

DURHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Thomas Paine once wrote “These are the times that try men’s souls”. This quote is quite apropos to summarize the 2021 year experienced by the Durham Historical Society. Despite completing our second year of COVID-induced hold-ups, we can proudly say that we persevered, making the best of a difficult situation and remained strong, willing, and capable of supporting our mission statement. We used our time wisely, taking appropriate steps in planning for the future and engaging in activities that avoided gatherings in large groups. This positioned us for a jam packed future.

Let’s summarize the activities that we engaged in:

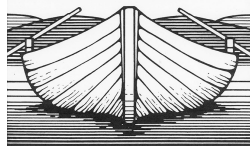
With the full cooperation of the Township, we were able to employ the services of Artisanal Structures, a well-regarded firm that specializes in the repair, renovation and restoration of historic structures to do some necessary work on the mill. During 2019, the Society was able to acquire and prepare for installation replacement windows for the warehouse portion of the mill complex. The Township wisely decided that the windows in the 1820 portion of the mill should also be addressed as well. Artisanal Structures took on both facets of the job – installing the purchased windows and since we decided to preserve the old glass in the windows of the mill, all the windows in the 1820 portion of the complex were repaired and restored rather than replaced. All this work was accomplished through a grant so no township tax dollars were expended in the project.

The distribution box which directed water over the entire width of the wheel was next addressed. The old corroded support beams were chiseled out of their masonry holdings and new I-beams were installed. When it was noticed that the distribution box itself was badly corroded, this too was repaired.

One of the problems encountered by previous visitors to the mill was the inability to clearly view the water wheel because of the safety barrier that was built around it. Artisanal Structures solved this problem by constructing a post and beam barrier incorporating glass panels to show off the wheel.

All this work had been preceded by the installation of an ADA compliant bathroom, with much of the work performed by the Township’s personnel. Again, it is important to note that the financing of all these projects took place with no Durham tax money being involved.

The Society continued to maintain the large planter near the entrance to the Post Office. As most members probably remember, we intended to periodically plant crops in this planter to showcase the variety of grains that had been used at the mill during its nearly 150 year



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history of processing locally grown agricultural products. A successful crop of oats was grown in 2021 and a planting of winter wheat took place which is currently growing and wintering over.

The local Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) has taken on the project of beautifying the wall that was recently constructed to help support the parking area by the Township offices. Members of the Society have readily stepped in to assist in the planning and eventual completion of the project.

Realizing the increasing importance of Social Media in today's society, DHS established an Instagram presence to augment our Facebook page. The interest in the mill became evident with over 260 followers starting to watch our Instagram posts within 8 months of establishing the site. They join the 626 followers of our Facebook page. Seeing another need, Board member Jim Walter started another Facebook page "Durham PA Historical Discussion Group". This site currently has 76 followers and its purpose is to highlight more detailed articles concerning the area's history supported with lots of historic pictures.

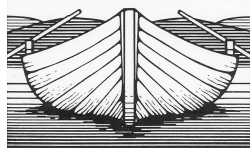
Donations from our Society's friends continue to be made. Rich Thaler presented to us a collection of old deeds and other legal documents dating back to the early 1800's. Interestingly, some of these bear the signatures of William and Jane Long who were responsible for building the mill in 1820. The signatures of other important Durham residents of the time are also included in the documents. Tim Koplín donated a collection of receipts from the Mill dating back to the early 1900's. These give a realistic picture of what the economy was like then as well as an insight to what the farmers were using to perform their daily work. Louann Timochenko donated a collection of antique hand tools and a scale of the type used in mills of our vintage. The Society takes this opportunity to again thank these individuals for their generosity.

The Society purchased a CD/DVD player to use to show historic videos to visitors to the mill.

At the Township's request, the Society purchased liability insurance to cover us and the Township when we will be able to resume our lecture series, workshops, and school tours.

The plants and shrubs we planted in the mill's tail race have taken hold and some of them bloomed late this summer.

As with most Societies of our type, we experienced some resignations from our Board of Directors. Dani McClanahan and Carl Martin both left the Board after serving for several years and their resignations were accepted with regrets. Fortunately we were able to find replacements in Sara Wuerstle and Maximus Weikel who both joined the board during the past two months.



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From a financial point of view, we were fortunate to win a grant of \$3000.00 from the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM). This money will be used for the planning and installation of a lighting system in the mill that will enhance our ability to conduct tours for the local elementary schools and interested parties to explain the role that Durham Township had in the history of our country.

We have applied for another grant to help us tell and show the story that the furnace, mill, Durham Boatyard, the area's farms, and the Native American sites played in the history of the area.

Other projects that have been planned include cleaning, painting and refurbishing the Society's office and historical collection areas.

So how do we look at this past year? Despite the road blocks that the pandemic threw up, we made best use of our time and continued on. In the words of one of our country's Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, "Energy and Persistence conquer all things."

Respectfully submitted,

David Oleksa, President