

Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Winter 2012



Student visits kick off education program

Peirce Mill is beginning to play its traditional role as an educational resource for the community, an activity strongly supported by the Friends from our beginning. Judging from the first six months of our school program, the Peirce Mill experience is a big winner among both students and teachers. We've heard only good things about the instruction and fun activities offered by park rangers (see below). The program is serving schools on both sides of Rock Creek Park. Program Manager Steve Dryden collaborated with Rock Park staff to host school group visits during the year, including two visits from the John Eaton School, as well as visits from the Mundo Verde School, Bancroft Elementary, Washington Latin School, and the Washington Yu Ying school (Chinese immersion school). Steve learned the Chinese word for "mill" and delighted in showing it off to friends until his pronunciation was cheerfully corrected by a Chinese Embassy press office he met at another park event! The students from John Eaton and Bancroft elementary schools, and the YuYing charter school, were transported to the mill in buses arranged for by the National Park Service (Washington Latin School attended on its own).

Particularly noteworthy was the visit from the Mundo Verde School, a bilingual environment-oriented charter school in Mt. Pleasant. Close to 100 students from the school visited the mill on Nov. 9. In the first picture, Ranger Michael Zweller shows the students samples of the corn before and after grinding. In addition to seeing the millstones grind, the students tested their own strength trying out the hand-powered model grinder and a primitive mortar and pestle.

Teacher Molly Howard wrote us afterwards:

Wow! I cannot say thank you enough for the lovely field trip this morning. On the short trip home, I asked one of the kiddos what he learned. He said, "I learned that there are many ways to grind corn. Some of them are really easy and some of them are really hard." Priceless! It was so great that you guys were able to tailor the trip to just what the kids are studying. I know this is going to make the subject come to life for them. While many of our students have spent a lot of time in Rock Creek, I was surprised to hear that for many this was their first trip. What an introduction. They are already talking about when we'll be heading back out to do some more adventures!



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Visit us on the Internet at 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.



A successful first year at restored Peirce Mill

In the twelve months since the dedication of the restored mill in October 2011, the National Park Service recorded just over 10,000 visitors to Peirce Mill! During the May to October period this year, the mill ground corn for visitors on weekends and for a number of visits by school groups during the week [see front-page story].

Park Rangers Tony Linforth and Jeanne Minor have been trained in mill operations and currently serve as interpreters, pending hiring of a permanent miller by Rock Creek Park. Miller Justin Filipowski from the GW Grist Mill at Mt. Vernon was available to operate the mill on an occasional basis. Community awareness of the restored mill was increased by events such as the candlelight tour of the mill on Saturday, October 27, an event announced in a Washington Post article on October 26, complete with a photo of the mill with candles flanking the pathway to the door. Most people coming to the mill also visited the nearby Peirce Barn, now officially called Peirce Mill Visitor Center.

Several tasks remain to be completed to make the mill fully operational. This summer only the #1 millstone (for corn) was used. Millstones #2 and #3 have still to be “run in,” that is accurately balanced, bins and feed mechanism installed, and test runs with wheat carried out. John O’Rourke and Gus Kiorpes (O&K), who built and installed much of the equipment, will do this work. A trash screen to be installed in the tailrace has been fabricated but not yet installed.

External to the building, the NPS has yet to complete work on a screen in front of the electric supply panel on the south side of the mill facing Tilden Street. External to the building, the NPS contractor responsible for landscaping has completed correcting problems that led to flooding at the front of the building during rainstorms.

Fund raising

We are happy to report continued success with our fundraising from foundations and individuals. We received \$67,103 in grants and donations in the nine months ending on September 30, 2012. Of the total, \$49,500 were grants for general support and educational programs from our foundation supporters:

- Hillwood Museum and Gardens (third grant)
- MARPAT Foundation (eighth grant)
- Kiplinger Foundation (ninth grant)
- Wells Fargo Foundation (first grant)
- Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation (fourth grant)

In addition, donations from board members and individual members totaled \$11,800. With these funds in hand, and positive indications of continued support from donors, we feel confident that the Friends can continue to be directly involved in the operation of the mill for the foreseeable future.

Separate grants and donations amounting to \$7,800 were received during this period to cover costs associated with our Smart Phone Mobile APP system to guide visitors around the mill, and maintenance of the fledgling apple orchard near the mill.

Annual meeting

This year’s meeting was held at the Nature Center in Rock Creek Park. Nine persons were present, including six of the current seven board members (Blackburn, Abbott, Looney, Lyman, Gaudette, Ploger), one nominated new board member (Tish Kilpatrick), our Program Manager (Steve Dryden), and one general member (Bob Day).

