

Grist from the Mill



Colvin Run Mill Volunteer Newsletter

December 2007



Holiday Programs

It's not too late to volunteer for your favorite holiday program. Children's

Holiday Shopping is on Saturday, Dec. 1, Sunday, Dec. 2 and Monday, Dec. 3. Country Christmas is Saturday, Dec. 8. Model Trains will chug into the barn on Saturday, Dec. 15 and Sunday, Dec. 16, with the whole barn dedicated to the display.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Kitty O'Hara who was honored as an Outstanding Volunteer at the Elly Doyle Park Service Awards in November. This annual event is the Fairfax County Park Authority's public salute to individuals and groups for outstanding volunteer service. We were happy to have Kitty's skills recognized at this event.



December Birthdays



3 -- Frank Boucher. Frank entered the world of puppetry one recent Saturday, and lived to tell the tale of introducing a large group of enthusiastic youngsters to Marvin and his friends. It has been a good year with

Frank's Financial Planning Service business growing, but still leaving time for him and Carol to volunteer, travel and enjoy the good life.

15 -- Mason Maddox. . Mason is spearheading the movement to initiate a National Milling Day. See more about that in *From the Miller's Corner*. On the home

front, Mason enjoyed taking his son Trace hunting again this year, teaching him the fine points of safety. Trace got a 3-point buck, so it was a big year for him.

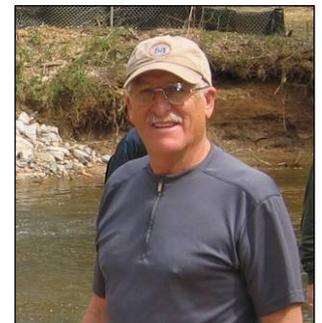
16 -- Nick Yannarell. Nick and Tina took a couple of weeks after Thanksgiving to explore Ireland. They have not been to Ireland in several years, although it has always been a favorite winter vacation. They look forward to seeing how the country has changed since joining the European Union.

Environmental Studies Course

By Mike Moran

The Living Earth Environmental Studies School (ESS) of the National Garden Clubs, Inc. invited me to conduct two classes related to key environmental issues for the Environmental Studies Course at Northern Virginia Community College in Loudoun County. Charles Smith of the Fairfax County Park Authority had contacted Ann Korzeniewski to explore my interest. Then, the course coordinator, Karen Meara invited me to teach the classes. The ESS course is composed of a minimum of forty hours of study, two field trips and a written examination with classes that cover air, land, and water. The units are divided into ecology and environmental science, life of the earth and stewardship. My classes focused primarily on air and related issues.

On November 2, I conducted two classes. The first dealt with environmental ethics, covering the concepts of utility, justice, and duty, used to weigh decision and actions. The class covered what actions are needed by individuals, families, communities, businesses, and government for sustainable development to ensure resources for this and future generations.



The second class covered earth stewardship, exploring sources of environmental information and education programs offered by businesses, government and

conservation organizations. On November 1, I went with students on a field trip to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) facility at Dulles Airport. A meteorologist explained the objective, functions and operations of the regional weather station and showed us the operations of the site, including real-time satellite pictures of various weather patterns and their interpretation.

The course coordinator sent me the following comments by the participants as part of the class critique: *"Great speaker, a big subject but well-covered. Enjoyed both programs and learned very much. Terrific speaker, would like to hear from him again, very motivating, thought provoking."* Also, the course coordinator asked if I would be willing to teach other classes in the future. She added, "the students loved you, you were an asset to the course."

Jim Hogan's Search for a Squint

What is a squint? The monastic orders of Medieval Europe sought to isolate themselves from the public world. To allow public attendance at monastic church services, a wall called a chancel screen was used to separate the public from the altar and choir. However, the public were left clueless as to the progress of the mass. So, a peephole, or squint, was put in the screen. A congregant would peep through the squint and keep the congregation informed as to when to stand, kneel, or pray.



We made a side trip to the town of Bradford Upon Avon specifically to see its Church of the Holy Trinity, which claims to have the longest squint in Europe. Although it was closed, we managed to get in, thanks to a lady

working on an altar floral display. While squints commonly measure in inches, this one is an astounding 10 feet long! Unfortunately, photography inside the church is forbidden, so you will just have to take our word for it.

The town is not without its other curiosities though. This Norman bridge has an odd cupola-like structure at one end, the original purpose of which has long since been forgotten. In the 17th and 18th Centuries, however, it served as the town jail. A small door on the bridge side opens onto a landing with a trap door. Prisoners were lowered through the trap into a windowless, unventilated pit until trial. As the magistrate had to work his way from town to town across the shire, prisoners could languish here for weeks or months before their guilt or innocence was established.



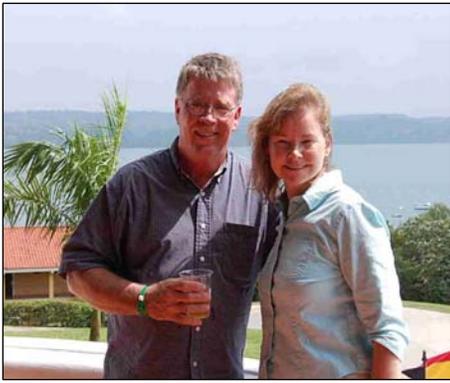
We were walking through the town of Tintagel on the west coast of Cornwall on a rainy Sunday morning. None of the shops had opened yet, so we just browsed the windows. One shop had this sign posted in the door. We didn't get to meet this shopkeeper, which is unfortunate, as I'm sure he or she is a very interesting character.

