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Gray's Mill: Email Reply to Ted Hazen, June 8, 2001

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Date: Fri, 8 Jun 2001 19:59:29 -0400
To: "Theodore Hazen"
From: "Anne W. Baker" <awb02@sprynet.com>
Subject: Re:
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachments:

Wow! Email is great. What a rich and informative reply. Thank you.

To make this issue clearer I am going to start with the mill . The remains of the existing building dates to the 1880's. It is a typical small, one story village mill, 24x24. This mill and many of the small mills in this once rural area were a combination of grist and saw mill. Consistently I find 2 sets of stones – one granite for grinding Jonny cake meal and the other French burr for grinding livestock feet. In addition there is always a corn-cracker, turned by water power, to crush the corn and the cob which was then ground in the French burr stones. Having looked at and researched the remains of other mills in the immediate area they all served those basic needs. All were originally powered by wooden wheels but had been modernized, with a turbine. I should explain here that they were not turbines as I understand them, but somewhere in between called, I believe, reaction wheels which were attached to the bottom of the penstock, and received the water through a spiral iron enclosure.

Jonny Cakes by-the-way, were introduced to the first settlers by the Indians. They are made with flint corn, a white corn meal. Jonny cakes are strictly local to Rhode Island and its Massachusetts borders. There are a few people that still grow and grind the flint corn (using a meadows mill) and many that still eat them. To prevent cross pollination the corn has to be grown at least a mile from any other type of corn and then you're lucky if you get 2 ears to a stork!

In this same area, in addition to the grist and saw mills, there were shingle, bark, forge, hoe, fulling, and carding mills. Most have disappeared except for the foundations and tailraces which were always made of granite as it is in abundance. Most of the stones I have seen have been cut with a star drill which I believe was introduced in the mid 1800. If I can find out a reliable date when the star drill came in to use along with the type of previous drill used and the mark it left, it would help the dating process.

About HABS-HAER. The mill is in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, close to the Rhode Island boarder. It has not been documented by HAER but all the existing material has been measured and drawn by an architectural historian.

Now I am going to go and look up some of the sites you suggested.

Thanks for your help.
Anne

I personally felt it was wrong to restore the mill to any period .

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