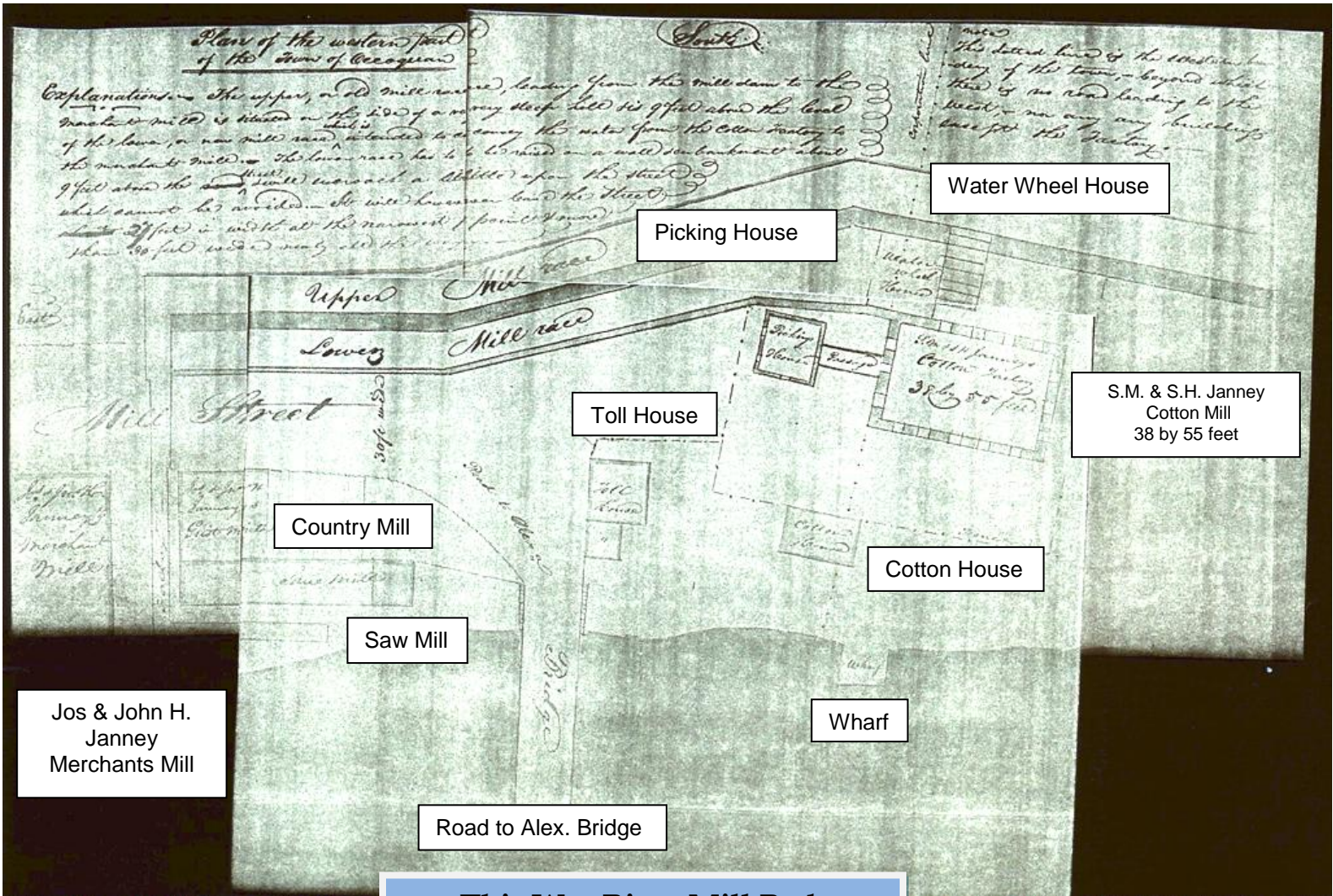


# The Mill Racer Winter 2016



## This Was River Mill Park Dolores Elder

Plan of the western part of the Town of Occoquan

Explanations- The upper or old mill race leading from the Mill St Merchants Mill is situated on the side of a very steep hill & is 9 feet above the level of the lower or new mill race which is intended to convey the water from the cotton factory to the merchant mill. The lower race has to be raised as a wall & embankment about 9 feet above the street & will encroach a little upon the street which cannot be avoided. It will however leave the street 27 feet in width at the narrowest point & more than 30 feet wide nearly all the way.

