

# Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill Spring 2000



## Letter From the President

This is the first issue of our newsletter in a new format—and the first to be available electronically. Many thanks to **Kevin Palmer**, who did the layout and graphics, and to **Dan Quinn**, who has agreed to team up with Kevin and to serve as editor on future issues. Dan and Kevin have some good ideas about things we can do with our newsletter—so watch for further improvements! This time, everybody on our mailing list will get a hard copy, but we would ask that members with access to the Internet try to download it from our web site (see article below). If you succeed, please send an e-mail to our Membership Chair, Sheila Ploger (Ploger@us.net), to let her know. That way we can put the savings on postage to other uses in the future!

The past months have been a very busy—and very important—time for the Friends of Peirce Mill. A long-awaited meeting with the National Park Service about plans for restoring Peirce Mill finally took place on February 9—after a postponement due to the January snowstorm.

The discussions are summarized below. Then, on March 28, we received final approval from the National Park Service to begin the first phase of the project: repairs to the floors of the mill. It has taken three years of effort to get to this point, and we see it as a major milestone in the history of the Friends of Peirce Mill! Work will begin in early April.

We've received several sizeable grants and pledges recently, bringing the total raised to date to about \$185,000, which is very encouraging. On March 20, we submitted a major grant application to the National

Park Service—a matching grant for \$440,000—under the *Save America's Treasures* program. We have other grant applications pending and in preparation. Further details below.



Our active membership remains at about 80 individuals or families. We are adding new members at about the same rate as we lose old members who don't renew. I hope that some upcoming media coverage will stimulate interest in the community and lead to an expanded membership. We have an interesting time ahead of us and I hope more of you will want to participate. For opportunities, look under "Volunteers" on the "Join Us" page of our web site or check announcements in previous News Updates.

Best regards,

Richard Abbott  
President

## Historic Structures Report

At a meeting at Rock Creek Park headquarters on February 9, **Baird Smith** of Quinn Evans Architects and Richard Abbott reviewed with NPS officials the revised and expanded draft of the first part of the Historic Structures Report (HSR) on Peirce Mill. Later, detailed comments on the draft were forwarded to us by the National Capital Regional Office of the NPS who, along with Rock Creek Park officials, are ultimately responsible for the HSR. Based on our report, and on Department of the Interior guidelines

for treatment of historic properties, preliminary agreement was reached on the type of treatment appropriate for Peirce Mill—a combination of "Preservation" and "Rehabilitation." Quinn Evans architects and engineers, together with Friends of Peirce Mill volunteers, are now working on the second part of the HSR, which will describe in detail the work to be carried out and how the mill will be interpreted to the public. We can expect that it will be several months yet before we have a complete and approved HSR, but as discussed below we have agreement in the interim to start work on the floors.

## Preservation of The Mill Structure

Treatment of the structure under the heading of “Preservation” means that repairs will be carried out which are necessary to maintain the building’s integrity and make it available for visitation by the public in safety. In practice, it will mean replacement or repair of selected floor joists and columns and any necessary repairs to the doors, windows and stone walls. Removal of all the temporary columns which date to the early 1970s will take place, greatly improving the interior look of the building.

A survey was carried out at the mill on March 1 by a Quinn Evans architect and a structural engineer, together with **Steve Ortado**, a historic preservation contractor and member of the Friends who will carry out the actual work. A plan for treatment of selected floor joists on a pilot basis was developed and has now been approved by the Park Service. Look for a sign to go up soon in front of the mill announcing the beginning of work!

## Rehabilitation of the Milling Machinery

Much of the planning for this work—the second phase of the project—has already been done by **Derek Ogden**, the eminent millwright retained by the Friends, and the prospective contractors, **O’Rourke** and **Kiorpes** (who are presently completing work on the restoration of George Washington’s Grist Mill at Mt. Vernon). We had a final meeting with these gentlemen at Peirce Mill on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and we can now finalize the sections of the HSR dealing with the machinery. The objective is, as it has been from the beginning, to have all three sets of millstones in operating condition, along with all other machinery throughout the mill (although it is unlikely that we will run flour and meal through machinery on the upper floors). Provided all these plans are approved by the Park Service, work can begin later this year, and we anticipate completing it in two years. Much of the white oak lumber for the water wheel and replacement gears was purchased last year and has been air drying every since to prepare it for use in the mill.

