



# SPOOM

## Mid-Atlantic Chapter

The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills

*Spring 2023  
Edition*

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct. 5-7—Fall Chapter Meeting
- Oct. 30 —Fall Newsletter  
Article Deadline

### SPOOM-MA Chapter

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## President's Message

- *Daniel T. Campbell*

The most recent SPOOM Mid-Atlantic gathering in Northern Virginia, attended by over 35 people, brought back memories to me on a number of levels, as well as providing new things to see, and new information about the old-friend mills that we visited. It has been over 12 years since SPOOM National had their annual conference at Colvin Run mill, when I was an experienced preservation architect but still a novel mill enthusiast, but with lots of interest. The dynamic aspects of a mill – which is a building wrapped around a mechanical process, are what fascinates me, more than other historic building types, which are more static.

It's also been 9 years since SPOOM Mid-Atlantic had our semiannual conference in the area (in 2014 - including G. Washington's Mill near Mt. Vernon), so the differences and improvements in the Old Mills that we visited, were striking and encouraging to see. Additionally, it was great to see the number of people at this conference rise to the level of "pre-pandemic" attendance.

Since those previous visits, Fairfax County Parks (who operates both Colvin Run and Aldie Mills) and Friends of Colvin Run Mill, have faced challenges such as their broken shaft and wheel replacement, and construction of a new flume, among other things. But despite those unexpected re-do's, we were pleased to see that Colvin also has added a greater amount of gearing now replicated by Ben Hassett Millwright, operating

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## Spring 2023 Meeting, April 20-22

- Susan Langley

This year's Spring meeting features three mills in northern Virginia. It kicked off with early arrivals to Herndon assembling at the local TGIFriday's for a meet-and-greet dinner. Formal activities began at Colvin Run Mill, Great Falls. Morning refreshments were served in the Marjorie and Robert Lundegard Education Center. This is especially meaningful for our Chapter since they played key roles in its establishment with Bob serving as its first President. Both Marge and Bob were prolific contributors to this Newsletter (early editions are posted here: <https://spoommidatlantic.org/chapter-activity>).



A looped slide show, assembled by Robert Coblenz, documenting the mill's first restoration ran while everyone gathered. Our hosts, Steve Golobic, Dan Dyke, Mike Henry and Gene Bacher, provided information about the latest restoration efforts, demonstrated the mill's capabilities and organized our snacks and lunch. Site manager, Julie Gurnee, sent her regrets as she was at another site preparing for Earth Day. The morning refreshments included sourdough bread made from the mill's flour. In addition to touring the mill, it was possible to visit the miller's house and garden, and the shop where a number of mill-ground flours also were available.

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## President's Message *cont'd*

new machines on the second floor and third floor / attic – such as the internal bag hoist, a new bolter, and an operating “hopper boy” per Oliver Evan's design.

I also noticed that like many mills in the eastern U.S., both Colvin Run and Peirce Mills (our host mill and Saturday visit), have an attic feature that I have seen before – a gable peak of masonry (stone or brick) on one end of the building, and a wood-framed gable peak on the other end with wood siding. In case any equipment needed to be brought in or out of the attic, the framed wall made for easier access, in historic days.

Steve Golobic is the Colvin Run Mill miller, I have seen him at National SPOOM Conferences, indicating his commitment to his trade. He is the full-time Fairfax County employee responsible for operations and maintenance of the mill. He started their wheel and ground some corn for us, in their #1 stone set-up. This product went down to the basement, to their shaking sifter, for us to see. Steve's assistant for the grind was Dan Dyke, a volunteer with the Friends of Colvin Run Mill.

At Aldie Mill it was good to see Mike Devine again, their miller, who has been the only one since their renovation by the Virginia Outdoors Corporation in the 1990's. I had not heard before, but Mike said that he has been looking at Aldie Mill since he was a child, driving by in his parents' car. At that time, there was a 4 feet diameter stone leaning against an outside wall and he dreamed of what was inside the building. Now he knows -- and works to preserve all of it.

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## Spring 2023 Meeting *cont'd*

The mill was constructed in 1811 on land once-owned by George Washington on the eponymous Colvin Run. It was operated for 125 years by a number of millers, with the large Millard family having the longest tenure until it closed in 1934. In that year it was purchased by Bernard Bailey with the intention of having it operate as a heritage mill, as it does today. However the construction of Route 7 cut off the mill from its water source and it was closed. The property was acquired by Fairfax County in 1965, restored the mill and created a workaround for the water problem, and opened to the public in 1972.



A comprehensive tour of the mill was provided that included recent restoration efforts and a demonstration of corn milling. The reverse of a bookmark produced by the Friends of Colvin Run Mill, has a QR code that links to a number of videos; see the next page.

