In the early 1960s, Peirce Mill was used as a teahouse. The interior was completely refitted with a kitchen and dining areas. This view shows the porch on the north side where the water wheel should be. All of the milling machinery that we see now came from the 1930s restoration.

You can see from the pictures that things are happening at the Mill! Our contractors, O’Rourke and Kiorpes, are in the midst of making repairs to the hurst frame, the heavy timber framework that holds the milling machinery. To gain access to the frame, the millstones had first to be removed, then the millstone floor. In the first picture, you are on the first floor looking at the top of the hurst frame. A section of the vertical shaft, which had also to be removed, lies on a temporary plywood walkway. In the second photo, you see the millstones—all six of them—in temporary storage at the south end of the main floor. The third picture is a view at the basement level of the metal scaffolding that had to be erected to support the heavy load of the millstones above—a total weight of over 10,000 pounds! These repairs should be completed by year-end.

While John and Gus work on the hurst frame, Steve Ortado has begun the task of removing damaged gears and shafts from within the frame. Some key pieces have already been lifted out of the machinery pit. Steve will tackle the tough job of removing the old main shaft, which is badly rotted, and the big damaged pit gear, once John and Gus have removed several of the horizontal beams of the hurst frame so that he and his crew can gain access to the area. Planning has also begun on the task of removing the water wheel on the outside of the mill. Rock Creek Park officials have agreed to provide maintenance personnel to work with Steve Ortado to cut the wheel in pieces and remove them using a crane. We will be sure to photograph the event and file a report about it in the next issue of Milling About.

Now that the Peirce Barn will be open on weekends through the winter, we would like to develop an exhibit panel for display at the barn that would tell visitors what is going on currently at the mill, what work is planned for the future, and when they might expect to be able to see the waterwheel turning again. We have a number of photographs that could be used and we can produce draft text for the panel. What we need now is somebody to put it all together, get it approved by Rock Creek Park officials, and then produce a professional quality panel. If you are interested and available, please e-mail Richard Abbott at abbot12290@verizon.net.

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

Annual Meeting

Members gathered at the mill on Saturday, October 16 for our annual meeting. We didn’t build it as an open house this time because the extensive work going on inside the mill limited access. Members and other visitors were, however, able to view the interior from just inside the front and basement doors. You can get an idea of what they saw from the pictures in the preceding article. As the picture shows, our meeting was held under a canopy, set up on the grassy area across from the mill and behind Peirce Barn. Members enjoyed coffee and bagels on a rather cool (but sunny) morning, while hearing an account of the current and planned future work at the mill by Richard Abbott, a report on fund-raising from Tom Blackburn, a financial report from David Lyman, and a membership report from Sheila Ploger. Board members were elected for another one-year term.

In a presentation by Dwight Madison, Supervisory Ranger for Rock Creek Park, we heard about the ongoing fish passage project along Rock Creek. Currently, work is proceeding upstream of Peirce Mill, but it is hoped that work can begin soon on the fish passage along Rock Creek. The Nature Center, Under this year’s event, Sheila Ploger was there to tell people about our fish passage project and to distribute brochures and membership forms. Plans are to station our volunteers would be there to tell visitors about the restoration project and, to the extent allowed by ongoing work inside the building, take visitors on tours of the mill. Audiovisual exhibits at Peirce Barn would explain how the work is being carried out.

Our bylaws call for an annual membership meeting in the fall, with a 10% quorum required to vote on issues affecting the organization. In past years, we have combined this meeting with the open house and used it as an occasion to do a “show and tell” about progress of work at the mill, to report on our financial condition, fund raising results, and membership; and to elect a board of directors. An alternative we are considering is to communicate with members by e-mail, for those so equipped, and by regular mail with others. Our thinking is that we would get more feedback from members this way than by asking you to come down to the mill once a year on a Saturday morning. We are now updating our e-mail membership list and you will be hearing from us soon through this channel.

Tell Us Your Story

Do you have an interesting story to tell, a favorite memory of Peirce Mill from your childhood? Share your story ideas or vintage photos with other Mill friends. Submit your contribution to Friends of Peirce Mill at Richard Abbott, 4305 38th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016, or e-mail to abbott1229@erols.com. We’ll try to get your submission into the next issue of Milling About. Thanks!