

# *Friends of Colvin Run Mill*

10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls, VA

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January-March 2025

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## MAJOR EVENTS

**Mill in Motion:** Obviously, not during the winter months but we'll begin again on the first and third Sundays, April, 12-3PM, thru October

In late January and early February we will be conducting our annual **Maple Syrup Boil Down** using sap from our trees and the expertise of our Lead Miller, Steve Gobolic.

In **March** we'll be offering a wide range of special classes including items of science (innovation and "spies"); what we know about enslaved workers; women's work in the 19th century; woodworking and wood carving; and the study of worms.

**See page 4 for specific times and registration requirements**

We are always looking for additional volunteers to help with our school programs (simple machines) and any of our other offerings. Just a few hours a month will help us and provide you with a great sense of accomplishment.

**Consider joining our team.**

## VISIT OF SUPERVISOR BIERMAN

On October 24 Dranesville Supervisor Jimmy Bierman and his staff assistant Natalie Simpson together with Vanessa Simpson from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman McKay's office toured the General Store, saw the mill in motion, and walked through the newly build tunnel under Route 7 to see where a new trail is being planned to connect to the Rails to River Trail to Lake Fairfax. Visitors also included Park Authority Board Member Tim Hackman and Tom McFarland, Trail Section Manager of the Park Authority.



**LEFT TO RIGHT: JIM WALLAR, SUPERVISOR BIERMAN, KIERSTEN FIORE, MIKE HENRY, WES CALLENDER, ALEX BLOCK**

Kiersten Fiore, site manager, led the tour supported by Board Member and former site manager Mike Henry. Supervisor Bierman witnessed the mill in motion, grinding wheat for Mount Defiance Distillery in Middleburg, receiving explanations from dusty Dan Dyke, Vice President, and miller Steve Golobic. After walking under Route 7 in the magnificent new tunnel, Tom McFarland explained the Park Authority's plans for a bridge and trail, indicating that a budget estimate may be available in the spring of 2025. Other board members involved with the visit included Wes Callender, Alex Block, and Jim Wallar.

## FROM GRAIN TO LOAF

About 30 people gathered on October 29<sup>th</sup> to hear about raising and grinding organic grain and making wholesome, delicious bread. Sponsored by Colvin Run, the Common Grain Alliance, the Fairfax County Park Authority, and Farmers Markets, the group took a quick tour of the mill and settled in for educational talks by Fred Sachs of Grapewood Farm and John Derry of Meadow Bread.



**FRED SACHS**

Family owned and operated Grapewood Farm, established in 2000 in the historic Northern Neck, specializes in producing superior organic small grains and stone-ground flour, proudly declaring its products "Virginia Grown, Virginia Ground." Believing that good crops start with good soil, Fred explained their use of no-till and reduced tillage methods in a three-year field rotation and the use of cover crops and composting to enrich the earth. He passed around samples of "dirt," one dusty sample of school yard hard tack, the other a dark, rich complexity of living organisms. Through the Common Grain Alliance, Grapewood has connected with a diverse local food network committed to the highest quality standards.

After working in bakeries, John longed for the countryside and found a spot near Hillsboro with a beautiful meadow. Hence the name, Meadow Bakery, committed to make wholesome, nutrient-dense stable food for the local community. John purchases grains from

local farms and grinds his own flour using a stone mill that keeps the flour cool and yields a creamy flour. He uses only whole wheat flour with a sour-dough starter to produce richly textured, tasty breads baked in a wood-fired masonry and brick bread oven. Don't look for Meadow Bakery products at your grocery store: he only sells at local farmers market, staying true to the land and the local community.



**SAMPLING THE WARES**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Children milling about the General Store as parents milled about outside was a reminder that Santa is coming to.... the mill. A tradition that has now spanned a generation, young parents fondly remember when they did their gift shopping at the General Store, had helpful volunteers wrap their selections, and surprised their parents at Christmas with their hand-picked presents.

In the sad news/good news category we bid a fond farewell to Dawn Bova who has been an exceptional program manager at Colvin Run for the last three years, applying her experience and expertise to introduce new programs and expand the reach of the park. The good news is Dawn has been appointed the Visitor Services Manager at Sully Historic Site, a step up where the county and the Park Authority will continue to benefit from her talents.

