Plimoth Grist Mill

Plimoth Plantation’s newest exhibit, the Plimoth Grist Mill is a restored and fully functioning grist mill located on Town Brook in Plymouth, Massachusetts, only a few minutes away from Mayflower II and the waterfront. The mill is a reproduction of the 1636 mill built by the Pilgrims in Plymouth Colony, and construction was completed in 1970. Many of the parts used to make the mill were salvaged from a mill in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The parts date back to the mid to late 1800s, but still work efficiently in spite of their age.

After more than a decade of using wooden mortars to hand-grind corn, Plymouth authorized the construction of a water-powered corn grinding, or grist mill on the Town Brook in 1636. Colonist John Jenney was given permission to run the mill and to take a portion of the corn that was brought for grinding as a payment for his work. After his death in 1644, Jenney left the mill to his wife, Sarah. Sarah, and later their son, Samuel, ran the mill until 1683.

The Plimoth Mill is a working grist mill that grinds corn into cornmeal on 200 year old French Buhr millstones. Plimoth Plantation’s miller works Saturdays and Wednesdays from noon to 3 pm, giving guests a taste of the highly involved process that goes into creating cornmeal. During the rest of the week, guests are brought around the site by trained tour guides who, unlike our staff in the 17th-Century English Village and Mayflower II, are not restrained by the year 1627. They explain the history of the mill from 1636 onwards, discussing the effects local industry had on the environment as well as the steps being taken to preserve the ecology of the Town Brook area today.
Outside of the mill guests can observe the waterwheel, fourteen feet in diameter, divert power from the water of Town Brook to the mill. In early spring, guests can also see the annual herring run, where alewife herring scale Plimoth Mill’s two fishways in order to cross over the mill’s ten-foot dam. Inside the mill on the grinding floor, guests can look at the fifty-four inch diameter bed and runner stones, and see how they work together to mill the corn. Downstairs are the mill’s gears, including the large face gear and the smaller wallower gear (also known as a lantern gear due to its shape.) These gears take the raw power of the waterwheel and translate it into the driving force of the runner stones.

The bottom floor also features an exhibit gallery and a Museum Store. In the gallery, guests get a hands-on experience with grinding corn in mortars and pestles, tying miller’s knots and sifting corn to make cornmeal. In the store, guests can buy freshly ground, organic cornmeal straight from the Plimoth Mill, as well as books and other souvenirs.

Plimoth Grist Mill at Jenney Pond is located at 6 Spring Lane in Plymouth. Tickets can be purchased at the door for the museum’s regular admission price of $6.00 for adults and $4.50 for children (5-12). For more information please visit www.plimoth.org/calendar or call (508) 746-1622.

2014 Herring Run Festival Programming
Plimoth Plantation and Plimoth Grist Mill will host a multi-day Herring Run festival starting April 25 and continuing into Sunday, April 27.

April 25
On April 25, Plimoth Plantation will host a film and discussion event on herring migration on the eve of Herring Run Festival in the Museum’s Visitor Center. The event will feature a director’s cut screening of the *River Herring Migration Series* and discussion with the filmmaker and wildlife researchers, moderated by Cape and Islands NPR’s Steve Junker.

The evening starts at 7:00 p.m. with a reception, then the screening of a specially-selected director’s cut of the three-episode series. Following the film, guests will join the filmmaker and local environmental experts for a discussion of herring, the Town Brook Herring migration, and the efforts of the Town of Plymouth and other organizations to ensure the sustainability of herring in the face of complex environmental issues. The panel will include David Gould, Plymouth Department of Marine and Environmental Affairs; Eric Hutchins, NOAA Fisheries Biologist; Eric Derleth, USFWS Fish and Wildlife Biologist; and Nick Wildman, Priority Projects Coordinator Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration. The discussion will be moderated by WCAI’s Steve Junker.

Tickets are $12, $10 for Herring Run Festival Classic 5K Run and Walk participants, or $9 for Plimoth Plantation Members and can be purchased by calling (508) 746.1622 x8346.
April 26 & 27
The inaugural two-day Herring Run Festival at Plimoth Grist Mill will begin on Saturday, April 26, 2014 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Herring Run Festival will feature special hands-on activities for kids, live music, a local artisan marketplace, and the grist mill will be grinding organic cornmeal and sampe (grits) and sharing samples of crowd-favorite corn dishes.

The festival is a celebration of the wondrous and fleeting herring and the phenomenal spectacle of their spring migration. Guests can witness the herring run up Town Brook (Mother Nature permitting), visit with local scientists to learn about their efforts to restore the herring population, hear about dam removal projects, and help scientists collect data by counting herring. Attendees can also learn about (and meet) another fascinating and important resident of Town Brook–the American Eel.

About Plimoth Plantation
Plimoth Plantation is a 17th-century living history museum dedicated to telling the history of Plymouth Colony from the perspective of both the Pilgrims and the Native Wampanoag. Located less than an hour’s drive south of Boston in Plymouth, Massachusetts (Exit 4, Route 3 south) and 15 minutes north of Cape Cod, the Museum is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm, 7 days a week, from March 15 through December 1, 2014. Plimoth Plantation is a private, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit educational institution supported by admission fees, contributions, memberships and revenue from a variety of educational programs/dining/special events and Museum Shops. Plimoth Plantation is a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate and receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, private foundations, corporations and local businesses. For more information visit www.plimoth.org