

Miller's Forum – July 2007  
By Dave Rollenhagen and Pete Curtis

The Second Annual Miller's Forum was held at Philipsburg Manor in Sleepy Hollow, New York, and was hosted by Pete Curtis, Miller. This forum was initiated by the Mill at Anselma in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania in 2006 as part of its interpretive planning initiative. The Miller's Forum has become an important opportunity for millers to come together to share experiences in milling, interpretive programs, and historic site best practices. The theme of this year's meeting was Shafts, Gears, Wheels and Flumes: The Craft of Mill Maintenance. Jim and Peter Krickler of Rondout Woodworking, Inc. led the discussion, and all attendees agreed on the importance of planning for mill maintenance and the allocation of sufficient resources to support it. This includes not only the mill machinery, but the mill building itself. Jim encouraged participants to maintain a mill maintenance log, and other sites acknowledged the importance of volunteer and board member participation in maintenance projects.

Another very important topic that the Forum addressed was "When is a Mill More than Just a Mill: Integrating Social History." As millers at historic sites, we have the added responsibility of interpreting the social history of our respective sites. Philipsburg Manor, where the mill originally was run by slaves, is a particularly good example of the importance of a good social history interpretation.

The meeting was not all work, and Pete was an excellent host. Several attendees participated in gathering and tying sheaves of winter rye, which they loaded into an ox cart, and transported to the barn. A visit to the fabulous old 1780 Dutch barn was a treat in itself, and to see Charlie Howell's former residence, now the activity center, was a nice remembrance. Several live demonstrations were in progress, including a boat building project, where the participants used only period hand tools. After lunch, Pete demonstrated his mill, with its unusual lever-and-wedge tentering mechanism, and showed the group Philipsburg Manor's excellent collection of historic interpretive aids.

The sites represented at the Forum were Newlin Grist Mill, Historic Walnford, The Mill at Anselma, Cooper's Mill, Colvin Run Mill, and the restoration crew at Philipsburg Manor. The 2008 Forum will be held at Historic Walnford (Waln Mill) in Crosswicks Creek Park in Upper Freehold, New Jersey on Tuesday, July 8, 2008. All site millers and colleagues are welcome. Please contact Dave Rollenhagen for details (610 827-1385).