

The Old Wind-powered Gristmill

A Regional Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark
The American Society of Mechanical Engineers
May 1991



Memorial Square
Victoria, Texas

The Old Wind-powered Gristmill

This old wind-powered gristmill, constructed in 1870, is a fine example of the European tower-type mill. It is believed to be the only existing one of three known to have been built in this region. It is located in Memorial Square, in Victoria, Texas.

Standing approximately 35 feet high, it supports four blades approximately 15 feet long, and contains equipment and machinery necessary for grinding meal from corn. The mill was originally designed so that the cap could be turned into the prevailing winds while the base remained stationary. Although a wood pole at the rear of the cap was used for turning, it proved to be a difficult task. Storms proved a hazard, and on several occasions high winds threatened to ruin the solidly built structure.

The walls were constructed of hewn logs, fastened with wood pegs. The main shaft of the mill was made from a 20-foot long log, 15-inches in diameter. Green boards, twelve inches thick were carefully selected, then bent to form the gear wheels. The primary gear, fastened to the main shaft, is approximately 15 feet in diameter, and is toothed. It drives a bevel gear attached to the primary vertical shaft. A second toothed gear on that shaft drives a bevel gear on a secondary vertical shaft which powers the top grinding wheel. This shaft was adjusted with wedges to change the particle size of the meal. The grinding capacity was 500 pounds per week, if the wind was blowing.

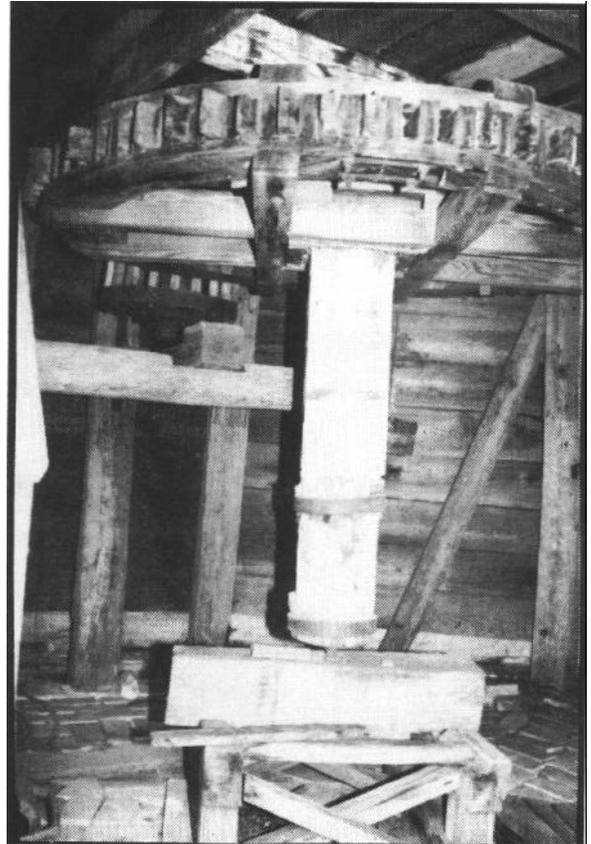


Primary Gear Set

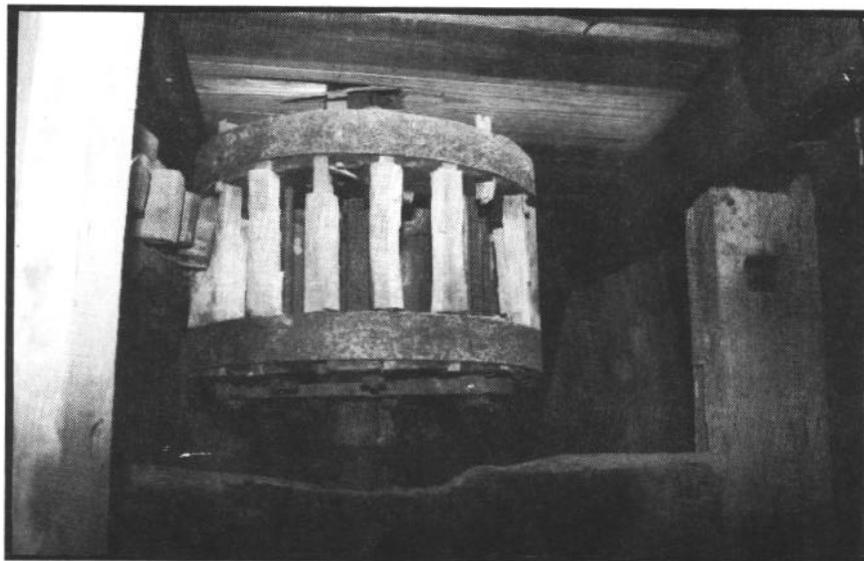
An original mill had been built before the Civil War, east of Goliad, Texas, by F.G. Witte. Mr. Witte imported the 48" diameter grinding stones, one 9" thick, the other 15" thick from Europe. The mill was sold to Louis Albrecht, who moved it to the Raisin Community on Coletto Creek, west of Victoria.

Fred Meiss purchased the remains of the mill, and with the help of Otto Fiek, rebuilt it on Spring Creek, north of Victoria. It remained in that location until it was moved to its present location, in 1935, after being deeded to the Victoria Morning Study Club.

During the reconstruction in the Victoria Memorial Park, some more modern materials were used. Steel nails, machine cut lumber, and shingles were used, which were not part of the original construction. The superstructure, log shafts, gears, and grinding stones appear to be original.



Secondary Gear Set



Grindstone Driving Shaft

ABOUT THE LANDMARKS.....

The Old Wind-powered Gristmill is the twelfth Regional Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark designated since the program began in 1973. In addition, ninety-eight National Landmarks, and thirty-two International Landmarks, five Mechanical Engineering Heritage sites and two collections, have been recognized by the Society.

The landmarks program recognizes our technological heritage, and serves to encourage the preservation of the physical remains of historically important works. It provides a roster for engineers, students, educators, historians, and travelers, and helps establish reminders of our past, present, and possible future paths of discovery.

The Coastal Bend Sub-section gratefully acknowledges the efforts of all who participated in the landmark designation of the Old Wind-powered Gristmill, especially Mr. T. Lindsey Baker of the Strecker Museum, Baylor University, and personnel of the Victoria Public Library, the Victoria Advocate, and the Victoria City Parks and Recreation Department.

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

Arthur E. Bergles, President
Reid P. McNally, Jr., Region X
Vice-President
George T. Butler, III, Region X
History & Heritage
D.L. Belden, Executive Director

THE ASME NATIONAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Prof. Euan F.C. Somerscales, Chairman
Robert M. Vogel, Secretary
Robert B. Gaither
Richard S. Hartenberg
J. Paul Hartman, PE
J.L. Lee, PE
Joseph P. Van Overeen, PE
John H. Lienhard

THE SOUTH TEXAS SECTION

Richard Boswell, PE, Chairman
Walter R. Taber, Jr., PE
Vice-Chairman
Geoffrey Anderson, PE, Secretary
J. Scott Campbell, PE, Treasurer
Sam Collier, PE, History & Heritage

THE COASTAL BEND SUB-SECTION

Tony Marcinkowska, PE, Chairman
Michael J. Chiles, PE, Vice-Chairman
Mike Roach, Secretary
Brian Reed, Treasurer
Paul Withers, Chairman
History & Heritage
Dwight P. Heath, History & Heritage