


Colvin Run Mill


~ Historic Site ~



10017 Colvin Run Road
Great Falls, VA 22066

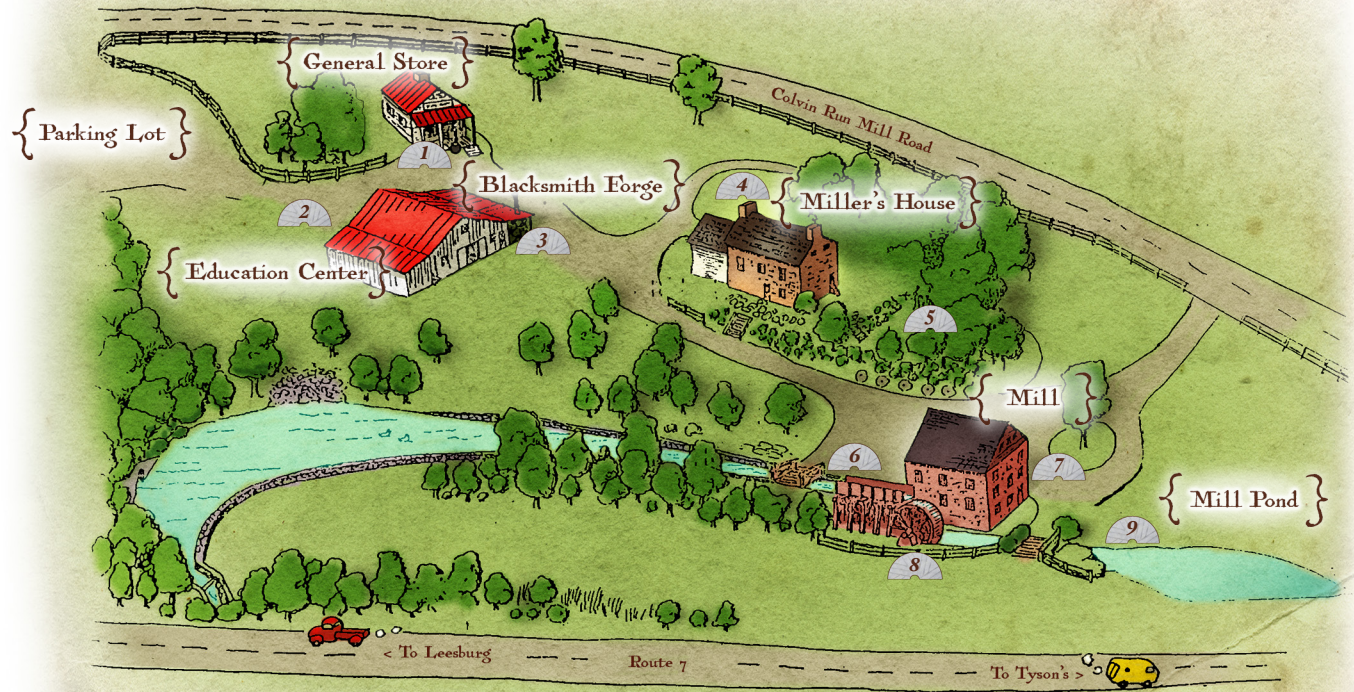
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 A publication of Fairfax County, VA
4/20

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Fairfax County Park Authority

Enjoy your walk through history...

Welcome to Colvin Run Mill. Colvin Run Mill is a tribute to industrial innovation and the working people who made it happen. This guide to our site will help you connect to the people and stories of our past.

Colvin Run Mill has long been the center of many different communities. The path from the parking lot leads to the porch of the **General Store (1)**, often an important gathering place. It now is our



visitor center, a museum, and a classroom. This building once stood on Colvin Run Road across from the Mill. Inside, on upper shelves and hanging from the ceiling, you'll see examples of items that storekeepers Maude and Mark Cockrill may have sold during the store's heyday, from the 1890s to the 1940s. Today, you can still buy whole wheat flour, cornmeal, and grits ground at the Mill, as well as "penny" candy and gift items.

The Education Center (2) was built in 1970 on the foundation of an old dairy barn. Inside, you will find a 1/24 scale model of Colvin Run Mill and the Grains Around the World exhibit, which features pictures and samples of grains grown and milled across the globe. You may also explore the hands-on history trunk, containing reproductions of historical items used at home, school, and work.

The blacksmith was an important community resource, critical to the life of the Colvin Run community. Today, blacksmiths experienced in the art and history of their craft regularly offer demonstrations spring through fall in the **blacksmith forge (3)**, located under the eaves of the Education Center.

Further along the gravel path is the c.1809 **Miller's House (4)** and ornamental garden (5), once home to the families who ran the Mill. In 1883, Addison Millard bought the Mill and moved here with his wife Emma and some of their 20 children. After Addison's death, the family remained, running the Mill until 1934.

Visit the exhibits in the house to explore the complex interplay of people, technology, and society at Colvin Run.



Walking down the hill, you'll parallel the **headrace (6)**, which brings water to the Mill. Standing on the bridge, you can see the water flowing to the flume and waterwheel. The water used to power our gristmill still comes from Colvin Run, from the opposite side of Route 7, through a tunnel under the road.



Look for the old **millstones** on the hillside across from the Mill. These premium grinding stones were imported from France for other mills in the area and would have been a major investment for a mill owner. A well maintained set of these burr stones could last up to 100 years, sometimes outlasting the mill itself. The Millards used the burr stones for part of the grinding process at Colvin Run Mill, even after they installed more efficient steam-powered roller mills. Using both old and new technology, the Millards could produce about 35 barrels of flour per day.

As you walk around the c.1811 **Mill (7)**, notice that the walls are a combination of original and replacement brick. When the Fairfax County Park Authority acquired the Mill, archaeologists discovered that a wooden wall on the waterwheel side replaced an original brick wall that had collapsed. A reproduction of the original brick wall was built and includes the "putlog holes" that supported scaffolding during the construction of the Mill.



The 20' overshot **waterwheel (8)** faithfully reproduces the original waterwheel that powered the Mill machinery. The axle is a single white oak log that transmits power from the waterwheel to gears inside the Mill that turn the grindstones and machinery inside the building. Active management and preservation of the Mill keep it operating today. You can support this effort by volunteering at the Mill.

Before walking back up the hill, stroll the banks of the **millpond (9)**. Once used by the community for seasonal diversions such as fishing, swimming, and ice skating, it is now home to geese, ducks, turtles, and an occasional heron. At the far end of the pond, the tailrace directs the water flow through a tunnel under Colvin Run Road into Difficult Run.

