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## **Friends of Connetquot Receive \$66,000 Grant from the Robert D. L. Gardiner Foundation**

Oakdale, NY --- The Friends of Connetquot Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the Friends were awarded a Robert D. L. Gardiner Foundation matching grant of \$66,000 to support efforts to restore the Nicoll Grist Mill located in the Connetquot River State Park Preserve. The Mill, which dates to the early 1700's, is an iconic structure and one of the few mills in the nation whose mechanisms are still based on the original Norse design utilizing a horizontal wheel to grind.

The Friends have been spearheading the restoration of the Mill. To date, work on the foundation, framing, shingles and doors has been completed. The Friends will utilize the matching grant from the Robert D. L. Gardiner Foundation to reinstall the main drive mechanism, horizontal wheel and mill stones. Once complete, the Mill will be a museum dedicated to increasing the public's understanding of the social and industrial history of Long Island and the Preserve's role within that framework.

Friends Board Chair Robert Labuski, speaking on behalf of the Board, has said that the Friends "are very grateful to the Robert D. L. Gardiner Foundation for their constant support of the Mill restoration. Their generosity is allowing us to finish the Mill restoration, which, when complete, will be a new cultural resource for the residents of Long Island."

**About the Friends of Connetquot:** The Friends of Connetquot, a 501(c) (3) organization, is dedicated to the preservation, conservation, and continuation for future generations of the Connetquot River State Park Preserve. In over fifteen years, the Friends have successfully completed many projects at the Preserve to protect and improve its historic structures--such as the Club House where they funded the renovation and restoration of an original bedroom and commissioned a fire safety study for the installation of a fire suppression system. Other projects include the acquisition of the South Side Sportsmen's Club archive, the reconstruction of the Rainbow Bridge, installation of new interpretive signs, and the development of a self-guided tour along Park trails through the use of a cellular phone. Their programs, such as the *Friends Lecture Series*, present topics related to the Friends' projects and the Preserve's history and natural resources by noted speakers, free of charge, to the general public. The Friends have produced educational videos (available via You Tube and the Friends' website) that narrate the Preserve's historical and environmental story. The Friends are continually striving to help maintain the integrity of the Preserve's grounds and historic structures and to add unique programs to enhance the experience of its visitors.

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