



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Fall/Winter 2020

COVID Accomplishments

Although we were closed to the public this year, we managed to get a lot done, arguably more than if we'd been open. Back in January we were looking forward to a normal year full of events and having the mill open to the public. Cathy worked hard on making grant submissions for our student interpreters to the Young Canada Works (YCW) and Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) programs. By March it was becoming clear this was not going to be a normal year. We cancelled our in-person board meeting for March and then shortly after that heard that the Maple Syrup Festival had been cancelled. In April we were still hoping to open, preparing for self guided one-way tours of the mill and looking into what COVID protocols would have to be put in place. But as the pandemic spread, it was becoming clear that we could not do a safe opening of the mill, even if allowed (which we weren't at the time). On May 19 the board made the decision not to open for 2020.



Jared Hayes and Adrianna Ouellet working with some of our archival material in the Old Town Hall.



Carter Perkins and John Cairncross turning the Old Stone Mill into a carpentry workshop.

Not wanting to disappoint any potential visitors, we created a new information brochure about the Old Stone Mill, and put it, together with brochures of the new heritage walking tour of Delta, in a weather proof brochure holder adjacent to the mill. That turned out to be very popular – we've run through several hundred brochures to date. It will be a permanent feature, we'll have these brochures available year-round, allowing people to learn about the mill and region even when we're closed.

Prior to our decision not to open, YCW had approved 2 grant positions for summer student interpreters. So we went back to them to see if we could re-purpose our two students to work on our collections and interpretive material. That was approved and it set the course for the next two months, with our two students, Jared Hayes and Adrianna Ouellet, working to properly organize our archives, artefact collections and interpretative material. This work was done under the supervision of the Collections Committee; Sally Wanless (Chair) and Ken Watson. With the Old Town Hall closed to the public, the entire building became their workspace and a great deal of progress was made.

We were initially turned down by the CSJ grant program, but, in early July, they came back to us saying that they could provide us with 2 grant positions. The employees didn't have



Closed to the public but very busy behind the scenes.

to be students, just anyone unemployed between the ages of 15 to 30. We knew we had lots of maintenance jobs; a needed clean-up job in the Old Town Hall, painting in the hall, a lot more painting in the mill, the repair of many window sashes, the need for 10 box benches – it became a long list. Liz Priebe and Moel Benoit volunteered to be the supervisors for that work. In mid-August we hired Carter Perkins and John Cairncross to tackle this work. We also contracted David Okum in his professional capacity as a carpenter to repair/rebuild many of the rotted window sashes in the mill. With the mill closed to the public, it turned into a workshop, a production line of carpentry and painting. You'll find a list of all they accomplished later in this newsletter.

Last year, the exhibits committee identified a possible solution to save what is left of the accordion lath and plaster ceiling in the mill – which, even though stabilized during the 1999-2003 restoration, was now starting to fall apart again. The idea floated last year was whether Plexiglas could be used to provide permanent support for the ceiling, while still allowing visitors to see the details of it. This spring/summer, research showed that it was a heritage-appropriate solution. But how exactly to do it? We had conflicting advice including whether to use Lexan or Plexiglas and how to install it. We then went to someone who we knew has experience working with Plexiglas, has carpentry skills and is very familiar with the mill; Art Shaw. Anna Greenhorn and Art had a close look at the job and Art suggested a carpentry solution, including volunteering his time to do the work. It took a bit of effort to acquire Plexiglas in these times of COVID, but we were able to obtain what we needed. Art, assisted by Moel, Ken, Carter and John, got the Plexiglas in place and the old ceiling fully secured in early October.

We're not done yet. The exhibits committee did two thorough tours of the mill in September, looking at what needs to be done for a possible 2021 opening. We still have lots of work ahead of us this winter in terms of new signage and new seasonal displays. We're also looking at lighting issues in the mill. While we have lots of exhibit lighting we lack area lighting in some critical areas. We're just scoping out



Installing Plexiglas. Art Shaw (left) with Moel Benoit, John Cairncross and Carter Perkins.



Information brochures now available to anyone visiting Delta.



