



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Fall/Winter 2016

Before the Old Stone Mill

The Old Stone Mill was not the first mill in Delta, the first mill was a wooden sawmill likely built by the founder of Delta, Abel Stevens. It was in 1793 that thirty-eight year-old Stevens first scouted the area around Delta, identifying the fall of water between the Upper Beverley lakes (then two small lakes) and Lower Beverley Lake. In December of that year he petitioned the Augusta Land Board for land in this location. He returned in February 1794 with six families and squatted on the land. He brought mill irons with him and eventually built a wooden sawmill. This is where history becomes murky.

The first settlers took land near Plum Hollow, on the upper reaches of Plum Hollow Creek which flowed to the Upper Beverley lakes. And while Stevens wanted the rights to the rapids (a mill seat) at Delta, he also very much wanted the Great Gananoque Falls at Lyndhurst, both for a mill and also to start up an iron foundry. To complicate matters for Stevens, the falls at Lyndhurst had also been petitioned for by Justus Sherwood. Since the area was unsurveyed, the province ordered surveyor Lewis Grant to conduct a survey and lay out a Township in the area.

The 1795 map on this page shows Stevens located on the Upper Beverley lakes. Another 1795 map (see next page) shows Stevens initials beside the Great Falls at Lyndhurst, indicating his interest in that spot. Stevens had yet to be granted any land so he may have waited to build his mill until he received legal rights. As late as January 1796 he was still petitioning the government for the falls at Lyndhurst stating that he had the "mill irons on hand," an indication that he'd yet to use them for a mill in Delta. He was granted land in the Delta area in 1796 and by 1797, when a more detailed survey was done by Grant, Steven's mill or mills is shown as being present. It's a bit uncertain who actually built the first mill since Surveyor Lewis Grant noted the mill as Wm. Steven's mill, William was Abel Steven's nephew.



Lower Beverley Lake in 1795

Lewis Grant's 1795 survey showing Abel Stevens on Upper Beverley lakes. The carrying place (portage) on the bottom left is Morton, the one at bottom centre is Lyndhurst. "Sketch of the Gananoque" by Lewis Grant, 17th June 1795, Archives of Ontario, AO 1532

The first mill was a wooden sawmill which became the nucleus for a new community, Stevenstown. The addition of a grist mill allowed farmers from the whole area to grind their grain, promoting both the growth of the community and more settlement of the region. The location of those first mills was near, but not on, the present site of the Old Stone Mill which sits in an artificial channel to the west of the original creek.

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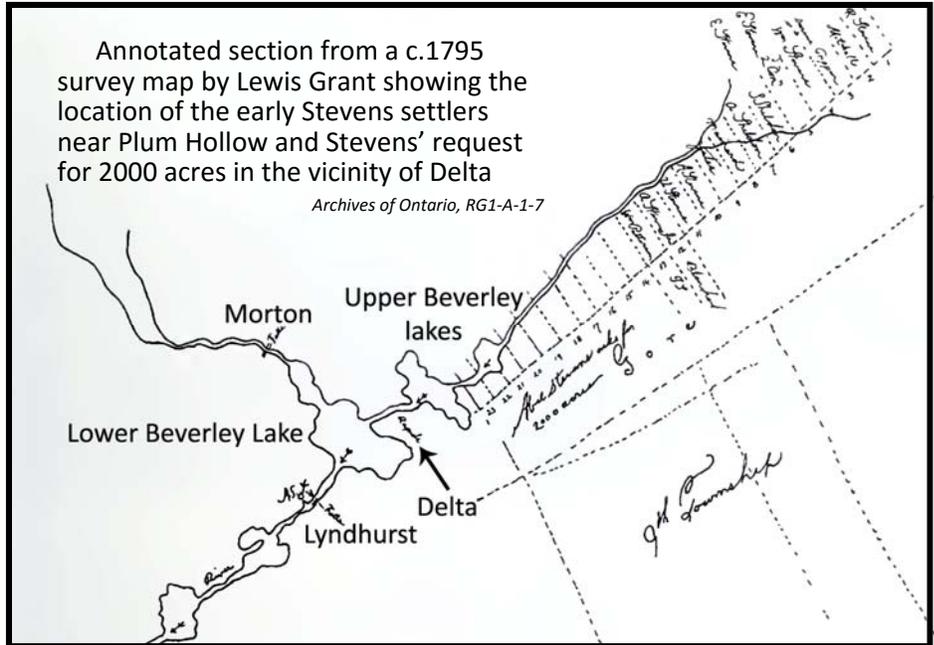
Delta Harvest Festival

October 1

Lots of fun for the whole family: vendors, demonstrations, music, food, bread contest, car show and much more. See the enclosed program guide for full details and our website www.deltamill.org for the latest

By 1799 the mills are listed as being owned by Abel Stevens and Nicholas Mattice. By 1803 the ownership is shown only as Nicholas Mattice although that might have been a lease arrangement with Stevens. At some point another grist mill was built in Stevenstown, on a second site, today's Foundry Creek (at or near Hicock pond), possibly by Abel Stevens Jr.

In the confusing chronology of mills and ownership, it appears that Stevens' wooden mill or mills burned down at least twice, the last time in 1808, shortly after Steven's sold his mill to William Jones. It may have been partially rebuilt, since in 1809, Jones' business partner, Ira Schofield, was assessed for this mill.



