

Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Summer 2007



Installation of the new main shaft



Gus Kiorpes takes measurements for the new main shaft

The first part of the machinery installation phase of the project begins this summer with the setting of the new main water wheel shaft. Accompanying photographs taken in July show our contractors John O'Rourke and Gus Kiorpes making measurements for placement of the shaft bearings at the inside and outside ends of the shaft. The shaft itself is a massive piece of wood trimmed down from the trunk of a large white oak tree that once grew in southern Virginia. The log as purchased was about 26' long and 3' in diameter at the small end and weighed about 6000lbs. The shaping of the shaft is a lengthy and involved process.

Later this year, the finished shaft will be trucked to Peirce Mill, set into place with the aid of a crane, and fitted into the bearings on either end. This should be a pretty spectacular event and we will make every effort to inform members—within the limits of what is possible given the uncertainties in timing of restoration work—and hopefully attract some media attention.

For those technically-oriented members interested in the process, here are the steps: The raw shaft was stored as a log for several years before being cut square to 24"x24"x22' and moved under roof in an open shed in the fall of 2006. In July 2007, it was cut down to a length of just over 21 feet, center points and lines were marked on each end, and it was then returned to the sawmill and cut down to an octagonal cross-section about 22 1/2 inches across the flats. Between drying and cutting to dimension the weight is now down to about 3500 lbs. The shaft has now been moved to John O'Rourke's shop in Port Republic, Maryland, where it will be cut to the finished length of 20'10", mortices cut into the ends and steel gudgeons (metal shaft ends) installed, milled again to a shaft with 16 sides, and rounded on the last foot of each end to a 20" diameter circle to accommodate encircling steel bands holding the gudgeons firmly in place.



John O'Rourke planning location of new main shaft

Visit by Councilmember Mary Cheh



Councilmember Mary Cheh speaking to Park Superintendent Coleman

On July 21, Peirce Mill was visited by recently-elected City Councilmember Mary Cheh, accompanied by some 20 bicyclists. Richard Abbott gave the group a short introduction to the mill and a look inside, before they began a bicycle tour of Rock Creek Park. Park Superintendent Adrienne Coleman was also present and took the opportunity to meet Ms. Cheh and to give her additional background on Rock Creek Park (see photo). The Friends welcomed this opportunity to get acquainted with Ms. Cheh, an outdoor recreation enthusiast who is quite familiar with Rock Creek Park and Peirce Mill. Having a friend and supporter on the City Council may offer opportunities for some future financial support to our project from the city government. Stay tuned!

Fund raising news

We are happy to report that there have been further successes in fund raising since our report in the winter edition of *Milling About*. New grants totaling \$126,000 were received, coming from the 1772 Foundation (\$75,000), the Kiplinger Foundation and the Kiplinger Family Foundation (\$26,000), the Clark-Winchcole Foundation (\$15,000), and matching \$5000 grants from the Deutsche Bank and FOPM member Adam Sieminski. This brings the overall total raised to date to \$712,000, not counting \$21,000 in in-kind donations. This sum represents roughly 80% of our planned expenditures on the project. We must raise the final \$220,000 to complete work on the mill between now and the fall of 2008. Although unforeseen items and price escalation could increase this amount somewhat, we feel confident that we can raise the needed funds. Our fund raising committee (Blackburn, Dryden and Abbott)

continue to maintain contact with our regular contributors and to track additional funding sources.

Detailed design of the water system

We reported last time (Winter 2007 edition) that the detailed design of the pumped water system to power the mill was held up while we waited for preliminary approval by Rock Creek Park. Well, some progress has been made at last! Park officials have told us to proceed with the design and submit documentation for a "Section 106 Compliance" process, something that the NPS requires when changes to an historical property are planned. We met on July 31 with our architect, Ward Bucher, and his team of engineers and pump specialists, to go over the design work. Ward tells us that the team should complete work by no later than September 10. The plans will include engineering drawings and specifications, and also an architectural rendering showing

how the new headrace, flume and water wheel will look to a visitor standing on the bike path looking southwest toward the mill. We hope to post that rendering on our web site when it is ready, and possibly also reproduce it in the next edition of *Milling About*.

