



Boston Mill Society

Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site, 32655 Boston Mill Dr., Shedd, OR 97377 (541) 491-3611

Introducing Tom Parsons, Thompson's Mills new OPRD Ranger

December 2010

"Thompson's Mills gets new ranger" was the title of the November 8 front page Albany Democrat-Herald article written by Alex Paul. It is shared with his permission.

SHEDD - After spending 10 years shuttling between National Parks Service assignments a continent apart - Point Reyes, Calif., and Cape Cod, Mass. - Tom Parsons has settled into a more permanent lifestyle as the new ranger at Thompson's Mills Heritage Site.

The 37-year-old New England native said the training and varied experience he gained from those positions will pay off handsomely in operating and maintaining the 152-year-old water-powered grain mill that was acquired by State Parks in 2004 and opened to the public in 2007.

"Seasonal ranger work was great," Parsons said. "It was always fun. Every day was different, and I got to enjoy the best of some of the most scenic places in the country."

Parsons earned a degree in geography from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania in 1995.

"My family has always had a great appreciation for nature and culture," Parsons said. "Being a ranger is a great way to get involved and to present both and get paid for it. I've always said my job is like being a working tourist."

Parsons brings experience in both carpentry and plumbing to the job and had hoped to learn to weld after taking a position with a metal fabricating company in Portland. But when the economy soured, Parsons was laid off and volunteered with Oregon State Parks in the winter of 2009.

"I was a seasonal ranger assistant at the Vista House at Rooster Rock," Parsons said.



"I learned about Thompson's Mill from a posting on the jobs board and I knew it was right for me."

In addition to the variety of day-to-day responsibilities of any park ranger, Parsons said he is intrigued by the fact that the Calapooia River water flows through the site and is affected by the mill.

"I've always enjoyed checking up on the weather but now I have to know what's going on upriver in the Calapooia watershed," Parsons said.

Other staff members at the site include a half-time assistant ranger and two half-time tour hosts.

"I would really like to see more school children visit," Parsons said. "I also plan to develop a volunteer group. We want to be a good neighbor and a place everyone can take pride in. We would like this to be a 'go to' spot when local people have family members visit town."

Parsons said he enjoys vegetable gardening, riding BMW motorcycles, fishing and hiking. He is living in Halsey and would like to start riding a bicycle to work when weather permits.



Mill Art Display



Mill warehouse walls, easels, and table filled with art

On the weekend of October 9 and 10 Mid-Willamette Valley artists displayed their paintings and drawings of the mill and surrounding countryside. The Boston Mill Society sponsored the art exhibit and sale. The display area was the storage area at the Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site 1 1/2 miles east of Shedd. Tours of the water-powered mill were conducted during the display hours. BMS board member Anton Johnson arranged the event with local artists who were encouraged to stay, greet the public, and paint or sketch. One artist donated a painting and Anton purchased one and donated it.

The Boston Mill Society has already purchased three additional tables that may be used for displays and is in the process of obtaining additional track lighting for better art viewing.

On September 16, the Boston Mill Society hosted the Pioneer Country Trail representatives at the mill. This is the group that sponsored the successful Wheat Fleet event last August. The group promotes enjoying the historic and agricultural heritage of Linn County.

May 2011 Event



The next art event at the mill will be a May display of Allen J. Norby's photographs of Birds of the Willamette Valley. Prints will be available for sale at the mill like this one of a visiting robin.



Letter from the BMS Board President

by Glenn Harrison

Welcome

We welcome the arrival of Tom Parsons, the new State Parks Ranger at Thompson's Mills. He has considerable knowledge and experience as an interpreter and is a former National Parks Ranger. His welcome was featured in several local newspapers including the Albany Democrat-Herald, Brownsville Times, Corvallis Gazette-Times, and Sweet Home New Era.

Support

During 2010 the Boston Mill Society paid for wagon restoration, funded two restroom murals, bought a camcorder and digital camera, produced and distributed three newsletters, sponsored an art show, received three art donations, provided three 6-foot display tables, improved and paid for the Boston Mill Society web site, provided input concerning the dam removal project, provided gifts for departing staff, joined the Pioneer Country Trail and hosted a meeting, participated in the Wheat Fleet activities, and maintained a store at the mill. In early 2011 we will purchase video editing software for use at the mill.

Email

Currently 102 people are receiving their newsletter by Email. To receive your newsletter in color and save printing and postage expenses, send your Email address to Glenn Harrison at gr.harrison@comcast.net.

Dam Removal

The Thompson's Mills property including the millpond is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR 1979 as Boston Flour Mill) and is on the Linn County List of Historic Places. There are three issues facing the Calapooia River Project - better water flow to lessen flooding, improved fish passage, and maintaining the historical integrity of the Thompson's Mills and its millpond with a connection to the Calapooia River. Because the proposed dam removals and the millpond are linked, the dam removals should not proceed until it is known how the Calapooia River water will keep the pond full. There could be extensive damage to the turbine bearings if they are allowed to dry-out.

