



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Spring/Summer 2023

IT'S OUR 60th ANNIVERSARY

On August 28, 1963, Old Stone Mill owner Hastings Steele signed over the deed to the mill to four trustees; Elizabeth Robinson, Mildred Sweet, Albert Frye and Robert Tuck. Those trustees started to call themselves The Delta Mill Society and gathered other volunteers to the cause of preserving the treasure that is the Old Stone Mill. A minute book we have from 1964 shows dozens of volunteers working to preserve the Old Stone Mill and to fulfill Steele's wish to have the mill presented to the public as a museum of milling technology.

On Saturday, August 19, we plan to celebrate the 60 years of volunteerism that have gone into making the Old Stone Mill the magnificent showcase it is today. Every day we celebrate the mill and its heritage significance to this area. But it is the thousands of volunteer hours that the Delta Mill Society puts in every year that allows us to do that. Our 60th anniversary will be a celebration of the people who in the past and to this day support this incredibly important part of our community and of our Canadian heritage.

We are in early planning stages for this event. Katherine Killins is our lead organizer for this event and she will welcome any ideas and/or offers of volunteer support. Please contact Katherine, or any other director, or send us an email letting us know of your interest.

Editor's Note

This is a text heavy edition of our newsletter, mostly dealing with Delta Mill Society issues, things that, as your new President, I think our members should know. I normally make the newsletter briefer and put in more photos and I promise that future editions will be lighter.

- Ken Watson

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday, June 19, 2023

11 am at the Old Town Hall



Old Stone Mill—pre-1972 and Today

The mill is the heritage showcase it is today due to the Delta Mill Society that has invested well over 2 million dollars in restoration of the building as well as adding operational milling equipment, exhibits, signage and more to make it a wonderful heritage experience for all who visit the mill.

REMEMBERING CATHY

Ed note: this is the write-up that I originally placed in the January/February edition of the Delta Pilot—kww



Cathy Livingston

Photo taken at the 2022 Delta Harvest Festival.

It was with profound sadness that we learned of the sudden passing of our President, Cathy Livingston, on Wednesday, December 14, 2022. Cathy played a dynamic role in ensuring that the Delta Mill Society not only met its primary mandate to protect and present the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site, but also for the society to continue to be an actively engaged member of the Delta community – working in partnership with other Delta organizations to help make Delta the vibrant village it is today.

Cathy joined the board of directors of the Delta Mill Society back in 2010 and in early 2017 became President of the society. Under Cathy's leadership the DMS accomplished many milestones including significant maintenance of the mill, continued operation of the Old Town Hall as a community hall for Delta and, most recently, the successful renovation of the Mill Drive Shed into a public-friendly Blacksmith Shop. Cathy also led us through two years of COVID closure to the public when the DMS was very active behind the scenes with several large projects.

On behalf of the entire board of directors of the Delta Mill Society; Moel Benoit, Anna Greenhorn, Jared Hayes, Katherine Killins, Lisa Martin, Sharon Okum, Liz Priebe, Art Shaw, Sally Wanless, and Ken Watson, we offer Cathy's family our sincerest condolences.

Cathy's enthusiasm for all things Delta and area, her kindness of heart and her community spirit will be greatly missed.

President's Letter

As the new President of the Delta Mill Society, I would like to introduce myself and let you know some of the issues we face. I wear many hats, so I am different things to different people; a heritage person (at a personal level and as a volunteer with several heritage organizations), an environmental person (including as Lake Steward of my local lake association), an author (several books), a photographer (thousands of photos), and the list goes on. My background is geology and I worked in the mineral exploration and mining industry in B.C., Yukon and northern Ontario. My wife Pat (also a geologist and a highly active local volunteer) and I moved here from Timmins in 1995 to a house on the shores of Sand Lake (Rideau Canal), in order to be closer to my in-laws who were living in Elgin at that time.