Forthcoming book on the Peirce Family

FOPM Vice President Steve Dryden is working on a history of Peirce Mill and the families that owned it. The book is planned for publication in 2008. Here's an excerpt:

Isaac Peirce arrived in the Washington area from Chester County, Pa., in the mid-1780s. He worked with his brother-in-law, Abner Cloud (whose family was buying land along Rock Creek and the Potomac River) for almost a decade, then acquired 160 acres and an existing mill on Rock Creek in 1794. It was a well-developed property that included a

dwelling house with brick chimney, a barn, slave quarters, and more than 750 apple and other fruit trees. The 320-square-foot mill structure was made of wood.

Isaac enlarged the operations on his property beginning in 1800 with the construction of a saw mill, and then a springhouse, followed by a potato house and cow barn, carriage house, distillery to make fruit-based brandies, and miller's house. This steady expansion was capped, in 1829, with the completion of the substantial stone mill that still stands today on Rock Creek. At least that's the presumption, based on the initials "BIP 1829" on the stone at the south gable, which could be an abbreviation for "Built by Isaac Pierce."

This interpretation certainly would be accurate. Isaac was ~ among his many skills ~ a millwright, or one who builds mills, but he didn't do the milling himself. Leasing the structure to someone who did the work and paid an annual rent, Peirce went about managing his expanding farm and carrying out his civic duties in Washington City. Peirce apparently didn't grow much wheat himself, but both he and his neighbors would need it for flour and bread production (corn meal was another mainstay, and other grains were grown for animal feed). And wheat could be grown well on the edge of the Piedmont because the soils of the hilly region were more suited to the crop than the tobacco that had been mainstay of the Tidewater economy. Further, getting the wheat to a port was more economical once it was ground into flour and thus less bulky. Liquor made from various grains was another efficient use of those crops. By 1810, milling was the second

Meet your board: Ken Faulstich



Kenneth Faulstich first started enjoying Rock Creek Park growing up in Prince Georges County, MD. Although he doesn't remember Peirce Mill as a kid, driving through the actual creek just up Beach Drive from the mill in the family car on the way to visit relatives in NW DC was always a highlight along with regular visits to the National Zoo. After moving into DC in nearby Tenleytown

back in 1979, biking and hiking through Rock Creek Park became a regular pastime. Ken's appreciation of Peirce Mill started when he realized that his wife's family had a saw mill that was operational in the late 1800s on their farm in Maine. Once he became a member of FOPM through his friendship with neighbor Richard Abbott, his interest bloomed. Ken's fascination in the operation of a mill also comes from his background as an engineer. He spent 32 years as a safety and fire protection engineer protecting federal government employees, visitors and buildings. The last 20 years of his career was with the Veterans Administration. Now retired, he keeps busy with vegetable gardening, exercising, volunteering as an interpreter at the National Zoo's Reptile House and serving on local neighborhood history projects. One recent project was the transformation of several antiquated city fire and police call boxes into works of art that reflected Tenleytown's history. He and his wife (and their cats) plan to spend summers on the family farm in Maine. Ken hopes to be an integral part of the efforts to maintain Peirce Mill once the construction of the machinery is completed and to participate in the educational programs that are planned that will keep Peirce Mill alive and well long into the 21st century.

most important manufacturing enterprise in Washington, with annual production valued at more than \$200,000.

New web hosting arrangement

We recently signed on with a new web hosting service that gives us more space on our web site. Thanks to Pam Sheary of QualityITWorks, who volunteers her time as web master, we now have space to post many more pictures than previously.

For example, you will now find a whole series of photos of the new roof being installed last January. In the future, we'll post pictures of any important phases of the project as they occur. We also updated the Restoration and Fact Sheet pages of the site. Check out the site and let us have your comments. By the way, if you need help on setting up a web site or maintaining or optimizing an existing site, contact Pam at pam@qualityitworks.com, and you'll get quality service.

d o w n s t r e a m



In the 1910s and 1920s, Peirce Mill was used as a teahouse, a popular dining destination as the city expanded north. On the left (north) side of the mill, instead of a waterwheel, there is a screened porch. On the right (south) side there is a gabled extension that is seldom seen in photos. The road in the foreground was at times known as West Beach Driveway.



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