

The Mill at Anselma

The Mill at Anselma, built by Samuel Lightfoot in the middle of the 18th century, operated continuously for over 200 years. Considered an outstanding example of the mill machinery of the wooden age, its preservation has long been of great concern to the Trust.

In the early 70's the Trust established a friendly relationship with Oliver E. Collins, the last of the millers. Various attempts were made to purchase the property, but Mr. Collins steadfastly refused to sell as he wished to leave this world knowing he still owned his beloved Mill.

In 1981, the Board authorized the purchase of land between the Mill and the Conestoga Road (Route 401) in anticipation of eventually acquiring the Mill, itself. This was an integral part of the Mill complex in the 19th century which included a station on the Pickering Valley Railroad, Post Office, Store, Creamery, and Ice House, as well as the Mill.

After Mr. Collins died in 1982, the Trust with the assistance of a \$125,000 loan from the National Trust for Historic Preservation was able to purchase the Mill from the estate. This loan was the largest in three years made by the Endangered Properties Fund of the National Trust.

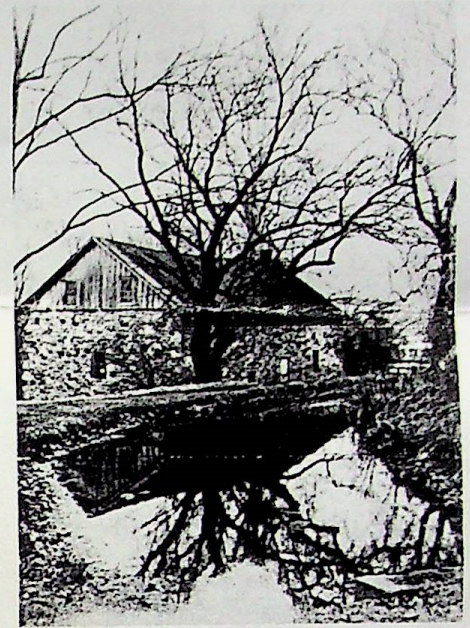
Shortly thereafter the Trust was

awarded a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission matched in part by the Chester County Commissioners for the purpose of making an Inventory and Feasibility Study. An Advisory Council, headed by John G. Harkins, Jr., supervised the study while research was under the direction of Denson Groenendaal, a consultant. Major capital improvements were subsequently accomplished through a grant from the J.N. Pew, Jr. Charitable Trust and another from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission under the federal Jobs Bill. The Mill was the only private site in Chester County to be so funded.

Under the leadership of Dr. Henry A. Jordan, a Director of the Trust, the Mill is now in the Second Phase of a restoration plan which will eventually return it to operation. Grants from the Chester County Commissioners and the Redevelopment Authority are helping to fund this phase. In the meantime, indebtedness has been reduced substantially through support from the Claneil Foundation and gifts from the business community.

Great encouragement was given when J. Jackson Walter, President of the National Trust, visited the Mill last September. Speaking afterwards at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Walter said, "The fact that the building and its works are intact is remarkable. A mill like this captures so much of the economic and industrial past and reaches out to all parts of the county."

As the challenge of the present restoration is met we reflect upon our first association with Mr. Collins and with those who persevered to make certain the Mill was saved. Earlier the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission honored the Trust's application to place the site on the National Register of Historic Places. Richard Tyler, then Curator of Science, Industry and Technology of the William Penn Memorial Museum, documented its importance, while Stephen Kindig, an authority on Molinology, periodically reminded the Trust of the Mill's significance from the point of view of surviving



William Cartledge, Jr.

A widely publicized photograph of the Mill

technology and automation as devised by Oliver Evans in the late 18th century.

The Hagley Museum also took great interest. Eugene Ferguson, Curator of Technology at the time, regarded Mr. Collins as a living exponent of American ingenuity. Oral history recorded by Frank McKelvey, the present Curator, is currently being expanded by Professor John Turner of West Chester University. Interviews have centered on Mr. Collins' son, Horace, who lives at the Mill and shares with visitors his enormous fund of knowledge.

As we look toward the completion of the restoration, aims are well expressed by Henry Jordan:

"The Mill at Anselma will become an outstanding resource to demonstrate an earlier technology and way of life to our young people... In our current world of synthetics and rapid change, it becomes increasingly important to be aware of the ways in which our ancestors combined the power of nature with inventions to create a means of livelihood. The Mill and the people who lived and worked together illustrate the ability of man to innovate, improvise and live off the land."



Jerry Tracz

Dr. Henry A. Jordan and Stephen Kindig in front of the old Anselma Post Office.