



TrueGrist

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill

Coming Up at Peirce Mill

Please check website (friendsofpeircemill.org) to confirm dates and times for events below)

August 21
Ice Cream Demo

September 10
Hattie Sewell
Film Premiere

October 9
Heritage Day
Festival



Mill Re-Opens!

Following a 15-month shutdown due to COVID, the mill re-opened in mid-July, and resumed the normal schedule of grinding grain on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month.

Until the end of October, the mill will be open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, from 10am until 4pm. The National Park Services asks that visitors practice social distancing, and wear a mask if not vaccinated.

The pandemic didn't slow down the Friends of Peirce Mill. Education continued - in the past spring, we reached almost

700 students for virtual, curriculum-related learning. There were several weeks in May when we had school programs almost every weekday.

We've also held virtual programs on cider and baking, featuring our friends at Seylou and Anxo. A special treat was the appearance in January of the noted cider maker Tom Oliver, beamed in from England for a Winter Wassail celebration.

In May, students from Howard University made a presentation on the life of Hattie Sewell, the African-

American entrepreneur who ran the Peirce Mill teahouse in 1920. The story of official discrimination that cost her the job will be told in a film premiering in September (see page two for more information).

Most importantly, the National Park Service's Centennial Challenge program has selected Peirce Mill for funding half the cost for completing the restoration of the water-powered, multi-story "Evans System" that historically processed the grain before and after milling.

Mid-Atlantic Grain Conference

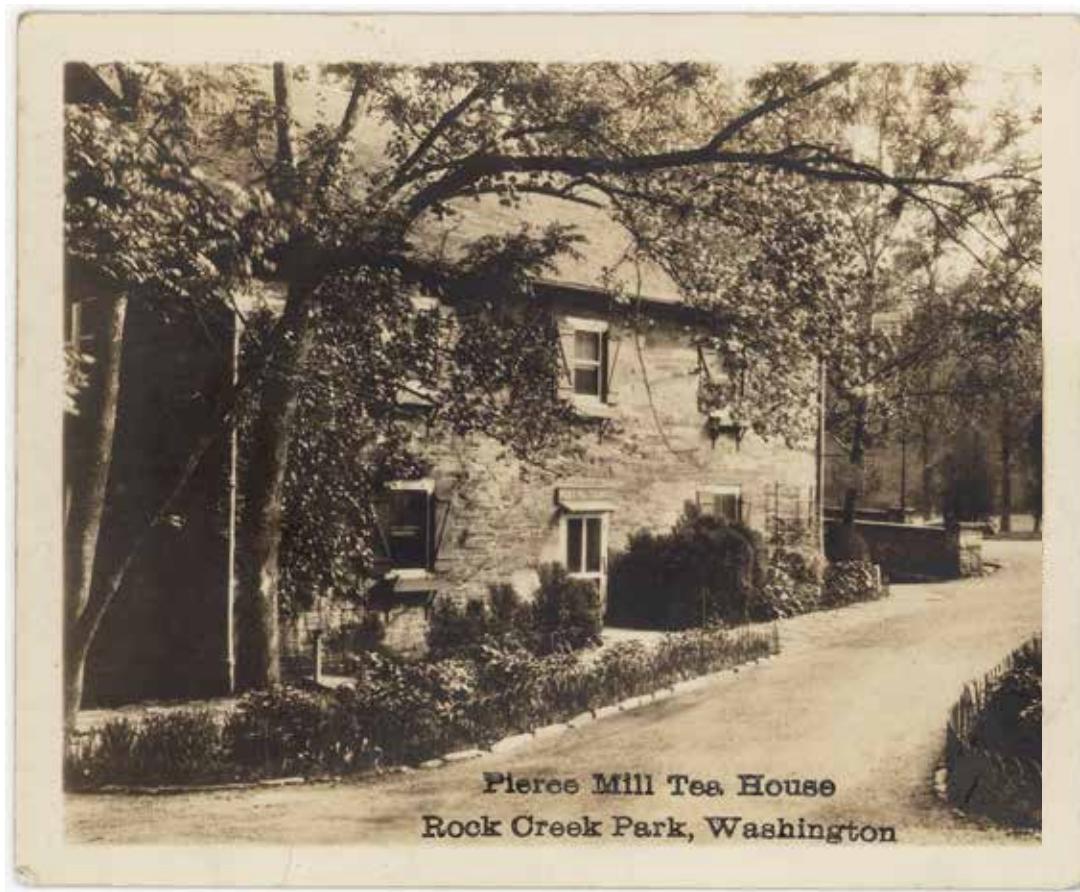
In Maine, it's called the Kneading Conference. In California, it's the "Gourmandise" grain gathering. Here in DC, for lack of a better moniker (at least at this time), we're calling it the Mid-Atlantic Grain Conference.

The Friends of Peirce Mill is looking into holding such a conference in the next year or so. The mid-Atlantic gathering would bring together farmers, millers, bakers and others to discuss the revival of the region's grain economy, and -- we hope --

Continues on page 3

Farmer Clay Trainum, Rockbridge County, Virginia, demonstrating the shelling of his heirloom "bloody butcher" corn, which is used for grits and other products.