While exploring the area, we drove through Delta and had the "what in the world is that!" moment as the Old Stone Mill came into view. In 1996, to have an active learning project for how to build websites for the new

Internet, I launched a website about the Rideau Canal (www.rideau-info.com) which is an extremely large website that I still maintain on a personal basis. In 1997 I put the word out to various heritage organizations that I was willing to build a website for them on a volunteer basis and host it for free on my website domain. Peggy Fry, via my wife, took me up on that offer for the Delta Mill Society. It was the second heritage organization website that I did, after Friends of the Rideau (also 1997), of what was to become a dozen by the mid-2000s.

So, in 1997, I started volunteering with the DMS, building its first website under the direction of the DMS (initially Alf Cassidy). In 2000, Anna Greenhorn, who can sweet talk anybody into doing anything, invited me to join the Board of Directors of the DMS. I was hesitant, noting that I was already attending far too many meetings with my other volunteer work, and didn't want to be attending more. "No problem" said Anna – "you don't have to attend meetings, we just want your skill sets on the board." This, "don't have to attend meetings"

became known as the "Watson Clause". That lasted less than a year. Of course meetings at the time were held at Anna's house and were in fact quite enjoyable since the DMS board then, as now, was made up of wonderful people (and Anna always put out treats on the table for us to nibble).

My main heritage passion is heritage landscapes, which is why I like National Historic Sites (i.e. Rideau Canal, Old Stone Mill), which have original structures on their original landscapes. These are fundamentally different than a general museum which has exhibits in any building (old or new) – the Old Stone Mill by contrast is the real deal – it's a building built in 1810 still intact on its original landscape. We don't have a lot of these left in Canada. While the Old Stone Mill is a type of museum, it is operated and interpreted specifically as an historic site.

My role in the DMS, prior to being elevated to President with the sudden passing of Cathy Livingston in December of last year, is varied. I'm the heritage researcher for DMS, researching the history of the mill, creating interpretive signage for the mill, and even authoring a couple of books ("Building the 1810 Old Stone Mill in Delta Ontario" and the OSM Interpretation Guide). In my role as "communications" I do the website and Facebook (under protest, I'm not a social media person), interpretive signage, brochures, the newsletter and the like. My camera is always at the ready during any DMS event. I'll also pick up a hammer or screwdriver to help out where needed.

I've now taken on the added load of President – administration, grant writing, etc. We are a big operation, we do in excess of \$100,000 of activity every year, all managed by volunteers. Fortunately I do have help, in particular Sharon Okum, our Treasurer, who, from an administration side of things, quietly and efficiently manages many things and has been of immense help in my learning curve of new administration duties. We are a working board of 11 people, with several also dealing with life issues, something every heritage society has to contend with. I asked our Chair of Cultural Heritage, Katherine Killins, to be Vice-President. To fill the board vacancy, I reached out to our former curator, Paul George, who, after a bit of gentle arm twisting, agreed to join the board. Paul was our curator from 2004 to 2012, when the grants to support his position ran out. He brings his wealth of Old Stone Mill knowledge as well as his professional museum expertise to the board. The rest of

our directors all have roles that support this large volunteer run operation – see the article "Busy Busy" in this newsletter for details.

Another hat I wear is that of heritage advocate. I started becoming very active in heritage advocacy in 2010 when Parks Canada began to abandon their legislated heritage mandate for the Rideau Canal (I continue that advocacy to this day – see www.SaveOurRideau.ca). Heritage doesn't defend itself, it's people who are passionate about our Canadian heritage who defend it. That is in fact a primary role of the Delta Mill Society, our main mandate is to protect and present the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site. Part of that protection now involves advocacy.

Contrary to popular belief, our designation as a National Historic Site of Canada does not come with any federal financial support. Outside of summer student grants (which anyone can apply for), our federal support is \$0. The Province of Ontario is not much better, we apply for (with a complicated grant process) the Heritage Organization Development Grant (HODG) and receive \$1,148 in return. Most municipalities support their public museums at a level to which they can at least have a staff person, but with the Township of Rideau Lakes we have to apply each year though their Community Grants process rather than being a line item in the budget as done by most other municipalities. We were very fortunate this year to get \$15,000 and certainly thank Council for approving that. But, in perspective, that number will only cover about 80% of our insurance costs and less than 40% of our fixed costs if we remain closed. Our costs go up if we are open to the public.

