

GRIST FROM THE MILL

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

COLVIN RUN MILL
HISTORIC SITE

February 2009

Rich Thorpe Models the Mill



It all started last summer when Dawn Kehrer asked our resident crafty volunteer woodworker, **Rich Thorpe**, if he could build a model of the mill's power train. Rich put on his thinking cap — and produced an interactive masterpiece. Later, when asked to answer a few questions about the project, he sat down and wrote the following article.

HAVE YOU EVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE?

It was Dawn Kehrer's idea to make a working model to demonstrate how the gears speed up rotation of the water

wheel. When she asked me if I could do it, I guess I had that deer-in-the-headlights look. Like most engineers-to-be, I made a few models as a kid, such as rockets (I remember Sputnik!), boats (that sunk), and even a goofy looking Golden Gate Bridge (okay, my dad helped with that one). But never anything that *actually worked*.

HOW DID YOU MAKE IT?

Luckily, Dawn was able to track down the mill restoration blueprints from 1972, which proved to be the key. I redrew all the gears at one-eighth scale, then glued the drawings to pieces of plywood. Next, I drilled holes for the face-gear teeth and wallower pins, and cut out the wheels with a band saw. I then glued dowels into the face-gear holes and beveled them with a

V-shaped sanding block. The wallowers were a little trickier, especially the small trundle gear that drives the runner stone.

WHAT WAS THE HARDEST PART?

The hardest, and most important, part was attaching the face-gears and wallowers to the shafts so that they spun concentrically. After much trial-and-error, the solution was to use a lathe to drill pilot holes down the center of each shaft and extra-long screws to mount them to the frames. With a little extra sanding of the gear teeth and a bit of luck, everything meshed together.

WHAT DID YOU LIKE THE BEST?

I struggled with how to make the gears turn

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WEEKENDS IN FEBRUARY:



Valentine Tea for Young Ladies

Saturday, 2/7, 2-3:30 pm
\$17 per young lady

Maple Syrup Boil-downs

Sundays 2/8 & 2/15
Noon—2pm, FREE
Outdoors!
Dress for the weather.



Small Museum Association 25th Annual Conference

February 22-24, 2009
Clarion Resort Fontainebleau
Ocean City, MD
smallmuseum.org

GET WELL WISHES



for a speedy recovery to **Marjorie Lundegard** who is recuperating from knee replacement surgery. We hope she'll be out and about in no time at all.



New Resource Management Division Site Operations Branch Manager Named

Thanks to Todd Brown and Matthew Kaiser, FCPA Public Information Office, for the following information and the photo.



TODD BROWN
Site Operations Branch Manager
Resource Management Division

Todd Brown, formerly manager of Frying Pan Farm Park (FPFP), has been promoted to the Resource Management Division's (RMD) Site Operations Branch Manager. He now supervises the division's five nature centers, two historic sites, Frying Pan Farm Park and Green Springs Gardens Park.

Todd began his career with the Park Authority in 1991 as the manager of Kidwell Farm (part of FPFP). In 2002, he became manager of Frying Pan Farm Park and its numerous operating sections.

He says his goals for his new job are very selfish — he loves to learn new things and deal with chal-

lenges and this position will certainly satisfy those desires.

The biggest challenge right now is the budget; and although Todd says he hates to be involved with difficult decisions that affect the people and sites we all love, he is looking forward to watching the talented and committed paid and volunteer staff at all the sites implement creative plans that will not only preserve the sites, but make them flourish.

Todd's favorite part of his new job is learning a million new things out at the sites — particularly about mills, invasive plants, Civil War history and owls.

His biggest fear is **SNAKES!** And he fears he'll see way too many of them on his site visits — it's already happened at Hidden Pond Nature

Center. (No word from Todd on what happened during the encounter, but surely the nature center staff turned it into a positive "teachable moment.")

Todd is a graduate of Strayer University in Manassas with a Bachelors degree in Administration. He also completed further studies at the Revenue Management School in 2008.

Todd reports that he and his "beautiful wife" Cheryl have an 8 year old son, Trevor, and a 6 year old daughter, Christa.

Todd believes that difficulty brings opportunity and we all now have the opportunity to shine.

Shine on, Todd! We all look forward to working with you to keep the RMD sites stronger than ever.



photo by **Ann Korzeniewski**



What Do YOU Think?

Your steadfast support of site programs and operations means a lot to the site's paid staff and visitors.

Paid staff has been discussing the site's annual volunteer awards and recognition events, and now it's time to go to the source for the opinions that matter the most.

That means we want to hear from **YOU**.

How many volunteer events do you attend here each year?

What's your opinion of the pancake breakfast?

What's your opinion of the awards dinner?

What time of day do you prefer:

- Morning?
- Late afternoon?
- Early evening?

What do you think about receiving paper certificates?

What should be recognized:

- Length of service?
- Special projects?
- Annual hours?
- Something else?

What type of recognition would be most meaningful for you?

For 35 years, the awards and recognition events have been based around meals. Would you like to attend another kind of event:

- Museum field trip?
- Local sport event?
- Hike on the CCT?
- Field trip to another park?
- What/where else?

Is there anything else we should consider when planning awards and/or recognition of your service?

Please reply via e-mail to **Mike Henry** at mike.henry@fairfaxcounty.gov or leave a note on his office chair.





**VIRGINIA
ASSOCIATION
OF MUSEUMS
2009 CONFERENCE**

**MARCH 21-24
FOUNDERS INN
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA**

The annual conference offers paid & volunteer museum staff across the state of Virginia the chance to gather for educational sessions, networking and career-building experiences.

The conference visits different areas of Virginia each year and participants gain the added benefit of experiencing the excitement and energy of local museums and historic sites.