Note

The dotted line is the western boundary of the town-beyond which there is no road leading to the west, nor any buildings except the factory.

Above are the map and explanations included with the petition Samuel M. and Samuel H. Janney, owners of the Occoquan cotton mill, presented to the Virginia Assembly on December 12, 1828. The cotton mill built in 1828 was destroyed by arson in 1862. It stood on the property where **River Mill Park** is located. The bridge to Alexandria is where our **Nathaniel Ellicott** footbridge is today. Joseph and John Janney's Merchant's Mill was adjacent to the west side of our museum.

I have labeled some of the indistinct map features for ease in reading. Joseph and John H. Janney owned the country mill as well as the Merchants Mill. In between the picking house and the cotton factory was a passage. The forebay, between the two grist mills, is the section of mill race crossing the street to the mill wheel. Interestingly the saw mill is located on the north side of the country mill. That was probably the most convenient location to share the water wheel power.

The bridge was built by Nathaniel Ellicott in 1797 as a toll bridge and was purchased as such by the Janney's who advertised the grist mills for sale several times through the 1800's along with the profitable toll bridge. The toll house at its location would allow the toll keeper easy access to travelers.

The original mill race in the map drawing was most likely a wooden race that crossed over Mill Street above ground, allowing for traffic to flow underneath.



On the left is a painting titled, "Termination of a Mile Race on the Occoquan, State of Virginia". It was signed by the artist Luke Robbins and dated 1823. It sold at auction<sup>1</sup> in 2005 for \$4,780. Based on the terrain in the painting it may be the Town of Occoquan mill race. We know from descriptions of the race that it was extensive in length.

Below is the petition that included the above map and explanations that were presented to the Virginia Assembly. Listed are signatures gathered

from supporters of the new mill race. Mason Weems is the son of Parson Mason L. Weems, author of "The Life and Memorable Actions of George Washington".

*To the Senate and House of Delegates of the State of Virginia*

*The petition of S.M. & S.H. Janney respectfully requests-*

*That your petitioners are now erecting a Cotton Manufactory at Occoquan Prince William County Virginia, and that owing to the peculiar situation of the ground through which the water course passes, it is found necessary in making a race to convey the water from the factory to the Merchants and Country Mills of Joseph and John H. Janney, to encroach a little upon one of the streets of the said Town of Occoquan which was laid out in conformity with an Act of Assembly passed the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1804.----- This location of the mill race will however produce no inconvenience to traveling in the said street, as the distance is very short and the street is more than wide enough for the waggons to pass each other.*

The inhabitants of the Town of Occoquan and the neighbors in Prince William & Fairfax County have given their consent and approbation to the making of the within mentioned Mill Race as is shown by their signatures hereunto annexed-

*Your petitioners would therefore respectfully pray that a Law may be passed, authorizing the location of the said mill race.*

*Sam M Janney*

*Sam H Janney*

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<sup>1</sup> Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneers, Milford, CT.

We the undersigned Inhabitants of Prince William & Fairfax Counties & neighbors or residents of the Town of Occoquan-hereby certify that we give our consent and approbation to the making of the mill race in the forgoing petition.

Michael Cleary  
 Jos. Janney  
 Thomas  
 Mason L. Weems  
 Jos. Foster  
 John Morgan  
 Peyton Reid  
 W.R. Selecman  
 William Selecman  
 Saml H. Fisher

James B. Blys  
 Peter Thimmon  
 Jos. M. Skinner  
 Jos. Reeves  
 Daniel C. Lee  
 Warhburn Arrington  
 Gaylor Arrington  
 John H Jackson  
 Thompson W. Brotett  
 Sanford Beach

Hancock Lee  
 B Haislip  
 Henry Selecman  
 Wm Maddox  
 Isacerdi Cox  
 John A Copeland  
 H Wood  
 William Beach  
 John Woodyard  
 Wm Lindsay

John D. Mills  
 James Peter?  
 John Bryant  
 Thomas  
 John Selecman  
 James Douran  
 George Selecman  
 John Underwood  
 Wm. B. Lynn

The above article originally appeared in the June/July 2007 OHS newsletter. It is edited as necessary with explanations about the park property. When *River Mill Park* opens this spring we can imagine the noise of the cotton mill, ships at the wharf and the roar of the water wheels as we walk the path along the beautiful and historic Occoquan.

