The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist Spring/Summer 2026

A NEW SEASON BEGINS

by Ken Watson, President, The Delta Mill Society

We've been busy over this long winter in preparation for the season opening of the Old Stone Mill on the May long weekend. Work for this started in early December with the application deadline for the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) grant program moved ahead to a new mid-December date. We also applied to the Young Canada Works (YCW) program, a summer employment grant program geared to museums. It has a later (mid-January) application deadline, but given the work that goes into the application process, it is better done sooner than later.

As is now the norm, these grants fall far short of what is needed. With both programs we apply for student grant support for our full 16 week season. For 2026, the grant from YCW, which used to cover 75% of the student costs for the full season, was reduced to 53.5% support. CSJ, as per usual in recent years, reduced our 16 week ask to only 8 weeks, half of our operating season (so effectively 50% support). We will make up the difference with DMS funding. Part of our core mandate is to have the mill open to the public as a museum of milling technology and we will continue to do that as best as we are able.

We received many good applications for the job of mill interpreter this year. Our student selection team of Katherine Killins, Sally Wanless and Joan Delaney, supported by our Office and Collections Manager Rebecca Rothwell, has chosen four students who we believe will excel at mill interpretation and other aspects of the job. Those students will undergo three days of training prior to our season opening on Saturday, May 16. Sally and Ken will continue heritage interpretation training and mentoring with the students as they get real world interpretation experience with the mill open to the public.

Meet Our New Miller, Jared Hayes

This photo, taken in 2023, shows DMS Director Jared Hayes receiving his miller training certificate from our Master Miller Chris Wooding. Chris, who has been our volunteer miller since 2011, retired from that job earlier this year. Jared has stepped up to assume the role of Lead Miller.

On the topic of grant funding, in this newsletter you'll find Part 6 of the history of the Old Stone Mill. This article covers the Delta Mill Society period from 2004 to 2010. I characterize this period as our "funding heyday". During that time period we were able to tap into several sources of grant funding, most of which are not available today. That funding was used primarily for legacy work which included the creation of interpretive signage and interactive displays within the mill in 2004-2006, the installation of a waterwheel in 2007, and the installation of working French burrstone millstones, a flour elevator, and a bolter in 2010. This achieved a DMS goal of having the mill operating on its 200th anniversary in 2010. It's quite the success story.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Tuesday, June 16, 2026
11 am at the Old Town Hall

NEW EXHIBITS FOR 2026

We continue exhibit work today on a more limited budget, most recently with new exhibits featuring

photos of the mill and of the volunteers who help to keep the mill, as a heritage showcase, open to the public. Last July we installed an exhibit featuring a series of historic photos of the mill, dating back to 1870. These were colourized and enhanced to bring out all the details of these historic views of the mill. We also set up a photo display of the restoration work done by the DMS between 1972 and 2004 when over 2 million dollars of work was completed on a full heritage restoration of the mill building.

New for 2026 is a exhibit featuring collages of photos related to making the mill operational. Titled "Bringing the Mill to Life", it chronicles the installation of the waterwheel, millstones and bolter, which all culminated in our first grind, using 200-year-old French burrstones, in the fall of 2010.

The exhibits committee (Paul George, Katherine Killins and Ken Watson) also worked on concepts for recognizing that the mill today, fully restored, open to public and filled with interpretive panels and interactive displays, is mainly due to thousands of hours of volunteer time. It is the work and vision of these volunteers that have resulted in today's Old Stone Mill museum, along with the Old Town Hall and the Blacksmith Shop. Paul came up with an overarching theme "Without Volunteers, the mill would quickly grind to a halt." While perhaps a bit corny, it does hit the nail on the head.

While we normally don't single out individuals, since there have been many significant volunteer contributors over the now 63 year history of the Delta Mill Society, we did want to single out a very special one, Anna Greenhorn. Anna, who passed away in 2025, exemplified the volunteer spirit and the upwards and onwards attitude of the DMS. Accordingly we've created two exhibit panels, one a general thanks to volunteers and one specific to Anna. These are being installed on the 3rd floor of the mill, adjacent to Anna's favourite area, the spot where she would explain the magnificent roof architecture, including our 50 foot long, five sided ridge pole, to interested visitors.

There will be a third component to this display, one focussed on volunteer solicitation. We always need more volunteer help, particularly with specific skill sets such as accounting, carpentry and heritage presentation. There are also lots of other volunteer jobs, from event helper to groundskeeping. If you have an interest in volunteering, we likely have a job for you. We will have a display set up showing these jobs and providing an opportunity for people to express their interest to the DMS. While our work centres

Top: the feature photo of Anna that we will have in our volunteer display.

Middle: Rebecca sanding one of the backing boards in preparation for mounting the display.

Bottom: A photo of our wheat field on April 28. The wheat, planted last fall, is coming up in advance of the weeds. But can we defeat the rascally rabbit that did in our field last summer?

around our primary mandate to preserve and present the Old Stone Mill as a National Historic Site of Canada, we also do events, run the Old Town Hall as a community hall, do living history such as heritage milling and blacksmithing, and more.

Our last new exhibit for 2026 is literally a living exhibit, a field of heritage Red Fife wheat. It's hopefully "third time's the charm" for the success of this exhibit. We originally tried two years ago using planters in the mill. The wheat didn't really take to those (too small, not enough soil for proper root development). Then we tried last year with a real outdoor wheat field, positioned on top of the Russell Building foundation near the mill. That field struggled with weeds and then was done in by a rabbit in July (documented in our Fall/Winter 2025 newsletter).

