

# GRIST FROM THE MILL

## VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

COLVIN RUN MILL  
HISTORIC SITE

September 2009

### Spotlight on Pat McGuire

Pat McGuire has been a fixture on the Colvin Run Mill scene for many years. He's been a member of the paid staff; he's been a volunteer. He's been storekeeper, miller's dusty, carpenter and *shhhh!* even Santa Claus. But his true calling is blacksmithing.

Lately, Pat has been demonstrating the ancient art of blacksmithing one Sunday each month at Colvin Run Mill, and in August he took his skills

on the road to the 4-H Fair at Frying Pan Farm Park.

Braving the 90+ degree heat on the last Family Fun Sunday of the summer, Dawn Kehrer photographed Pat working hammer and tongs in the Colvin Run forge.



Pat McGuire will  
fire up the forge  
on Sunday,  
September 6,  
11am - 3pm.



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- "Old Mill" Ruins in Great Falls, Virginia **2**  
*by Marjorie Lundegard*
- Salt Glazed Stoneware, **3**  
*by Dawn Kehrer*
- They're Baaack! **4**
- SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Meeting **5**
- Welcome Allison Hicks **5**

### WEEKENDS IN SEPTEMBER:

#### GRINDING DEMONSTRATIONS

*Sundays, 9/6 & 9/20, noon-3pm*

**\$6 adult, \$4 child & senior**

Watch the miller grind grain as it was done 200 years ago. Whole wheat flour, cornmeal and grits ground at the mill are for sale in the Colvin Run General Store.

#### ICE CREAM MAKING

*Saturday, 9/12, noon-3pm, \$1.25/cup*

Crank up the last delicious batch of the season.

#### BLACKSMITHING DEMONSTRATION

*Sunday, 9/6, 11am—3pm, FREE*

Watch the sparks fly and the smith work hammer & tongs to forge useful & decorative items from steel.

#### OFF THE COUCH, OUT OF THE CAR – FIND YOUR FEET!

*Sunday, 9/20, 1-3pm, \$5 per person*

Bring the family for an outdoor adventure. Make trail mix, play a hiking relay game & hit the Cross County Trail for a 45-minute hike. Pre-paid reservations by 9/17.

#### MILL RUN DULCIMER BAND CONCERT

*Sunday, 9/20, 2—4pm, FREE, donations accepted.*

Kick off the fall concert season with the band and tap your toes to your old-time favorite tunes.

#### SAILING AT THE MILL

*Sunday, 9/27, 1pm, \$10/boat*

Assemble and decorate a wooden sailboat, then test its seaworthiness on our mini-lake. Pre-paid reservations by 9/24. Sponsored by the Friends of Colvin Run Mill.



## “Old Mill” Ruins in Great Falls, Virginia

by *Marjorie Lundegard*

How many mills are named “Old Mill”? The name could be used to describe **all** the mills in Fairfax County. Today, all that remains of this particular old mill are some partial stone walls and foundation located in a very hilly wooded area near the Potomac River in Great Falls. It may be the mill reported in 1836 by Haywood Cleveland McMullan to be located at the intersection of Jefferson Branch and Nichols Run, two streams that empty into the Potomac River above the falls.

J.M. Trammel received a land grant in this area in 1748. The Virginia Northern Neck Mill grant of June 17, 1748, was for 513 acres of land and the boundary description refers to a “mill run” and a “north fork of a mill run” which appears to reference the two streams that fed this mill.

An 1827 map labels the mill as “Still House Branch” which supports the rumor that this mill was once used as a distillery. Civil War maps of the

area indicate a mill at this location called “Old Mill.”

The mill ruin is on private property currently owned by the Calvary Baptist Church. It is located at the intersection of the two streams near the end of Springvale Road in Great Falls.

Visitors are discouraged from the site because pieces of the ruins are disappearing. Someone tried to haul away the grinding stone, but in the process the stone broke into pieces, leaving only one large piece intact. How many other pieces of the mill have disappeared is anyone’s guess.

One corner of the stone mill is still standing and there is evidence to locate the first floor level. The mill probably measured about 20 feet by 26 feet. The height of the room was about 10 feet and the exterior stone walls were two feet wide. There is no evidence of mortar being used between the stones. Due to its size and location, this was probably a custom mill.

The mill had two mill-races, one from each stream. Part of the dam is still intact and the lower level of the ruined building has a small arch where the axle of the waterwheel entered the mill.

Further research is required to learn more about this mill ruin. Who were the owners? What grains did the mill grind? When was the mill built and when did it cease operations? As you can see, there are many questions that remain to be answered.



**One corner of the “Old Mill” still stands. Note the small arch in the wall where the waterwheel axle entered the building.**

### September Birthdays



- 5 John Dettra
- 10 Jennifer Blackwood
- 24 Barbara Raymond



## Salt Glazed Stoneware

by *Dawn Kehrer*

This month you will see the miller's desk in a new location in the miller's office and a new jug on the windowsill. As for the desk, our miller, Mason, suggested we move it closer to the north window so that the 19<sup>th</sup> century miller could benefit from the natural light. He could also see anyone coming down the path from the house while standing at his desk near the window.

The new jug is salt glazed stoneware with a handle and round top and is appropriate for the 1810–1850 time period. I traded our other jugs for this one that I found among the Fairfax County Park Authority historic artifact collections in storage. Its origin is unknown. Several potters manufactured salt glazed stoneware during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Alexandria, Virginia, and one of the manufactories operated almost continuously from 1813 to 1876. The miller may have

needed to wet his whistle during the day and the jug could have held a beverage for him and his visitors. What would he have drunk? I'm looking into that for next month's article.