This newsletter highlights a particularly active fall under the leadership of the new site manager, Kiersten Fiore. Thanks to her efforts, the Park Authority approved renovating the shed by the mill, a major undertaking with the support of Great Falls experts. New programming, like Historic Crafts and Trades, standard ones like the Ship's Company with the added twist of the Chanteymen, a joint seminar with the Common Grain Alliance, a new blacksmith crafting simple tools, selling grains at the Reston Farmers Market, and the visit of Supervisor Bierman all illustrate how Colvin Run contributes to and benefits from the local community.

Next year looks to be even more exciting with Mount Defiance Distillery offering a whiskey tasting (Colvin Run Mill has ground wheat for them to make mash for their bourbon) and movies at the mill, together with the ever-popular maple syrup boil down, Easter egg hunt, and the mill in motion. We appreciate your support that keeps Colvin Run vibrant, look forward to seeing you at the park more often, and wish you all the best for the New Year.

**Jim Wallar**

**President, Friends of Colvin Run Mill**

For more from the President, see [President's Grindstone blog](#):

***Great articles on water wheels, the grits contest, the Archimedes screw, mill stones, and much, much more!***



## **RESTORATION OF THE SHED**

Thanks to the contributions of Doug Cobb, long-time Great Falls resident who worked with Dan Dyke, Board Vice President, to conceptualize the renovation, and Tom Donaldson, President of the Sugar Oak construction firm who organized, supervised, and provided for expert carpentry skills, the restoration of the shed was accomplished before winter set in. Site managers Julie Gurnee and Kiersten Fiore worked with the Fairfax Park Authority to get the project approved in what seemed like record time. KUDOS TO ALL!



***OCTOBER 26, 2024***



***NOVEMBER 10, 2024***



***COMPLETED NOVEMBER 29, 2024***



***INTERIOR, NOVEMBER 29, 2024***

## SANTA AT THE MILL

This wildly popular event was held again this year on December 14th and 15th. Nearly 525 adults and children attended either the sensor-friendly timeslots or the more general sessions. We had the traditional Christmas tree decorated as it might have been in the early days of the mill (early 1800s) and the Miller's House decorated in both

of its representative time frames, early and late 1800s.

In addition to Santa himself, we provided hot chocolate, marshmallows to toast, carolers, and holiday crafts. On the prior weekend we also provided a children's shop to help 96 children fulfill their shopping needs.



**THE TREE**



**THE MILLER'S HOUSE**



**SANTA WITH VISITORS**

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS JANUARY THRU MARCH 2025

### January

11 Snowflake Family Tea Party  
20 Cooking and Crafts Workshop Camp  
26 Maple Syrup Boil Down  
29 CGS Woodworker Badge Class

### February

1 Valentine's Day Family Tea Party  
2 Maple Syrup Boil Down  
8 Maple Syrup Boil Down  
15 Spy Craft  
22 Remembering Metilda: Growing Up Enslaved

### March

6 Homeschool Science: Innovation--4-class series, March 6, 13, 20 and 27  
8 What We Know: Enslaved People at Colvin Run  
8 In the Garden: Worms  
16 Science Meets History: Spies  
20 Felting Basics: Owls--2-class series, March 20 and 27  
22 Women's Work in the 19th Century  
23 Woodcarving Class--3-class series, March 23, 30 and April 6  
30 Woodworking Class

### Maple Syrup Boil Down

Please register for this tasty experience in one of our many time slots on Sunday, January 26, Sunday, February 2, and Saturday, February 8. Bundle up by the fire to learn how maple syrup is made. Learn why trees produce sap and how it is collected. Try delicious maple syrup on cornbread made with Colvin Run Mill grains. Visit the general store, Miller's House and Mill to conclude your day. You can register by visiting our website, [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill).

### Discovery Baskets

Check out one of our fun-filled Discovery Baskets. This winter's themes are Trees and Sugar, Sheep to Mittens, Sweet Treats, and Simple Machines. The baskets will have a variety of books, games, puzzles, and sensory surprises for you to explore.

### Baking through the Holidays

A new exhibit case in the General Store. Learn how different cultures celebrate the winter holidays through baking. Take some inspiration from other recipes to celebrate at home. The exhibit will be open through early March.

**Check ParkTakes for specific time and registration requirements.**



## FOOD AND SONG DELIGHT

On November 10th visitors were entertained and educated by the Ship's Company and the Chanteymen, reenactors of sailors portraying nautical life in the 1700s and 1800s. The Ship's Company baked and boiled as though they were aboard ship, using products that had a long shelf-life for extended voyages. They made pies and pasta using whole wheat ground at the mill.



