

d o w n s t r e a m



In the early 1900s, Peirce Mill was used as a teahouse. The interior was completely refitted with a kitchen and dining areas. This view shows the porch on the north side where the water wheel should be. All of the milling machinery that we see now came from the 1930s restoration.



4305 38th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016



Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Fall 2004



Restoration work moving ahead

You can see from the pictures that things are happening at the Mill! Our contractors, O'Rourke and Kiorpes, are in the midst of making repairs to the hurst frame, the heavy timber framework that holds the milling machinery. To gain access to the frame, the millstones had first to be removed, then the millstone floor. In the first picture, you are on the first floor looking at the top of the hurst frame. A section of the vertical shaft,



Millstones and millstone floor removed for repairs to hurst frame.

which had also to be removed, lies on a temporary plywood walkway. In the second photo, you see the millstones—all six of them—in temporary storage at the south end of the main floor. The third picture is a view at the basement level of the metal scaffolding that had to be erected to support the heavy load of the millstones above—a total weight of over 10,000 pounds! These repairs should be completed by year-end.

While John and Gus work on the hurst frame, Steve Ortado has begun the task of removing damaged gears and shafts from within the frame. Some key pieces have already been lifted out of the machinery pit. Steve will tackle the tough job of removing the old main shaft, which is badly rotted, and the big damaged pit gear, once John and Gus have removed several of the horizontal beams of the hurst frame so that he and his crew can gain access to the area. Planning has also begun on the task of removing the water wheel on the outside of the mill. Rock Creek Park officials have agreed to provide maintenance

personnel to work with Steve Ortado to cut the wheel in pieces and remove them using a crane. We will be sure to photograph the event and file a report about it in the next issue of *Milling About*.



Millstones stored at south end of main floor.



Scaffolding erected in basement to support the millstone load on the main floor.

Do you have graphic arts skills?

Now that the Peirce Barn will be open on weekends through the winter, we would like to develop an exhibit panel for display at the barn that would tell visitors what is going on currently at the mill, what work is planned for the future, and when they might expect to be able to see the waterwheel turning again. We have a number of photographs that could be used and we can produce draft text for the panel. What we need now is somebody to put it all together, get it approved by Rock Creek Park officials, and then produce a professional quality panel. If you are interested and available, please e-mail Richard Abbott at abbott1229@verizon.net.



Dwight Madison of the NPS tells members about plans for the fish passage.



Musicians Karen Ashbrook and Andrea Hoag entertain some of our younger visitors in front of the mill.

afternoon, so it was a good thing that Bob Day put up another canopy over their heads! Thanks to Bob, and to the board members who were there all day to set up and pull down the canopies and put away the chairs and tables. A total of 14 members attended the meeting, of whom seven were FOPM board members. Thanks to the other seven who took the trouble to come down on Saturday to take part.

Re-thinking our annual meeting/ open house event

A very low participation of members at our annual combined open house and annual meeting has been typical now for some years. Your Board of Directors is considering other options for this event, given the fact that the costs (musicians, refreshments) and demands on board members' time may not be justified. We are considering as an alternative combining the open house with Rock Creek Park Day, which takes place every September at the

Nature Center. For this year's event, Sheila Ploger was there to tell people about our project and to distribute brochures and membership forms. Plans are to station somebody at the Nature Center again next year, and to direct visitors from there to Peirce Barn and Peirce Mill, where we would have the usual banners and flags to mark the location. Our volunteers would be there to tell visitors about the restoration project and, to the extent allowed by on-going work inside the building, take visitors on tours of the mill. Audiovisual exhibits at Peirce Barn would explain how the work is being carried out.

Our bylaws call for an annual membership meeting in the fall, with a 10% quorum required to vote on issues affecting the organization. In past years, we have combined this meeting with the open house and used it as an occasion to do a "show and tell" about progress of work at the mill; to report on our financial condition, fund raising results, and membership; and to elect a board of directors. An alternative we are considering is to communicate with members by e-mail, for those so equipped, and by regular mail with others. Our thinking is that we would get more feedback from members this way than by asking you to come down to the mill once a year on a Saturday morning. We are now updating our e-mail membership list and you will be hearing from us soon through this channel.