What does *salt glazed* mean? In salt glazing, common dampened salt is thrown or placed into a kiln at peak temperature during the firing process of stoneware, which is made of clay. The hot temperature vaporizes the salt and the vapor combines with the silica in the clay body to form a hard glassy glaze on the stoneware. The pottery will also have the texture of orange peel. You can recognize salt glazed pottery in general with the two characteristics of orange peel texture and glossy shine.

If the potter does not add decorative paint to the pot before firing, the color of the piece will depend on the amount of iron in the clay. More

iron creates a dark, heavy brown color; small amounts of iron create a light gray, light amber or tan color. There are several other pieces of salt glazed stoneware on the upper shelves of the Colvin Run General Store if you would like to see more examples.

The salt glazing process was discovered in Germany about the 14<sup>th</sup> century and then brought to Staffordshire, England, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Salt glazed stoneware was popular during the colonial and Federal periods in North America and was useful for food and liquids in times past and today because it is non-toxic, impermeable and extremely durable. There is much more to know about salt glazing, of course, and I encourage you to read more about it at your local library or online.



**The miller may have needed to wet his whistle during the day, and this jug could have held a beverage for him and his visitors.**

**This motif was unique to 19th century stoneware potters in Alexandria, VA. It is a simple round blossom rising from a leafy stalk, with arcs of small leaves bending down from each side.**





## They're Baaack!



**Ken Asher and Iris Schwartz** have been on sabbatical for over a year. They left us in March 2008 to relocate in England where they planned to spend six months working, exploring and enjoying a change of scene. They must REALLY have enjoyed the change, as they ended up staying for a year.

But they kept in touch with their milling roots while they were away. Iris wrote an article about visiting Pann Mill in Bucks County, England, for the November 2008 Colvin Run Mill newsletter. When they finally came back to the U.S. this spring, the intrepid travel-

ers stayed at home in McLean for only two days before jumping in the car and heading out for a ten week trip to discover America. First they visited family on the east coast, and then continued west. At one point they found themselves in Las Vegas, NV, where they got a pop-up tent and kept on trekking.

They followed the Lewis & Clark trail, explored Oregon and visited California wineries.

Whew!

You can view more photos and read about their trip on Iris's blog at [writergirl-traveler.blogspot.com](http://writergirl-traveler.blogspot.com)

Now back at home more permanently, Ken and Iris are looking forward to rejoining the Colvin Run Mill volunteer team. Ken will once again be giving tours on Sundays and Iris will turn her talents to tending Emma's herb garden outside the miller's house.



**Ken & Iris's home away from home.**



## SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Meeting

by Marge Lundegard

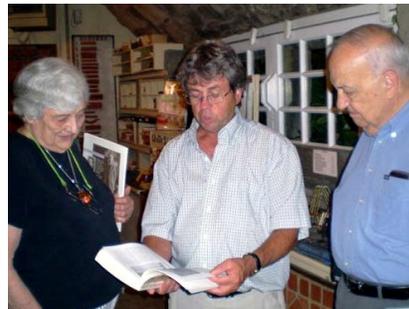
On August 15, the SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Chapter held its fall meeting at the Stover-Myers Mill in Pipersville, Pennsylvania. The meeting was hosted by Charles Yeske. **Nick Yannarell** and **Bob and Marge Lundegard** attended the meeting along with more than 30 people from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Delaware.

After the business meeting and a speech by Earl Brown, lunch was served

in the lovely park alongside Tohickon Creek. The guests were encouraged to explore the mill that was built around 1800 and remained in the same family for several generations. The mill ceased milling flour in 1920.

At 2 pm the group went to the Mercer Museum in Doylestown. This is a history museum of everyday life during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Henry Mercer gathered more than 40,000 objects that documented the lives, trades and crafts of early

Americans prior to the American Revolution. In 1916, Mercer constructed a museum to exhibit these objects. The museum, made of cement, is known as the Castle and is six stories high. It is truly an experience to view all of these objects.



Marge Lundegard, SPOOM host Charles Yeske and Nick Yannarell at the Mercer Museum.

Mark your calendar!



SPOOM Mid-Atlantic's next meeting will be at Poplar Grove Tide mill in Mathews, Virginia, on March 17, 2010.

## Welcome Allison Hicks

**Allison Hicks**, a senior at Oakton High School — alma mater of Mason's much-missed former dusty Kevin Gawthrop — has been training on Sundays this summer to become a weekend touring docent.

She chose Colvin Run Mill because it is close to her home, the people are friendly and the visitors are eager to learn about the mill.

Allison enjoys theatre, especially children's theatre, and is a member of the Elden Street Players. She is looking forward to using her drama skills on tour to bring the mill to life.

In school, Allison is stage manager and make-up mistress for the Oakton High School theatre productions and she serves as president of the Thespian Honor Society.

Allison is also interested in helping animals, but her mother is not sure she wants a dog at home full-time. So Allison fostered an "oldie but goodie" cocker spaniel who needed a temporary home for a few months before being adopted.

Allison will soon be ready to lead tours on her own and we are sure visitors will enjoy her enthusiasm for the mill as well as her dramatic talents.



Allison Hicks, new weekend docent.



## COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE

10017 Colvin Run Road  
Great Falls, VA 22066

Phone: 703-759-2771

Fax: 703-759-7490

FOR REASONABLE ADA  
ACCOMMODATIONS, CALL  
703-324-8727



A PUBLICATION OF  
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
AND  
COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm)



Don Sweeney, FCPA



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

**Programs, Volunteer Scheduling & Sales:** Jennifer Blackwood

**General Store Operations & Programs:** Terry Tomasulo

**Miller's Assistant:** Kim Whitacre

**Jill of All Trades:** Pam Gennari