

**MILLS AND MILL SITES  
IN  
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
AND  
WASHINGTON, DC**

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**Friends of Colvin Run Mill**

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**GRIST MILLS of FAIRFAX COUNTY and WASHINGTON, DC**

## HISTORY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

Many people owned land in this county and many rented land to farm. The common lease form was called the “3 lives lease”. This meant the land lease was enforced for the duration of three lives of the persons named in the lease. Most often this involved the man, wife and son. Usually the lease holder was required to build a house at least sixteen feet by twenty feet, a tobacco barn that was thirty feet by twenty feet, and plant a specified number of fruit trees and cut timber needed for personal use. For 100 to 200 acres of land, the annual rent in 1760 was around 530 to 630 pounds of tobacco delivered to a tobacco inspection warehouse.

The right to vote was given to lease holders in the county in which the land lease was held. If the leased land was sold, the lease remained in place. Unlike leaseholders, the tenants had no secure tenure to their land and were subject to eviction without notice. Tenants were transient, staying only to make one crop.

Much of the labor was provided by black slaves. In general the larger the land holdings, the more slaves the owner had.

In the 18th century there were few roads. Most people traveled little, either by foot or horse. The roads were maintained by the owner or renter of the adjacent land. To create a new road, a request was made to the county court who would appoint two to three men to lay out the new road. The work on the roads was performed by renters on the land through which the new road was cleared. The roads meandered in order to avoid hills, streams, and swamps. Some of the roads followed old Indian trails. Sometimes the road followed a ridge. Construction and maintenance of bridges was the responsibility of the county courts. There was a bridge at Grayson Mill that crossed Pohick Creek built in 1750. The bridge over Pimmit Run was built in 1754 by Gerrard Trammell. A bridge over Wolf Trap was constructed by Sybil West in 1755. A bridge over Difficult Run was built in 1760.

Religion was an important feature of life. The established church was the Church of England. Everyone was required to pay taxes to support the minister and churches. The parish vestry was responsible for education, apprenticing of orphans and bastards, presenting to the court the moral misdemeanors committed in the parish and also giving relief to the poor. In 1732 the Truro Parish was formed and it included what later became Fairfax County. In 1760 there were three churches in the Parish. The Pohick church was the second church built in the parish. The Falls Church was built around 1733 on land owned by John Trammell. The first church built was in Alexandria.

The cash crop of Colonial Virginia was tobacco. Officials were paid in tobacco as well as tithes and fines. A planter would deposit so many pounds of tobacco in a warehouse. The planter was given a “tobacco note” and this was considered legal tender. At the Inspection warehouse the tobacco would be labeled as good tobacco or as burned tobacco unfit for sale.

From the earliest settlements, mills were important. Fairfax County had many streams. A permit form from the county was required to construct a mill. From 1748 to 1760 Fairfax County had fourteen mills. By 1760 taverns or ordinaries were built along the roads to provide the travelers with food, drink, and lodging. To have an ordinary, the court had to grant a license. During 1759 to 1761 thirty four licenses were granted by the county.

By 1760 the county had six ferries. There was a ferry over the Occoquan. In 1738 the Mason Rock Creek Ferry crossed the Potomac near the mouth of Rock Creek. In 1740 the Hunting Creek Ferry started from

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Hunting Creek and crossed the Potomac to Frazier's Point. The other ferries were the Hereford Ferry, the Clifton's ferry, and the Posey ferry. If the ferry carried a man or horse, a shilling each way was charged. For a coach, wagon, or cart the fee was a bit more. A hogshead of tobacco was charged the same as a horse.

Fairfax County was formed in 1742 from Prince William County. In 1757 the area west of Difficult Run formed Loudoun County. In 1760 Thomas 6th Lord Fairfax was the proprietor. In 1611 early English settlers introduced grain cultivation but since growing Indian corn was easier to cultivate and harvest, the growing of small grains did not become popular. By the end of the 17th century wheat production had increased. In fact, at this time wheat bread was enjoyed only by the affluent population. By 1620 England gave instructions to the Colonies to build corn mills. In fact, in 1621 the Flowerdew windmill was in operations. In 1649 there were five water powered mills and four windmills in operation as well as many horse operated mills and hand mills.

In 1667 valuable inducements were given to those building mills. By the 1700's mills were regulated as a public utility. In the Tidewater area most mills were custom mills that usually had one run of stones and were operated by white indentured servants or black slaves.

Tobacco growing depleted the soil so grain growing became popular. From the 1750's wheat cultivation and milling of grains became of great importance. The flour from the large merchant mills was shipped to the British West Indies who primarily grew sugar cane. The Virginia flour was shipped in barrels that survived the long sea voyage because dryer grain was used in the milling process. The slave people of the West Indies ate wheat flour bread but the slaves of Virginia preferred the corn bread.

In 1772 the Virginia House of Burgess's passed a law that all barrels were to be stamped with mill owner's name and also the name of the mill as well as the name of the inspector who had inspected the quality of the flour and stamp that on the barrel. In 1776 every flour producer had to swear before a justice of peace that the quality of the product inside the barrel was that indicated on the barrel.

To increase the number of mills skilled millwrights were encouraged to immigrate to the colonies. The ironwork and millstone of the 17th century were imported from Britain and Western Europe. By the mid 18th century colonial foundries and millstone quarries supplied these. However, for fine wheat flour French burrs from an area around LaFerte Sous' Jouarre in Paris Basin France were imported. Also popular were "Cullin" or "blue" stones quarried near the Rhine in Germany and distributed from Cologne.

Many of the plantation or custom mills were built by carpenters and craftsmen from the plantation. Merchant mills used skilled millwrights. Master millers were employed.

In the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley the Scotch, Irish and German who had settled in this area became excellent growers of grain. Mills were constructed near canals such as the James River Kanawa canal. In 1790's Oliver Evans and Thomas Ellicott revolutionized the grain milling business by introducing the automated handling of grain and flour. By 1850 Richmond's Gallego and Haxell Mills were the second the third largest mills in the country.

## CABELL'S MILL

The address is 5235 Walney Road (route 657), Centerville, and Virginia. Take route 28 southwest toward Dulles airport. Go past the airport and also the Sully Plantation. Turn left onto Walney Road (route 657) and proceed to mill, which will be on the right hand side.

Cabell's mill is a two-storey limestone building with a gable roof. The chimney, at the south end, is original. The mill is located on Big Rocky Run, the source of water for the mill. The mill is located in the Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, which is at Route 28 and Walney Road. You turn onto Walney Road and continue to the mill, which is on the right hand side of the road.

At various times the mill was known as Rocky Run Mill, Triplett's Mill, Pittman's Mill, Middlegate and Sandy Folly. The miller's house is now called Middlegate. The mill is believed to have been built before 1800 by William Carr Lane or Carr Wilson Lane. The mill may have been built as early as 1759 because it is thought that the original mill may have burned and later was rebuilt on the original foundation in the early 1800's.

During its lifetime, the mill served as a meeting place, a social center, and a place to catch up on the local news, gossip, or politics. At one time corn and wheat were common products brought to the mill. In 1875, or a little later, the mill was used for tanning and dyeing of leather. In the 1880s and early 1900s, the mill was probably a sawmill.

George Britton bought the mill in 1816 and sold it two years later to Triplett. In 1866, Thomas Cabell bought the mill. Sometime later, around 1875, Edward Pittman bought the mill. His niece, Caroline Settle, who had inherited the mill in 1906, sold it in 1929 to Rixey Smith. Rixey renovated the house and mill.

Probably it was Rixey who removed the machinery from the mill. In 1932-1934, Arthur and Dorothy Radford bought the mill, filled in the millrace, and named the property Middlegate. In 1944, Ellanor Lawrence bought Middlegate and converted the mill into a guesthouse.



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Cabell's Mill is now a building that is rented for special occasions, but if you look closely, you can see the faint outline of the millrace where water once ran down to the waterwheel.

The Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, where Cabell's Mill is located, is a beautiful park with many interesting hiking trails and a lake where children can observe the aquatic life.



## COLVIN RUN MILL

The address is 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls, Virginia. Take route 7 west from Tyson's Corner for 5 miles. Turn right at stoplight, which is Colvin Run Road. One can see the mill from route 7.

Colvin Run Mill is a four storey, gable roofed, brick structure located five miles west of Tysons Corner in the triangle of land formed by Route 7 (Leesburg Pike) and Colvin Run Road. Colvin Run Road was part of the Leesburg-Alexandria turnpike, built between 1829 and 1840, as a major artery for the farmers in the Shenandoah Valley to the market of Alexandria. This site, which was chosen for a gristmill, had a good source of water, access to the shipping port of Alexandria and proximity to the rich farmlands in Virginia.

The mill was built between 1802 and 1811. The miller's house, just up the hill from the mill, was built about the same time. Phillip Carper, who owned the mill from 1811-1842, was the first owner of an operating mill on this site. Little is known about the operation of the mill during this time, but the development of area roads and advances in milling technology, as proposed by Oliver Evans, led to a period of relatively steady growth in mill productivity. Carper's mill supplied flour to Alexandria, Georgetown, Dumfries, and Colchester. In 1842 Carper sold the mill to John Powell.



Powell was not a miller so he hired professional millers to operate the mill. In the first half of this time period, times were good. However, in the second half of the time period, progress slowed. Besides the gristmill, there was a sawmill and a blacksmith shop in the area. In 1850, railroads began to move grain from the Shenandoah Valley to the Tidewater areas and the mills located on the Leesburg-Alexandria Turnpike felt the impact. As the country became more involved in the Civil War, normal farming and travel ceased and merchant milling became difficult. Powell's mill, which was not protected by either side, decreased production and finally ceased operations. After the Civil War, John Powell declared bankruptcy, and in 1883, the court sold the mill.

Addison Millard purchased the mill in 1883 and operated it until his death in 1898. His wife, Emma, and two of their sons, Samuel and Alfred, ran the mill until 1916, when Emma died. Samuel and Alfred operated the mill until 1934. The Millard tenure was the mill's most



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prosperous era. The Millards rebuilt the millpond and the millrace, introduced roller milling (known as the New Process) and installed two steam turbines.

In 1934 the mill was sold to Bernard Bailey. He intended to remodel the mill and grind wheat and corn as a business enterprise. He removed all of the roller equipment and restored the grinding stones. However, in 1941 route 7 was realigned and ran between the mill and the milldam. This affected the natural flow of water. Besides the water problem, Bailey had other problems. World War II made the purchasing of building materials very difficult. Bailey abandoned the idea of restoring the mill and left the area, only occasionally returning to visit his mill.

In 1965, The Fairfax County Park Authority began negotiations to purchase the mill. By condemnation, the Park Authority acquired ownership of the 30 acres of land bisected by Route 7. This included the mill, miller's house, a barn and several other sheds along with the milldam and millrace. Restoration began in 1968.

Although the waterwheel wall had to be completely rebuilt with new bricks, many of the bricks in the other walls are the original bricks. The millrace is lined with reinforced concrete and fieldstones. The mill has a 20-foot overshot waterwheel, which can generate up to 27 HP of energy. The power supplied by the waterwheel drives the gears of solid white oak and maple. The gears are located on the lowest level of the mill. On the first floor are two runs of stones, although the mill could accommodate three runs of stones. Also on the first floor are the beam scale where the grain was weighed and the grain elevators, which carried the grain or product upward. Gravity was used to move things downward. To move the grain horizontally, an Archimedean screw was used. After the grain was ground into flour, the flour was carried by the grain elevators to the top floor where a hopper boy, a mechanical rake, was used to cool and dry the flour. Below this level is the bolting machine, which is used to sift flour into various grades.