We are one of only two public museums in the township (the other being the Chaffeys Lockmaster's House Museum), and the only one where the non-profit group owns the building (the Lockmaster's House is owned and maintained by Parks Canada). And of course we also own and operate the Old Town Hall and the Blacksmith Shop, and provide public washrooms to the visiting public (a needed visitor service in Delta).

Municipal support depends on where a museum is located. An extreme example is Watson's Mill in Manotick (not an NHS and 50 years younger than the OSM), which, in 2021, received \$221,886 from municipal and regional governments. Back in 2016, Joanne van Dreumel did an analysis of municipal support of public

museums and found the Township of Rideau Lakes to be the lowest of any municipality in this region.

So, advocacy is a role of the DMS President that I see as necessary. In terms of goals, I'd like to see us continue what the Delta Mill Society has done very well over the past 60 years – protect and present the Old Stone Mill. The objects listed in our incorporation as a non-profit with charitable status (our legal obligations), are “TO preserve as an historic landmark the old stone mill at the village of Delta, in the said United Counties of Leeds and Grenville; to promote interest in the historical development of the Delta mill; to provide a suitable repository for irreplaceable objects marking the historical development of the Delta mill”. While we do other

heritage things (i.e. Blacksmith Shop), it is these objects that define the primary role of the Delta Mill Society.

We are also part of the dynamic Delta community, reflected in our current use of the Old Town Hall as a community hall and our support and participation in Delta community events. We are an economic linchpin for Delta and an important contributor (both heritage and economic) to the Township of Rideau Lakes. The Old Stone Mill is a significant attraction that brings in visitors from far and wide. We've been around for 60 years and hopefully will be around forever. We have a long track record of overcoming challenges put in our way, with an attitude of “onward and upward” (to borrow Anna's favourite catch phrase).

Ken Watson, President, The Delta Mill Society

Busy, Busy

Normally, I'd pick a specific topic in terms of Delta Mill Society (DMS) activity, but in this article I'd like to do the broad sweep of what we do. We are the largest heritage organization in the Township of Rideau Lakes. We own three heritage buildings; have annual expenditures of more than \$100,000 and put in an estimated 5,000 hours of volunteer time per year. Unlike most other public museums which receive municipal funding at a level that supports a staff person, we don't and the DMS is operated solely by volunteers. We have no staff, other than temporary summer student staffing (which requires volunteer time in terms of supervision and administration).

We face a number of challenges. While financial health is always a concern (our base fixed costs are now in the order of \$40,000 per year), we do have generous donors who support the work of the DMS and allow us to remain solvent. An equally pressing problem is the ageing demographics of our board. We have many long serving board members and we are no longer the spring chickens we use to be. So, board and volunteer renewal, finding people who are willing to step up and put in the many hours throughout the year necessary to keep the Old Stone Mill maintained and open to the public, as well at the Old Town Hall and Blacksmith Shop, is both a priority and a necessity for the DMS.

Our AGM will be held at 11 am on Monday, June 19 and while it is just a business AGM only (no speaker), we encourage members to come out since it is a great

opportunity to talk directly with our board. We have an 11 member working board, with regular monthly full board meetings, where we spend time working out the many details required to keep us operating and meeting our mandate. We also have committees, which meet as required. There are opportunities there for volunteers to work with us on various facets of what the DMS does.

Administration

To say that running the DMS is a big job is a vast understatement. It is a year-round job, primarily done by the President, Vice-President and Treasurer (currently Ken Watson, Katherine Killins and Sharon Okum). I'd like to give a big shout-out here to our Treasurer, Sharon, who is a keystone of the DMS. Sharon's job extends far beyond the number crunching, it involves student grant management, mill shop sales management, student scheduling and more. Since she's doing essentially two jobs, that of Treasurer and of Mill Shop/Student Grants Manager, we've solicited another volunteer, Eva Wheaton, to help us with the accounting side of things. Eva has been providing help to Sharon for several years. We formalized that arrangement earlier this year to have Eva do most of our main accounting work. In addition to Eva's accounting skills, she provides a third party view of our accounts, making sure we're doing everything correctly.

