

Mystery of the Tipton, Jr. Windmill

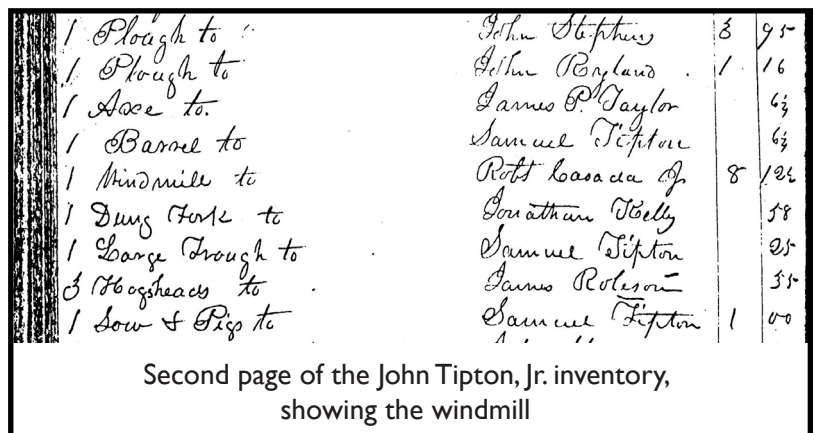
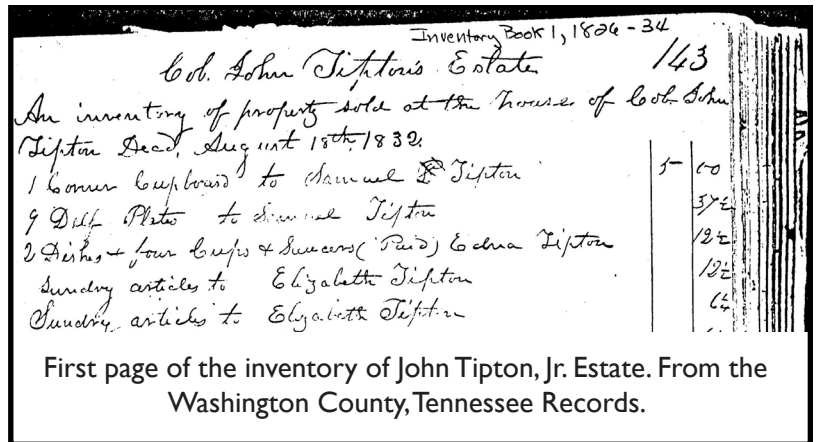
With the help of a grant from the Harris Fund for Washington County, a fund of East Tennessee Foundation, Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site began a project in 2013 titled "Wind & Water." A new exhibit panel and an accompanying activity box are planned as an outcome. Continued research has been and is being conducted on the usage of wind and water power during the lives of John Tipton, Jr. and David Haynes (father of Landon C. Haynes). Nearly a year after the death of Tipton, his estate was sold at auction. One item sold was a windmill. As for David Haynes, he worked as a millwright. The lives of both men are captivating and essential in memorializing the site's history, but the puzzling Tipton, Jr. windmill is one of fascination.