Annual Meeting

Members gathered at the mill on Saturday, October 16 for our annual meeting. We didn't bill it as an open house this time because the extensive work going on inside the mill limited access. Members and other visitors were, however, able to view the interior from just inside the front and basement doors. You can get an idea of what they saw from the pictures in the preceding article. As the picture shows, our meeting was held under a canopy, set up on the grassy area across from the mill and behind Peirce Barn. Members enjoyed coffee and bagels on a rather cool (but sunny) morning, while hearing an account of the current and planned future work at the mill by Richard Abbott, a report on fund-raising from Tom Blackburn, a financial report from David Lyman, and a membership report from Sheila Ploger. Board members were elected for another one-year term.

In a presentation by Dwight Madison, Supervisory Ranger for Rock Creek Park, we heard about the on-going fish passage project along Rock Creek. Currently, work is proceeding upstream of Peirce Mill, but it is hoped that work can begin soon on the fish passage around the dam near the mill so that it can be ready in time for the spring herring and shad run.

Later our musicians entertained visitors in front of the mill (see picture). We had rain showers in the

Updating of our web site

Be sure to visit our web site at www.peircemill-friends.org. Our site manager, Pam Sheary, has just posted new material for the "Restoration" page, including a list of our principal donors. New photos of work on the hurst frame have also been added. On the "Visit" page, the current opening hours for Peirce Barn are listed: 12 Noon to 4 PM on Saturday and Sunday. We were happy to learn recently from Pam that she is now donating her time for managing the web site, a most welcome gift that is recognized in the relevant section of the Restoration page. Many thanks, Pam!

DVD film of the restoration work

Thanks to another in-kind donation of services, we will soon have available a five-minute DVD film which can be used to help in publicizing our project through the media, and in fund-raising. How this came about makes an interesting story. Several years ago, Mike Dolan, a local writer and documentary film producer, interviewed Mrs. Randall H. Hagner, Jr. for an article in the City Paper in March 1995 about the history of the area around the intersection of Van Ness St. and Connecticut Avenue. "Lummy" Hagner is a valued member of FOPM and has greatly assisted us in fund-raising since just after our founding in 1997. She was able to tell Mike about her ancestor John Adlum, who was a pioneer in the cultivation of native grapes on his 230 acre farm, "The Vineyard". His farm occupied the area between today's Wisconsin Avenue and Tilden Street intersection, eastward almost to Rock Creek, and

north from what is now Rodman St. to just south of Yuma St. Adlum published the first American book on indigenous grape culture in 1823, and sent a copy of the book and several bottles of wine produced from his grapes to Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson wrote acknowledging the gift and commenting on the good quality of the wine. Adlum's farm was bisected by a road extending down to Rock Creek and then known as Peirce Mill Road.

To make a long story short, Mrs. Hagner suggested to Mike that he talk to us about filming the on-going work at the mill. Early this year, Mike talked to Steve Dryden of the Friends of Peirce Mill, and later to Richard Abbott, about making a DVD film showing in detail how the work on the basement columns was being carried out. Mike offered to contribute his time for the filming. Over the next six months, Mike and his cameraman Sean Simmons filmed Steve Ortado and his crew as the work proceeded, with Steve providing comments and explanations of each phase of the job, and Richard Abbott speaking about the need for funds to complete the project. When completed, we plan to use the film in fund-raising and possible also have it shown on local TV stations. Mike showed excerpts of the video at our October 10 board meeting, and discussed the costs involved in professional editing of the many hours of footage he shot. We are considering seeking a foundation grant to cover these costs and would be grateful to hear from any of our members who might know of foundations that support this type of activity.

FOPM Officers and Key Individuals

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

Tell Us Your Story

Do you have an interesting story to tell...a photo of the Mill you found in the attic...a favorite memory of Peirce Mill from your childhood?

Share your story ideas or vintage photos with other Mill friends. Submit your contribution to Friends of Peirce Mill c/o Richard Abbott, 4305 38th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016, or e-mail to abbott1229@erols.com. We'll try to get your submission into the next issue of *Milling About*. Thanks!