

Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Fall 2008



www.peircemill-friends.org

The New Pit Gear is Installed

The top story for this issue is the installation of the new pit gear. We've included a picture that shows the finished gear attached to the new water wheel shaft. We think it is beautiful in and of itself, but we value it also for the visual proof of progress in restoring the milling machinery. Gus Kiorpes put many hours into the exacting work of making the gear wheel off site, then bringing it to the mill in segments and reassembling it. Before that could be done, however, the three arms of the gear had to be morticed into the shaft, that is, fitted into openings cut into the shaft, then locked together by an ingenious pattern of notches.

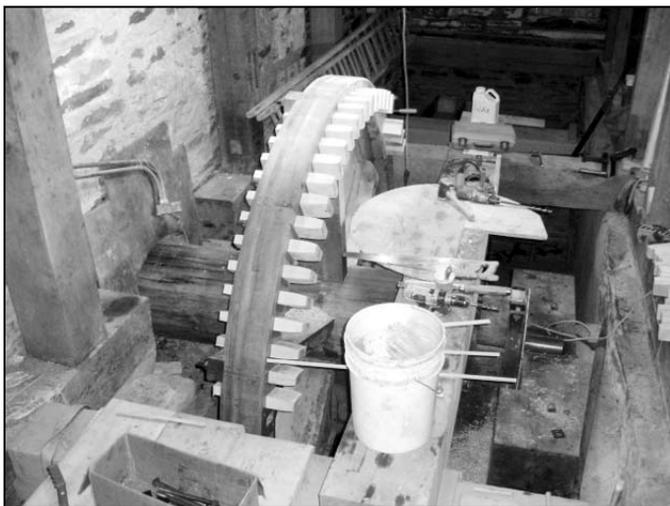
The second picture shows Gus installing one of the arms. Once that was done, the outer segments could be assembled and fitted to the arms. The final step was to install the cogs. All the parts are of white oak, except for the cogs, which are of maple. The gear wheel, which is an authentic reproduction of a gear used in 19th century mills, was designed and drawn up by our Millwright, Derek Ogden. Its function is to engage a gear fixed to the vertical shaft, and through it to power machinery throughout the mill. The vertical shaft is the next phase of the machinery installation and will be carried out early next year.



Gus Kiorpes installing the arms of the pit gear.

We've Raised A Million Dollars!

The total amount of funds raised since incorporation in 1997 is now just over \$1 million -- truly a milestone for our organization! The total breaks down, in round numbers, as follows: \$783,000 from foundations, corporations and associations; \$100,000 from the D.C. Government, \$41,000 from the National Park Service, \$42,000 in individual donations, and \$35,000 in in-kind grants from our contractors and others. A hearty thanks to all our supporters! We are especially grateful for the contributions of three foundations that together have given us over half the total funds raised —The 1772 Foundation, The Kiplinger Foundation, and the Marpat Foundation.



The finished pit gear.

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Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Friends was held on October 25 at the home of board-member Philip Gaudette. Seven of the eight board members attended. All FOPM members had been contacted by our Secretary, Sheila Ploger, either by email or regular mail, in advance of the meeting. They received an annual report of our activities and a ballot to vote on board members for the coming year (October 2008 to October 2009). The present board was re-elected, including Adam Sieminski, who was appointed at mid-year to fill the position of a retiring member, Gene Hines. All eight of us gathered at the mill two weeks later for the picture shown here. Thanks to Adam Sieminski Jr. for the photography!

The meeting was an occasion for stock-taking and looking to the future. Business Manager David Lyman reported that the total of funds raised since incorporation in 1997 has reached \$1,000,662.

Originally, we thought that \$1 million would be enough to complete the project, but cost escalation over the eleven years since our founding has brought the estimated total cost of the project to \$1.5 million.

David Lyman, Sheila Ploger, and Richard Abbott reported that in August we responded to a request from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) for a review of our activities. We submitted a packet of documents about our financial status, our fund raising record, and our expenditures. Later the three of us took part in a conference call with the GAO that covered also a review of our relationship with Rock Creek Park through our cooperative agreement. We were pleased to hear later from the official in charge of the review that we had satisfied all their requests for information.



*Front row, L to R: Tom Blackburn, Richard Abbott, David Lyman, Philip Gaudette
Back row, L to R: Sheila Ploger, Steve Dryden, Ken Faulstich, Adam Sieminski
Photo by Adam Sieminski III*

Much of the meeting was taken up by a discussion about a possible new long-term relationship with Rock Creek Park once the mill is again operational. Our experience over the past eleven years gives us concern that the National Park Service (NPS) may not have sufficient staff and funds to operate the mill once it is again operational. Clearly, neither we nor the NPS want to see the mill again sitting idle and our joint restoration effort wasted. Board members Philip Gaudette, Steve Dryden, and Richard Abbott submitted a document for discussion that laid out various options. It was decided to delay further discussion until a planning meeting could be organized that would bring together individuals in the local historical preservation community who are knowledgeable about how Friends groups work with NPS parks in other parts of the country. This topic is a timely one, as there is increasing recognition of the need for a larger role for citizen organizations in NPS parks, given Federal budget restrictions. We will report to members later on our progress.

