

Our Story

History:



The Fly Creek Cider Mill was built in 1856 by Hosea Williams. The Mill's water-powered turbine powered the cider-making equipment, grist mill and a wood working shop. Operation continued with Linn Kane until the early 1950's.

Barbara and Charlie Michaels purchased the property mainly for the residence and used the Mill as a workshop. Soon Mr. Kane's stories of the Mill's former glory took root and the young couple started restoring the Mill. Cider operation restarted and the Michaels

grew their business into a successful fall market and attraction reaching sales of almost \$300,000 over a 90-day season.



In 1999 Barbara and Charlie decided they wanted to retire and sell the property to Brenda and Bill. Otsego Apple Growers, LLC was created to hold the property and Fly Creek Cider Mill & Orchard, Inc. was created as the business. Brenda and Bill extended the business by opening in June and operating through December. At the end of the first year there was little profit and they decided to drastically change the business in order to succeed.

New products were introduced, merchandising and traffic flow improved, and an investment in marketing and public relations was made to position the Mill as a one-of-a-kind attraction and retail experience. Additionally a new logo was developed and trademarked.



The first 7 years saw annual improvements to the existing building all funded through cash flow plus the addition of a 3-acre parking lot purchased from and financed by a neighbor. Improvements included an interior stairway to link the upper and lower sales floor and expansion of retail space into existing back room storage and prep areas. Every time square footage was increased, sales and average sales increased. Technology was introduced with a complete point-of-sale system and an On-Line Store was added in 2007.

In 2012 Farm Credit East became involved and the mortgage, remaining SBA loan and parking lot mortgage were refinanced. Additionally Farm Credit extended the same Operating Line of Credit provided by the prior lender with the addition of a small Capital Line of Credit.

Sales continued to increase through improved marketing, merchandising and product expansion. The existing structure was stressed to the extreme and not intended for the amount of retail use. Additionally the flat roof needed structural repairs. The building was also not winterized which limited growth during the winter.



In 2015 after many years of observing traffic flow and buying patterns the decision was made to complete a thorough renovation. The single-story series of additions applied to the Mill through the 70's and 80's were removed and replaced with a second story learning center created to expand viewing of the cider-making operation.



The renovation started December 20, 2015 and was completed on March 20, 2016 and the Mill opened for its 160th year on April 1st. The new facility provided full insulation, new electrical and two sources of heat and air-conditioning. The traffic flow improved and was modeled after Stew Leonard's and Ikea stores.



Now operational year-round the Mill maintained its core year-round staff supplemented by a large number of seasonal full and part-time employees. Marketing continued to expand and developed the Mill into a must-see attraction in any Cooperstown tourism itinerary.

[Take a 3-D tour of the Mill Store Marketplace, Learning Center and Cider Gallery](#)

[Long version of the History of the Mill](#)