



*2023 Greetings to visitors, friends and benefactors of
The Sturgeon's Mill Restoration Project
May 6-7, June 17-18 (Fathers Day), Sept. 16-17 and Oct. 14-15*



Gratitude and Appreciation, Harvey Henningsen - Editor

At our last board of director's meeting our board members traded stories about the wide range of talents our volunteer crewmembers bring to the successes of the continued restoration projects that go on throughout the year at Sturgeon's mill.

In 1964 when the sawmill shut down, this working museum survived "The Scrappers," the junk dealers, who come in and cut up the machinery to sell as scrap iron when mills and factories shut down. I was just 19 years old and I pleaded with my dad, Jim Henningsen, who was Ralph Sturgeon's partner in the sawmill, not to cut up the machinery. I loved those steam engines! My dad agreed to let the old mill remain intact after it closed. For the next 30 years Ralph Sturgeon, who lived next to the mill and had a bird's eye view to watch over the sawmill, cared for it as it slumbered. Ralph kept the machinery oiled and moving and all of the equipment and tools intact. Today Bob Sturgeon lives in the same house and keeps an eye on the sawmill and grounds. We are grateful for the original crew of three historical preservationists who started restoring the sawmill, in the early 1990's and for the next group of seven historians that continued the work by first keeping the mill's structure from falling into the nearby creek and provided the first \$700 of seed money to continue the sawmill's restoration. Today our 40+-member volunteer crew of historical preservationists continue to restore and preserve this working museum. The heart and soul of this wonderful working museum has always been, and always will be, the volunteers that have worked thousands of hours to bring this 108-year-old relic of a sawmill back to life and have kept it running as one of the finest working museums in the United States.

Look closely at the panorama image of our 2022 Sturgeons Mill volunteer crew members. Every one of

these volunteers brings a unique skill set that can be shared with others so every crew member learns a little bit more and this sawmill thrives under our crew's shared interests and efforts. Every one of these volunteers has a desire that the people who come to visit our working museum truly get an excellent historical experience and a better understanding of local West County timber & sawmilling history.

Look at the crewmembers faces. Each person that you are looking at truly cares about this sawmill's history and our visitors learning about it. These crew members want to step back to a simpler time in their lives, perhaps to their childhood or younger years. The beautiful equation is every crewmember gets their historical skill-set and comradery needs met and their giving of time at our sawmill allows our visitors to "step back into history" and let their imaginations paint a picture of what early life and work in Sonoma county must have looked like. Visitors also get to see manual labor and team work that makes hard work look easy. When you visit the mill again please be sure to ask our crew members any questions about the old machinery and how it works. In addition, please give these volunteers a thumbs up and a thank you for the time they spend to make your visit to Sturgeon's Mill a lifetime memory. I wish to give my thanks to Jim Lerum for bringing his Shire horses to our demonstration runs. It's a lot of work bringing horses that weigh almost 2 tons to our steam-ups. Jim does a wonderful presentation on life in Sonoma County before cars. We express our gratitude to crewmember Dan Gonzalez for his promotional help on Facebook. These issues of our Sturgeon's Mill Newsletters would not be possible without the skills and help of Robert Brent who helps put these newsletters together in addition to being a first-class docent.

Finally, everyone here at Sturgeon's Mill wants to express our gratitude and appreciation to all of our visitors who take the time to visit us during one of our demonstration runs. Thanks for your interest and financial support that allows us to continue saving this sawmill and journey back into local Sonoma County history.

***The President's Message - Tom Schaeffer* Information through the Ages**

Getting current news in the past was not at the fingertips of our ancestors, in fact, news may be months old or longer if gotten at all. And when it did arrive was it correct?

