

Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Spring/Summer 2008



www.peircemill-friends.org

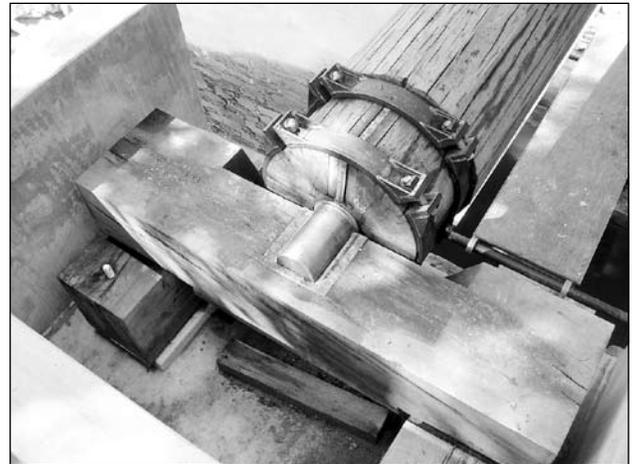
Installation Of The New Main Shaft

Tuesday, June 17 was an important day for our mill restoration project: the new main shaft was installed! As the pictures show, a crane lifted the 20-foot long oak shaft from where it had been positioned on the ground near the mill and moved it toward the building. Then, with signals to the crane operator, John O'Rourke guided the two-ton shaft through the hole in the mill wall to where his partner, Gus Kiorpes, was stationed, and together they manipulated it into position. Finally, the crane operator lowered the shaft gently onto the waiting bearings at either end. As the final picture shows, it was a perfect fit!

Gus and John will be working off-site the rest of the year making new wooden parts that will be fitted inside the mill next year. Over the next month, Steve Ortado and crew will be finishing the work on the western half of the mill floors. Then he can refasten the floor boards, which will make it possible to allow visitors to safely enter the front door.



Lifting the shaft



The outer end of the shaft in its bearing



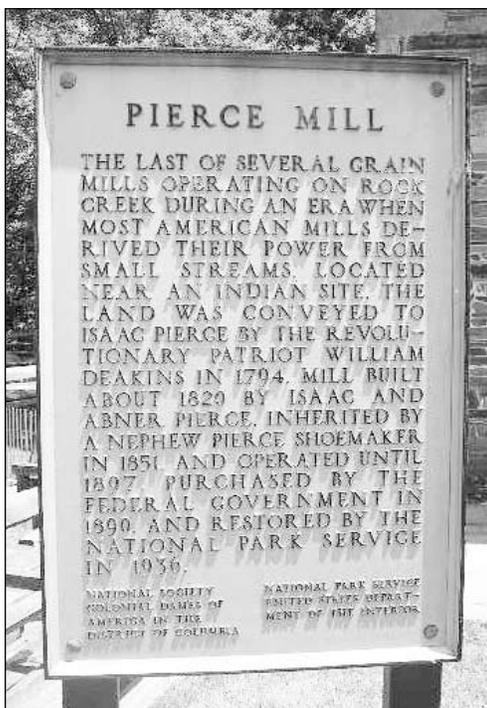
John O'Rourke guiding the shaft into position

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The Colonial Dames Renew Their Connection With Peirce Mill

Anyone who has visited Peirce Mill will have seen the metal sign at the left of the walkway to the front door (see photograph, and note old—and incorrect—spelling of Peirce). Erected, we believe, in the 1950s, it tells a brief story of the history of the mill and concludes with the donor's name: "National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the District of Columbia."



The connection between the mill and the Colonial Dames has now been renewed. In November 2006, we were contacted by the D.C. chapter of the Colonial Dames of America (CDA) about putting on a benefit for the restoration of Peirce Mill. The following year the Dames chose us as their major project for the year 2008 and made plans for a reception to raise money for us. Louise Beale was the organizer of the event, held on May 21 at the home of CDA member Mrs. Betty

May in Washington. The event raised \$7,000 for our mill restoration project. We're grateful to the "Dames" for their support and are pleased that the connection has been renewed after a little "pause" of about 50 years. We understand that another benefit event is being planned for 2009.

Peirce Mill In The Press

Thinking that the shaft installation would be a good "photo op," and an opportunity to let people know about our successes to date, we invited the press to attend the event. This led to articles about our restoration project in the *NW Current*, *The Washington Times* and—through the AP Wire Service—one also in *The Examiner*. *The Times* article, on June 25, was headed "Taking a Turn for the Better: Advocates savor success in restoration of mill." The lead paragraph read:

Deep in Rock Creek Park, at Beach Drive and Tilden Street Northwest, sits the largely forgotten Peirce Mill, a place where the production of flour and bran turned on the trickle of Rock Creek. A working mill and teaching tool till 15 years ago, Peirce Mill has sat dormant since the water wheel shaft collapsed in 1993 because of rot. The National Park Service deemed too costly the necessary renovations, including a fully restored roof and floor. But now there is grist for the old mill again. Just last week, Peirce Mill received a new water-wheel shaft, a major victory for the Friends of Peirce Mill, a group of advocates raising money to make the site operational.

