GRIST From the Mill

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2020: A Year of Challenge and Change

For Newlin Grist Mill, 2020 brought an unprecedented series of challenges that tested patience, adaptability, and the organization's ability to cope with multiple crises as once. It was Newlin Grist Mill's commitment to serving the community and our community's dedication and support in return that allowed us to not only endure but thrive.

The year began with the millrace and fishing ponds full of silt from construction work upstream connected with the Rt 322 project. The previous two seasons of pond fishing had suffered early closures due to water temperatures, but the fishing ponds could not be opened during 2020 due to the siltation.

While negotiations to remedy the issue dragged on with PennDOT, we tried to take advantage of the rare opportunity of a dry millrace to remove the water wheel and flume in preparation for their replacements which were being constructed in the Millwright Shop. Archaeological investigation was also initiated at the spillway gate to examine design, construction, and condition in anticipation of its much-needed restoration. Staff worked with Temple University engineering students on plans to expand the wetland now impacted by siltation.

Flood waters overwhelm the Visitor Center August 7, 2020.

Progress halted following the closure of museums in March. Work on the water wheel and flume projects were stopped and archaeology was suspended. The Trimble Kitchen restoration was interrupted as craftspeople working on reproduction furnishings found themselves shut down. The pandemic resulted in the cancellation of nearly all programs and events. Staff only entered the property to feed animals, check messages, and empty trash cans. Later they returned to maintain trails and ensure the park remained safe for visitors. The staff quickly regrouped and while working from home generated online content. The Newlin Series was converted to virtual programs, Summer Discovery was offered as an online experience, and efforts were redirected to create online programs for schools.

As the summer wore on, a reopening plan was developed, and preparations were made to accommodate limited numbers on tours and in the Visitor Center. As Newlin Grist Mill prepared

Upper fishing pond filled with silt.

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to reopen, a flash flood struck on August 4th, bringing water into the Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Cabin. By August 7th, the staff had nearly completed cleaning up the buildings and removing debris from walkways, but a larger deluge flooded all the buildings including the first floor of the Visitor Center. The water levels reached a height of 14" above the first floor of the Visitor Center.

The floods devasted the buildings and park especially the Visitor Center. While there was damage to windows, doors, and the floor of the mill, it was the modern finishes and furnishings that suffered the most. Trails were severely damaged and outdoor equipment washed away. The dam suffered some damage to its earthen section, but the earlier repairs weathered the flood.

After the initial shock of back-to-back floods, the process of cleanup and repair began again. The park had to be closed for public safety during the initial assessment and repair activities. The park reopened in early November with a few trails that remained closed. Over the past few months, efforts have focused on repairs in the Mill, Visitor Center, Archive, and Cabin so that staff could return and the site could reopen to the public.

Flooding is increasing in frequency and intensity. Changing weather patterns are producing larger amounts of precipitation in shorter periods, and increased development in the watersheds mean these events are having greater impacts. Therefore, recovery activities have included ways to mitigate future damage and reduce expense caused by flooding. Fortunately, mills are designed to flood so the best way to protect our mill is keep it in good repair. For the visitor center, mitigation includes raising outlets and installing removable wall panels for easier cleanup. The organization is studying the feasibility of elevating the structure above the flood level. These activities have been complicated by the restraints brought by the pandemic.

We are grateful for all your support and goodwill during these crises and appreciate your patience as we recover. We look forward to welcoming everyone back as work is completed, buildings are reopened, and tours restart.

The flood burst through a window washing steps, hoppers, and benches across the room.

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Coming Back with Your Help!

Following August's devastating floods, the outpouring of assistance and donations energized the staff at a difficult point. Your dedication to our mission was inspiring and kept us going. As a thank you, we wanted to show some of what your support has made possible up to now.

One of the first challenges to overcome was getting people safely onto the property. The force of flood waters gouged huge troughs in the parking lot stripping tons of material and depositing it around the site. Thanks to the donation of over 20 loads of millings by Concord Township, Penonni Associates, and MOR Construction, the parking lots have been repaired and no longer are a safety hazard.

