



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Fall/Winter 2021

Recognition of the Old Stone Mill

Unquestionably the Best Building of Its Kind in Upper Canada

- Statistical Account of Upper Canada, 1817

One of the earliest surviving mills in Ontario, a fine example of early Canadian architecture and a reminder of the pioneer industrial development of eastern Ontario

- paraphrase of our National Historic Site of Canada designation, 1970

An exceptional example of Georgian industrial architecture, the Old Stone Mill has played an important role in Delta's history—first as a catalyst for its development and now as a guardian of its history.

- Ontario Association of Architects, 2021

Since it was first built in 1810-11, the Old Stone Mill has stood out as an exceptional building. This summer, we were very pleasantly surprised to be contacted by the Ontario Association of Architects to let us know that the Old Stone Mill had been selected as a 2021 Queen's Park Pick, one of 9 in all of Ontario, selected from over 50 submissions. The recommendation to the OAA was made by our local MPP, Steve Clark.

The OAA's initial interest, as with many people, was the striking architecture of the mill. But as we pointed out to the OAA, the importance of the mill goes far beyond its architecture, it goes to the reason for the design of the mill and the mill's role in the early development of this part of Ontario. So we fed them information about this, including Ken Watson's 2018 book "Building the 1810 Old Stone Mill in Delta, Ontario." That made the OAA aware of the deeper significance of the mill, including its international significance as an Oliver Evans' automatic mill. They, similar to many people, became fascinated with this important aspect of the mill as they learned more about it.

In the end they did a very nice write-up about the mill. You'll find a [link](#) to their article on the home page of our website. They also recognized the Delta Mill Society's primary role with the mill as a guardian of its history – which we strive to do in all our work. We hope that with the Queen's Park Pick, more people in Ontario and around the world will become aware of the incredible heritage significance of the Old Stone Mill.



A Canadian Stamp

On our 200th anniversary in 2010, we were featured on a Canadian stamp. This photo shows Anna Greenhorn holding the presentation plaque given to us by Canada Post in January 2010.

Art Shaw—Lifetime Member

At our AGM on September 20, the Board of Directors of the Delta Mill Society recognized the exceptional volunteer contributions of Art Shaw by awarding him a lifetime membership in the Delta Mill Society.



President Cathy Livingston presents Art with his Lifetime membership at our 2021 AGM.

Art has been a tireless volunteer with the Delta Mill Society since 1985. It was Art who led us through the massive restoration of the Old Stone Mill from 1999-2003. That major achievement alone would have warranted this recognition, but Art, a highly active volunteer before and after that time, continues his volunteerism with the Delta Mill Society to this day—now leading the Blacksmith's Shop project and taking on part of the Hopper Boy project.

Art translates his love of history to tangible actions. You can drive across the restored Lyndhurst Bridge thanks to Art. You can view the beautifully restored Old Stone Mill thanks to Art. Visitors can appreciate aspects of the 1810 mill through interactive displays inside the mill thanks to Art. In 2022, you'll be able to visit a rehabilitated Blacksmith's Shop thanks to Art.

This is just the tip of the heritage iceberg that is Art's volunteerism. For more information, have a look at our Fall/Winter 2017 newsletter (on our website) that had a Q&A article featuring Art.



On June 23, the Cheese Box Veneer Lathe finally exited the Driveshed.

Blacksmith's Shop Project

This project, led by Art Shaw, has seen good progress this summer. In our Spring/Summer 2021 newsletter there was an article detailing the history of this project and noting some of the roadblocks we've encountered in trying to move the project forward. Most of those roadblocks have now been cleared.

One roadblock was several tons of cheese box making equipment that was quite literally blocking the project. Art was able to find a new home for this equipment at the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum, but first we had a little problem, how to get this very heavy equipment out of the Driveshed?

The same principles that were used to move the stones that make up the pyramids in Egypt were applied to moving the 4+ ton cheese box veneer lathe out of the Driveshed – rollers, levers and brute force. It took a few days to do this with a group of volunteers led by Art. Thanks to Moel Benoit, Ken Watson, Lisa Martin, Barry Martin, Jared Hayes, John Cain, James Lolley, Al Robertson, Gordon French and PJ Livingston for their help.

Another roadblock was the need to meet building codes in all the work. While Art is doing the main design work, regulations require the hiring of an engineer to provide all the code compliant details. Finding such a person in these very busy construction times proved a challenge. Art was eventually able to find an engineer, who has now supplied Art with the final details needed to submit an application for a building permit.