Jared Hayes in one of our three collection rooms on the 2nd floor of the Old Town Hall.

that issue now so that we can put some costs to it. We also expect to have a brand new exhibit for 2021, a working model of a Hopper Boy (an Oliver Evans invention for the cooling of freshly ground flour) which should be installed in the mill sometime this winter or spring. It is being built by Dustin Smith as part of an Algonquin College Heritage Carpentry course. That project got a bit derailed last spring by COVID, but we've heard from Dustin that his work is almost done. So we're very much looking forward to that addition in the mill. And finally (for now) – the new roof for the Turbine Shed will be installed this fall.

Bottom line is that your Board of Directors has been very busy this year working to meet the mission and mandate of the Delta Mill Society, to preserve and present the Old Stone Mill National Historic Site.



President's Report

First, I would like to thank our Directors for their support, especially during this difficult and challenging year. We continue to work great together and share our many talents and so we have been able to accomplish a lot of work in 2020, even with the many restrictions.

We did finally manage to hold our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on September 21st at the Old Town Hall but in a different format. After our regular board meeting we held the AGM at 11 a.m., with 1 guest in attendance. I presented our 2019 YTD report that included our Financials plus an update on what had been happening this year.

The focus of the AGM is to elect the 2020-2021 Board of Directors, and I am pleased to say that all positions have been filled. An updated list can be found in this newsletter. Sadly, we lost a long-time friend and member of our Board, Doug Bond, who is missed by all who knew him.

Lisa Martin, under the guidance of Anna Greenhorn, has taken on the role of Secretary. Thanks to Anna for her many, many years as Secretary of the Board and keeping us all in line. We hope she will continue to keep us on track. We welcomed new director Jared Hayes, who is probably the youngest person to sit on the Board of Directors, and is already active with the Collections and Exhibits committees.

Even though we were closed to the public there were still visitors wandering through the village with brochures in hand, thanks to Ken Watson who created one on the history of our Old Stone Mill NHS. These brochures, along with ones of the Delta Walking Tour, were placed in a Plexiglas box that was attached to the fence beside the Mill, so that people could learn what the mill is all about. The brochures had to be restocked regularly as many visitors who came were interested, let's hope enough to come back for a visit and guided tour in 2021.

Thanks to Katherine Killins, DMS Director and owner of part of the Jubilee Business Block, for setting up displays of the OSM and the history of the village in her storefront windows. As tourists made their way along the streets they would stop, look, and read.

This year we added an Exhibits Committee to the Board of Directors to help us determine what exhibits to display in the Old Stone Mill, making changes and removing items that do not pertain to milling. Anna, Ken, Katherine and now Jared have taken on this role.

We were fortunate to be able to hire Jared Hayes and Adrianna Ouellet for 2 months through Young Canada Works. They are both past summer staff with an interest in history and under the leadership of Sally and Ken they managed to sort, organize, and document our artefacts and archives stored on the upper floor of the Old Town Hall. They also documented exhibits that we have used in the past and came up with ideas for some we could do in the future.

The second granting agency, Canada Summer Jobs, initially turned us down but at the beginning of July we received an email stating that we had been granted 2 people. Since the age requirements were from 15 to 30 and they did not need to be students, we felt that we could keep 2 people busy in doing some much-needed maintenance jobs. So, we put out the call and hired Carter Perkins and John Cairncross who started with us on August 24th and finished on October 16th. They did an excellent job working under the supervision of Moel and Liz. We've included a list of the many jobs they completed in all 3 of our buildings.

We hired David Okum to build new replacement sashes for some of the windows in the mill and install new upper trim boards to the Drive Shed, at a cost of approximately \$4,000 for both jobs. The Turbine Shed Roof will be done this



Director Katherine Killins moved several of our displays to the windowed fronts of the units that she and her husband Brian are renovating in the Jubilee Business Block of Delta.

President's Note Continued ...

fall by Superior Contracting out of Athens, ON, using grey coloured Agway Steel. The total cost of that job will be about \$18,300 (\$7,000 materials, \$11,300 installation). We have recently paid our insurance coverage which comes out at \$7,000 for the year. We spent about \$1,800 on Plexiglas and wood to provide needed support for our old accordion lath and plaster ceiling. Other expenses included 25% of the wage cost to cover off the balance through hiring students under the Young Canada Works program. Canada Summer Jobs is 100% covered.