The trails suffered surprising damage with the floods leaving behind washouts ranging from three inches to over twenty inches deep. In total, more than 165-cubic yards of materials washed away. Fearing future floods would wash out gravel, staff and volunteers tamped clay into the holes and covered it with stone that blended with the existing trail surfaces.

The Visitor Center experienced record high water levels that inundated the walls, cabinets, carpets, and furniture. Your support helped us quickly dry out the buildings and treat inside the walls and under the floors with fungicide. Preparing for the possibility of future flooding, waterproof insulation and removable wooden panels will reduce future losses from flooding and make cleanup faster and easier.

When flood waters rushed through windows and doors in the mill, they undercut the brick floor requiring the bricks to be removed, the base for the floor repaired, and floor reset. Find out what we discovered on page 11. The same rushing water scoured a gulley in front of the cabin undermining the porch posts and requiring clay to fill the 18" deep trench.

Thank you Donors & Volunteers

We cannot adequately express how thankful we are for all those who rallied behind Newlin Grist Mill in 2020! The outpouring of support, encouragement, and donations reminded us of the significance of what we do for our community. We are pleased to have been able to provide a sanctuary and a place to find a few moments of peace from stress and chaos. The appreciation that we received in return was important because it enabled adaptation during the pandemic, made recovery from the floods possible, and inspired everyone to keep moving forward during difficult times. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you!

Our staff members have been affected by the closures during the pandemic, the devastation from the flooding, siltation of our waterways, and the strain of trying to keep everyone safe while getting things done. Your care and concern for Newlin Grist Mill strengthened our spirits and offered the motivation we needed to face the challenges of each new day. You were there for us and we are honored to be a part of such a caring and generous community.

We want to thank everyone who offered to help after the flood. The number of people offering their time far exceeded the number of volunteers that we could safely accommodate. Volunteers performed over 860 hours of flood clean-up and repairs. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were instrumental in helping to clean up flood debris, wash signs, and replace infrastructure for the public to resume enjoying the park. Without the assistance of the individuals and families who regularly volunteer, the clean-up and repairs would not be as far along. They contributed to fixing the trails that allowed the park to reopen, labored to assist staff in recovery, and completed critical work on repairing the Visitor Center, Mill, Archive and Cabin. One of our summer campers celebrated her birthday by organizing a clean-up crew to help with fall leaf cleanup around the parking lot, visitor center, and Miller's House.

Donations purchased the materials that volunteers and staff installed.

Volunteers worked hard tamping donated clay and stone dust at cabin and trails.

Dave Clarke volunteered the use of his backhoe to help spread donated millings in parking lot.

We appreciate our donors who provided essential funding and in-kind contributions that made the work possible. Their support allowed for the purchase of materials crucial for emergency repairs, supplies to clean and dry out the buildings, clay and stone dust required to fix trail damage, millings to repair the parking lots, and hire contractors. Contractors repaired masonry in the Mill and Archive, rewired the Visitor Center, and replaced damaged floorboards in the cabin. Employees of Maguire Products convinced the company owners to support the flood recovery with a large donation while other area businesses hosted promotions, raffles, and donation collections in support of Newlin Grist Mill. Thank You all for coming to our assistance!

Our community's support is deeply appreciated, especially during this time of chaos, health concerns, and financial uncertainty. Every word of encouragement, volunteer hour, and contribution made a difference in overcoming tremendous challenges. We face more challenges in 2021, but thanks to your generosity and dedication we are stronger and better able to protect our natural resources, preserve our history, and keep Newlin Grist Mill a place of discovery and learning. Thank you for being a part of the future of Newlin Grist Mill!

Thank You Sponsors!

Despite the challenges faced in 2020, both as a non-profit organization and as members of our broader community, we were humbled and encouraged by the generosity and support of our business partners and event sponsors. The events and activities that were anticipated to be held throughout the year abruptly ground to a halt in early March. Yet many of our business partners continued to support our work. They re-directed their event sponsorships to areas of greatest need, donated time, and helped locate and obtain materials to repair our trails and parking lots. They enabled us to purchase equipment necessary to begin the production of quality virtual learning programs.