Grain is still being ground at Colvin Run Mill using the old French Buhr stones. However, due to the fact that water is not readily available, grinding is limited to one or two Sundays per month. It is worthwhile going through the mill with a docent and exploring the miller's house, the general store, and the blacksmith shop.



## PIERCE MILL

This mill is located in the Rock Creek Park. Take the beltway (495) to Maryland. At Connecticut Ave. goes south for 4.5 miles to Tilden Ave. Turn left and proceed to mill.

Pierce Mill is located in the northwest section of Washington D. C. in Rock Creek Park.



The mill is located at the intersection of Tilden Street and Beach Mill Drive. To reach the mill, take I-495 to Connecticut Ave. south and drive about 4.5 miles. At Tilden Street, turn left and proceed to the mill. Since there is not much space to park at the mill, you can park a short walking distance from the mill.

By 1800, Isaac Pierce owned between 1200 and 2000 acres of land (from Chevy Chase to the National Zoo), broken only by the 49 acres owned by the Bladgen Mill. In 1801, Pierce built a springhouse, which was behind the miller's house. Southwest of the springhouse is a modern house situated where Isaac's house was located. The old house, made of hewn oak, iron nails and wooden pegs, was torn down 1876.

This area was an active milling center, having seven mills listed in the records of Georgetown. Some of these mills had two runs of stones and one had eleven runs of grindstones. The John Quincy Adam's Mill was located where the National Zoo is today. This mill had a twelve foot overshot waterwheel and three runs of stones. This mill could produce several hundreds barrels of flour each day. The Lyon's Flour Mill, a large merchant mill, and the Patterson Paper Mill were other important mills located along Rock Creek,



Isaac Pierce owned the mill from when he arrived in Rock Creek until he died in 1841. He left the mill to his son, Abner C. Pierce, who died ten years later. His wife's nephew, Pierce Shoemaker, inherited the mill at this time. He owned the mill until 1892 when the U. S. Government condemned 450 acres of land in the Rock Creek Park and purchased the Mill. Isaac Pierce was a millwright, a designer of mills, not a miller.

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None of his heirs ever ran the mill either. Evidently, either slaves or hired millers operated the mill.

According to Pierce Shoemaker, the present mill was built in 1820. However, the date on the mill's south gable is 1829. Since the south gable is made of stone and the north gable is made of wood it is possible that this is the date the south gable was added. The mill is made of blue granite from a quarry on the left side of Broad Branch Road. In 1840, an overshot wheel replaced the original undershot waterwheel. In 1876, a 40-foot Loeffel turbine wheel was added. The original dam, which was built above the present concrete one, washed away in 1876.

Business at the flourmill was very good between 1860 and 1870. Farmers from Rockville, Bladensburg, Georgetown, and Falls Church supplied large quantities of corn, wheat and rye. Saturday was a very busy day at the mill. The mill ceased operation in 1897.

In 1934-35, Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, became interested in the decaying building and allotted some money to restore the mill. This was a Public Works Administration project. The mill was excavated and one millstone was replaced. Wood timbers in the walls and floors were replaced. In 1935, restoration stopped due to lack of funds; however, around \$8000 was allotted for the construction of the waterwheel. William L. Amonette, a retired miller, was hired to advise in the construction of the wheel. The mill began operation in May, 1936, but soon had to stop due to lack of water. The dam was raised eight inches to provide a greater fall of water and in the summer of 1936, grinding resumed with the mill capable of producing 100 barrels of flour per day.

After the restoration, the first miller was David Bozeman, followed by Raymond Little. During World War II, Benjamin H. Didawich was the miller. The last miller during the 1950's was Raymond Watt. In 1958, operation ceased due to insufficient waterpower, machinery breakdown, and lack of trained millwrights to effect repairs. The mill opened as a museum. In 1965, James Askins began restoration of the mill again with \$10,000. In 1970, Bob Batte, a miller, operated the mill.

There are two millstones in the mill today. Mr. Francis Shoemaker bought one in 1880 for \$75.00. This imported stone was used to grind wheat into flour. The other stone was flint and was used to grind corn. Also in the mill is an old desk, which has had the legs, cut off to make it look more modern. Today, in 2009, the mill is undergoing continuing restoration. Milling is expected to resume in 2011.

## ROBEY'S MILL

The address is 12124 Pope's Head Road (route 654) Fairfax, Virginia. Take route 123 west, through Fairfax City to route 654-Pope's Head Rd. Turn right and proceed to the mill, which will be on the right hand side.

Robey's Mill is located just off route 123 to the west. This mill is also known as Piney Branch Mill and Hope Park Mill.

Robey's Mill is located on the west bank of Piney Branch stream near Popes Head Road. It is a small 3-storey timber frame building, which was built on high stone. The siding was covered with circular sawn vertical clapboards. The original roof was wood shingles but this has been replaced by asphalt roofing. The water wheel has been removed but pictures taken 1936 showed the wheel to be around 18 ft in diameter and to have 12 spokes. This water wheel powered 2 runs of millstones, which are located on the second floor. The original dam was made of 15-foot long pine logs. The space between the logs was filled with natural rock. The millrace was about 65-70 feet long and it carried the water through the flume, which was 20 feet above the ground level.



The ground floor contains the power machinery, sifting or bolting area, and also an area for bagging and storage. Today one sees the wheel axle, power gears, greater face gear, lantern gears, bridgetree and brayer, sifter and various pulleys. The floor is also made of circular sawn random width planks set on 6 x 10's laid on a dirt sub floor. The stairs leading to the second floor are 10 feet deep and some of the steps are the original steps.

On the second floor there are two runs of monolithic 4-foot buhr stones, a hopper, stone crane with bales, and grain chutes. The miller's office was located in the southwest corner and contains many carvings made by civil war soldiers from both sides. Some of the doors have the original hinges and latches. The third floor was used for storage.

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Edward Payne probably built the mill. If not Payne, Then David Stuart was the builder. The mill was built before 1804 because at this time Stuart was planting crops of wheat in the late 1700's. The mill was probably built somewhere between 1790 and 1804. In 1815 Stuart listed the mill for sale. By 1826 the mill was in need of many repairs. In 1837, John Barnes Sr. bought the mill. He was a miller by trade. His eldest son, Young Jack, was taught to be a miller. In 1853, the estate of Barnes Sr. was divided among his children. It is known that Young Jack inherited the lot with the mill and the miller's house. However, the managing of the farm property took much of his time so less and less time was spent on milling. The Civil War had a great impact on the estate. His economic fortune was insecure due to the war and also his mishandling of public funds. So in 1869 the mill property was sold at public auction.



James Fox who also over extended his finances bought the property and the property was then sold to Summers in 1884. By 1886 Frank Robey had purchased the mill lot. The mill was the most prosperous during Robey's ownership. Frank Robey's nephew, Major Robey, operated the mill from 1904-05. Frank's brother, George who was the Major's father, was the mill's stone dresser. The mill ran everyday of the week except Sunday. If the mill ran at capacity, it would produce 15-16 bushels of fine stone ground flour daily. Frank Robey also operated a small general store, which was located on the ground floor of the house. In 1905 Major Robey got married and moved away shortly thereafter. The mill ceased to operate, but Frank Robey retained ownership.



In 1930, Stafford bought the mill and went to considerable expense to renovate the mill. In 1932 the mill did operate but just to give demonstrations. When the mill was sold in 1951 to Wilcox, the buildings were falling down and the millrace was overgrown. Wilcox attempted to repair the buildings but the expense was just too great. The mill has never operated since this time. In 1963, David McGrath bought the mill.

## GEORGE WASHINGTON'S GRIST MILL

The mill which is located on Dogue Run is adjacent to Mount Vernon. It is a reconstruction of the original mill built by George Washington. In fact, this was the second mill he had owned at Mount Vernon. George's half brother, Lawrence, was the original owner of Mount Vernon. When Lawrence died, his widow owned the property, which was leased by George. When Lawrence's widow died, George inherited the property.

On this property was a grist mill whose exact location is not known but it probably was located on Dogue Run opposite the present mill. The original mill took fifty five minutes to grind a bushel of corn. So, a new mill was built on this site. The mill had two runs of stone, one of which was French Buhrs and the other Cologne stones from Germany. One run of stones was used for grinding wheat and the other for grinding corn.

In the 1790's, George had improved the mill by adding grain elevators. In 1799, Lawrence Lewis, a nephew, rented the mill. When George died later that year, Lewis inherited the mill. In 1803 Lewis took out an insurance policy on the mill. The policy stated that it was a 3.5 storied stone building 46' by 16' with an internal 16' breast water wheel. Water was always a problem for the mill as the water in Dogue Run varied greatly. So, the mill only operated about six months out of the year. When Lewis died in 1839, his son inherited the mill. In 1846 the mill was sold to a group of Quakers. By 1850 the walls of the mill had fallen down and the stones were used in the construction of other buildings.



To accurately restore the mill, a drawing of the mill, by Gillingham, was followed.

Washington had a license from Oliver Evans which allowed him to use Oliver Evan's patents. During the excavations, a part of the original water wheel was found plus some parts of the gears. The actual water wheel, gears etc were taken from a mill in Front Royal which was built around the same time as the Washington mill.

On the ground floor is the site of the water wheel, master gear and other gears which operated the stones. This floor is the heart of the mill. The miller's office is on this floor next to the fire place. Two grain elevators are also on this floor, one takes the grain to the third floor for storage, and the other transports the meal to the second floor where it is sifted.

The first floor contains the grinding stones and also the hopper where the grain is weighed. Also on this floor is a device for packing the flour which comes from the bolting machine located on the second floor. This machine sifts the flour. The third floor has a Hopper Boy which is used to cool and dry the flour before it is sifted. This floor was also used for storage.

**MILL SITES AND MILL RUINS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

### **AYRE MILL SITE**

This mill was located two miles from Chantilly, about one fourth mile south of US 50.

Tommy Ayre came from England in 1820 and bought an estate in this area. He built a house and later a mill on his land. So, the mill was built a short time after 1820. This was a gristmill that was operated by Tom Summers. This part of highway 50 was called the Little Rivertown Pike and the mill was known as the Old Fox Mill.

A granddaughter of Tommy Ayre married George Harrison and they inherited the mill tract after the death of Tommy. Later, F. W. Huddleston owned the mill.

### **BARCROFT MILL SITE**

This mill site is located below the dam of Lake Barcroft, on the east side of Holmes Run, south of Columbia Pike. Since the mill was built on the flood plain the mill site is not visible from Columbia Pike. Deeds dating back to the 1700's refer to this property as "Adams Mill Lot". This mill was probably built by a man named Douglass. It was built on the site of an earlier mill around 1810. In 1812 Douglass sold the property to George North for a sum of \$15,000. It is believed that Douglass had built a grist mill and a cotton mill.

This mill has had many owners and this indicates that the earlier millers in this area had limited success in milling. When North died in 1817, the mill was sold at auction to pay off his debts. Benjamin Thornton bought the mill but by 1822 he too had fallen on hard times and the mill was foreclosed. Robert J. Taylor, in 1824, purchased the mill. Robert was an agent for the Bank of Potomac. In 1831, Robert conveyed the mill property to William Kehoe by an unrecorded deed. In 1838, Kehoe conveyed the property to Smith Minor by another unrecorded deed. In 1848 Ambrose Barcroft acquired this mill but it is not clear if the old mill was still standing or a new one was built.

It appears that Ambrose, in 1866, sold the mill and twenty four acres of land known as Adams Mill, to Dr. John Barcroft for much less than he had paid for the mill. Dr. John had come to Fairfax in 1849. Perhaps the reason for such a low price was that the mill had been severely damaged during the Civil War. It is thought that the mill only had limited operations during the Civil War. Dr. Barcroft apparently decided to rebuild Arlington Mill on Four Mile Run instead of this mill. A Mrs. Milton Barcroft Payne, wife of Dr. Barcrofts's grandson, said that the Federal troops, when returning from the Second Battle of Manassas of Bull Run, damaged the property severely. The mill ceased operating at this time. Dr. Barcroft returned to New Jersey and abandoned the milling enterprise until after the war.

