



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Fall/Winter 2019

Is the Old Stone Mill a Grist Mill?

What a silly question, of course it is since grist mill means flour mill – right? It turns out the answer is more complicated than that. The term grist, and how it is used, illustrates the evolving nature of the English language.

The word “grist” is derived from the Old English word *grīst* meaning the action of grinding (from Old English *grindan*, meaning to grind). So, in its original form, a grist mill means a grinding mill. That’s fine and dandy when used as a verb, but grist is now most commonly used as a noun and this is where we run into problems. A common saying is “all is grist for the mill” where the noun means material to be processed by a mill, in our case it would mean grain that is ready to be milled. Our definition of grist is “grain that has been separated from its chaff and is ready for milling” – but that’s only one of several meanings for the term.

Back in 1795, when Oliver Evans first published his millwright guide, which was used in the design of the Old Stone Mill, the term grist was used in reference to small batch milling, what we would call a custom mill. The only section in Evans’ guide that uses the word grist is his description of a system for sequential small batch custom milling, where farmers would bring in their grain, have it ground and returned to them as flour, usually in a single run. The term he used for these small batches was “grists”, for both the product coming in (grain) and the product coming out (flour). He noted that “a mill, thus constructed, might grind grists in the day time, and merchant-work at night.”

We don’t know if the Old Stone Mill incorporated Evans’ sequential system for small batch milling of “grists”. It was purpose-designed as a merchant mill, a mill where the miller buys the grain from the farmer and produces flour intended for sale or export. Milling grists meant that the miller took a small percentage (1/12) of the grain coming in, returning the rest to the farmer as flour. Most millers preferred merchant work over grist work since there was much more money to be made in merchant milling. A miller near Ancaster in 1804 stated that he considered grinding for toll (1/12) not worth the expense. However, similar to many mills of that period, the Old Stone Mill would have done a mix of custom (grist) milling and merchant milling.

By the mid 1800s the term grist mill came to more generally mean any small flour mill (whether it did custom or merchant milling), with the term grist, as a noun, meaning the product being ground (grist goes in, flour or meal comes out). Today its most common use is to mean fodder for the rumour mill (derived from the saying). But bottom line is yes, in today’s vernacular we are a grist mill. It became the common term for a small, older style flour mill and fits with the etymology of the word to mean grinding.

- Ken W. Watson

A Soon to Change View

The red building that blocks the view of the Old Stone Mill is being demolished by the Township of Rideau Lakes. The building, deemed structurally unsafe after years of neglect by its current owner (who lives in the Toronto area), was built by the Russell family. It opened in 1922 with two shops on the main floor and two apartments on the 2nd floor. When the Russells built the maple syrup factory (adjacent to the Old Town Hall), they located their business offices into this building.



The Delta Mill Society is a volunteer, non-profit organization, dedicated to preserving heritage and presenting milling technology of the 1800s.
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President's Note

Wow! A lot has happened since our spring newsletter! In April we did our spring clean-up to prepare for the Maple Syrup Festival and our May long weekend opening. We started by relocating some items on the 3rd floor of the Old Stone Mill as part of our plan to improve interpretation of the building itself as an Oliver Evans' automatic mill (as we detailed in the last newsletter). That meant removing the boat, canoe, fishing gear and the fake cottage. Ken (our Communications and Heritage Research Director) later added new interior signage to interpret features of the building as they relate to the Oliver Evans process. A hopper-boy exhibit is planned on the 3rd floor in 2020 (near to where the original hopper-boy would have been located in the 1810 mill).

Thanks to a grant from the Henderson Foundation, as soon as the weather warmed up Ron Howard painted the trim around the windows and doors of the 1st and 2nd floors of the Old Stone Mill. Once we closed in September David Okum rented a lift and painted the trim on the 3rd floor windows and roof. They both did a great job and the Old Stone Mill is just shining. Ken is thankful that he no longer needs to Photoshop fresh paint onto his photos of the Old Stone Mill.

Thanks to Sharon, our Treasurer, for managing our finances and making sure the federal government grant info is updated, as they certainly help us with the student funding.

Katherine, our Cultural Integrity Director, used her heritage eye to re-design the layout of the mill's gift shop this spring, improving product presentation and visitor flow. That was a great success.