For our "third time's a charm" we've improved the soil quality by adding composted manure (thanks Moel) and Chris Wooding planted fall Red Fife wheat. This will hopefully solve the weed issue since fall wheat comes up very early in the spring, ahead of the weeds. We will monitor for any rabbit activity and look at deterring any such midnight nibblers using Bobbex (a rabbit and deer repellant). This may be our last shot at the field since Chris, in addition to retiring as our miller, is also slowing down work on his farm. We'll see how the field turns out this year. If it provides a waving field of wheat by the fall, then we'll look at continuing it if we can. Rebecca is tasked with looking after the field.

2026 EVENTS

You'll find a listing of coming events on the back page of this newsletter. We also maintain a current list of events on our website and advertise through our Facebook page. DMS Director Liz Priebe looks after Old Town Hall events as well as rentals.

Our biggest single fundraiser of the year, the "Ginormous" used book sale, was held during Maple Syrup Festival in April. It was the best ever both in terms of donations of books and other items (DVDs, puzzles) for the sale as well as the proceeds from the book sale. Proceeds are split equally between the DMS and the Rideau Lakes Public Library.

Coming up at the end of May is a new play by the Rideau Players, "Spectres and Speed Trains". It will be performed on two evenings as well as an afternoon matinee performance in the Old Town Hall. In June, we'll have Mary's Merry Minstrels perform a concert as a fundraiser for the DMS. In July there is the Delta Pride cabaret. In August there will be a musical event, Bach on the Beverley. Details of these and other events can be found on our website.

The last Saturday of September is Delta Harvest Festival and we are pleased that we'll have the Stonebridge Quilters back with a display of quilts. Last year we had over 40 quilts displayed in the mill as part of Rideau Lakes Doors Open in August (not being held this year). It was extremely popular with visitors and should prove so again.

With the change of miller, our 2026 milling schedule is still being worked out. We have a set of dates that Jared can commit to, he may add more as he works out his availability. Check our website for the current schedule.

Our Blacksmith Shop is open on a similar schedule to the milling. Art Shaw is our Blacksmith Shop manager and local blacksmiths Megan Carter and Mike Armstrong show off their heritage blacksmithing skills to the interested public. Megan and Mike also offer blacksmith training in our Blacksmith Shop.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's membership renewal time. A membership form has been included. Your support of the Delta Mill Society is both needed and much appreciated. If you've lost your form or if someone new wishes to join, our membership/donation form is on our website.

Books, Books and More Books

Our used book sale is our largest single fundraiser. This year, a group of 41 volunteers worked on the set-up and tear-down. In addition to books, we had lots of DVDs (foreground in the photo) plus many jigsaw puzzles (very popular).

OUR MILLERS

In 2010, we installed a set of operating French burrstone millstones. These extremely hard stones, quarried in France, are the best stones for the milling of wheat. It is the type of millstone that was used in the original 1810 mill. We purchased a working set in 2008 and installed them in 2010 (see Part 6 of the History of the Mill in this newsletter for details). Our advisor was Roland Tetrault, the master miller from Upper Canada Village. Paul George, our curator at the time, contacted Roland and got him interested in our project to install a set of operating stones.

Roland did our first milling during Thanksgiving Festival (now Harvest Festival) in the fall of 2010. The wheat used for that milling came from the farm of Chris Wooding. Paul had been looking for a source of heritage Red Fife wheat, the most popular bread-making wheat of the mid-late 1800s.

Roland taught Art Shaw, Moel Benoit and Chris Wooding how to operate the stones. Moel and Art both did milling but it wasn't long before Chris took the helm as our Lead Miller.

Chris had a corporate career before he started farming in 2005. His interests are not just in the farming aspect, but the genetics of heritage wheat. The first Canadian bread wheat was Red Fife, developed in 1842 in the Peterborough area to grow in Canadian conditions. It was replaced over time by more modern wheats which had higher yields.

Red Fife was revived in 1988 by a heritage grist mill British Columbia. They started off by planting one pound of Red Fife seed. Over time, other people, mostly organic farmers, looked at reviving these heritage wheats and Red Fife production greatly increased. Chris became part of that revival including working not only to organically grow Red Fife but also develop other varieties using natural selection, such as flood resistant variety of Red Fife which Chris named Flood Fife.

Top: Miller Roland Tetrault in 2010
Centre: Miller Chris Wooding in 2013
Bottom: Miller Jared Hayes, with his brother Joel, in 2026

In an interview printed in our Fall/Winter 2016 newsletter (reprinted in this newsletter) Chris noted that after being introduced to what we were doing in restoring our heritage milling equipment "I fell in love with the Mill and the people involved." And so, by 2011, Chris became our main miller.

During a milling demonstration, his interpretation not only included how the millstones work but also details about the genetics of heritage wheats and the importance of preserving those heritage gene lines. Chris has become such an authority on the genetic of heritage wheats and other grains that he conducts tours of his farm to university students and also gives lectures on the topic. We're pretty sure that we're the only heritage mill where the milling interpretation included words such as diploid and hexaploid (ancient grains are diploids with 2 sets of chromosomes, modern wheats are hexaploids with 6 sets of chromosomes).

In 2023 we decided to offer milling training to any of our summer students who wished to learn how to operate the millstones. In discussions with Chris, it was decided that this would be best done during an actual milling session, with Chris stepping the student through all the procedures for making the perfect whole wheat flour. Our youngest DMS Director, Jared Hayes, who joined our board in 2020, expressed an interest in

learning and earned his milling certificate as part of the 2023 training sessions. In 2025, Jared became our "Junior Miller", helping out Chris during each milling session.