Stories told by word of mouth many times, person to person to person became embellished, edited and just plain fabricated to fill in when their memory failed them. Distance was a major factor in how news was sent. Drums were pounded, plumes of smoke were sent to the sky, town criers were sent to villages. Traveling troops told stories as they passed through. Newspapers had limited availability, beginning in the 1700's for the population that could read, and the circulation was small at first. Morse code and the telegraph brought the world together in the 19th century. Imagine information from Europe in seconds through underwater cables? Edison's recordings brought music and stories to the masses. Then wireless radio entertained millions as folks sat in the evening watching the radio shows. The next big change was television, and it was a biggie! Nothing at that time since talkies would monopolize our lives and fill us with anticipation more than that magic box with multiple channels, we had 4! Now it's hard to get excited about a black and white world of 20" color TV that came in the early 60's, then well - you know the rest.

Hundreds of channels, wide screens, high def, megatrons, mega all! Technology keeps moving faster and faster. Cell phones, smart phones, laptops, internet, Instagram Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, pick one or use them all. It's all on there. Posted for education, for fun, for profit, or spite or revenge. It is up to the individual to decide what is true or even real. But there is unlimited beneficial information that can help you connect with family, friends groups and organizations around the globe, that can, and does change lives and the world.

Someday...we will be able to receive internet at Sturgeons Mill and possibly pull ourselves into the 21st century. Heck, we still use bells and whistles to communicate in the sawmill. But until technology arrives we will present to our visitors as we always have, a personal look into the past of how a steam powered sawmill operates. Our docents put their heart and soul into presenting a factual experience that can be absorbed and remembered using photos, written explanations and demonstrations. Our volunteers are our most utilized and valuable entity for passing our story to our visitors. Presenting the operation of our sawmill and its history to as many visitors, students and clubs is the ultimate goal. Doing so in a beautiful setting and at the location it has been for 100 years is priceless. But even we have had to search our archives to sort out non-truths, myths, stories and names just remembered wrong. Sometimes it is just a simple case of bad hearing that can alter the facts of history.

The story of the three older fellows sitting in the park talking: fellow No. 1 says "it sure is windy today." Fellow No. 2 says "You're a little behind times, today is Thursday." Fellow No. 3 says "Yeah, I'm thirsty too, let's go grab some beers." I'm sad to say it, but I know those guys!

Getting names, dates and locations correct build accountability. Telling the truth in the beginning makes it easier to remember and tell it again.

During our 2022 season, Sturgeons Mill experienced record numbers of visitors. Was it because of post Covid folks needing to return to normal? Or maybe people wandering aimlessly stumbled onto our open house? Was it advertising on media platforms like Facebook, reaching thousands sharing their experience at the mill? I think maybe a little of all, but mostly the later. I think this internet communication thing may work!

Experiences are the most remembered and cherished. So come to Sturgeons Mill and experience it yourself! Been there? Please come again, there is always something new. As a non-profit 501c3, we appreciate and rely on your support to maintain our equipment and buildings and to improve our educational outreach to students. See you at the Mill!

Please send donations to the mill by check, or donate through our website with Paypal

With Thankfulness Essie Doty - Secretary/Treasurer

I am going to take the time this year to thank a wonderful group of volunteers who all work very hard to make Sturgeon's Mill a success each weekend we are open to the public. We call them "worker Bees". Usually they are behind the scenes. You seldom see photos or mention of them but without their dedication, things wouldn't run as smoothly as they do. We appreciate them much more than they realize.

Kathy Laugero, Lavonne Sturgeon and Judy Schaeffer are always willing to help Woody in the parking lot. Judy is also greeting, directing and counting our visitors as they enter the grounds. This is a really big, job.

Beverly Henningsen is a wonderful greeter. She asks visitors if this is their first time visiting us. She then directs groups towards their interests, or to a docent who will be giving tours.

Lori Todd, Katy Todd, Nancy Chaffin, Susan Lawry, Sherry Failing and Cindy Varner all work tirelessly displaying and selling a variety of tee shirts, hats, suspenders, sweat shirts and vests along with mugs, pins, post cards, decals, etc. These items sold at the "tee shirt shack" are a valuable source of income for our treasury.