The National Park Service Gets Some Money for Peirce Mill

Further information is now available on the Federal appropriation for Peirce Mill that we reported on in the last issue of this newsletter. The National Park Service has budgeted \$3 million for Peirce Mill and the surrounding area, although the appropriation for the current fiscal year is for \$1 million only. We have just learned that appropriation of the remaining \$2 million may be delayed until FY2012 -- possibly a fallout from the current financial crisis.

We also learned that a portion of the \$1 million will be expended on two contracts that the Park has signed with Quinn Evans Architects (QEA): one for preparation of a Cultural Landscape Report on the area surrounding the mill, including the planned re-circulating water system, and a second for a Schematic Design for the restoration of the interior of the mill. Both contracts will be supervised by the Denver Service Center (DSC) of the National Park service, in cooperation with NPS

officials from the Regional Office and from Rock Creek Park.

On November 12, we were invited to meet this group together with QEA staff members who will carry out the two studies. We were pleased to learn that Architect Baird Smith of QEA will be in charge of the work. Baird has a long association with the Friends and knows Peirce Mill well since he was in charge of producing the Historic Structures Report some years ago. At the meet-

ing, Baird said that he expected that all work by the Friends on the milling machinery and the floors would be incorporated into the Schematic Design for the mill, and that the report would examine other tasks that were never part of our original project, such as flood control and strengthening of structural elements on the upper floors of the building. Ms. Bonita Mueller, the DSC official in charge of the work, said that after the studies were completed

and approved, it was expected that the Federal appropriation would cover the construction cost of our planned water system as well as changes to the surrounding landscape. However, given the probable delay in receipt of funds by the Park, mentioned above, it appears that if we are to complete the project by the target date of May/June 2010 the Friends will have to raise some portion, if not all, of the remaining \$500,000 needed. Will the Park help fund the water system? Stay tuned!

A little history...

Peirce Mill: The First Restoration

Part One: Genesis of the Project

Those of our members who have read about the history of Peirce Mill, possibly on the History page of our web site, will know that the first major restoration of the mill took place in 1935 and 1936 during the depression years. We have information on this project in our archives, but until now the whole story has not been available to our members. And some information that has appeared contains factual errors – including our own web site, as we just discovered!

We first have to go back to those difficult years during the Great Depression, basically the entire decade of the 1930s. When President Roosevelt took office in March 1933, unemployment had reached 25%, the highest it had ever been. The president quickly inaugurated relief and work programs which helped, but it was soon realized that they weren't having enough impact on unemployment. Roosevelt and his trusted assistant, Harry Hopkins, felt that putting people to work was preferable to relief in the form of chits for food and clothing for those who were physically able to work. Not only would it restore self respect to the worker, but a properly designed

program could accomplish projects that were of benefit to the country. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, a leader of the progressive movement in US politics, had a conservationist perspective and during his tenure the reach of the National Park Service was greatly extended. However, in creating new entities to carry out these work relief programs, Roosevelt had to deal with conflicts that emerged between Ickes, who might well have expected to have oversight of the programs, and Harry Hopkins, whom Roosevelt had grown to trust -- and found easier to work with than Ickes.

Ultimately, under what came to be known as the New Deal, two programs emerged. The Project Works Administration or PWA (an expanded version of the existing Civil Works Administration) would be responsible for large public works projects, such as dams, bridges, airports, schools and hospitals, and would be directed by Secretary Ickes. All construction work was to be done by private contractors. The second program, the Works Progress Administration, or WPA, would administer through local government entities smaller, labor-intensive projects that were expected to have a greater impact on unemployment. This agency was to be headed by Harry Hopkins. It was very a very broad program, initially concentrating on building roads, schools, parks,

and other recreational facilities, but later expanded into historical preservation, and the arts, including providing work for musicians, artists and writers. The President appointed Secretary Ickes to head a "Committee on Allotments" that was supposed to select projects for both the PWA and the WPA.

A PWA project to restore Peirce Mill emerged from correspondence between Superintendent of National Capital Parks C. Marshall Finnan and Secretary Ickes in 1934. While discussing renovation of the Klinge House in Rock Creek Park, Finnan suggested that the restoration of Peirce Mill could be added to the project at very low cost. Ickes was intrigued by the idea and asked NPS Director Cammerer for a cost estimate for the mill restoration. An estimate of \$19,250 was prepared by NPS officials Thomas Waterman and Malcolm Kirkpatrick in May of that year. In his capacity as PWA Director, Ickes quickly approved the restoration of both the Klinge House and Peirce Mill. The mill restoration became PWA Project #571 (On our website, we said that it was a WPA project.) and work began the following year.

The story of the actual work of restoration will appear in the next issue of *Milling About*.

d o w n s t r e a m



This picture was taken in 1920 on Beach Drive, across the creek from Peirce Mill. It doesn't show the mill, but we thought you might enjoy this view of the two ladies perched on the fenders of a brand new 1920 Oldsmobile. The teahouse dam is visible at the left. The picture, which was found by Ted Hazen, the former miller at Peirce Mill, is titled "Oldsmobile Sales Company, Rock Creek Park" and was reproduced from a glass negative in the National Photo Company Collection.



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