



MILL NEWS & NOTES

FROM THE

Water Mill Museum

41 Old Mill Road, Water Mill, NY 11976

(Mail to: PO Box 63)

Tel: 631-726-4625

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A Message From Our President

It was a great season at the Water Mill Museum. We hosted 6 art shows, the 37th Annual Quilt Show and Sale and due to popular demand, we extended the Ice Boating Exhibit. We also hosted an Uncle Fred Checkers Game Night and a Simple Machine Workshop featuring the same machines found in our 1644 Water Mill.

Beyond the general maintenance to keep our mill humming, such as air conditioning repair and replacing an old water heater, we were faced with repairing a deteriorated sluice way that was allowing debris to travel to the water wheel, barely avoiding serious damage. And finally, this month, our antiquated, brick septic system failed. This is a serious and expensive undertaking.

We are employing licensed experts to do the job right. As a Board, we can afford to do no less, to protect and maintain our mill for future generations. We are applying for grant money to help offset some of this expensive endeavor, but we know we will also be faced with repairing a brick wall, brick patio, wood deck and plantings, all of which will be disturbed.

We appeal to you, our friends and neighbors, to make these repairs possible. We are grateful for any donation, large or small, and have enclosed an envelope for your convenience.

On behalf of the Board, I thank you and look forward to seeing you next season.

Sincerely,

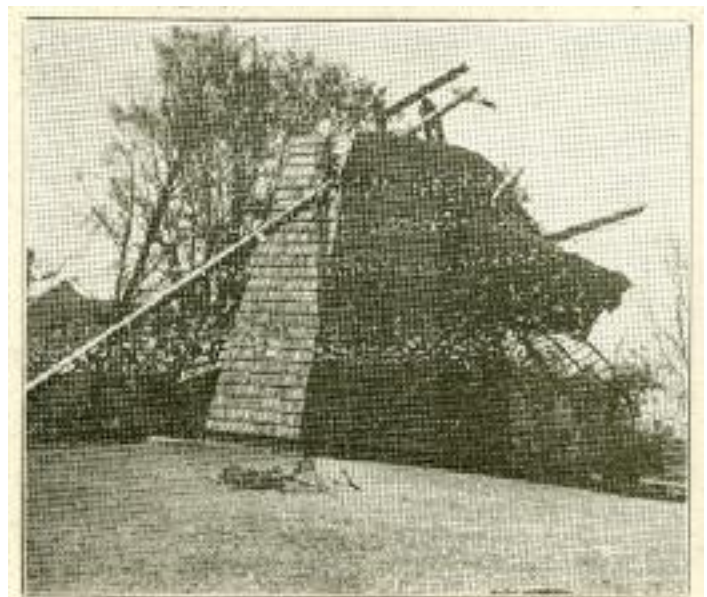
Sandy Raynor
President

Archiving Our History

It has been a busy and extremely productive season for the Water Mill Museum. In conjunction with the Water Mill Community Club and the Water Mill Village Improvement Association we are embarking on an exciting new venture; archiving and digitizing all of our records. A search committee was created to find an expert in the field who shares our love of Water Mill.

To that end, we are pleased to introduce you to our archivist Wendy Ambrozewicz who has been busy this summer painstakingly going through all of the museum's files and records. Everything in the museum's archives is being catalogued, digitized and properly preserved for the future. Wendy has uncovered a treasure trove of photographs and documents and with the help of our board member Sue Taylor, papers and ledgers are being scanned and transcribed. Next up will be the creation of a digital collection through the New York Heritage Digital Collections website at www.nyheritage.org which will be available to the public free of charge. We will keep you posted.

—Rachel Verno/Director



HISTORIC OLD WINDMILL AT WATER MILL SHOWING TOP HANGING ON NORTH SIDE

Archival newspaper clipping depicting damage to the windmill from the 1938 hurricane.

ATTENTION ARTIST MEMBERS

If you wish to take part in the Members' Art Show next spring, it is essential that we have your contact information.

Questions?

Go to our website to register or contact

Kathy Odell-Hamilton

kaoh@optonline.net

Simple Machines Demonstrated



It was a windy, rainy night on August 10th, but the inside of our 1644 Water Mill was lit up with a cheerful anticipation. Forty-two enthusiastic people gathered to hear Steve Peiffer, who served as our miller for several years in the 80s and 90s, describe with the aid of tinker toys crafted to demonstrate many of the simple machines that can be viewed at work in the mill—lever, wedge, wheel and axle, pulley, screws, and inclined plane. His presentation was rich with humor and an ability to make us all feel excited and un-intimidated by the knowledge he shared. One attendee said “I got that small town feeling. It felt like everybody really cared about their mill. Steve did a fantastic job.” (*Dave Raynor*) “What a WONDERFUL idea! The basic tools being applied!” (*Chester Hartwell*)



As often happens after an event at our mill, neighbors linger, chat, enjoy the history and efforts of a loyal community to preserve and honor our beginnings and journey into our world together.

