

A trip to the past

Artisans abound at Fort Museum opening

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Among the artisans demonstrating their skills Saturday during the opening day of the 2015 season at the Fort Museum, Shannon Bardole, of Ames, is the one most likely to sweep visitors off their feet.

She could do this, quite easily, with what she was making.

Brooms.

Not just any brooms, but brooms made from broom corn, a type of sorghum.

Her demonstration gives visitors a unique memory to take home.

"There's not a lot of people that can say they've seen a broom being made," she said.

The process begins with combing the seeds off the broom corn. Next, bundles of the tough bristle material are attached to a broomstick on a —



-Messenger photos by Hans Madsen

SHANNON BARDOLE, OF AMES, demonstrates how to make a broom, the old fashioned way, during the opening day of the 2015 season Saturday at the Fort Museum. The brooms are made from Broom Corn, a type of Sorghum.

what else? — broom-making machine. Once completed, the broom gets clamped into a vise-like machine that presses it flat. The bristles are then stitched to hold them in that position and, finally, the ends trimmed to uniform length on a machine that looks like an old-fashioned paper cutter.

The machines she uses are a mix of antique parts, new parts adopted to the purpose and new white oak timbers.

So how do you tell a good broom? Bardole demonstrates the tapping on the floor method. The broom, after being tapped on the floor, should re-

See FORT, Page 3A

JOERG ROCHLITZER, of Wellsburg, demonstrates the small antique printing press he was letting children try out Saturday during the opening day of the 2015 season at the Fort Museum. The sheet they printed could be folded into a hat like the one he is wearing.