After the battle of Appomattox, Dr. Barcroft returned to this area. In 1880 he bought the Custis Mill Tract that included the war-wrecked Arlington Mill on Four Mile Run. Dr. Barcroft rebuilt this mill and operated the mill for several years and finally rented it out to various millers one of which was John Newton.



In 1873, Dr. Barcroft sold the Barcroft mill to Mr. Arnold for \$6000. Soon, he suffered foreclosure on the mill and a William Reed bought the mill property. Thus the mill became known as the Reed Mill. In 1879, there was a grist mill and sawmill at this site. In 1905, the town of Barcroft had a gristmill, a railroad station, a general store, a blacksmith shop, a cattle pen, a stone quarry, a farm machinery shop and twenty homes. In 1920 the mill burned. Local children used the water wheel as a Ferris wheel. The mill had a thirty six foot water wheel and this was said to be the largest water wheel on the eastern coast. The millrace was eight feet wide and four feet deep. By 1970 the mill was in ruins. During the flood of Agnes, 1971, the dam at Lake Barcroft was washed out and the rest of the mill ruins were washed away. Today, there is no evidence that a mill ever existed below the Lake Barcroft dam. There is a thriving housing community in this area where the mill once existed.

### **BOWMAN'S DISTILLERY**

In March of 1934 Smith Bowman and his sons applied for a permit to distill liquor. Originally Mr. Bowman, in 1927, purchased the land for a beef and dairy farm.

The first bottled bourbon, aged four years, was sold to the public in 1938. The first distillery was located in the old soapstone mill in the town of Wiehle that was planned in 1890. The distillery has now moved from this area and the area now contains homes and townhouses.

### **BRIGGS MILL SITE**

The Samuel Briggs' mill site is located inside the Great Falls Park, a part of the National Park Service. The mill site is just below the Visitor's Center and adjacent to the river wall of the canal.

Historical documents do not tell much about this mill. Samuel Briggs, a Marylander, probably constructed a gristmill around 1797. Briggs had made an agreement with Henry Lee for a "mill seat" around 1792. The building of the mill was probably in response to the improvements of navigation due to the Potowmack canal, and the development of the nearby town of



Matildaville, which was begun as an industrial center. The location of the mill indicates that Briggs intended to purchase boatloads of grain coming down the Potomac River, process the grain and sell the flour or meal.

Archaeological studies indicate that the mill had a four-chambered stone foundation of 53 feet by 27 feet. The size of the foundation suggests that this was probably a merchant mill, not a mill operating just for the local community. The size of the foundation also suggests that Briggs intended to install three runs of millstones. Since the foundation is on both sides of the millrace, it is believed that the mill spanned the millrace and had a waterwheel inside the building.

An indentation in the terrain indicates the location of a sluiceway to take the water from the Potowmack Canal to the mill. The waterwheel pit was probably adjacent to the riverside of the canal.



The mill would probably have been of an Oliver Evans' design as it was constructed when his ideas were transforming the milling technology. Two modern experts in milling, D. W. Garber and Derek Ogden, agree that if the mill functioned for any period of time, it would probably have been automated per Oliver Evans' design. Actually, due to seasonal episodes of low water, it is not likely that the mill operated very much.

Since there are no records of the construction, operation, or time of demise of the mill, both Garber and

Ogden think that it is also possible that the gristmill, though started, was never completed. However, it is an interesting site to see and you can draw your own conclusions about the mill.

After you have visited the mill site, enjoy one of the many hiking trails in the park. One trail goes past the place where the planned community of Matildaville was established. You can also walk down along the remains of the old Potowmack Canal and see the remains of the locks. The building of the canal locks was a truly remarkable engineering project.

## **BROWNS' MILL SITE**

Brown's mill was located on Wolf Trap Creek, on Browns Mill road, just off of Beulah road. The mill was also known as the Walter's Mill. The mill was probably built before 1800 or the late 1700's. The Walters family came to this area in 1812 and bought the mill. William Walters operated the mill until 1890 when he sold the mill to Everett Brown, thus the mill was called Brown's Mill. Everett rebuilt the mill in 1895 and operated the mill until he died in 1923. Besides being a miller Everett also tended to a two hundred acre farm that extended up to the barn at the Montoux produce stand.

The millpond was upstream behind the mill on Wolf Trap Creek. Everett Brown also had a general store next to the mill as well as two hundred acres of land that he farmed. The mill was a two and a half storied frame structure. There was an overshot water wheel that was replaced by a turbine in 1905. This was a custom mill. Sometimes the mill operated during the winter months. During the last years of operation a gasoline engine was used. All is gone now including the dam, millrace and pond. People, ten miles or more away, would bring grain to the mill using either horses or oxen to pull their wagons. The mill was only about four miles from Colvin Run Mill. The Brown Mill was more of a neighborhood mill.

In the winter months when the mill was in operation, often some of the wheels and gears had to be thawed out using boiling water. Once the mill was running, all went well and no further thawing would be necessary. Whole wheat flour and corn meal were produced at the mill. The mill did not have the proper machinery to make white flour.

Everett Brown married Katie Cockrell. They had three daughters, Evelyn, Elizabeth and Eulalia. Elizabeth taught at the Andrew Chapel School. Evelyn worked at the Woodward and Lothrop Department store in downtown Washington. She commuted to her work for 43 years. Eulalia never worked outside the home.

Walter Gaines owned the Wolf Trap Farm for several years in the 1920's. He was operating the Brown Mill when Everett Brown died in 1923. The mill remained in the Brown family. Occasionally Mr. Gaines ran the mill. Soon the mill began to deteriorate. The roof began to leak. Finally, the children of Everett hired someone to tear down the mill.

The family consisted of the daughters of Everett, Evelyn, Elizabeth and Eulalia who kept some of the millstones. Some of the millstones were sold. In 1938 Mr. Maurice Garrison bought the mill property. He remodeled the store and operated the store for a short period of time. Many of the stones from the mill were used in the construction of the Garrison home.

## **COTON PLANTATION MILL SITE**

This tract of land was owned by Thomas Ludwell Lee, Jr., grandson of Thomas Lee of Stafford. The plantation was located where the present day Xerox International is located, east of Leesburg on route 7. The remains of the plantation exist there today. The plantation was named after the ancestral home of Thomas Ludwell Lee in Shopshire, England.

In 1803, Ludwell Jr. had enlarged the house. He had added a distillery to the site as well as a mill and other buildings. He married Fanny Carter, the daughter of Robert Carter. In 1806, Ludwell Jr. was in poor health and was having some financial problems. He ordered the land to be sold to pay off his debts. He also had some land in the town of Matildaville that he had inherited from his Uncle Francis Lightfoot Lee that was to be sold also.

In his will, he stipulated that each daughter was to receive one thousand pounds when she married. The Coton plantation was to remain intact. Ludwig died on March 5, 1807. In 1818, his wife sold the mill. In 1819 she leased nine hundred forty one acres of land to Mr. James Hook. The Coton plantation was sold in two parcels. The west Coton contained eight hundred acres of land, a house and some out buildings. For this Robert Bentley paid \$9640. The east Coton contained nine hundred eighty eight acres of land. George Kephart paid \$4816.15 for the east parcel.

In 1971 Xerox purchased the land that was once the Coton Plantation. Part of the mill house and mill exist along Goose Creek.

## **DOMINION MILL-RIGHT IN OUR BACK YARD**

The "Water Grist Mill", located at 3610 Wheeler Ave. Alexandria, Virginia was first noted by Nick Yannarell on our mill field trip to the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria. In fact, as we cruised down the Potomac River, Nick pointed out where he thought the mill was located.

Several days later, Nick came to the mill with pictures of the Water Grist Mill and some data about the mill. Yes, the mill building does exist today.

This mill was built on Holmes Run somewhere between 1776 and 1811. Prior to 1776, there was a "water grist mill" somewhere on 236 acres of land owned by a George Gilpin and William Hartshorne. In 1776, George and William had petitioned to condemn an acre of land on which to build a mill. By 1812, the Gazette paper stressed the newness of the mill building. The mill was advertised for sale as a four storied brick mill with 3 large runs of buhrstones and one run of country stones. The millrace was 4000 feet long. The mill was 50 feet by 40 feet in size and could produce 10,000 barrels of flour yearly.

In 1812 this property was held in trust for a debt to a Mordecai Lewis. However, Lewis died before the debt was paid and the case went to Chancery. The land included the merchant mill buildings and improvements together with the dwelling house, mill, and all other buildings. On September 15, 1812, Thomas Wilson took title to the above.

## Grist Mills of Fairfax County and Washington, DC

The heirs of Thomas Wilson, David Thomas and Martha Brown, received the mill and its appurtenances. The lot contained 56 acres of land and a mill known as the Phoenix Mill.

By November 19, 1841, the mill had changed ownership again. Benoni Wheat and John Jordan Wheat were the new owners. By 1853, John H and James Watkins were the owners of the Phoenix Mill.

By 1896, Frank M. Hill became the owners of "Old Dominion Mills and the land attached thereto." This was 56 acres of land, less the land the railroad had acquired. The mill, formerly known as the Phoenix Mill, was part of the purchase.

In 1903, the mill was acquired by Charles B. Cockrell. The site was the land between Little River Turnpike and Holmes Run and the railroad, along with the Phoenix Mill. In 1922, Patrick and Kate Culleton had acquired the mill and acreage. From 1922 on, the mill had several owners. Raymond and Josephine Gaines owned the mill in 1946. In 1954, S. J. Bell and wife Anne were the owners. In 1958, the Industriail Maintenance Corporation "Old Mill" was the owner. Today, the Flippo Construction Company owns the mill and operates their business from the site.

The mill was a simple structure. The original window openings have been changed. The building has a "Dutch Colonial" roof form which many not have been the original roof design of the building.

In 1796, The Columbian Mirror and the Alexandria Gazette offered a Milford mill for sale as follows:

- 44 acres of land on Holmes Run.
- Excellent location of a mill to purchase wheat from the back county
- Has excellent pair of buhr and country stones.
- A new bolting cloth and screen, flour elevators and hopper boy.
- New water and cog wheel
- Sufficient water to turn both stones nine months each year.
- An excellent dam, newly built.
- A good log house and a smoke house with a kitchen.
- A new stable to hold four horses.
- Excellent spring of water
- A miller's house.

In 1798, another mill and mill site were offered for sale. The mill was also on Holmes Run, a little below the Robert Allison's mill.

If one walks around the mill there is evidence where the wheel axle entered the building. Today Holmes Run flows under the building. Below the basement floor is another area six feet high. This area is where the river flows under the building and back to the railroad tracks. The head race has been covered with paving to make a parking lot.



There is a chimney in the corner of the building on the first level of the mill. However, no fireplace exists in the building today. The huge beams inside the building are all that remain of the original interior. The mill was a simple structure. The original window openings have been changed.

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screen, flour elevators and hopper boy. New water and cog wheel. Sufficient water to turn both stones nine months each year. An excellent dam, newly built. A good log house and a smoke house with a kitchen. A new stable to hold four horses. Excellent spring of water and a miller’s house.”

Research at the Hagley library revealed that the Old Dominion Mill, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had a Fitz water wheel. The water wheel was an 1-X-L design, eighteen feet in diameter and eight feet wide. The owner of the mill wrote to the Fitz Co. the following—“The summer has been very dry and the water level awfully low but we have been able to run all of the equipment for it takes very little water to do lots of work with the 1-X-L water wheel. Since the wheel was installed in 1909 we have had no trouble in anyway. We ran it last winter night and day without ice forming on the wheel. The wheel ran two runs of stones, the feed mill, elevators, separator and bolter. The buckets on the wheel were never more than half filled.”

