



# The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Fall/Winter 2018

## Walter H. Denaut and the Old Stone Mill

The early years of the Old Stone Mill were quite rocky. By 1818, William Jones' partner, Ira Schofield, had left Delta for greener pastures. In 1819 William Jones mortgaged the mill to his brothers, Charles and Jonas Jones, for the sum of £ 1,358, indicating the mill was in financial difficulty. In 1835, the mill, now owned by Henry Jones, was put up for sale. It was bought in 1836 by James and Amelia Macdonell. By the time of James' death in 1847, the mill was carrying three mortgages. Then, in February 1850, it was sold by Amelia to Walter H. Denaut. The mill subsequently became known as Denaut's Mills.



Walter H. Denaut

A c.1870 photo of Walter Denaut—likely taken by his son Roderick (a professional photographer). Rideau Lakes Public Library Digital Collection.

Denaut brought business acumen and a large amount of capital to the mill. Born in Prescott in 1807, he worked in Delta from 1825 to about 1829 and then moved to Brockville. There he ended up in various ventures that built up his pool of capital and he returned to Delta in 1839 where he opened a merchant business. He was clearly familiar with the mill and its operation by the time he bought it in 1850. He discharged the three mortgages on the mill and in 1851 did extensive work on the mill, assessment showing the value of that to be £ 2,600. We don't know what he did, but during his early period of ownership he built the mill drive shed with a brick upper storey that became Delta's first town hall.

Denaut was obviously looking for ways to make the mill more efficient. In about 1860, he made the greatest change to the mill, building the turbine shed and replacing the old waterwheel technology with newly developed turbine technology, installing two 48" Swain turbines. He also rebuilt the sawmill adjacent to the turbine shed to provide more business opportunities. The mill at this time was doing well, with yearly production of 6,000 barrels of fine flour.

Denaut, known as "Squire Denaut," also had a significant impact on the village of Delta, not the least of which was his large home, built in 1848-49, today's beautiful Denaut Mansion Country Inn. An 1861 map of Delta shows several properties (at least 7 including his merchant shop) labelled "W.H. Denaut" in addition to the Old Stone Mill and the Mill Drive Shed.

He died in 1889 and his obituary noted that "death has taken one who has been closely identified with the progress of the country." We are indebted to Denaut, for without his acquisition of the mill in 1850 it likely would have become just another one of the many small mills in Ontario that went out of business and no longer exist today.

- Ken W. Watson



## Delta Harvest Festival

September 29

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](http://www.deltamill.org) for the latest information.

## President's Note

Wow, what a season at the Old Stone Mill. It was an extremely busy summer and with the help of our four summer students along with the leadership of Anna Greenhorn, Katherine Killins and Sharon Okum, we were open seven days a week from May 19 to September 3.

We had a great group of student interpreters, Jared Hayes and Emily Gardiner were returning students and Kyla Newman and Nicholas Couzelas were new staff and all did an excellent job for us. Along with their daily tours and many other duties they worked throughout the summer on special projects that fit in with their talents, interests and studies.

Jared, from Smiths Falls, is in his final year, majoring in History at the University of Ottawa. He was staff leader for the training and supervision of the other three staff members and often went above and beyond the call of duty. Jared took on a project to document the standardization of weights and measures, something that applies to the mill (i.e. standard weight of a bushel of wheat). He created an interpretive panel and display which is now located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the mill. We hope to get him back should he decide to proceed with a master's degree.

Kyla, from Athens, is going into her final year at teacher's college at Queens University. Coming from a farming background, Kyla organized a "A Little Red Hen" event at the mill that brought children and their parents to the Mill to learn about how wheat seeds grow into plants and how the kernels are ground into flour which makes delicious food, in this case chocolate zucchini muffins which all enjoyed. She also designed a wooden life size hole board (painted design of people in period costume with open hole to put your face in for photo ops). We hope to have that painted by Lower Beverley Lake Park Staff over the winter to be on display next season.

Nicholas, from Lyndhurst, is going into his second-year majoring in Bio-Engineering at Carleton University. Nick's quick mind was evident early on since after the

first day of training he was ready to give tours. His talents in computer technology had him setting up inventory on our new Square card reader that was used for visitors to make payments using debit and credit cards. His special project was to video tape our Anna doing interpretation of the mill. It's a project we've wanted to do for many years and we thank Nick for doing such a great job. Ken Watson will be working on editing the video files this winter and see how we can best display them.



Jared Hayes with his weights and measures interpretive panel which is now on display on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the mill.

Emily, from Brockville, is going into her second year, majoring in music at Queens University, and well she should with her beautiful voice. Her project this summer was to do a "History of Music" researching what would have been used for entertainment over the 200 years of Old Stone Mill. Her display is on the third floor along with one of her Mom's violins.

We thank all the students, they did a great job, even beyond the mill, such as watering the plants for the Beautification Committee. We hope those eligible will decide to join us again next year.

Many, many thanks to our Miller, Chris Wooding. The Mill was always packed with visitors coming to see him grind

his organic wheat into flour and then buying it as soon as it was bagged. It was a hot, dry summer so we hope the crops will be good when harvested. Demand for Old Stone Mill stone ground flour continues to increase and Chris is hard pressed to keep up with it. We used an MHAC grant this year to get a portable sound system for Chris so that all can hear his extremely interesting interpretive presentation – from the growing of the wheat to the grinding of it into flour.

