

# d o w n s t r e a m



This photo from the 1930s reconstruction (dated 8/5/35) shows the tail race before installation of the new water wheel. The arched opening for the main shaft is easily visible. In the background, an old car is driving by on a street known at various times as Broad Branch Road and West Beach Drive. Part of that street has been replaced by a hike/bike trail. Some of the old curb and paving is still present in the parking area at the north end near the modern Broad Branch Road.



4305 38th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016



# Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Summer 2004



## NPS Director Visits Peirce Mill

The Director of the National Park Service, Fran Mainella, visited Peirce Mill on May 5, together with other NPS officials. FOPM board members were there to greet them and lead a tour of the mill. Director



Mainella expressed great interest in our efforts to restore the mill, and assured us that Federal funding of the project has a high priority (though the timing of funding remains uncertain). Richard Abbott is shown with Director Mainella in one picture. In the other, the group is, L to R: Perry Wheelock (Rock Creek Park Cultural Resource Specialist), Cindy Cox (Assistant



Superintendent, RCP), Terry Carlstrom (NPS Regional Director), Adrienne Coleman (Superintendent, RCP), Fran Mainella, Tom Blackburn, Richard Abbott, Steve Dryden, Joe Lawler (Deputy Regional Director, NPS).

## Our New NPS Liaison Person

We have a new NPS technical liaison person who is now providing an essential communications link between the on-going work at the mill and Rock Creek Park officials. Kari Grabinski joined the National Park Service, National Capital Region, in February. As an Historical Architect, she manages planning and design contracts involving historic structures. Prior to joining NPS, Kari managed preservation projects for the Minnesota Historical Society. A native of Minnesota, Kari has a degree in Building Preservation Technology from Belmont Technical College in Ohio and a BA in Art History from the University of Minnesota. Since she began working with us in April, Kari has proved to be both efficient and accessible and has made a huge contribution to the project by facilitating procedures for approval by the Park of each phase of the work at the mill.

**...SAVE THE DATE...**

## Annual Meeting and Open House

This annual event will be held this year on Saturday, October 16. You'll hear more about it later, but we are planning to repeat some of the popular attractions from previous years: folk music, blacksmith, woodworking, and maybe even cider pressing. Please plan to join us on that day!

## Work on the Mill Floors Moving Ahead

Steve Ortado and his crew have now completed work on Column #3, the last of the columns in the basement that support the main cross beam. As readers of this newsletter know, this phase of the restoration project became more and more complex as time went on, the main beam being in worse condition than expected and each column requiring a different treatment. We're all happy to see the end of it at last!



Steve has already begun the next part of the job, that of replacing selected floor joists, the 17-foot beams supporting the main floor that go in both directions from the main beam to pockets in the wall on the west and east sides of the basement. The picture shows sections of the main floor removed so that the crew could gain access to a damaged joist.

Planning has begun for the next phase of the project: repairs to the "hurst frame," the framework of heavy beams which contain the milling machinery. Before this work can begin, the millstones must be removed and the millstone floor taken up – a major task. Each floor board must be marked and numbered so that they can be replaced in exactly the same position. In order to safely move the very heavy millstones to a storage position on the southeast side of the main floor, the floor must be supported beneath by metal scaffolding which we will rent from a local company. The scaffolding should be installed by the end of the month, allowing John and Gus to begin work on moving the stones. To follow the progress of work, keep checking our website for additional pictures.

Once the floor and the stones are removed, Steve Ortado will have access to the pit below and can begin to lift out the damaged main shaft and gears. Now it



really gets interesting! We'll post pictures on our web site from time to time so you can follow this phase of the restoration project.

## Committee of 100 Vision Award

The Friends of Peirce Mill received one of the prestigious Vision Awards for 2003 from the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. Their mission: to safeguard and advance the fundamental planning, environmental and aesthetic values inherited from the L'Enfant Plan and the McMillan Commission that give Washington its historic distinction, natural beauty and overall livability. ([www.Committeeof100.net](http://www.Committeeof100.net)) Richard is a member. Sally Berk, a trustee, nominated us for the award. In Richard's absence, Philip Gaudette accepted the award at a ceremony June 4 at the Dickson Mansion (now Kingsbury Center).

Our award honors the Friends of Peirce Mill for diligence in making possible the preservation and rehabilitation of the last extant 19th century water powered grist mill in the District of Columbia, a symbol of the milling industry that once flourished along Rock Creek.

We are honored by the company of other award winners. Lifetime Achievement Awards were given (posthumously) to John W. Hechinger and Walter E. Washington. Special Achievement Award winners:

- African American Heritage Trail, the city's first official guide to historic sites associated with black history.
- H-DC, a D. C. history site with information on all aspects of Washington arts, humanities, and social sciences.
- Carlos Rosario International Career Center and Public Charter School, a restoration of the former James Ormond Wilson Teachers College built in 1912.
- Save the Tivoli, a historic preservation struggle that started in 1980 to save the historic theater built in 1922.
- Sixth and I Streets Historic Synagogue, the restoration of a historic building to its original use.
- reSTOREdc, part of the Mainstreet program with seven locally designated programs in D. C. Each Mainstreet project develops and executes a commercial revitalization plan in cooperation with residential and business associations.

## Joint Picnic with the Association for Preservation Technology

On a glorious Saturday (June 25), we had a joint picnic with members of the Association of Preservation Technology, a volunteer organization of architects, engineers, and historians. The group name captures their interests. We have significant cross-membership with APT and some obvious shared interests.

## 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

Kevin Milstead, president of APT, and Richard Abbott, president of FOPM, organized the gathering that attracted more than 50 people from the two groups for food and entertainment. Food included a mixed grill courtesy of Kevin and pot luck salads, veggies, and desserts. Threats of rain were greatly exaggerated, and we ate under the trees near the creek.

Entertainment included tours of the mill (six tour groups by my count), exhibits at the Peirce Barn, vintage maps of the area of the mill, and a hike to Klinge Mansion. Isaac Peirce gave that land on the next hill to the south to his son Joshua, who built a home that he called Linnean Hill after the biologist who invented the naming system for plants and animals that we still use. Joshua Peirce was an accomplished horticulturalist who introduced many plants into commerce in the Washington area. The building is now used for National Park Service offices.

Ken Drake of APT told some of us that he worked (as a truck driver) in a mill in Peoli, Wisconsin. He has been peeking in the windows of Peirce Mill and is eager to see it grinding and clanking. Steve Dryden of FOPM talked about how the Peirce and Shoemaker families came from a rural Washington lifestyle that is hard to imagine when stuck in city traffic. The family members started assorted businesses with mixed success but a steady connection with the land. They were naturalists when country wasn't cool.

For board members especially, it wasn't all food and entertainment. The weekend before, volunteers met at the mill to beat back the spider webs and sweep up. After the picnic, the board had a productive meeting under the trees.

## 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](mailto:abbott1229@erols.com). We'll try to get your submission into the next issue of *Milling About*. Thanks!