Thank you to MOR Construction, R. Webb Excavating, Maguire Products, and Visit Delco PA for the resources and funding needed to repair buildings, trails and parking lots and making it possible to reopen the park. The Tales on Trails program was able to continue in 2020 thanks to MOR Construction and Agilent Technologies.

We were able to purchase filming and editing equipment needed to begin the creation of our virtual learning programs, something that would not have happened if not for the support from Univest Insurance, Chandler Funeral Home, MOR Construction, Primrose School, and Team Toyota. These programs reached audiences as far as Chicago. We are planning to continue after we resume in person tours and school groups and look forward to reaching an even wider audience with digital learning resources. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Wild Birds Unlimited: A Community Partner

We would like to extend a special thank you to our partners at Wild Birds Unlimited of Glen Mills. They have been instrumental over the past few years in helping to support our birding program through donations of seed and co-leading our monthly bird walks. Chris is passionate about birds, but also about giving back to the community, and we are lucky to have him! He and his staff are always ready and eager to answer your questions about birding.

When Chris heard about the flood damage we sustained in early August, he launched a fundraising campaign through his store for the months of September, October, and November. During the campaign, he offered free gifts for donations toward our flood cleanup and highlighted different aspects of Newlin Grist Mill through social media. He also helped to coordinate volunteer crews who came out on two separate occasions to help with flood cleanup. Thank you Chris, Anne, and all the staff at Wild Birds Unlimited for the many ways you support the mission at Newlin Grist Mill, and for your generous spirit that benefits our entire community!

An Oasis During Covid

Over the past three centuries, the Newlin Grist Mill has served its community as a place for making food, gathering, learning, and recreation. The historic buildings and surrounding natural areas create a stimulating setting for both exploration and reflection. During the pandemic of 2020, these inspirational settings took on a new role as a place of refuge and escape from the chaos around us.

"So many wonderful memories of Newlin Grist Mill. From summer camps to girl scout rallies to long walks in the woods with my dogs. . ."

The number of daily visitors soared as people tired of being isolated indoors and sought refuge in open spaces. Increasing numbers of people came as they searched for places to get outdoors and into nature. Through most of the summer, 500-700 visitors daily made use of the park, trails, and historic atmosphere.

"I grew up in the area but didn't fully utilize Newlin Grist Mill until the Coronavirus Pandemic hit."

Based on their comments, people were drawn to Newlin Grist Mill's well-maintained, shaded trails and the variety of options in the 8.5 miles of trails. Especially popular were the trails suited for younger children and those close to water. Visitors particularly liked the waterfalls (mill dam and spillway) and stepping stones that cross the creeks.

"Your beautiful location and creek were our favorite 'go to' to ease the anxiety. Truly a gem and a history worth preserving for years to come!"

Newlin Grist Mill experienced a 25% increase in visitation for the year, despite being closed from August through early November. Thousands of new families were introduced to the historic site and park. Our biggest challenges were having buildings closed and the lack of parking.

"Know that the Newlin Grist Mill is a literal oasis in a desert of uncertainty."

We realized early in the pandemic that the Newlin Grist Mill was serving an important function for the community and did our best to maintain the cleanliness, safety, and protection for which the park is known.

It was an exceedingly difficult decision to close the entire park after the parking lots and lower trails were devasted by flooding during the first week of August.

The creeks and historic buildings create an attractive and calming atmosphere.

The pandemic has been difficult for everyone and we thank you for your patience as we made the trails safe and continue to repair buildings and trails throughout the year. We look forward to welcoming everyone back in the coming months, seeing old friends, and meeting those we were unable to greet in person in 2020.

A typical image of a full parking lot and waiting cars in 2020.

Scout Projects Making a Difference!

Each year the Newlin Mill is fortunate to host Boy and Girl Scouts seeking to volunteer on group and individual projects. Despite the challenges of the past year, scouts contributed substantially to trail improvements, public safety, and flood repairs.