Recycling the Holidays

Aren't those holiday cards lovely? They are much too nice to relegate to the trash heap. After you have enjoyed them, drop them off (just the front or the whole card) for Jennifer Blackwood to incorporate into crafts throughout next year's programs. That way others will enjoy them all over again!



Mike & Ruth Murphy in Costa Rica



Mike and Ruth Murphy recently returned from an exciting adventure in Costa Rica. They zipped through the forest, donned gas masks to see

a volcano in Nicaragua, slathered on volcano mud and saw an amazing amount of birds and gorgeous scenery. Considering a trip to Costa Rica? See Mike's account on the bulletin board or ask him for some travel tips.

From the Miller's Corner



Mason Maddox is spearheading the campaign to initiate a National Milling Day for the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM). Mills have been an important part of the nation's economy, beginning with the colonies. Oliver Evans was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution with his automation of grist mills. Mason is drafting a letter that SPOOM will distribute to its members and other interested parties to be sent to members of Congress in the effort to have a day that recognizes the history of milling.

Mason kept the waterwheel turning for school groups in late November. It will be turned off in December to prevent ice forming on the wheel. It was a good grinding season and the freezer is well stocked to tide us over until spring.

Arti-Facts from Dawn Sleigh Bells Ring

Maybe you will be traveling over the holidays to visit friends and family. One hundred years ago, if you lived in a snowy area, you might have traveled in a horse-drawn sleigh. Your sleigh or your horse probably would have had bells to warn others of your approach as you quietly glided on the snowy roads.

A set of four sleigh bells on a metal strap hangs from a shelf in the Colvin Run Mill General Store. According to the inventory, these steel cup chimes or bells, graduated in size, date from the late 19th century. Each bell with three small steel balls inside makes a different pretty chime tone, not like a jingle bell at all. These kinds of bells might have been placed on the shafts that connected the sleigh to the horse. The 1902 *Sears, Roebuck* catalogue advertised this style of bell, as well as several other types that fit on the horse's body, on the horse collar or on the saddle.



Bells were decorative as well as practical. According to one web site, bells and other ornaments were used to adorn horses from at least 800 BC. Supposedly, the bells were thought to attract good luck and prevent illness or injury, as well as display the owner's wealth. On the practical side, bells warned pedestrians and other drivers of an approaching vehicle and the bells on a street vendor's cart announced that they were in the vicinity.

While dashing through the snow in your one-horse open sleigh, you may have been tempted to sing a sleighing song published in 1857 – “*One Horse Open Sleigh*” – by James Lord Pierpont. Pierpont was born in 1822 in Boston, Massachusetts. At age 10, while living at a boarding school in New Hampshire, he wrote his mother about riding in a sleigh through the December snow, an activity that he apparently fondly remembered when he wrote his famous song as an adult in the mid 1800s. The song may have first been publicly performed in 1857 for a Thanksgiving program in a church where James worked as the organist. The name of the song was changed two years later to “*Jingle Bells or The One Horse Open Sleigh*.”

This song has the distinction as the first song ever broadcast from outer space. In December, 1965, Gemini 6 spacecraft astronauts Tom Stafford and Wally Schirra played *Jingle Bells* with a smuggled harmonica and bells after they reported sighting a command module being driving by a man in a red suit with eight smaller modules.

On The Road with Marge and Bob Potomac Mill, Westmoreland County VA



On a rainy day, on the way to visit family in Kilmarnock on the Northern Neck of Virginia, we stopped at the Potomac Mill near Oak Grove, Virginia, at the intersection of SR 639 and SR 654 off SR 3. For over ten years, we have passed the Potomac Mill and have frequently stopped to survey the mill. On October 20, 2007, we stopped again to examine the mill's condition. After the several years since our last visit, the mill might have completely disappeared. What did we find?

One good thing, the two-story frame mill covered with metal siding is still standing, but is now surrounded by brush, vines and trees making it almost impossible to see the mill. A big tree had fallen on the roof, leaving a big gaping hole. So, now the mill is open to all kinds of weather. The ten foot steel water wheel is covered with vines as it sinks further into the soil. Slashing through the scrubs and briars, we could see inside the mill. The floor was not safe for us to venture inside; however, from the open door we could see the Midget Marvel machine that has a twenty five barrel capacity. The mill also has one run of grinding stones, a hopper, bonnet and crane, all visible from the open door.

This custom mill on Popes Creek was built in 1713 by Nathaniel Pope. It was sold to Augustine Washington, father of George Washington, in 1728 and is also known as the Washington Mill. The Washington family owned

and operated the mill until after the Civil War. The mill was still operating in 1942.

The mill building could still be restored. The most needed repair to the mill, at the present time, is a new floor and a roof. Since the mill still has all of its equipment and there is water in Popes Creek, the mill could be restored to a working mill once again.

Be sure to stop to see this mill that is on the way to the Stratford Hall Plantation and Mill and to Mary Allen's new summer home on the Little Wicomico River near Reedville, Virginia.

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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