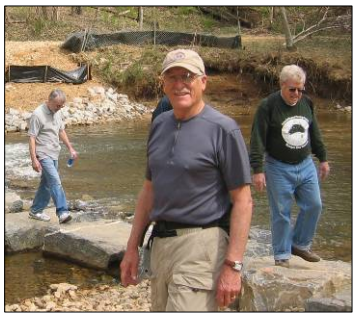
Grist from the Mill

Colvin Run Mill Volunteer Newsletter **September 2007**

Fall Fun

Check out the enclosed fall brochure to find all the fun activities scheduled September through November. You'll recognize some tried and true programs as well as a couple of new ideas.

Tuesday, September 11 10am-noon Volunteer Field Excursion



Here's your chance to hike the prettiest part of the Cross County Trail with Mike Moran, an avid hiker, as a guide. The three-mile hike from the Difficult Run Stream Valley Park to Colvin Run Mill is an easy walk with even terrain, lots of shade, and beautiful scenery. Transportation will be provided back to the starting point. Sign up with Erin Chernisky at 703-324-8750 or erin.chernisky@fairfaxcounty.gov.

September Birthdays

5 – John Dettra. The summer campers join in the singing with enthusiasm whenever John brings his auto harp. He shows everyone that playing is fun and not that difficult and lets interested youngsters take a turn under his watchful eyes. John has always loved music and encourages that love in others.

10 – Jennifer Blackwood. It's becoming a tradition for Jennifer to extend summer by celebrating her birthday in Florida, relaxing in the sun and putting up the hurricane shutters before she comes back to a busy fall at the mill.

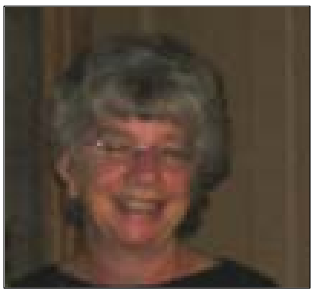
24 – Barbara Raymond. For over 8 years, Barbara has poured tea, cranked ice cream, hosted events, and tended the gardens at Colvin Run Mill. In recognition of her varied volunteer roles, Barbara will be recognized as an outstanding volunteer at the Resource Management Division Volunteer Excellence Reception and Brunch.

Saturday, September 29 9:30am – noon RMD Volunteer Brunch and Awards

Celebrate our outstanding volunteers and enjoy a bountiful brunch at the Resource Management Division's Volunteer Excellence Reception and Brunch on Saturday September 30, from 9:30am - noon at Green Spring Gardens Park. Barbara Raymond will be recognized for her outstanding contributions and Nick Yannarell will receive special recognition for his 25 years of volunteering with Fairfax County Park Authority.

Expanding Repertoire

Two of our current volunteers are expanding their volunteer duties this fall. Beginning in September, Muriel Levin will volunteer one Sunday a month. Muriel currently works with school groups and helps with data entry on Wednesday. She has been poring over the Docent Manual and is eager to lead more adult tours.



In October, Kitty O'Hara will start working with school groups on Fridays in addition to leading tours one Sunday a month and being our Wednesday storekeeper. Kitty loves to learn and try new things.

Park Praise

The August 2007 issue of *Park News* has comments of a satisfied customer about a mill tour with Mike Moran.

"Our two grandsons were enthralled by his stories and information. His explanations enabled the boys, now 10 and 12, to understand everything he said and he patiently answered their many questions. …Moran was the best guide we have ever had during our uncounted various tours taken during 40 years of parenting and grandparenting...."

Out and About with Mike & Martha Toms

Mike and Martha Toms are having entirely too much fun in retirement. We received the following email from Mike in August.

We are now in Estes Park, Colorado. We took a side trip to Cheyenne Wyoming, where I lived when I was five years old. Cheyenne is a small city, laid back and extremely proud of its frontier heritage. Warren Air Force Base, just to the west of town, is home to many Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (yes they are still around but some have been phased out). The air base traces its origins to Fort D. A. Russell named for a general and Civil War hero who died in battle in Chantilly, Virginia. The fort was established in 1867 to protect the builders of the Union Pacific Railroad from Indian attack. The cavalry moved out in the 1930's. The US Air Force took over in 1947 and changed the name to Warren Air Force Base. We recommend visiting the museum on the base.

Arti-Facts from Dawn

Pearlware

The smallest dish in the archaeological exhibit case in the Miller's House is an octagon-shaped plate, decorated with a green shell edge. The artifact inventory notes that this dish is an example of pearlware, a ceramic earthenware made with the addition of white clay and characterized by a bluish glaze containing cobalt.

Pearlware has a long and fascinating history that encompasses the history of the English Staffordshire potteries and I invite you to do some reading on your own. However, I will give you some major points about pearlware and shell edge to tell our visitors.

Josiah Wedgwood is traditionally credited with developing pearlware in 1779. Letters from him to his partner Thomas Bentley discuss the development of an earthenware ceramic that Josiah called "pearl white" which was whiter than the popular 18th century staple creamware. Pearl white could be gilded, painted, molded, pierced and transfer printed, and was used for everything from dining services to chamber pots. It was cheaper to produce than comparable English porcelains and bore a closer resemblance to the popular imported blue and white Chinese porcelain than creamware. In short, pearl white was inexpensive, versatile and pretty. The term pearlware first appears in the mid 1800s according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

In the 1980s, ceramic historians challenged Wedgwood's title as inventor of pearlware. Perhaps as early as 1775, Staffordshire potters were already making a line of dishes called "China Glaze" which was, in effect, the same as the dishes that Wedgwood called pearl white. Archaeological evidence from America also supports the belief that China Glaze predated pearl white. This revision to ceramic chronology is important to archaeologists because pearlware had a 1779 "terminus post quem", or earliest point in time used for dating archaeological deposits. This new knowledge will cause archaeologists to reconsider dates of the findings where pearlware has been discovered.