It was a busy summer and thanks to our volunteers and our summer staff we managed to give tours to our many visitors from all over the world. We hired Jared Hayes from Smiths Falls, his fourth year with us, and Justin Vanderkloet and Adrianna Ouellet from Athens area and Annalise Simpson from Plum Hollow. They did an excellent job under Jared's leadership and Anna

said they had things done before she had a chance to even ask them, making her summer more relaxed.

Special thanks to Anna, our Secretary, Chief Tour Guide and many other duties, who was always willing to stop whatever she is doing to give folks a tour. It seems as soon as we closed the door on Labour Day weekend we had a lot of visitors come to the village looking for a tour of the Old Stone Mill.

Thanks to Liz (Events Director) and Moel (Maintenance Director) for looking after the many events that took place in our Old Town Hall as it was rented out

for yoga classes, art classes, weddings, music concerts and special events. Through a 5B Private Foundation grant we purchased a large air conditioner for the Delta Room, replaced the lighting in the main hall which has made a huge difference, painted the main entrance and over the winter we are working on plans to relocate and enhance the kitchen. We have also purchased additional chairs and tables to keep up with the demand of our hall usage.

Thanks to Sally, Lisa and Ron who are always willing to help give tours when needed.

Thanks to Doug for his knowledge of heritage buildings and to Art Cowan for being available when needed and of course Moel who does what's needed to keep our buildings intact.

Thanks to John Cain, our Blacksmith, who was on site every weekend and even took his vacation time to spend in the Drive Shed. Many, many visitors stopped to watch his work, purchasing items that he had created and giving donations. Thanks to Art Shaw, our Blacksmith co-ordinator, for your support.

Thanks to Chris Wooding, our volunteer miller, who cold stone grinds heritage red fife wheat that he grows on his organically certified farm, using our 200-year-old millstones. Chris provides the public with a wonderful presentation while he is milling, from how his wheat is grown to how it is milled into flour. The resulting flour is a very popular items in our gift shop. We were sold out many times, it was hard to keep up with demand.

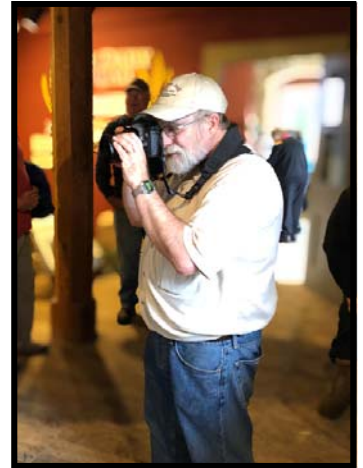
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2019 Summer Students—Jared Hayes & Justin Vanderkloet (top). Annalise Simpson & Adrianna Ouellet (bottom) - photos by Mariska Kriebel.

Ken Watson

The Delta Mill Society consist of a team, Board of Directors/volunteers, who not only share their passion for the Old Stone Mill (OSM) but also have a wide range of knowledge, expertise and skill sets. Ken Watson is part of this team (currently Vice-President) but prefers not to be in the public eye. He is active behind the scenes. Ken grew up in Montreal and studied geology at Queen's University, where he met his wife Pat, who is also a geologist. After working in their field of expertise and residing in Vancouver, Yukon and Timmins, they decided to move to the shores of the Rideau Canal near Elgin in 1995 to be closer to family. A self-confessed "computer geek" he learned how to built websites on the "new" Internet so that he could work from home. He retired from commercial website work in 2015 but continues to do several heritage websites on a volunteer basis, including the Old Stone Mill website. He's also authored several books about the Rideau Canal. A long-time avid photographer, he uses that skill set to take photos at events (for use on social media and advertising) and to document the Old Stone Mill. When the DMS lost its last staff in 2013, Ken took on the roll of Communications and more recently Historical Research and Interpretation. In 2017 he wrote the new interpretive guide for the students and volunteers (with help from Anna) and in 2018 a book about the history of building the mill. Besides all of the above he also prepares the wording and graphics for new interpretive signage, for our various brochures and is the editor of this newsletter.



You'll usually find Ken taking photos of this and that in the mill.

