

Magic at the Mill mixes history and holidays



A new flagpole Christmas tree was among the exhibits during the 13th Annual Magic at the Mill Saturday evening, Dec. 22, 2012. / JUSTIN MUCH | Statesman Journal

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There's something quaint and seemly about mixing history and Christmas.

Folks at Mission Mill know that, and that's why this year marks the 13th for Magic at the Mill, the annual yuletide event that sprinkles venerable Mission Mill with lights, period clothing, hands-on activities and live entertainment. Throw in Santa Claus and some reindeer food and you have the whole package.

"We have 14 historical buildings within five acres, which makes this a nice setting for this event," said organizer Peter Booth.

Dressed in a festively-fitting elf's cap, yet armed with organizers tools of a walkie-talkie and clipboard, Booth directed handfuls of the roughly 500 volunteers shortly before Saturday's opening, quick preparations to greet the hundreds of expected guests.

The Mill expects 5,000 visitors through the five-day event, which ends tonight (Sunday). Going into Saturday it had already eclipsed the 3,000 mark, lending confidence that the Mill will realize that 5K projection.

Kids' activities included the new reindeer-food stop near the millrace, along with silhouettes, making quilts, origami, storytelling and, of course, visiting with Santa. Beyond the lights, exhibits included textile demonstrations and a toy-train exhibit. The real Union Pacific train also rolled by, twice, within the first half hour of Saturday's 5:30 p.m. opening, a fortuitous addition for fans of the rail.

"This is an entire holiday celebration with a very strong historic flair," Booth said. "Where else can you see the oldest house in Oregon (1841 Lee House) decorated in Christmas lights?"

One thing that's impossible to miss is the lights, which this year include a first-time flagpole tree. They are also impossible to count.

"We actually tried to count the lights one year, and we failed miserably," Booth laughed at the hopeless endeavor. "Let's just say there are thousands, and thousands, and thousands of lights."



Toy trains (and even occasional real ones) were among the exhibits during the 13th Annual Magic at the Mill Saturday evening, Dec. 22, 2012. / JUSTIN MUCH | statesman journal



Kids gather at the reindeer food table during the 13th Annual Magic at the Mill Saturday evening, Dec. 22, 2012. / JUSTIN MUCH | statesman journal

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