The Friends of Peirce Mill work in partnership with the National Park Service to preserve this historically significant example of early American industry. Located in Rock Creek National Park, the water-powered flour mill offers educational experiences to all generations.

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Hattie Sewell Project

The Friends of Peirce Mill recently received a Vision Partnership grant from Humanities DC to create a short film about Hattie Sewell, an African American woman who ran the teahouse at Peirce Mill exactly 100 years ago.

Sewell was awarded the teahouse contract in the summer of 1920. She paid a monthly rent of \$45 and increased business. But a prominent neighbor and relative of the Peirce family, E.S. Newman, complained that the teahouse had become "a rendezvous for colored people, soon developing into a nuisance." According to Rock Creek Park's Administrative History, there were no other complaints about Sewell's establishment. Nevertheless, her contract was terminated in October 1921.

The Friends of Peirce Mill and Rock Creek Park are working with students from Howard University to learn more about Hattie Sewell and to create a short film about her life and times. The film will become part of the DC Digital Museum

Save the Date!

The Hattie Sewell film will premiere at Peirce Mill during the evening of Friday, September 10. Sunday, September 12 is the rain date.



This project is supported by a grant from HumanitiesDC as part of the "Humanities Grant Program," an initiative funded by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

[Click here to learn more about friendsofpeircemill.org](http://friendsofpeircemill.org)



Ben Stowe, at the Little Hat Creek bakery, Roseland, Virginia. The wood-fired stove bakes sourdough breads, made from flours mostly sourced in Virginia and nearby states.

Continued from page 1

encourage greater public knowledge about the connection between nutrition and consumption of whole grains.

Better flavor is also involved. As Jennifer Lapidus, owner of the Carolina Grown mill in Asheville, N.C., notes, locally-grown grains allow bakers to move away from industrial commodity flour to “cold-stone-milled flour, variety specific, of place, flavor, and character” with “extraordinary taste, texture, and story.”

We don’t know what the bread made from Peirce Mill in the 19th century tasted like. But we do know that the shift from local grains to all-purpose white flour ground in the Midwest has always been regretted by artisan bakers, and customers who pay attention to what they eat.

Southerners who love grits will tell you that there is just no comparison between store-bought instant grits, made in metal rolling mill, and corn that is ground between stones, and cooked fresh.

Fans of rye bread, buckwheat pancakes, or sourdough will also testify to the better quality of these foods when they are made from stone-milled grain.

Lapidus sources all her wheat from North Carolina, her buckwheat from Virginia, and spelt grains from



Wade's Mill, near Lexington, Virginia, was built in 1750. It is the state's oldest continuously operating mill.

Pennsylvania. This regional, multi-state approach is also employed by Jonathan Bethony, owner of the Seylou bakery in Washington DC., who emphasizes that soil health is the key to sustainable agriculture.

“We have excellent farmers” in nearby states, who care about the replenishing the soil with time-tested techniques such as using cover crops and practicing no-till, or minimal disturbance of the land.

Daniel Austin, owner of the Little Red Hen grain farm in Rocky Mount, Va., says that rather than “growing things as quickly and cheaply as possible,” farmers must be good stewards.

Cover crops are also employed at the Peirce Mill demonstration historic orchard. If you’d like to be involved in planning the grain conference, please contact Steve Dryden (sdryden@comcast.net)

Abner Cloud’s Mill: Not !!

For the past century at least, just about everyone has believed that the ruins (and we mean *ruins*, just a few stones), across the C&O Canal near the Abner Cloud House, were the remnants of Cloud’s mill. So he was a miller, right?

Wrong. Research by Palisades resident Cathy Ball has confirmed that Abner Cloud Jr. never owned, built or

operated a mill. Cloud, whose sister Elizabeth married Isaac Peirce, was part of the Pennsylvania Quaker entourage that came to the future territory of Washington DC in the 1780s. Settling on land his family owned that abutted an earlier version of the C&O Canal, Cloud did build the house that still stands there, and had several business interests, including the lease of Potomac shore

Continued on page 4



Continued from page 3

land to fishermen. There was what was known as a “mill seat” (a site close to water for powering the wheel) nearby.

Ruins on this site were what the old *Washington Star*'s intrepid local columnist, Harry Shannon, aka “The Rambler,” identified as “Cloud’s mill” in a June 1918 article. That assumption was repeated by other writers throughout the 20th century, and evidently formed the basis for a National Park Service historic marker near the ruins. I joined this trail of misinformation in my 2009 book, “*Peirce Mill: 200 Years in the Nation’s Capital*” – though I noted that none of the historic records I looked at, curiously, mentioned mill-related activities.

Cathy, who's a member of the chapter of the Colonial Dames of America that maintains the Cloud house, has been studying the Cloud family for the past year. Her conclusion, based on deep dives into official government records and court filings, is that the mill seat was always on land owned by others, and though adjacent to the Cloud property, Abner never was involved.

---Steve Dryden, Executive Director



Your annual membership can make a difference! Let's keep Peirce Mill running for another 200 years!

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For more information, email us at: info@peircemillfriends.org or call: 202-248-1505

Or join and pay by credit card at www.friendsofpeircemill.org

The Friends of Peirce Mill, Inc. is a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. It has been recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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