Once that permit approval happens, we can then move ahead with the required electrical, carpentry and masonry work. Some of this will have to be done by

contractors, but Art hopes to have some of the work done by volunteers—trying to fit the entire project into our \$20,000 grant. The target is to have the building re-opened to the public with blacksmiths merrily hammering away, for our grand re-opening in May 2022.

President's Report

Well, that was certainly a quick summer and now we are at the beginning of November with the Christmas Season just around the corner. COVID restrictions are starting to be lifted and this is a good sign that we may be back to a 'new' normal by next spring, so the Directors are working on a celebratory grand re-opening on May 21, 2022.

We have lots of reasons to celebrate. We will celebrate opening to the public after being closed for the past 2 years, we will celebrate all the work we have done over the lockdowns and we will celebrate the fact that it is our 212th anniversary. We were planning a celebration for our 210th in 2020 but COVID got in the way of that. We will also celebrate the fact that the Old Stone Mill NHS, nominated by MPP Steve Clark, was chosen by the Ontario Association of Architects as one of their 2021 picks to be showcased at Queen's Park.

As I mentioned we have made a lot of progress since the spring. Even though we were closed to the public, we were able to hire 2 summer students and with extensive volunteer hours put in by our Directors we continued with our many projects.

Thanks to summer student William Brown for the work he did inside the Mill under the direction of Moel, Katherine, Anna and Ken. Work included painting many window sills and inside trim, installing new glass, helping with clean up, and setting up displays. With William's work the Old Stone Mill is looking better than ever.

Rebecca Rothwell was hired to continue the work on documenting our numerous collections and artifacts that was started last year, now approaching 1,000 pieces according to Director Sally Wanless. With private donor help we have managed to keep Rebecca on staff past her Canada Summer Job grant period, allowing her to continue this important work.

We also continued the work on the Drive Shed, thanks to the very professional and dedicated work of Art Shaw. The cheese lathe and related items were shipped to the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum in June, no small feat moving the 8,000 lb. piece of machinery with many hands at the task. Art managed to re-home several other pieces of non-mill equipment so the shed is now in the process of being converted to an improved Blacksmith Shop with 2 forges, a seating area and an iron display with interpretive signage. With the help of a private grant donation having this project completed for our grand re-opening in May, 2022, could be a reality.

On the last weekend in September we had the Old Stone Mill and the Old Town Hall open to the public as part of Delta Harvest Festival. At the hall, we had our Ginormous Used Book Sale, a partnership with the DMS and Rideau Lakes Public Library. Thanks to Liz, Lisa and Moel for their work in preparation and during the sale. The book sale normally takes place during our annual Maple Syrup Festival, which was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID. We still have a lot of books left and are planning another sale on Saturday, December 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. All books are sold by donation only and we split the proceeds with the Rideau Lakes Public Library.

During Harvest Festival weekend, the Old Stone Mill was open for self-guided tours and we had over 400 visitors come through over the 2 days. For many, it was their first visit to the mill. All were extremely impressed.

We continue to look for grant funding as we just received a 38% increase in our insurance costs. Of course even though we were shut down, we still have heat, hydro, phone, and internet services to pay for in addition to our very large insurance bill. We are fortunate to have some grant funding through the Township of Rideau Lakes and the provincial HODG grant. We have applied for the "Museums Assistance Program – Reopening Fund for Heritage Organizations" grant, but have yet to hear if we were successful with that application. Thanks to Sharon Okum for keeping track of our finances and making sure all the bills are paid.



2021 Seasonal Staff

William Brown and Rebecca Rothwell.

President's Note Continued ...

We thank you for your support in the past and hope you will continue supporting us through a membership and/or a donation. The Delta Mill Society is the caretaker of three significant heritage building in the village of Delta and the Township of Rideau Lakes and it takes a lot funding to keep everything going.

The Delta Mill Society is supported by a group of dedicated volunteers and we thank them all as we would not be able to accomplish all that we have without the personal generosity of time and skills provided to us by those people. We have not hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in two years but we plan to do so next year, hopefully in appreciation of not just existing, but also some new volunteers. We ALWAYS need more help. See the [Volunteer Page](#) on our website at www.deltamill.org. It includes an expression of interest form that can mailed in or emailed to us directly at info@deltamill.org.