### **DOMINION MILL IN ALEXANDRIA**

This is an addendum to the article above. It is most exciting to be learning more and more about this mill that was built around the same time that Colvin Run was built. The two buildings are very similar in structure but the Old Dominion mill has one additional floor.

Bob and I decided to visit this old mill. We took the Mount Vernon Parkway south to Duke Street in Alexandria. We turned right onto Duke Street and continued on it until we passed Quaker Lane. At the next traffic light turn left onto Wheeler Street. Duke Street divides two streets--Wheeler and Arell. Continue on Wheeler to the mill which will be on the left hand side. You can't miss the mill because there is a big FLIPPO construction sign on the gable of the building.

This is an old brick building with bricks very similar in color and texture to those at Colvin Run Mill. The original arrangement of the windows has been changed. Since the mill is now an office building, the windows were probably changed so that each office space might have a window. The original

window arrangement was four windows across on the side and three windows across on the ends. There is a wood frame gable roof. The gable end contains two floors.

In walking around the building one can see the arch where the wheel axle entered the building. Today Holmes Run flows under the building. We were told that below the basement floor is another area six feet tall. This is the area where the river flows under the building and back toward the railroad tracks. None of the employees at Flippo Construction have ever been down in this area. The upper two floors in the building are not useable today, but could be made so.

There is a chimney, which towers above the roof line, in the corner of the building. However, there are no fireplaces in the building today. Probably, the fireplace on the first floor would have been where the miller had his office. The head race was probably covered up by the parking lot. As one looks toward the mill from the parking lot, the Fitz overshot water wheel would have been on the right hand side of the mill. The tail race, which is now underground, is also covered with paving at the back side of the mill.

After thoroughly looking around outside, we decided to venture inside the building and talk to someone about the history of the structure. We got into the entrance way, which was as far as we could go. All of the doors leading inside were locked. Fortunately, while we were explaining our mission to the secretary a Mr. Rizer came along. He volunteered to take us on a tour inside the building. The only mill-like features which are visible today are the heavy beams in the ceiling and the very thick outside walls which are two-three feet thick. He took us down to the basement area that has more of the original beam structure exposed. We were in a room which was probably the gear area. One could see how the beams were joined and also the original wood.

We were not able to learn any additional history about this mill from Mr. Rizer. However, being in the construction business, he did fully appreciate the sturdy structure of this old building. The "Dutch colonial" roof line is most unusual for a mill. We asked if the roof line was altered sometime during the renovations. Mr. Rizer, who had explored the upper two levels, said that in his opinion this was the original roof line judging from the old beams and flooring at this level.

When we departed, we promised to send Mr. Rizer all of the information we had about this mill, which is a great deal. In turn, if he discovers new information, he will share it with us. Who knows, there just might be an addendum to the addendum to the addendum.

## **EDES MILL SITE**

This mill was located on the Potomac River, close to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and south of Chain Bridge. The mill was operated by William H. Edes. In November 4, 1791, Amos Cloud came to this area and purchased land that included a mill seat. Abner Cloud inherited this property. He purchased a mill seat and built a mill and a miller's house around 1801. General Washington is said to have been a guest at this miller's house from time to time.

This mill was also known as the Lock Mill because it almost occupied the "site" of the locks of the old canal that were used to pass boats around the Little Falls. This mill was owned by President

Monroe and was called Edes Mill. In 1869 the mill was owned by D. L. Shoemaker and produced one hundred twenty barrels of Evermay flour each day.

## **FENDALL-HIPKINS MILL SITE**

The land at the mouth of Pimmit Run was patented in 1719 by Thomas Lee. Lee had a dream to establish a center of trade at the mouth of Pimmit Run. The Potomac River was navigatable up to Little Falls that is above the mouth of Pimmit Run. The volume of water from Pimmit Run had a fall of twenty seven feet. When Thomas Lee died, his son, Philip Ludwell Lee, laid out the town of Philee at Little Falls. The town was never built.

It was an Alexandria attorney, Philip Richard Fendall, and Lewis Hipkins who acquired the property at the mouth of Pimmit Run in 1789 and erected a granary, a gristmill, a brewery, and a blacksmith shop. In 1803, the mortgaged property was described as having “a good merchant mill, brewery, distillery and other improvements.” In 1806 Joseph Deane acquired the property. Often the merchant mills were licensed to issue scrip in the remote areas that did not have banking services.

It was Edgar Patterson who realized the full potential of Pimmit Run. In 1815 Patterson obtained the property from Joseph Deane. Between 1816 and 1821 this was the busiest two hundred feet of shoreline on the Potomac River. In an 1821 newspaper this ad appeared:

“To manufactures, paper mill, flour mill, wool factory, stone quarries, and land for sale.” The flour mill was described as a large three story stone building with three runs of buhrstones and all necessary machinery to manufacture flour. The mill is located at Little Falls Bridge, three miles from Washington and Georgetown. At this point, the river was forty to sixty feet deep. This was considered to be the most profitable milling establishment in this part of the county.

The lower story of the mill was built on a rock base that also served as a landing for the boats. These men could load a barge with three hundred barrels of flour in one to two hours. There was a two story stone wool factory that adjoined the mill. The building was one hundred ten feet long. Inside were carding machines, bibles and jennies, twelve broad and a number of narrow looms and all necessary machinery for the manufacture of blankets and cloth. There was a stone fulling mill, a stone dye house, and a stone bleach house. There was a paper mill at this site and was probably built west of the gristmill.

## **FOX MILL SITE**

This mill was located near the source of Difficult Run. The mill was also known as the Difficult Mill and the Waples' Mill. The mill was located near the intersection of 664 and 665 (Waples' Mill Rd and Fox Mill Rd.).

Amos Fox, in 1784, petitioned the courts to build a mill on this site. For some reason there was opposition to this petition. His petition remained in the court until 1787 when he obtained permission to build a mill on this site. At this time, Amos built a mill at this site. The mill was profitable for



two decades. When Amos died, his three sons, Morris, Isaac, and Gabriel inherited the mill around 1807. The sons replaced the mill with a modern more complex gristmill and sawmill. The sons did not have the same business skills as did Amos. A neighbor, Thomas Fairfax, took them to court in 1803 concerning the encroachment of the mill on his lands. Another neighbor, in 1812, filed the same complaint in court. The suit claimed that the millpond encroached on his land. In 1813, Gabriel got sole possession of the mill.

Not much is known about the operation of the mill from 1813 to 1850. Gabriel's wife died sometime during this period. Around 1840 he married a Mrs. Summers. Gabriel was listed as a very wealthy man. He owned lots of land and slaves in Fairfax County. He had three mills that were well known. When Gabriel died, his wife's son, William Thomas Summers, was the superintendent of the mills that consisted of a woolen mill, a grist mill and a flour mill. The flour mill was a large three story building with a large millpond that was formed by the dammed up creek. The pond was about one fourth mile wide and one half mile long. There was a long millrace to the mill. The mill had a very large water wheel. The mills were about three miles from the old court house.

Around 1850, Gabriel's widow was listed as the owner of the mill complex. Henry Waples, a neighbor, ran the mill for Mrs. Fox. Sometime in the 1850's the mill was bought by Henry Waples. In 1879 the mill was known as the Difficult Grist and Sawmill.

### **HERNDON MILL SITE**

This general mill was located in Herndon but has disappeared. The granary was destroyed by a fire in November 16, 1971. The left end of the building abutted the old W & O. D. right of way.

### **HUNTER MILL SITE**

This mill was located east of Snakeden Branch and north of Difficult Run, about one hundred feet west of where Hunters Mill Road(674) crosses Difficult Run. This mill is also known as the Lewis Mill.

The mill was purchased by George Washington Hunter, Sr. at a public auction in 1831 and he operated the mill until 1911. George was the son of an immigrant from Ayrshire Scotland. George was a well known attorney in Fairfax. There was a mill on the property prior to the ownership by Hunter. Originally the mill land was part of a grant to John Lewis made in 1725. Thomas Lewis, nephew of John, had a grant of land in 1767 that included two hundred sixty two acres of land from the John Lewis grant and an additional ninety seven acres of land.

The mill was rented to Israel Sheppard in 1843 for which he paid a sum of \$230 to George W. Hunter. In 1851, the mill tract was conveyed to George W. Hunter, Jr. There was a dam on Snakeden Branch that directed the water to a half mile long millrace to the twelve foot overshot water wheel. This was a three story stone mill

In 1856 legal problems appeared. Edmund and Beverly Powell, who were merchants, sued Hunter over a long overdue note. To settle the claim, in 1858, the court ordered the Hunter Mill property and the lands of George W. Hunter, Jr., to be sold at a public auction. The description of the property was

two hundred acres of land on Difficult Run, a dwelling house, a grist mill and a sawmill. Edmund Powell bought the mill tract that was only one hundred thirty eight and a half acres, not the two hundred acres of land claimed. Powell paid \$3105.87 for the mill tract. Powell then transferred his purchase to James Hunter, a brother of George W. On a Sunday in December 1857 six men gathered at the mill to play a game of cards. This began as a friendly game but soon one player, Edward H. Thompson, took offense over a remark made by Moses William who said “any man that could cheat for nothing would cheat for \$1000”. Moses said that he was not going to continue to play. Ed Thompson, at whom the remark was made, stabbed Moses a couple of times. Moses died from these wounds. An inquest was ordered and Ed Thompson was found guilty and sentenced to three years in the state prison.

In 1861, a reporter, George Alfred Townsend, reported the following—“Hunter’s Mill, a storm beaten structure, looks like a barn. The millrace is dry because the civil war soldiers drained the race to get the fish that were in the millrace. The mill wheel is dry and motionless. The miller’s house was used as a hospital for Lt. Col. Kane and some inferior officers.” There is some reference to Hunter’s Mill as the burnt mill which might have occurred immediately following the Civil war.

James Hunter died in 1867. Sarah, the widow of James, offered the land at public sale. There were several auctions before a successful bid was made. In 1869, Cornelius D. Doremus and Daniel Doremus bought the mill tract for \$3000. They ground corn and wheat. In 1910 Blumer H. and Edward Brashears bought the mill and the land from Doremus family.

In the early 1900’s the mill ceased operating sometime before the mill burned. Apparently, the old stones from the mill were used to build up the road bed for the construction of Hunter Mill Rd. Sometime after 1911, the Brashears subdivided the farm land.

## **JACKSON MILL SITE**

This mill site was off Towlston Road, north of the Bethel Church, on Leigh Mill Rd. where the road crosses Difficult Run. This mill had various names such as the Lewis Mill, the Trammel’s Mill, the Jackson’s Mill, and the Leigh Mill.

In 1744 Stephen Lewis owned a water gristmill at this site. The mill changed ownership within the Lewis family several times. In 1808 a Daniel Lewis bought one acre of land from Thomas Lewis for the purpose of improving the mill dam. In 1819 the mill property was part of Penelope Lewis’s dowry. By late 1819 the mill was conveyed to Gerrard Trammel. In an 1836 lawsuit brought by Thomas Fairfax against George Gunnell, the court ordered the sale of the land known as the “Difficult Mill Tract” at auction to the highest bidder. John Powell, then 32 years old, purchased the tract conveyed by this court order. Four years later, John Powell also bought the property we now know as the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site.

Cordelia Sansone, in her recent book, *Journey to Bloomfield*, simply states: “In September 1842 John Powell paid Philip Carper \$6,500.00 to purchase Colvin Run Mill, the miller’s house, 75 acres of land on the south side of Leesburg Pike, and all the buildings thereon.” Sansone also reports that at

that time the Virginia economy was depressed and land was priced at \$2.00 an acre (Carper had paid \$6,645.45 cash for the mill and 90 acres in 1811). In 1841 Powell gave only a small amount of cash and a note that was not paid until 1853.