Early this year, Chris let us know that he was going to have to retire from milling, but would be able to train any replacements and help us find new millers. The transition from a long-time volunteer to a new one can be a lengthy process, trying to find a person with the right skill sets willing to volunteer their time. Fortunately for us, Jared immediately stepped up, volunteering to become our miller.

Jared has a interesting backstory with the DMS. He started off with us as summer student in 2016. Jared has a keen interest in history and took to the job right away. He did such good work that we kept re-hiring him and he became "Lead student". He developed a keen interest in the Delta Mill Society, particularly the story of the early years, when a group of volunteers took an old run-down mill and saved it from almost certain destruction. He got so fascinated with these "heritage heroes" that he decided to do a Master's of Arts in History, with his thesis topic on the early years of the DMS.

In 2020, with the shutdown of the mill due to COVID, we pivoted, taking the opportunity to have Jared and another summer student who we'd planned to have as mill interpreters, work on our collections and archives. We started a project (our Collections Project) that year to get our collections and archives in order. Jared worked that summer in the Old Town Hall, where we used the empty hall as a sorting area for our masses of files.

Jared expressed an interest in joining the Board of Directors, which had an opening. We had a delayed AGM that year (held in September) and with Jared no longer an employee of the DMS, he was voted in as a Director (an employee can't be a director).

Jared completed his Master's in 2021 and in 2022 turned his thesis into a book, *"From Mill to Museum, The Grassroots Preservation Effort for the Gristmill in Delta, Ontario, Canada"*. As previously noted, in 2023, Jared took milling training from Chris and in 2025 came out for each milling session to be Chris' helper.

This year, Jared did a refresher session with Chris just prior to Delta Maple Syrup festival and did his first milling session, now as Lead Miller, on that Saturday. He even brought along his own helper, his brother Joel. Jared did a great job, explaining the milling process to an interested audience. It was a very smooth transition from Chris to Jared.

Sorting Files in 2020

Here we see summer students Adrianna Ouellette and Jared Hayes working at sorting masses of files in the Old Town Hall.

Jared will make the job his own, interpreting the milling process in the context of the history of the mill. The milling dates, as currently known, are shown on the back page of this newsletter and are posted to our website. Come out on a milling day this summer and watch Jared convert heritage organic Red Fife wheat into 100% whole wheat flour using our 200-year-old millstones.

-Ken Watson

Jared showing newly milled flour to a young visitor during Maple Syrup Festival in April 2026.

THANKS CHRIS

It's difficult to put into words our appreciation for Chris. He was our volunteer miller for 15 years and also the farmer who grew the grain we milled.

Over those years he enthralled hundreds of visitors every year with his knowledge of heritage grains and his demonstrations of the heritage milling process.

On the next page you'll find a Q&A with Chris, done in 2016, which explains his passion for doing this volunteer work.

Ed Note: this is a reprint of an article that ran in our Fall/Winter 2016 newsletter

Featured Member/Volunteer Q&A by Mariska Kriebel

Chris Wooding

After a corporate career Chris changed his life path in 2005 and became a self-taught farmer in the Gananoque area. A man of many interests and passions, he grows and produces organic cereals including wheat, rye, oats and barley at his farm. Besides all this labour intensive work at the farm he still finds the time to tend to another passion, as our Miller, demonstrating the grinding process at the Old Stone Mill several Saturdays a year during the operating season.

Chris in front of his Massey Ferguson Pull-Type Model 35 combine

When and how did you become interested and involved with The Delta Mill Society?

The very first time I even heard or knew of the Old Stone Mill was just before the 200th anniversary celebration in 2010. Paul George (former Curator) contacted me as he was looking for Red Fife wheat for their inaugural milling. I fell in love with the Mill and all the people involved. At that time I received an apprenticeship course by Miller Roland Tetrault. I have been milling ever since then at the Old Stone Mill, it's become part of my life.

What do you find most rewarding about being a volunteer?

The most rewarding, without exception, is that every Saturday that we mill, there is at least one family, one kid, one older person, who I have an amazing conversation with. That reaffirms that what we do at the Mill and what I do at my farm may be seen as a little antiquated and a little out of step with the current world, but there is always one person who says you are doing the right thing. For example, there was a couple from Illinois who thanked me for the fact that the milling demonstration was so authentic and that I did not put up a tourist show. You can really change people's perspective and especially if you see children getting excited that is very rewarding.

What do you consider the most significant historical aspect of the Old Stone Mill?

The stones are the most important and fascinating part to me. These stones originate from a quarry in France. They were brought over and used in ships as a ballast in the 18th century and then they were formed into millstones here.

Why do you think it is important to preserve the Old Stone Mill?

The number one thing is that I believe we have to go back to the roots. I think the current food system and processing is failing, and we need to sustain our valuable land. At the Old Stone Mill people can actually see how the milling works and it gives the public a taste of the real process of where the flour comes from and meet the farmer who grew the ingredients on his land. It cannot get any better than to go home and bake your own bread or cookies with the flour from the Old Stone Mill

Besides the Old Stone Mill do you have any other favourite museums?

My other favourite museum would be Heritage Acres on the Saanich Peninsula, north of Victoria, BC. (heritageacresbc.ca). This was my first real introduction to the old farming machinery.

For more information about Chris's work, philosophy & farm see: www.ironwoodorganics.ca

Thank you Chris!

GRAMPAW DENAUT

Historical research usually results in dry material about a person, various facts about their life but no real insight as to who they were. This is generally the case for Walter Denaut, the owner of the Old Stone Mill from February 1850 until his death in March 1889. The Denaut period of the mill was covered in our spring/summer 2024 newsletter. In it, facts listed were taken from sources such as census records and genealogical references. We have some photos but these don't really give a sense of the man.

