



SPOOM

*Semiannual
Newsletter*

*Fall 2023
Edition*

Mid-Atlantic Chapter The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills

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- Fall 2024: Virginia & West Virginia

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President's Message Fall 2023

Approaching the end of a year, naturally makes us look back at the preceding time, but also logically sets our eyes ahead toward the future coming year. Such is this time in the life of our organization.



Moravian Industrial Quarter

The recent SPOOM Mid-Atlantic gathering around Bethlehem, in northeast Pennsylvania, was hosted by a group that we began negotiating with years ago, that being the Hellertown Historical Society. Although HHS was new to hosting a meeting, with the assistance of our board members Charles Yeske and Judy Grove, they did a masterful job of arranging the accommodations, booking tour sites, meals, education, and entertainment, in our typical “two-and-a-half day” schedule. We are grateful for new groups like Hellertown, stepping up to conduct their first conference, and for newer people attending

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2024 SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Spring Chapter Event will be Thursday to Saturday, May 9 to 11, in the State College, PA area.

the meeting, along with our previous regulars – totaling nearly 30 people this time. Attendees included 3 from other chapters of SPOOM – who travelled from Massachusetts and NJ to experience these Old Mills with us.



We were treated to lots of time in Hellertown's own Wagner Mill, with many interesting mill parts and other historical objects inside and in adjacent buildings on the 35-acre site – even an old 1860 iron bridge, recently accepted to the National Register of Historic Places. We saw and heard presentations in their Tavern Room, often used for parties and receptions, which held our semi-annual meeting and Board election on Saturday, with lunch. We are grateful for the long service of Susan Langley who has stepped down from the board after decades of service and leadership. Likewise thankful for our recently joined member Lisa Reed, architect, for rising to be elected to a new 2-year term on the board. The actions and results of the recent board meeting and membership meeting are elsewhere in this newsletter, or on the website.

Most of us may think of Bethlehem in the context of its industrial age and production of steel for our country's modern infrastructure. But there was a lot to learn about the area's agrarian-based beginnings, and development in the 18th and 19th centuries. Historic Bethlehem is a non-profit organization focusing on the preservation and restoration of that colonial period, whose docents led us through that history at the Burnside Plantation and the Industrial Quarter restored Moravian buildings, some of which are still underway. We learned about production of other aspects of colonial life, such as blacksmithing, leather tanning, pottery and dying, and waterworks for the public of the early city.

Fortunately, we were not too far away, to also visit the Durham Mill, built on an earlier iron furnace, where cannon balls had been produced for the Colonial Army's use in the Revolutionary War – and were shipped down the Delaware River in the eponymous Durham boats, one of which was on display outside of the mill. On Christmas evening, 1776, Washington and his men crossed the Delaware River in Durham boats, to attack the Hessians at Trenton, NJ

Looking favorably toward the future of our SPOOM Chapter and the general interest in mills, there were several children who attended the meeting. Galen and Bonnie Ingram invited their daughter-in-law and 4 grandchildren to join us at the visit to Burnside Plantation, a Moravian family farm. Lisa Reed brought her daughter from Maryland for the entire conference. We are happy to see the next generation showing an interest in the history of mills.

Our Friday night schedule typically includes breaking into smaller groups, for dining in various restaurants. However, on this trip it was different to have a group gathering for Friday's dinner hour, with food and drinks together instead. We appreciate that Hellertown recommended that new format. "Old" is in the name of our organization, but it was good to break the Friday mold, and to try that kind of group pub-buffet, in lieu of sit-down dinners in separate groups, this time. Our many thanks to Larry Sutton and the speakers and volunteers at HHS, and for all at the docents and people at Historic Bethlehem and Durham Mill, for opening their sites to us, for another successful and memorable Fall Meeting.

Daniel T. Campbell

—Dan Campbell





SPOOM Mid-Atlantic Chapter Event: Oct. 5-7, 2023

FRIDAY MORNING AT THE HELLERTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hellertown Historical Society (HHS) was the gracious host for the SPOOM-MA weekend with the main venue of the Wagner Grist Mill. The mill is not currently grinding grain, but has a great deal of water in the pond and water is falling beside the mill. On Friday morning, Larry Sutton – the president of HHS greeted the group in the Tavern Room on the first floor of the mill. Chip Wagner, a direct descendant, presented the history of the Wagner family and mill. My first question was, “Are Chip and I related?” Further research is necessary! Dennis Scholl followed with the education programs at the site – also seeking input on the educational programs which are done in our mills. A tour of the three floors was next with guides to answer question stationed on each floor. 35-year volunteers, Harry and Jeannette Boos, were stationed on the 2nd floor which housed an excellent museum depicting early life in Hellertown. Among the displays were a kitchen, weaving corner, country store, school room and milling display. The third floor was storage.



