



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Spring/Summer 2016

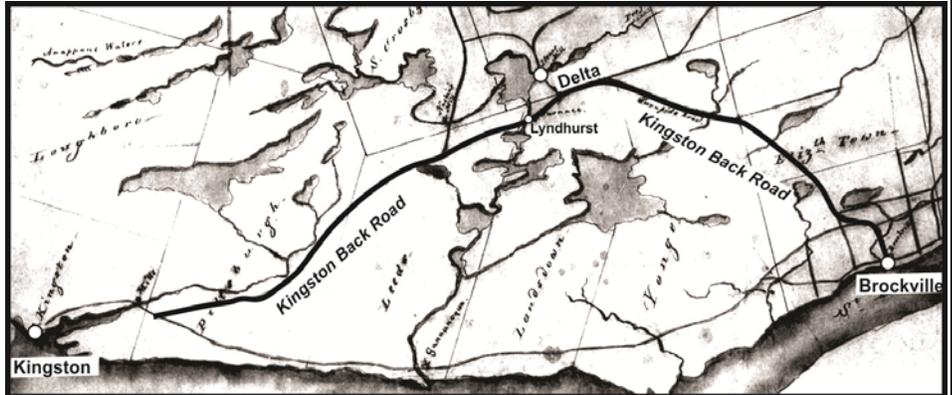
ALL ROADS LEAD TO DELTA

This year is the 200th anniversary of the founding of Perth. Delta has a connection to this in that in April 1816, the first settlers travelled from Brockville through Delta, on their way to the newly surveyed townships surrounding Perth. Why go through Delta? The reason is that they had to travel down Big Rideau Lake, using a scow that was overwintered in a sheltered bay near today's Portland.

To get from Brockville to Portland, the road took them through Delta. In fact Delta was the only inland community in this region at that time. Why? Because of the mill.

Abel Stevens arrived at the small set of rapids on today's Mill Creek, the water flow from a much smaller Upper Beverley Lake (in fact two small lakes) to Lower Beverley Lake, in 1793. This was his second choice for a mill site, he really wanted the greater drop of water at today's Lyndhurst, but couldn't get the water rights to that location, so he petitioned to get the rights for the Delta site. He came back in 1794 with a group of settlers, built a wooden sawmill and formed a small community. At that time Delta was in the middle of a wilderness. There were few trails and few settlers. In 1794, to improve access to the site, Stevens had a road built from the Brockville area to Stevenstown (Delta).

A road back then is not what we think of as a road today. Trees were felled by axes and the first road would have been little more than "an avenue through the forest." Improvements such as road surfacing (i.e. gravel) were to come much later. There is no information on what that first road looked like, but we do have information about a later road Stevens had built. He remained fixated on Lyndhurst, not so much for a mill but for an iron furnace (smelter). Iron deposits had been discovered on Lower Beverley Lake in 1783



Section from a March 1816 map showing some of the roads leading to Delta

and the falls at nearby Lyndhurst could provide the power required for machinery in a furnace. In 1798, Abel Stevens and Matthew Howard organized a group of 16 men to build a road from Lyndhurst to Kingston Mills. When completed, it was reported that the road was 30 feet wide and had 13 bridges.

This new road was the final piece that provided a contiguous northern road connection from Brockville to Kingston, a route that would later become known as the Kingston Back Road. This served William Jones and Ira Scofield well when they built their stone mill in 1810 since a good road already led to Delta, making it easy for farmers to bring their grain to the mill. And so it was in April of 1816, that the first group of settlers to Perth travelled from Brockville to Delta (then known as Stone Mills – a small community with 9 houses), since Delta was the road hub of the region.

The *Settlers Trek*, a commemorative re-enactment of the first trip, will be coming through Delta on May 17 & 18. Join them at a **supper in the Old Town Hall** on May 17 (plus events on the morning of the 18th). Then, on June 25, you can take part in the first *Delta Shunpikers Road Tour*, a fun exploration of our scenic back roads. See the back page for more details.

- kww

President's Letter

We are very busy preparing for a new season. This year, even before our season opening, we are heavily involved in special group tours and planning for the Brockville-Perth Settlers Trek.

As always, this time of year raises one of our priority obsessions – community support. Generally, we are quite successful in obtaining funding for special projects. Library and Archives Canada has generously funded our “Preserving Rideau Lakes Heritage” initiative. Readers may have participated in the “Lost & Found” events held in February and March. In collaboration with the Chaffey's Lock & Area Heritage Society and the Rideau Lakes Libraries, we digitized many key records of the area for community access.