## Powering the Mill with Water from Rock Creek

This third and most complicated phase of the project is still under study. For environmental and cost reasons it has been decided that for the foreseeable future we have to drop plans for rebuilding the old rock dam, located some 300 feet above the existing dam, and the millrace, both dating to the 1930s

We are studying several possible alternative solutions which would involve pumping water from the creek to a short open millrace, then to the flume and over the waterwheel, before returning to the creek. This will be done in such a way that visitors will be able to make the all-important visual connection between the mill and Rock Creek. The issue of restoring the dam and millrace could be re-opened once issues related to fish migration in Rock Creek, and providing fish passage around the existing dam, are resolved. Our review of early documents on the mill, and recent studies, do indicate that Peirce Mill had problems with insufficient head of water throughout its history. This suggests that careful analysis would be required before undertaking this costly work.

## Fund raising

We can report continued progress in fund raising. As you will see from the attached list, grants and pledges totaling \$185,000 have been received to date. A number of the recent grants have been due to the personal efforts of our loyal member and native Washingtonian, **Mrs. Randall H. Hagner, Jr.** Mrs. Hagner has a wide circle of friends in the Washington area and served for many years on the board of the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association. As a result of her efforts, many more people in the community are aware of our project and are interested in getting involved in fund raising.

Meanwhile, we have submitted grant applications to several foundations identified last year by our professional fund-raising consultants, including the Philip L.Graham Foundation (*Washington Post*) and George Preston Marshall Foundation. With the help of a group of dedicated members (David Lyman, Steve Dryden, Bob Chamberlain, Barry Nestor), additional grant applications are in preparation.

## Web Site

If you have access to the Internet, please visit our site at [www.peircemill-friends.org](http://www.peircemill-friends.org), where several earlier newsletters are posted—and where this one soon will be. Several pages were recently updated by our Webmaster, **Richard Quin**. You will find some interesting material on the history of Peirce Mill, as well as links to other sites having to do with milling. Plans are to post some of the 140 historical photographs of the mill which we recently obtained from the Rock Creek Park archives, and later to add photos of work at the mill as it proceeds. We welcome your comments on the site!

## Workshops

We are re-instituting the series of crafts workshops directed by Steve Ortado that we began last year. For a variety of reasons, it was only possible to hold the first two of the seven scheduled. Apologies to any of you who might not have gotten the word on this change. The first in this new series will be a windows workshop scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, April 29 and 30. This workshop was very popular last year, and resulted in repairing and re-glazing of two windows in the mill. You can see the excellent results on the left and right of the front entrance of the mill. Thanks to contributions of professional time by Steve and his associates, we are able to keep the cost down—\$150 for non-members and \$125 for members for two-day workshops. For this first one, if you were one of the nine who took the course last November, you can participate in this more in-depth workshop for \$50.

Our plan is to hold a series of workshops adapted to the needs of homeowners, whether it be routine maintenance or full-scale restorations. We are thinking of scheduling the following workshops: spring home maintenance, sash and door making and repair, plaster repair, exterior painting, interior finishes, decorative painting and wood graining, masonry (repainting), and timber framing. If you'd like to take part in any of these, and receive professional instruction, please contact **Steve Ortado** at (202) 686-0135. Once we determine the level of interest in each of these, we will draw up a schedule and announce it through our newsletter and also through an advertisement in the *Washington Post*.

## YWCA Race Against Racism

The Friends of Peirce Mill is one of the organizations supporting the YWCA *Race Against Racism*, scheduled for Saturday, April 29. This is a national event, with Al and Tipper Gore serving as honorary chairs. It is a run/walk for all ages held downtown on that Saturday morning. Supporting organizations form teams, with each participant contributing \$20, which goes to fund YWCA programs designed to "eliminate racism, achieve racial justice and embrace diversity." If you don't want to run or walk the 5K course, there is need for people to assist with organization. **Richard Abbott** has a supply of registration forms with additional details. If you feel, as we do, that there is room for improvement in race relations in D.C., please join us in this event. If 10 members sign up, we will spring for "Friends of Peirce Mill" T-shirts for all! Let Richard know at [abbott1229@erols.com](mailto:abbott1229@erols.com).