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION AND
TO REGISTER GO TO
VAMUSEUMS.ORG**

February Birthdays

2 — Will blacksmith **Pat McGuire** see his shadow? Or will spring be right around the corner? Only the proprietor of Sleepy Groundhog Forge (aka **Santa Claus** earlier in the winter) and Mother Nature have the answers.

22 — **Bob Lundegard** will be tending to his wife **Marge's** recovery from knee replacement surgery this month with help from their son Paul, visiting from California. Undoubtedly Marge & Bob will celebrate in style — if not quite yet on the dance floor!





Four Wash Boilers Found – Only One Child Lost!

Arti-FACTS
by Dawn Kebrer



The wash boiler represents “the great domestic dread of the household” — the drudgery of washday.

In 1904, an article appeared in *The New York Times* describing, believe it or not, a wash boiler riot! For one hour only, a New York store offered wash boilers for just one dime (they usually sold for about \$2.00). The crowds of women who arrived for the sale completely blocked the streets so the police were called.

When the police got to the store, they found a struggling mass of women, crowding and elbowing. “Some had one baby and two wash boilers, while others were fighting their way to the street with two babies and three wash boilers.” In the scrimmage, one baby was lost and was later claimed by a “big, stout woman who informed the police that she had suc-

ceeded in getting four wash boilers.”

Wow! Who knew that a sale of wash boilers could cause such a scene? I guess we are lucky to have one of these popular items in the Colvin Run General Store.

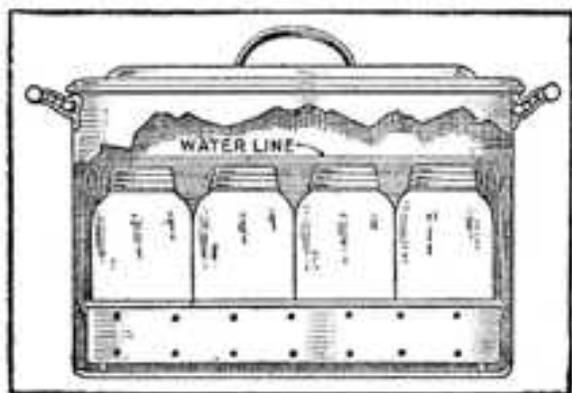
Our copper wash boiler with wood handles, minus its lid, hangs above the counter and dates from the early 1900s. Our boiler is oval, but others were round and were manufactured of tin, copper or porcelain-lined cast iron. Copper is a good material for this item as it is resistant to corrosion and a good conductor of heat. The oval model has a 20 gallon capacity and fits over two stove burners.

Among our volunteers, **Marjorie Lundegard** remembers her grandmother using her boiler to boil linens and towels and can food. A wooden stick was used to stir the dirty clothes in the hot soapy water. The wash boiler might also be used to boil hams.

In a larger sense, the boiler represents the “Herculean task which women all dread” and “the great domestic dread of the household” — the drudgery of washday before modern appliances. In the book, *Never Done, A History of American Housework*, Susan Strasser writes that “even the most simplified hand-laundry process consumed staggering amounts of time and labor.”

A typical washday, often Monday because people changed their clothes on Sunday, involved pumping, lugging and boiling water for soaking, rubbing, rinsing, boiling, bluing and perhaps starching. Finally, wringing out the laundry and hauling it to a clothesline to hang until dry. Then, start the whole process over again for another load of dirty clothes.

Modern housewives are grateful that this memory from the “good old days” is long past.



Boilers were also used to heat canning jars to preserve food.



Rich Thorpe's Model, cont'd.

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once they were inside the plexiglass case. Maybe a Model T-type hand crank. But how to make it long enough to reach into the water-wheel? Then Mason Maddox gave me a "deep socket." But how to connect it to the wooden handle? I tried epoxy glue, but right away it fell apart. Blacksmith **Pat Maguire** saved the day with a steel 1/4-inch square pin and his mortise drill for making a square hole in the handle. We epoxied everything together, and voilá, the waterwheel turned, the gears meshed, and the runner

stone spun like crazy! Finally, after all these years, about 80 of hours of labor, and some key help from CRM staff, I had made something that *actually worked!*

The most interesting part of the project was when I took it to the mill, I looked at the real water-wheel, and something wasn't right - it has *ten* pairs of spokes, not eight! I rechecked the blueprints to make sure I wasn't crazy, and sure enough, I counted only eight. The folks who did the restoration must have had a good reason for adding the extra spokes, but what was it? Maybe someone who reads this article will remember.

A FINAL THOUGHT:

Making the gear model was a challenge, but building the real thing must have been quite another for the restoration crew, or for that matter, the original builders of Colvin Run Mill. With all our sophisticated tools and know-how of today, you've still got to hand it to the carpenters, blacksmiths and engineers of centuries past.

Other people helped to complete the project:

FCPA carpenters Ed Purcell & his helper built the wood base for the model and sealed the gears.

Our good friend Susan Clark used the Museum Collections Management Section's budget to pay for the custom-made plexiglass cover.

NEXT MONTH:

- Last Maple Syrup boil-down of the season, Sunday, March 1, noon-2pm
- School field trips resume!

Next month, we'll discuss how docents can operate the model to demonstrate for school children and other visitors how the water-wheel and gears power the grinding stone.





COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE

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www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm



Mike Toms, Colvin Run Mill Volunteer



The mission of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is to maintain and interpret its historic buildings and collections for the enrichment of Fairfax County residents and visitors as they relate to the themes of technology and community in 19th century rural northern Virginia.

Manager: Mike Henry

Assistant Manager/Newsletter Editor: Ann Korzeniewski

Miller: Mason Maddox

Historic Collections Coordinator: Dawn Kehrer

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