



Coming Up at Peirce Mill

Please check our website,
friendsofpeircemill.org,
to confirm dates and
times for events below.



JUNE 18–19

Create by the Creek



AUGUST

Ice Cream Making



OCTOBER

Heritage Day Festival



TrueGrist

NEWS *from the* FRIENDS *of* PEIRCE MILL

Friends of Peirce Mill Celebrates 25 Years

With Goals for Mill's Third Century

Twenty-five years ago this past winter, a visionary mill volunteer met with fellow enthusiasts at his home in Tenleytown who shared the dream of bringing Peirce Mill back into operation.


Richard Abbott's vision was fulfilled (see story below). And the Friends of Peirce Mill, looking ahead to 2029 and the mill's 200th birthday, has created a five-year strategic plan. The National Park Foundation funded the planning, led by DC-based LINK Strategic Partners.

In-depth interviews of key stakeholders—including FOPM's board and staff, National Park Service personnel, other park partners, and community members—identified four main goals:

- Continue to preserve, restore, and interpret Peirce Mill, Barn, and Orchard.

- Tell the full history of the Peirce Estate.
- Create a welcoming community in Rock Creek Park.
- Use the mill's 19th century-technology to engage 21st century students.

To see the final strategic plan and learn more about these goals, please visit FOPM's website: friendsofpeircemill.org/our-mission/.

FOPM called its new plan "Rock Creek's Crossroads" because we believe that Peirce Mill is a place where communities come together—and a place where past and present meet. In the coming years, FOPM hopes to bring people into Rock Creek Park to connect to the city's history and to each other. We hope you'll join us! 

Remembering Richard Abbott

Richard Abbott, founder of the Friends of Peirce Mill, passed away on November 5, 2021 at his home in Bellingham, Washington, where he had moved more than a decade ago to live closer to his family. He was 91.

Rock Creek Park superintendent Julia Washburn, who first met Richard when he was a volunteer at the mill in the

early 1990s, praised him for his "tireless zeal" and added that his "dedicated skill and creativity have left an important legacy at Rock Creek Park. Richard set a wonderful example of what a successful public-private partnership can do to preserve and protect historic places for future generations."

continued on page 4



The Friends of Peirce Mill, in partnership with the National Park Service and the wider community, works to preserve, restore, and interpret the last working gristmill in Washington, DC for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of all generations.

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Tim Makepeace

President (acting)

Bill McLeod

Treasurer

Nathan Marzoli

Fritz Edler

Stacey Lincoln

Jeanne Minor (*ex officio*)

Gregory Nau

Steve Dryden

Executive Director

Angela Kramer

Education Director

Denise Arnot

Newsletter Design

Miller Jeanne Minor Retires

Jeanne Minor, the first woman miller at Peirce Mill—and one of the few in the United States—retired at the end of December after almost a decade at the controls.

Jeanne was known for her friendliness to all the mill’s visitors, but she was especially fond of the animals that frequented Rock Creek Park. Dogs knew that Jeanne handed out treats and insisted on stopping by for a milkbone. Over the years, she fished hundreds of toads out of the millrace. Even the park’s crows and squirrels seemed to know Jeanne and the kernels of corn she left for them to enjoy.

Jeanne took an unusual path to become a miller: for 18 years, she was the head lion keeper at the Smithsonian’s National Zoo, just a mile and half downstream from Peirce Mill. Jeanne joined NPS as a ranger in 2008. Like any miller, she wore many hats—besides historic interpretation, Jeanne cleaned out the basement after damaging floods, greased wooden gears, and hauled 50-pound bags of corn.

Demonstrating her continued devotion to the mill, Jeanne has accepted an invitation to join the board of the Friends of Peirce Mill. We are thrilled she will still be part of our community! 🍷

FOPM Welcomes New Board Member Fritz Edler

The Friends of Peirce Mill is pleased to welcome to its board Fritz Edler, a volunteer who has become a familiar presence at the mill since joining a few years ago.

Fritz brings some very special knowledge to his board and volunteer service. Up until his retirement in 2015, he was a locomotive engineer running Amtrak trains between New York and Washington. He remains active in the field as a special representative for Railroad Workers United, a solidarity and advocacy organization for rail workers and their supporters. Raised in the Maryland suburbs, Fritz is also a principal in the local environmental organization Green Neighbors DC, has served as a leader with the Boy Scouts, and is active preserving South German and Austrian mountain traditional dances, costumes, and culture.

“My main interest at the mill is making the visitor experience as powerful as possible,” says Fritz, who recalls first seeing the mill operate in 1985. 🍷

Fritz Edler (left) explains the gear system in the basement to visitors.





