

Friends of Colvin Run Mill

April— June 2023



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ON-GOING EVENTS

General Store: Open Thursdays thru Sundays

Miller’s House Exhibit and Mill Tours: Saturdays and Sundays. Milling to start on April 16.

Grind Days: listed on Page 4.

See page 4 for exciting new event opportunities

Details and information at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill

MAPLE SYRUP BOIL DOWN A BIG SUCCESS



Despite a poor run of sap, Steve Gobolic (the site’s full-time Miller) was able to provide informative instructions for boiling down sap to make maple syrup (typically, it takes 40 plus gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup). Despite the paucity of sap, Tom Milton and Dan Dyke were able to keep the fire going for demonstration purposes. Steve showed the process to over 600 visitors on three weekends in February and March. This now popular annual event permits visitors to better understand how to go from “tree” to “table.”

“MINGLE AT THE MILL”

Great Falls Supports the Mill

It was a beautiful evening, September 17, 2022, when the Celebrate Great Falls Foundation and the Friends of Colvin Run Mill hosted “Mingle at the Mill.” The event was designed to afford Great Falls residents a chance to engage with the Mill and its newly restored Miller’s House and to benefit the Friends’ efforts to maintain, promote and provide historical context for the site including the re-establishment of its “family garden.” It was a smashing success and permitted the Foundation to donate \$5000 to the Friends (see photo below).



From Left: Steve Gobolic, (CRM Staff), Dan Dyke, Kitty O’Hara, Jim Waller (Friends of Colvin Run Mill Board members); and Piper Ryan, EXDIR of Celebrate Great Falls Foundation.

The event featured hors d’oeuvres made from flour and corn meal from the mill, signature apple cider as well as a variety of wine and artisan beers from the Aslin Beer Company in Herndon. Catering was provided by the Old Brogue restaurant in Great Falls. Live “old time” music was provided throughout the event by the Fairlington Raccoons. Attendees enjoyed the lantern-lit path to the mill and learn of its history. The Friends exhibited a moonshine still where attendees could learn about the history and technology of alcohol production. The evening was topped off with a silent auction of gift cards, services and items from Great Falls businesses.

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!

GET READY FOR “ENGINEERING THEN AND NOW” ON MAY 20

Technology is a hallmark of Colvin Run Mill Park as evidenced by being one of the few water powered grist mills to be listed by the [American Society of Mechanical Engineers](#) on its historic landmarks website. Oliver Evans, a young inventor from Delaware, received one of the first patents in the new US of A in 1790 for automating the milling process using elevators, moving belts, Archimedes screw conveyors, and a rotating rake that cools and dries the flour. Applying his innovations reduced manpower needs to run a mill by half. Higher efficiency means higher profitability. Gravity and waterpower drove these innovations and moved grain through the mill. “The only labor required of the millwright was to start, stop, and adjust the machinery.”

On Saturday May 20 from 12-3 pm “Oliver Evans” (aka Mike Henry, the former site manager, and FoCRM Board Member) and his assistant (Robert Colblenz, a real engineer and another FoCRM Board Member) will explain Evan’s innovations as you watch the mill operate. Come meet him and other historical “re-enactment” engineers and examine 19th century tools and innovations. Use your critical thinking skills to solve hands-on problems and challenges. Watch a NASA film explaining how they employ technology used at the mill in their operations today. Fun and an educational experience for the entire family. Have a picnic at one of the many tables on the grounds so you can be there at the start of the action!



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I reckon that I stuck 1,000 marshmallows on sticks for visitors, old and young, at the maple syrup boil downs. What a joyous crowd, learning the process of “sugaring,” transforming the sap of maple – and other – trees to deliciously sweet syrup. The process requires patience and lots of firewood to boil down 60 gallons of sap to yield one gallon of syrup. As Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of [Braiding Sweetgrass](#) delightfully observes after recounting her own family’s sugaring experience, half of the truth is that the earth endows us with great gifts: “the other half belongs to us: we participate in its transformation. It is our work, and our gratitude, that distills the sweetness.”

I have written before about the Fairfax County Park Authority’s lack of funds to build a trail on the south side of the new pedestrian passage under Route 7. We have some good news: planning and permitting is scheduled to begin next month. Finally, some movement! However (yes, here it comes), they estimate that this phase could last up to 18 months, and they have still not identified funds to build the trail. If the planning phase runs the entire 18 months, completion would be beyond the July 2024 date when the Route 7 project is to be completed. And construction of the trail would not have begun!

The lack of a designated trail runs the risk that hikers will find ways to the tunnel through the precious wetlands, park staff would be deprived of new programming possibilities, and hikers and families would not have a safe way to get to the Rails to River and Cross-County trails from the mill. A much better scenario would be to have the trail, with appropriate signage completed, when VDOT’s expansion work is finished. We will continue to encourage the FCPA to expedite their procedures. Raising your voice with your supervisor might also help give the project a little push.

Jim Wallar

President, Friends of Colvin Run Mill

[To read Jim’s Colvin Run blog, go to our web site at: www.FriendsofColvinRunMill.org (click on “Pres Grindstone”)]

FAIRFAX COUNTY BUDGET TIME: PARKS NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Once a year the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors considers an “advertised budget,” receives public comments, holds townhalls and hearings, and, by May 9 decides on a final budget. Parks are a source of joy, knowledge, peace, exercise, history, and greenery. Fairfax County is blessed with an award-winning system. As the number of parks and parkland have grown, the budget has not kept pace. The result: programs and maintenance are not what they used to be. Colvin Run Mill Park is a case in point. About 10 years ago the park had five full-time staff, now it has two.