Given the fact that we lost revenues with no gift shop sales on flour, bread and souvenirs, no donations from mill tours and no fund raising events such as the Giant Used Book Sale, Old Bastards Vintage Motorcycle Club breakfasts, Festival of Small Halls and other concerts, and hall rentals, our Treasurer, Sharon Okum and I were becoming concerned.

So, on September 1st, we applied for the Museum Assistance Program Covid19 Grant and received \$10,000. We also received \$1,148 from the Ontario Heritage Organization Development Grant program. Earlier in the year we received grant funding of \$8,000 from the Township of Rideau Lakes Grants to Others and \$500 from the MHAC Seed Funding. These, plus of course the generous donations from our membership, will keep us in financial shape.

We still have some work to finish up on the displays at the Old Stone Mill, but we believe members will be pleased with the changes and will come to visit once we can safely open again. A major project we are working on is the Drive Shed. Our plan is to somehow relocate the equipment being stored there so we can expand the inside of our Blacksmith's Shop, to make it more public friendly with seating and exhibits related to ironworks and to also add a second forge for training. We will be organizing a committee to review and make plans in the New Year. If you are interested in volunteering please let me know.

So, while we have been closed to the public it has been a very productive year as we have managed to get a lot of other jobs done behind the scenes that will prepare us for the future. We do hope to be able to open in 2021, COVID permitting, and are already working towards that goal.

Thanks,

Cathy Livingston

DMS President

2020 Maintenance Work

Normally, Moel works behind the scenes fixing this and that as problems come up (and they keep coming up, a fact of life with heritage buildings). With our CJS staff, Carter and John, we were able to tackle a large number of these jobs. Their work included the following:

Old Stone Mill

- Painted all the interiors of the mill windows
- Painted the railing between the drive-shed and the mill
- Completed new sashes for 11 mill windows
- Painted new fascia and window trim
- Built 10 box benches for use throughout the mill
- Helped with the installation of Plexiglas on the third floor
- Rearranged wall partition on 3rd floor of mill
- Removed "icehouse" on 3rd floor of mill
- Built barn board wall on stairway on 1st floor of mill
- Sanded and refinished outside benches

Mill Drive Shed

- Painted sashes and sills of the drive shed

Old Town Hall

- Painted the lift on the front of the hall
- Painted the back door of the hall.
- Trimmed back vegetation around the heat pumps
- Moved the books on the stage to make way for painting the ceiling
- Helped with cleanup of 2nd floor, moving items to 1st floor and taking 2 loads to the dump
- Painted door jamb of accessible bathroom
- Touched up paint in the bathrooms
- Installed corner trim in bathroom hallway



Daylight showing through a rotted out window sash in the Old Stone Mill (close up on left)

Accessioning & Deaccessioning our Collections

While we are an all-volunteer group, we try to follow professional protocols as much as possible. That includes everything from maintaining the mill in a state of Commemorative Integrity (condition, authenticity, interpretation) to properly maintaining our collections of archival material and artefacts. With any "object," whether it is a document or an artefact, there is a formal process to follow when adding it to a collection (accessioning) or removing it from a collection (deaccessioning). The reasons a museum might deaccession an item are many, but in general relate to whether the artefact meets the requirements of the museum's collection policy and is in good enough condition to be put on public display. With most museums, less than 10% of their collections are on display, the rest are held in storage. The Delta Mill Society collections are no exception to that.

When the Delta Mill Society was incorporated in 1972, the objectives of the society were defined as *"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."* Over the years, due to the general historical interests of some of those involved with the Delta Mill Society, and the fact that we had storage space, we ended up with a large eclectic collection, much in no way related to the mill or milling. This has created a serious shortage of space in our limited storage areas, we even have some overflow stowed in a director's barn – it's a significant problem for us.

This came to the fore about three years ago when we started to get serious about fixing the Drive Shed to provide a nice, publicly accessible Blacksmith's Shop. We wanted to open up more space but a problem we immediately ran into is that 2/3 of the building is filled with "stuff" – most not related to milling. The largest single object is a large, very heavy, Cheese Box Veneer Lathe (from the cheese factory in Philippsville). We also have a cheese box maker, a cheese barrel head saw and other cheesy things. Until we can relocate these items, we can't proceed with the Blacksmith's Shop improvements.