Powell then owned two mills. His home, the miller's house at the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, is one measure of his prosperity.

In 1854, Powell sold the 100 acre Difficult Run Tract to Robert Jackson. The mill on this tract, at



Leigh Mill Road on Difficult Run, became known as Jackson's Mill. Powell held the Colvin Run Mill until 1877 when it became a part of Powell's bankruptcy sale.

The McDowell map published in 1862 listed the mill as the Jackson's Mill. However, the 1879 Hopkins's Map noted the ownership of the mill to be that of M. A. Jackson. It appears that the mill burned in the 1880's. Bob Jackson, who was a miller, sold the mill to Dr. Alfred Leigh who rebuilt the mill.

The records of 1890 noted co-ownership of this mill to be that of Dr. Leigh and a Mr. Beall. The mill was a large mill. The mill had one story constructed of stone and the other stories were constructed of wood. This was a three story mill with a gable roof. Sometime in the 1890's Jesse Cornwell was the miller and following him were Mr. Bucks and later his sons. The last person to operate the mill was a Mr. Tinsman in 1920.

What happened to this mill? Not much remains at the site to suggest the existence of a mill at this site. There is lots of stone rubble that might have been part of the stone foundation of this mill.

## JOHN MASON MILLS

George Mason III, in 1717, purchased several properties along the shore of the Potomac River. In fact, he amassed over 2000 acres of land. However, neither Mason nor his son, George Mason IV, developed these lands. The Mason family acquired the rights to the Virginia-Maryland ferry, the site of the present Key Bridge.

George Mason IV died in 1792 and his son, John, inherited these lands. About 1800 he constructed a mill on the north bank of the mouth of Spout Run.

Apparently no record has been found that describes the Spout Run Mill. In 1940 the structure of the mill was destroyed when the Spout Run Parkway was constructed. The collapsed walls were of local stone which suggests that the mill might have been made entirely of stone, or had a stone foundation with a second storey frame structure. There was a river dock from which a ferry conveyed the wheat and corn flours to the Georgetown markets.

The engineering of the millraces to the mill complex was unique. Water to power the mill was drawn from two sources, Spout Run and the nearby Windy Run. The south race used water from Spout Run while the north millrace used water from Windy Run. At the confluence of the two races Mason dug a chute in the palisade that dropped the combined streams almost straight down to the mill water wheel with enormous force.

For access to the mill via land, Mason laid a road running north from the present Wilson Boulevard. The exact path of the road has been lost but it approached the mill where the Doubleday Bridge once crossed Spout Run. The road descended to the mill approximately along the north lane roadbed of the Spout Run Parkway.

Approximately, in 1833, John Mason went into bankruptcy and all of his lands, including the Spout Run Mill, were taken over by the Bank of the United States. The mill was closed down and the other holdings were broken into lots and sold individually.

The widening of the George Washing Parkway completely destroyed the millraces and chute. All that remains are the histories.

### **KEENE MILL SITE**

This mill was located six miles from the town of Burke, on the north side of Old Keene Mill Road, just after crossing Pohick Run. This mill was probably built in the early 1800's or late 1700's. This was one of the largest and best mills in Fairfax County. Farmers from the lower end of the county came to this mill. The mill remained in the Keene family estate until it was sold to Presley Baker and Archibald Hall in 1838. In 1849, a son of the original Keene, William H. Keene, acquired the mill property from his father. The father died soon after William acquired the property. The brothers and sisters of William sued to have the will annulled. In 1852 the will was annulled. However, in 1853, William tried to recoup some of his financial losses and he claimed that he should be awarded \$750 for the managing of his father's affairs. By the time the estate was finally settled, William was in jail for the murder of Lewis Hall. In 1857, the mill property was sold to George Chichester for the sum of \$450.

After 1865 when the owner died, the mill ceased operating and slowly began to fade into the past and eventually collapsed—only a memory. In 1971, hurricane Agnes knocked out the small bridge over Pohick Creek

### **LANE'S MILL RUINS**

For nearly two hundred years Lane's Mill was an important part of the Centerville economics and social history. This mill was located on the road from Centerville to Chantilly, just east of the bridge

over Big Rocky Run at the apex of Cub Run and Great Rocky Run. In 1727 James Aubrey, who was an explorer, received a patent for seven hundred acres of land on Great Rocky Run. In 1740 Willoughby Newton bought the land on Little Rocky Run, above Centerville. In 1746 he requested a patent water mill on Great Rocky. This mill was built by James Lane, Jr. sometime between 1760 and 1767. First, a sawmill was built and later a gristmill and a distillery were added to the site. The gristmill was built at the fork of Cub Run and Great Rocky Run, using a dual water race system. Both races would be used in times of drought. The old dam, 200 yards east of the highway, has been broken but the abutments remain. In 1813, Lane paid taxes on both a gristmill and a sawmill. Lane died in 1822.

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Lane's Mill was operated by blacks. Black farmers and white farmers brought grain to the mill. Members of this community were the Robinson's families and the Harris' families. In 1822, Nestor Kincheloe rented the mill and in 1857 he bought the mill. Pendleton Robinson operated the Lane's Mill during the 1800's when Kincheloe was the owner. When Kincheloe died in 1900, Robinson leased the mill, grinding corn and wheat for the local farmers. At this time, the mill was known as the Robinson Mill. Robinson opened a store at the mill. He continued grinding until 1920 or 1921 when the stones were no longer capable of grinding and could not be replaced. He ground corn until 1924.

In 1763, James Lane bought seven acres of land opposite the mouth of Great Rocky Run from Willoughby Newton. In June of 1769 William Carr Lane, brother of James, bought four acres of land that also included a mill. In November of 1770 W. C. Lane deeded "the tract purchased of John Lane and Catherine who was the daughter of Willoughby Newton, my water grist mill" to my son Carr Wilson Lane. In February of 1772, Carr Wilson Lane purchased twenty adjoining acres of land from John Lane.

During the lifetime of Carr Wilson Lane he purchased many acres of land including a second gristmill that was located further upstream from the Lane Mill. In August of 1791 Carr Wilson sold twenty acres of land with a mill to Samuel Love.

This site is an excellent example of colonial industrial enterprise. Lane's Mill has been designated as an archaeological site and is owned by the County. The ruins have been stabilized.

### **MURDOCK'S MILL SITE IN DC**

This mill was located southwest of the intersection of Murdock Mill Road and Massachusetts Avenue extended, Washington, DC.

William D. C. Murdock was a descendent of William Murdock who represented the Colony of Maryland in the stamp Act Congress in 1765. The father of William Murdock was the Rev. George Murdock, who was the first rector of the Rock Creek Parish.

William D.C. Murdock was partly educated at West Point and lived nearly all of his life in the District of Columbia. He died in 1886 at the age of 80 years.

## NEWTON'S MILL SITE

In 1740 Willoughby Newton was granted one thousand seven hundred and nineteen acres of land that was located between Little Rocky Run and Big Rocky Run. The grant was enlarged to thirty six hundred acres of land in July 20, 1743 and by September 13, 1749 the grant included six thousand four hundred and twenty one acres of land. Newton leased some parcels of his land in one hundred and two hundred parcels. By 1747 Newton had ten such leases.

William Newton petitioned the court in 1746 for a mill seat on Great Rocky Run which was granted by the court. It is not known when the mill was built but in 1763 the mill was given to his daughter. The mill was also known as Cub Run Mill and the Kincheloe's Mill. The estate of Willoughby sold a thirteen hundred parcel of land east of Big Rocky Run in 1767 to Mr. William Alexander that included the tract with the mill dam and millpond at the junction with Cub Run. Newton had another mill on Big Rocky Run, about one mile north of Centerville that was bought by John Land and sold to William Carr Lane.

## OLD MILL RUINS IN GREAT FALLS, Virginia

How many mills are named "Old Mills"? The name could be used in the description of all of the mills in Fairfax County. To learn the history of this "Old Mill" is very difficult. This mill ruin is located in a very hilly wooded area, near the Potomac River. In an 1836 report that was made by Haywood Cleveland McMullan a mill was reported to have been located at the intersection of the Jefferson Branch and Nichols Run. These two streams empty into the Potomac River, above the falls in the river.



Today, all that remains of this mill are some partial walls and foundation. The mill is located on private property at the intersection of the two streams. The property is currently owned by the Calvary Baptist Church that is located near the end of Springvale Road in Fairfax County, Virginia. Visitors are discouraged from visiting the site because pieces of the ruins are disappearing. Someone tried to haul away the grinding stone but in the process the stone broke into pieces, leaving only one large piece intact. How many other pieces of the mill have disappeared is anyone's guess.

One corner of the stone mill is still standing. There is evidence to locate the first floor level.

The mill was probably about 20 feet by 26 feet in size. The height of the room was about 10 feet. The stone walls were two feet wide. There is no evidence of mortar being used between the stones. Due to the size of the mill and also the location of the mill, this was probably a custom mill.

The stone mill had two millraces, one from each stream. Part of the dam is still intact. The lower level of the ruin has a small arch where the axle of the water wheel entered the mill.

J. M. Trammel received a land grant in this area in 1748. A map of 1827 labels the mill as “Still House Branch” which supports the rumor that this mill was once used as a distillery. Civil War maps of the area indicate a mill was at this location and was called “Old Mill”.

The Virginia Northern Neck Mill grant of June 17, 1748 was for 513 acres of land. In the boundary description there is a reference to a “mill run” and a “north fork of a mill run” which appears to refer to the two streams that fed the mill.

Further research is required to learn more about the mill ruins-- Who were the owners? What grains did the mill grind? When was the mill built and when did it cease operations? As you can see, there are many questions that remain to be answered.

## **OLD MILL SITE IN GREAT FALLS**

This old mill site is located on River Bend Road, about 2 miles south of where Aaron Chapel Road, which is SR 682, intercepts River Bend Road, which is SR 603. This mill was noted by J. M. Trammel. The mill was used to grind corn and wheat. A survey report was made by Haywood Cleveland McMullanin in 1936. The report by McMullanin is part of the Virginia W.P.A. Historical Inventory Project.

McMullanin reported that there was a marker at this site that read “Ruins of old mill built by George Washington”. The ruins consisted of the foundation and the location of the water wheel. No other information available. The marker is no longer at the site.

## **PINEY BRANCH GRIST MILL SITE**

This mill was located about two and three tenths of a mile south of the Fairfax courthouse, about a mile on SR 654. The mill was built around 1750.

Doctor David Stuart, in 1782, bought one thousand two hundred fifty acres of land and called it Home Park. Doctor Stuart married Eleanor Custis, widow of John Park Custis. The land bought by Dr. Stuart was part of a grant of land from Margaret Lady Culpepper and Lord Culpepper to Lord Fairfax in 1710. In 1936 the owner was Captain A. LeGrand Stafford.

In the 1830's a new roof was added to the mill. The shingles were all hand hewn from trees cut on the property. An old cedar tree, over twenty four inches in diameter, supplied the wood for the main shaft. The overshot water wheel was made using dogwood trees. Dogwood was also used to make some of the other gears. The dam was rebuilt using concrete. However, sand and gravel from the stream bed was mixed with the concrete.

During the Civil War the mill served as a barracks for the Confederate Army. Some of the soldiers carved their initials on the walls. Some of the surrounding homes served as hospitals.

### **PITTSMAN'S GRIST MILL SITE**

This mill was located 1.2 miles north from Centerville on SR 657. The mill was built in 1850 and was known as one of the best gristmills in this area. Many farmers lived in this area.