Mill Protection and Presentation

This is the main part of our core mandate, to protect and present the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site. This is the primary "object" in our incorporation documents. It is also a moral responsibility as a National Historic Site to maintain the site in a state of "Commemorative Integrity" – which, in a nutshell, means we protect the physical structure of the mill and we interpret and present the reasons for our NHS designation to the public.

This occupies much of our volunteer time, everything from building maintenance to the presentation of the mill, including heritage research about the mill, interpretive signage in the mill, the training and supervision of student mill interpreters, our milling demonstrations, information presented in books and on our website, and the list goes on. This is so important to us that we made a decision earlier this year to hire students in advance of grant funding results, since we can only have the mill open to the public, 7 days a week through the main visitor season, through the use of students. This year we did not get the grant funding we needed – but with the generosity of a donor, we will have local youth (3 from Delta, 1 from Lyndhurst), employed for the summer, presenting the mill to the public.

We have Moel Benoit looking after maintenance, trying to nip problems in the bud, and arranging for larger scale projects such as the roof replacement we did on the Turbine Hall in 2020, the stabilization of our accordion lath & plaster ceiling (with the design and help from Art Shaw – also in 2020), getting the windows in the Old Stone Mill repaired (2020-2021), arranging for the full replacement of smoke/fire alarm sensors in the mill in 2022, and, most recently (May 2023), arranging for the installation of a monitored smoke/fire alarm system in the Old Town Hall.

Heritage research and interpretation has been done in the last several years by Ken Watson. Our Cultural Heritage Chair Katherine Killins works hard to make sure the presentation of the mill, including the physical look, is heritage appropriate to the main periods we present (primarily 1810s and 1860s). Our lead oral interpreter, Anna Greenhorn, makes sure we tell the many stories of the mill, ones that will engage public interest. Anna, Katherine and Ken have been working together for the last several years on the overall

presentation of the mill. That work continues to this day. We now have our newest director, and former Curator, Paul George, helping us.

Collections

Our core mandate includes the maintenance and documentation of artefacts related to the development of the Old Stone Mill. We have a lot of artefacts, well over 1,000, mostly housed on the 2nd floor of the Old Town Hall, with a number of oversize artefacts housed in the Blacksmith Shop (formerly the Driveshed). Essentially half that building is filled with artefacts. Not all are related to the mill since our collecting over the years has been rather eclectic with many items not related to our mandate.

We are now into our fourth year of a large project to properly document and organize our collections with the help of a seasonal staff person. That person has been supported by designated donations to the DMS. This project is managed by Collections Chair Sally Wanless, helped, as required, by Ken Watson. As with mill interpretation, we will now be adding the skills of Paul George to this committee.

Old Town Hall

The Old Town Hall (OTH) was acquired by the DMS in 1994, primarily to provide us with office space and a safe spot to house our collections, which were vastly increasing at that time. During the mill closure from 1999 to 2003 for the massive restoration project, the Old Town Hall was operated by the DMS as a public museum, a role it continued for a few years after that as the "Museum of Industrial Technology". When we could no longer afford to maintain the OTH as a museum, we looked at returning it to one of its original purposes, that of a theatre and community hall. In 2012, the DMS put over \$100,000 of renovations into the OTH, including returning the main hall to its former glory.

Today the OTH serves two purposes – as our business office and safe storage for hundreds of artefacts and as a community hall, hosting everything from weddings, to community concerts, to giant book sales. While a primary purpose of the hall is its use as a fundraiser for the DMS, it also serves a significant community engagement role, something the DMS considers to be very important. The DMS has been an

integral part of the Delta community since we formed in 1963, and we take that role seriously.

