



Photo: Archives of Friends of Peirce Mill.

For several years around 1920, Peirce Mill was used as a teahouse. The National Park Service has menus, a guest book, and several dozen photos of the exterior and interior, including the kitchen sink. This view of the east face of the mill shows a screened porch. Open breeze dining must have been a treat in hot Washington summers. This view also shows dormers and shutters on most of the windows.



4305 38th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016



# Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill Winter 2002



## Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Peirce Mill,

You will read below about the good news that work at the mill will soon be restarted. Seven months have passed since we were informed that all contracting would be done through Federal procurement procedures, a decision which we vigorously opposed and which has now been changed, although only for the next phase of the work. It is our hope that the upcoming work, following procedures laid down by the Park, will begin a new and productive phase in our cooperation with the Park, cooperation which dates back almost five years. Our task now will be to regain momentum for the project in terms both of membership support and in fund raising. Rock Creek Park is seeking funds in the Federal budget to support the project, but until that happens, the project relies entirely on whatever funds the Friends of Peirce Mill are able to raise. Donors will be influenced by demonstrations of member support through contributions of time and money. Most of our approximately 100 members have continued to support the Friends through membership renewals during this difficult time, which is greatly appreciated. The response to our appeal below for volunteers to staff the mill during February and March will be another indication of that support. Hang in there with us—interesting times ahead!

Sincerely,  
Richard Abbott

## Work starts again at the mill

At the request of Rock Creek Park, Friends Board members **Steve Dryden** and **Philip Gaudette** met with Park officials **Cindy Cox** and **Laura Illige** on January 9 to discuss the contracting issue. We are happy to report that this issue has been partially resolved, and that Steve Ortado will soon be back at work at the mill.

As most members know, work on the floors of the mill was suspended last year when the Park informed us on July 12 that all future work at the mill would be contracted through Federal procurement procedures. Your Board of Directors took a firm stand against

this policy, especially as it related to the on-going “pilot” or experimental work being carried out by **Steve Ortado**. Those of you who attended our annual meeting in November will remember the spirited discussion about this issue, with Park Chief Ranger Laura Illige in attendance. The members who spoke strongly opposed the Park’s decision, which would have resulted in the Friends raising money for the mill restoration and then turning it over to Rock Creek Park for disposition. Our view was that foundations, corporations, and individuals who have already contributed funds to the Friends of Peirce Mill for restoration of the mill, and those who might contribute in the future, did so on the understanding that the Friends would play a major role in organizing and scheduling of the work in an efficient manner. We felt that we could offer no such assurances if Federal procurement procedures were followed. This was not meant to denigrate the cooperation and support we have received from the Park over the past five years, but simply to disagree with the proposed procedures—a decision which is made at the Park level and is not a requirement of the Park Service. Friends Board members made inquiries and learned that there are at least two other National Parks where citizen groups carry out contracting directly based on agreements negotiated with Park officials.

The Park has now drafted an amendment to our Memorandum of Agreement, the document dating back to 1997 which defines how we and the Park cooperate on the restoration project. The amendment, and an attached scope of work, would allow the “pilot project” repairs to the main beam and column to continue, based on a series of conditions, such as submission of work plans and specifications, close coordination on a daily basis with a Park representative, and inspection and acceptance of the completed project by the Park. Steve Ortado would complete the work he had started last year, and we would pay him from our grant funds. The Board of Directors of the Friends discussed this proposal from the Park at its February 6 meeting and agreed to accept it under certain conditions which we are still clarifying with the Park.

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The project has lost momentum as a result of these delays, with consequences for our fund raising efforts which are not yet known. At least one foundation to which we applied for a repeat grant wrote to say that they were aware of problems with the project and would not make a donation this year. If our cooperation with the Park over the next few months develops as we hope, we believe we can launch a new cycle of grant applications during the coming year.

## Peirce Mill as a Heritage Tourism Site

If you attended our annual meeting last fall, you may remember **Julie Carpenter** from the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition. Peirce Mill fits squarely into the idea of heritage tourism, and the Friends of Peirce Mill belong to the Coalition. Here are some details about the Coalition and some ideas toward a deeper relationship.

The mission of the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition is to strengthen the image and the economy of the District of Columbia by engaging more of its visitors in the diverse heritage and culture of the city beyond the monuments. Their website: [www.dcheritage.org](http://www.dcheritage.org).

Some current projects: the Beyond the Monuments Campaign focuses on neighborhoods as destinations. A city-wide system of marked heritage trails began with "Civil War to Civil Rights." New bus and walking tours will connect visitors to the authentic places and voices of DC.