Rocky Run was capable of furnishing enough water to power a mill adequately to meet the demands of the area. The demands required operating the mill night and day. The best millwright known was used to construct the mill.

During the Civil War the owner of the mill was a prisoner of the Union Army. The mill was partly destroyed but after the war the mill was restored. However, the mill was never as efficient as it was before the war. At the death of the owner, the mill ceased to operate. In the 1930's the property was sold to Commander A. N. Radford.

### **ROCK HOUSE AND MILL SITE**

This mill was located one mile from Centerville on the road to Chantilly, SR 657. The Rock house and mill were built about 1714. This site is near the Pittman Mill site that was built in 1850. The Pittman Mill might have been built at this location. The owner was Commander A. W. Radford

### **SUN SAWMILL AND GRISTMILL SITE**

The mills were on the Alexandria-Leesburg Pike, several yards southeast of the intersection of the Lewinsville Road and the Pike.

The gristmill was a three story white clapboard structure whose water source was a spring. Samuel Sharper used to haul flour from a mill on Leesburg pike to the flat boats at the mouth of Difficult Run. Wagons were loaded with nine barrels of flour. Often the roads were muddy which made the trip very difficult. The flour was loaded onto the flat boats for delivery to the C & O canal. Landing of the flat boats on the Maryland side of the river could be seen from the Virginia shore.



## SWINK'S MILL SITE

In the early eighteenth century John Binns, a farmer, introduced the "Loudoun system of lime, deep plowing, clover and grazing farming" to redeem the soil from the years of growing tobacco. Wheat then became the new crop and thus the constructions of grist mills and flour mills in this area. Every stream with sufficient water flow could have mills constructed alongside of the streams. Thus, if you owned a mill site and had stone or wood to construct a mill, you could become a miller.

Scott's Run was a stream for a potential mill site. Pearson Alexander Scott of Westmoreland County had been given, in 1716, nine hundred and fifty acres of land that was between what we now call the "Lewinsville Road and Tyson Corner". Just before the present bridge over Scott Run on road 193 was the location of Ball's Mill. The millrace was on the right hand side. This land was part of the Turberville land grant. In 1799 John Turberville left one-third of the proceeds from the mills on Scotts Run to his wife. The mill ground corn up to the time of the Civil War. At this time, the Ball's abandoned the mill.

The Ball's heir divided the property. In 1877 William Waring Ball sold the land at the corner of Georgetown Pike (route 193) to James Welsh. James built a mill. Wheat, rye and corn were ground at the mill. The mill was a two and a half story frame structure with a gable roof. A shed was added to one end. The water wheel was in the rear of the building on the up-stream side of the mill. In 1891 the millrace was extended. An aqueduct was built to carry the water across the road to the water wheel. The aqueduct leaked a bit and this greatly annoyed the neighbors who had to use the road. At this time, the mill was known as the Welsh Mill.

The miller's house, which was a wooden saltbox structure, was across the road from the mill. The house was built around 1878. An addition was added to the house and this served as a country store.

The McGarity family became owners of the mill. Thus, the mill was known as the Albert McGarity Mill. In 1892, Edward Franklin Swink, from Schwinksville, Pa., became the owner and operator of the mill. The Swink family had built, in 1880, "Spring Hill", a beautiful old house. The story goes that Mosby was hidden in the attic of Spring Hill. Mosby certainly was in this area during the Civil War and was harassing the "Yankees".

At this time, the mill was known as the Swink's Mill. The mill ground grain until around 1908. Around this time the profits were beginning to decline due to the big milling companies in the Midwest. During World War I the mill made sorghum molasses that was used in place of the very scarce and costly sugar.

Mrs. Frances Swinks Van Patton lived in the miller's house along with her seven brothers and sisters. Evidently sometime in the 1920's a fire started in the upper story of the mill. The mill did not burn to the ground but the structure was weakened so badly that the mill had to be torn down. If one looks closely evidence of the millrace can be seen today. The miller's house is painted a bright pink and is easily detected as one crosses the bridge over Scotts Run.

## SYMOND'S MILL SITE



Several years ago when we were living at our house on Fringe Tree Road my son, Paul, came home and told me about the mill foundation he had discovered on Captain Hickory. He had been wading in the creek when he came along this mill ruin. At the time, I wasn't overly excited about his discovery.

Now, some twenty years later, I am very much interested in locating old mills and learning about their history. One day, at the garbage dump, Bob, my husband, engaged someone in a conversation and soon the topic of mills

was being discussed. The man told Bob where an old mill in this community was located.

The mill is on private property. If one uses the stream bed to go to the mill, you do not go through private lawns. You would drive to where Fringetree Road crosses Captain Hickory, get out and start wading downstream--which is in the direction of the flow of the water. We drove down to the Mill. Use Leigh Mill Road to Millwood Road and then turn onto the first road that goes off to the right. Follow the main road to the end. Again, you will end up at someone's house. Introduce yourself and state what you wish to do. The neighbors are quite helpful, but know very little history of the mill.

Mason Maddox had gone to this site with some family who had lived in this area for several generations. He was able to find the headrace that is actually very close to the house on this property. The tailrace was quite evident. The stone foundation is in fair condition. The mill was quite small. It was a frame structure set on the stone foundation. The water wheel was probably inside the mill.

There was an original land grant to Lewis Ellzey in June 6, 1737. The deed book indicates the land was sold sometime in 1743 and later in 1757. In 1786, a Symond acquired the land and he probably is the one who built the mill. The mill was built sometime in the 18th century. In 1795-6, Jackson appears to



have bought the land.

In the 1940's, Mrs. Devilla, a local resident, rode horses in this wooded area. She remembers the mill. At this time, the mill was not grinding corn or any grain. The mill was producing "corn liquor". Outside the mill she remembers seeing one intact grinding stone and one broken stone. There was no evidence of any other grist milling equipment. The equipment in the mill was now the copper still. The man who operated the still was not the owner of the mill. Mrs. Devilla remembers the many samples she got on her weekly stops at the "mill". Liquor making was illegal but no neighbors reported the operation. One day, while at the mill, a young reporter came by the mill. He was intent on writing an article about the "mill". Everyone tried to convince him not to write the article. However, within a few days his article appeared in the local paper. The article alerted the Federal Government who made a visit to the mill. The man was able to salvage his equipment and the local "gossip" is he moved to West Virginia and set up his still. So, after 1948, the mill ceased to be used and gradually fell apart.

### **TOWLSTON MILL SITE**

This mill was on Difficult Run, between Georgetown Pike and the Potomac River, in what is now the Great Falls National Park. This mill was also known as the Gunnell Mill and the Douglass Mill. The mill, which was a merchant mill, is said to have been built by Bryan Fairfax and William Ramsay around 1767. The mill was a stone structure. In 1805, the Alexandria Daily Advertiser listed the mill for sale—"as the mill where Mr. James Douglass' mill stood. The mill was a quarter of a mile from the Potomac River and about one half mile from the Great Falls in the River." Thus, it appears that James Douglass owned the mill some time prior to 1805.

In 1811 a chancery suit forced one of the owners to sell the mill property at a public sale. James Gunnell purchased the mill and then conveyed it to his brother William Gunnell. Later on William conveyed the mill to his brother Henry. Between 1793 and 1835 the mill had many owners. Ogleway was listed as the miller in 1832. A Ferdinando Fairfax acquired the mill in 1835. By 1845, a sawmill was also in operation at this site. By 1855 the mill was in a state of disrepair. A map of 1866 listed the mill as a "burnt" mill. Later maps do not list this mill.

### **UNION MILL SITE**

The Union Mill site is located on Union Mill Road. Going toward Centreville on route 29 turn left onto Union Mills Road and proceed for about four miles. The mill was at the mouth of Popes Head Run, where it intersects Bull Run. In the Union Mill area, some of the early mills on Popes Head Run were the Turley Mill, the Kincheloe Mill and the Thomas Pollard's Mill. These mills were custom mills, and ground grain mainly for the farmers. Other industries in the area were talc quarrying, grazing and lumbering.

In July of 1809 John Hixon Dye was granted a permit to build a gristmill, sawmill, and a fulling mill on ninety acres of land near Bull Run. The complex was called Union Mills. John Hixon was twenty five years old when he bought the old Kincheloe's Mill seat. John Hixon enlisted in the 60th Regiment. His brother, Daniel, was in charge of Union Mills. Daniel had trouble keeping manpower to operate the mills. John died in 1826 at the age of forty one. When he died, he owned twelve

slaves. Daniel became the proprietor of Union Mills. He received a head injury that left him non-compos mentis. Daniel died in 1832.

In 1830, Hector, Daniel, and Nestor Kincheloe bought one third of the Union Mill property. By 1839 the complex was known as the Popeshead Mill. In 1845 there was a trustee sale of Union Mills and seven acres of land. Once again the property was owned by the Dye family. During the Civil War Union Mills was occupied by both sides, the union armies and the confederate armies. This occupation disrupted the milling. The Civil War stunted the economic growth of the area. By the late nineteenth century over-timbering caused a decline in foresting and the last sawmill closed in 1898.

When the property was sold later, Willcoxon, a tavern keeper, was the highest bidder. William Sudderth, a millwright, became involved in the restoration of the mill. Willcoxon was to repair the millrace but he died in 1849. Thus the project was never completed and the mill was abandoned. Today, some stones indicate the location of the mill site.

### **WHEELER'S MILL SITE**

When this mill at Brown's Chapel was sold, the owners were Hoge and Wheeler. The mill was powered using a Diesel engine—a glow pin diesel. The engine had a pin in the dome that you heated with a blow torch until it was red hot. The engine would then fire when you turned it on. As the engine got going, the motor kept the pin hot and the hot pin kept the engine running.

### **CENTERVILLE MILLS**

1. LANES MILL was near the junction of Rocky Run and Cub Run
2. DANIEL THOMAS MILL petitioned the courts to build a mill on Popes Head Run.
3. WILLIAM CARR MILL William Carr was the son of Carr Wilson Lane. This stone mill was built before 1800 east of the bridge over Big Rocky Run. The mill was sold to George Brittin in 1816.
4. UNION MILLS was on Johnny Moore Creek, near Bull Run
5. THOMAS BLACKBURN built a mill on Rocky Run in 1814.
6. CARTER MILL was on Catharpin Run near the junction with Bull Run. This mill is also known as the Sudley Mill.

## MISCELLANEOUS SITES

Due to the urban sprawl, many of the old gristmill sites have been destroyed. To build a mill it was required to obtain a permit from the county court. Probably some mills were built before Fairfax County was formed in 1742. The following information was obtained from the journal "Historical Society of Fairfax County, 1958-59"

At the junction of Big Rocky Run and Cub Run, about a mile west of Centerville, was a mill, which was built in 1746-47. It was called the Big Mill and operated for around 200 years. Part of the wall of the mill is all that remains. Willoughby Newton, in 1746, requested the court to grant a permit to build a mill on Big Rocky Run and Cub Run. There are no records of when the mill was actually built but in 1763 the mill was given to his daughter. The mill was also known as Cub Run Mill and the Kincheloe's mill.

William Lane and his son, Carr Wilson Lane, built a mill before 1800 on the road from Centerville to Chantilly, just east of the bridge over Big Rocky Run. The old dam, 200 yards east of the highway, has been broken but the abutments remain. Also, the millrace leading from the dam to the mill site has been preserved.

The Carter Mill, aka Sudley Mill, is on Catharpin Run, a little above the junction with Bull Run Stream. This was a frame building. Part of the foundation remains to mark the site, which is north of the New Bridge over Catharpin Creek and about 150 yards west of highway 234. Four of the old millstones are being used as steps to a house, which was built in 1905 on the old foundation of the old Sudley Springs Hotel.