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

In 1996 I launched my first website, a "hobby" website about the Rideau Canal (rideau-info.com). Once I was comfortable with creating websites (this was before the days of do-it-yourself websites), I started to do some on a volunteer basis for heritage organizations. Through my wife I was approached by (then) board member Peggy Fry to built a website for the OSM. In July 1997 I launched the first Old Stone Mill website. Initially content was provided by the DMS (volunteers and staff) but as I became more knowledgeable of the DMS, I started to add my own content and when we lost staff in 2013, took it over completely. I became a Board Member in the spring of 2001, with the "subtle" persuasion of Anna Greenhorn who assured me I wouldn't have to attend meetings (that didn't last long :-)

What do you find most rewarding of being a volunteer?

I enjoy communicating heritage information to the general public, usually through the written word (websites, books, brochures, signage, etc.), to allow them to understand and appreciate the history and the role of the OSM in the development of early Canada. It gives me the opportunity to use all my knowledge and relevant skills. I'm most passionate about heritage landscapes and tend to concentrate on brick and mortar history. I enjoy the research and working with all other board members and my wife Pat, who proofreads everything I write.

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

Its function as an industrial building, based on the Oliver Evans automated mill design, set in a very interesting landscape and its role in the pioneer development of this area.

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

The Old Stone Mill is a physical reminder of our local and regional heritage (something people can see and touch).

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

I favour historic sites over museums (historic sites are the real thing sitting on their original landscapes). My other favourite local historic site is of course the Rideau Canal!

Thank you Ken!

President's Note Continued ...

Thanks to Ginny who not only recruits our volunteers but is also very handy with the needle and has made very special items for our gift shop as well as our students' heritage clothing.

Thanks to Mariska for maintaining our Instagram presence and sharing Facebook duties with Ken.

Thanks to Anne from Nana B's Bakery in Merrickville for baking bread for us and creating the ever popular Miller's Loaf. The community was addicted and almost every Saturday morning the bread sold out before noon.

In September, we participated in the 5th Annual Delta Harvest Festival which, despite some grey and wet weather, was another wonderful success. We also hosted a Festival of Small Halls event in September featuring the Red Hill Valleys.

We are always looking for donations and grant funding to help us with our many capital projects (the list keeps growing). We now need to replace the leaky roof on the Turbine Shed (we plan to do that in 2020), we need to fix the end wall of the Drive Shed, fix up the main forge and install the second forge (for training) and we need to paint the inside trim around the windows in the Mill and fix several sills. There is always something that needs to be done when you are the owner and operator of three heritage buildings.

The DMS are also in the process of relocating items that do not fit in with our mandate which is the Old Stone Mill. Sally (Collections Director), has been working to sort out what we should keep (what artifacts actually relate to our mandate and what don't). Our Drive Shed is full of machinery (much related to cheese) that we would like to transfer to other museums where they can be viewed by the public rather than being buried in one of our buildings. We have a list of these items with photos so if you have any connections and/or ideas please let us know.

It takes a lot of dedication from all of our Volunteers and that certainly includes our 11 member Board of Directors and our 4 Coordinators to manage all of these operations. I am so very thankful for your time, talents and dedication. Together everything works just like clockwork.

See you in the spring!

- Cathy Livingston

FALL/WINTER EVENTS

- November 23 – Delta Country Christmas
November 30 – Festive Christmas Market
December 6 – Festival of Small Halls Music featuring Còig (Celtic quartet)
December 7 – Children's Christmas Workshop
December 14 – Mensen Family Concert
December 21 – Caroling at the Mill
Nov 29 & 30, Dec 6 & 7, 13 & 14 and 20 & 21
– Celebrating the Season



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



Google 5-star Reviews

A few of our 2019 reviews

- Excellent insight into our local history. Tour guide was very knowledgeable. This is a must see.—B.G.
- Beautiful Building. Friendly and knowledgeable staff. – B.P.
- Very interesting building and Mill. Our guide was very knowledgeable. Well worth a visit.—E.M.
- It has been an amazing visit! Highly recommend to everyone! — O.A.
- Really interesting place with a bit of local history. The guide who helped us was very nice and quite knowledgeable. Also their gift shop has some cool things to buy for a souvenir.—S.L.

A theme in these is “knowledgeable guides” which is testament to the effort we put in to train our staff and volunteers. The Delta Mill Society has always put in a lot of effort to ensure that our guides are well versed in the history of the mill and how to best interpret that to the general public, many of whom walk in with no knowledge of grist mills, much less an Oliver Evans automatic mill.