Eric Tanzosh completed his Eagle Scout project in August. He constructed a new set of stairs connecting the main trail with one along the creek. The stairs improve public safety by providing a safe alternative to people climbing the hillside and protect the environment by stopping erosion from foot traffic. The project integrated a low-profile design that protects against flood damage and a platform extension that protects a wetland. The project was well designed and built as it survived both floods.

Ryan Orso constructed a bridge over a small drainage area to connect the main trail to the upper field along Concord Creek as his Eagle Scout project. The bridge was meant to improve access by visitors and during programs like the monthly bird walks. He received donations from several local businesses to make his project possible.

Girl Scout Troop 5297 volunteered as a group to build trash can holders to replace several that had been washed away during the floods. This project helped with badge requirements while making it easier to keep the park free of litter.

Nick Ganti completed his Eagle Scout project in January by building picnic tables to replace several destroyed during the floods. His tables were built to accommodate wheelchair access and make the park facilities available to more of our community.

Thanks to the members of our scouting communities who made a difference by contributing to clean up and recovery projects!

Eric Tanzosh's stairs and Brian Orso's bridge will improve access in the park.

Nick Ganti's picnic tables and Troop 154's cleanup of the Creek Trail were both important to flood recovery.

GS Troop 5297 build trash can holders and help keep the park clean!

Around the Mill

Tommy the Toad lent his likeness to a "Flat Tommy" activity for last year's virtual Summer Discovery camp.

Jane Staud works on detailed cleaning of stone box.

The park had a frosty visitor this winter!

Young helpers get an impromptu lesson on salamanders during a fall cleanup.

Volunteers have repaired nearly one quarter of a mile of trails.

Wild Birds Unlimited of Glen Mills brought volunteers out to help repair trails.

A snowy view of the Osage Orange hedgerow.

Freshwater Mussel (Eastern Elliptio) probably a raccoon snack.

Pretty sunset at Trimble House.

Around the Mill

Volunteers tamping clay into areas under the cabin porch that were washed away in the August floods.

Summer Discovery friends helping with trail cleanup after flood.

Volunteer Ruben Hertzog assists Keith with documenting a test unit in the Grist Mill.

Boy Scout Troop 22 after cleaning and repairing picnic tables.

Ice on the Frog Pond.

Mike Boughner moving a bucket of the tuns of clay used to repair the trails.

Girl Scout Troop 5073 Cleaning up Flood Debris on Trail.

Happy Honeybees in the orchard!

Girl Scouts from Troop 5106 volunteer during fall clean up.

Adjusting with Virtual Programs

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations that offer educational programs to schools, scouts, and other groups found themselves needing to pivot their programming.

While some institutions already had established virtual and distance learning programs, many sites, including Newlin Grist Mill, had built their education programs around in-person, hands-on experiences. The program staff was able to offer a limited slate of virtual education opportunities in 2020, most notably a virtual version of Summer Discovery camp, but it was clear that the site lacked the infrastructure for formal virtual programs.

With the help of a grant from ArtsAid, and donations from our sponsors we were able to purchase the equipment and software to film, edit, and present virtual education programs. We have been working on planning and developing these programs over the winter and will soon have a catalog available for educators and group leaders to choose from. These include virtual nature walks and scavenger hunts, meet & greets with our education animals, and history programs that explore systems of trade, work, and everyday life in the colonial period. These programs will incorporate a mixture of live interactions and pre-recorded elements facilitated by our expert staff.

2020 virtual Summer Discovery participants introduced their favorite animals in one session.

NGM staff film content for virtual education programs.

We anticipate that most of our education programs will be virtual for the spring 2021 semester, and likely into the fall semester as well. But even after we return to in-person field trips, we envision that our virtual programs will act as a compliment to them as we move forward in a post-pandemic world. Scheduled before, after, or in between onsite visits, the online elements can help put Newlin Grist Mill into a larger context and incorporate resources and technology that enhance (rather than replace) hands-on experiences.

60th Anniversary Blog

On December 27, 1960, the Nicholas Newlin Foundation came into being, with E. Mortimer and Elizabeth Newlin the driving forces behind its creation. The goal was to create an organization that would protect the Newlin Grist Mill property—both its historical and natural resources—and provide ongoing support for the site so that future generations would be able to enjoy it as a refuge from ever-encroaching development.