At our AGM on September 20, 2021, the following Directors were nominated, accepted and motion carried: Moel Benoit, Art Cowan, Anna Greenhorn, Jared Hayes, Katherine Killins, Cathy Livingston, Lisa Martin, Sharon Okum, Liz Priebe, Sally Wanless, and Ken Watson. Art Shaw continues as our Blacksmithing Coordinator and Chris Wooding as our Milling Coordinator.

Also at our AGM we welcomed Marie White, the Economic Development/Cultural Heritage Coordinator for the Township of Rideau Lakes. We look forward to productive work with her to have the township promote the mill and help us out.

At our October 18, 2021 regular Board meeting our Executive was formed.

President: Cathy Livingston
Vice President: Ken Watson
Treasurer: Sharon Okum
Secretary: Lisa Martin

- Cathy Livingston, President

Our Last Grand Re-opening

Back in 2004, we re-opened the mill to the public after being closed since 1999 due to the major restoration of the mill. In this photo, taken on May 15, 2004, we see one of the founding trustees of the Delta Mill Society, Beth Robinson (who turned 101 this year) about to cut the ribbon. To her left is MP Joe Jordan and to her right is MPP Bob Runciman and Ron Holman, Mayor of the Township of Rideau Lakes.

Used Book Sale

Saturday, December 4, 2021

We're having another used book sale at the Old Town Hall on Saturday December 4, from 9 am to 3 pm. Come out and load up on winter reading material. We have hundreds of books, all are offered on a donation basis—the proceeds will be split 50:50 between the Delta Mill Society and the Township of Rideau Lakes Public Library.

Grand Re-Opening

Saturday, May 21, 2022

We're planning a grand re-opening ceremony on Saturday, May 21, 2022 starting at 11 am.

We have all sorts of things to celebrate. First and foremost is of course the official opening of the Old Stone Mill for a full summer season, something we haven't been able to do since 2019.

We will be showcasing the newly invigorated mill interior (see Protect and Present on the next page).

We'll also celebrate our recent province-wide recognition by the Ontario Association of Architects.

We may even celebrate the Delta Mill Society itself. While 2022 is the 59th year of active work by volunteers in support of the mill, it is also the 50th anniversary of the formal incorporation of the Delta Mill Society in 1972, which marked the start of physical restoration of the mill.



To Protect and Present

The core mandate of the Delta Mill Society and an obligation as part of our National Historic Site of Canada designation is to protect and present the Old Stone Mill. The protect part goes back to 1972, when, immediately after the incorporation of the Delta Mill Society, rescue restoration started on the mill to keep it from falling down. That culminated with the massive full restoration of the mill that took place between 1999 and 2003. Maintenance work to protect the mill continues on a yearly basis.

The present part dates back to 1983 when the doors of the Old Stone Mill were opened to the public. In 1997 our website was launched, presenting the Old Stone Mill to the entire world.

After the major restoration, much more presentation work was done under the direction of our professional curator, Paul George, including the acquisition and installation of a waterwheel, working millstones and a bolter. Much effort was put into developing mill interpretation, including interpretive signboards with the full chronology of the mill, featuring the various owners, as well as interpreting other features of the mill such as the waterwheel, turbines and the overall design of the mill as an Oliver Evans' automatic mill.

Three books about the history of the mill have been published by the Delta Mill Society, the first by Paul Fritz in 2000, a second by Wade Ranford in 2006, and a third by Ken Watson in 2018.

In 2016, then President Dann Michols initiated a project to capture, in writing, the oral interpretation of the mill, particularly that done by our head tour guide, Anna Greenhorn. With Dann's departure to Ottawa, Ken Watson, Chair of Heritage Research and Interpretation, took over that project and the first version of our "Tour Guide Manual and History of the Old Stone Mill" was published in the spring of 2017.

This work led to a more critical look at how the mill was being interpreted, including the physical

interpretation inside the mill. Our Chair of Cultural Heritage, Katherine Killins, was also looking critically at how the mill was being interpreted. So, Ken, Katherine and Anna became an ad-hoc committee to focus our interpretation back to the mill itself, the reasons for our NHS designation and the tremendous significance of the mill as one of the best surviving examples of an Oliver Evans' automatic mill.

It is a nice blend of skill sets. Ken does the heritage research and writing, which includes new interpretive signage focusing on various key aspects of the mill.