The community hall aspect is managed by director Liz Priebe with the help of other DMS board members (i.e. Moel Benoit, Lisa Martin) and general community volunteers. It is a very large job, managing everything from hall rentals to DMS events.

Blacksmith Shop

This building, originally the Denaut Hall, was a brick town hall built on top of a stone carriage shed foundation built for mill owner Walter Denaut in the 1850s. In the 1920s, the building was sold by mill owner Hastings Steele and it was repurposed as a garage, including the installation of a forge. In about 1960, the brick hall was removed and replaced by the wooden frame, galvanized steel-clad half storey we see today. In 1992, the DMS purchased the building with the intent of using it for oversized artefact storage and named it the Driveshed. By late 1992, Art Shaw had the forge back in action and started public blacksmithing demonstrations.

In 2022, we put \$42,000 into the building to expand the blacksmithing area, rebuilding the main masonry forge, installing a metal forge, replacing the electrical wiring, adding a display case and other improvements. DMS director Art Shaw is our Blacksmith Shop Manager. We are very excited to have the help of two young smiths, Megan Carter and Mike Armstrong, who moved to the Delta area just a few years ago, and operate Armstrong and Carter Ironworks on Daytown Road.

We have a new 16 foot long Blacksmith Shop sign, hand painted by volunteer Darlene Campbell, that we will be putting on the building. We are trying to have the Blacksmith Shop open to the public as often as we can – it should be a significant heritage feature in Delta for years to come.

Safety

We take the safety of our volunteers, summer staff, and visitors very seriously. In 2022, Cathy Livingston brought our safety manual up to date. Director Jared Hayes is now conducting regular safety audits of our operations. Safety is also something that is core in the training of our students, a duty both to their own safety and that of visitors to the mill.

Everything Else

I could go on (and on), there are so many things the DMS does, some in the public eye such as Facebook, our website, public access to the Old Stone Mill, Old Town Hall and Blacksmith Shop, public events (many types) plus the many things we do behind the scenes. The 5,000 hours of volunteer time estimation is likely an understatement.

In the end our primary goal remains the protection and presentation of the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site, a job I think we do extremely well.

As I write this, we are preparing for our season opening on May 20. This involves all sorts of things, including student training, setting up the mill for public access, managing inventory, scheduling events such as milling and blacksmithing days (see back page) and more.



Summer Students

This photo, from 2018, shows summer students Kyla and Jared ready to greet visitors. Their employment was supported by federal government student grants. This year we applied for 4 positions through Canada Summer Jobs and only received 1. We ask for what we need and normally get that number. The local area MP, in our case, Michael Barrett, can adjust who gets CSJ grants in their riding, so we've written to him to note our concerns about a lack of federal support for the Old Stone Mill NHS and Delta. We hope to do better in 2024. For this year we will self-fund the positions that did not get grant funding.

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.

THE WOMEN OF DELTA SAVE THE OLD TOWN HALL

In December 1994, the Delta Mill Society purchased the Old Town Hall from the Township of Bastard and South Burgess. Today we use it as our business office, to house our large collection of artefacts, and as a community hall, hosting various community events. The building has a long history, originally built in 1879/80 with municipal offices and a court house on the first floor and a Masonic Lodge (Harmony Lodge #370) occupying the second floor. The building at the time was simply a rectangular brick building. The side offices, washrooms and kitchen areas were added in the 20th century.

We are not entirely sure of the original first floor configuration – today we see it as a large open hall, but in the 1880s, it had several offices as well as the public court on the first floor. We know this from a description of the building in a newspaper article from 1888, when the building caught fire.

At about noon on Friday, February 24, 1888, fire broke out inside the building. The following is a description of the event from the Farmerville (Athens) paper:

Shortly after the hour of noon today fire broke out in the Division Court's office in one of the rooms in the lower flat of the town hall. As soon as the alarm was given there was a general movement towards the scene of the fire but the building was filled with such dense smoke that any attempt to save its contents seemed to be impossible and the fire had such a hold on the building that attempts to extinguish it looked like madness in the absence of any modern apparatus for putting out fire. But the people of Delta are not easily driven to despair and in a few minutes, everyone was at work with organized attacks upon the fire in which Walter Beatty took the lead and direction.

