

Rohrer's Mill Is Ren

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RONKS (Lancaster Co.) — The creak of wheels turning, the swish of water rolling over the water wheel, and the faint aroma of stone ground wheat transport visitors back in time.

"I suspect we do things just about the way they did them 142 years ago," Christian L. Landis said.

A slight dusting of flour rests on the wooden wheels, pulleys, ropes, heavy belts, and wooden gears all in working order at Rohrer's Mill, located near the Strasburg Railroad.

Landis believes his mill is the last one in the county to remain non-mechanized.

People come from all over the United States, from Africa, Japan, and Europe to visit the mill that was built in 1852.

It is believed to be the site of a mill that was built during the early settlement in the county, but written history can only trace it back to 1834 when Henry Rohrer purchased the frame mill from the Denlinger family. Rohrer replaced the frame structure with a large brick grist and saw mill that has

been in the Rohrer family for seven generations. Henry Rohrer was the great-great-great-grandfather of Landis' wife Esther. It is through Esther's side of the family that the farm has been passed down through the generations.

The mill was built on the family's 133-acre farm, one mile south of Route 741, along Calamus Run in Paradise Township.

Esther said the creek was named Calamus Run because so much calamus reed grew on the riverbanks.

A dam is built at the stream that feeds into a race and a pond. The water is then piped into a water tank, which feeds the waterwheel.

The couple married in 1940 and farmed on another family farm for about three years before moving to the mill location. Landis farmed the land until 1968, when his father-in-law retired and Landis took over the mill duties.

The pulleys and wheels are all water powered except for the diesel engine used for the hammer mill. The only mechanized machinery in the mill is the mechanical sewer used to tie flour bags.

Landis said that, to his knowledge, modernizing the mill was



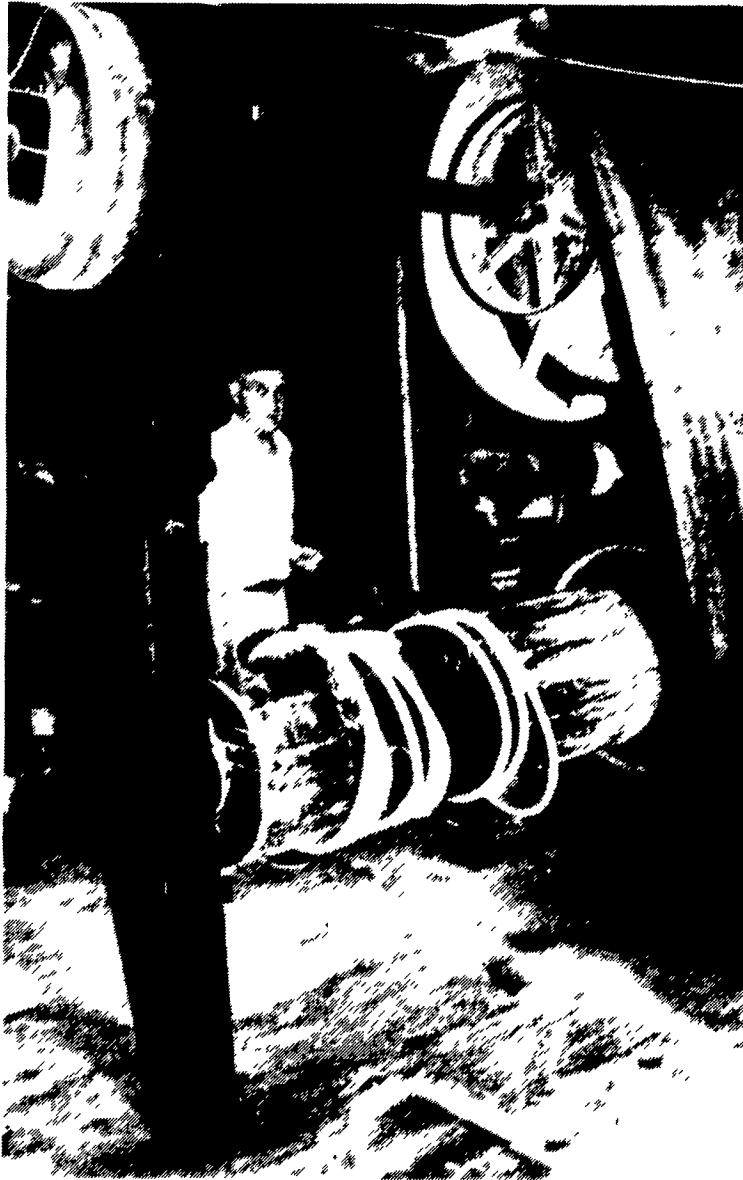
Christian and Esther Landis walk in front of the mill that has been passed down through Esther's side of the family, the Rohrers, since 1834.



The gentle slap of the waterwheel can be heard throughout the mill as its power grinds cornmeal and flour.



The frame part of the mill was purchased by the Rohrer family in 1834. Later, Rohrer replaced it with a brick grist and sawmill and enlarged it with an addition, in which a 15 horse-power engine was installed. The mill operates today just as it had in the 1800s, with power from a waterwheel.



Pulleys, ropes, wheels, and belts throughout the mill are rigged to provide power and hoist 100-pound feed bags from the bottom level to the top.

never considered as a possibility. It certainly is not a consideration now.

"It's so old now that it is of historical interest," Landis said as he talked of the articles written and pictures taken of the mill.

Things have slowed down a bit from 1930s when business was at its peak with about 13,000 bushels of wheat ground into cracked wheat and whole wheat pastry flour. Then, the waterwheel also operated a saw mill in the front part of the feed mill.

Although the hum of the saw mill has long ceased, Landis said, "Everything is there that could put it back into use."

Even wooden signs informing customers of log milling rules and prices are still posted. One reads: Sawing off nails — \$1.00 per nail.

"You know what nails do to saws," Landis said. "If they hit a nail, it ruined the blade and they had to stop to sharpen it."

Now the mill primarily grinds the corn and wheat grown on the property. The flour is bagged and sold to local stores and co-ops.

The two large millstones that stone-grind the corn and wheat are encased in a round wooden structure. Stone-ground meal is sought after by food connoisseurs and those interested in the nutritional value of whole grain products.

For customers interested in a fin-



Christian Landis ties flour bags with the only mechanized item in the mill.