

MILL HISTORY WE DIDN'T KNOW

Recently the park received a letter from Alan Chittick. He was a summer staff member in the 1970s. He confirmed that there was a non-functional water wheel on the mill installed in the 1950s. But it was destroyed after about 2 weeks by a tree brought downstream by a flood. This photo depicts the reinforcing concrete that he describes (at the top of the stone wall). Below is part of his letter.

Hello,

My name is Alan Chittick. I am so happy to see the restoration work on the mill and one room school.

In the summer of 1971 I worked as a Park Attendant with Gary Galliard (Park Officer) at Wildcat Den. That was a special year in the history of the work on the mill and also the one room school. During that summer the schoolhouse had just arrived and was set on the current foundation. One of my jobs that summer was to paint the inside of the schoolhouse. Every day of paint was stepping back into history.

Also during that summer every Thursday I took some time to sweep out the mill so I could open it on weekends to allow people to come inside to walk around. The basement was closed off so no one could see the old steamboat boiler, but people enjoyed walking around the rest of it.

Why was it an important year for the mill ... it was the summer Gary and I formed up and poured the concrete retainer wall around the foundation that you see today. One of my assignments that summer was to daily crawl through the hole in the corner of the mill that had been broken out from a tree that had hit it during a previous spring flood. Over time it had filled up with mud that had to be removed so we could build forms behind the stone foundation. At the time a person could not stand up under that area so I had to crawl under, then scoop out the blue-green smelly stuff with a shovel. When I got that dug out we were able to build the forms behind, then in front of the old stone foundation. To get the original look of the foundation my other assignment was to wade into the creek to find the original stones that had broken out of the wall. At first I thought that would be a tough order, but found those stones pretty easy to identify. Maybe interesting to know ... wading back and forth to bring the foundation stones back to the stream bank was too time consuming, so I asked Curt Noble, the officer at Fairport Station to bring down his new International tractor with the front end loader so I could throw the stones into the bucket.



To this day I have a lingering smell of the daily “mud shoveling” from under the mill. It was awful!

I am so happy that the “Friends” organization has formed, and hope it will continue to provide a glimpse of history to future generations.