**FOOD PREPARATION**

Chanteymen are sailors who sing chanties (from the French, *chanter*, to sing) that are in rhythm with work on board ship, like hauling sails, lifting the anchor, or rowing long boats." Pull! My bully boys. Pull!" A chanteyman was not an official position but a good voice and quick wit that helped crews work together efficiently could be traded for a reduction in hard labor. "Simple and direct, wild and spirited, salty and rough as a North Atlantic gale, they were a reflection of the sailors themselves."



**THE CHANTEYMEN AT SONG**

For nearly three decades the Ship's Company Chanteymen have been touring harbors and Irish pubs along the East Coast, delighting thousands with their songs and stories.

## BECOME AN OFFICIAL "FRIENDS OF COLVIN RUN MILL" MEMBER

Membership dues are as follows: Individual - \$35 a year, Family - \$55, Business - \$100.

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

## TRADES AND CRAFTS DAY SUCCESS

On Sunday, October 20 from 12 to 3, the site hosted local artisans who demonstrated crafts and trades of the early nineteenth century when the Mill was in its infancy and many household items and clothes were made and merchandized locally. It wasn't until the latter part of the century when the Sears Catalogue was first published (1888) that the Miller and family could order and have shipped to them these household items.

The crafts women and men demonstrated: spinning wheel (Dian Myers); broom making (Andy Black); natural dyeing (Elaine Kelly); blacksmithing (Christen Young); cider pressing (James Pinkowski); spirits distilling (Dan Dyke); book binding (Alexis Candelelaria); needle and thread (Lisa Neel) and, of course, milling (Steve Gobolic).



**BOOKBINDING: ALEXIS CANDELARIA**



**NATURAL DYEING: ELAINE KELLY**



**BROOM MAKING: ANDY BLACK**

**A hearty BRAVO to all the crafts and trades people who shared their knowledge and skills.**

## SPOOM MEETING

SPOOM (Society for the Preservation of Old Mills) is the national organization dedicated to old mill preservation and education. Friends of Colvin Run Mill board member Alex Block attended one day of its three-day meeting in Northern Virginia on November 8, 2024. Here is a condensed version of her experience. [The full report can be viewed on our web site under “President’s Grindstone Blog”.](#)



**LOCKE'S MILL, BERRYVILLE**

“On that Friday we toured Locke’s Mill in Berryville; Ayrshire Farm in Upperville; and Waterford Mill in the town of Waterford.

Locke’s Mill, on the picturesque banks of the Shenandoah River, was built by the grandson of once-acting Governor of Virginia, Robert “King” Carter, on land bequeathed to him by King George I, and was operational before 1751. After 1876 it was rebuilt as an “Oliver Evans” mill with new buhr stones imported from France, still in use today.

After changing many hands and destroyed by floods including the 30 foot waterwheel, restoration was begun in 1992 and grinding operations resumed in the three-story mill in 2013. A rail system was built

into the ceiling on the second floor to accept sacks of grain deliveries that are carried along the track, entering the grain system below through a chute in the floor, then up an elevator to the third floor where it is funneled into a hopper and flows to the grindstones below.

Owned and operated today by Sandy Lerner, Locke’s Mill is actually two mills in one: a system strictly for organic grains, and a second, separate system that processes large quantities of grains for distilleries and other commercial customers (see photo at right). It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

Next we visited Ayrshire Farm which is also owned by Sandy Lerner, an advocate of sustainable, humane, and organic farming, who purchased the 800 acre farm in 1996, becoming the First Certified Humane and Organic farm in Virginia. Her restaurant, Hunter’s Head Tavern in Upperville, is a Certified Green® Restaurant.

Finally, we toured the mill in Waterford. A National Historic Landmark today, the enchanting, small village of Waterford was founded about 1733 by Amos Janney, a Pennsylvania Quaker, who established a grist mill and a sawmill.



**LOCKE'S MILL, BERRYVILLE**



**WATERFORD MILL**

The Waterford Mill initially played a central role in the economic development of the town. It changed hands many times over the course of two centuries with new technology of the day installed with every new owner. Industrialization and weather, floods and damage also contributed to the decline of mill operation and Waterford Mill closed its doors in 1939. However, restoration of the Waterford Mill building began in 2009 and has been repaired structurally over the years, bringing the mill closer to a period of interpretation between 1855 and 1885. The multi-phase construction completed in 2023, it is used today for educational and cultural enrichment programs. It is also used as a commercial sales venue during the annual Waterford festival.

What a delightful, rewarding day it was and it I was so thankful to be afforded this opportunity to meet and share with others our mutual interest in old mills.”



**WATERFORD MILL, WATERFORD**