

RAWSON'S KING MILL PARK

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION



PARK HISTORY

The first settlers in Leonidas Township arrived in 1831. Brothers James and Robert Cowen came from Pennsylvania. James Cowen worked at the land office in White Pigeon as a surveyor. He discovered 80 acres of unclaimed land in the Leonidas area and entered in the tract at the land office.

After acquiring the 80 acres the Cowens constructed the first saw mill in 1832. In 1833, James ran the first raft of lumber from the mill down the St. Joseph River and shipped it to Chicago. The money raised from the lumber sales helped them eventually construct a flour-mill. In 1836, the Cowens built the first flouring mill and dam.

The Cowens struggled to make Leonidas a civilized community, and in 1836, a post office was opened at Cowen's Mill. In 1843, the first "flour ark" went down the river from Leonidas to Three Rivers. In 1847, W. H. Cross used the Cowen's Mill as a store and sold general stock, hardware and leather.

In 1852, the Cowens sold the sawmill and land to David Kidd. David Kidd built the third sawmill on the site and repaired the gristmill. He then sold the property to John Robinson in 1868 who then sold the site to the Switzers in 1872. The Switzers tore down the old mill and constructed the current building. It was reported that in 1873 the mill manufactured 1,158 barrels of flour.

The Kings purchased the property in 1889 and they replaced the stones with roller mills around 1904. One set of stones was used up until the 1930's for grinding corn meal.

In 1964, Donald Avery purchased the mill from Nancy Mast as a business venture. The Leonidas Milling Company, owned by Avery, was run by Kenneth Saxman and his son. In the mid 1960's, the mill processed between 25,000 and 30,000 bushels of wheat. The mill was then closed due to regulations.

A friend of Eston and Lydia Rawson learned that the King Mill was not being used and informed the Rawsons. They came to view the mill and property and Lydia fell in love with the site immediately. The Rawsons purchased the mill from Don Avery in 1967.

In 1967, when the Rawsons purchased the mill, the areas around the mill pond and Nottawa Creek were popular local fishing spots. The Rawsons started to clear the islands and make great improvements to the landscape, and the property became very attractive. Local neighbors began using the area as a park, and many neighbors even had their weddings behind the mill. The mill race in front of the wall was also refurbished and new stone walls were built. This became the local swimming hole for area residents. In 1976, when the Rawsons moved to the site, they allowed visitors to tour the mill, their home. They enjoyed and took great pride in sharing this historic structure and the products of their hard work.

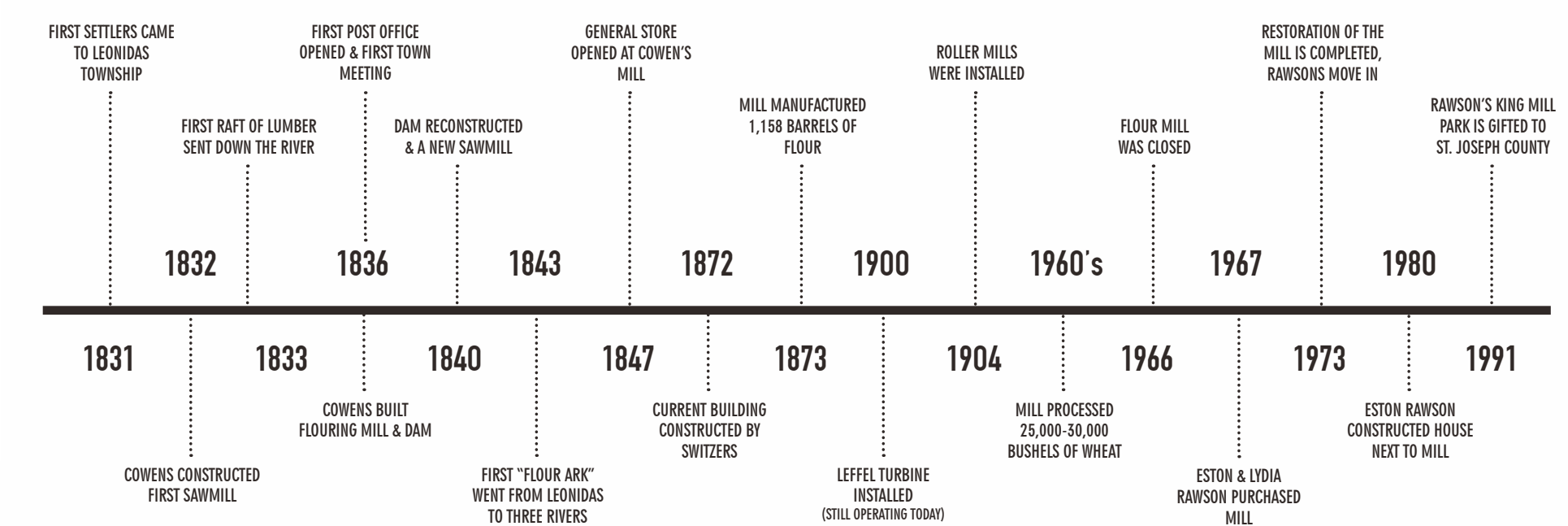
In 2015, St. Joseph County Parks and Recreation staff embarked on extensive renovations to the grounds and mill, hoping to recapture the property's historical and cultural value for St. Joseph County residents.



BEAUTIFUL IN EVERY SEASON



A UNIQUE WEDDING VENUE



RAWSON'S KING MILL PARK HISTORICAL TIMELINE



LEAVE NOTHING BUT YOUR FOOTPRINTS

The Parks Department would like to encourage you to be conscious of your imprint on our preserve. Please carry out nothing more and nothing less than you carry in.



In March of 1991 the Rawson's graciously donated the land around the Rawson's King Mill to the St. Joseph County Parks Department for use as a County Park.

ONLINE INFO

