

Friends of Colvin Run Mill

January—March 2024



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HOLIDAYS AT THE MILL

Some 30 visitors signed up for two “Lantern Tours” the first weekend in December and more than 400 visitors attended “Santa at the Mill” during the next weekend. What a wonderful way to return to the traditions of the past! Pictures on Page 5.

WE’RE CHANGING OUR NOMENCLATURE

The new name for “Grind Day” is (drum roll):

“Mill in Motion”

Here is the full new ParkTakes description:

“We’re running the mill like it’s 1811 when the mill was first operating. Come see one of the country’s remaining examples of early American mass production. Learn why Oliver Evans’ plans for an automated mill received one of the first US patents and revolutionized food production in the young country. After you explore the Mill, visit the 19th century Miller’s House exhibit and stop in the Colvin Run General Store to purchase grain ground at the mill. “

This change will start with the Spring Park-Takes (programs in March, April and May).



Site manager Julie Gurnee was awarded “Supervisor of the Year” by the Fairfax County Park Authority.

CONGRATULATIONS JULIE!

ON-GOING EVENTS

General Store: Open 11-4 Thursday thru Sunday.

Miller’s House Exhibit and Mill Tours: Saturdays and Sundays.

Mill in Motion: Milling resumes in April and continues on first and third Sundays (12 to 3 PM) through October.

See page 5 for a complete list of exciting educational opportunities!

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

MINGLE AT THE MILL— AGAIN

On Saturday evening, September 9, 2023, the Celebrate Great Falls Foundation and the Friends of Colvin Run Mill hosted “Mingle at the Mill” for the second year in a row. Proceeds from the event resulted in a \$6000 donation to the Friends of Colvin Run Mill, funds that will significantly assist in the establishment and maintenance of the gardens surrounding the restored Millers House.



John Burke and Sara Sultan - program committee for Mingle at the Mill (not pictured, Piper Ryan who kicked the thing off) and Jim Wallar, President, Friends of Colvin Run Mill

We thank the Celebrate Great Falls Foundation for its generous contribution to the Friends for the second year in a row!

ELECTION RESULTS

The results are in! The Friends of Colvin Run Mill Board of Directors for the next year will consist of (in alphabetical order); Gene Bacher, Alex Block, Wes Callender, Bob Coblenz, Dan Dyke, Mike Henry, Kitty O’Hara, and Jim Wallar.

Officers selected by the Board are:

President: Jim Wallar

Vice President: Dan Dyke

Treasurer: Kitty O’Hara

Secretary: Wes Callender

Contact us if you have suggestions, ideas, complaints, and/or would like to volunteer a few hours a month to this noble cause. Go to:

[Contact us - Friends Of Colvin Run Mill](https://www.friendsofcolvinrunmill.org)

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

What a joy seeing parents congregate on the general store’s porch, chatting while waiting as their children “secretly” shopped for their gifts in the store. Shades of the old days when folks lingered around the store and shared information (gossip?).

Candlelight tours of the mill and miller’s house conveyed a sense of Christmases past. Santa arrived the next weekend, delighting young and old with the promise of Christmas present. We were pleased to be one of the Friends groups to receive the Sally Ormsby award for advocating for more resources from the county budget for park forestry, important for Christmases yet to come.

I am honored that Friends have entrusted me with a second term. As Friends, we support the excellent staff and help them realize ideas to strengthen the educational aspects and preserve the historic nature of the park. As my grandfather used to say, such effort takes either time or money. We are grateful to the Celebrate Great Falls organization and other donors for their financial contributions. We also need more contributions of time! If you have any interest in history, technology, nature, or food, consider spending a few hours a month at the mill. There is always something to do or something going on that would benefit from extra hands. And you will have contributed to making one of the county’s “true gems” shine ever brighter.

Wishing you a most joyous holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year.

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”)]

Great articles on water wheels, the grits contest, the Archimedes screw, mill stones, and more]

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](https://www.friendsofcolvinrunmill.org/be-a-friend)).

STATUS OF THE TUNNEL AND ASSOCIATED TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

The tunnel that connects the two portions of the park that are separated by Rt 7 is complete and Park Authority efforts to make the connection to other county trails are in a planning phase. Since the associated trail improvements were not included in approved budgets, this requirement may be satisfied by end of year funds or included in a future year budget.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has provided security lighting so here is a photo of the tunnel at night:



Route 7 Tunnel as part of Colvin Run Mill site

BOB COBLENZ VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Tour docent, Friends Board Member, and local representative to the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM) Bob Coblenz has been awarded the Volunteer of the Year from the Colvin Run Mill site. Presented at the Elly Doyle awards ceremony, this award recognized Bob for his continuing contributions to the history and understanding of Oliver Evans's technological improvements to the process of milling grain into flour. Here is Bob acting as Oliver Evans's assistant at our Engineering Then and Now Day, 2023.



