

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
69-03-08-0002	3/24/69

1. NAME	
COMMON: Peirce Mill	
AND/OR HISTORIC: Pierce Mill	

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: N. W. corner, Tilden Street and Beach Drive, N. W. (Rock Creek Park)			
CITY OR TOWN: Washington			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
District of Columbia	08	District of Columbia	001

3. CLASSIFICATION				
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District ☐ Building ☒	Public ☒	Public Acquisition:	Occupied ☒	Yes:
Site ☐ Structure ☐	Private ☐	In Process ☐	Unoccupied ☐	Restricted ☒
Object ☐	Both ☐	Being Considered ☐	Preservation work in progress ☐	Unrestricted ☐
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
Agricultural ☐	Government ☒	Park ☒	Transportation ☐	Comments ☐
Commercial ☐	Industrial ☐	Private Residence ☐	Other (Specify) ☐	
Educational ☐	Military ☐	Religious ☐		
Entertainment ☐	Museum ☒	Scientific ☐		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNERS NAME: United States of America, NRS			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Recorder of Deeds			
STREET AND NUMBER: 6th and D Streets, N. W.			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE	
Washington	District of Columbia	08	
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: part of Rock Creek Park			

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Properties recommended by Joint Committee on Landmarks			
DATE OF SURVEY: March 7, 1968 Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local ☐			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: National Capital Planning Commission			
STREET AND NUMBER: 726 Jackson Place, N. W.			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	
Washington	District of Columbia	08	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent ☒	Good ☐	Fair ☐	Deteriorated ☐	Ruins ☐	Unexposed ☐
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered ☐	Unaltered ☒		Moved ☐	Original Site ☒	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Peirce Mill faces northwest at the N. W. corner of Tilden Street and Beach Drive, N. W., in Rock Creek Park. The mill is a rectangular, gabled-roof structure of simple design, with 2-1/2 stories in front sloping down to 3-1/2 stories in the rear. It is constructed of blue-grey and brown stone granite reportedly taken from a nearby quarry on Broad Branch Road. The building is in excellent condition; and with the exception of minor changes made during the 1934-36 restoration, it appears to be little altered from its original design. Unfortunately, the historical data upon which the PWA restoration was based have been misplaced, and we have no record of why these changes were made.

The mill is approached by a short path of stones, one of which is an old grinding stone. The simple, central board door, painted brown and two stone steps above grade, is flanked on either side by a 12/8 light double-hung window with wooden sash and sill painted white. The three windows of the second story are of the same design as are most of the other windows in the mill. Before the 1934-36 restoration, these windows were 2/2 light double-hung, with single shutters hung from the left. The rear of the mill is similar in design to the front but with the central door at the basement level and two full stories above. Prior to the PWA restoration, there were two gable-ended dormers evenly spaced along the roof, but these have been removed and the black shingle roof is obviously of later date.

The controversy over whether Peirce Mill was built in 1820 or 1829 has never been resolved. Francis Shoemaker and several other writers favor the 1820 date, although "BIP" 1829" is inscribed in the south stone gable. The north gable is made of wood, however, and may predate the south gable and inscription. "BIP" may mean either "Betsy and Isaac Peirce" or "Built by Isaac Peirce."

Inside the mill, with the exception of a small office for the National Park Service guard on the first floor, each of the floors consists of only one room. The original timbers and board floors remain, and the walls are of the same stone as the exterior. There is a modern concrete floor in the basement. The milling machinery in the mill today was installed in 1934-36 and is a reproduction of the 1897 equipment. There are excellent illustrations in the mill of how this equipment worked. On the ground floor to the left of the entrance door are three mill stones. One of these, bought by Francis Shoemaker in 1880, is an imported stone intended for grinding wheat and flour. A second older domestic stone of flint was used for grinding corn. The third stone, imported from France, is the newest stone in the mill. When the National Park Service restores the mill to operation--or simulated operation--they will replace the present damaged water wheel dating from the 1934-36 restoration with a new overshot wooden wheel, and only one of the three stones will be activated. They will also rechannel the millrace to increase the water volume.

There are several other extant structures near the mill which were once part of the Peirce plantation. The small spring house northwest of the mill on Tilden Street where milk and butter were kept cool was built by Isaac Peirce in 1801. In 1811 he built a distillery southeast of the spring house, which later served as a barn and is now a privately owned residence. There is another stone barn several yards away from the mill.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian ☐

16th Century ☐

18th Century ☐

20th Century ☐

15th Century ☐

17th Century ☐

19th Century ☒

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1820 or 1829

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal ☐

Education ☐

Political ☐

Prehistoric ☐

Engineering ☐

Religion/Philosophy ☐

Historic ☐

Industry ☐

Urban Planning ☐

Agriculture ☒

Invention ☐

Science ☐

Art ☐

Landscape ☐

Sculpture ☐

Commerce ☒

Architecture ☐

Social/Humanitarian ☐

Communications ☐

Literature ☐

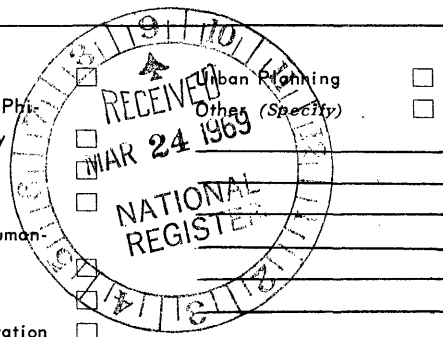
Theater ☐

Conservation ☐

Military ☐

Transportation ☐

Music ☐



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated Peirce Mill a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The last extant grist mill in the District, Peirce Mill is the principal relic of the Peirce plantation and a unique symbol of the milling industry which once flourished along Rock Creek. It is now maintained by the National Park Service.

