



# Ralston Cider Mill Museum

336 Mendham Road West  
Mendham, New Jersey 07945



## In This Issue

- Mill Community In Covid Era
- Spotlight on Historic Machinery
- Loughlin Descendents Reconnect with Ralston Cider Mill

**Ralston Cider Mill Press**  
**Published by**  
**Ralston Cider Mill Museum**  
*An Operational Cider Mill*

### EDITORS

Raymond Nadaskay AIA  
 James Malchow

**PRINTING DONATED BY**  
 Trukmann's Reprographics

# Ralston Cider Mill Press

FALL 2020



## Cider Mill Friends Step Up in Time of Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many people and businesses to come up with new ways to live and work in 2020. The farming, milling, and distilling world, however, was able to turn to old ways to find its path forward.

As coronavirus created shortages on safety equipment, local distilleries sprang into action. Laird's Applejack distillery in Colt's Neck, New Jersey, and Claremont Distilled Spirits in Fairfield were among the many distilleries that began producing hand sanitizer. Claremont Distilleries, which visited the Ralston Cider Mill for a lecture in 2019, produced thousands of gallons of sanitizer (190 proof alcohol mixed with aloe gel) and distributed it to first responders and the general public free of charge.



Claremont Distilleries distributed thousands of gallons of free hand sanitizer produced at their Fairfield distillery.

Local farms also rose to the unprecedented challenge of meeting the demand for fresh food during a time when people were staying away from public places as much as possible. Alstede Farms in Chester required face coverings, implemented special hours for at-risk and senior shoppers, and implemented other protocols like online shopping and curb side pickup to keep fresh foods within reach of even the most distanced shoppers.

"We very quickly pivoted, and our team did a great job of getting our entire farm store listed online," said Kurt Alstede. "So today we now have the capability of doing curbside and local delivery. We can do local delivery to one of our many farmers' markets and during the height of the season, we were doing as many as four to five hundred curbsides a day."



Sturminster Newton Mill in Dorset, England

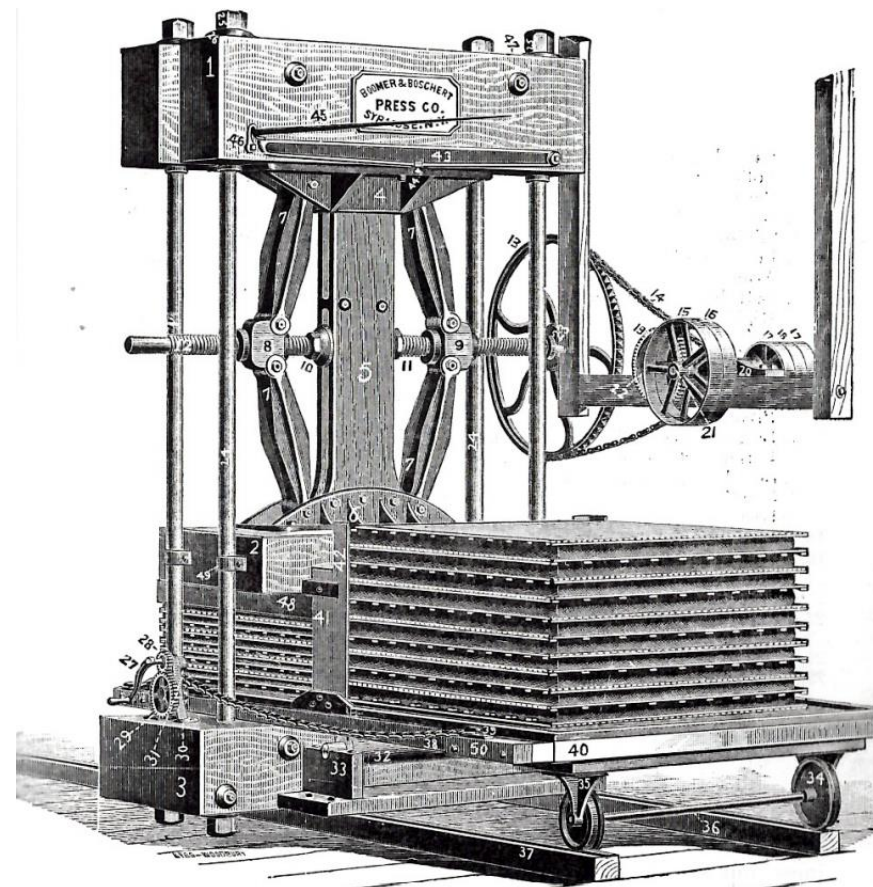
### Medieval Mill Reawakens Amid Covid-19 Shutdown

The can-do spirit inspired by the coronavirus pandemic was not limited to the United States alone. In England, a shortage of flour prompted a 1000-year-old gristmill to begin grinding grain into flour for the first time in decades. Volunteers at the Sturminster Newton Mill, which dates to the year 1016, said "When Covid-19 struck, all of the local shops ran out of flour very quickly.... We had a stock of good-quality milling wheat and the means and skills to grind it into flour, so we thought we could help."\*

The noble work of the Sturminster Newton Mill millers can provide a lesson for preservationists in the United States. As our museum keeps the Ralston Cider Mill working in healthy restored condition, there is no telling when and how it will be of use to future generations. "It's like stepping back to an earlier way of life, where power was harnessed naturally and without pollution," said miller Imogen Bittner. "It's good to see that the old mill can rise to the challenge."