The Real Walter Denaut?

On the left is a colourized photo of Walter taken in about 1880. It exemplifies Walter as the dignified businessman. On the right is an AI generated image of Walter with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, dressed in a Santa Claus outfit correct to the 1880 period. This reflects Walter as described in a 1935 newspaper article by Harry Blanchard.

Walter took a money-losing mill that was carrying three mortgages and made it into a money making operation. He also ended up owning many properties in Delta, from tenant houses to his grand home, known today as the Denaut Mansion. In addition to the mill, he also operated a merchant shop in Delta and he possibly built the first hotel in the village.

So, our conclusion, based on what he did, was that he was a man with great business acumen, making our vision of him that of a canny businessman. Photos we have show this, a dignified man, dressed in business attire.

He clearly was a very successful businessman, but what type of person was he really? A 1935 article in the Brockville Recorder and Times by Harry Blanchard provides a little bit of insight into Denaut's character as the following quote reveals.

"Among the children he was always known as "Grampaw" Denaut. On a Christmas day he would gaily saunter down the street, attended by a whole retinue of happy children. He would invariably shepherd them all into Johnny Brown's drug store, where he would line them up at the counter and joyously loosen up to the extent of buying them more candy than most of them could eat."

So, now we have a vision of a man who would "gaily saunter" down the street on Christmas Day and treat the children of the village to a bounty of sweets. Did Walter dress as Santa Claus? Later in the article it notes that "After the death of "Grampaw" Denaut, his place as village Santa Claus, in the joyous distribution of candy in Johnny Brown's drug store was taken by "Wat" Beatty." But that's in reference to these men giving free gifts, not that they dressed as Santa Claus.

While the children "gorged" themselves with sweets for an hour, with Johnny on the hop every minute to supply their wants, "Grampaw" would have a little refreshment with his friends "Wat" Beatty and Dr. Sinclair. While the author doesn't specify the refreshments, he notes that Johnny had "crocks of 'hot stuff' below the stairs" and that "Grampaw would

have frequent occasion to fish out of the barrel and consume with gusto a fat dill pickle." Pickle barrels were common in bars and saloons of the era as a chaser for hard liquor and to mask liquor on the breath.

So now we have Walter, not as a businessman, but as a man who would come out on Christmas Day to play Santa for the village children and then enjoy a libation or two with his friends Wat Beatty and Dr. Sinclair. As a guess based on available evidence, the period for this story would be the late 1870s or early 1880s.

Wat Beatty is Walter Beatty, a provincial land surveyor who lived in Delta. We have an 1892 survey map of Delta done by Walter in our collections. Dr. Sinclair is John McNabb Sinclair who was a medical doctor that lived and worked in Delta. He shows up in the Delta listing of the 1871 Ontario Directory

A bit of a mystery in the article is the reference to Johnny Brown's drug store. Initial thoughts about the location of this store turned to Walter Denaut's former store. In the 1850s, Walter was a partner with James Crawford (of Brockville) operating a merchant and drug store in Delta. We know this from an 1858 almanac which was "presented by, Crawford & Denaut, Beverley, C.W." The store also shows up on an 1861 map of Delta. It was located on the east side of Mathew Street at the intersection of King Street.

At some point, his store was taken over by Omer Brown who operated it as a general store and possibly drug store. It burned down in 1896, collateral damage from the burning down of the adjacent Singleton Block. That business block was rebuilt in 1897 as the Jubilee Block. Omer Brown at that time established a new store in the Jubilee Block.

An assumption I made was that "Johnny Brown's" drug store might have been Denaut's original store which was later taken over by Omer Brown. However, I wasn't able to find a direct connection between Omer and Johnny. An idea that Johnny might have been a reference to Omer's father was incorrect since Omer's father was James, not John. But further genealogical searches revealed a "John E. Brown" who lived in Delta. Clearly this must be the "Johnny Brown" of the story. John E. was born in 1847, Omer was born in 1852. However while we see census listings showing Omer as Merchant's Clerk in 1871 and then as a Merchant in 1881, we don't see John E. listed as a merchant. In 1861 he was a labourer, in 1881 he was postmaster and in 1891 he was Municipal Clerk and Treasurer. He's not evident in the 1871 census.

This all remains a bit of a mystery. My assumption that the Johnny Brown drug store was Denaut's former general and drug store, which was later owned and run by Omer Brown, may be incorrect. Or it may be a case that, since historical research usually involves bits of information with lots of gaps, it simply wasn't documented or that documentation has yet to be found. Or maybe Blanchard's recollections, done many years after the fact, is incorrect in terms of Brown's name.

But the story is a good one. It helps to flesh out our knowledge of Walter Denaut as a person.

- Ken Watson

Walter Denaut's General and Drug Store

This AI colourized photo, taken c.1900, show Denaut's store, now operated by Omer Brown. Was it at one point operated by John E. Brown? Is this the store in the story? The answer is "perhaps". Credit: DMS Digital Archives; Paul Fritz Collection; colourization by K.W. Watson

ONLINE PHOTO EXHIBITS

This past winter I completed a website project to update the photo galleries on our website. This was sparked by playing around with AI to colourize photos, a far easier and much faster process than doing it manually. A danger of using AI for this purpose is that, unlike regular colourization, AI is basically recreating the image. So the prompts used to get AI to do the job properly have to be very specific and the results thoroughly checked to ensure that the AI colourized version is true to the original black and white (B&W) version.