The property on which Peirce Mill stands was originally part of three English land patents--"Resurvey of New Seat" patented to George Read in 1747, "The Gift" patented to Samuel Beal in 1762, passed to William Deakins, and "Mill Seat" patented to James White in 1772. In 1794 William Deakins deeded "The Gift" and part of "Mill Seat" to Isaac Peirce (sometimes Pearce or Pierce). Born in Pennsylvania on April 9, 1756, Isaac Peirce was a resident of the Georgetown area by 1790. He married Betsy Cloud, the daughter of Abner Cloud, a pioneer miller in the region. They had nine children, many of whom became prominent citizens of Washington.

When Isaac acquired the Rock Creek property, there was already a two-story frame grist mill with an undershot wheel near the site of the present mill. By 1880 Isaac owned 1,200-2,000 acres of land along Rock Creek, extending from Chevy Chase to the present Zoo, interrupted only by the Blagden Mill property.

Isaac built the present mill either in 1820 or 1829. This mill was powered by an undershot wheel and two runner wheels until 1840 when these were replaced by an overshot one. Isaac probably never ran the mill himself. He was a millwright and farmer by occupation, not a miller. The mill was only one of many Peirce interests on the large plantation, and was operated for the family by various millers, who occupied a small frame house across the road from the mill. Although there is no record of exactly when each operated the mill, some of the Peirce millers were "Donald, Tennyson, Gaskins, Fleckker, Donald again, Gaskins again, and the White Brothers."

Isaac died in 1841 leaving his estate, including the mill, to his fourth child, Abner Cloud Peirce, by occupation a stone mason, who continued to operate the plantation. Abner Peirce died in 1851, and his sister Abilgail's son, Peirce Shoemaker, inherited the estate. In 1876 Peirce Shoemaker replaced the old Peirce family home with a new house. It was during his tenure in the 1860's and 70's that business at the mill flourished remarkably. The installation in 1878 of the metal Loeffel

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

McCormick, Charles H. Milling in Rock Creek Park, General Background,
Division of History, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation,
National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, November 1, 1967.

Historic American Buildings Survey, (DC-22) 19 exterior photos showing restoration (1934, 1935, 1936), 3 photocopies (1899, c. 1900), 7 data pages (1936).

Clark, Allen C. "The Old Mills," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 31-32, Washington, D.C. Published by Society, 1930, pp. 81-115.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE							
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE			LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	38°	56'	24"	77°	03'	08"
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"						
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"						
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"						

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:		
Nancy C. Taylor, Landmarks Historian		
ORGANIZATION		DATE
National Capital Planning Commission		Feb. 27, 1969
STREET AND NUMBER:		
726 Jackson Place, N. W.		
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Washington	District of Columbia	08

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name _____

Title Deputy Mayor-Commissioner

Date March 24, 1969

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the
National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