We also obtained a generous grant from the William James Henderson Foundation to enable us to replace the tables and chairs in the Old Town Hall so that people will be more comfortable at the many events planned for this year. Anyone who has risked his/her life by sitting in our old wooden chairs will appreciate the change.

But funds from these and other fundraising activities must be directed towards projects. Only the Township of Rideau Lakes, with its generous grant in a very tight year, contributes to our general operating costs. Unfortunately we were not successful in obtaining Ontario government museum oriented funding (CMOG) this year because the 200-year-old Old Stone Mill could not meet their new climate control standards.

By relaying this, I am not complaining, I am setting out how important community support is for the success of maintaining local heritage such as the Old Stone Mill and the Old Town Hall. We depend heavily and gratefully on the generosity of the local community and patrons from away. Funds received through memberships and donations are essential for the preservation and operation of both historic sites.

Perhaps more important, and more rewarding, is the contribution made by our volunteers. Our Board and committees are composed of volunteers, and volunteers deliver our events. They come from many backgrounds and bring many skills. In this newsletter we are asking our readers to consider the many ways in which their skills could be used by the Society. Please consider joining us. It is not all work; we have a lot of fun and learn about our community and its history.

- Dann Michols



Come out and help our enthusiastic group of volunteers. To make taking the first step easy, we've included a non-committal “expression of interest” volunteer form with this newsletter. Please consider filling it out and sending it to us. Thank-you

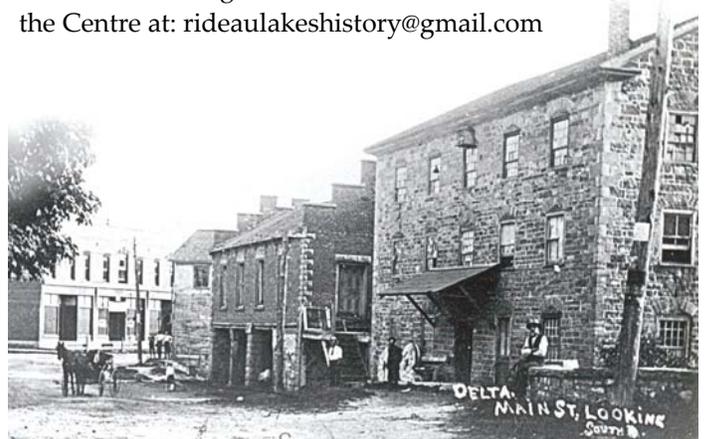
RIDEAU LAKES HISTORY CENTRE

A few months ago The Delta Mill Society received a \$14,900 grant from Library and Archives Canada in order to digitize more of our Rideau Lakes heritage. We've partnered with the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society for this project and our local Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee has also been very involved.

The project is headed up by Dann Michols, DMS President and Sue Warren, former Head Librarian for the Township of Rideau lakes. Lots of work has been done and the first program is now nearing completion. We've applied for a second grant to continue the digitization.

In addition to the digitization, the project has allowed the creation of the Rideau Lakes History Centre, located adjacent to the Delta Library (18 King Street, where the pharmacy used to be). The centre contains a gold mine of heritage information including cemetery recordings, census material, Tweedsmuir books, all printed local histories for Rideau Lakes area, family histories, heritage photographs, store ledgers plus the entire digital database (photos, old newspapers and more).

The Centre is presently open on Thursday afternoons from 1 to 4 pm (or by appointment). Come in and browse the collection or bring in your heritage photos and documents for digitization. For more information contact the Centre at: rideaulakeshistory@gmail.com



Old Stone Mill & Drive Shed c.1890

Featured Member/Volunteer Q&A by Mariska Kriebel

Beth Robinson



Beth is one of the original four trustees that received the deed for the Old Stone Mill from Hastings Steele in 1963, and set it on its course to become the museum it is today. She is the daughter of a well-known, Delta born resident, Lorne Pierce, editor of Toronto's Ryerson Press.

Beth studied occupational therapy at the University of Toronto and during World War II she was employed at the Military Hospital in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, close to Montreal, where she worked with both the physically and emotionally injured men and women. After her marriage, and with her children in school, she returned to occupational therapy and later studied to become an art therapist, taught at the then known Ontario College of Art, and at Concordia University.

Beth is an exceptional woman of many skills, talents and passions. She is involved in introducing a teaching film on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to audiences. Her latest achievement is a published wartime memoir, "Please Write" and currently is writing short stories for Peace Quest Kingston. She is still involved with the modern dance world in Toronto and Guelph, and even dances with the Irish! Beth was presented with the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012 and Governor General's Caring Canadian award in 2014.

