

# Fabyan Windmill

After years of planning and effort to restore historic Fabyan Windmill to its original grandeur, the Forest Preserve District of Kane County presented a grand opening and rededication celebration on Friday, June 3 and Saturday, June 4, 2005. Fourth-generation Dutch Windmill Maker Lucas Verbij was contracted by the Forest Preserve District to tackle the tough job of restoring the Windmill. The Windmill began turning the spring of 2004 when a first group of volunteer millers was trained. Final restoration efforts were completed in the fall of 2004 and the millers continued working. A second group of volunteer millers and the first group of volunteer docents began training in 2005.

“Fabyan Windmill is the best example of an authentic Dutch windmill in the United States, actually it’s a treasure and would be among the most popular windmills in the Netherlands,” states Verbij. The 68-foot, 5-story Fabyan Windmill is located on the west side of Route 25 in the Fabyan Forest Preserve.



The Windmill was originally built by Louis Backhaus, and his brother-in-law Freidrick Brockmann, German craftsmen, between 1875-76, on a site at Meyers Road near 16th Street, now Lombard, Illinois. It was purchased by Colonel George Fabyan from Mrs. Fred Runge for about \$8,000 and moved to his estate, Riverbank, in Geneva in July 1915.

The Windmill was disassembled and the Egar E. Belding Co. of West Chicago was employed to move the structure. The transporting crew used a team of mules and a 20-foot extending wagon to move the 50 foot upright beams to the Fabyan Estate. The Windmill was reassembled over the next 19 months. Colonel Fabyan hired Danish millwright, Mr. Rasmussen, to oversee the reconstruction. He was assisted by John Johnson from Batavia, along with the Wilson Bros. Construction Co. Mr. Rasmussen and Mr. Johnson did much of the delicate woodwork, such as rebuilding of the vanes (blades). Roman numeral markings carved into the beams used in reconstruction are still visible.

It took 33 workers mixing concrete by hand to build the foundation. The foundation is 42 inches deep and 26 inches thick. Inside the mill the beams and shafts are of cypress wood and trimmed with black walnut. New wooden gears were also made. At the top, or cap of the mill is a huge cogged wheel turned by wind blowing against the vanes. The vanes are covered with canvas sails to help catch the wind. The moving cog rotates a shaft running the height of the mill. This turns two grinders and the sharpening wheel in the basement. The cogs and wheel are carefully fitted wood. Throughout, the mill is held together by dowels glued into drilled holes with scarcely a nail to be seen.



A bakery, in the basement, was out-fitted with a huge oven. The flue ran underground and came up through a chimney located near the Windmill. This was necessary since a chimney was not possible with the turning cap. There is mystery regarding the use of the oven as the flue for the oven was poorly designed and thus, is questionable.

Before and during World War I, the mill ground the grain grown at Riverbank as well as from local farms. The grain was used to feed the prize livestock on the Fabyan Estate and to make bread for the Fabyan’s two bears Tom & Jerry.



Several honors have been accorded Fabyan Windmill. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and it was also honored in 1980 by its selection to be on a U.S Postal stamp. This fifteen cent stamp was part of a series of five American windmills included in a stamp booklet called WINDMILLS USA.

Indeed, even the Windmill can tell some of its own tale. A time capsule was discovered in the walls of the mill by construction engineers from Walter Daniels Construction Company. Documents included the names of persons who proudly worked on the mill in the 1930’s as well as the 1960’s. The Forest Preserve added another list, information from the year 2004 and placed the time capsule back in its original spot.

## HOW DOES THE WINDMILL WORK?

The cap (s) is turned with the winch (p) until the sails catch the wind. Depending on the wind, a sail is drawn down the sail bar (b). High winds require less open sail than low wind. The sails catch the wind and turn the wind shaft (f). The wind shaft which is connected to the brake wheel can be stopped with the brake by putting weight on the brake lever (i) or by pulling on the external brake lever (m). The turning wind shaft (f) turns the wallower (j), which turns the upright shaft (k). A wood wheel (r) on the fourth floor is used to adjust and irregular spinning of the upright shaft (k). The upright shaft is connected to a large gear (l) on the third level. Power to run many things in the windmill is drawn from this gear. Lantern gears (n) are used to turn the grinding stones (5 & 6), grain elevators (7), automatic sifters (8) and a vacuum system.

## How is grain ground to flour?

Grain is poured into first level hoppers (1) when carried into the Windmill. From there it is cleaned in the basement with the corn sheller (2) and grain separator (3). Grain elevators (7) carry cleaned grain to the third level hoppers (4) which drop it into the second level grinders (5 & 6). Corn & oats are ground in the west grinder (5) and dropped to a ceiling mounted sifter (not shown) on the main level. Wheat & rye are ground in the east grinder (6) and sifted in the automatic sifter (8) on the second level. The flour is stored in hoppers (9) suspended from the ceiling on the first floor.

## WINDMILL TOUR INFORMATION\*\*

Saturdays and Sundays  
1 p.m. - 4 p.m. between  
May 15 - October 15

Groups of 10 or more by appointment  
Call: (630) 232-5980 or  
Email: [forestpreserve@co.kane.il.us](mailto:forestpreserve@co.kane.il.us)

### \*\*Please note:

Tours of Fabyan Villa and Japanese Gardens are also provided by Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley throughout the year by appointment as well as the following dates.  
Please call: 630-377-6424 to schedule.