The Keene Mill site is located on the north side of Old Keene Mill Road, just after one crosses the Pohick Creek. The mill was probably built in the early 1800's. The mill stayed in the Keene family until it was sold to Presley Baker and Archibald Hall in 1838. A son of the original Keene, William H Keene, acquired the mill property in 1849. The father died soon after this. William H's siblings sued to have the will set aside. In 1852, the will was annulled. In 1853, William H. tried to recoup some of his financial loses and claimed he should be awarded \$750 because he managed his father's affairs. However, by this time the estate was settled and he was in jail for the murder of one Lewis Hall. So, the mill property was sold for \$480 in 1857 to a George Chichester. In 1971, the hurricane Agnes knocked out the small bridge over the Pohick Creek

The Barcroft mill site is located on the east side of Holmes Run, south of Columbia Pike (route 234). Since it is in the flood plain land, the mill site is not visible from Columbia Pike. The date of construction of the mill is not known. It probably was between 1848 and 1866. The Federal troops, returning from the Second Battle of Manassas, destroyed the mill. The mill was rebuilt. This mill had a 36-foot water wheel, the largest in the nation so it is said. A fire in the late 1920's destroyed the mill. All that remains today is most of one long wall with a window opening.

The County records show that other mills were located on Pohick Creek, Difficult Run, Four Mill Run, and Great Hunting Creek. Information about these sites can be obtained from the Fairfax County Library Virginia Room.

### **FAIRFAX COUNTY MILL SITES IN 1813**

- 1) Adams Upper and Lower Mills. These mills were built around 1781 by Samuel Adams. William Nelson bought the mills in 1825. The Upper mill was later owned by Augustine Williams and Thomas Simpson
- 2) Colvin Run Mill was built around 1809 by William Sheppard. In 1811 Philip Carper was the owner of the mill. This was a merchant mill.
- 3) Chichester Mill was built by Daniel Chichester in 1801. He had both a sawmill and a merchant mill. By 1839 the property was in disrepair.
- 4) Long Branch Mill was built on land owned by Richard Chichester. His wife, Sarah, owned the mill and later the son, Doddridge Pitt Chichester was the owner.
- 5) Coleman Mills were two different mills, one at the confluence of Sugarland Run and Folly Lick Run and the other on Difficult Run which may be the same mill as the Jackson Mill.
- 6) Craik Mill was built on Backlick Run by either James Craik or his father William.
- 7) Deneale Mill was at the confluence of Piney Branch and Popes Head Run and was built before 1797.
- 8) Union Mills was built near the mouth of Pope's Head Run by John Dye in 1809. There was a water grist mill, a sawmill and a fulling mill.
- 9) Fitzhugh mill was a merchant mill that was built before 1813 and was later burned by the Confederate troops.
- 10) The Edward Just Ford mill was constructed sometime after 1780 and consisted of a grist mill and a sawmill.
- 11) Fox Mill was built by Amos Fox on Difficult Run around 1790. Besides a grist mill there might have been a fulling mill.
- 12) The Hawxhurst mill was built by Colonel Broadwater before 1787 on Difficult Run.
- 13) The Accotink Mill was built on the Accotink Creek probably by Zachariah Gardner after 1804.

- 14) The Towlston Mill was a gristmill built by Bryan Fairfax and William Ramsay around 1767.
- 15) The William Hepburn petitioned to build a mill in 1788.
- 16) The Keene Mill was built before 1799 by James Keene.
- 17) The Lane Mill was built by Willoughby Newton upstream from a mill seat on Big Rocky Run in 1746. This later became the Cabell's Mill.
- 18) The William Lane Mill was built about 1767 by William Lane. Two millraces were used to power the mill—one from Cub Run and the other from Big Rocky Run.
- 19) The Daniel Lewis Mill was built by Stephen Lewis around 1810
- 20) The Lawrence Lewis mill was built by George Washington on the Dogue Creek around 1770.
- 21) The William Moss mill was built by John Summers on Turkey Cock Run around 1761. Moss' mill was built on or near the Summers Mill.
- 22) The Barcroft Mill was built around 1810 by John Douglas.
- 23) William Cole Payne Mill was a merchant mill built between 1758 and 1762 along Accotink Creek by William Cole Payne.
- 24) Simpson Mill was built by Moses Simpson sometime before 1787 on South Run.
- 25) Stuart Mill was built by Edward Payne in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 26) Cameron Mills was probably built in the mid 1700's. This was a complex of two merchant mills.
- 27) Lane Mill was built on the Rocky Run before 1802 by William Lane Jr...
- 28) The Thomas Wilson mill was a merchant mill built by William Hartshorne and George Gilpin in the 1770's. .

## MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION FROM THE 1813 CENSUS

In the 1813 census of the Fairfax Parish in Fairfax County, there were eleven people mentioned as owners of grist mills, sawmills and manufacturing mills. The following were owners of manufacturing mills—Hannah Adams, Philip Carper, Daniel McCarty Chichester and William Cole Payne. The following people owned and operated grist mills—James Doctor Crack, James Coleman, Henry Gunnell, William Gardner, William Hepburn, Daniel Lewis, and George North.

In 1814 there were 6 mills whose value was \$100 each and 11 mills valued over \$100.

In 1820 the Waples Grist Mill was valued at \$1500. The mill was water powered and had one run of stones and one employee.

Brown's Mill was built around 1800. In 1812, the Walter's family was the owner of the mill. In 1890, Everett Brown bought the mill and operated it until he died in 1923. In 1895, Brown tore down the old mill and built a two and a half storied frame structure mill with an overshot water wheel. In 1905, Brown installed a turbine.

Wheeler's Mill was located at Brown's Chapel. This mill used diesel power. Wheeler sold the mill to Hage and Weaver.

In the 1813 census of the Truro Parish in Fairfax County, there were 16 mills listed. The following were owners of merchant mills—William Deneale, William Fitzhugh and Zachariah Gardner. The following people owned grist mills—Doddridge Chichester, Stephen Daniel, Laurence Lewis, Wheeler Roby, William Simpson, Daniel Stuart and Mary Talbot. The following people owned grist mills and sawmills—Morris Fox, Amos Fox and his sisters, Richard Fitzhugh, James Keene, Garrett Lane and William Lane.

## MISCELLANEOUS MILL SITES IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Swink's Mill was located on Scotts Run. This mill was a wood frame structure of 2.5 stories. The Miller's house remains today and is painted pink. It is said that Mosby hid in the attic of this house when he was in the area harassing the "Yankees" during the civil war. The mill was standing in 1918.

Ball's Mill---In the 1700's, the location of this mill was near where Scotts Run crosses Georgetown Pike.

Wirt's Mill was on the Mattox Creek that is now part of Westmoreland County. This was a one storied brick structure with a weatherboard gable. In 1913, the mill was standing and in operation in Westmoreland County. This mill was also called the Washington Mill. The mill was owned by Laurence Washington at one time, but is now called the Wirt's Mill. The Wirt's family and the Washington family intermarried. The tract around the mill is called "Wirtland". The mill is not far



from Wirt's wharf. The wharf is a frail, decrepit old landing place. After stepping off the wharf, turn right and follow the road that goes through the tilled fields, thickets, pine groves and green trees. The old mill was at the upper end of Mattox Creek at the foot of a steep wooded hill. William Wirt was an attorney General of the U.S. from 1817-1829.

Janney's Mill was a large mill located at Occoquan Village.

Quaker's Mill was built in 1846 on the Accotink Creek. This probably was at the site of the Eleanor Kennedy shelter at 9155 Richmond Highway (now route 1) at the intersection of Backlick Road and route 1. Quakers settled here. The mill had a stone foundation with a frame siding. The three and half storied mill had a gabled roof.

Occoquan Mills was located on the river at Occoquan and was built around 1757-1759. There were two mills at this location. The merchant mill was a stone and frame structure and burned in the early 1900's. The country mill was smaller and was built of brick and stone. It too has disappeared.

#### Canal Traffic Mills

1. 1821 Leonidas H. John at Little Fox at the canal
2. 1790 Matildaville at Great Falls.

Walker's Mill is also known as the Towlston Mill.

Towlston Mill was located on Difficult Run. The mill was a stone structure. It was located between the Leesburg Road and the River. This mill was later called the Walker Mill

Jackson's Mill was located off Towlston Road, just north of the Bethel Church, at the point where Leigh Mill Road crosses Difficult Run. The mill was a 3 storied stone structure. It was a large mill. At one time, the mill was known as the Trammel's Mill. Bob Jackson was the last miller. The mill then passed from Jackson to Dr. Alfred Leigh.

Old Jackson Tavern is located on route 7 near Dranesville. In 1968 the Fairfax County Park took possession of the tavern. After Jackson, a Wm. T. McFarland ran the tavern. For 36 years the tavern was kept by Samuel Jenkins.

Robert's Mill was located on Cameron Run. It was operational in 1916. It was a two storied wood frame building with a gable roof. The mill was mentioned in the June 22, 1913 article in The Rambler Column by J. Harry Shannon. Roberts formed the Alexandria Water Company and later sold the Bird mill to the company. They installed a pump that was powered by water from the mill race. Water was pumped from the millrace into a water reservoir.

The Old Mill site is located on River Bend Road, south of the Aaron Chapel Road. The mill was used to grind corn and wheat. There used to be a marker that read "Ruins of old Mill built by George Washington." The marker showed the location of the foundation and also the water wheel.

Stephen Lewis had a grist mill, built in 1700, along Difficult Run, east of Angelica Run.

Wheeler's Mill was a grist mill that was owned by J. A. Wheeler. The mill was located at the intersection of Hunter Mill Road and Leesburg Pike. This was the largest electrical powered mill that ever operated in this area.

Coleman's Mill was located on Difficult Run. Coleman petitioned the county to build a water grist mill around 1802. Records show no mention of this mill after 1830.

Broadwater Mill was built on land near Old Lawyer's Road. This mill was owned by Charles Broadwater and was built on or before 1787 on the east side of Difficult Run. Difficult Run supplied water to power at least six mills or maybe more.

Hawxhurst Mill was built on Difficult Run in the 1840's near where the present Lawyer's Road crosses Difficult Run.

Cloud's Mill, also known as the Triadelphia Mill, was a frame structure with a millrace 2100 feet long.

Cameron Mills were located where Taylor Run enters Cameron Run. There was a complex of two mills located at this site. The mills were built around 1752 and might have been built by William Bird. By 1799 John Vowell and Thomas Vowell were the owners.

The Arlington Mill was located where Columbia Pike intersects Four Mile Run and was built in 1836. The mill had an overshot water wheel. During the Civil War the mill suffered severe damage. The mill burned in 1920.

The Custis mill was located on Four Mile Run at the intersection of the W & D Trail and Columbia Pike. The mill was destroyed during the Civil War but was rebuilt in 1880. The mill dam and mill race served as an ice plant on Columbia Pike. The mill ceased operations in 1906. The Custis Mill was called the Arlington Mill.

Ball's Mill was built in 1754 by John Colville on the site where Lubber Run intersects Four Mile Run.

The Masterson's Mill was built around 1740 near where Glebe Road intersects I-395.

The Roach Mill was located where Roach Run joins Four Mile Run. The mill was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a cotton mill adjacent to the grist mill.

John Carlyle's Mill was built in the 1760's on Four Mile Run.

Chubb's Mill was built prior to 1719 on Four Mile Run.

The Mason Mill was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century on Spout Run but also used water from Windy Run that is adjacent to Spout Run.

The Patterson Mills were located where Pimmit Run enters the Potomac River. This was a favorable location for mills because there was a 27 foot drop from Pimmit Run to the river. Patterson had a wool factory, a flour mill and a paper mill.