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**Cotton Factory Day Book**  
*Dolores Elder*

A few years ago my husband and I stopped at the Library of Virginia on one of our road trips. My ever patient husband held open the 1836-1841 daybook<sup>2</sup> from Samuel M Janney’s cotton works and turned pages as I took over 100 digital photos. The daybook included transactions related to the cotton works and copies of some of Janney’s correspondence. Below are a few selections from the daybook pages.

On October 22, 1836 Janney paid an insurance premium of \$201 to the Franklin Insurance Company of Philadelphia. This covered the cotton works for \$10,000 and Samuel paid 50¢ to the Bank of Potomac for issuing the check.

10 Mo. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1836

*S M & S H Janney*  
*Remitted to Franklin Ins. CO. Phila. For prems Ins. On Factly 10,000\$*

	201
<i>Pd. Bk. Potoc. \$ for check</i>	.50
	201.50

\*\*\*\*\*

A reoccurring theme through the daybook is Samuel’s concern over his finances. We know from his memoirs he never felt he was meant to be an entrepreneur and was happy to finally sell his cotton works to Joseph Janney Jr., president of the Occoquan Manufacturing Co. Below are excerpts from a letter to creditors W Fowler & Son dated May 24, 1837. Listed within the correspondence are the assets and debts of the cotton works. I wasn’t able to decipher all of the entries but included those that I felt fairly confident about. Towards the bottom of the daybook page Janney also writes about some of the charges he wasn’t aware of that were connected to new machinery.

*Occoquan 5 Mo 24’ 1837*

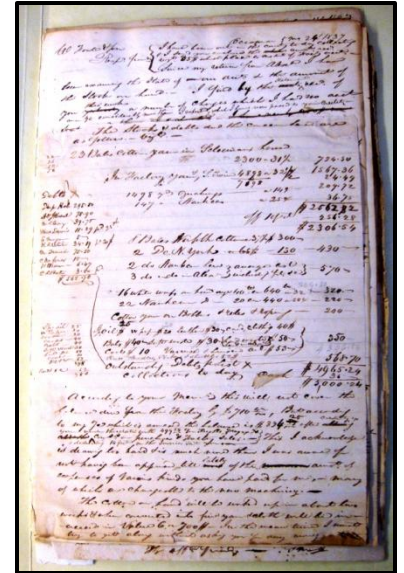
*W Fowler & Son*

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<sup>2</sup> Library of Virginia Call # 24678

Respected Friend

I have been out in the county today collecting & I send you enclosed the amount rec. 35\$ which place to credit of Factly. Acct. Since my return from Alex. I have been examining the state of our accts. And the amount of the stock on hand. I find by the statement rcd of you this week a number of charges which I had no acct. and considerably more than I expected which I have never posted to your credit. The stock and debt and the corrections are as follows-



One of the assets Janney lists are 23 bales of cotton yarn stored at the Selecman warehouse valued at \$724.50. In the factory some of his assets are cotton yarn on bobbins worth \$200, 8 bales of Norfolk cotton worth \$300, and factory yarns and twine valued at \$2306.54. There are 147 yards of Nankeen (cotton cloth buff in color) cloth valued at \$36.75 and 1498 yards of Osnaburg (coarse fabric made from flax or flax and jute mix) cloth worth \$209.72.

Among the unpaid accounts he lists are M. Cleary \$39.75, Deep Hole Plantation \$295.80, B. Brawner \$6.47, M. French \$75.50 and A & J Russell for \$78.90.

Several of Samuel's costs for the month were whale oil \$25, w paper \$20, leather \$30, cards \$40, bats \$40, coal \$10, varnish and linseed oil \$53. Separately listed were the costs for reeds, needles, shuttles and pickers for \$52. These combined costs came to \$350.

In summary Samuel listed his total debts at \$568.70, his assets \$4965.24 and cash collected that day \$35, for an asset total of \$5000.24.

