Old Stone Mill
National Historic Site

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Welcome to the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site!

The Old Stone Mill is the only stone gristmill in Canada designated a National Historical Site. This designation recognizes that the mill was fully automated in 1810. Fully automated means that all the machinery was run by the waterwheel and that only one person was needed to run the entire mill. A second reason for this designation was the mill's Georgian-style architecture, such as the arched windows, uncharacteristic for an industrial building of that time.

What is a gristmill?

A gristmill was an important industry in the community. The gristmill's function was to grind grain into flour. Without a gristmill, farmers had to grind grain themselves using different methods such as the mortar and pestle and the hand-quern. The construction of a gristmill represented prosperity, security and even wealth for the community. It was also a meeting place for area residents.

First Floor

The first floor was where farmers would unload the grain. This was the area of the mill where the millstones ground the grain and where the millstones were dressed; the waterwheel is also accessible from the first floor. As well, grain quality was checked, and the flour was bagged. It was the beginning and the end of the automatic milling process.

The Front Door

The front door of the mill is the original from 1810. It still has the Norfolk type handle and the original iron lock box. What is believed to be the original signature of William Jones, the owner of the mill at the time of construction, can be seen above the door.

Weigh Scales

The miller would have brought the bags of grain (from the farmer) through the door and weighed them on the scales. The bags were then emptied into a bin below the floor.

Grain Elevators

From the bin, elevators, which consisted of buckets on a canvas belt, would have taken the grain to the third floor to start its way through the machinery. The motion of the waterwheel was the source of power for the movement of the elevators, as it is for all the machinery in the mill.

The Waterwheel

The original breast shot waterwheel was located in the wheel pit. The wheel is 10 feet in diameter and is close in size to the original waterwheel. It is important to note that this is an indoor waterwheel, an uncommon, but very beneficial design.

The Millstones

The millstones were used to cut grain into grist. The best stone to grind hard Canadian wheat was buhr stone. The bottom stone remains stationary while the top stone rotates without touching the stone below.

Automatic Mill

The automatic mill was invented by Oliver Evans and appeared in his book published in 1795. You will notice that once the grist was brought into the mill, it need not be touched again until it was bagged.

Mill Owners

Between 1810 and 1963, nine mill owners left their mark on the mill, each adapting the mill to the economic challenges and the developing technologies of their time.

Flour Chutes

A board placed near the end of a chute acted as a valve to control the flow of flour during production. Once a bag had been filled with flour, the miller would slide the board into place, stopping or redirecting the flow into a barrel until he was able to slide a new bag into place to continue bagging.

Rats in the Mill

This valve was also used to help control rat problems common in a mill. The grain chutes were smoothed by the moving grist and grain passing through, so once a rat got in, it could not get out. With this board in place, the rats would gather until the miller, or his assistant, would remove the board, before starting up operations, and the rats would fall into a bag and be disposed of.

Turbine Shed

You have now moved from the original 1810 mill into the 1860 turbine shed, added by Walter Denaut. This was added to accommodate two 48 inch Swain turbines. Turbines used less water flow to run the same amount of machinery and required less maintenance than the older, wooden waterwheel. As a consequence, the original waterwheel was removed and a new race way was constructed for the turbines.

Belt Driven Millstones

The two holes in the wall between the turbine shed and the waterwheel are where a belt was placed to run the millstones off the turbine.

Roller Mill

When George Haskins became owner of the mill in 1893 he replaced the millstones with the roller mill. The roller mill took less space, wasted less grist, and made finer flour with smaller quantities of less popular bran and middlings.

Grain Grinder

Hasting Steele took over the mill in 1913. The need for the mill was diminishing and the mill no longer operated constantly. Steele converted the mill into a feed store. The grinder continued to be used to grind winter wheat into feed.

The Delta Mill Society

Hasting Steele had the foresight to deed the mill to four individuals in 1963 for $1.00. These four individuals founded the Delta Mill Society. The Delta Mill Society is a not-for-profit organization that owns, manages and continues to operate the mill as a museum.

Second Floor

The second floor's main purpose was to house the bolter and storage bins for the cleaned grain. The Bolter separated the grist into the bran, middlings and flour. Walter Denaut also had his office on this floor, where he would keep records and accounts, and where customers could gather to escape from the dust and talk about business or take in a game of checkers.

The Miller's Room

The miller's room was added by Walter Denaut. It is arranged to be representative of items typically found in a miller's office and not necessarily of a given time period. The cubbies in the desk were an organization system to separate each client's accounts.

When the mill was prosperous, the mill was run constantly, which is why there is a bed in the miller's room. The bed in this room is a rope bed; instead of slats, the mattress was supported by ropes.

You will notice that the room has plaster walls and a layer across the floor; this was used to keep out the dust that was found throughout the mill. Without dust, the miller could safely light the stove without fear of the dust igniting.

The Many Miller's Rooms

The miller's room was typically used as an office, for the mill's accounts, but over the years, it had several other functions. On two separate occasions during the 1920's and 1940's the miller's room was also used as a cobbler shop, and was occupied by one of the cobblers.

Third Floor

The third floor was very important to the functioning of an automatic mill. The third floor housed the smutter and the hopper boy. The smutter used a fan to help knock and blow away dirt, stalk or smut (a type of fungus) that was in the grist. The hopper boy raked the ground grist to cool it, so that it could continue through the mill.

5 Sided Ridge Beam

The 5 sided, 60 ft ridge beam (located at the peak of the roof) is made from a single tree. This, along with the other engineering features of the roof system, is credited for keeping the mill building standing since 1810.

Lath and Plaster

Rats were a constant challenge in a mill. The miller would store his flour on the third floor in a rodent-proof room. Rodent proofing was achieved by using lath and plaster on the ceiling and the walls.

The Delta Mill Society

Thank you for touring the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask one of our volunteers or staff members.

If you have not yet done so, please take a moment to visit the Museum of Industrial Technology located in the Old Town Hall building on the street behind the mill. Both museums are operated by the Delta Mill Society, which is a not-for-profit organization, committed to preserving the Old Stone Mill NHS and sharing the rich, industrial history of the Delta area.

Donations are greatly appreciated

Please return this booklet to the front desk.