May 15-October 15

### Fabyan Villa:

Wednesday 1-4 p.m., guided architecture tours every half hour.  
Saturday & Sunday, 1-4:30 p.m. guided history tours every half hour.  
Thursday 1-4 p.m. (Kid's Days!)

### Japanese Garden:

Wednesday and Sunday 1-4 p.m.  
June - August: Thursday 1-4 p.m. (Kid's Days!)

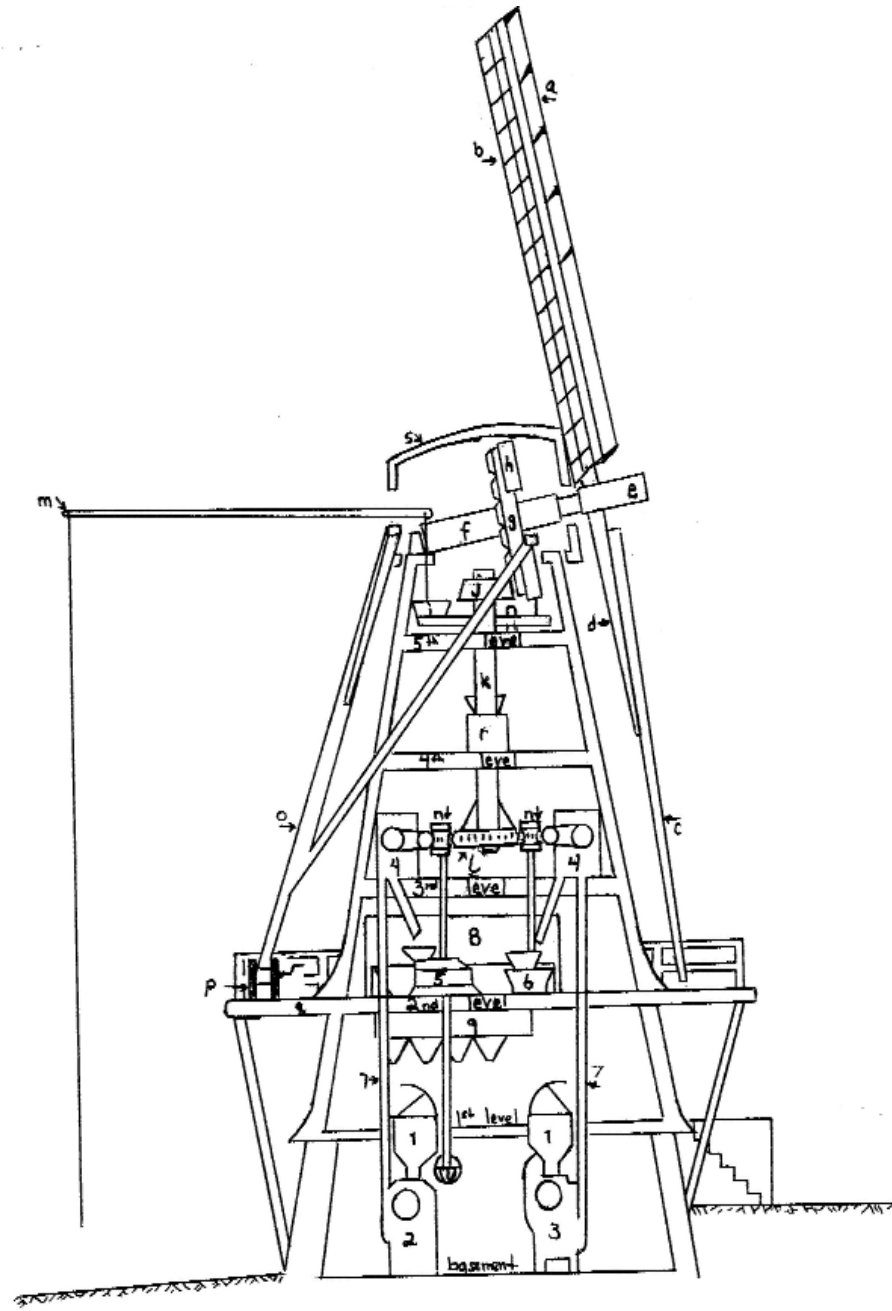
## Where is Fabyan Windmill? Can I Volunteer?

The Fabyan Windmill is located on Rt. 25, between Rt. 38 and Fabyan Parkway in Geneva, Illinois. Please join us as a Volunteer Docent! Call 630-232-5980 or email: [forestpreserve@co.kane.il.us](mailto:forestpreserve@co.kane.il.us)

## WINDMILL SECTIONS

- a. windboard
- b. sail bar
- c. whip
- d. sail stock
- e. head end of the wind shaft
- f. wind shaft
- g. brake wheel
- h. brake
- i. brake lever
- j. wallower
- k. upright shaft
- l. large gear
- m. external brake lever
- n. lantern gears or spider gears
- o. tail pole
- p. winch
- q. stage
- r. wood wheel
- s. cap

- 1. hoppers
- 2. corn sheller
- 3. grain separator
- 4. cleaned grain hoppers
- 5. corn & oats grinder
- 6. wheat & rye grinder
- 7. grain elevator
- 8. automatic sifters
- 9. storage hoppers



Kane County Forest Preserve District  
 719 Batavia Ave., Bldg. G  
 Geneva, IL 60134



## FABYAN WINDMILL



KANE COUNTY FOREST  
PRESERVE DISTRICT