Denise Hoffert-Hay, Project Manager for the dam removal project for the Calapooia Watershed Council says - The project to remove Sodom and Shearer Dams and provide channel restoration is on schedule for implementation Summer 2011.

The project engineering firm, River Design Group, has completed the project's 90% designs and Biological Assessment (BA), key components to the project permitting phase.

This project has been several years in development and has involved dozens of landowners, agency staff, and funding partners. Project implementation will be funded by grants already secured from American Rivers, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (funded by the Oregon Lottery), and NOAA Fisheries through the Open Rivers Initiative. The Council appreciates the time and energy that everyone has put toward this project and to understanding the complexity of issues surrounding water management in this basin.

The historic resources information is covered in great detail in a separate document that is a part of this project's permitting and FERC license surrender. The document was prepared by the project's archaeology consultant, Applied Earthworks. The document is in review process by the US Army Corp of Engineers. I am waiting to hear from them (and they consult with SHPO and the Tribes) before releasing the cultural resources document to the public due to sensitivity on Kalapuyan historical findings that are mapped in the document. As soon as that review is complete (likely the first of 2011), I will have that information to give to you.

I understand that you have some concerns over the removal of the dam affecting the water level in the mill pond. RDG and OPRD are working to have a water delivery system to satisfy the Mills water needs. The dam removals are scheduled for Summer 2011, pending permits. I believe OPRD's intent is to have an alternate water supply for the Mills on a similar schedule.

Dennis Wiley, Willamette Valley District Manager for Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, adds - At this point in the 90% design of the Shearer and Sodom Dam removal project, the mill pond is fed only by the Walton Slough (adequate in the wet season, but inadequate during summer flows). Hence OPRD's need for the design of an alternative system for delivering water to the pond. The alternative water supply system is separate from the dam removal projects being pursued by the CWC. OPRD is cognizant of the status of the National Register nomination and will need to work to mitigate impacts to the historic resource. We should have some good information for making decisions on how best to supply water to the mill pond soon and will share that information with the BMS in the near future.

Memberships and Donations Help

The Boston Mill Society urges you to become a member for the 2011 calendar year. Your additional donations support projects that assist at the Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site. See the the form on the last page. Visit the Boston Mill Society web site at <http://www.bostonmill.org>

The Oregon Cultural Trust is again seeking donations of any amount mailed to 775 Summer Street NE, Suite 200, Salem, OR 97301 97301-1280. Donations to nonprofit organizations are tax deductible, but the Cultural Trust is even better. You get an Oregon tax credit for any amount up to \$500 for an individual or \$1,000 for a couple.

There are many more worthy historical groups that are also in need of funding. Please give as you are able.

Oregon Country Trails

Visit Oregon's only agri-tourism system, Oregon Country Trails, Home Page at <http://www.oregoncountrytrails.com>. There are trails in Linn, Benton, Lane, Deschutes, and Crook Counties.

Visitors to Linn County are encouraged to stop by the Albany Visitor's Center, the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce or Thompson's Mills to pick up a brochure and get some friendly directions to our enchanting country trails. Simply click on a trail, download a map, follow the road signs, and enjoy the adventures.

Constitution Amended

On November 2, 84% of Oregon voters approved Ballot Measure 76 that amended Oregon's Constitution to continue the placement of 15 percent of net state lottery proceeds into the Parks and Natural Resources Fund, half for state parks, beaches, historic sites, and recreation areas, and half for restoration and protection of natural resources, including fish and wildlife habitat and protection of watersheds. State agencies receiving money from the fund are required to use the money for the specified purposes. Eligible grant recipients are identified and minimum allocation levels of grant funding are available for local and regional park projects that protect and restore fish and wildlife habitats, and protect watersheds.

The estimated income for the fund in 2011 is \$87 million. Some of these funds could help preserve and maintain the Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site as well as the Calapooia River watershed and fish restoration.





JOIN NOW!

Yes! I want to join the Boston Mill Society

The Boston Mill Society invites you to join in making the vision of a Living History Museum and Agricultural Interpretive Center a reality. Members receive newsletters, have the opportunity to vote at the May annual meeting and volunteer to help with projects.

Any donation is welcome.

- \$20-\$49 Sacker \$200-\$499 Miller
- \$50-\$99 Blacksmith \$500-\$999 Head Miller
- \$100-\$199 Carpenter \$1000 Millwright

(Please print)

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Although the weather is colder, visitors continue to turn up and enjoy a visit through the mill. Visitors have now come from 792 locations in 48 states and Washington, D. C. plus 24 other countries including five provinces of Canada. Oregon visitors are from 200 different locations.

An expanded version of this month's newsletter can be viewed, and downloaded, at the BMS site:
www.bostonmill.org/news.html

Please mail to:

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