



Colvin Run Mill is built according to the principles of Oliver Evans, the inventor and technologist who revolutionized grist mill construction and helped bring the production line to America. Tobacco reigned as the undisputed king of crops in the agriculture of the Northern Neck during the first century following its settlement. By 1740, however, declining annual yields of tobacco from the exhausted soil indicated the necessity of diversification of crops. Corn and wheat became increasingly popular because they were staples which helped feed the farmer's family and his dependents. Moreover, the accessibility of the Northern Neck farms to the Chesapeake Bay meant that the crops could be shipped either as grain or as milled flour to parts along the coast, to the West Indies, and to Europe.

The first recorded survey of the site on which Colvin Run Mill stands is dated June 8, 1739, shortly before the land was granted to John Colvill by the proprietor. Colvill later sold the land to William Fairfax who, in turn, willed it to Bryan Fairfax, from whom George Washington purchased it in 1763. Washington kept this tract until his death, and letters written during the War for Independence speak of his intention to build a mill on Difficult Run. There is no further documentation, however, to support the conclusion that he had this specific site in mind or that he carried through his plan.

Today it stands as a monument both to the skills of its early builders and millers and to the craftsmanship of the twentieth century artisans who accomplished its restoration.

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