Last year as a part of the Alliance of Park Friends we advocated that the share of the Park Authority’s budget be increased from 0.6 percent of the General Fund to one percent, as measured by the County Executive. Well, that didn’t happen. This year we are being more concrete.

Our first priority is to advocate for more staff at parks. A first step would be to have all fully funded positions be filled at competitive salaries. At present, positions on the books are left unfilled because funds are needed elsewhere in the park system. The advertised budget has taken a good first step. It proposes a two percent market rate adjustment for salaries plus additions for merit and longevity pay and a competitive rate adjustment. In addition, the country has undertaken a comprehensive review of salaries set years ago that are no longer at competitive levels. The next step is to increase funding to fill vacant positions or, put another way, increased funding for those activities that have siphoned off personnel funds in the past.

Another priority are park forests. Not only are they beautiful and provide a relief from the heat, but they also support wildlife and our lives – with peaceful, carbon dioxide absorbing green leaves. No wonder that the County-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan calls for an increase in the tree canopy to 60 percent. The Park Authority, owning about 9 percent of the county’s land, has a special responsibility including removal of old, diseased, and dangerous trees. Current resource allocations limit removal primarily to dangerous trees and even then, funds from personnel or other accounts are needed just to take care of the dangerous trees. This year the Park Authority requested \$739,463 to hire staff and have equipment to be more proactive. The advertised budget allots only \$57,000 of that request.

(Continued next column)

(Park funding continued)

If you are of a mind, you can write to your supervisor during this budget season and show your support for the parks asking that the Park Authority’s share of the General Fund budget be increased, specifically for hiring staff and caring for Fairfax County forests.

EDUCATION CENTER PLAQUE

The Friends have designed and had created a plaque which will shortly be installed in the Marjorie and Robert Lundegard Education Center explaining the genesis of its designation in their honor.

FRIENDS FINANCIAL STATUS

We have gotten word from the Fairfax County Park Foundation that our application for a “Mastenbrook Grant” intended to help pay for the restoration of the Family Garden has been approved. This grant will pay about half of the total cost of the project.

The initiative for the restoration and maintenance of the Family Garden has attracted other resources (including the donation made by the Celebrate Great Falls Foundation). This will cover nearly 3/4 of the cost and permit the Friends to better respond to other priority projects during the year.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

COLVIN RUN MILL TO HOST MEETING OF THE “SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF OLD MILLS” (SPOOM)

On Friday, April 21, the Mill will be hosting a meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SPOOM, a nationwide organization dedicated, as the name says, to the preservation of old mills, grist and otherwise. We have a long standing relationship with SPOOM and have provided training for SPOOM members in years past.

Visitors will tour the mill, be provided outlines of projects (like our simple machine program) which use the mill and its technology as a learning tool for visitors of all ages, and stay for a lunch catered by Mookie’s BBQ in the Education Center. From here they will tour the Aldie Mill later in the day and on Saturday will tour Peirce Mill in the District and hold a business meeting.

Go to [“Home - Society for the Preservation of Old Mills \(spoom.org\)”](http://Home - Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (spoom.org)) for more information.

THE COLVIN RUN MILL SITE IS EXPANDING AND ENHANCING ITS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ON A BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS

New and reoccurring events scheduled for Colvin Run Mill, April 2023 thru June 2023.

Check ParkTakes for time and registration requirements.

April

Saturday, the 8th: Easter Egg Hunts

Sunday, the 16th: First Grind Day of 2023

Tuesday, the 18th: Colvin Run Book Club *April 1865: The Month That Saved America*

Sunday, the 23rd: Girl Scout Carving (Northern Virginia Woodcarvers)

Friday, the 28th: Campfire & Games at the Mill

Saturday, the 29th: Colvin Run Spring Tea

May

Sunday, the 7th: Grind Day and Blacksmith Demo

Saturday, the 13th: Campfire and Games at the Mill

Tuesday, the 16th: Colvin Run Book Club *The Last Days of Night*

Saturday, the 20th: Engineering Then & Now

Sunday, the 21st: Grind Day and Woodcarver Open Public Instructions

June**

Sunday 4th Grind Day and Blacksmith Demo

Note: There is no Grind Day on Sunday, June 18th

**** Three camps are scheduled to start in June. They are: All-American Girl: Living Doll Camp; Cooking & Crafts Camp; & Camp Colvin. Most camps are already fully registered but a “waitlist” is available. Check ParkTakes for details and registration.**

Become an Official

“Friend of Colvin Run Mill”

At the Board of Directors Meeting in April 2022, the Board approved membership dues as follows: Individual - \$35 a year, Family - \$55, Business - \$100.

If you join, your membership supports an historic treasure that continues to educate and inform and grind out fine whole wheat flour, not to mention cornmeal, grits, and buckwheat flour.

In addition, you’ll continue to receive the Newsletters, have opportunities for special tours, receive samples of stone ground grains at special events, and you will have the right to vote for members of the board of Friends of Colvin Run Mill (one vote for individuals and businesses and two votes for families).

Join now by completing the membership form on the Friends of Colvin Run Mill site (focrm.org/be-a-friend).