Besides the grist mill, the HHS also preserves the Miller’s House, a Wash House, a circa 1860 “Pony Truss” Bridge, and a barn with agricultural implements and machinery, blacksmith, and cabinet –making tools. Also nearby are picnic tables, fishing pond, ball fields and the Saucon Rail Trail.

The mill was also used on Saturday afternoon for lunch and the SPOOM-MA business meeting.

—Chas and Karen Wagner



Wagner Grist Mill



From the Borough of Hellertown Walking Tour at www.hellertownhistoricalsociety.org

HISTORY OF WAGNER GRIST MILL

The grist mill was built by Simon Heller, around 1765. The exact date is unknown, though records indicate a land grant dated October 4, 1746. This land was obtained from William Penn's sons, Thomas and Richard Penn, as part of the "Walking Purchase" agreement. The mill was first used as a sawmill. Later, Simon added another section to the original mill to mill grain. In 1771, after several transfers, the mill and adjacent land was sold to Christopher Wagner who operated it for many years thereafter. In July 1806, the mill was turned over to Christopher's grandson, Jacob Wagner. It was rumored there was a Tavern in or near the grist mill. While no documentation has confirmed the existence, the Hellertown Historical Society renovated and opened the lower level of the grist mill as a very popular venue, called the "Tavern Room", offered for patrons to hold various events as a fundraising tool for the organization. It's rumored that Marquis de Lafayette visited this tavern after the Battle of Brandywine Creek, on September 11, 1777, when he suffered a leg wound and sought a month's convalescence at the Sun Inn in Bethlehem.



FRIDAY AFTERNOON TRIP TO BETHLEHEM

Historic Bethlehem Inc. preserves historic Bethlehem sites; collects, maintains, and exhibits local historic and artistic objects; and seeks to convey its history to the public in an engaging manner through tours and programming. On Friday afternoon, two guides— Brother Tim and Sister Loretta—attired in colonial dress, led our group in the exploration of these two Bethlehem sites.

Burnside Plantation, also known as Lerch Farm, is an old, historic plantation centered around a 1751 farmhouse with two bank barns circa 1840, a large kitchen garden and orchard, a corn crib, and wagon shed. Also, the site includes one of the only remaining working High Horse-Power wheels in the U.S. With this ingenious machine one horse could do the work of 15 men.

James Burnside bought a 500-acre tract of land from John Stephen Benezet in 1748. Burnside sold 200 acres to a group of Moravians in 1751. In 1758, Burnside's widow sold the remaining 300 acres to the Moravian Church. The Church leased the plantation to individual farmers from 1765 to 1845. The plantation was sold to Charles A. Luckenbach (1869 Mill), who sold it to William Lerch in 1853. Lehigh County bought the plantation in 1986 and leased it to the private corporation Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites "to restore, develop, and manage [it] as a living and natural history resource".

Bethlehem's Colonial Industrial Quarter By 1745, the Moravians, a modern Protestant religious group from Germany, had established 35 differ-

ent crafts, trades, and industries in Bethlehem. Many of these were located along the Monocacy Creek, now called the Industrial Quarter. Moravian craftsmen used the power of the Monocacy Creek to grind grain, pump water, full cloth, press flax seeds, grind bark, and soften hemp. These industries helped make early Bethlehem a nearly self-sufficient community.

The current site includes the 1750 Smithy, 1761 Tannery, 1762 Waterworks, 1782 Miller's House, 1869 Luckenbach Mill, The Springhouse, The Pottery Ruin, Dye House Ruin, Butchery Ruin, and Oil Mill Ruin.

Of particular interest is the Water Works. The pump house, originally built in 1754 and upgraded in 1762, contained three pumps, powered by an undershot water wheel, which forced spring water to a water tower at the top of the hillside above. From there, water flowed by gravity into four cisterns that in turn led into many of the town's buildings. This is regarded as the first pumped municipal water system in the American colonies.