Colourization brings out details in the image that are often hard to discern in the B&W image—the human eye is more attuned to colour than it is to B&W. So I find value in doing this from a heritage research perspective, there is lots of historical detail that can be gleaned from a photo. In terms of historical authenticity, while the B&W techniques used in those time periods are of interest to photographers such as myself, the things being photographed at the time of course had colour. So colourizing these images really does bring them to life.

The DMS has a collection of digitized heritage photos. Many of these are now up on our website. I added seven new photo galleries and updated four other ones. I expanded the size of the images and made the pages a bit more smartphone friendly (although it is best to look at these on a larger computer screen). The galleries includes buildings, people and even maps of Delta. Head over to www.deltamill.org/photos.html or click the "Visuals" tab on our website menu to see them.

- Ken Watson

Hazel Horton c.1906

On the left is the original B&W print. The middle is a human colourized version and on the right is an AI colour version. In this case, the photo is said to be of Hazel Horton who painted the mill from a canoe when she was 14 (making the date 1906). A digital copy of her painting is also on our website. The website also has full captioning describing each heritage photo.

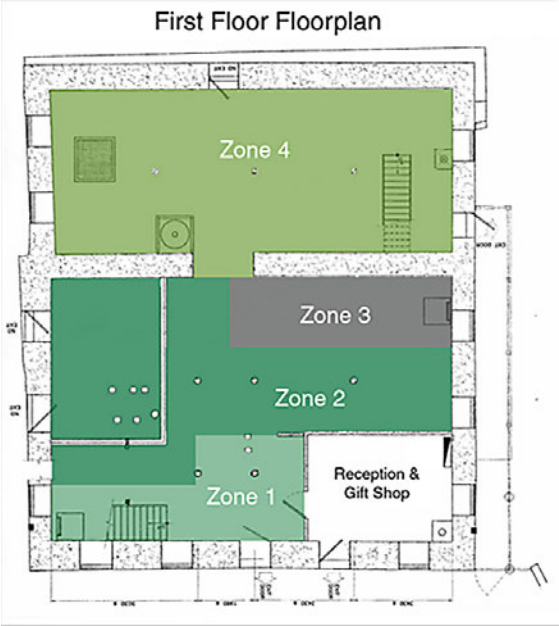
Grand Central Hotel (aka Beverley House, aka Delta Hotel, aka Flood Hotel) c.1910s

This photo of the hotel, looking down the mill stream, was taken from the 3rd floor of the mill. The colour version gives a much better sense of the scene. The hotel may have a tie to the mill. On an 1861 map, there is a hotel in this spot shown as owned by Walter Denaut. Is this the hotel Denaut built? The hotel, and several buildings around it, burned down in 1937.

History of the Mill Part 6 – Mill Interpretation and Operation

On May 15, 2004, the newly restored mill was re-opened to the public. At this time the mill was mostly empty, since in 1999 exhibits that had been in the mill were moved to the Old Town Hall in advance of mill restoration. Most of those exhibits didn't relate to milling and were left in the Old Town Hall, which the DMS later rebranded as the Museum of Industrial Technology. A new exhibit plan was being developed for the Old Stone Mill to better reflect it as a museum of milling technology and as a prime example of an Oliver Evans' automatic mill.

In the fall of 2002, the DMS brought in Paul George, the former curator of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (now the Canadian Museum of History) in Gatineau to help us out. Paul brought his professional curatorial and exhibit development skills to the DMS. He worked initially as a volunteer and then as an employee with then President Art Shaw and members of the board to develop interpretation and exhibits for the mill. This was done to satisfy goals set by the DMS Board of Directors which were to install exhibits depicting the mill's history and evolution, and to reconstruct the 1810 milling machinery to restore the mill to working order.



2004 Interpretation Plan

This image is from a 15 page document prepared by Paul George detailing the mill interpretation themes and the various displays and exhibits that needed to be created and installed. That work came to fruition in 2005 and 2006, with the creation and installation of many of interpretation panels and interactive exhibits that visitors enjoy today.

The first phase of this plan was the exhibit development. In the spring of 2004, a formal proposal for this was made with a budget of $44,000 ($70,000 in 2026$). Work was to be focused on the main floor of the mill which had been divided into four zones, each with its own theme. Exhibits would be a combination of interpretive panels and interactive displays. Funding was solicited at the time from the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) Job Creation Partnership (JCP) program. We received JCP funding in 2004 and 2005 which allowed us to implement our exhibit plans as well as hire additional staff, including Wade Ranford as a heritage researcher. Wade put the results of his detailed research into a book, "A History of Grist Milling in Delta" which the DMS published in 2006.

We were also able to hire graphic artists to create graphics for our interpretation panels, including the large Automatic Mill panel that visually illustrates the Oliver Evans' mill design as it was applied to the Old Stone Mill. By the summer of 2005, we had several interpretive panels and exhibits installed on the first floor including our Dressing the Millstones display, our Moving the Grain interactive display (built by Art Shaw) and our Automatic Mill Display. By the summer of 2006 we had developed and installed most of the chronology panels featuring the people involved with the mill over the years.

The Mill Shop in 2005

The mill shop in 2005 was a bit emptier than it is today. This small space has been reconfigured many times.

At this time, discussions were also ongoing regarding restoring the mill to working order. Anna Greenhorn, who was Secretary of the DMS at the time, reminded the board that the goal of the DMS was to have this completed by our 200th

Anna Greenhorn and Paul George.