At the end of the ledger page Samuel Janney writes;

According to your ?? this will not cover the balance due from the factory by \$710.40.... but the cotton on hand will be worked up in about two weeks and when converted into fine yarn & cloth will be increased in value 6 or 700\$- In the mean time I will try and get along without asking you for any money.

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An entry from August 29, 1837 was a letter concerning longtime Occoquan resident and businessman, Hugh Hammill. Over the ensuing years Hugh's endeavors would include wheelwright, ship builder and sawmill operator.

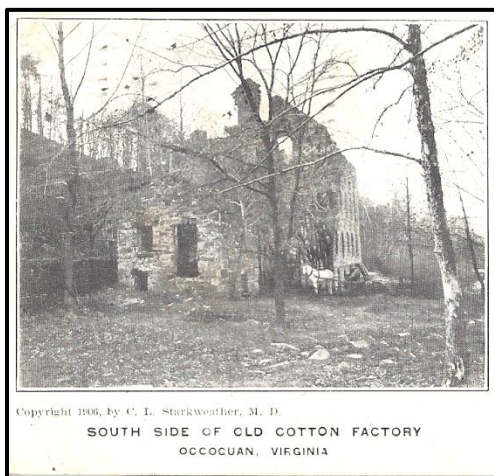
Occoquan 8 Mo 29' 37

John Brooks  
Esteemed Friend

My neighbor H Hammil goes to Balt. To buy Iron & may not have funds enough with him to buy all he will want. I consider him very safe. He is an industrious man and is doing a good business. He does all the smith work of the factory & if thou feels any hesitation about letting him have the iron I will be responsible to the amount of 50\$ if required.

Your Friend,  
S M Janney

In 1837 Occoquan resident Hugh Hammill was 27 years old, his son Edward was just an infant. Edward would grow up to open the Commercial Hotel (206 Union Street) after the Civil War. From the 1850 census we know where Hugh lived in Occoquan. The Underwood family lived at 314 Mill Street (Town Hall's location), then following east down the south side of Mill Street we have the Hugh Hammill family, the Robert Allen family and next Maria Selecman at approximately 306-308 Mill Street. Unrelated to the cotton mill but an interesting fact from the 1850 census was that the Selecman property was operated as a hotel. Maria's son Joseph, aged 15, was listed as a landlord. It was surprising to see this family property operated as a hotel at this early date. Maria is the only adult living at the property. Could she have lost a spouse and turned to operating a hotel or boarding house to support the family? In the mid 1870's-1900 time frame the property was the Alton hotel operated by Lycurgus Ledman.



On the left, a 1906 postcard of the cotton mill ruins.

To the right is the top of the cotton mill ruins. The country mill, merchant's mill and miller's office (museum) are on the north side of Mill Street.



**Remember When...  
The Garden Kitchen**

The Garden Kitchen, café, restaurant & bakery was located at 404 Mill Street in historic Occoquan from 1990 until 2013. Housed in an old dwelling built about 1860, this structure has been a store, home and meeting place ever since. The old house is a notable example of tongue and groove construction and has held together without nails for over 150 years!

Mr. Hammill, the building's owner in the late 1800's, use to regale his customers with fascinating stories of the Civil War. Around the turn of the century in addition to dispensing medicine from Occoquan's first pharmacy located on the main floor, Dr. Frank Hornbaker lived and practiced in the building. He married his wife Grace Clarke Hornbaker in 1914. Here they raised a family and Grace continued living in the house after the doctor's death in 1937.



Marie-Claire and Shara in 1993

In the heart of Occoquan's old district, the Kundus, Sharadindu (Shara) originally from Kolkata, India and Marie-Claire, originally from Chicoutimi, Quebec, Canada, owned and operated the Garden Kitchen. Having three distinct seating areas, the upper dining room overlooked Mill Street and was furnished with white wicker and colonial furniture. The main dining area was white and yellow and

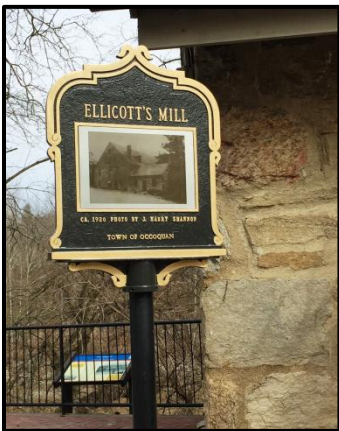
had an early American flair. The third gathering room had intimately arranged seating in the style of a French café. The narrow stone and brick stairway entrance opened to a beautiful tiered outdoor terrace that was bordered by colorful azalea bushes and flowering dogwood trees. Hidden at the top of the lovely aged brick passage, the Garden Kitchen was a delightful discovery for everyone!