2023 Quilt Show

The 37th Annual Quilt Show and Sale was a huge success and raised funds to help maintain the museum. Thanks to all of our exhibitors and to Warren Frank who once again graciously donated so many pieces quilted by his late wife, Bonnie Frank. We had a terrific turnout. If you missed the show or would like to participate next year, contact the museum to be added to our email list.

This year’s raffle quilt, a traditional log cabin design, was made by Bonnie Frank and won by Teal Vella of Water Mill.

“Every few minutes a new piece of our roof disappeared”—*the 1938 Hurricane—* *a first-hand account from inside the Mill.*

The morning of September 21st, 1938 was a balmy sunny day at Water Mill, L.I., and a grateful change after intermittent rains for several days. As I walked back to the Old Mill from the post office, I contemplated taking the afternoon off (I had not had a half-day since Labor Day) but as I sniffed the air there seemed to be an almost imperceptible haze descending and I thought, that might mean a change of temperature in which case I’d rather wait for another day of sunshine. A few minutes later I mentioned this to Mrs. Woelfel, the tearoom manager, and she said, “Oh do not go today for the radio this morning predicted a hurricane bound here from Florida.” I smiled at that and said every year about this time we had bad storms and often they had been connected with storms from the South but that they really were not serious affairs. A heavy gale or a few days of rain and the equinoctial storms were a thing of the past! And I thought no more of the matter. Around one o’clock it commenced to rain and by two p.m., it was pouring hard and a stiffer than usual wind was blowing. We had two late luncheon customers and they waited around hoping for a letup; it was generally agreed that such a heavy rain was not likely to last long. But it rained harder and harder and the wind blew stronger so our patrons decided to make a dash for their car, despite my protests.

That left Mrs. Woelfel, Jessie, a waitress, and myself alone in the Mill. Mrs. W. said it was certainly a hurricane and she predicted that we would lose the roof and maybe the whole building. Well she came from Texas so I thought she was probably hurricane conscious. I was not really frightened up to that time.

Continued on next page

Student Tour of the Mill



Students from the Little Red School House in Sagaponack were given a hands-on tour of our Mill by Steve.



continued from previous page

In a few minutes our front door which opens outward blew open and the Yale lock was torn off it by the force of the wind. When we brought the door back there was nothing to keep it closed and by that time the gale was so fierce that no one of us was strong enough to hold the door and so for the next hour and a-half two out of three took turns hanging on to that door. In the meantime the rain was so heavy that we could not see further than across the road where the young trees were swaying down to the ground and up again and down and up. They seemed to be in no danger so I enjoyed their graceful dancing and remembered pictures and stories of Hawaiian storms.

Mrs. W. was thoroughly frightened by now and went upstairs to pack her bags. While she was up there the skylight blew off and the rain came pouring in. In less time than it takes to tell, there was an awful roar and a large piece of the roof was gone. Then the chimney fell, outward fortunately for no one was hurt by the falling bricks. Every few minutes a new piece of our roof disappeared leaving gaping holes. Mrs. W. then took a turn at the door and I went upstairs and moved reserve stock as best I could under the still covered parts of the roof though it was hard to tell which section would be the next to go.

By this time the roar of wind and rain was almost deafening. We began to feel very isolated there in the Old Mill which was built in 1644. I decided to try and get help but the phone was disconnected as nearly all wires were down by then. Mrs. W. felt sure that the whole building would be blown into the millpond and as her earlier prediction regarding the roof had come true I gave this suggestion some consideration; however forlorn the upper floor appeared, the ground floor was just as sturdy as ever.

There came a little lull and we thought the worst was over so I decided to seek help in my car. I dashed across the road where my little coupe was parked but I could not start. Mrs. W. then decided to go on foot to the grocery store which was around the corner. I heard later that as she reached the corner she was blown into a tree and three men from the little stores rushed to her rescue. The lull was a false alarm; the wind shifted and starting on his new course returned with greater fury than ever. We could see huge trees uprooted across the highway and in neighboring yards. It was getting darker but we had no light. Again, a little lull and again I crossed the road to try and start the car. Then a sudden gust and I was knocked down flat on the road. My hat blew into the pond and my scarf up into the Heaven. I picked myself up but felt dazed by such an unusual fall. I was streaked with mud from head to foot and every one of my short hairs was blowing wildly. When I returned to the Mill Jessie said, "Why Miss O'Hara whatever happened?"