Sylvia Fisher tells visitors about the office where there are still cancelled payroll checks, and where all book-keeping ledgers are kept. It is a remarkable world of history of the mill over many years.

Anne Campbell works tirelessly in the gardens, planting, pruning, weeding as well as overseeing what needs to be done and guiding helpers to clear dead plants, pulling ivy away from trees, raking and weed eating and generally making sure our gardens stay as beautiful as possible. Marc Woodworth and Tom Charleston are her main helpers. Tom Schaeffer always provides a beautiful bench which is raffled each weekend we are open. This raffle is our largest money maker and folks are so happy to find they are "winners"!

We rely on our docents to lead groups around the mill and grounds. Long time docents are Dwight Ontiveros, Mark Allen, Tom Charleston, Robert Brent, Marc Woodworth, and Bill Hanson. Our new docents are Erick Black, Keith Holman, Steve Helm, Walt Morton, Dan Gonzales and Tom Brown. Bob Seyms, Matt Stockton and Dakota Freeman tell visitors about the Willamette steam donkey. Devin Granahan explains the planer. Tim Talamantes is the head docent in charge of scheduling and training docents. Bob Maddocks and Jim Flint explain the small engines. Our very talented blacksmiths are Ken Maxfield and Joe Messina, Joe also builds benches for sale at demonstration runs and they always sell out. We are so blessed to have such dedicated volunteers and want them to know they are appreciated.

Nuts & Bolts, Sawdust & Steam Harvey Henningsen - Photography

With Covid-19 raging through Sonoma County our 108-year-old working museum sawmill was still and slumbered for 2 years without visitors. Our crew here at the sawmill were pleasantly surprised to see how many visitors returned after the Covid 19 lockdown. On a typical demonstration run weekend we have about 1,000 visitors, averaging some 500 visitors a day. At our last weekend run of 2022 we had almost 1,700 visitors come to "Step-Back-into-History" with us. Unfortunately, we had to turn many visitors away because there were no parking spaces left. Please plan to arrive by 10am for best opportunity to secure parking.

What's new and new-but-used at our Sawmill?

New bathrooms with flush toilets are here! Thanks to a lot of work by our crewmembers and an extra amount of skilled carpentry by President Tom Schaeffer and board member Jess Todd we have beautiful new bathrooms with sinks and mirrors and early 1900's sawmill decor. Check them out, it's right next to our Williamite steam donkey.

We have purchased a new /used forklift thanks to the hard work of incoming board member Bill Hanson who successfully obtained a \$27,000 grant from the Fred MacMurray Foundation for this purchase. Many thanks to Kate MacMurray for making this grant happen.

A 1918 chain-driven White logging truck and a 1920 Fageol converted buzz-saw gifted to our museum by Guy

Smith. The White logging truck has been lovingly restored by crewmembers Jim Flint and Jess Todd. This chain-drive truck is an important addition to our historical logging truck collection.

Sturgeon's Mill initiates plan for the next generation. Our board of directors has set in motion a plan to keep this Working-Museum-Sawmill going into the future. We are moving ahead with plans to set up a foundation to ensure that this working museum will continue into the future after we are gone.

Student Education Day ... Thursday April 27, 2023 has been chosen for students to have a sawmilling history day at our working museum. Each year we welcome 200 students from 3rd grade through high school to "Step-Back-into-History with us. We already have 80 confirmed reservations for students from two schools. We cut off reservations at 200 students and we have room for another 120 students. Teachers interested in getting their class on the reservation list need to contact Harvey Henningsen, student education coordinator, at hhartist@sonic.net soon before our 200 student capacity is reached.



*Your financial support is needed.
Please send tax deductible donations to:*

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707-829-2479

2023 Run Dates, 10 AM to 3 PM (no dogs, please):
May 6-7
June 17-18 (Father's day)
September 16-17
October 14-15