The hall was a large two-storey brick building and the fire was found to be raging under the first floor among scraps of lumber and rubbish left by the builders. Two lines were formed to the creek and the men and women pulled up pails of water while children passed them back to be refilled. In this way, a perfect deluge of water was directed at the fire and the effort was soon apparent in a decrease of the volume of smoke making ingress into the building possible. Willing hands were soon engaged in the work of salvage and nearly all the contents of the lower storey as well as furniture and paraphernalia of the Masonic Lodge in the upper flat were removed. A great deal of it however was damaged by water.

In the meantime, the fire had been creeping up the walls and spreading to all parts of the building and the determination of many had given place to a willingness to be beaten and we believe that shortly after two o'clock every man in the crowd began to relax his effort and wanted to quit. Then the women exhibited the stuff they were made of by counselling a continuance of the fight and a redoubling of their own efforts. Thus, the men were shamed into a display of renewed energy and by half past 4 the fire was extinguished leaving the building gutted but with walls standing and roof intact. [thanks to Sue Warren for the transcription of this newspaper article].

Evidence of the fire still remains in the form of charred wood, hidden behind walls and under the floor. Today, looking at the contribution of the Old Town Hall to the Delta Mill Society and to the people of Delta as a community hall, we extend a large thank-you to the women of Delta in 1888 for saving the building.



Old Town Hall—c.1910s

This undated photo is from the 20th century since it has the side office addition which didn't exist in the 19th century. Some of the stones in the foundation are likely from the old stone school house that previously occupied this spot.

2023 Special Events

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

OLD STONE MILL 2023 Milling Schedule (starting at 1 pm)

Day	Date
Saturday	May 20
Saturday	June 3
Saturday	June 17
Saturday	July 1
Saturday	July 15
Saturday	July 29
Saturday	August 12
Saturday	August 19
Saturday	September 2
Saturday	September 30

BLACKSMITH SHOP 10 am to 2 pm

Day	Date
Saturday	May 20
Saturday	July 15
Saturday	August 12
Saturday	September 9

Note: we are still working out our 2023 Blacksmith Shop schedule, more dates are expected to be added. See the events page on our website for up to date information.

Saturday, September 9 will be the *Ontario Artist Blacksmith Association Hammer-In*, with smiths across the province attending.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Monday, June 19, 11 am Old Town Hall

We will have a business AGM starting at 11 am on Monday, June 19.

Everyone is welcome!!

DELTA FAIR Thurs-Sun, July 27-30

The Old Stone Mill will be open as Delta hosts the 193rd annual Delta Fair. See www.deltafair.com

Delta Mill Society's 60th ANNIVERSARY Saturday, August 19

A celebration of 60 years of volunteerism directed to the preservation and presentation of Old Stone Mill. Details TBA.

DELTA HARVEST FESTIVAL Saturday, September 30

The Delta Harvest Festival will celebrate the bounty of the fall harvest. Details TBA.

SEASON OPENING Saturday, May 20

The mill will open for the 2023 season. The Blacksmith Shop will also be open and we will have a milling demonstration starting at 1 pm.

Leeds Heritage Day Saturday, May 27

The Old Stone Mill and many other area museums will be open as part of Leeds Heritage Day.

MUSIC at the Old Town Hall

Saturday, June 3, 7:00 pm— *Mary's Merry Minstrels* presents *Mary's Old Time Country and Old Time Gospel* concert. No admission (donations appreciated)

Saturday, June 17, 7:00 pm— DJ Lee Pankow presents an evening of *Classic Country Music*. No admission (donations appreciated).

Friday, October 20, 7:30 pm— *Festival of Small Hall Music Event*—artist TBA.

More Events & Event Updates

We're always working on new things including more music at the Old Town Hall. We'll have information about these, as well as updates on our current events, on the events page of our website. We also announce each of these events on our Facebook page. See:

www.deltamill.org or www.facebook.com/DeltaMill/