Colonial Bethlehem had an ideal location for a tannery. The creek provided water for washing



High Horse-Power Wheel



View inside Waterworks

the hides, the adjacent butchery provided ample hides, the forests provided bark needed to produce tannic acid for curing leather. In 1765, a water powered bark grinding mill was included in the design of a new oil mill, replacing the large grinding stones originally turned by animal power.

The oil mill constructed in 1765 was multifunctional, housing machinery to process linseed oil, crush tanbark, grind groats, make snuff, full leather, and soften hemp. The machinery was powered by two undershot wheels turned by the Monocacy Creek.

The original wooden mill, built in 1743 and replaced with a limestone building in 1751, supplied flour for the community. After an 1869 fire, the current stone Luchenbach Mill was erected and in 1882 modernized with a new roller system. In 1892 the building was restored as an adaptive reuse and now houses the administrative offices of the Historic Bethlehem Partnership who oversees the restoration, preservation, and research of the surrounding historic sites and structures.

—Judy Grove



Inside Durham Mill

SATURDAY MORNING AT DURHAM FURNACE & MILL

The 20 conference attendees who stayed on Saturday's tour were treated to a "two for one" experience as the site's historical significance includes that of an iron furnace and a mill. Though owned by Township, the Durham Historical Society's members interpret and preserve its history and provide tours of the complex as several did today.



Outside Durham Mill

While little of the furnace remains, its founding in 1727 and continued operation until 1791 is replete with historical associations. Col. George Taylor was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the furnace manager for a time; Revolutionary War General Daniel Morgan, hero of the Battle of the Cowpens, hung around the furnace as a lad; Cannon balls and the like were produced for the Continental Army; Its Durham boats that normally transported ironware down the Delaware River were requisitioned by General Washington to transport his troops across that river in 1776. Depletion of the surrounding forest ended the source for making charcoal, the fuel for firing the furnace. That and advancements in the iron industry drew its time to a close.

Phase two of its significance then began with the erection of the still-standing gristmill built by William Long in 1820. Powered first by a waterwheel driven by water that coursed along a mile long headrace, the mill ground corn, wheat, oats and other grains into flour and animal feed until 1967 as its machinery and power sources evolved. While operational details are still being researched and uncovered, clues and equipment



Durham Boat



remaining show that four sets of millstones were used as were a hammermill and attrition mill. An adjoining warehouse constructed enabled the mill to hugely expand its operation – so large that a railroad siding to the mill provided access for the delivery of carloads of grain. Ceresota Flour was the mill's big flour product, as advertised on one side of the warehouse, and its final big seller was its animal feed with molasses added.

The Society was proud to have the SPOOM Mid-Atlantic members “look-see” at the Fitz waterwheel and sluice mechanism, the remaining stone gearing, numerous elevators, belts and pulleys, and other miscellaneous fixtures. Congratulatory remarks from the attendees have reassured the Society of its purpose.

—Charles Yeske

Social Times and Buisness Meeting

THURSDAY MEET AND GREET AT HISTORIC SPRINGTOWN INN



In 1763 Abraham Funk purchased 300 acres of land containing a gristmill and sawmill from Steven Twining and the village of Springtown was born. The Springtown hotel was built around 1830 by Christopher Witte. The hotel changed hands numerous times since then, but has been in continuous operation longer than any other hotel in Springfield Township. On December 4, 2018, Bobby Gianguzzi and Carol and Douglas Tweed became the new owners of the inn. SPOOM Mid Atlantic attendees witnessed firsthand the excellent food and ambience provided by the talent, knowledge, and dedication of this partnership.

—Judy Grove

FRIDAY NIGHT SOCIAL – A NEW CHAPTER TRADITION??

The impressive historic structure at 430 Main St, Hellertown was originally built to sell beer that was made in the J. Widmer Brewing Company building. Braveheart Highland Pub opened in December 2006, specializing in Scottish food and imported beers, as well as excellent customer service and a welcoming atmosphere. The twenty folks who enjoyed the camaraderie and selection of food and beverage at this evening social recommended inclusion of similar gatherings for future meetings.

—Judy Grove

SATURDAY CHAPTER BUSINESS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The SPOOM MA Board Meeting was held via Zoom on Monday, October 2 at 9 pm with nine members present. As of 9/30/23 the chapter has \$14,292.21 in the treasury and 82 members.

