The Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill

Restoration Progress Report 89
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Work at the mill has slowed down for the restoration crew as summer ends. We have all of the machinery working at this time and no new restoration projects on the horizon. We have I am sad to say run out of machinery at the mill that is practical to restore back to operating condition.

There are many machines that could be restored to operating condition, the problem is that they are either not visible to the public when the mill is operating or they would add very little to the mill experience. That combined with the on going hot weather led me to suspend work for one Tuesday this month. I plan to have the crew back at the mill next Tuesday.

The log cabin has been taken as far as we can go with it until the floor is installed. The remainder of the underside of the loft has been stained. Once the floor is installed some of the larger artifacts like the rope bed can be moved to the cabin.

Speaking of the rope bed we have made some modifications of its head and foot boards to make the bed more rigid. I am also happy to let you know that Roberta House and her husband are going to supply the feather tick mattress for the bed. She visited the mill two Tuesdays ago to get the dimensions of the bed. She plans to sew the tick as a winder project. She also has a comforter that she will donate to go with the tick.

Back to the mill. We have been doing numerous minor repairs to the building and machinery. One on going problem has been the boiler feed pump booster pump that hangs in the turbine pit. We had to clean mud out of it and rearrange how it is suspended. Keeping the pumps cleared of mud will be an ongoing problem.

Another issue we dealt with is a torn splice on the flat belt that connects the main line shaft in the basement with the millstone drive jackshaft. This belt has a 90 degree rotation in it and because it has to make this turn there is a considerable amount of tension on it. About once a year the belt splice tears out and has to be replaced.

This time I used the repair / replacement of the belt splice lacing as a training exercise, the newest members of the restoration crew had never seen a wire lacing splice installed in a flat belt. Now they know how to use the lacing machine and properly install a new splice.

Another routine task that we did this last month is one of the most important at the mill, lubricating the machinery. In my research on the mills that once existed in Muscatine County I discovered that many burned due to bearings running dry, overheating due to friction and bursting into flame. Since Pine Mills has many of the same type of primitive bearings (iron shafts running in hard wood pillow blocks) it is vital that we keep them lubricated.

Many of the lubrication points are well hidden or difficult to physically get to in the mill. This month lubricating them became another training exercise so our new volunteers know where all of them are. By the way, we use about a gallon of 80 weight oil a year at the mill.

Mitch White

It is with great regret that I note the passing of Mr. Mitch White one of the founders of the Friends of Pine Creek Grist Mill. Even through his recent illness he maintained his interest in the mill and its restoration. I took the photo above on July 10th, 2016. Mitch was assisting with our efforts to get the mill turbine operating again.

Mitch provided me with a great deal of information about the early days of the Friends and their efforts to restore the mill. His enthusiasm and knowledge will be missed.

The new safety cover over the turbine bevel gear that Dick Klauer fabricated.

Roberta House and her husband with the comforter for the rope bed.

Below the crew is using our antique belt lacing machine to install the new splice in the belt. Hank Mann (on the left) and Clarence Klauer are working the machine while Don Stoltenburg looks on.

Clarence is tightening the clamps on the headboard of the rope bed. By gluing the boards together into one unit the bed became stronger.

Now comes the hard part! Once the new splice is installed the link pin has to be installed in the belt and the belt slid back onto its pulleys.