

Water flows at Backus Mill

By Richard Houghton

As the sluice gates opened at the Backhouse Mill and the 12 foot overshot wheel turned for the first time, cheers went up from members of the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, their wives, and members of the Oakcrest Women's Institute.

Roy Smith, chairman of the LPRCA, opened the gates Wednesday afternoon.

Louis Gomori, and Tony Marques, who are employed by the LPRCA as carpenters, assisted the starting of the wheel by holding it with

sticks so that it couldn't turn in the wrong direction. One side of the wheel was heavier because it rested in the water. If the wheel wasn't held this would cause it to turn the wrong way.

Under the direction of Tom Haskett, general superintendent, the gears and bearings will be connected this summer between the mill wheel and the main drive wheel.

Mr. Haskett commented that they are very satisfied with the results of using the overshot type wheel. The original mill supposedly had an undershot which meant that water fell into buckets on the wheel and turned the power towards the bottom of the wheel.

With the overshot wheel the force of the water carries

the water over the top of the wheel in the buckets. This allows the wheel to harness the power of the water and not just the force of gravity.

An official opening of the mill will take place sometime later in the summer when Students Working in the Environmental Enhancement Program (SWEPP), who are working with the carpenters, finish cleaning, restoring, and rebuilding inside the mill.

The Conservation authority bus tour has been an annual event since 1948 when the Big Creek Conservation Authority was formed.

Previously the tour was for board members and guests only, because until last January, the LPRCA had 35 board members. When the LPRCA went regional, board members were reduced to 15, not counting three appointees, two of which have yet to be added.

Now for the first time board members wives could come along to see the conservation areas and projects of the authority.

The tour stopped at South and North Waterford, Little Lake, Teeterville, Lehman, Deer Creek, Backus, Fisher, Vittoria, and Norfolk Conservation areas, just to name a few places on the itinerary.



Construction workers Louis Gomori and Tony Marques control the overflow gate on the flume of the Backhouse Mill, just before the sluice gate was opened. (Photo by Richard Houghton)

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