

# Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Winter 2011



## Major Progress at Peirce Mill



The ARRA project is now moving ahead rapidly at Peirce Mill. In our summer 2010 issue we told you about the beginning of the project, which is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus fund). At that time we expected completion to be in mid-March of this year, but various delays having to do with permitting have pushed back the date to approximately mid-May.



As our first picture shows, the contractor, TMG Corporation, has already excavated a pit where the re-circulating pumps will be installed. These pumps will lift water from below the new water wheel to the head race (yet to be excavated) from whence it will flow down a flume to power the water wheel. Inside the building, TMG has completed installation of additional beams that will strengthen the structure to accommodate much heavier floor loading, as well as heating ducts that will take

the chill off the building during the winter months (second picture).

Elsewhere on the project site, work is well advanced on providing improved drainage from the slope above the mill so that seepage will no longer enter the building and damage the structure. In an interesting “green” element in the project, water collected from the hill above the mill will drain into two “bio-retention ponds” that will filter the water before it reaches Rock Creek. Finally, most of the old parking lot



has already been removed, preparatory to lowering the level between the Barn and the Mill to its 19th century appearance (third picture). A turnaround area off Tilden, just uphill from the Barn, will be installed so that school buses can safely unload visitors to the mill. In the next issue of Milling About we should be able to give members a date for the ceremonial start-up of the mill machinery.

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Visit us on the Internet at [www.peircemill-friends.org](http://www.peircemill-friends.org)

The Friends of Peirce Mill, Inc., is a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. It has been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

## Work on the Milling Machinery



The specialized contractors retained by the Friends, O'Rourke & Kiorpes, have also been making good progress. Our photo shows the new millstone floor with the three sets of millstones back in position and the wooden millstone cranes also installed. At the basement level, Gus has completed the “tentering gear” for the third set of stones (the mechanism that controls the spacing between the “runner stone” and the “bed stone”). Still to be done inside the mill are the vertical shafts that transmit power from the main shaft to the millstones and the machinery on the upper floors, and the tentering gear for the other two sets of stones.

Currently, Gus and John are working off-site in their shop in Port Republic, Maryland, fabricating parts for the new water wheel. Plans are to assemble it at the mill and attach it to the already-installed main shaft when work on the water system (the pump pit, headrace, and flume) is farther advanced.

## Operating Peirce Mill

Upon completion of the ARRA project, Peirce Mill will once again be an operating grist mill! This exciting prospect will be the culmination of almost 15 years of effort by the Friends of Peirce Mill and the National Park Service. So, as you might expect, having invested so much time and money in the project, the Friends plan to continue to be involved at the mill as it enters the operating phase.

Continuing our partnership with Rock Creek Park, we have offered to cover a portion of the annual operating costs of the mill, including maintenance of the machinery, purchase of supplies of corn and wheat, and educational materials. We have also hired a part-time Program Manager to provide day-to-day coordination between the Park and the Friends (see report on the annual meeting below). The Park will hire a full-time miller, provide the services of a Park Ranger, develop and utilize

educational materials, assure maintenance of the building and cover utility costs. These arrangements are expected to be finalized soon in the form of a new cooperative Rock Creek Park/FOPM agreement.

## Annual Meeting 2010

As usual, we held our annual meeting in October, and as usual it was attended only by board members as our general membership generally gives the meeting a pass. [Please note, though, that your role as a member is very important. Membership dues cover all our administrative expenses so that all donations can be reserved for the restoration project.] However, all members did receive an invitation, an annual report, and a ballot on which to vote for board members. Enough members responded so that we met the quorum required by our bylaws for election of the board.

As in past years, the current board was re-elected. Richard Abbott, who has been serving as President since the founding of FOPM in 1996, then announced that he was resigning in June due to his planned relocation away from the DC area. To accommodate that change, it was agreed that on June 1, board members Adam Sieminski and Tom Blackburn would become President and Vice-President respectively, and that both would serve until the next annual meeting.

