

FABYAN WINDMILL

FABYAN FOREST PRESERVE

The 68 foot Dutch windmill is located on the west side of Route 25 in the Fabyan Forest Preserve. Originally built on a site along York Road between Elmhurst and Oakbrook it is estimated to be over 150 years old. Colonel George Fabyan purchased the windmill for \$8,000 and had it moved to his Geneva estate in October, 1914. It was reassembled over a period of nineteen months for a cost of over \$70,000. Fabyan hired a Danish millwright, Mr. Rasmussen, to oversee the reconstruction. Rasmussen was assisted by John Johnson from Batavia and the Wilson Brothers Construction Company.

Roman numerals carved into the beams to help with reassembling are still visible in the windmill. It took thirty-three workers mixing cement by hand to build the foundation which is 42 inches deep and 26 inches thick. Inside, the beams and shafts are cypress wood and trimmed in black walnut. New gears were also made of wood.

At the top of the mill is a huge cogged wheel turned by the outside wings (or arms) and the wind. The moving cog rotated a shaft running the height of the mill. This turned two grinders and a sharpening wheel in the basement. The cogs and wheel are made from carefully fitted wood. Throughout, the mill is held together by dowels glued into drilled holes. There are very few nails to be seen.

Before and during World War I the mill ground different grains. Paper and cloth bags to hold ground grains were found in the basement. An old tool box and hand drill also remain from the period. The huge antique oven was used to bake bread, although the flue system may have been inadequate. The mill was no longer used after World War I.

When the mill was resingled in the late twentieth century, a paper was found under the shingles signed by some of the men who worked on the mill in 1915. They include: Oscar Wilson, Charles Lindahl, Ben Anderson, Carl Peterson, Martin Seastrom, and Dick Swanberg.

In 1973 the Geneva Chronicle interviewed William Benjamin Munson who was a member of the one of the crews to work on the windmill. He was an employee of the Edgar E. Belding Co. of West Chicago when the windmill was moved to Geneva. The company was employed to move the structure once it had been disassembled. The transporting crew, with the use of a team of mules and a 20 foot extending wagon, moved the 50 foot upright beams to the estate.

Two honors have been accorded to the windmill. The first was being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The second involved selection in 1980 as one of five American windmills reproduced in a stamp booklet produced by the U.S. Postal Service.

Beyond these honors the Fabyan windmill has been, and continues to be, a well-known landmark in the Fox Valley for over eighty years.

FABYAN WINDMILL

FABYAN FOREST PRESERVE, GENEVA, IL

The 68 foot Dutch windmill, located in the Fabyan East Forest Preserve, in Geneva, IL was originally built on a site along York Road between Elmhurst and Oakbrook II around 1846. Colonel George Fabyan purchased the windmill for \$8,000 and had it moved to his Geneva estate in October, 1914. William Benjamin Munson who was a member of one of the crews that worked on the windmill, noted that the transporting crew used a team of mules and a 20 foot extending wagon to move the 50 foot upright beams to the estate. The windmill was reassembled over a period of nineteen months for a cost of over \$70,000.

Fabyan hired a Danish millwright, Mr. Rasmussen, to oversee the reconstruction. Rasmussen was assisted by John Johnson from Batavia and the Wilson Brothers Construction Company. When the mill was re-shingled in the late twentieth century, a paper was found under the shingles signed by some of the men who worked on the mill in 1915. They included: Oscar Wilson, Charles Lindahl, Ben Anderson, Carl Peterson, Martin Seastrom, and Dick Swanberg.

Roman numerals carved into the beams to help with reassembling are still visible in the windmill. It took thirty-three workers mixing cement by hand to build the foundation which is 42 inches deep and 26 inches thick. Inside, the beams and shafts are cyprus wood trimmed in black walnut. New wooden gears were also made. At the top of the mill is a huge cogged wheel turned by the outside wings (or arms) and the wind. The Fabyan windmill arms were covered with sails to help catch the wind. The moving cog rotated a shaft running the height of the mill. This turned two grinders and a sharpening wheel in the basement. The cogs and wheel are made from carefully fitted wood. Throughout, the mill is held together by dowels glued into drilled holes. There are very few nails to be seen.

Before and during World War I the mill ground different grains. There is a large wooden platform outside of the mill that served as a scale to weigh wagon loads of grain. Paper and cloth bags to hold ground flour were found in the basement. An old tool box and hand drill also remain from the period. The basement, outfitted with a bakery, is believed by experts to be unique in the world. The huge antique oven was used to bake bread, although the flue system may have been inadequate. The mill was no longer used after World War I.

The Fabyan windmill has received two high honors. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was selected in 1980 as one of five American windmills chosen to be U.S. Postage Stamps. In 1997 the Fabyan Windmill underwent a top to bottom evaluation by Lucas Verbij, *Verbij Hoogmade B.V., The Netherlands*, one of the foremost windmill experts in the world. According to Verbij, the main reason the windmill still exists is Colonel Fabyans elaborate reconstruction.

"It is clear for me that this windmill was built with a unlimited budget, the best wasn't good enough and every detail was worked out well. I desperately hope that the people of the United States realize that they have a very unique windmill that still can be saved and should be saved forever. The windmill is an example of super millwright's work, technical knowledge, perseverance and wealth of the beginning of this century. When (if) the Fabyan windmill would have been built in The Netherlands it would be now the most popular windmill of this country because of its beauty, unique machinery and its still new looking appearance. Save the Fabyan windmill...The Colonel and the windmill deserve it"

The Fabyan Windmill is owned by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. For more information, please telephone Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley at (630) 377-6424.