SHIP'S COMPANY VISITS THE MILL

Ship's Company War of 1812 Contingent is a Baltimore and Washington D.C.-based living history group dedicated to interpreting the history of the US Navy. They visited on November 5th to talk

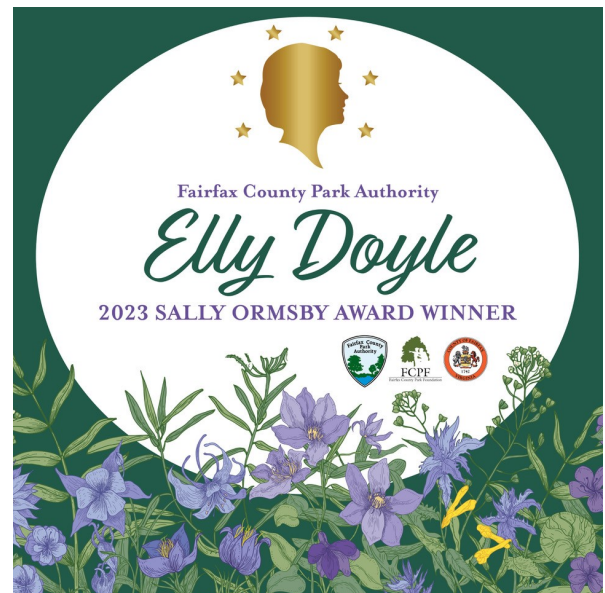


and demonstrate "Feeding the Navy." They prepared food - pies, cookies, hard-tack - using ingredients and methods available in 1812, including wheat ground at the mill. Highly engaging, the re-enactors delighted visitors with tales of the kitchen of the sea - the galley.

SALLY ORMSBY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

The Friends of Colvin Run Mill has been participating in a county wide effort with other Friends of Fairfax Parks (the Fair Parks Initiative) to persuade the county to increase parks and recreation funding. Modest improvements were realized this past year and the initiative was selected as one of the 2023 Environmental Awards. See the video of the presentation at the annual Elly Doyle awards ceremony in November:

<https://fairfaxcounty.egnyte.com/dl/egK8cRVBRo>



FROM MILL TO STILL

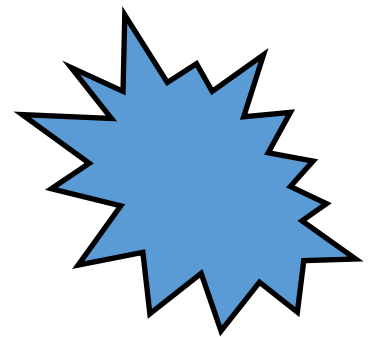
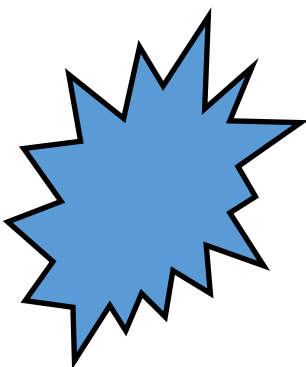
By Dan Dyke

Before halting the mill stones for this winter, Colvin Run Mill had one more grind of wheat to complete. In early December, 1,500 pounds of locally grown wheat was delivered to the mill. That's more than the mill normally grinds over the course of a year of public sessions demonstrating how the mill operated in the 19th century. The 1,500 pound order was for **Mount Defiance Cidery and Distillery** located in Middleburg, Va. Mount Defiance uses locally grown grain and other local ingredients to produce small-batch hard ciders and spirits.

In order to complete the grind in a single day, the mill was run faster than it normally does for public demonstrations. If mills had emotions, I would swear it was running happier than I've seen it in the past seven years I've volunteered there. Since I know it doesn't emote, I can truthfully say the mill was running smoother than I've ever seen it. There is discussion about repeating this bigger, faster grind for the public in the coming year.

Historically, it was common to grind surplus corn, rye and wheat for distilling into alcoholic spirits. Excess grain would spoil if not ground into meal and excess meal would spoil if not consumed within a reasonable period. Farmers would preserve the value of their grain by fermenting it and distilling it into alcoholic spirits. Alcohol could easily be transported for sale and was actually used as currency before prohibition. And, it was very profitable!

In 1850, a bushel of wheat, or 60 pounds, was worth about \$1. Each *pound* of grain along with some molasses, honey or some other sugar, however, yielded approximately *one gallon* of white spirits (a.k.a. moonshine or unaged whiskey) or 60 gallons of alcoholic beverage per bushel of wheat (or other grain). Here is what we found about the price of whiskey in 1850: they charged 38 cents a gallon, and 10 cents per quart (40 cents per gallon). So that \$1 bushel of wheat now as the basis of 60 gallons of whiskey would yield at least \$22.80 and as much as \$24. Not a bad return on surplus grain for 19th century farmers and millers.



Still components found at Colvin Run Mill

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

January thru March 2024

SEE PARKTAKES FOR SPECIFIC TIMES AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

January 2024	February 2024	March 2024
<p>Saturday, 20th, Snowflake Family Tea Party</p> <p>Friday, 26th, BSA Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge Class</p> <p>Friday, 26th, GSA Woodworking Badge (Cadettes)</p>	<p>Saturday, 3rd, Valentines Day Family Tea Party</p> <p>Saturday, 10th, Maple Syrup Boil Down</p> <p>Saturday, 17th, Remembering Metilda: Growing Up Enslaved</p> <p>Sunday, 18th, Maple Syrup Boil Down</p> <p>Sunday, 25th, Maple Syrup Boil Down</p>	<p>Monday, 4th, Mini Millers: Historic Games and Toys</p> <p>Sunday, 10th, Woodcarvers Class (Northern Virginia Woodcarvers)</p> <p>Saturday, 16th, 19th Century Women's Work</p> <p>Monday, 18th, Mini Millers: Country Life</p> <p>Thursday, 21st, Felting Basics: Posable Mouse</p> <p>Saturday, 30th, Easter Egg Hunt</p>



Santa at the Mill December 2023



Christmas Tree December 2023