

2012 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Murphy Windmill, Golden Gate Park



The fully restored Murphy Windmill in Golden Gate Park

The Murphy Windmill, commonly believed to be the largest windmill of its kind in the world, is the second of two windmills located on the western edge of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The 95-foot-high tower was constructed in 1907 to irrigate the park, pumping water from underground aquifers to refresh the park's dry, sandy soils. The Murphy Windmill is a municipally owned site, one of an ensemble of early 20th century structures that define the origins of Golden Gate Park. The Windmill is San Francisco Landmark no. 210 and is a contributor to the Golden Gate Park National Register Historic District.

In 1905, a donation from Samuel G. Murphy, a SF banker, made construction of the Murphy Windmill possible. J.C.H. Stut, a mechanical engineer trained at the Union Ironworks in SF designed it based on traditional Dutch mechanical elements, but replacing traditional wood operating parts with steel and iron. The windmill operated until approximately 1935. By the late 1960s, it had fallen into disrepair.

The restoration project was initiated by concerned citizens who organized the Campaign to Save the Golden Gate Park Windmills and was successfully completed as a public/private partnership. During the nine-year project, San Francisco's Dutch community, including the Netherlands Consulate General, were active supporters. The object of the project was to eliminate the potential for collapse and restore

the windmill to operating condition, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Restoration, as well as use the windmill to educate the public as an example of sustainable practices.

The project was completed in three phases. Apart from the physical project challenges, raising funds in a two phase, multi-year project in an uncertain economic climate proved to be one of the project team's greatest challenges. That funding was found and the project completed is a testimony to the commitment, ingenuity and tenacity of all involved.

Learn more about the history of the windmills at Golden Gate Park: <https://goldengatepark.com/windmills.html>