Old Business: Incorporation Form 1023 documents were submitted to the IRS on September 1. SPOOM Mid-Atlantic will award \$2,000 in grants upon completion of the respective projects by the intended recipients selected by the SPOOM grant committee. Steve Childers will represent the chapter and display his mill model at the October 22-23 Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair at Peirce Mill, Washington, D.C. The following slate of officers: Craig Sansonetti, Secretary; Judy Grove, Treasurer; and Charles Yeske and Lisa Reed, Directors, all with terms ending 12/31/2025, will be presented for vote at the membership meeting. The position of Vice President is vacant.

New Business: To comply with our corporate by-laws regarding meetings, at future chapter events the board will meet with members present to conduct any specific board items and then adjourn. When necessary to complete official business such as elections, a membership meeting will be held immediately following. At times, the board may choose to meet prior to the biannual meetings as warranted.

Future Events:

May 9-11 Spring 2024 in Centre County, PA will include Nittany Antique Machinery Association (NAMA), Curtin Iron Works, a Roller Milling seminar by Craig Sansonetti, a flour bags and milling manuals display by Galen Ingram.

Fall 2024 will potentially include Locke's Mill in Berryville VA, Shepherd's Mill in Shepherdstown WV, and the Waterford Foundation in Waterford VA.

Potential 2025 SPOOM Mid-Atlantic 20th Anniversary Sites: 1) Southeastern PA, including Castle Valley Mill, Charlestown Woolen Mill, Anselma Mill, and an ironworks and 2) Union Mills. The 2025 National SPOOM Meeting is being planned for Boston in June.

The SPOOM MA Membership Meeting was held at Wagner Mill on Saturday, October 7 at 12:40 pm for election of officers and sharing Board Meeting business. The slate of officers was unanimously approved by the membership as presented. With the resignation of Susan Langley as newsletter editor, Rachael Zuch agreed to serve as layout editor and Becky Glover as content editor.

Complete meeting minutes and finance reports are posted on our Chapter Activity page at <https://spoommidatlantic.org/>.

—Judy Grove

Worth a Visit – Alburtis-Lock Ridge Furnace and Park



The Thomas Iron Works at Lock Ridge in Alburtis were named for David Thomas, an ironmaster who brought the technology for hot blast manufacture of anthracite iron from Wales, and his son Samuel, who chartered the Lock Ridge Iron Company in 1867. The furnaces turned iron ore into the iron essential for a growing America. The discovery that bituminous coal could be made



into coke led to the Lock Ridge furnaces closing in 1921. Following the last cast, the buildings were abandoned and scrapped.

Jean Caroline Butz, who played among the ruins as a child, convinced local officials to preserve the furnace complex and surrounding grounds for their beauty and historical significance. In



1976 Lock Ridge Park became a county park and work began on a museum within the remaining, now-stabilized masonry structures. The park, located at 525 Franklin Street, Alburtis, is open daily from dawn until dusk. Outdoor exhibits illustrate how iron was made over a hundred years ago. The museum is operated by the Lehigh County Historical Society. Seasonal public tours are offered but private tours may be arranged by calling 610-435-1074.

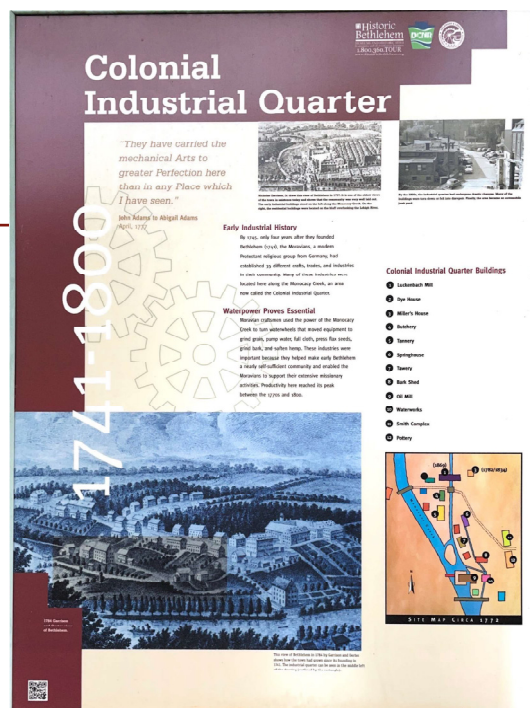
—Judy Grove

Using your Smart Phone to Prepare PDF's

On mill tours, eliminate the frustration of trying to photograph posters and signage without glare and crooked edges. Let your smartphone do the work for you by following these instructions.

