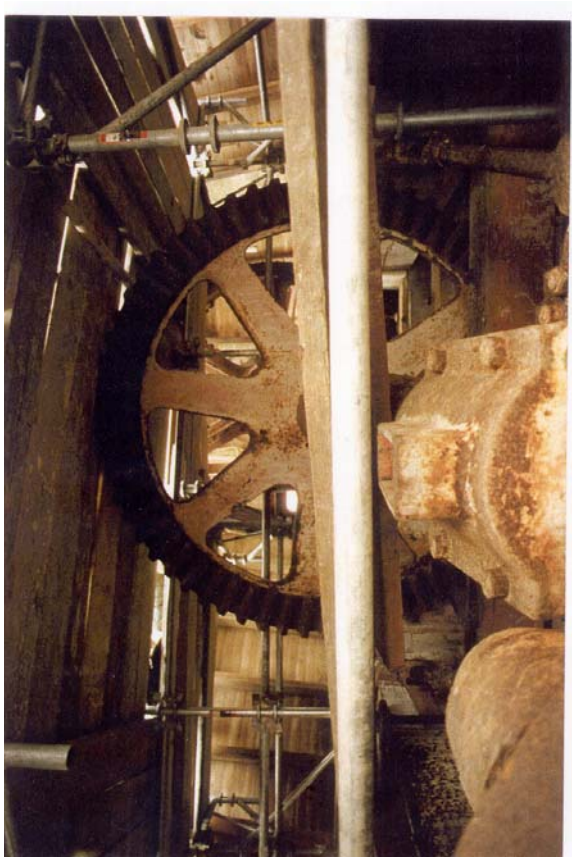
The Fall and Rise of the Murphy Windmill (by Denise Louie, September 2006)

Deterioration of Tower Structure


Corrosion of Windmill Shaft

Understated…..

yet proudly standing at the Western Edge of Golden Gate Park is the South, or Murphy Windmill. It awaits its turn for the admiration already experienced by its North sibling, the Dutch Windmill; it awaits its return of its magnificent sails from the Netherlands, currently refurbished by a fourth generation Dutch windmill craftsman.

Built in1905 with donated funds from banker Samuel Murphy and designed by local engineer J.C.H.Stut, the Murphy Windmill incorporated mechanical elements of Dutch as well as other European windmills along with his own innovations unique to this structure. Powered by Pacific Ocean winds, the windmill pumped as much as 1.5 million gallons of water daily, and key in transforming the western end of Golden Gate Park.

The use of the windmill was discontinued around 1913 with the advent of inexpensive electrical power and the abandoned Windmills saw increasing deterioration over the years.

Murphy Windmill

Recognized…..

In 2004, Golden Gate Park was inducted into the National Register of Historic Places. Because of its significance to the development of the park, the Murphy Windmill is listed as one of the historical contributing facilities.

The "San Francisco Giant," as it is known in the Netherlands, holds architectural significance for its innovative design in engineering and construction, and serves as a reminder of its function to provide irrigation before modern methods. According to Lucas Verbij, fourth-generation Dutch windmill engineer, "Windmills were never built with such a pump system before. The mill had extremely long and wide sails and was built close to the ocean, catching strong winds and storms. The mill shows the general construction and mechanical knowledge of that period with beautiful cast-iron work. Because this windmill is so unique, with so much of the American technical history and know-how of the beginning of this century in it, it should be protected and kept forever."

Inspiration….

The South Windmill offers inspiration to individuals about the importance of sustainable and renewable energy sources, a concept that has perhaps even more relevance today than it did at the time of its initial construction. Besides serving as a popular destination for Park visitors, the windmill conveys a compelling message to an international audience regarding the exploration and practical application of alternative energy. On June 5, 2005, San Francisco proudly hosted World Environment Day, a celebration established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to stimulate worldwide awareness of the environment. As part of the festivities, a temporary exhibit on wind power was setup at The Randall Museum, another Recreation & Park Department facility.

Refurbished Windmill Shaft

Reconstruction in the Netherlands

Restoration…….

Through a joint effort by the Recreation & Park Department, the San Francisco Parks Trust, and the Campaign to Save the Windmills in Golden Gate Park (The Campaign). The Murphy Windmill restoration will be completed in two phases. The first phase, already in progress, consists of the windmill cap removal and refurbishment by Lucas Verbij in the Netherlands with the remaining structure documented, partially dismantled and stored for reuse. Funded by California , a State Coastal Conservancy grant, and in part by private donations raised by The Campaign, the windmill cap will be returned to San Francisco when the second phase commences.

The second phase consists of the stabilization and restoration of the tower structure, the cap returned, mounted in place, and reassembled. Funding is provided by grants from State Prop 12 & 40, State Coastal Conservancy, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the California Cultural and Historical Endowment, and the benevolence of individual and corporate donations. **The Recreation & Park Department and its partners continue to identify funding to complete the project.**

Help complete the Windmill….

Efforts are still underway to help fund the project. YOUR DONATION WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE! Visit the San Francisco Parks Trust website at www.sfpt.org or The Campaign to Save the Windmills in Golden Gate Park website at www.goldengateparkwindmills.org or call (415) 668-0763 for more information on how you can be involved in saving this remarkable treasure.

Vote….

for the Murphy Windmill to receive a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express online once a day through October 31, 2006 at www.partnersinpreservation.com .