



# THE SPENCERVILLE MILL MUSEUM BRINGS THE PAST TO LIFE

*Photos courtesy of The Spencerville Mill Facebook page. Left: Welcome to the Mill Museum; Middle: Alicia Wanless and Micheal Berk, modelling Regency wear available at the Mill Museum; Right: A sampling of items for sale*

By Lisa Crandall

Every town, city and village begins as a gleam in the eye of an enterprising individual and Spencerville, Ontario is no different. In 1812 Peleg Spencer identified what he thought was a likely looking spot on the South Nation River and set to work. Over the next hundred years multiple generations of the Spencer family built, rebuilt and ran a succession of mills in the area. In 1912, the Barnard family bought the mills and began to expand the business, upgrading the mill equipment, then taking on the responsibility of acting as wholesalers and distributors of feed supplies, as well as various grades of flour and farm merchandise. A hardware store was added in 1955 and served the community until it closed in 1972.

In 1985, the Spencerville Mill property, a neglected ruin at this point, was purchased by the South Nation Conservation Authority. Since that point, guided by a dedicated Board of Directors and supported by a small army of volunteers, the mill has been slowly brought back to life. Over the years, various parts of the mill have been literally torn down to the ground and rebuilt. The Museum's website is filled with videos and images of each project. Although it is no longer a working mill in its present form, all three levels of the mill have become

functional again, and the mill has changed its name to the Spencerville Mill Museum.

On the main floor, visitors will find the Barnard Emporium, an old fashioned general store/souvenir shop named after the original shopkeepers. The shop features the work of local artisans and a range of handcrafted goodies such as, candles, jams and textile creations. The Emporium is also home to Barnard's Regency Clothier, offering a selection of hand-made Regency Clothing available for rent.

On the lower level, a range of exhibits highlight the intricacies of how the original grist mill operated by harnessing the local river, as well as informative displays about farming in the area in the early 20th century.

On the top floor, there is an ever-changing array of historic exhibits and artifacts, focusing on the histories of the Dutch, German and Swiss immigrant families, who helped to create the community. This brightly lit, wide open space is available for community events such as, weddings and banquets, as well as being used for fundraising events for the mill itself.

In 2017, the focus has shifted to the land surrounding the mill. The Spencerville Mill Foundation, Spencerville Business & Community Connections and the

Edwardsburg-Cardinal Township have all come together with ambitions to raise sufficient funds to enhance the parklands, as a special place for locals and visitors beside the South Nation River. The plan includes, wheel chair accessible paths, gardens, benches, a picnic area, historical panels, an information kiosk and map of village businesses as well as points of interest.

Special events planned for the rest of the summer include, the ongoing Music at the Mill series of live concerts. Spaced throughout the months of August, September and October, the upcoming concerts feature a range of performers, from Classic Soul and Motown, to Celtic Energy and Blue Grass Americana. Other events include, a Vintage Carnival in August, a retro fun fair for the whole family. In September, there will be an eagerly awaited food tasting event called "An Affair with Food & Drink." The focus will be on local food and drink. Then in October, the Masquerade at the Mill costume ball will signal the end of the season for the Mill Museum. **LH**

*For specific details of upcoming events at the Spencerville Mill Museum, check out their website at <http://www.spencervillemill.ca>*