There are some obvious connections between these city-centric projects and Peirce Mill. For example, the fine walk from Connecticut Avenue down to the mill as part of a walking tour. Julie is in charge of themes, and we spoke with her about a theme of Rural Washington in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with Peirce Mill as a well-preserved centerpiece. We also spoke of signs marking the old roads. In 1860 there weren't that many roads north of Boundary Street (which is now roughly Florida Avenue).

The challenge for FOPM: Come up with broad ideas to enhance the role of Peirce Mill—as a destination, as a springboard for historical research, or in some other way. Work with other Coalition members to put together partnerships and concrete grant proposals. The Coalition is loaded with ideas and energy, and we can surely add to the party. Then volunteer to move some project forward.

Are you interested? Contact **Philip Gaudette**—email preferred—at [gaudette@verizon.net](mailto:gaudette@verizon.net) or daytime phone (202) 752-6384.

## Volunteering at the Mill

The Friends of Peirce Mill have been asked by Rock Creek Park officials to recruit volunteer guide/interpreters to serve at the mill during February and March when the Park is unable to provide coverage by Ranger staff. We are told that this is a temporary situation, but that without Friends volunteers, the mill will be closed during this period. We need to hear urgently from members willing to donate four hours a week or more. This can be almost any time of the day, weekdays or weekends, whatever time you can spare. Knowledge of milling is not essential as you will be asked to go through a training session before starting. Volunteers must be at least 16 years old, so that college students and high school seniors would be welcome. Their hours would most likely qualify as community service time.

Note: The above urgent message went out on February 6 to all members who are on e-mail, about 60 at present. (If you didn't get the message, please send your e-mail address to Richard Abbott at [abbott1229@erols.com](mailto:abbott1229@erols.com)). We're happy to report that to date eight members have volunteered their time. We hope to staff the mill from Wednesday through Sunday, at least through March. A Park Ranger will be there with the volunteer on weekends but not weekdays. Training sessions for new volunteers are now being scheduled by the Park Chief of Interpretation, **Dwight Madison**. The four-hour session will cover the history of Peirce Mill and of Rock Creek Park, interpretive methods, and visitor services. After going through the course, you will be an official National Park Service interpreter, similar to a docent in museum settings. If we have enough volunteers, we can pair persons with little prior knowledge about milling with those who have. So don't be discouraged if you are new to the subject – as long as you have an interest. This can be a rewarding experience and will make a real contribution to our mill restoration project. So let us hear from you at the above e-mail address, or by phone to 202-244-2379. We could use more volunteers!

## Take advantage of our membership in other groups

We are members of several other organizations with connections to milling and historic preservation. You'll find the links on our web page ([www.peircemill-friends.org](http://www.peircemill-friends.org)) and they are well worth pursuing.

TIMS (The International Molinological Society) is an international milling organization, based in the Netherlands, which publishes papers on the technical aspects of milling. These professional monographs make very interesting reading for those wishing to know more about the technology of milling. Richard Abbott receives TIMS publications and would be glad to share them with members. They could be routed around among members who let Richard know of their interest.

APT [The Association for Preservation Technology]: The Washington D.C. chapter of this national organization schedules tours to historical sites in the Washington area, and they also organize tours to places throughout the Eastern Seaboard, including such sites as the steel mills in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Richard Abbott receives the regular APT newsletters by e-mail and would be glad to forward them to any interested members.

SPOOM [The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills]: A lot of interesting information on mills which can be visited in the U.S. is found on the SPOOM web site. Check the link on our web site.

## FOPM Board Members, Officers and Key Individuals

President:	Richard Abbott
Vice President:	Steve Dryden
Secretary/Treasurer:	Sheila Ploger
Business Manager:	David Lyman
Archivist:	Philip Gaudette
Legal and Tax Affairs:	Gene Hines
New Board Member:	Arthur Fort
Chair, Proctors Committee:	Mrs. Randall H. Hagner, Jr.
Assistant Chair, Proctors Committee:	Mrs. I. Townsend Burden
Special Events Coordinator:	Robert Day

## We Visit Another Mill

To see what a mill restoration project looks like when it is almost completed, FOPM Board members Steve Dryden, Philip Gaudette, Arthur Fort, and Richard Abbott, along with member John Williams, visited George Washington's Grist Mill at Mt. Vernon on February 28. The picture shows some of the new gears and shafts built by Gus Kiorpes and his crew. Work is nearing completion and it is hoped to begin operating in April. We will keep you informed as members will find it interesting to visit as a preview of a future Peirce Mill. Gus and his partner John O'Rourke have been involved with the Friends in selecting lumber to rebuild gears and shafts at Peirce Mill. They are real experts in building wooden milling machinery and we plan to have them play a major role in the restoration of Peirce Mill. We want our mill to look just like this when it is finished!



*The Grist Mill at Mount Vernon is nearing completion of an extensive restoration. FOPM Board members visited the mill on February 28 to compare work there and envision a similar future for Peirce Mill.*