iPhone or iPad: Open Notes and select a note or create a new one. Tap the Camera button, then tap Scan Documents. Place your document in view of the camera. If your device is in Auto mode, your document will automatically scan. If you need to manually capture a scan, tap the Shutter button. Tap Keep Scan. Tap Save or add additional scans to the document. Tap the download button to select a destination for the PDF.

Android Phones: Open Google Drive and tap the floating plus button. Select “Scan,” and snap a photo of the document with your camera. Tap the checkmark button if the scan looks good. Tap the Add Page button and “Next” if needed.



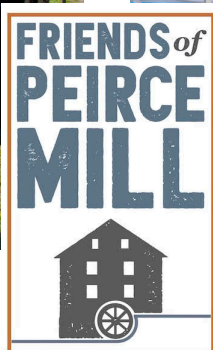
Give the file a name and choose which folder to save it to. That's all there is to it!

—Judy Grove

First-Ever Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair Held at Peirce Mill

Farmers, millers, and bakers from across the region came to Peirce Mill in Washington, DC on a sunny October Sunday for the first-ever Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair on the 22nd of October. Organized by the Common Grain Alliance (CGA) and

the Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM), and hosted by Rock Creek Park, this free, family-friendly festival included farming, milling, and baking demonstrations, a whole-grain cooking classroom, hands-on activities, and live music.



About 2,000 visitors attended the Grain Fair, which featured a wide range of mill-related activities. At the SPOOM Mid-Atlantic tent, enthusiastic visitors turned the crank on a working model of the Oliver Evans system built by Steve Childers of Abbott's Mill in Delaware. FreshFarm FoodPrints brought a variety of hand milling tools for folks to try, part of the grain education lessons they developed for local DC schools. Mark Woodward and Paul Lebeau offered advice for bakers on milling at home. And Deep Roots Milling shared how they grind and sell locally grown grain at historic Woodson's Mill in Virginia.

Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair visitors also saw Washington's last working gristmill in action. They learned about the city's agricultural history--and met some of the practitioners working to keep those traditions alive in the region today.

And although Peirce Mill no longer sells the corn-meal it grinds, during the Grain Fair vendors offered locally grown and milled foods at a market on nearby Shoemaker Street. The Friends of Peirce Mill, the Common Grain Alliance, and the National Park Service are already discussing plans to host a 2nd Annual Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair in the fall of 2024!

—Angela Kramer

The Craft of the Miller Network

In 2017, the Kingdom of the Netherlands' Craft of the Miller was added to the Representative List of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The aim of the group is to support the craft of the miller worldwide by developing an international network of wind- and watermill millers and mill societies to share knowledge and skills through regular online conferences.

The October 2023 conference, Mills in the United States of America, featured four speakers who each have a unique perspective on mills and milling. Tony Shahan of Newlin Grist Mill and the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills Archives shared an historical overview and some of the improvements in US milling technology. Harry Hopcroft of the Tide Mill institute discussed the presence of tide mills in the US and the role of

the Tide Mill Institute in studying and preserving them, focusing on two particular mills, one in Virginia, and one in California. Steve Bashore of George Washington's Grist Mill and Distillery at Mount Vernon and Mario Scalise of Bale Mill each shared unique aspects of their mill and milling operation, as well as ways their mills support the preservation of the craft of a miller. Alisa Crawford, is a European-trained windmill operator and member of the steering group for the Craft of the Miller Network. In the U.S., she has operated the DeZwaan Windmill in Holland, Michigan.

Recordings of this excellent conference, along with the nine previous ones can be viewed at <https://network.molens.nl/>

—Alicia Crawford

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 _____

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Please Check One:

☐ Individual, Member of SPOOM - \$10.00 ☐ Individual, Not Member of SPOOM - \$15.00

☐ Sustaining Membership - \$25.00 ☐ Organization Membership - \$50.00

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 SPOOM Mid-Atlantic.** Online membership payment is available through the membership page of our website 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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