### **MILLS ALONG ROCK CREEK FROM 1790 TO 1897**

If one starts at the Kennedy center and begins to hike the Rock Creek trails the first mill site will be the Patterson's Paper Mill that was on the east bank of Rock Creek, at P Street and Florida Avenue. This mill was a water powered mill that was also known as the Columbia Paper Mill. This mill was built by Gustavus Scott and Nicholas Lingan in 1800. In 1805 Edgar Patterson was the owner. In 1821, Edgar put his mill up for sale. The mill was described as a three storied structure, one hundred twenty feet long. The first story of the mill was constructed using stones and the other two stories were made of wood. In 1829, Andrew Way leased the paper mill. By 1877 the mill no longer existed.

A survey in 1868 showed the mill with a single water wheel, a very short millrace, and the dam that was opposite the north radius of the wheel. In 1820 the mill had two vats and two engines in operation. Patterson employed six men, twelve women and two boys. Each received around three dollars a week for their hard labor. A wooden covered bridge was constructed near the water with a steep and precipitous roadway leading down to the stream. The bridge was near the present "P" street bridge and was called the Paper Mill Bridge.

The next mill one would have encountered on the Rock Creek would have been the Parrot's Mill that was a wool and cotton factory that was located near the present corner of 27<sup>th</sup> and Q streets. The mill was on the same road as the Lyon's Mill that was located further upstream. The mill was in operation in 1813. The mill was called the Georgetown and Cotton Manufacturing Company.

This mill carded wool and spun cotton and was operated by Richard Parrot. In 1820 the mill supported a household of five people. Parrot did not own any slaves. Nothing remains of this mill today. Little is known about this mill. Parrot had a home that was known as "ELERSLIE" and was located in the present day Montrose Park. In August of 1814 Dolly Madison, in her flight from the capital, stopped here and changed horses and coaches to divert attention.

Further up stream was the Lyon's Mill that was also known as the Federal Mills. This was a merchant mill that was located across from the eastern boundary of the Oak Hill Cemetery. The mill was built in 1780 by Pigman and Crow. The mill tract was about sixty five acres. Joseph E. Rowles operated the mill from 1792 to 1811 when he died. At this time, the mill was known as the Federal Mills. To settle the estate the property was sold to four local citizens, Washington Bowie, John Kurtz, Elisha Riggs, and John Lyons purchased the mill. The mill tract was twenty seven and a half acres of land.

By 1826 only Kurtz and Lyons owned the mill. Later, Lyons became the sole owner. In 1820, the mill had five runs of stones and ground 43,000 bushels of wheat. In 1850 John Lyons, at the age of 69, had a household of fifteen people that included seven slaves. The mill was passed onto Evans Lyons, the son of John. Evans had three Negroes that were listed as millers. At this time the mill

was producing around \$78,000 in products. On his farm Evans raised wheat, oats, potatoes, hay, and other orchard products. He had a cow that produced 104 pounds of butter each year.

Ten years later, at the age of 54, Evans was doing quite well. Evans had six horses, 4 cows, and 3 pigs. He was cultivating thirty-five acres of land using his farm machinery.

Lyon's Mill survived the Civil war. However, the storm of 1869 carried away the dam and bridge. There was seven feet of water in the mill. The damage was quickly repaired and by 1870 the mill was producing flour, animal feed, offal and plaster. The property was valued at \$60,000.

Three years later Evans died. Evan Hughes Lyons operated the mill for a brief period. By 1875 Hughes had died. The mill was abandoned and forgotten. In 1913 the mill collapsed with a roar that was heard at the Sheridan Circle.

The mill was made of brick, stone and wood. The foundation was made using native bluestone. The next two levels were made using brick. There were nineteen doors and windows on the west side of the building. In 1813, the mill had three runs of stones that could produce one hundred forty barrels of flour per day. The millrace was almost one half mile long. Fishing was a favorite sport at the mill. Many barn dances were held in the mill. This was also a favorite spot for picnics by church groups and school children. It has been rumored that Robert Fulton tested a model of his steamboat, Clermont, at Lyons Mill.

The next mill upstream was the Adams Mill, also known as the Columbian Mill. The mill was located within the present day Zoological Park. The mill was built by Benjamin Stoddert before 1800. Benjamin Mackall purchased the mill in 1800 and sold the mill in 1803 to Ralph Waldo Shoemaker. Between 1803 and 1809 Jonathan Shoemaker was the miller. Jonathan later operated the Shadwell Mill that was near Jefferson's Monticello. It is rumored that Dolley Madison often rode out to the mill to visit Mrs. Shoemaker.

In 1809 Roger Johnson purchased the mill and then he conveyed the mill to his son, George. Over the next decade George spent lots of money making improvements to the mill. The mill was a four storied brick structure fifty feet by fifty four feet in size. There was a plaster mill at the site also. In 1820, he claimed to have spent \$60,000 on the mill. He had five runs of stones that ground 60,000 bushels of wheat, 20,000 bushels of corn, as well as 40,000 pounds of plaster of Paris. By 1823, the bank was threatening foreclosure. George needed to borrow \$20,000. George went to his cousin, Louisa, whose husband was John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, and convinced them to bail him out of his financial hole. He paid off the mortgage of \$20,000. George had convinced them to also put up an additional \$10,000 that was to be used to get the mill in shape. Adams was not a business man but he thought that being a mill owner was appealing. He had planned to retire at the end of the Monroe administration and owning a mill seemed to be a solution to his problem.

The first year was bad because many repairs to the mill were necessary. Business was not good. Production began to decline. The book-keeping done by Johnson was unintelligent. In 1824, floods came and washed out the roads and damaged the mill. In 1829, by the end of the Adams unhappy presidency, Adams was completely disillusioned. When crop production was up, the general market was down. In 1829, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad brought large quantities of grain to Baltimore to be processed. John Adams, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, son of John Quincy, took over the business and managed to make

the mill solvent. In 1834, John 2<sup>nd</sup>, died. John Quincy managed to pay off the huge debt. He considered selling the mill but there was no market for this. Around 1838, he was forced to borrow money from his former valet, Antoine Guista.

Louise Adam's brother-in-law, Nathaniel Fry, took over the mill and through his good management he produced a small profit. When Adams, Sr., died, his son Charles Francis Adams inherited the mill. Horatio White was the miller. In 1867, the Adams mill came to an end. By the turn of the century, no trace of the mill existed. The mill seat consisted of thirty two acres of land. There were two mill structures at this site—a bone mill and a wheat mill. The wheat mill was a four storied brick structure that was fifty feet by fifty four feet in size.

The next mill upstream was the Peirce Mill. This is the only surviving structure of the mills that once operated on the Rock Creek. The mill is located near the intersection of Beach Drive and Tilden Street, within Rock Creek Park.

In 1794 Isaac Peirce, a millwright and a farmer, acquired 1200 to 2000 acres of land along Rock Creek. With the land, he acquired a two story wooden grist mill that was powered by an undershot water wheel. Peirce was a Quaker from Pennsylvania. In 1801 Isaac built a distillery that he later used as a barn. By 1820 Isaac had slaves. In 1820 or 1829 Isaac built the present mill using native bluestone granite that was from a nearby quarry. By 1830 Isaac had twenty seven people in his household—fourteen slaves and one free Negro. In 1840 he was still operating his mill. Improvements were made in this year. An overshot water wheel was added. Isaac died in the winter 1841. He left his son Joshua a large gift of land. He left the Peirce mill to his son Amber C who was 56 years old at this time. Amber also owned nine hundred and sixty acres of land valued at \$22,000.

In 1851 Amber died and his estate, including the mill, went to his nephew, Peirce Shoemaker, who was the son of Amber's youngest sister, Abigail. Peirce Shoemaker married Martha Carberry, daughter of Lewis Carberry. Shoemaker operated the mill until his death in 1891. The mill had just three Peirce owners, Isaac, Amber, and Peirce Shoemaker who were the owners for over 125 years.

In 1878 a forty inch wide metal Leffel turbine replaced the water wheel. The turbine “sucked in water” and carried it to the mill. The turbine developed fifteen horse-power and turned three runs of stones. The 1870's were good years at the mill. The mill operated until 1897. A. P. White, the miller, while grinding a load of rye for a neighbor, had the shaft break. The unground rye had to be hauled away. In 1890 the Park Authority began condemnation of the land.

In 1921 the mill became a tea house that was managed by the girl scouts. In 1928 the Welfare and Recreational Association took over the management of the tea house. In 1934 or 1935 Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, became interested in the old mill. The Public Works Administration (commonly called PWA), was allotted a sum of money to restore the mill to its original state. Every cent and a bit more was needed to do this. One millstone had to be replaced as well as many rotted floor and wall boards. The millrace had to be excavated and the water wheel had to be replaced. The porch that was added to the mill, when it was a tea house, had to be demolished. In October of 1935 restoration stopped due to lack of funds. Additional money had to be allotted and restoration was resumed. The mill became operational in May of 1936 but for only a brief period of time. The dam

had to be raised an additional eight inches to provide better water power. In the summer of 1936 grain was being ground at the mill.

For awhile David Bozeman was the miller and he was followed by Raymond Little. During World War II, since there was a price freeze, the miller, Benjamin H. Didawick threatened to leave because the grinding was too costly. The last miller, in 1950, was Raymond Watt. The flour that was produced at the mill was used in the making of bread that was used in the government cafeterias.

In 1958 the mill ceased operations due to the combination of problems such as a low water volume, machinery breakdowns and no trained millwrights. The mill remained open as a historic museum. In 1965, the National Park Service proposed to make the mill operational. The Fitz Water Wheel Co. made the oak water wheel, 10.5 feet in diameter and 9'2" wide. Other repairs were made to the mill and in May 1970 the mill was once again operational. Visitors could buy two pound and five-pound bags of cornmeal and wheat flour. The mill broke down again in 1993. Since water no longer flowed through the flume, the wheel dried and soon warped. The mill became a museum and classroom for area school groups.

After a four year effort to gain support, local preservationists have begun restoring the mill. The mill is open weekends from noon to four P. M. The mill is not operational as yet but this beautiful stone building has milling machinery inside and there are guided tours through the building.

The mill above Peirce Mill was the Thomas Blagden's Mill, also known as the Argyle Mills. Thomas Bladgen probably built the mill in the early nineteenth century. The mill was not only a flour mill but also a bone mill. The mill was definitely operating before 1850 at which time Charles W. Floecker was the miller. There were two mills here—a bone mill and also a grist mill. The millrace passed between the two mills. The fall was eleven feet. In 1880 the mills were using an overshot water wheel that developed forty horsepower at thirty rpm. In 1899 the mill was put out of business by a flood and also the development of the gradual reduction milling method.

When Charles Floecker was miller there were three runs of stones. In 1849 to 1850 the mill capacity was one hundred fifty bushels a day with the help of three people. Production for the year was 583 barrels of rye flour, 4692 bushels of flour, and 5303 bushels of cornmeal and 8660 bushels of offal. By 1880, flour production had declined and there was a shift to the production of animal feed. The mill was abandoned. The construction of the Rock Creek Parkway destroyed the rest of the mill. The Argyl Mill was of stone construction. The mill was condemned in 1890 and acquired by the U. S. Government.

Just north of the Blagden mill and south of Military Road is where the first mill on this stream was probably located. Between these points was where the greatest water power was found. The fall was seventy five feet in a distance of less than a mile. This fall was part of the tract of land formerly owned by Peirce Shoemaker. The tract was known as the "Crystal Spring" tract because it contained several large springs. The tract was patented under the name of White's Mill seat in 1634. In 1800 the tract was known as Peter's Mill seat. In March of 1827 Thomas Peter advertised the mill as a "450 acre on Rock Creek, an excellent mill seat, and the city turnpike runs though the tract." Further north of Peter's mill was Jones Mill. The mills of Dr. W. Duvall were north of Jones Mill. The Rock Creek grist mills were the farthest north.