The decoration that rims our little plate is shell edge. Author Terence A. Lockett stated that this type of decoration appeared on the staple pearlware of many potters. The shell edge was inspired by mid-eighteenth century rococo design elements on porcelain and earthenware from Europe, and it appeared on ceramics in several ways. On some plates, the edge was scalloped in either a uniform or asymmetrical scallop, or the edge could be unscalloped with just fine lines impressed into the edge of the dish. Tableware of this style with a blue or green shell edge, similar to our plate, was made almost exclusively of pearlware until well into the 1830s.

According to authors Robert R. Hunter Jr. and George L. Miller, the shell edge decoration was "One of the most popular and long-lived styles ever produced by the English ceramics industry." It seems to have been used in almost every American household during the early Federal period. It is no surprise that archaeologists found small pieces of shell-edge ceramics during digs at Colvin Run Mill and Sully Plantation.

On the Road with Bob and Marge
THE OPEN AIR MUSEUM NEAR AMSTERDAM

Upon arrival at the open-air museum, we hopped on the tram and rode around the perimeter of the museum. The first stop was Wormerveer, a c.1770 horse-driven buckwheat/groat hulling mill moved to the museum in 1926-27 from the province of North Holland. It is in the building that was an area coach house. The mill has wood gears and three pairs of buckwheat/groat stones, two for breaking the hulls and one for grinding. There are also two sets of shaking sieves, a bolter and three winnowers. The groats produced at the mill were sold for porridge and pancakes. An additional grinding stone used vinegar in the wet grinding process to grind mustard seeds to make mustard.

Next, we visited an 1830 horse-driven oil mill from Zieuwent. This is a rectangular brick building with a half hipped roof covered with clay tiles. It has one pair of edge runner stones, a pressing block, and an oil seed heater. In 1894, a 12 HP steam engine was installed, but it broke in 1904 and the horse was put back to work. In a 10-to-12 hour day, the mill could produce 40 liters of oil which was made into oil cake for cattle feed. The mill operated until 1923-4 and became a museum in 1931.

We stopped at Velwe, an operational water-powered paper mill with an overshot waterwheel and wood gears. The mill was re-built on this site in 1933, based on a 1654 mill, and the waterwheel was replaced in 2002. It is a rectangular building with a hipped thatched roof. The machinery inside the mill includes a cutting bench, a tilt hammer, a beater, dipping vat, paper press, and a drying area.

Het Fortuyn, or The Fortune, is from Delft. It is an eye-catching white-washed conical brick tower mill with a thatched cap. The mill has 3 pairs of cullen stones for grinding grain, and a smaller pair of cullen stones for hulling grain. Both stocks for the sails are welded steel. The mill was built in 1696, moved to the museum in 1920, and last restored in 1974.

The Spidermill, Gorredijk, is a small hollow-post drainage mill using an Archimedean screw. The mill has overlap weather board siding with vertical battans, wood sail stocks and wood gears. This mill never had a professional miller but was attended by farmers, usually in the spring and summer. The mill was built in 1800 and, in1886, the mill was used to pump water into the local skating rink. It was moved to the museum in 1925.

The Tjasker drainage mill, the largest mill of this kind, rests on a trestle and used an Archimedean screw to drain about 10 hectacres. Sails and screw are on the same shaft, thus no gearing is needed. These types of mills were usually disassembled in the winter months and stored. It was built in 1875 and moved to the museum in 1928.

The post mill from Huizen is a three level corn mill set on an open trestle with a wood windshaft and a tarred cap made of overlap weatherboard. A sack hoist is

driven off the brake wheel. Inside are two pairs of stones. Parts of the mill date from 1700. It was moved to the museum in 1916 and the last restoration was in 1975.

The drainage mill from Noordlaren, an octagonal smock mill with an Archimedean screw, was used to drain a 250 hectare polder at Noordlaren. The mill has a thatched cap and sides and rests on a brick base. The

sails are common curved wind boards on the leading edges. There is outside winding with a capstan wheel-tail pole winding. The mill was built in 1862 and electric power was added in 1939. It was moved to the museum in 1960, where it operates when there is sufficient wind.

Minj Genoogen, or My Delight, is a paltrok post sawmill with a three frame up-down saw that is now powered by electricity. Paltrok saw mills originated in the Zaan area before 1600, and, at one time, there were over 250 such mills in Zaan and over 400 in Holland. The wooden

square body of the mill is covered with white vertical battens and rests on a circular brick wall. The white cap is covered with weather boarding. The sails are black cloth with boarded leading edges. Although the original date of the mill is unknown, it was moved to the museum in 1928.

Original farm houses with attached barns are also at the museum. Cows are fed and milked in part of the barn. In the summer when the animals are out in the pasture, this part of the barn is scrubbed and used for family living. We were able to see only a small portion of the museum, but a volunteer, who had been at the museum for 40 years, shared his vast knowledge with us.

The mission of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is to maintain and interpret the historic buildings and collections at the site 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.

A publication of Fairfax County, Virginia and Colvin Run Mill Historic Site www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm

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