

2021 McCormick Farm Mill Day

When Charles Wade Jr., previous owner of Wade's Mill in Raphine, contracted with the Shenandoah Valley AREC in 1998 to develop an operation manual for the 18th-century grist mill, he was determined to go beyond instructions to sharpen, level, and tram the stones. Wade urged Virginia Tech, the land-grant university now operating the historic McCormick Farm, to make the mill operational. "It is a beautiful piece of equipment and can tell a better story running than in static condition."

Wade's recommendation to provide plenty of water to run the mill will be on display at the Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center, McCormick Farm's 15th Annual McCormick Farm Mill Day on

Saturday, October 2nd, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In a 1988 letter to John E. Wells, an architectural historian, William McClure, then superintendent of the farm, states that the mill, constructed just prior to 1800, "furnished flour and meal to the McCormicks and their neighbors" for over 50 years. When the need for home milling diminished, the building "served as a slave dwelling, tenant house, and storage place" according to McClure.

The historic mill was restored to its original purpose in 1937, and again in 1998, from the same blueprints. Specially selected Virginia white pine was used in both renovations of the wheel. The mill is an overshot wheel design, with water flowing over the top into buckets, creating an experience that one staff member has called "similar to the feeling of being on an old boat, with the wood creaking and the water splashing." On Mill Day, Glenn Wilson, of Raphine, Virginia, will operate the mill and answer questions about historical milling. Visitors may be tempted to heed the words of Charles Wade and seek the sorts of stories the mill itself has to tell about farm life in the valley for the past 200 years.

The Shenandoah Valley AREC's commitment to a strong tradition of agricultural innovation will be on display, with demonstrations of traditional crafts such as weaving and broom-making. Attendees will enjoy a hay ride through the research farm, witnessing modern day innovation in beef cattle production practices.

Music will be provided by Pat Cantrell and High Country, and the Raphine Volunteer Fire Company will be offering its legendary BBQ chicken. Hikers can enjoy the Marl Creek Interpretive Trail and its fall scenery, including a newly established meadow with native flowers for pollinators. There will be educational activities for school-age children.

The Virginia Tech Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center, McCormick Farm is located between Steeles Tavern and Raphine on Raphine Road. From Interstate 81, take exit 205 and go east on Raphine Road towards Steeles Tavern. McCormick Farm is located on the north side of Raphine Road at 128 McCormick Farm Circle.

This event is free of charge and open to the public. For more information or to request a vendor booth, contact the Shenandoah Valley AREC at (540) 377-2255.