As happened with many mills, a small community grew up around it. The general store/post office remains and serves as the present shop. Blacksmithing demonstrations are held beside the Education Center which.

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## President's Message *cont'd*

Mike described the history of the mill from the early 19th century to the present. Pre 1807, there was a smaller mill here, which some believe was in the small building which remains, beside the current tailrace. There were several other buildings at Aldie, as were necessary to operate the mill, and some evidence of foundations remain. These included a cooperage, a packing house, blacksmith shop and a distillery. The water source for Aldie is from the Little River which comes from about a half mile upstream from across the town. Then the tail race goes another quarter mile back to Goose Creek after the mill.

The current Aldie buildings represent all time periods of the mill's history. The steel flume frame, wheel and flume installed circa 1900, are replicas of the original wooden ones, from circa 1870. At one time there had been a sawmill spanning over the tailrace, with an up-down sash saw, possibly driven by a turbine. Our thanks to Mike Devine and the Fairfax County employees Tracy and Richard Gillespie.

On Saturday at Peirce Mill, the first new thing that we encountered was our most recently elected board member, and Chair/Education Director for the Friends of Peirce Mill – Angela Kramer. Since her term began this year, Angela diligently and graciously took on the task of arranging this meeting, with Judy Grove and others mentioned.

We learned some new facts about the alternate histories of Peirce Mill, such as

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stands on the foundations of a former barn and represents a former smithy in the area

After a delicious barbecue lunch, we set off for Aldie Mill Historic Park. A tub mill was built on the property in 1764 by James Mercer. His son Charles, an attorney and legislator, had William Cooke construct a wheel-operated mill between 1807-1809 under an indenture. Cooke also built a granary, residence, smaller plaster mill, and store as well as a now-lost assemblage of associated businesses that included a distillery, smithy, cooperage, sawmill and wheelwright shop. Cooke bought out Cooke's share in 1816 and leased it to tenants until 1935 when he sold it to John Moore. It was

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being used as a tourist spot when it went non-functional in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, complete with a false dam, now requiring the fish ladder mentioned in the story. The race water is now piped underground, but the former location of the head race is now outlined with cobblestones on the ground, creating a walking path leading to the exterior wheel pit, on the upstream side of the mill. When the mill was restored in the 1930's for a cost of \$30,000, it was said to be the first historic restoration by the US government, interesting to me - since I work on so many now.

It was great to have the assistance of Fritz Elder and other FOPM, including our former Vice President Adam Sieminski who has been out of the US for several years with his wife Laurie, on assignment- and have returned.

It was a great Spring conference, to return to these sites and to learn so much more about them again and anew. These meetings, as always, make me thankful for the people who work hard to manage our organization week to week, and who arrange these meetings semi-annually. Although it is mill buildings that we revere and preserve, it is the people who make it happen, and those that attend who make it worthwhile – people are back now in stronger numbers. We welcome all members and friends of mills, to attend the conference in the Fall, in Pennsylvania.

Dan Campbell

President, Mid-Atlantic SPOOM



## Spring 2023 Meeting cont'd

operated by the Moore family and then through marriage by the Douglass family until 1971. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation acquired the property in 1981 and gifted it to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority which started restoration in 1995 and opened it to the public in 2002. It was accepted into the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 as an Historic District. The mill race runs completely through the adjacent village of Aldie.



Our host, Mike Devine, explained that the two 16-foot metal Fitz waterwheels were installed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each wheel could run 2 sets of French millstones. Later roller mills were installed and run by only one wheel. While both wheels could be operated the mill is not currently set up to do this. Other equipment is stored awaiting funding to install it and some was given to a Georgia mill restoring a distillery and some stones were given to a friend by the last owner and are currently at Deep Creek Lake, Maryland. Much of the restoration of the mill was undertaken by Ben Hassett, who was trained by noted millwright Derek Ogden. Mike also provided a corn milling demonstration and answered our many



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## Spring 2023 Meeting cont'd

questions. If you missed the meeting, you can take a virtual field trip to Aldie mill at the following link:  
<https://aldie-mill-virtual-field-trip.webflow.io/>

On Saturday morning we met at Peirce Mill, Rock Creek Park, Washington, DC. Author Steve Dryden provided us with the history of the site before volunteers, Fritz Edler and our own Adam Sieminski, led tours. SPOOM-MA Board member Angela Kramer is also the Chair of the Friends of Peirce Mill and organized this visit. Peirce Mill is also the May sponsor for the SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Chapter website.