We also had a space problem in the Old Town Hall. The 2nd floor houses much of our collections, but it too had run out of room. It was filled to brim with various things – including a paper mache cow. We needed to get things in order.

The Delta Mill Society has always tried to follow museum protocols and there was a properly established system for accessioning and deaccessioning objects. But as Sally found out, it hasn't always been followed. In some cases our documentation for an object was just a handwritten note, in some cases it was nothing. The level of documentation depended on who accepted the object on behalf of the Delta Mill Society.

It was also clear on review that our list of non-mill related artefacts was much longer than those related to the mill. This presented an opportunity to solve our space problem, particularly in the Drive Shed, by identifying which objects related to the historical development of the Old Stone Mill and which weren't. Those that weren't could be deaccessioned and removed, hopefully to a new home.

There was a lot of board discussion of what to do with these items. Many relate to the historical development of Bastard Township (agricultural & cheese items) or to the historical development of Delta. However, the Bastard and South Burgess



The Cheese Box Veneer Lathe in our Drive Shed.



Anna peeks into part of the Drive Shed filled with "stuff."

Historical Society has no storage facilities, the Delta Agricultural Society, which does own several buildings, told us they had no available space and the Township of Rideau Lakes has not made any storage space available for township artefacts. So, while the board had a preference to have these objects remain local if possible, some may end up leaving this area for good.

Early this year the board voted in a new collection policy, basically our incorporation objectives, to collect items related to the historical development of the Old Stone Mill. Part of the new policy specifies what to do with deaccessioned items. Listed in order of preference is: donated or sold to a local museum, donated or sold to a regional museum, donated or sold to any museum, or sold to the public. This priority is based on a goal of having the object, if possible, be available for viewing by the general public (rather than gathering dust in our collections).



One of our new forms.

Over the past year, Sally and Ken have also revamped all the existing forms we use to bring them up to date and have added a few new forms to cover off any scenario, to properly document activity within our collections. Part of the work done by our students this summer was this mammoth organization of the documentation, to help us properly identify what should be maintained in our collections and what should be deaccessioned and possibly be removed from our collections.

Deaccessioning doesn't mean that we're getting rid of them right away, or even at all. It is just a formal system of designating certain items as not meeting our collection criteria. Many we will keep if we think they have use as possible future interpretive displays which don't necessarily have to be mill related. For instance, artefacts related to vintage small scale maple syrup making are something that we plan to keep. We've also put a vintage cutter (a type of sleigh), built in the Delta Centennial Carriage Factory, on display on the 2nd floor of the mill. But other material, such as those related to cheese making or dairy production, don't belong in our collections.

In terms of what we've already done, our cheese-related items have all been deaccessioned. We had two people from Upper Canada Village look at these this fall (originally to be this spring, but that got derailed by COVID). Unfortunately they emailed us a couple of weeks ago with the news that they have decided not to take any of this equipment since the machinery is not old enough to meet their collection criteria. We are now looking at alternatives, we can't do our Blacksmith's Shop expansion until these objects are removed.

We've donated a boat and plan to donate other boat building material to the Portland-on-Rideau Historical Society, in the hope that they will be able to put these on public display. We understand that there is an initiative under MHAC to provide a storage facility for artefacts related to the historical development of this area, with the eventual idea of using these in a community museum. It would certainly be nice to have that available in 2021, we have lots of items we could provide for that initiative. But for us the clock is ticking, particularly with the Drive Shed. We need to see that space opened up in 2021 and will try hard to make that happen. Would anyone like a few tons of vintage cheese equipment?

- Ken Watson

DIRECTORS 2020/2021

At our Annual General Meeting on September 21, 2020 in the Old Town Hall, Delta, the following directors were elected for a 2020/2021 term: Moel Benoit, Art Cowan, Anna Greenhorn, Jared Hayes, Katherine Killins, Cathy Livingston, Lisa Martin, Sharon Okum, Liz Priebe, Sally Wanless and Ken Watson. At the next board meeting the following executive and co-coordinating positions were agreed upon: President: Cathy Livingston, Vice-President: Ken Watson, Secretary: Lisa Martin, Treasurer: Sharon Okum, Milling Co-ordinator: Chris Wooding, Blacksmith Co-ordinators: Art Shaw and John Cain.