



DURHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

The state of the historical society is strong. We completed an extremely active year and our accomplishments were many. After receiving our second Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Grant, the Society went right to work on follow-up activities in the Mill's tail race. The weather didn't cooperate very much with heavy and consistent rains turning the tail race into a muddy mess. So much so that the Road Master, Peter Cox, declared that he would be unable to get the Township's equipment into the tail race to give us assistance in cleaning and regrading it. However, a local resident, Anthony Mills, stepped in and volunteered his own equipment which completed the job to everyone's satisfaction. Later in the year (again after weather delays) nearly 100 native plants, shrubs and trees arrived and were successfully planted by volunteers and the help of Kind Earth workers. The documentation requesting the remainder of the grant was submitted and we are awaiting dispersal of the funds.

Plantings were not restricted to the tail race. We have taken over the maintenance of the big planter outside the Post Office and we harvested our first crop of winter wheat (about 9 pounds of beautiful wheat similar to the type that was ground at the mill during its heyday). This was followed by a planting and harvesting of a crop of buckwheat, another grain that was grown in the Durham Valley and processed at the mill. We are deciding what crop will be planted early next year. We want to stay consistent with grains that have a connection to the mill's history.

We were fortunate to have two Eagle Scout projects in the past two years assisting us in the Mill's restoration. (Will Thoman's and Isaac Danuloff's). This year we had our third Eagle Scout choose the Mill as his center of attention for a service project. Nathan Thoman managed a sizeable crew to thoroughly clean the mill including some areas that haven't seen a cleaning crew in half a century. He is also researching and will provide placards explaining the workings of the machinery that is on display.

Our Lecture Series proved to be very popular with more people attending than ever before. The presentations included one by author Carl LaVO on the old village that was inundated by the creation of Lake Nockamixon, historical architect Michael Margulies who spoke on historic architecture and rehabilitation, Bucks County Recorder of Deeds Robin Robinson's talk on the restoration of the historic Bucks County recorded deed books, and our own Jim Walter who presented "Return of the Fire Dragon", an account of the history of the second Durham Furnace.

In addition to the lecture series, the Society began a workshop series. These workshops are all concerned with historical topics and the attendees have all left the workshops feeling satisfied and enlightened. Valerie Martz , a local paper artist, presented two workshops – Paper Box making and Origami and another one on Book Making. Becky Kutys presented a workshop on historic letter press using a printing press nearly 100 years old. Participants were able to print a set of coasters for themselves.



As can be expected, a lot of energy was expended towards the Mill. Through the efforts of the Township, we received a \$53,000 grant to assist us with ADA renovations and general updates including new windows for the warehouse portion of the structure. The windows have arrived and plans are made on getting them caulked, stained, painted and installed. The long awaited security system has been installed. The powder post beetle issue that we were concerned about has been lessened due to a local expert reporting that the fears were groundless and that the beetle infestation was long dead. In doing some road work, our Road Master found a significant piece of one of the mill's stones. This has been placed by the mill where it has drawn considerable comment. Recently we completed a trade of an old piece of equipment (one of the two of this type that we had) to the County for a seed cleaner which we didn't have.

A number of tours of the mill were given. A group of women from the Questers organization down in the lower part of the county were treated to a tour as were a group of Palisades Middle School students in keeping in step with our mission to use the mill as an educational tool whenever possible. We also gave several tours during Durham Day and through our participation in the Lehigh Valley's Passport to History Day. A special tour was given to Glenn Blakely of the Thomson-Neely House who is interested in giving us some assistance in our restoration project.

Speaking of tours, the Society was treated to a tour of its own when Jim Walter arranged for a tour of the Little Farm located near the site of the Durham Iron Works.

Our mug sales were brisk this year resulting in the order of two new issues which are selling well indeed.

Through a partnership with Lehigh University, our search for the elusive George Heinline grave continues. A team of students with their professor and some ground-penetrating radar equipment scanned the suspected area where we think the grave was located and we are awaiting their report.

As we've done for the past few years, we hosted a team of teachers for their community service day. The teachers cleaned out the old zoning office which will give the Society more space and also started to digitize some old photos we've collected. In addition to these photos being reproduced, the Society also had some VHS tapes redone as DVD's, new postcards printed and a 1773 map of the area digitized with copies suitable for framing.

For the third year, we co-sponsored the Walk in Penn's Woods event. Sarah Snider did a great job in explaining how much of the area changed during her 65 years in the Township and Scott Douglas of the Cooks Creek Watershed Association treated the participants to an invertebrate study of Frya Run.

Lest you think that the Society consists of Luddites, let me report that we have created and are maintaining a new Instagram account, have made significant additions to our website, maintained an active presence on Facebook and have even established a "Go Fund Me" account which has brought in badly needed funding for the restoration of the Mill.



Earlier in the year we hosted a display of historic artifacts at the Palisades High School. The 6 week long display was appreciated by both the community and the student body.

Lastly, the Society engaged the services of Amy Hollander, an experienced historic project strategist, to assist us in planning for future efforts concerning the Mill's restoration.

Having heard about our activities during the past year, I'm sure you will agree that the Society has maintained its strength and that we are well poised for the upcoming year when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Mill.

Thank you.

David Oleksa, President