A new addition to our team this year was our Blacksmith John Cain, which allowed our blacksmith's shop to be open every Saturday (and more at times). Turns out John is a cousin of mine through the Gray family, so it was only fitting that he was working at the forge that my Grandpa Gord Gray used to own and use. Many people visited and watched, fascinated by this

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**Featured Member/Volunteer Q&A by Mariska Kriebel**

***Moel Benoit***

Moel is part of the active hands-on Board of Directors volunteer team that makes things happen for the Delta Mill Society. Moel grew up in Southern Ontario not too far from Windsor/Leamington. He was educated as an Electronics Technologist at Windsor College and worked in this area for a couple of years. Then he relocated to Ottawa and was employed by Bell Northern Research, which became the Nortel Company. His field of expertise was in the R&D department developing digital switches. In 1999 the plan was to move from Ottawa to the countryside and a new home was soon found in Delta.

Moel offers a lot of technical and practical assistance for all sorts of maintenance and repair issues. His logical insight as well as his composed nature have been great assets to the DMS. When a problem occurs, Moel is immediately on site to find a solution, which comes naturally to him. In addition to that, Moel supports and helps out at many events organized at either the Old Stone Mill or the Old Town Hall. He is often accompanied by his loyal four legged friend Milo.



**Whatever job needs to be done, Moel is there with a smile on his face!**

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

I started with volunteering at the Fairgrounds as it was close to our house. Then I was approached by Anna Greenhorn on behalf of the DMS. I said I would like to give it some thought as I was not sure if I wanted to commit to both organizations. The thinking process did not take long as Anna approached me again with even more enthusiasm and a slight, but charming, persuasion. Shortly after that I was introduced to the late Stew Wright from Delta. I started helping Stew with the Christmas lights and the wreaths. When Stew was ready and happy to retire from his volunteer position he handed me a big clump of keys and from that moment I took over his volunteer position.

***What do you find most rewarding of being a volunteer?***

When we came to Delta as newcomers, we did not know anyone. The perfect step to integrate in Delta was to become a volunteer. It offers a chance to meet new people in an informal way and to get to know the community. Throughout the years I have met many wonderful people and it gives you a sense of belonging. Besides the interaction I enjoy it also gives me the opportunity to use my expertise and knowledge in practice. This all for a good cause to preserve the Old Stone Mill!

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

It is part of the history of our area. I think that everyone should appreciate the past and specifically Delta's past. It's a landmark and it attracts many visitors from Canada and abroad. It puts Delta on the map. We should be very proud of it.

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

My favourite museums would be the Canada Aviation and Space Museum, the Canada Science and Technology Museum and the Canadian Museum of History, which are all located in the Ottawa area. Closer to home it is the Arthur Child Heritage Museum in Gananoque. The Brockville Museum is next on my bucket list!

***Thank you Moel!***

President's Note Continued ...

heritage art as John created his special goods that were for sale in the Mill Gift Shop. Great job, thanks John.

Our plan, should we be able to obtain the required funding (~\$70,000), is to restore the Mill Drive Shed (stonework & forge) and to clear out artefacts that do not pertain to the mill or blacksmith's shop, to make it a public friendly area with room for benches and interpretive displays. Thanks to a generous donation by blacksmith Rory MacKay, we now have a second forge. It needs a bit of work but will be a great addition and fits in with our plans to have a training forge in addition to the main forge.

We were very fortunate to receive funding from the William James Henderson Foundation that will be used to paint the outside trim of the Old Stone Mill. Work will begin this fall on the 1st and 2nd floor windows and doors with the balance being done in the spring. We truly appreciate this funding that will spruce up our heritage building.

The Old Town Hall was a busy spot over the summer, particularly our ever-popular public washrooms. It was also the place for kid's paint classes, sign painting, seniors social and dance and other events and rentals. There is lots more happening this fall and winter, for an updated list of events please visit our web site at [www.deltamill.org](http://www.deltamill.org).

Special thanks to Ken Watson for his research on Building the 1810 Old Stone Mill in Delta. Ken presented his findings at our AGM in June and it has been published as a book (available in our gift shop) and is also available as a free PDF on our web site.

And thanks of course to our entire 2018 board of director: Moel Benoit, Doug Bond, Art Cowan, Anna Greenhorn, Katherine Killins, Cathy Livingston, Sharon Okum, Liz Priebe, Ron Schleede, Sally Wanless and Ken Watson, plus our many other volunteers, who all work hard to keep our Old Stone Mill NHS an amazing place.

- Cathy Livingston



## DELTA HARVEST FESTIVAL

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR

PRESERVES \* PRODUCE \* BAKING \*  
JELLIES \* 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.



Please contact Katherine Killins:

[katherinekillins@gmail.com](mailto:katherinekillins@gmail.com), 613-924-7142

## FALL/WINTER EVENTS

September 21 – **Festival of Small Halls** (music)

September 29 – **Delta Harvest Festival**

October 20 – **Country Blends** (music)

October 25 – **Halloween Seniors' Social**

October 26 & 27 – **Spirits of the Mill**

December 1 – **Kids Gingerbread Craft Fair**

December 7 & 8 – **Festive Christmas Market**

December 13 – **Christmas Seniors' Social**

Nov 30 & Dec 1, Dec 7 & 8, 14 & 15 and 21 & 22

– **Celebrating the Season** (NEW – Fri and Sat)

For all the information about these events please see the Events page on our website [www.deltamill.org](http://www.deltamill.org) or see our events listing on our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/DeltaMill/](https://www.facebook.com/DeltaMill/)



### Google 5-star Review

(posted by RT, September 5, 2018)

We are so happy that we stopped in Delta to check out this historic place. The staff were very well informed, dressed in period costumes, and charming. You may see a couple of folks just hanging out in the gift shop near the entrance, they're usually members of the restoration group, and full of fun facts. The exhibits are well labeled, and well explained. The building itself is the star of the show. The gift shop had some fresh all grain flour we bought.