

South Londonderry Township Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes for Monday September 14, 2015, 7:00pm

Presiding: Susan Bucks
Members Present: Lois Matarazzi, Secretary; Cindy Skinner
Members Excused: Faith Bucks; Peter Gluszko; Sid Hostetter; Maria Pichini, Chairperson; Bill Stoffel
Twp. Supervisor Rep: Rugh Henderson

Preservation Award

- Award Presentation to be held during the next Community Meeting on Wednesday, September 30th, Campbelltown Fire Hall at 7pm; Susan to follow up with recipients [Risser Marvel Farm] and remind them of the meeting time and location

Colebrook Mill History

A brief review / history of the Colebrook Grist Mill is attached

Fundraising

Ideas for possible fundraisers were discussed, such as:

- ✓ Tapestries showing different South Londonderry historical buildings
- ✓ Have businesses become sponsors – their logo would be included on each Historical Commission Newsletter for a designated period [1 year]

Prior to any fundraising, the Commission would need a specific item that funds would be raised for and approved by Township; Commission to investigate further

Next Historical Commission Meeting

Monday, October 12th; 7:00pm

Meeting adjourned,

Respectfully Submitted,
Lois Matarazzi

A Brief History of the Colebrook Grist Mill

The following paragraphs represent a brief but not complete recapitulation of the history of the Old Colebrook Grist Mill from its conception to the present day.

What is known?

1. The Colebrook Grist Mill lies on land once owned by Robert Coleman, Esquire, and was part of the Colebrook Furnace holdings built in 1791 by Mr. Coleman.
2. The mill itself, according to local historian Paul Grittinger, was built in 1791, which makes the mill about 224 years old.
3. According to a 1798 Glass Tax report, the mill was listed under the ownership of one Robert Coleman Esq., along with a man by the name of Samuel Jacobs as the occupant which would indicate that either Mr. Jacobs lived in the mill itself or in an accompanying adjacent structure next to the mill. This is supported by the presence of one or more stone foundations and a cistern.
4. In Sept, 3, 1853 an agreement was reached between one John Bensen, agent for William Coleman (Robert Coleman's son) and one Abraham Blauch to work in the grist mill/saw mill at Colebrook Furnace and also have use of the "Mill House" and lot occupied by Samuel Benson.
5. A person by the name of Christian B. Gish (1835-1916) operated the mill from 1871 to 1891.

6. In a book known as Boyd's Directory of Lebanon City, a miller is listed as being at Colebrook by the name of Levi Manbeck (1891-1893)

Thus there is a mill record, although it most probably is incomplete and does not list all of the mill's major events from 1793-1893 or some 100 years of time. From here an accurate record of the mill's time period from 1893-2010 would seem to indicate that from 1910-1920, the Mill was used as a storage building by the Pennsylvania National Guard for their purposes and later by the Pennsylvania Game Commission for their purposes, mostly storage of equipment and belongings.

As it stands now, the roof needs a few additional slates to fill in for missing ones. The roof is totally made out of slate. The red sandstone walls are in fairly good shape after some 224 years of existence. The original doors and windows remaining in tacked along with the three original large floors made out of local wood remain historically significant, each with a history in and of itself. The old Colebrook Grist mill was once a place of agricultural activity, bringing people together in the township all the while producing bran, cracked corn, dried cornmash, ground wheat, oats and rye flour. Commerce was actively carried on daily within its walls and on its grounds. A glimpse of the past is seen still in the mills design, wood beams, stains and a gigantic iron undershot water wheel. This wheel and its turning action created the power to animate the mill's grinding activities by means of additional smaller turning wheels and moving the belts and pulleys. Only the holes and sockets now stand in testimony, revealing the design and former functions of the now missing component parts.

The previously named various grains were once ground into usable grits to feed both people and livestock and to act as a means of barter and making money. All of this is part of a story worth preserving for the township residents of today.

Yes, the old mill building is suffering from neglect and old age; it stands on the precipice of being lost. However, it still can be brought back into useful service to this community if action is taken now. Oddly enough, it remains with this current generation of people living in the township which holds sway over the destiny of this past landmark of distinction located in South Londonderry Township, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania.

This building was one of the township's very active links to the past, by its citizens working there and the activities which were carried on there. Let us make it so again.

(Rev. Dr. W.E.Stoffel, 2015)

Credits:

The author wishes to give special thanks to the following individuals without whose research and fact gathering talents this brief outline may not have come into being: Donald Rhoads Jr. and Chris Scholly.