

The Windmills of Long Island part 1

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Long Island stretches out into the Atlantic for 120 miles east of New York City, and the mills I shall describe are all situated east of the portage at Canoe Place and the Shinnecock Hills. Only very few of the old mills remain, and these are the Beebe Mill at Bridgehampton, three mills at East Hampton, one at Gardiner's Island, Hay Ground, Montauk Point, Shelter Island, two at Southampton, and the Mill Hill Mill at Shinnecock Hills.

None of these mills now fulfil their original purpose, that at Hay Ground is used as a tearoom, and at Montauk Point the old mill serves as part of a house, and that at Mill Hill is used as part of a summerhouse. Most of the mills date well back into the eighteenth century, but some are of later date. The Beebe mill was built on a hill at Sag Harbour in 1820 and was moved to Bridgehampton in 1837. It was sold and again moved in 1882, when steam power was added and was working until March, 1911, when it lost a sail. This was the last of it as an operating mill, and eventually it was bought by John E Berwind and moved to its present site.

East Hampton, which contains three windmills, is the home of the Dominys, a noted family of windmill builders, whose name continually crops up in the records of these old mills. The present head of the family, Mr Felix Dominy, is well acquainted with the running and repair of windmills. The first reference to a windmill at East Hampton concerns a 'spider mill' ie, a jib sailed mill, which in 1737 was conveyed to his great-great-great-grandfather, and which stood on a plot of land near the road to Three Mile Harbor; this was replaced in 1806 by the Mulford Mill.

In addition to these mills there is mention of Merry Mill, Sandy Hook Mill, Hedges Mill (a grist mill), Chelfield Mill, Derby Mill and Dominy Mill. Evidently the township was an important milling centre at that time. It is recorded that a mill in Hash Amonock was sold in 1788 for £21!



The Gardiner Mill, one of the three remaining, stands on the site on the east side of Main Street Burying Ground, where it was built in 1771. It is in the grounds of the original mill house, now enlarged and owned by Mr Lion Gardiner, a descendant of the Mr Lyon Gardiner who had it built, and the mill is maintained in working order. Notes made by John Lyon Gardiner for whom Gardiner's Island Mill was built have survived in MSS, and from them we learn that the mill was erected on Monday, May 23rd, 1795 by Nathaniel Dominy Junr and others and cost \$773 or £309.7.0. It still stands in working order on its original site by the shore.



The Hook Mill was built in 1796 by Nathaniel Dominy, the timber for it being got on Gardiner's Island. It was last run in 1907, and in 1920 was purchased by the village as part of a War memorial and repaired. It gets its name from the low tract of land at the east end of the Main Street on which it stands. It is in excellent condition.



The Pantigo Mill was built, or more probably rebuilt, in 1771 on an artificial mound on the village green. In 1850 it was purchased by Mr Felix Dominy's father, who moved it on to his land on the Panitigo - Amagamsett road. In 1915 it was bought by Mr George N Buck who had it removed to the garden of the cottage made famous by John Howard Payne as 'Home Sweet Home.' He had it repaired and used as a museum and on his death left house, mill and grounds to the village of East Hampton.