We wanted to be sure to mark this important anniversary, but the pandemic put a damper on plans for in-person celebrations. Instead, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Nicholas Newlin Foundation, we will be sharing stories of the Foundation and Newlin Grist Mill in blog form. These "60th Anniversary Stories" will be highlighted on our website on a regular basis over the course of 2021.

Head over to the website to read the first couple of entries, which give the founding story and discuss the enduring relevance of the organization's mission.

Future posts will feature the people, initiatives, programs and traditions that have shaped the character of the organization.

If you have any materials, especially photographs, that you think would help us tell the story of the Foundation, let us know!

Finding Positives in 2020

The pandemic and floods instantly bring to mind uncertainty and loss, but 2020 was also a year of discovery and improvement.

The cleanup and repair of the buildings furthered our knowledge and provided more details of how they changed through time (see story below).

On the nature side of our mission, the discovery of a new spider species in the park is the most notable. Snetsinger's Purseweb Spider is an endemic species found only in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Last year made long-needed updates to our computing and communication systems a necessity. Like many Americans, working from home required upgrades to be efficient. These will not only get us through the challenges of the moment but will also make us better in the future. Additional upgrades are being made to protect our buildings and operations from future flooding and reduce both the impact and cost of future events.

Disruption to our normally full schedule of programs allowed staff to dig deeper into various research projects. The topics included millwrights, labor, kitchens, blacksmith shops, brewing, forest management, and stream protection. This information will be incorporated into future programs. We were also able to participate in and present at seminars and conferences which will help us serve our community better and have expanded our network nationally and internationally.

Archaeology is revealing new discoveries (above) A window in the mill was once a door. (below)

Unexpected Historical Discoveries

The cleanup and repair of our historical buildings after the floods has not only contributed to their protection and maintenance but has led to several unexpected discoveries.

During work around a window in the Mill that was washed out by the flooding, evidence was located that indicates the window had once been a door. The seams in the masonry revealed a patch in the wall below the window. This door could have provided access to the hurst frame and gearing in the mill. It explains the unusually low window set at the exterior grade.

Before repairs were made to the brick floor, the area impacted by the work was excavated to investigate what could be learned from evidence surviving beneath the floor. The excavations revealed multiple floor levels of stone and earth fill. What appears to be fragments of mortar set horizontally at one level of the floor suggest there may have been a mortar floor in at least part of the building.

In other parts of the Mill, excavations around a pilar support uncovered a substantial concrete structure beneath the support. The excavations uncovered sections of the exterior wall and the wall surrounding the pit beneath the hurst frame providing important information about earlier construction.

One of the most intriguing discoveries was a post hole mold near the hurst frame. Combined with the discovery of the door mentioned above and photographic evidence, the post hole suggests there could have once been a raised platform in the mill. It is possible this platform was once several feet above the exterior grade. It would mean people entered the mill by a loading dock and walking onto the platform rather than walking down the stairs leading to the current floor.

More work is needed to investigate further and is planned for later this spring when temperatures make the work less arduous. It is hoped that continuing the excavations will reveal details of the Mill's construction and provide further clues concerning this platform.

What to Expect in 2021

A reduced slate of programs is planned with modifications to keep everyone safe. Our yearly "Earth Day" event has been turned into "Earth Month." The event will be spread over four Saturdays in April during which registered volunteers will improve habitat, repair trails, and make the park a better place.

The popular Bird Walks with Wild Birds Unlimited restarted in March. Tales on Trails will be returning with a new series of books to encourage young readers as they walk the trails.

"Pop-Up Naturalist" is being converted to a pandemic-friendly format. Look

Programs like Tales on Trails will be returning in 2021.

for signs along the trails that highlight features related to a specific topic each month. Signs will describe nature facts, share identification tips, and challenges. The "Newlin Series" presentations will be held virtually once again. The "Public Archaeology" program will proceed with monthly excavation days open to public observation, but they will proceed without hands-on visitor participation.