18/02/2019

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
69-03-08-0002	3/24/69

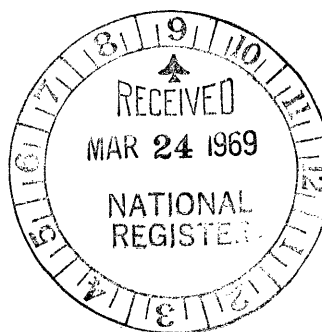
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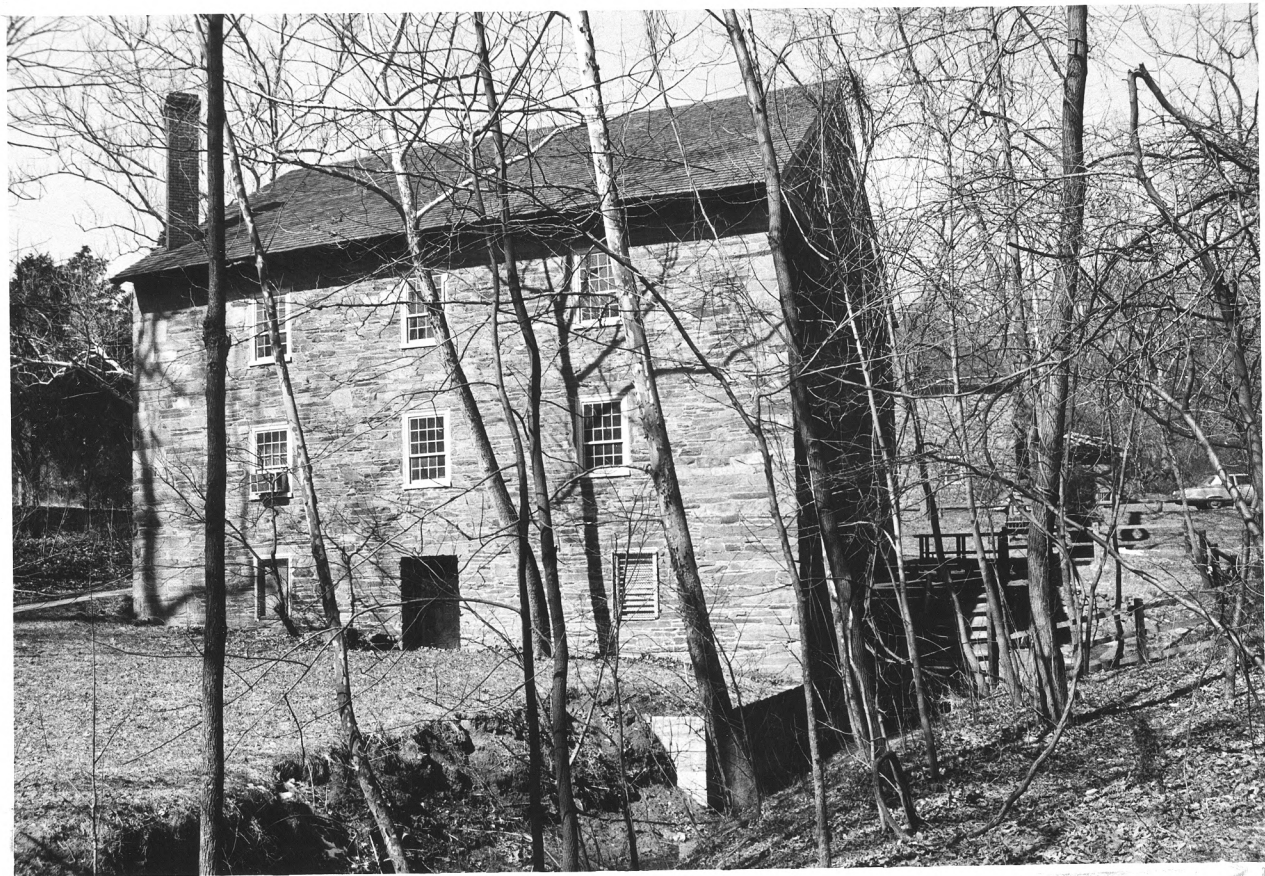
8. Significance--Peirce Mill

turbine wheel replacing the wooden water wheel probably marks the arrival of Alcibiades and Charles White, who were the last commercial millers at Peirce Mill. By 1880, however, steel rollers began to replace mill stones, resulting in the mass production of cheap white flour and the eventual destruction of the American grist mill. The quantity of business at Peirce Mill declined rapidly in the 1880's.

Peirce Shomeaker died in 1891. In 1892 when the Government condemned 450 acres of land for inclusion in Rock Creek Park, Parcel 75 upon which Peirce Mill stands (15.612 acres) was purchased by the Government for \$16,306.00. The White Brothers continued to operate the mill until 1897 when the main mill shaft broke. It was not repaired and all milling ceased.

Between 1934 and 1936 Peirce Mill was restored as a PWA project. The mill was again placed in operation on December 1, 1936, and ground corn meal and flour for use by Government cafeterias. It was closed again in 1958 because of the lack of trained millwrights and a decrease in the water volume in the mill race. Since then, it has been maintained solely as an historic site. The National Park Service hopes to restore the mill to operation by 1970.





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE

District of Columbia

COUNTY

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ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

69-03-08-0002

3/24/69

1. NAME

COMMON: Peirce Mill

AND/OR HISTORIC: Pierce Mill

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

N.E. corner Tilden Street and Beach Drive, N.W. (Rock Creek Park)

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

District of Columbia

CODE

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COUNTY:

District of Columbia

CODE

001

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Leo J. Schmittel, National Capital Planning Commission

DATE OF PHOTO: March 1969

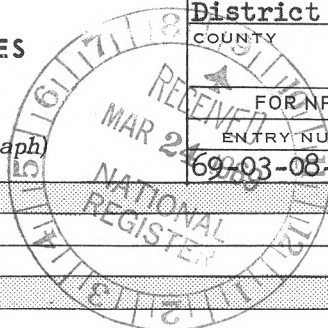
NEGATIVE FILED AT: National Capital Planning Commission, 726 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

View of southeast rear and northeast side of mill showing water wheel

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

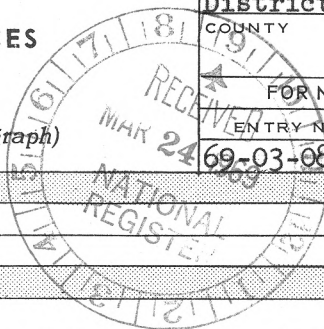




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District of Columbia	08	District of Columbia	001
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Washington, D.C.			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			
View of northwest front and southwest side of mill			