Another change was that Steve Dryden resigned from the board and was hired by FOPM as a part-time Program Manager. Steve's job is to coordinate activities of FOPM with those of Rock Creek Park (RCP) during the next few months until the start-up of the mill and continuing during the operating phase. Thereafter, Steve will work with RCP on developing educational programs, assist with raising funds to cover operating costs, handle public relations, and coordinate volunteer activities by FOPM board and members. Steve's long association with and knowledge of the mill—and the recent publication of his book on the Peirce family—makes him the right person for the job.

## Recruitment of Miller

The National Park Service plans soon to announce the recruiting of a park ranger to fill the position of miller at Peirce Mill. The position will be posted on the Federal government's website at:

[www.USAjobs.opm.gov](http://www.USAjobs.opm.gov)

If you are interested in the position, check the website over the next few weeks.

## Financial Review

As we get ready to take on the challenge of supporting a part of the cost of operating Peirce Mill, it was time to review our financial situation. The review indicated that, although we have sufficient funds to complete all the planned work on restoring the wooden milling machinery, we anticipate incurring other expenses between now and June that are associated with start-up of the mill, such as building bins, chutes, tenting gear, stone furniture (enclosures and hoppers), and installing the sluice gate control arm. The cost of these items, together with operating costs for the 12 months beginning in June, is estimated to be not less than \$60,000.

We are currently preparing grant applications to our main donors—those that have supported us for many years—and we are optimistic that donations will be received in time to meet these expected costs.

## Volunteer (Docent) Training

Are you interested in becoming a Rock Creek Park volunteer at Peirce Mill? Park officials have just announced plans for a two-day training session to be held on two Saturdays in May. The sessions will be on May 7 and May 14 from 9 AM to 1 PM at the Nature Center and at Peirce Mill.

This is your chance to – finally! – get involved in a hands-on activity at the mill. Email our Program Manager, Steve Dryden, at [jsdryden@comcast.net](mailto:jsdryden@comcast.net), if you'd like to sign up. Steve will get back to you later with more detail on the training session.

## History of the Friends of Peirce Mill

As the Friends of Peirce Mill enter a new phase in its 14-year history, and as he prepares to leave the area, Richard Abbott has decided to write what he is calling “**A Brief History of the Friends of Peirce Mill**”. Keeping it brief will not be easy. There are many file boxes of records to be gone through, and later disposed of.

It all began with Richard's September 1996 article in the *Washington Post* about the sad condition of the mill three years after its breakdown in 1993, in which he proposed the formation of a friends group to take on the task of restoring the mill. As a result of the article, 35 people called, expressing support of various kinds, from taking an active role in running the organization to simply offering to contribute money.

With later calls over the next several months, the number increased to over 60. Among them were a number of people who continued their membership for many years, and a select

group of 27 who have remained with us for the entire 14 years of our existence. We'd like to recognize their loyalty now. In addition to Richard, they include:

Elizabeth Allaben and Matt Chambers  
Idelle Barnhart  
Bob Day  
Steve Dryden  
Arthur Fort  
Philip Gaudette  
Richard and Sue Gerson  
Alexandra Hiniker  
Ben and Susan Hoover  
Dorothy Hutchins  
Bob and Marge Lundegard  
Jeannette and Charles Miller  
Steve Ortado  
Sheila Ploger  
Bob Reynolds  
Clem and Sue Swisher  
Lisa Turner  
John Williams  
Bob and Evelyn Wrin

With the upcoming startup of the mill after so many years, we hope that these faithful “Friends” will feel that it has all been worth it!



## Open Board Position

The resignation of Steve Dryden from the FOPM board of directors creates an open position on the eight-person board, a position which we want to fill during the coming year. Are you interested in becoming a member of the board and getting involved with the operation of the mill? If so, let us know of your candidacy by email at [abbott1229@verizon.net](mailto:abbott1229@verizon.net). We expect to choose the new board member between now and June.

# *d o w n s t r e a m*



The Peirce distillery building, where hard cider was produced from the Peirce's own apple orchard appears in this circa 1900 photo of bicyclists on the bridge next to the mill. It is at the center left background, with the miller's house (since removed) to its right. Above the head of the bicyclist on the right is the roof of the carriage house and up the hill you can see a barn used by the Peirces, also since removed. The right photo shows the totally restored and enlarged distillery building—now an elegant private residence—as it looks today.



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