



2025-2026 Holiday Greetings to visitors, friends and benefactors of The Sturgeon's Mill Restoration Project

2026 Demonstration Run Dates

May 9-10 (Mothers Day), June 20-21 (Fathers Day), Aug. 1-2 and Sept. 12-13

The President's Message Tom Schaeffer

Volunteers and Friends



As we close in on the last remaining days of the year I tend to reflect on highlights of 2025, the good things, the sad things and Well, life at the mill. The projects that were completed as well as the endless ongoing maintenance required to keep the mill in a state of readiness. Hundreds of hours of hard work are spent readying the mill for our public steam-up demonstrations, and with practiced planning by our lead crew members, our small army of volunteers get the work done. Surpris-

ingly, not all goes according to plan. There are always the unexpected mechanical breakdowns, un-cooperating weather, and staff shortages. We always work through the issues....after all, the show must go on.

I have always thought that we get the most amazing visitors who seem to be genuinely interested and surprised with the whole operation. Some have family history in the timber and milling industry, having stories of their own to share. Others know nothing about a steam sawmill and are eager to learn all they can about every operation. Our docents and crew are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and always willing to answer questions.

The cook shack is always popular when it's time to take a break. Get a great lunch, listen to some live music and enjoy the beauty of the grove and gardens surrounding the picnic grounds.

I have touched on just a few of the good things at Sturgeons Mill, now a few sad things. Three of our longtime volunteers have passed away this year. Wes Brubacher, Bob Skover and Frank Robinson. All were seniors who had brought their knowledge and skill to share with the rest of us. Both Frank and Bob were good at lending a hand wherever needed, always upbeat and glad to participate. Wes had been an active crew member before steam had been restored to the mill and was run on compressed air. He had been a director on our board as well as serving as Vice-President with me for several years. His gift of time, guidance and his many monetary contributions will be greatly missed. He was always congenial, but was mostly known for his stoic demeanor and dry, matter of fact sense of humor. Wes and I worked well together and I was glad to call him a friend.

As projects improving the structures at the mill move forward and our presentations of the mill evolve, we are forever counting on volunteers to continue to do the heavy lifting. I am grateful for their time, efforts and foremost their friendship.



Woodland Gardens Essie Doty, Secretary/Treasurer

The Woodland Gardens at Sturgeon's Mill are slowly being restored to their original beauty. There are more large trees growing in the garden than in the 1920's and 30's when Wade and Esther first moved to the sawmill site. Because there are more trees now, there is a lot more shade and consequently less color in the garden. If you just wander the paths and sit a few minutes you learn to appreciate the quiet beauty of the green shrubs, ferns, and evergreen trees. There are redwood trees with twisted bark which have been labeled "corkscrew trees." No one seems to be able to explain why these trees have the twisted bark. We just enjoy guessing why.

Reading Wade Sturgeon's diary, we learn, even before the mill was located in the area people enjoyed picnics here before Wade created the "Woodland Gardens." We now have areas in the garden where our visitors can enjoy lunch. There are picnic tables in the garden area (near the garden shed) and the larger area below the gardens is a special setting with the red and white tablecloths and umbrellas where visitors can enjoy lunch and enjoy timeless historical songs played by the 11 piece string group, The Bohemian Ukuleles.

There once were three lily ponds edged with beautiful white quartz rocks mined from a gold mine at the head of Willow Creek in West Sonoma County. You'll see the quartz rocks throughout the garden. There are abalone shells lining here and there that remind us of the days when abalone were plentiful. One of the ponds was filled in after Wade passed away and planted with rhododendrons, azaleas and lilies and other small shrubs donated in his name.

We will continue to add plants and flowers to improve the beauty. The peaceful gardens are a break from the hub-bub and noise of the mill.



Introducing Erik Black, New Board Member

Hello, I'm Erik Black. The newest member to the Board of Directors at Sturgeon's Mill. I'd like to take a moment to introduce myself to those of you that I haven't met yet, and to say thank you for supporting such an amazing organization. I've been volunteering at the Mill for about 3 years now, and I have loved every minute of it. I started as a docent and now am training as a block setter. I'm an engineer by profession and I have always had a love for old equipment, which is how I found myself at Sturgeon's Mill.

To me, Sturgeon's Mill represents history and community. The volunteers that come together to keep a piece of history alive all care about and support each other in a way I haven't been able to find elsewhere. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, and there is a strong culture of respect and acceptance in our community. Anyone is welcome to share, work, and learn.

Growing up, I was taught to take pride in making things with my own two hands and being able to repair anything that broke. I find that same pride in the volunteers at the Mill and know that the knowledge and skill required to work with your hands is strong in the community the restoration project has built.