This set the stage for Jones and Schofield to start the construction of the Old Stone Mill, in a new location, in 1810.

- Ken Watson

For more information about early milling history in Delta, pick up a copy of "*A History of the Old Stone Mill, Delta, Ontario*" by Paul S. Fritz and "*A History of Grist Milling in Delta*" by Wade Ranford. Wade has descriptions and tables that try to sort out the confusing chronology of mill ownership. Both books are available from The Delta Mill Society (contact us or visit our gift shop when open).

President's Note

As I write this note, we are closing down the Mill for the season. We still have several events planned and a number of special tours booked, such as one for the Old Bastards Motorcycle Club, but the regular grind, so to speak, finished with Labour Day.

The 2016 season was a good season but it seemed to pass too quickly. Once again, we were successful in obtaining grants to cover a portion of the costs of our summer staff and the four students we hired were excellent. Allisa and Matt returned for their second and third summers respectively and Jared and Alper arrived for their first. Jared, a first year student at Ottawa U., was an excellent addition to the team. When not involved in tours, he photographed many of our artefacts and, with Allisa, completed their cataloguing. Matt, as our resident blacksmith, produced a number of items for the Mill Gift Shop. Alper can now include re-painting the Delta Bridge on his résumé!

The season started with the hosting of the Settlers' Trek when in arrived in Delta on May 17. The Trek was a re-enactment of the trip from Brockville, taken by the first settlers to Perth, in 1816. A welcoming ceremony, complete with piper and Rideau Lakes dignitaries in period costume, was followed by a community dinner in the Old Town Hall. Next day, the trekkers were treated to milling and blacksmithing demonstrations before they continued their trek to Perth.

Our Season Opening and participation in Brockville Doors Open followed. At our AGM in June we showed the Emmy Award nominated Travelscope video "Thousand Islands – a Canadian Bi-National Adventure" which heavily featured the Old Stone Mill. Our miller, Chris Wooding, and our baker, Margot Sortberg, stole the show and may be up for Oscars.

Other summer events included our first Shunpiker's Road Tour in June, the Fish Fry in July, and the

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**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

Photo by Mariska Kriebel

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 flour 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, that 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 that 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 that grew the ingredients on his land. It cannot get any better then 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!

President's Note Continued ...

Temptation or Temperance Dinner in August. The latter event was our fundraising dinner and featured the temperance history of the area. Dr. Peter Scofield gave the first temperance speech in Upper Canada at our Mill in 1828. During tempting activities at the reception in the Mill, Scofield himself arrived and lectured the participants to the Old Town Hall for a temperant dinner before himself being driven away by truly tempting desserts.

A busy summer but we are not yet done. The Festival of Small Halls dinner takes place this month in the Old Town Hall featuring Hat Fitz and Cara. The Delta Harvest Festival and 'Spirits of the Mill' follow in October. In November and December, the Society will provide its contribution to Delta's Celebrating the Seasons. Information can be found at www.deltamill.org.

Thanks again to all our volunteers this year, especially those on our Board of Directors. We could not continue our work of 'instilling a passion for our heritage' without you.

Dann M. Michols, President

SPIRITS OF THE MILL



Saturday, October 29— We will gather at the Old Town Hall in Delta at 7:00 pm and take a walk to the Old Stone Mill where we will meet some very interesting people from the past. Then we'll return to the Old Town Hall for a presentation on "Pioneer Funeral Foods" by Joyce Gunnewiek and end the evening with refreshments. Cost for the evening is \$5.00 per person. "Not for the faint of heart"

KIDS GINGERBREAD CRAFT FAIR

Saturday, December 3 – hosted by the Delta Mill Society at the Old Town Hall from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Children accompanied by their parents are welcome to come and do some gift shopping and have fun decorating gingerbread cookies - supplies provided at no charge and hot dogs and pop will be for sale



DELTA HARVEST FESTIVAL PLEASE GIVE US YOUR PRESERVES * PRODUCE * BAKING * JELLYS * PICKLES * RELISHES

We're looking for donations from our members of any type of preserves, baking, produce, etc. These are for our Friends of the Mill table where they will be sold as a fundraiser for the mill. Donations can be dropped off at the Old Stone Mill on **Friday, September 30, from 9 am to 4 pm.**



HELP!!

We need volunteers both on Friday, September 30 to help with setup and Saturday, Oct. 1 to help with various tasks. To arrange for a task and a schedule, please contact Katherine Killins:

katherinekillins@gmail.com, 613-924-7142 or
Cathy Livingston: cathy.livingston@sympatico.ca,
613-928-2796.

DELTA COUNTRY CHRISTMAS



Delta Country Christmas will be held on **Saturday, November 26**, starting at the Baptist Church at 6:30 pm. We will walk to the Mill Drive Shed and then end at the United Church. The Christmas story will be told in words, song and pageantry.

CELEBRATING THE SEASON

We'll be open for the five Saturdays leading up to Christmas, **November 19 & 26 and December 3, 10, 17**

Our **Christmas Gift Shop** will be open on those days from 5 pm to 9 pm in the Old Town Hall. We're looking for donations, please start collecting your "Good

As New" items to be delivered to the Old Town Hall starting the 1st week of November. For more information contact Cathy Livingston:

cathy.livingston@sympatico.ca,
613-928-2796