Under the stewardship of the Kundus, the original sandwich & pie shop turned into a bona-fide café, restaurant, bakery and fine catering enterprise. Southern Living magazine wrote that “owner Marie-Claire bakes so many pies that she dreams about baking pies”. The Garden Kitchen where dessert was the best part of the meal, Marie-Claire’s sinful chocolate cake, fruit and cream pies, brownies, cookies, cinnamon rolls and many other delectable’s were main attractions! Cream of broccoli soup & the chicken salad sandwich with crunchy bacon and juicy tomatoes on homemade bread were signature items for lunch. A very popular breakfast & lunch spot for more than two decades, the Garden Kitchen was frequented primarily by local residents and business people. The restaurant provided more than 50 meals to the White House Press Corps during President Barack Obama’s 2012 visit to Pfitzner Stadium, in Prince William County. Well known visitors included Virginia Governor Tim Kaine and Hollywood actor Jimmy Smits.

For 23 years a sense of history and community existed at the Garden Kitchen under Shara and Marie-Claire’s stewardship. In April, 2013, the Town of Occoquan presented the Walter D. Bailey Volunteer Award to Shara & Marie-Claire Kundu for their service to the community!

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### Ellicott’s Mill Historical Marker



Our Ellicott’s Mill historical marker has returned. In November the marker was sent off to Lake Shore Industries in Erie, PA for restoration. LSI was the original manufacturer of this style of informative markers you see through Occoquan. Dating from 2000, the markers are showing wear. OHS adopted this marker that sits by the corner of the museum, covering the costs of the restoration. The marker once again reflects the pride we feel in the richness of Occoquan history!

If you are interested in adopting a marker for restoration contact OHS for information at: [curator@occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:curator@occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)

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### Reading is Fundamental

*Reading is Fundamental* or RIF provides free books to many children in Northern Virginia, including our own PWC. In the 2015-16 time frame they have provided 7,176 free books in PWC alone.

To bring awareness to the program and raise funds RIF is sponsoring a 5K fun run, *Book it for Books*, on April 30 at Burke Lake Park. OHS is happy to be one of the sponsors for the event.

This excerpt from the RIF material provides a little more background on the program: “In our 40 year history RIF of NOVA has supplied more than one million books to children. As part of the

nation's largest children's literacy non-profit organization, RIF of NOVA provides motivational activities to encourage a passion for reading at book distribution celebrations where children also pick the perfect book from a display of carefully selected books chosen specifically for that site. Book ownership and the promotion of literacy are instrumental to the future educational and life success of children....."

Consider signing up for the 5k fun run or the 1 mile walk in support of RIF. Let's have a team Occoquan and show our support for reading and fitness. Visit the RIF web site at <http://www.rifnova.org/> for all the details. Hope to see you on April 30!

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## Mill House Volunteer

We are delighted to have Bethany Shoop, a George Mason University student working with us at the museum. Bethany is developing an educational program for children that will include discovery bags that can be signed out at the Mill House Museum. Through activities children will have fun learning about the various birds and plant life along the river, studying the river tides and becoming familiar with a compass. These discovery totes should be available at the museum when *River Mill Park* opens this spring.

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Occoquan River, February 25, 2016  
After the rain

### New at the Mill House

At the museum shop is a new ornament featuring a Boyd Alexander photograph of the Christmas tree in the gazebo at Mamie Davis Park. Also new is a ball cap with the Occoquan Historical Society logo. Both items make great gifts or you can treat yourself!

The museum will be open until 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, Memorial Day to Labor Day. These new hours are to accommodate visitors to Occoquan during the summer months.



Mill House Museum  
PO Box 65, 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125  
[www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)  
703-491-7525  
Open Sunday through Saturday 11-4  
Saturdays & Sundays 11-5 Memorial Day-Labor Day