

# Mill Racer

Volume XIII Summer Edition 2015

## New Addition to the Collection

We are so fortunate to have on display an artifact from the Occoquan Iron Works. Henry Selecman descendant, John Austin Savage Jr. and his family so generously gave us on loan a vise that was hand crafted by Henry Selecman. The vice measuring 40" long, was used by Henry during his years in Occoquan.

Selecman, a master forger, emigrated from Germany in the 1750's and according to family history was employed by John Ballendine to manage the iron works.

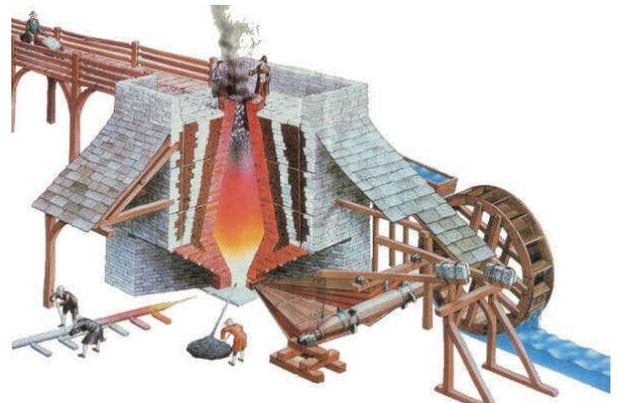
The Occoquan Works were productive enough that in 1758 George Washington ordered 3 tons of iron for Fort Loudon.

Walter Smoot, a 15 year old whose Grandfather and Uncle resided in Occoquan wrote the following for the Washington Post on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1916 after a visit to town.

"..we came to the head gates of the race. Directly below us is the site of the iron foundries. We note the great sea wall made of enormous boulders built to protect these iron works from damage from ice or flood in the river on which it projects....It was then by the falls of Occoquan Creek, on the left bank going toward the source, were located some foundries.....Quantities of iron ore can be seen today strewn about the place where they used to be, and up to very few years ago there still remained on the site of one of them an immense iron hammer resembling in size and weight a modern pile driver. Here it is said that a large number of the cannon used in the revolutionary war were forged."



Above: Henry Selecman's hand crafted vise  
Below: The Savage family, daughter Shari, granddaughter Tyller, John Austin, his wife Alice and grandson Michael. Sara Lee Taylor on the far right.



Above: An iron furnace powered by water. Notice the giant bellows adding oxygen to raise the heat in the furnace. The molten iron flowed out into sand forms that resembled suckling pigs. Hence the term pig iron.

### Carbide Bunker

Inscribed with the date Jan 28, [19]14, this cement bunker was used to store carbide. Inexpensive but also prone to explosions, carbide was used for lighting in rural areas not served by electricity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Carbide and water were mixed to form acetylene gas that lit the streets of Occoquan.

### Occoquan Hotel Carriage Stone

Here, in front of the nineteenth century Occoquan Hotel, this granite carriage stone assisted travelers in and out of their horse drawn vehicles. The original building was destroyed in the 1916 Occoquan fire.

### Water Basin Gearwheel

This gearwheel is from one of the five water basins used at the Occoquan River Station water processing plant. Up to 40 million gallons of water were processed here on a daily basis from 1965-2009.



Above: 1960's aerial view of Occoquan indicating the location of the current Mill House Museum structure and the site of the eighteenth century iron works.

### June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Dedication

During our annual OHS membership meeting we dedicated the three historical markers that were placed this spring.

The markers for the 19<sup>th</sup> century carriage stone and the 20<sup>th</sup> century gearwheel are free standing. A plaque is in place on the 1914 carbide bunker.



Above: OHS Board Member Bobbie Frank & OHS President Shara Kundu cut the ribbon on the carbide bunker.

Following is the marker text for anyone who missed the Spring Newsletter.



Pictured above left to right; Rose Destefano, Alice Gardiner, OHS Vice-President John Amodea, Annette Riley, former OHS President, Kim Deal, Dolores Elder, Bobbie Frank, former OHS President Betty Strawderman, OHS President, Shara Kundu, Occoquan Mayor, Liz Quist, former Occoquan Mayor Earnie Porta, Stewart Christiano.

Photos above and to the left by Boyd Alexander

## Save The Date!



Join OHS for our fall fundraiser at the **Bottle Stop** located at 311 Mill Street in Occoquan on Tuesday evening, **September 29, 2015.**

Great wine and a fund raiser too, can't wait!

## Prince William Today

The June 12, 2015 edition of the *Prince William Today* contained a wonderful article by Aileen Streng titled, "Is that where you keep the witches?" The article features our new historical markers and the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mill House Museum. Below is a link to the article. If the link doesn't work just go to [www.insidenova.com](http://www.insidenova.com)

[http://www.insidenova.com/eedition/page-c/page\\_7335d8c9-53b7-546a-b744-62431198de67.html#page\\_025\\_c](http://www.insidenova.com/eedition/page-c/page_7335d8c9-53b7-546a-b744-62431198de67.html#page_025_c)

## Election of Board Members

The Board of the Occoquan Historical Society was elected at the June 11, 2015 membership meeting. Board members are as follows;

Boyd Alexander, Stewart Christiano, Kim Deal, Rose Destefano, Dolores Elder, Bobbie Frank, Alice Gardiner, Earnie Porta, June Randolph, Annette Riley, and Martha Roberts.

Officers will be elected at the next monthly meeting.

### Annual Dues

Thank you to everyone who has mailed in their dues, dropped them off at the museum or paid online. All the support has been wonderful!

If you haven't had the opportunity to pay your dues you can mail them to the address at the bottom of the page with a check payable to the **Occoquan Historical Society for \$20** or pay online through our web site; [www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)

**Thank you everyone!**



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