

Some Ideas for Oliver Evans/"National" Milling Day

Sample Activities

1. Serve a birthday cake with an edible photo of Evans or a diagram of his mill on the cake
2. Include information Oliver Evans during guided tours on this day
3. Display exhibits on Oliver Evans and/or his inventions in the mill
4. Present short lectures on Oliver Evans
5. Have characters impersonate Oliver Evans or a disgruntled miller (unhappy about being expected to pay for a patent)
6. Exhibit antique flour, feed and grain bags, diaries or log books from the time period if available

Sample Publicity Pieces

NOTE: Substitute information pertinent to your mill and celebration for the italicized items.

Sample Promotional Piece #1: National Milling Day Set for August 28, 2011

Our mill was one of many mills of the Mid-Atlantic region that operated during the golden era of flour manufacture in early America from 1760 to 1860. Most regional grist mills built during this time frame were based on the ideas of Oliver Evans – machinery fabricated from wood and iron, powered by water, in buildings of wood and stone or brick. These mills were part of an export industry in a growing international market. Around 1810, the three leading American export products to Europe and the Caribbean were cotton, tobacco, and flour. The industrial growth of the new nation was to be financed in large part through these three industries. In the Mid-Atlantic region, flour was number one: Pennsylvania manufactured 50% of the nation's total production of flour and Virginia manufactured 25%.

This important history deserves to be recognized by our school children and the public at large. For this reason, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SPOOM (Society for the Preservation of Old Mills) has declared Sunday, August 28, 2011 as "National" Milling Day. Special educational programs will be held at participating mills to celebrate this heritage. Events planned for *Your Gristmill* include *tours by knowledgeable guides, a display of Oliver Evans' accomplishments, and pictures of other mills*. The mill, located at *your address* will be open from *your hours* on Sunday August 28. For more information, check out our website *your url address* or call *your phone number*.

Sample Promotional Piece #2: Your Mill Celebrates Oliver Evans Day

YOUR TOWN, STATE – National Milling Day will be observed at *Your Gristmill* on Sunday, August 28, 2011 from *your hours* as part of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SPOOM (Society for the Preservation of Old Mills) celebration. The origin and expansion of flour milling in the Mid-Atlantic States occurred primarily from 1760 to 1860 – the time frame within which most regional grist mills were built. Oliver Evans, the famous inventor of the 1780s, created the first automatic flour mill, which greatly aided the expansion of the milling industry. He also invented the first high pressure steam engine, an amphibious vehicle, and much more. A birthday cake for will be served in his honor. Visitors will see *Your Gristmill in operation with tours by knowledgeable guides, a display of Oliver Evans' accomplishments, and pictures of other mills*. *Tours are free, but donations are greatly appreciated.*

Sample Promotional Piece #3: Oliver Evans: Genius or Trouble-Maker?

Born September 13, 1755 in Newport, Delaware, Oliver Evans was continually experimenting with labor saving devices and new uses for gears from his teens. At the age of 22, he designed a machine to relieve the tedium of his laborious job to make teeth used in cards for combing wool. His invention produced 1500 a minute, and they were clearly better than the hand-made ones.

Evans devised more than 80 industrial inventions over the course of his lifetime, but today he is remembered most often for his innovations in milling. He worked with his brothers to build an improved flour mill on Red Clay Creek in Delaware in 1784. The mill incorporated the first continuous production line in any industry: all movement was automatic, power being supplied by waterwheels, and grain was passed by conveyors and chutes through the stages of grinding, cooling and sifting. Evans also invented the mechanical hopper boy (that replaced apprentice boys of the same name). This consisted of a large wooden tub set on the floor with pivotal arms that raked and cooled the flour. With these improvements, a mill could be run by approximately two men for every 20 barrels of flour produced per day — half the manpower needed to operate an unimproved mill.

His plans and books (particularly *The Young Millwright and Millers Guide*, published first in 1795 with 15 reprintings) provided the information to implement his system. He received one of the first patents issued by the United States Patent Office for his system. However, he spent the rest of his life in court defending his patent rights.

Evans offered the license to use his system for a \$40 fee per millstone pair. To promote his system, he offered a free license to the first miller in each county to adopt his automated system. By 1792 there were 100 licensed mills, but many others used the technology without paying for the license. Evans devoted a great deal of his time to enforcement of his patents. For this he was often at odds with the patent system and the courts and viewed by many as a troublemaker.

Use this paragraph if your mill is considered an Oliver Evans process mill:

Mills that adopted these improvements were known as Oliver Evans mills. (*Insert the name and location of your mill here*) is one local example that has been restored and is open to the public for guided tours on (*insert dates and times here*).

Otherwise use this paragraph:

Mills that adopted these improvements were known as Oliver Evans mills. The isolated location and increased competition from larger mills explains why this technology bypassed many rural mills like (*insert the name and location of your mill here*).

So, was Oliver Evans a genius or a troublemaker? Whatever the reader may think about the man, the good news is that he was, in fact, quite well-to-do when he died in 1819.

Any Additional Resources or Ideas?

Please forward any additional suggestions you or your brilliant mill site minds have devised to me at judygrove@verizon.net These will be distributed via Email to the contacts available through our www.spoommidatlantic.org website.

Also, if someone at your mill is gathering research for a talk or display and would be willing to share with others working on the same, please forward their contact information. For example Josh Grove histryhunter@aol.com is gathering information for the celebration at Wallace Cross Mill.