The mill was one of eight mills utilizing Rock Creek when it was built in 1829. It was constructed by Isaac Peirce a Quaker who moved there from Pennsylvania. In 1892 it was included in the new National Park established along Rock Creek but the distillery building was not included, was sold into private ownership and remains visible but private property. The mill operated until 1897 when its machinery failed. It was converted to a teahouse for park visitors, complete with a waterfall serving as a mock dam for a visual aesthetic but with no relation to the actual race. During the Great Depression, it was restored as part of a WPA project and operated sporadically until 1993 when the equipment again failed. The Friend of Peirce Mill was created in 1997 to aid the National Park Service in its restoration. It resumed grinding in 2011. After walking the grounds along the Creek, past the fish



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## Spring 2023 Meeting cont'd

ladder, and along the path of the race, we started on the lower level of the mill and, as we usually do, worked our way to the topmost floor.

The equipment for the first restoration was provided by the Fitz Company in Pennsylvania and the mill ground wheat, rye, and corn, which many visitors comment they recall coming to the mill to purchase flour, or coming as children with family. Although it is grinding again, a plethora of health regulations prohibit selling the mill's products for human consumption, but all mills in this situation are allowed to sell them for animal feed.

For those able to stay after the business meeting, orchardist Tim Makepeace led a fascinating tour through the fenced orchard. To maximize efficient use of space, most of the trees were root stocks to which an amazing number of varieties were grafted. One tree held nine grafts. These all reflect historic apples that might have fed the distillery

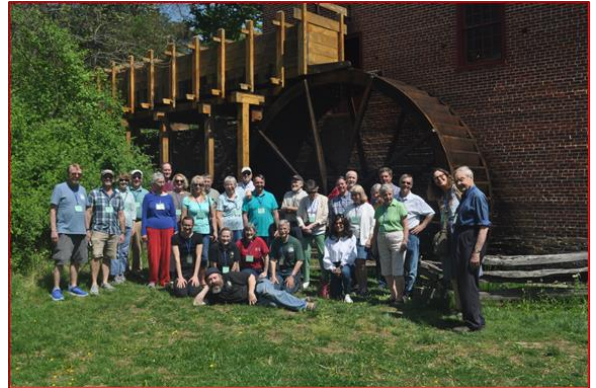
formerly part of the property. The ground cover was deliberately chosen to provide desirable elements either into the soil or as fertilizer when cut and left. Only a thunderstorm could curtail the tour.

The business meeting was held after box lunches were enjoyed under a picnic shelter. Chapter President Dan Campbell called the meeting to order and the minutes from the Fall meeting were accepted. He announced that the Chapter has four new members. Judy Grove provided the Chapter's financial standing, website report, and noted that the current membership is 70 with 32 members paying to attend all or part of this meeting. Although the Chapter had voted to

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## Spring 2023 Meeting cont'd

make an annual donation to SPOOM National to assist with the grant program, no applications were received in 2022. Dan noted that two project inquiries had been received from Heathcote and Gore Mills, both in Freeland, MD. There was discussion about the need for trainings and suggestions for addressing this. Susan Langley asked for submissions to the newsletter. Upcoming events were announced. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chapter is 2025 and ideas and suggestions to celebrate this are invited. The Minutes will be posted on the SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Website as they become available. As a token of appreciation for providing such terrific tours, SPOOM Mid-Atlantic made a donation to each of the mills that hosted our visits.



### Tide Mill Institute

For updates on tidal power, historic tide mills, virtual tours and lectures, please check out:

<https://mailchi.mp/75f3b1425267/email-url-13657829?e=d1a717cd69>.

### Grist from Abbott's Mill

Don't forget to check in on Steve Childer's blog to see what fascinating topics he is currently covering.

<https://www.gristfromabbottsmill.net/>

### Aldie Mill Historic Park

Virtual Tour of the Mill:

<https://www.novaparks.com/parks/aldie-mill-historic-park/things-to-do/aldie-mill-virtual-field-trips>

### Old Wye Mill

Virtual Tour of the Mill: <https://www.oldwyemill.org/>

## Construction Underway at Renfrew Mill!

-Renfrew Mill

Contractors are currently digging trenches for poured concrete footers and removing truckloads of soil from the property (see below). They are encountering large deposits of *fragipan*, a highly dense subsurface of soil layers, and jackhammering through (see foreground, near black sheeting). Careful adjustments are being made to ensure nearby archeological resources, including the 1855 Miller's House foundation (outlined by yellow caution tape at upper left) are protected from loss or damage from potential landslides.

Visitors should also expect temporary closures of some trails including sections of the George Buckey Trail, Mill Stone Trail, and Mill Race Trail for the duration of construction. We apologize for the inconvenience and request you follow posted signage for detours. Renfrew also asks that visitors remain alert and use caution when vehicles are passing on Fahnestock Lane. Crews have been advised to yield to pedestrian traffic on shared thoroughfares. Thanks for your patience and understanding as Renfrew embarks on this special addition to the farmstead.