## Grants and Donations Received FOPM

May 1997 through February 2000

### Foundation, Corporate and Association Grants and Pledges

Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation <i>May 1997</i>	\$3000
Riggs Bank <i>October 1997</i>	\$100
James Ford Bell Foundation <i>March 1998</i>	\$30,000
D.C. Historical Society <i>October 1998</i>	\$150
Georgia-Pacific Corporation <i>July 1999 (for repairs to floors in mill)</i>	\$48,800
Chevy Chase Bank <i>September 1999</i>	\$5000
PEPCO <i>October 1999</i>	\$5000
Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of Washington D.C. <i>October 1999</i>	\$3000
Helen Parker Willard Foundation <i>December 1999</i>	\$5000
The Kiplinger Foundation <i>January 2000 (Pledge)</i>	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$150,050</b>

### Special Grants

The National Park Service <i>October '98/January '00 (for architect and engineering studies)</i>	\$21,000
The National Trust for Historic Preservation <i>November 1998 (for services of fund raising consultant)</i>	\$5000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$26,000</b>

### Individual Donations

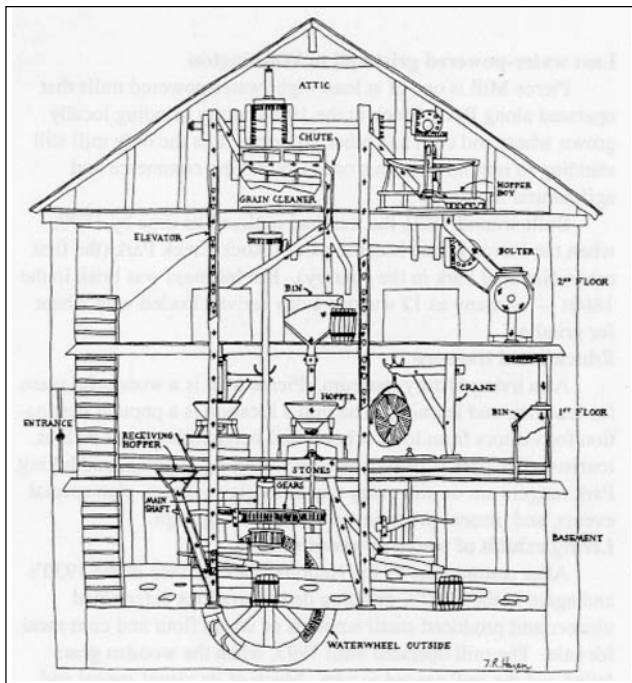
Mrs. Florence Keys Willard	\$4000
Mr. David P. Close	\$2000
Mrs. Randall H. Hagner Jr.	\$1800
Mr. E. M. Dodge	\$500
Mr. A. Steward Booher	\$100
Mr. and Mrs. James Wright	\$100
Mr. John Sargent	\$100
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,600</b>

**Grand total of cash grants \$184,650**

### In-Kind Grants

The National Institutes of Health <i>Tree for water wheel shaft</i>	Estimated value \$2,000
Mrs. Barbara McNear <i>Artist's sketch of Peirce Mill</i>	Estimated value \$500
Mrs. Randall H. Hagner Jr. <i>Printing of stationery</i>	\$300
Mr. Daniel Goggin <i>Web site costs</i>	\$108
<b>Total in-kind grants</b>	<b>\$2,908</b>

**TOTAL (All Grants) \$187,558**



Sketch by T.R. Hazen.

This cutaway drawing of Peirce Mill shows all four levels of the mill and the main pieces of equipment still located there. The original mill was built in the 1820s and operated commercially until 1897. A few years later most of the equipment was removed and the building served as a tea room for several periods until a major restoration was undertaken by the National Park Service in 1935. The gears which drive the millstones from the water wheel shaft are seen at the basement level. On the main or ground level, the three sets of millstones are shown, with one “runner stone” lifted out of place for maintenance. Hoppers which supply grain to the millstones, and bolting screens for processing the milled grain, appear on the second floor. The attic contains a rotating grain cleaner and a “hopperboy,” a device to cool the freshly ground grain, which follows a design by inventor **Oliver Evans** in 1795.



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