Voting on board members and officers for the coming year was the first order of business. Secretary/Treasurer Sheila Ploger reported that membership is currently 135, so that with the additional 6 proxy votes she received from members we met the 10% quorum required by our bylaws. The group then voted unanimously to re-elect the current seven board members and to add an eighth member, Tish Kilpatrick. The board then voted to retain the current officers for another year: Tom Blackburn, President; Quentin Looney, Vice President; and Sheila Ploger, Secretary/Treasurer.

Our financial situation was then reviewed. As of September 30, we had \$44,231 in our checking and money market accounts. Our tentative budget for the coming 12 months is \$36,400, which consists of \$25,500 for the Program Manager, \$5000 for maintenance of the mobile APP, \$5000 for some additional work by our contractors (O&K), \$400 for maintenance of the apple orchard, and \$500 for compensation for temporary millers. Other matters discussed are reported below.

Hellos and goodbyes

Hello to our newest board member, Kathleen (Tish) Kilpatrick. Tish has been a member of FOPM for five years and serves as an interpretive volunteer at Peirce Mill. After graduation from college, she moved to Washington and worked for NASA, initially as an intern, then in administration and publications. In retirement she has served as president of her condominium, and as a volunteer at The Phillips Collection. Tish has a long connection with Peirce Mill—when she moved to the Forest Hills neighborhood in 1983 she remembers buying corn meal at the mill. Welcome to the board, Tish!

Goodbye to Rock Creek Supervisory Ranger Ricardo Perez. He will be leaving the Washington area in January to take up a new position as superintendent of the TBD National Park. Before coming to Rock Creek Park, he served at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco. We will miss Ricardo as he truly understood the value of partnerships with citizen groups like ours. We remember in particular his contributions as coordinator with FOPM at the Heritage Festival and mill dedication in October 2011. Good luck, Ricardo !!

Smart phone app

The official Peirce Mill “app” tour can now be accessed on your smart phone browser by typing in: peircemill.toursphere.com. This application (also known as a mobile website) is the first of its kind in Rock Creek Park, and allows visitors to learn about the mill and its history, even when the building is closed. It can also inform passers-by who might not have known of the mill’s existence and its recently-completed restoration. FOPM received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to pay for the design and on-line presence of the app. The mobile website also has pages describing the native plant garden renovated by FOPM with water sustainability features at the Rock Creek Nature Center.

The apple orchard

In June, FOPM planted three Dwarf Stayman apple trees on the slope behind the Peirce Barn Visitors Center, the first of what could be two dozen trees recreating a portion of the Peirce family orchard. Protected by deer fences, the trees survived the torrid summer, thanks to help from American University student Victoria Rocco, who diligently watered weekly in 100 degree weather. Thanks, Victoria! Discovered in the 1860s in Kansas by a Dr. Stayman, the apple is believed to be a seedling of the Winesap apple and is often known as Stayman’s Winesap. A firm, crisp apple with a sweet-tart taste, it is widely grown in Virginia. The orchard will improve the authenticity of the mill site and allow education of visiting students about horticulture and healthy diets.



Volunteers needed at the mill

Share your interest in Peirce Mill and learn how a grist mill works and much more! We always need volunteers to show visitors the wonders of the mill. More people are visiting the mill since it reopened last fall and we need volunteers to fill Saturday and Sunday, morning and afternoon, shifts. Training on the mechanics of the mill and its history is available.

For more information contact:

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Peirce Mill video film

FOPM announces the unveiling of the video film *From Field to Table: Bread and Butter on a 19th Century Farm*, a dramatized version of the milling process and the making of bread. In stunning blu-ray format, the video was made with St John College High School students playing the roles of farmers, millers, and the Peirce family. This production, made possible by a grant from the National Park Foundation, was directed by T.J. Curry and Steve Dryden, with cinematography by Brian Neary. It was filmed at Peirce Mill, Frying Pan Park and Sully Plantation. The initial showing was at the Peirce Mill visitors center at 4 P.M. on December 14. While this newsletter will likely arrive after that date, the film will be shown on demand at the Peirce Barn on weekends during the winter months.

a look back



This 1917 photo of the mill looking northeast includes the familiar stonework of the Tilden Street bridge on the right. This was taken before the Teahouse period when a shed was built on the north side of the mill, but you can see a footbridge in that location, probably over the old millrace. .

The photo is from the Harris & Ewing Collection of the Library of Congress. The Harris & Ewing Company photographed people, events, and architecture, particularly in Washington, D. C., during the period 1905-1945. Higher resolution copies are available here:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/hec2008005299/>



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