We began to fear for Mrs. W. when she appeared in a sedan with three young men. By the time she had piled all her luggage in there was no room for Jessie or me. In the meantime I had wrapped up the more important State records, the money and one or two personal items. It made a rather large heavy package. The driver of the sedan promised to return for Jessie and myself but he was so long in coming we felt that he must have met with an accident or forgotten us.

The wind had lessened considerably though it was still much wilder than usual. I glanced out of a window and noticed that the pond was higher than water line. Even as I looked the water rose rapidly, reaching the banks, going up the steps of a little house opposite encircling our own place. We have a deck on one side of our Mill, about twenty feet above the water and here was the water on a line with the deck floor!!!

Now I was nervous. The wind with all its noise and power somehow did not frighten me as much as seeing that water rise as if someone had turned two faucets on in a small basin. It looked as if the old old building was to be swept into the pond after all. The wind had abated. Jessie and I decided to start out on foot to seek shelter. We could not go away and leave the Mill door open so together we managed to push a huge heavy tub of flowers against the door. In order to do this we had to step in water above our ankles. I had also my heavy large cumbersome package.

At the corner we saw many cars stalled in the rushing water across the highway. The windmill, a famous landmark was dangling at a pitiful angle. Trees on the convent grounds were so uprooted that all the entrances were blocked. Such devastation. Chimneys down, fences down, windows blown in: trees by the hundred uprooted, blocking off the road here and there.

It was clearing. The wind dying. The late afternoon sun broke through clouds. I guessed it was over at last. Jessie left me to wait in a store for someone to take her home. I walked on alone: coming abreast of a familiar potato field I noticed little lapping waves moving toward me. The ocean, crossing the Halsey potato field!!! Were we safe yet after all? I crossed the road and walked on the

edge of farmland eyeing the waterline. Another gust of wind nearly threw me a second time but my heavy awkward bundle acted as a lever. Would I ever reach home? Would the wind ever go without returning?

I was home. I hurried to get out of wet shoes and clothing. I glanced out of my window and saw a large bridge at the foot of our road. Then in a neighboring yard I saw a garage that had never been there. I began to sense the extent of the damage.

[The following is handwritten by Grace on the original document – WA 09/09/2023]

I ate with my beloved Halseys that evening & we sat up late, wondering what was in store for us. We all decided to remove shoes only when we retired, just in case more wind or rain forced us to leave the house in a hurry. All was calm though & the next morning was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen.

—G.M. O'Hara

Grace O'Hara, the author of the above letter, was employed in 1938 by the NYS Commission for the Blind. At that time, the Mill was rented to the Commission and the proceeds of the rental helped the Ladies Auxiliary of Water Mill purchase the Mill in 1942 and eventually open it as a museum.

“Every few minutes a new piece of our roof disappeared” — the 1938 Hurricane, a first-hand account from inside the Mill.

Honorary Life Members

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Quilt Show/Facebook – Eileen Noonan

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Website – Ann Lombardo

Traveling School Tours – Steven Peiffer

**Thank you to our members, supporters, and volunteers,
who along with our board of directors, keep the Water Mill Museum running.**

We especially want to thank:

- Bob Eisenberg of East End Blueprints
- Strong Oil for donating ice for the Members' Art Show
- Kathy Odell-Hamilton for curating the Members' Art Show
- Meredith White, Jamie Wilson and Alfonso Blas for the gardens
- Lou Puglisi for all the hand painted artwork he donates year after year
- Warren Frank who donated even more of Bonnie Franks' quilts this year
- Merry and Greg Bellafiore of Long Island East Printers for always making our newsletter so special
- Ed Hurley for keeping a watchful eye over the mill all year long
- Ray Wellen and Danny McKeever (they are contacts for the alarm)
- Ricky Muller
- Marilyn Holstein of Discovery Maps
- Mary Godfrey of Mary Godfrey Custom Framing and Photography for help with the Uncle Fred Exhibit at the Westhampton Library
- Jimmy Corwith for installing our new sign
- The family of Paul Corwith for donating the two wonderful books

- Dante Mazza for making us the beneficiary of the Water Mill Cup
- Gary Sapiane from WLNG for the great ads for the Quilt Show
- John Degan of Liberty Iron Works
- Jim Hagen of Concrete Construction

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If you are interested in serving on the board of Water Mill Museum, please notify the board of directors by email through director@watermillmuseum.org

Find us at www.watermillmuseum.org
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To write us: Water Mill Museum
PO Box 63
Water Mill, NY 11976
To phone us: 631-726-4625