Due to the changing tides of our culture and the increased reliance on mass production, people are losing this connection to each other. Many people these days don't know how to repair their own cars, clothes, or appliances, and even fewer can build structures and machines like the ones found at the mill. The preservation of knowledge and technology of the Mill's history and the way it operated is vital to keeping these old ways alive to share with the next generation. Without our community of volunteers working diligently to share the history of the mill and pass down this knowledge, so much insight into our past would have been lost. I have learned so much from my fellow volunteers, and I hope to pass that knowledge on to future volunteers for many years to come.



Harvey Henningsen, Board Member, Restoration Founder

The 2025 year at Sturgeon's Mill slipped by like a gentle breeze. Over 5,000 visitors came to "step-back-into history" with us. They enjoyed seeing and understanding how steam power propelled the industrial revolution and powered our country through one of the most productive and prosperous periods of our nation's history. Docents who lead tours around our Working Museum explain the stages of milling lumber from logs to finished lumber. Seeing how things work is part of the experience, but understanding the history of Sturgeon's Mill and having someone explain the process gives visitors the big picture of the whole process.

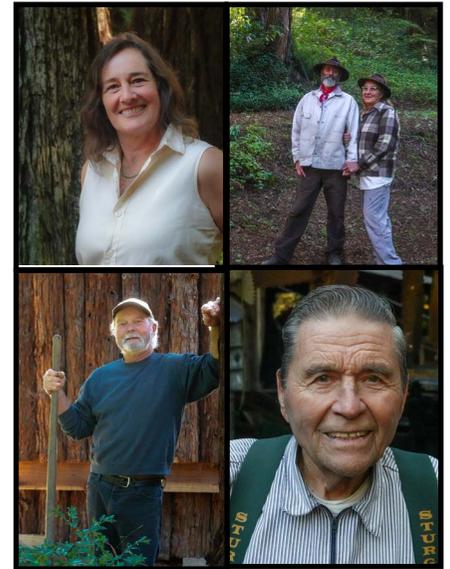
Visiting our working museum without a docent is like trying to understand a movie with the sound turned off. Our friendly docents allow our visitors to hear and see the big picture. If you are pleased with your tour of our sawmill please be sure to give a compliment to your docent as they love to hear your appreciation. I've been coming to Sturgeon's Mill since 1945 and nothing has changed in this canyon where the sawmill makes our sawmill a West Coast favorite for "Real California History." If you've already visited us please bring a friend for a visit in 2026.

Student Education Day was filled to capacity this year with eager 4th to 12th grade students from all over Sonoma county, Lake county and a class from San Francisco. It looks like this coming year is already filled. We are beginning to put interested classes on the 2027 waiting list.

Special thanks go out to our unsung heroes. Thank you to our volunteer parking crewmembers Kathy Laugero, Woody Woodworth and MaryJo Geitner who have the important but thankless job of fitting all of our visitor's cars parked safely in our parking lot. Our thanks to the cookshack staff who feed our guests and our crew headed by Judy Schaeffer. A big thank you to Lori Todd, Katy Stednitz and Beverly Henningsen at our Kiosk for answering lots of questions and helping our visitors purchase souvenirs.

A last offering of gratitude to President, Tom Schaeffer and Vice President, Jess Todd who have taken this Working Museum to the next level, creating an easy flowing powerful experience for visitors. Tom & Jess can often be found at the sawmill on non-working days planning, fixing and setting up projects for the next work day.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving we give thanks to our volunteer crew, our visitors & donors.



Donors' Corner William Hanson, Board Member

Sturgeon's Mill is supported by generous gifts by those who love what we do and help us keep the Mill in good working order. Your cash donations, raffle tickets, merchandise purchases are all part of our operating fund. One of our primary goals is to operate without an entry or parking fee, making the Mill open to all. We are also supported by gifts from individuals, businesses, foundations and legacy planning.

There are many ways to make a legacy gift to Sturgeons Mill Restoration Project, a Working Museum, while fulfilling your financial goals. Legacy gifts can offer tax advantages now and, in some cases, generate lifetime income. There are more advanced estate planning donations that may be beneficial to donor(s) during their lifetime. Businesses donate directly by donating goods and services. Many businesses have Foundations that accept grant applications. You can help the Mill by recommending our request for funding and stand with us during the application and award process.

Help us by making a tax deductible donation this year. Make a check payable to Sturgeon's Mill Restoration Project and mail to 2150 Green Hill Rd., Sebastopol, CA 95472 or go to our Website www.sturgeonsmill.com Our tax ID # is 68-0267335.

Contact: Bill Hanson, Donation Coordinator, div4ab@gmail.com (707) 483-9336 or text

Any estate, tax advantaged and long term giving are done with the advice of your professional advisor.



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

Sturgeon's Mill Restoration Project
2150 Green Hill Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472
www.sturgeonsmill.com
707-829-2479

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