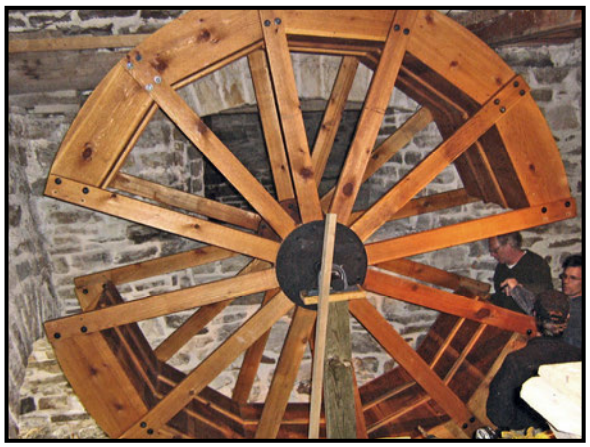
Interpretive Displays in 2005

These photos, taken in 2005, show a temporary display of a millstone vat along with a sign promoting new exhibits under the theme "2005-2006, Watch Us Grow"; our interactive moving the grain display; and our millstones display. Detailed research, extensive planning, the use of graphic artists, and construction expertise resulted in highly professional displays.

anniversary in 2010. The mill the DMS received in 1963 was mostly devoid of original equipment other than the turbines, grain grinder, grain elevator, millstone crane, miller's staff and miscellaneous items such as chutes, gearing and pieces of burrstone. Original 1810 equipment such as the waterwheel and millstones were long gone. In 1995 we purchased a set of French burrstones from Upper Canada Village which were installed in 2004 in our Dressing the Millstones display. But to become an operating mill would require items such as a working set of millstones and a period correct bolter.

Our guiding document at the time was the 1996 conservation report which had been prepared as a pre-requisite to mill restoration. In addition to detailing the required physical restoration of the mill building, this report included a cost estimate of restoring the waterwheel, millstones, hopper-boy, and bolter as well as the required flour elevator and chutes. Those costs were estimated to be $176,000 in 1996 which is the equivalent of $330,000 today. The largest component of that was the installation of a waterwheel, which was estimated at $106,000 ($200,000 2026$), not including the desired archaeology of the wheel pit.

An additional problem, not addressed in the 1996 conservation report, was the water required to power a waterwheel that could turn millstones. The water configuration of the mill changed in 1962 when the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) removed the stoplog dam at the head of the mill's bywash and replaced it with a stop-log dam upstream of the King Street bridge. This had the effect of lowering the water level adjacent to the mill by almost 5 feet. MNR had no interest in either moving their stop-log dam back to the head of the bywash or installing a head gate in their 1962 dam with a flume leading into the mill. One of those things would have been required to return the original water power to the mill.



Installing the Waterwheel

Construction of the waterwheel nears completion in 2007.

Since the cost of a full working waterwheel restoration was beyond the means of the DMS and logistically impossible (no water), discussions focused on authenticity versus the reality of being able to get this done by 2010. Paul George was able to convince the board that what we needed was an exhibit waterwheel, one that could be used to show visitors how the original waterwheel would have worked, but not one designed to power the mill. Paul sourced a manufacturer of replica waterwheels from South Carolina. Accordingly, a waterwheel was installed in May 2007 by volunteers with the help of the manufacturer. A small sump pump was installed to pump water onto the wheel to put it into motion. This allowed the

small amount of water that flows through the waterwheel raceway to be used to rotate the water wheel. All in costs were about $13,000 ($20,000 in 2025$), an affordable and elegant solution that allows visitors to see how the mill was originally powered. The replica is a 10-foot diameter waterwheel, slightly smaller than the original 12-foot waterwheel. This means it spins above the wheelpit, leaving that area undisturbed for any future archaeology.

Art Shaw and the waterwheel/gearing display

In these 2007 photos we see Art Shaw beside his waterwheel interactive exhibit at the IPM. Subsequently it was brought back to Delta and moved into the mill. Over the years, the DMS has gained lots of experience in moving large heavy things by hand.

In 2007, in addition to having both the Old Stone Mill and the Old Town Hall (Museum of Industrial Technology) open for the full summer season, we also created a large exhibit for the International Plowing Match (IPM) that was being held locally at Crosby that fall. This exhibit was primarily organized by Art Shaw who, in addition to setting displays featuring Halladay boats and several heritage chairs, also included his hand-built fully working model of a waterwheel with wooden gearing turning a set of millstones. We have that model in the mill today as an interactive exhibit with the waterwheel turned by a handle. But at the IPM it was run by water power, fed by a recirculating pump and tank. It was a huge hit, particularly with kids. We had hundreds of visitors looking at our exhibit each day of the IPM.

Also in this period, Paul was trying to source a set of operating French burrstone millstones and a bolter that would be appropriate to the mill's early period. An operating set for sale was located in St. Sylvere, Quebec, but the owner would only sell what he had as a full package which included several things we didn't need such as a modern grain cleaner, a smutter and a set of scales. So Paul continued his search throughout North America. By early 2008 nothing else had been found. The St. Sylvere equipment was still being offered for sale and Paul and Associate Curator, Natalie Wood, went for a visit to review the equipment and talk to the owner. The asking price was $35,000 ($50,000 2026$) but Paul negotiated with the owner to allow that to be paid out over 3 years. This was presented to the DMS board in June 2008 with the board passing a resolution to purchase this equipment. In September 2008, with help from G. Tackaberry & Sons Construction, the equipment was picked up in St. Sylvere and trucked to DMS Director Art Cowan's property just outside of Delta where it was moved into barn storage.

The Operating Milling Equipment Arrives

Unloading the milling equipment from the Tackaberry truck in September 2008 at Art Cowan's farm. In the foreground are Moel Benoit and Paul George.