Two photographs of the shaft being installed accompanied the

article, which went on to credit Councilmember Mary Cheh with helping arrange the \$100,000 grant from the DC Government, and also mentions one of our principal donors, the Kiplinger Foundation.

Mill Tours To Be Offered Again

As every "Friend" of the mill knows, the building has been closed to visitors for most of the time since the breakdown in 1993, except for special events. An example of a special event was the April 26 open house and mill tour organized by Steve Dryden, under the auspices of Cultural Tourism DC.

The popularity of the event, and the progress we've made on restoring the interior of the mill, led us to propose to the Park that we offer our services as docents (interpreters) on weekends. This has been agreed upon and we will have one or two of our members stationed at Peirce Barn on selected Saturdays from approximately noon to 3 PM. To check the schedule, call Steve Dryden at 301-656-0049. We extend an invitation to all those receiving this newsletter to come down and see the progress we are making inside the mill.

Share Your Peirce Mill Story

Do you have an interesting story to tell...a photo of the Mill you found in the attic...a favorite memory of Peirce Mill from your childhood?

Share your story ideas or vintage photos with other Mill friends. Submit your contribution to Friends of Peirce Mill, c/o Richard Abbott, 4305 38th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016, or e-mail to abbott1229@verizon.net. We'll try to get your submission into the next issue of *Milling About*. Thanks!

Revised Project Budget

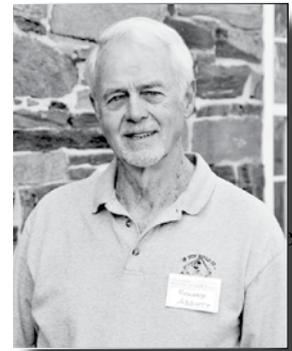
As we promised in last month's *Milling About*, we want members and supporters to know how things stand financially for our project. Our official fund-raising total at this moment is \$913,000. We would have been close to our goal if the original \$1 million estimate for total project cost, made some eight years ago, had held.

We had also thought that we could expect project completion by 2007. Unfortunately, these time and cost estimates are no longer valid! As the time schedule continued to slip due to lengthy approval processes and additional engineering studies that were required by the National Park Service, our budget was subjected to the inevitable cost escalations. Our latest overall cost estimate is \$1.44 million, and a completion date of late spring 2010. We expect to close this \$527,000 gap with a combination of Federal funds and foundation grants. We were recently informed that the National Park Service has appropriated \$3.2 million for Peirce Mill and surrounding areas of Rock Creek Park, the funds to become available over three fiscal years. However, only the first \$1 million has been received to date and future allocations are uncertain as to date and amount.

Following discussions with Rock Creek Park officials, it appears that \$250,000 of this appropriation could be available for our restoration project. On that basis, we would still need to raise \$277,000 over the next two years. Based on our track record of fund-raising, and the loyalty of our major donors, we judge that it is feasible to meet that goal.

Meet your board: Richard Abbott

Richard Abbott has a long association with Peirce Mill, beginning in 1988 when he served there as a helper to miller Ted Hazen. The mill was then in operation on weekends and for school groups during the week. Richard's job was to put the freshly ground wheat flour and corn meal in bags for sale to the many visitors who loved visiting the mill and buying naturally stone-ground products. He was working there on April 13, 1993 when the mill broke down. It has not operated since that day. It was the inability of the National Park Service to fund the needed repairs that inspired Richard to write a letter to *The Washington Post* asking the public to support a restoration effort. The letter, published in the Outlook section of *the Post* on September 29, 1996, resulted in calls from about 65 local residents, the formation of the Friends of Peirce Mill, and our incorporation as a non-profit organization in April 1997. Members and readers of this newsletter will know the rest of the story!



Richard is a chemical engineer by training. The mechanics of mills, whether driven by water or wind, have always interested him. His career in the food processing machinery business, and as a food industry consultant in developing countries, led to many foreign assignments in Africa, Asia and Latin America and long-term residence with his family in Guinea, Thailand, and Austria. Now in retirement, his goal is to lead the Friends of Peirce Mill restoration effort until the wheels and gears of the mill are once again turning.

Milling On The Web

There is a great deal of information available on the web for milling enthusiasts. Check out our own web site at www.peircemill-friends.org, then go to the "Links" page and you will find a list of milling and historic preservation organizations, including SPOOM, as well as links to other national and international milling organizations, and links to other local mills.

If you want to learn more about the history and technology of milling, check out the web site operated by Ted Hazen, the former miller at Peirce Mill, at <http://www.angelfire.com/folk/molinologist/map.html>. This extensive site is the most complete source of information on milling available anywhere.



d o w n s t r e a m



This view of the mill was taken during the 1935 restoration. (Note the car in the background.) It shows the unfinished flume and “apron,” the curved shape that will be positioned just behind the breast-shot water wheel to provide a channel for the water as it leaves the water wheel. When this picture was taken, the main shaft had not yet been installed. For the current restoration, the steps will be in a different order. As we report in this issue of *Milling About*, the new shaft is already in place. Next year the flume and apron will be installed, and finally the water wheel will be mounted on the shaft.



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