**Visit the Renfrew Mill homepage to track our progress:**

**<https://www.renfrewmuseum.org/mill/>**

Artist's rendition of how the Royer Gristmill, standing 1807-1895, may have appeared while in use. Original watercolor by Clyde Roberts, 1991. Renfrew Museum Collection. (From the Renfrew Mill website.)



Equipment and vehicles will be entering and exiting the mill site regularly throughout the season during weekdays typically between the hours of approximately 7:00am and 4:00pm. Traffic will impact Fahnestock Lane and the Visitors Center parking lot. If possible, please park at the Lower Lot off of Welty Road when visiting during this period. Those needing to park at the Visitors Center lot adjacent to the barn, please be alert, watch for trucks and equipment, and use caution.





## A Castle in a Storm

-Liesel Fischer

(Reprinted with permission from the Castle Valley Mill blog addressing the impact of the Covid pandemic and their response)

As all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a resounding effect on the restaurant business and the food industry as a whole. From food shortages, plant closures, and the complete shut-down of public restaurants country-wide, Castle Valley Mill's future was uncertain. Pre-pandemic, our main business flourished among large-scale distributors, restaurants, and the distilling industry.

When the quarantine began snuffing out businesses, we braced ourselves and prepared for a hard fall both in income and work. We watched as our shipments halted, product was returned, and our millstones silenced because they had no reason to spin.

Then, on day four or five, our online store began to pick up some weird, unexpected forecast. The daily orders went from 3, to 5, to 15.

Roughly a week and a half after our scariest moment, our shipping orders were printing in stacks of 150. That's 150 people ordering *our* product. Whether this was to make cookies, bread, muffins, grits, oatmeal- real food, for real people, in a very real situation.



Stores are terrifying, and shelves are empty anyway. Large mills aren't fast enough to snap into a retail business model.

Castle Valley Mill had a staff of three: My father, my mother, and me. Before this, I was studying abroad in Berlin. I caught a last-minute ticket out on March 15th. A day later, the U.S went into lockdown. Nearly three months later, we are supplying distilleries for hand sanitizer, distributors for small grocery stores, and individual homes for their dinner plates. We have been pleasantly blind-sided and thrown head-first into being a rock in a storm. Rather, a castle.

Welcome to our blog, and welcome to our castle.

Thanks to you, these stones gather no moss. Our doors are open.



### Castle Valley Mill

1730 Lower State Rd, Doylestown, PA 18901  
(215) 340-3609

<https://www.castlevalleymill.com/>

Please visit the website for the store, wholesale, recipes, FAQ and more.





## Upcoming Events & Activities

### Union Mills Homestead

3311 Littlestown Pike, Westminster, MD 21158

July 15-16 Civil War Encampment and Living History

August 5 Old-fashioned Corn Roast

September 30 Maryland Microbrewery Festival

November 18 Christkindlmarkt

For information on all upcoming events:

<https://unionmills.org/>



### Ma & Pa Railroad Heritage Village (Muddy Creek Forks

Roller Mill) 1258 Muddy Creek Forks Rd, Airville, PA 17302

July 23 Civil War Encampment

September 30 Railroad Heritage Day

For more information:

<https://maandparailroad.com/calendar.php#heritage>



September 7-9 National SPOOM 2023 Conference,

Auburn, NY For more information:

<https://www.spoom.org/>



October 5-7 SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Chapter Fall Meeting.

Hellertown, PA More information will be posted soon:

<https://spoommidatlantic.org/>



October 22-23: Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair

Peirce Mill, Rock Creek Park, Washington DC. For more

information: <https://www.commongrainalliance.org/mid-atlantic-grain-fair-conference>



### Old Wye Mill

900 Wye Mills Rd, Wye Mills, MD 21679

**What Harvest Festival**

**Christmas Shoppe**

Dates are yet to be determined. Watch the website:

<https://www.oldwyemill.org/events-and-programs>



# MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Please enroll me as a member of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Society for the Preservation Of Old Mills

Please Print

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Milling Connection: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

(newsletters are emailed or posted in web site when possible to save postage)

Subscription ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Please Check One:

☐ Individual, Member of SPOOM - \$10.00

☐ Individual, Not Member of SPOOM - \$15.00

☐ Sustaining Membership - \$25.00

☐ Organization Membership - \$50.00

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Please indicate level of membership and mail this form with your check or money order to **Membership Manager, 613 Green Valley Road, York PA 17403. Please make your checks out to Mid-Atlantic Chapter.** Online membership payment is available through the membership page of our website [www.spoommidatlantic.org](http://www.spoommidatlantic.org) as well. The Mid-Atlantic Chapter is a member in good standing of the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills and serves MD, DE, PA, VA, and DC.

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Attach  
postage  
here

**Membership Manager  
Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SPOOM  
613 Green Valley Road, York, PA  
17403**