This period was also the heyday of funding for the DMS. Our Fall 2008 newsletter noted that grants had allowed us to hire six students and an intern as well as work on several projects including sorting our archival documents and getting software (PastPerfect) to manage our collections. The newsletter included "A big thank you to the Township of Rideau Lakes, Young Canada Works, Ontario Summer Experience, Canada Summer Jobs, Valley Heartland, Brockville Community Foundation, IPM Legacy Fund, Rideau Lakes Heritage Advisory Committee, and the HBC Foundation for their generous contributions." We also had a good revenue stream from our own fundraising efforts, including Charity Bingo (as documented in the Fall/Winter 2025 newsletter).

The intern hired in the spring of 2008 was Natalie Wood who became our Associate Curator. Paul and Natalie started work on much more ambitious plans, including soliciting Trillium Grant funding to allow us to complete the installation of the milling equipment as well as develop new exhibits in time for our 200th anniversary in 2010. With exhibits now well established on the first and second floor of the mill, focus turned to the third floor. To help celebrate the mill's bicentennial, attention turned to the water power than ran the mill, including our mill pond, Upper Beverley Lake. Originally two small lakes, the raising of the water that came with the building of the Old Stone Mill in 1810 created one lake that was more than just a source of water power, it provided animal habitat and opportunities for people such as commercial fishing and recreation. Paul and Natalie developed a third floor exhibit on those themes.

Natalie Wood

Natalie in costume in 2008 and bagging some of our first flour in 2010. As Associate Curator, Natalie played a key role in the day to day operations of the DMS. She took heritage very seriously and when interacting with the public was often in either period costume or dressed as "Millie the Miller". A graduate in History from Queen's University, Natalie was mentored by Paul and continued her studies while working for the DMS, obtaining a Certificate in Museum Studies. Today, Natalie is the Curator of the Brockville Museum.

In the spring of 2009, we were informed that our application for an Ontario Trillium Grant was successful, with the DMS receiving $155,500 ($225,000 2026$) over the next 20 months (to the end of 2010). Work on getting the mill ready for our bicentennial and having it able to produce flour using our recently acquired millstones, moved into high gear. We had the milling equipment, it was now a question of installing it in the mill, something that required a lot of design work. With funding now in place, we also started planning our 200th celebration, which we named Deltabration 2010. It would feature a calendar of events that would showcase Delta's heritage and community spirit and attract more visitors to the village. We set a date for our grand 200th anniversary to be June 5, 2010.

At this time the plan for the restoration of mill with operating millstones was still following the ideas laid out in the 1996 conservation report which was for a full authentic restoration of the 1810 mill. We were also hoping to use Parks Canada Cost-Sharing Program funding as we had with the main restoration of the mill. This meant following the 1996 conservation report and this is when significant problems with this concept made themselves known.

Paul George

On the left we see Ron Schleede and Paul George BBQing hot dogs at an event. On the right we see Paul along with DMS Directors Moel Benoit and Art Cowan constructing the porch roof on the Old Town Hall. Being the curator of a small non-profit heritage organization means getting involved in all aspects of helping that organization. Paul helped out at events and was hands-on in the construction of exhibits and other work.

In 2002, as part of the mill's restoration, we'd documented and removed the timber foundations for the millstones known as a husk. In 2009 we

contracted Sentwood Mercer Ltd., historical restoration specialists, to stabilize and preserve the existing husk timbers. But it was when they investigated the re-installation of these timbers that significant difficulties with the logistics of this were revealed. The husk that had been removed was a highly altered husk, modified over the years and lowered to the level of the main floor in 1922. The conservation report assumed restoration of the husk to its 1810 configuration which was about 5 feet above the level of the main floor. This would necessitate the removal of the second floor above that area as well as other alterations to the building. Also, as previously noted, there was no way to restore actual water power to the mill. In addition, putting the millstones up on their original elevated platform would have a negative impact on visitor flow, making it difficult for visitors to view the milling process.

In September 2009 Paul made this case to the board, "the Delta Mill Society must now also determine whether or not this long standing goal [original 1810 configuration] is still desirable, given the significant implications for visitor circulation, exhibit space in the building and relatively significant structural modifications that would be required to the building itself." Paul also pointed out a funding and timeline issue, we didn't have the funds or the time to do this by 2010 and that "the second and equally important goal of the project was to increase the mill's interpretive potential through the installation of period milling equipment as the most effective means of communicating the principles of early milling technology. This further supports the reasons for the designation of the Old Stone Mill as a National Historic Site."

The board agreed with this reasoning, and we pivoted to an alternate plan which included installing the millstones on a newly built husk at the level of the main floor and powering the millstones with electricity rather than water. The bolter itself, at 14 feet long and 7 feet high, also presented its own logistical problem, how to get it installed on the 2nd floor of the mill? We hired carpenter Robert Okum who carefully disassembled the old (late 1700s) bolter and then reassembled it on the 2nd floor. Rob was also instrumental in building the husk and working with Roland, Paul and DMS volunteers to make the system operational.

A robust electric motor on its own solid foundation would be needed to power the millstones. Fortunately, the location of the mill, being sited on bedrock, made this a bit easier. We used Norcan Hydraulic Turbine Inc. out of Carleton Place to design and supply the equipment to power the millstones. We also installed a smaller electric motor system on the 4th floor of the mill to power the newly built flour elevator. The bolter, now installed on the 2nd floor, was also supplied with an electric motor to turn the bolter reel. Chutes from the head of the flour elevator led to both the bolter and directly to the first floor to provide a choice between bolting the flour or simply delivering whole wheat flour to the main floor. This system is still in use today.

