

DURHAM

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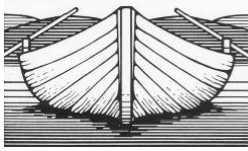
Historical Society

## DURHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The condition of the Historical Society remains strong. The year was an eventful one with the members engaged in conducting meetings, planning, completing already started projects and building on projects that had been planned. Much effort was put into applying for grants and reporting back to agencies who had seen fit to award us grants in the past. Members of the community, both past and present were generous in their donations of technological equipment and artifacts that they or their family members had discovered and the Society thanks them for their generosity.

This year, we were able to restart our lecture series and we were rewarded with higher attendances than we had experienced previously. Dave Bretz, a local surveyor and an expert on researching old deeds gave a great presentation in June where he demonstrated how to research deeds to arrive at important information and also taught the audience how to plot geographical information found on old deeds. A second lecture was presented by Amy Hollander. Amy completed her 500 year history of the Durham area and her presentation can be found on the Society's web site. Portions of the presentation will be available at various kiosks that will be found in the mill with corresponding information being reported at the location appropriate to the kiosk's location. In line with these kiosks, the Society purchased and installed several extenders so that internet service could be received throughout the entire first floor of the mill. Amy's presentation concerned the first of five sections of her project, basically information about the Native Americans who lived in this area. The two presentations were enhanced by some additions we've made to the mill. We purchased and had installed a 10 ft. presentation screen and mounted a projector to the ceiling to provide a more professional venue for presenters. Favorable comments have been received from visitors. The lighting project for the mill was completed and now many features of the mill can be enjoyed by visitors since the museum quality period bulbs more efficiently (and more economically) light the areas. We have updated the security system for the mill. The Society's office area has been cleaned and organized with significant efforts being completed to curate all of the artifacts in the Society's collection and have them recorded in an on-line program called CatalogIt. This makes it possible for other museums and historical societies who belong to the organization to see what we have and also gives us access to their collections for purposes of research. We have actually established a small museum for the benefit of children and visitors to the mill. We have spoken with teachers at Palisades who have expressed interest in having school trips to the mill and the museum area will be a highlight of the visit.

For many years, the residents of the area have been asking what could be done to get the mill's waterwheel turning again. Although this is a long term project, I am pleased to report that several steps have been taken to move in this direction. Loose stone in the wall near the wheel has been removed eliminating a dangerous situation for ongoing work. The wheel, itself has been dug out with sediment that has been built up over the years removed. The areas involved



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with the wheel's bearings have been cleaned and degunked and the walkway around the wheel area has been examined and found to be in extremely bad condition. We are currently examining solutions to this problem. In addition, we are in the process of determining costs for the work that would have to be done to get the wheel turning again. The Township's discovery of a long abandoned and buried structure which appears to be a root cellar perhaps has given the Society impetus to do original research and we have contacted several archeological organizations to assist.

As previously mentioned, the Society is grateful for the support of individuals who have made contributions. For example, local residents, Les Williams, Sara Wuerstle and Blake Timochenko Made contributions of antique milling tools, a stoveback cast at the original Durham Furnace and high tech equipment . Former resident Jim Little and his wife contributed many artifacts including arrowheads found in the area, cannon balls that were made here in Durham, and a collection of beautiful pieces of art that were donated for the express purpose of the Society being able to sell them and use the proceeds for the mill. Susan Rau Stocker (daughter of former Durham supervisor, Dave Rau) donated a copy of her recently published book, Mooring at the Millrace .

The Society hosted several visiting groups during the year. A delegation from Stenton House (the Philadelphia home of James Logan, William Penn's secretary) visited Durham and were favorably impressed with what they saw here. We participated in the Annual Passport to History event and were glad to see about 50 individuals who came to see the mill and to listen to its history. The mid-Atlantic chapter of SPOOM (Society for the Preservation of old Mills) made Durham a side-stop on their annual meeting (this year held in Hellertown). Society members feel that they should be giving back to the greater community as well as concentrating efforts on the mill. We partnered with the Durham EAC to plant and install planter boxes on the township's parking barrier walls and also participated in the painting of those barriers. We also conducted two trash pick-up events and cleaned the section of Durham Road from County Line Road to Rt.212. Since Durham Day had to be canceled because of weather, we held an open house at the mill for interested parties and again had about 50 attendees, highlighted with a well-received special kid's tour of the mill. Finances are always an important issue so we are spending quite a bit of time and effort in looking at ways of raising badly needed funds. We continue to apply for grants to conduct various projects and are attempting to research alternative ways of getting funding. But all-in-all, we feel the year has been a good productive one and we are happy to be a partner in preserving and fostering both the mill and the history of Durham.

Respectfully submitted, David Oleksa, President