

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 21 1979
DATE ENTERED AUG 3 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Davidson Windmill

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

SE of Superior on WI 13

STREET & NUMBER

State Highway 13, .6 miles east of County Road "U" NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Superior

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

7th

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Douglas

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <i>Vacant</i>

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Eugene Davidson

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1 Box 80

CITY, TOWN

Wentworth

STATE

Wisconsin

54894

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Douglas County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1313 Belknap

CITY, TOWN

Superior

STATE

Wisconsin

54880

5 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

July 24, 1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin

53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on a bluff overlooking the Amnicon River, the 35-foot tall Davidson grist windmill is an eight-sided sheet metal clad tower, topped with an octagonal revolving log turret. The turret carries a shaft on which eight wind blades are mounted.

Each face of the mill is eight feet wide at the base, tapering to five feet at the top of a 20-foot tall trunk. The tower's eight tamarack supports are enclosed by panels of white-painted sheet metal. The mill's only openings are four one-foot square windows and a small doorway at the mill's base. The revolving turret is constructed of hand-hewn pine logs and is capped by a cedar-shingled conical roof. Two 25-foot tail poles are attached to the turret for turning purposes.

The mill's interior is divided into three levels: the main floor where the finished product is collected and the gear assemblies are located; the second floor with the two millstones and grain hoppers; and the third level where the wind shaft, brake wheel and main drive gear are located. A 30-foot tamarack log is the main shaft for the mill's operations.

All interior mechanisms are original. The main timbers are hand-hewn and all other wood is hand-cut. Originally, the mill was encircled at the second level by a platform that was used to adjust the blade's sheets. This was removed ca. 1940. The sheet metal "sails" that hung on the frame latticework blades were removed about the same time. The mill's sheet metal exterior was painted white ca. 1930. Otherwise the structure is identical to a 1920 photograph.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
—1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1900¹

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Jacob Davidson²

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Davidson Windmill is a rare American example of a northern European style windmill, and is significant for its historic associations with the development and commerce of northern Douglas County. It is one of the few fully intact gristmills remaining in Wisconsin.

The windmill's builder and original owner, Jacob Davidson, was one of the first homesteaders in rural Douglas County, settling on his 80-acre tract along the Amnicon River in 1887. Davidson had been a millwright in his native Finland where he worked in flour mills driven by wind power. Then known by the name of Jaako Tapola, Davidson was also a practiced shoemaker, carpenter and blacksmith. He worked on Canadian railroads after he emigrated from Finland in 1881.

Davidson began construction of the windmill in 1905. At that time, the closest gristmill was in Superior, eight miles away and largely inaccessible because of poor roads. Davidson's mill serviced a six-to-ten mile radius until 1926 when, with the advent of the automobile and new roadways, it could no longer compete with the larger Superior mills. During operations the mill capacity was 40 barrels a day, with an average price of 15¢ per bushel of wheat. Other materials ground were oats, barley, rye and peas.

History records that in 644 A.D. a millwright in Persia was the first to use wind to power a mill. Then, early in the 14th century in France, the tower mill was developed with a rotating cap that enabled millers to face the sails into the changing winds. This type spread throughout Europe to Finland where the common four-blade fan was replaced by eight blades. The tower mill also became very popular in the United States, particularly on Cape Cod and Long Island where there were few streams for mill power, but an abundance of ocean breezes.

Familiar with the Finnish windmills, Davidson designed his mill similarly, using a coffeepot to get the right proportions. Such tapering octagonal structures were known as smock mills in Europe, as they gave the appearance of a man wearing a smock with a caplike headpiece (the turret).

(continued)

1. Wisconsin Magazine of History, March 1942, p. 329
2. Ibid. p. 329

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Davidson, Eugene, Oral Interview, July 22, 1978.
 Howell, C., The Mill. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1977.
 Roeseler, O., Wisconsin Magazine of History, Vol. XXV, No. 3. Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, March 1942.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .04 (approximately)
 UTM REFERENCES QUADRANGLE NAME Parkland, Wisconsin-MN QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

A	1,5	5,8,3,7,3,0	5,1,6,6,5,2,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The nomination includes a circular parcel of land extending 23' from the center point of the windmill, or approximately 12.5' from the outside walls of the structure.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James Peters, Project Surveyor	(continued)
ORGANIZATION Northwest Regional Planning Commission	DATE August 21, 1978
STREET & NUMBER 302 Walnut Street	TELEPHONE (715) 635-2197
CITY OR TOWN Spooner	STATE Wisconsin 54801

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Richard Henry
 TITLE _____ DATE 5/10/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Carol Hull DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DATE Aug 3, 1979

ATTEST: Emma Jane Sax **KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER** DATE 8-3-79

Regional Coordinator KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

The octagonal turret was constructed of hand-hewn pine stumps, used because of the need for curved corners where the logs from each side overlap. There are no overhanging timbers. Nearly all other materials used were native to the Amnicón Valley, with all the labor, including sheet metal work, forging and carpentry, performed by Davidson and a few neighbors and children. Due to the difficulty of cutting and hauling the huge granite millstones from the Amnicón River, finding the straightest tamaracks for the mill's centerpole and eight side supports, and making the intricate gear assemblies, the construction process took four years. All the gear teeth are cut birch roots carefully meshed together.

There are two sets of millstones; the set four feet in diameter is used for rough millwork, the other, six feet in diameter, is used for the finer grinding processes. The bottom stones are powered, through a series of gears, by the main shaft and, in turn, the wind blades. Utilizing two tailpoles on the mill's exterior, the turret can be rotated along a track on steel rollers so that the blades will face squarely into the prevailing winds. These wooden arms were never more than two-thirds covered with their sheet metal sails due to the strong winds off Lake Superior, 2.5 miles distant. It was planned to use a motor tractor and wooden pulley for auxiliary power. This option, however, was never used.

Idle since 1926, the mill remains in excellent working condition through continued maintenance by the owner. In 1956 the mill's severely deteriorated stone foundation, broken wooden blades and original cedar shingle roof were replaced, using similar materials. Ownership remains in the same family, whose house and surrounding log out-buildings are located in the valley below the windmill. The mill is one of the few grist windmills in the Midwest, and the only known Finnish mill in Wisconsin.

11. CONTINUED

Barbara Wyatt, Nomination Specialist

State Historical Society, Historic Preservation Division

February 27, 1979

816 State Street

(608) 262-8904

Madison

Wisconsin 53706

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DAVIDSON WINDMILL, Town of Lakeside, Superior vicinity, Douglas County, Wisconsin

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2.9.

Additional exterior photograph submitted herewith.

Submitted 06-27-79
DNA