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

During our summers at our cottage in Delta, I became one of Hastings Steele's customers. I bought his bran for my muffins. At the time the mill had been owned and operated by Hastings Steele for almost fifty years and he was beginning to think of retiring. It was his wish to turn the historic mill into a museum. On August 28, 1963, John Matheson, then a member of Parliament and a Brockville lawyer, met with Hastings Steele, Mildred Sweet (Delta), Alfred Frye (Soperton), Dr. Robert F. Tuck (Chicago), and myself from Toronto. We signed the papers that would effect the transfer of ownership of the Mill from Hastings Steele to ourselves as trustees. We pledged to create a museum in the Old Stone Mill and paid Hastings Steele one symbolic silver dollar for his generous gift. Initially we focused on creating a museum environment inside the mill and then began finding ways to raise money to restore the building. When The Delta Mill Society was incorporated in 1972, we transferred ownership of the mill to the society.

What do you find most rewarding about being a volunteer?

In the mill I was able to use some of my artistic skills to design the first displays in the museum. Volunteering gave me opportunities to broaden my interests and my skills, to meet a new group of people, and have an ever-growing understanding of the mill's history and function.

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

For me the most exciting time was when, after extensive research, the correct placement of the water wheel and the grinding stones became known. The other part for me is the sheer beauty of the building and all the miracles that went together to restore the mill right to the third floor.

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

I believe there is huge historical significance to a building that tells its story well, and even provides glimpses of its former use, such as the grinding of the wheat for flour and baking. There is always something about the Delta Mill that enriches the mind and eyes of its visitors.

Beside the Old Stone Mill do you have any other favorite museum?

If you call the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto a museum I would say it is my second home. I visit it frequently for the very thing I mentioned when I spoke of the Old Stone Mill: it is beauty that sustains me.

Thank you Beth!





2016 Special Events at the Old Stone Mill

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

OLD STONE MILL 2016 Milling Schedule (starting at 1 pm)

Day	Date
Wednesday	May 18 (9 am)
Saturday	May 28
Sunday	May 29
Saturday	June 4
Saturday	June 18
Saturday	July 2
Saturday	July 23
Saturday	August 6
Saturday	August 20
Saturday	September 3
Saturday	October 1

DELTA FAIR Thurs-Sun, July 21-24

We will be participating in the annual Delta Fair. The millstones will be turning on Saturday July 23. Lots of activities throughout Delta—come and celebrate one of Ontario's oldest fairs—see www.deltafair.com

HARVEST FESTIVAL Saturday, October 1

Our 2nd Annual Delta Harvest Festival promises to be even better than last year's very successful event. Come out and celebrate the bounty of the fall harvest. More details in our next newsletter.

SETTLERS' TREK Tues & Wed May 17-18

The commemorative re-enactment of the trip of the first settlers to Perth will arrive in Delta at 5 pm on May 17. At 6 pm a dinner will be held in the Old Town Hall (\$12)—all are welcome.

On Wed morning (9 am), the mill will be open plus there will be milling and blacksmithing demonstrations. Come out and join the fun.

New for 2016! DELTA SHUNPIKERS ROAD TOUR Saturday, June 25

Come and explore our scenic rural back roads with a self-guided tour of the Delta area – we'll supply the map and listing of points of interest. A brown bag lunch is available (\$8) or you can enjoy a Ploughman's Lunch (\$10) at the Old Town Hall between 11 am and 2 pm.



Registration is free (donations appreciated). Please pre-register by contacting us (613-928-2584 or info@deltamill.org) prior to June 25.

FUNDRAISING DINNER Saturday, August 20

We'll be having a special fundraising dinner with the theme of *Whisky and Temperance*. It will be a gala evening, check our website for updates. Full details TBA.

SEASON OPENING Saturday, May 21

The mill will be open for tours from 10 am to 5 pm daily until Labour Day.

DOORS OPEN Sat & Sun, May 28 & 29

We'll be open from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm for Doors Open with blacksmithing on Saturday and milling starting at 1 pm on both days. Plus a special Ploughman's Lunch (\$8 – 11 am to 2 pm).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Tuesday, June 14, 7 pm Old Town Hall

Our AGM will feature a showing of the Emmy award nominated Joseph Rosendo's Travelscope: *"Thousand Islands - A Canadian Bi-National Adventure"* which features a section on the Old Stone Mill.

Everyone is welcome!!

FISH FRY Saturday, July 30

We'll be having a fundraiser fish fry from 4 pm to 6 pm, featuring Mike Mundell's tasty fish, chips, coleslaw plus a homemade dessert. Only \$12 (adult) \$8 (children).

CELEBRATING THE SEASON Saturdays, Nov. 19, 26 and December 3, 10, 17