The annual "Harvest Festival" will be held on October 2nd, making adjustments to our regular activities as needed based on health guidelines at that date. This year's event will also be held in collaboration with Visit Delco, PA to incorporate a modern food festival.

The beloved "Tavern Night" returns on November 6th. To maintain social distancing standards, we have scheduled two seatings, one at 4:30pm and the other at 7:30pm with a maximum of 25 people each. Masks will be worn by our staff and volunteers and will be required for guests when not seated at their tables. Register quickly as seats are selling fast!

Over the fall and winter, staff, volunteers, and contractors have been hard at work making repairs to the Visitor Center and Grist Mill in preparation for reopening. The public restrooms reopened in February. The Visitor Center is scheduled to reopen in June (dependent upon repairs and changes in safety regulations). Measures will be in place to protect the health of everyone. Masks will be required in buildings, social distancing will be maintained, and hand sanitizer is available upon entering the buildings. Timed tours of the Grist Mill will be offered at 11am and 2pm. They will be limited to 5 people per tour with masks and social distancing required.

Volunteers have been working hard both on site in small groups and remotely depending on the project. We will be continuing to work on trails, building repairs, and addressing damage to natural areas.

Expect construction throughout the property and buildings in 2021. We appreciate your understanding as repairs continue in the Visitor Center, Mill, Archive, and Cabin. Activity will resume on the Trimble Kitchen and Water Wheel after these projects are completed.

Trails will be closed periodically as we continue with repairs including upcoming work on the dam. We anticipate beginning the Frog Pond Expansion project once permits are obtained. Silt removal in the millrace and ponds will begin if a settlement and permits are finalized. Thank you for your patience as we continue to make these critical repairs!

Follow our Facebook page and check our website for updates!

Events will resume this fall with Harvest Festival and Tavern Night.

Progress will continue on repairs and restoration around the property.

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Newlin Grist Mill is grateful for the generous support of our sponsors, donors, and partners in 2020 who made it possible to serve our community in challenging times. Thank You!

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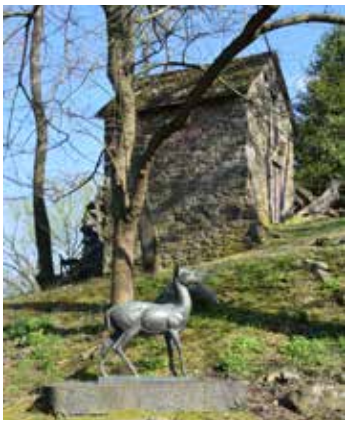

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Debbie Latch
Lori Lighton
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Heather Long
Janet Maffei
Jeanne Maloney
Amanda Manahan
Tom Maslanka
Meghann Matwichuk
Casey McCusker
Janice McGough
Frank McKelvey
Jerome McMullan
Bernard Miller
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Emily Pace
Joe Pakovits
Nicholas Pedulla
Pennsylvania Trust
Michael Poiesz
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Grants
ArtsAid
Concord Township
Hardy Plant Society Mid Atlantic Region
Lawrence Saunders Trust
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Society of Colonial Wars
Society for Industrial Archaeology
Society for the Preservation of Old Mills

**We apologize for any inaccuracies and welcome your corrections.*

Nicholas Newlin Foundation

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Glen Mills, PA 19342
Ph: 610-459-2359
info@newlingristmill.org

Check the website for current hours of operation and tour times.

www.newlingristmill.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Walks—last Saturday of the month;
Nov.-Mar. 9am, Apr.-Oct. 8am

Public Archaeology—3rd Saturday of the month;
May-July, Sept., Oct., 10am-3pm

Newlin Series—virtual, schedule TBA

Summer Discovery Camps—Jun. 28-Jul. 2, Jul. 19-23,
Aug. 2-6; 8:30am-12:30pm

Harvest Festival—Saturday, October 2nd
(historic demos, 10am-4pm; food festival, 11am-7pm)

Tavern Night –Saturday, November 6th
(first seating, 4:30-6:30; second seating 7:30-9:30)