Katherine has a tremendous "heritage eye", an innate knowledge of what is heritage appropriate to the mill, everything from the new roofing for the turbine shed, to the internal layout of the mill. Anna of course is our knowledge base for all things Old Stone Mill, including decades of experience in dealing with the public, understanding how to best interpret the mill to the many people, with a large variety of interests, who visit the mill.

With the mill closed to the public for the last two summers, we've had the opportunity to make many of our ideas reality. We've placed new interpretive signage throughout the mill and re-arranged several areas, including all of the third floor, to focus the interpretation of the mill as an Oliver Evans' design. We're having a replica hopper boy built for placement on the 3rd floor, in the

location where one used to be when the mill was built. We've created a new exhibit space on the 3rd floor to allow the presentation of exhibits of general interest — the first being a Mills & Stills exhibit, last seen over a decade ago in the Old Town Hall. We've quite literally opened the window on the Miller's Office, providing visitors with a more personal experience of that space.

The list of things done inside the mill in the last 3 years is too long for this newsletter—but we expect the public will be highly appreciative of the "new" Old Stone Mill when we re-open to public in 2022.



While our main focus has been on interpreting the mill as an Oliver Evans' automatic mill, we also have other exhibits. Here we see Katherine and Anna having fun setting up the Mills & Stills exhibit on the 3rd floor of the mill.

The Collections Project

We are the caretakers of many artifacts, some in the mill, some in the driveshed and many stored on the 2nd floor of the Old Town Hall. Museum protocols dictate that these be well documented in addition to being looked after. This has been a problem with the Delta Mill Society. The level of documentation has varied over the years and much of what we have is either poorly documented or in many cases, undocumented.

A few years ago, our Chair of Collections, Sally Wanless, started in on the mammoth job of trying to get our collections properly organized and documented. COVID came to our rescue in the form of summer students available to do this work in a closed to the public Old Town Hall. Last year Sally's main student helper for this job was Jared Hayes (now a director of the DMS) and this year it is Rebecca Rothwell, who, as of this writing is still with us, working hard under Sally's direction to complete Phase I of this immense task.

To say it's a huge project is a vast understatement. This is one of those "behind the scenes" jobs that the public doesn't see, yet it is critical in terms of our mandate and the protection and documentation of our heritage artifacts and archival material. While the mill is an historic site (original building on its original landscape) as opposed to a museum (any building presenting artifacts to the public), for our collections, we operate, as best we can, with full museum protocols. Unfortunately, in the past, this has not always been the case.

Sally took the documentation of our collections back to the basics, to gather, in one spot, all the information we have about each artifact. It's a



Field Trip

In 2008 we spent \$35,000 to purchase a package of old milling equipment from a milling operation in Saint-Sylvère, Québec. This included the operating bolter and French burrstones that we used to put our mill back in operation on our 200th anniversary in 2010. The rest was stored in the barn of DMS director, Art Cowan. None of these items were documented at the time.

This fall we did a field trip to the barn to find out what was there, make a list and photograph all the objects. Upper photo is Rebecca Rothwell providing scale for the top of a smutter. Lower photo has Sally Wanless, Moel Benoit and Art Shaw trying to piece together other objects.

combination of a paper system, all the paper information about each object in its own file folder, and a digital system of indexing our collections on a spreadsheet. It's a system that will be easy for volunteers to maintain into the future unlike systems many museums have that depend on trained professional staff to maintain.

Sally also fixed our broken documentation system, bringing the various documentation forms that are needed for a proper collection up to date and in-line with present day museum standards. Sally and Ken re-wrote our collections policy to be fully conformable with our incorporation mandate and to ensure proper board awareness of items going into and out of our collection.

This is not just esoteric work—it has many real world applications. For the proper interpretation of any object, it is critical that we know the full provenance of the object – what exactly the object is, where it came from, how did it come into our possession. If we don't have that information, the object is essentially useless to us other than as an interesting looking prop, or, in most cases, simply buried in our collections. Was the object provided to us as a gift or a loan? Were there any conditions attached to that gift or loan by the donor? This is information we need to have for every object in our collection. It's information that we're now finding is often missing.

As of this writing, we've documented 852 objects and the project continues. More correctly, we've put together the presently available documentation for 852 objects, which, for many, is slim. Phase II of this project will be to sort the wheat from the chaff, deaccessioning items that don't belong in our collection and trying to find full provenance and documentation for objects that actually meet our mandate.