\*Quotes from *Smithsonian Magazine*, "One-Thousand-Year-Old Mill Resumes Production to Supply Flour Amid Pandemic"

## Your donation keeps us pressing on!



Boomer & Boschert Knuckle Joint Press

## News Program Connects Loughlin Descendent with Family History

A Sunday Morning news segment about Laird's Applejack, America's oldest distilling company, prompted Pennsylvania resident James Conroy to look into his own family's distilling history.

Conroy is a descendent of Thomas Loughlin, who founded the Ralston Cider Mill in 1910. After searching online for information about Loughlin, Conroy contacted the Museum.

While we were delighted to share everything we know about Mr. Loughlin with his family, we were also eager to learn more information from them. The more we know about the mill and its history, the better we can preserve it and share it with the public.



Glass decanters of "Tiger Applejack" and "Licking River Rye" from the family collection of James Conroy, a descendent of Ralston Cider Mill founder Thomas Loughlin

## Socially Distant, Cider Mill Welcomes Enthusiastic Visitors in 2020

*"Just wanted to drop you a note to say thank you again for the tour of the cider mill! It was very informative, interactive and exciting. My children haven't stopped talking about it since we left. The cider was certainly delicious and a very nice touch at the end. Thank you again!"*



Uwais, age 10, and his siblings, Eesa, 8, and Unaysah 3, all enjoyed their visit to the mill.



The Ralston Cider Mill was closed for the spring tour season during the height of the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. As autumn approached, museum volunteers and trustees were uncertain about holding any programming. With our annual Pressing Day event cancelled, we chose to proceed only with guided mill tours, limited to one group at a time by appointment.

To our surprise and delight, a record number of visitors toured the mill over the course of the fall.

Visitors were required to wear masks indoors and to maintain appropriate distance from the tour guides.

The bump in visits was also noted by neighboring apple farms, who said that they had never experienced such large numbers of people looking for a chance enjoy fall activities and get outdoors.

Tours by appointment were a great success for the Ralston Cider Mill, and will continue year round going forward. To book your tour, visit [www.ralstoncidermill.org](http://www.ralstoncidermill.org).

## Historic Machinery Spotlight: Boomer & Boschert Knuckle Joint Press



Dating from about 1875, the 12 foot tall wood and metal Knuckle Joint Press, or "scissor press," is among the oldest pieces of equipment in use at the mill today.

It was used in another distillery in Mendham prior to being installed in the Ralston Cider Mill.

This model was surpassed by later innovations like the three-speed gear press. Nevertheless, this machine impresses visitors by its size, design, and longevity.

## Canadian Museum Turns to Ralston Cider Mill for Help Restoring Press

In November, 2020, the Ralston Cider Mill was contacted about providing technical support for the restoration of a Boomer and Boschert scissor press in Ontario, Canada. The press was used at the Port Dover Vinegar Works from the 1890s until 1920. After sitting outdoors for the last hundred years, most of its wooden components have rotted away. The present owners hope it can be restored by the Walpole Antique Farm Machinery Association in Jarvis, Ontario.

The Ralston Cider Mill's staff was pleased to provide documentation on Boomer and Boschert Presses, as well as measurements from our scissor press to assist in its restoration.



Weathered remains of a Boomer & Boschert press in Port Dover, Ontario, Canada



## Your Donation

will insure continued restoration and provide operating funds for the coming year. Thank you for your support. Please use the return envelope to mail your donation. You can also donate online at [www.ralstoncidermill.org](http://www.ralstoncidermill.org) and support the mill through AmazonSmile.

The Ralston Cider Mill is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

## We Are Grateful

for support from The 1772 Foundation, A.P. Kirby, Jr. Foundation, The Morris County Heritage Commission, Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund, New Jersey Cultural Trust, and the ongoing generosity of Foerster Landscaping and Alstede Farms.

## Volunteers

are the core of the Museum's team. We are happy to train new volunteers to lead tours and bring the mill experience to the public. Please indicate your interest in volunteering on the enclosed envelope.

## Board of Trustees

John O'Hara, President  
Kurt W. Alstede  
Raymond Nadaskay, AIA

Carolyn Daly, Esq., Emeritus  
Steve Freeman, Emeritus

James Malchow, Director

## Contact the Mill

Ralston Cider Mill  
336 Mendham Road West  
Mendham, NJ 07945  
[info@ralstoncidermill.org](mailto:info@ralstoncidermill.org)

[www.ralstoncidermill.org](http://www.ralstoncidermill.org)