We started Deltabration 2010 on January 11, 2010 with a ceremony in the mill where Canada Post presented us with a plaque with a new set of stamps, including one featuring the Old Stone Mill. In 2008, Canada Post

Installing the Millstones in 2010

Top: Paul George points out work on the new husk (millstone foundation) to the DMS directors

Middle: Roland Tetrault and Paul George supervise moving the runner stone into the mill

Bottom: Paul supervises the installation of the bedstone into the husk. Rob Okum on the right.

Top: This is the header for a website we created dedicated to the many Deltabration 2010 activities. It was a very busy year for the DMS.

Left: At the June 5, 2010 celebrations, Paul George gave special thanks to Beth Robinson (red hat), one of the original four trustees that saved the mill from destruction and formed the Delta Mill Society.

had chosen the Old Stone Mill to be one of five mills in Canada to be showcased on a postage stamp. It is perhaps a coincidence in timing that these stamps were officially released in 2010 on the 200th anniversary of the Old Stone Mill.

Once the weather warmed up, the new husk and flour elevators were constructed, and the required electrics were installed. This allowed us by late May to move the millstones from barn storage and install them on the newly built husk. While there was lots of refining work still to be done prior to being able to grind grain into flour, we were able to provide a public demonstration of the operating millstones on June 5. This was done by Roland Tetrault, the Master Miller from Upper Canada Village. Paul had connected with Roland several years earlier and got him interested in what we were doing with the Old Stone Mill. Roland was instrumental in helping up properly set up the millstones, instructing our volunteer millers and showing us how to properly dress (sharpen) the millstones (see the videos on our website showing this).

The year was very busy including the Maple Syrup Festival in April, Doors Open Brockville-1000 Islands in May, our Deltabration Celebration in June, Delta Fair in July, the DMS's Thanksgiving Celebration in October and Celebrating the Season in Lower Beverley Lake Park in December. We had the help of over 75 volunteers to pull all this off. Our main Deltabration celebration was held on June 4 to 6, including a gala dinner on June 4, the official opening of our new third floor exhibit, "Down by the Old Millstream – Celebrating Life on the Beverley Lakes" on June 5, as well as a dinner theatre presentation and several activities on the Sunday.

Millie the Miller

We have several graphic designs for Millie including the one shown here. At events in 2010, Natalie became Millie in real life with a flour sack dress and pigtails.

Canadian Postage Stamp issued in 2010

Also, as part of Deltabration, Paul and Natalie developed an educational outreach program called The Mobile Mill which had modules for Kindergarten/Grade 1, Grade 3 and Grade 7 students. The Kindergarden/Grade 1 module featured Millie the Miller, "a lively flour sac doll". Millie also showed up at various Deltabration events in real life in the form of Natalie dressed as Millie.

At our Thanksgiving Celebration in October, we had the millstones grinding Red Fife wheat into flour for the first time in over 100 years. Flour production using millstones had ceased in 1893 when then owner, George Haskin, replaced them with a roller mill. Paul, in sourcing a heritage wheat to use for our milling, contacted Chris Wooding who was organically growing Red Fife Wheat on his farm just south of Athens. Chris supplied us with the wheat and in 2011, became our miller.

- Ken Watson

2026 Special Events

(see www.deltamill.org for more details and updates)

OLD STONE MILL
2026 Milling Schedule
(starting at 1 pm)

Day	Date
Saturday	**May 16**
Saturday	**June 27**
Saturday	**July 25**
Saturday	**August 15**
Saturday	**September 5**
Saturday	**September 26**

Note: more dates may be added, check our website for the most up to date milling schedule.

BLACKSMITH SHOP
10 am to 2 pm

Day	Date
Saturday	**May 16**
Saturday	**June 27**
Saturday	**July 25**
Saturday	**September 12**
Saturday	**September 26**

Note: Saturday, September 12 is the the *Ontario Artist Blacksmith Association (OABA) Hammer-In*, with blacksmiths across the province attending.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Tuesday, June 16, 11 am
Old Town Hall

We will have a business AGM starting at 11 am on Tuesday, June 16.

Everyone is welcome!!

DELTA FAIR
Thurs-Sun, July 23-26

The Old Stone Mill will be open as Delta hosts the 197th annual Delta Fair. See www.deltafair.com

MUSICAL EVENTS

Saturday, June 20—Mary's Merry Minstrels will perform in the Old Town Hall from 5 pm to 9 pm.

Saturday, August 22 – Bach on the Beverley— an afternoon show from 3 to 5 pm for lovers of classical music.

Both events are free (donations appreciated), no reservations required.

DELTA HARVEST FESTIVAL
Saturday, September 26

The Delta Harvest Festival will celebrate the bounty of the fall harvest. Includes a quilt display in the mill. Details TBA.

SEASON OPENING
Saturday, May 16

The mill will open for the 2026 season, 10 am to 5 pm daily until Labour Day. We will have a milling demonstration starting at 1 pm and the Blacksmith Shop will be open.

ORIGINAL PLAY
Fri , Sat and Sunday
May 29 to 31

Spectres and Speed Trains, an original play by the Rideau Players, will have three shows in the Old Town Hall—see our website.

DELTA PRIDE CABARET
Saturday, July 11

There will be an evening performance at the Old Town Hall. Details TBA

CRAFT SALE
November 14
CHRISTMAS CONCERT
December 19

Both events will be held in the Old Town Hall. Details TBA.

More Events & Event Updates

We're always working on new events. We post this information to the events page of our website and on Facebook: **www.deltamill.org** or **www.facebook.com/DeltaMill/**