Heirloom Corn Makes a Comeback

As we noted in the previous issue of *TrueGrist*, the Friends of Peirce Mill is planning a “Mid-Atlantic Grains Conference,” possibly in 2023, to promote the farmers, millers, bakers, and others who are making a new regional grain economy. Besides great taste and variety, the new movement emphasizes the health benefits of unrefined grain (preserving the bran, germ and endosperm—the ingredients of a whole grain), and the revival of farming techniques that don’t abuse the soil and surrounding habitats.

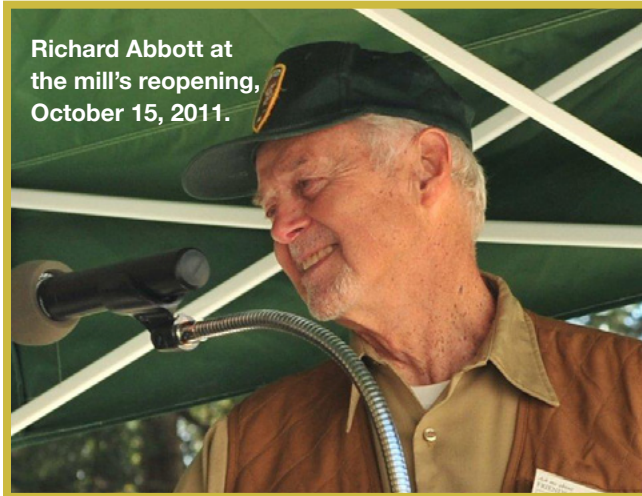
FOPM boosted Sample Whole Grains, a social media activity, on March 30, and organized a cornbread making workshop in April for members. Featured at the latter event were heirloom corn varieties such as **Cateto Orange Flint** (top left). Originally from South America, traces of its genetics are found in many modern, commonly-grown maizes (order from: redtailgrains.com).

Also on display was **Bloody Butcher** (left middle). Developed in Virginia before the Civil War by mixing Native American corn with the white settlers’ seed (order from: deeprootsmilling.com).

A third heirloom variety is **Cherokee White Eagle** (left bottom). This beautiful blue and white dent corn is now available for milling after years of seed development in eastern Tennessee (order from: farmandsparrow.com). 🌽



The Rock Creek Morris Women, who have been welcoming spring at the mill since the 1980s, danced on April 9 at the official opening of the milling season.



Richard Abbott at the mill's reopening, October 15, 2011.

Richard was a volunteer guide at the mill in late 1993 when the main drive shaft shattered. There was already a long list of deferred maintenance issues that had left the mill facing an uncertain future, as the National Park Service did not have the funds to start a substantial restoration effort. After a few years of hoping the money and plans would materialize, Richard wrote an op-ed style column in *The Washington Post* appealing for help in starting a "Friends" group.

At that time, Rock Creek Park had a few non-profit partners, but none of them had tried to undertake a capital campaign to repair a major park facility. Richard, a retired international agribusiness and marketing consultant, spearheaded the arduous process of writing a historic structure report on the mill's condition, finding the right

engineers and millwrights to design and complete the restoration, and soliciting the necessary funds.

Though the price tag grew, and bureaucratic obstacles proliferated, Richard stuck with the campaign, engaging private donors and key preservation advocates such as Adlumia "Lummy" Hagner, a Washington *grande dame* and descendant of Peirce family neighbor John Adlum.

As the FOPM fundraising total neared \$1 million, the Obama Administration's economic stimulus program kicked in with a matching \$2 million payment. In October, 2011, Richard was on hand to share ribbon cutting with the Park Service as the mill began grinding corn again.

Peirce Mill was just one of Richard's many volunteer endeavors. His service ranged from monitoring elections in Bosnia to working in the insect house at the National Zoo, and more recently, hosting a jazz radio show and playing piano in retirement homes.

Richard grew up on a chicken farm in Hayward, California, and attended college at Berkeley, earning a degree in chemical engineering. After army duty, Richard completed a master's degree at the John Hopkins School of International Studies in Washington, where he met his wife, Marijke. His work for the U.S. Agency for International Development took the couple around the world, including stints in Guinea, Thailand, and Austria.

Richard had a real affection for the mill and its demonstration of the "old ways" of producing an essential foodstuff. He shared these feelings with visitors, who also "loved the mill experience: the meshing of wooden gears, the smell of freshly ground flour, and the sound of falling water," as he wrote a few years before the mill re-opened. His memory inspires us to keep the wheel rolling. 🌿

FRIENDS of PEIRCE MILL 🏠

Your annual membership makes a difference! Let's keep Peirce Mill running for another 200 years!

- ☐ Student \$25
 ☐ Individual \$40
 ☐ Family \$100
 ☐ Miller \$250
 ☐ Millwright \$500
☐ Master Millwright \$1000
 ☐ Other donation \$ _____

NAME (please print clearly)

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Make checks payable to: Friends of Peirce Mill, mail to: 2039 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Apt. 103, Washington, DC 20009. For more information, email: info@peircemillfriends.org, call: 202.248.1505, or visit: friendsofpeircemill.org.

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