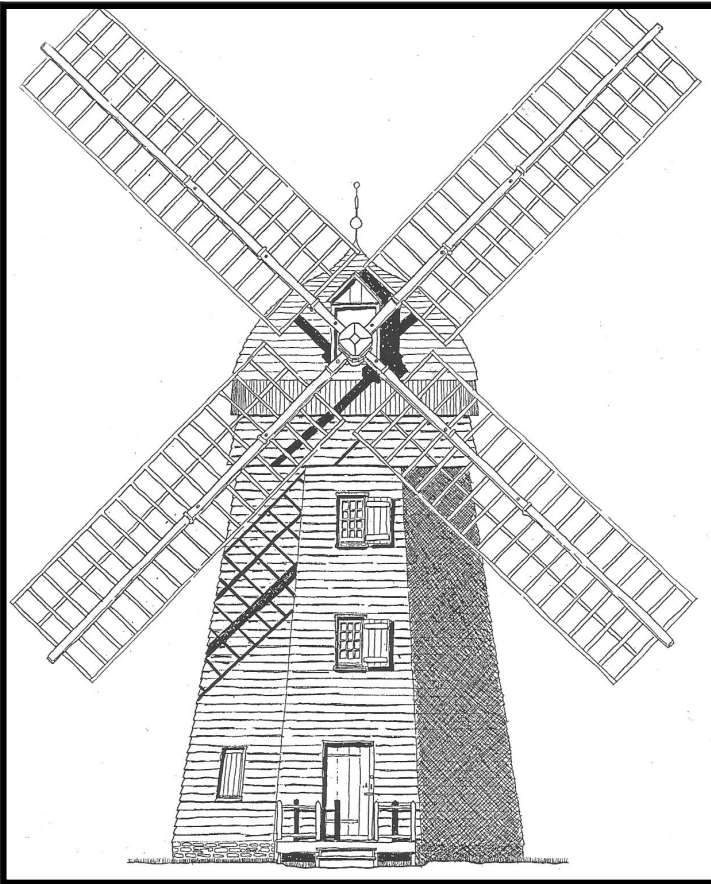
The earliest use of wind power was by attaching sails to boats. Ancient sailors learned and quickly understood the importance of the energy of wind. The first documented instance of the use of a windmill was in Persia around the sixth to eighth centuries A.D. This primitive windmill is believed to have been used to either grind grain and/or pump water. By the fourteenth century, the use of windmills spread rapidly throughout Medieval Europe. Gone was the simple and inefficient horizontal design of Persia. Complex vertical windmills began to guide Europe into the age of industry. Windmills were not only used for grinding grain and pumping water, but were now draining dykes, processing spices, making pigments, milling lumber, and much more. The ideas and designs of European windmills was brought to America and played major roles in industrializing the Northeast of the United States. Steam power of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries put a near end to the use of windmills. Today, wind pumps for water and wind turbines have replaced the windmill in capturing the energy of wind. Wind pumps have allowed cities to thrive out west by pumping valuable water to millions, while wind turbines provide electricity for countless of people throughout the world, even for East Tennesseans.

Born on April 21, 1767, John Tipton, Jr. was the seventh of nine sons of Colonel John and Mary Butler Tipton. On October 27, 1791, he married Elizabeth Snapp and returned to live in Shenandoah County, Virginia. In 1797, they moved to and settled in Blountville, Tennessee. While living there, he bought and sold hundreds of acres of land. After his father's death in 1813, Tipton, Jr. inherited his father's cabin at the base of Buffalo Mountain. Moving with his family from Blountville to Washington County, Tennessee, he expanded his father's cabin into a Federal-style farmhouse. Much like his father, he excelled in politics. Elected seven times to the Tennessee General Assembly, the height of his political career was when he served as the Speaker of the House during the 7th General Assembly. While serving in the 19th General Assembly, John Tipton, Jr. fell ill and died on October 8, 1831. He was buried in what is now the Old City Cemetery of Nashville.

On August 18, 1832, an inventory was recorded of the items of John Tipton, Jr. that was sold at auction nearly a year after his death. Rudimentary items such as a corner cupboard, dishes, a desk, beds, an axe, ploughs, and even farm animals comprise the inventory list. Most of the items were bought by his remaining children or relatives. The fourth highest paid item was for eight dollars and twelve and a half cents. This item was the mysterious windmill. Listed only as a "windmill," this leaves the type and its possible use unidentified. The buyer of this windmill was Robert Casada, Jr. Little is known about Robert, but it is believed that he was the son of John Casady. John owned 160 acres of land on Sinking Creek near Buffalo Mountain and was the neighbor to Colonel John Tipton, the father of John Tipton, Jr. And so the puzzling Tipton, Jr. "windmill" leaves one to imagine what once stood on the property.

Part two of the "Wind and Water" will continue in the next edition with the article "David Haynes the Millwright."





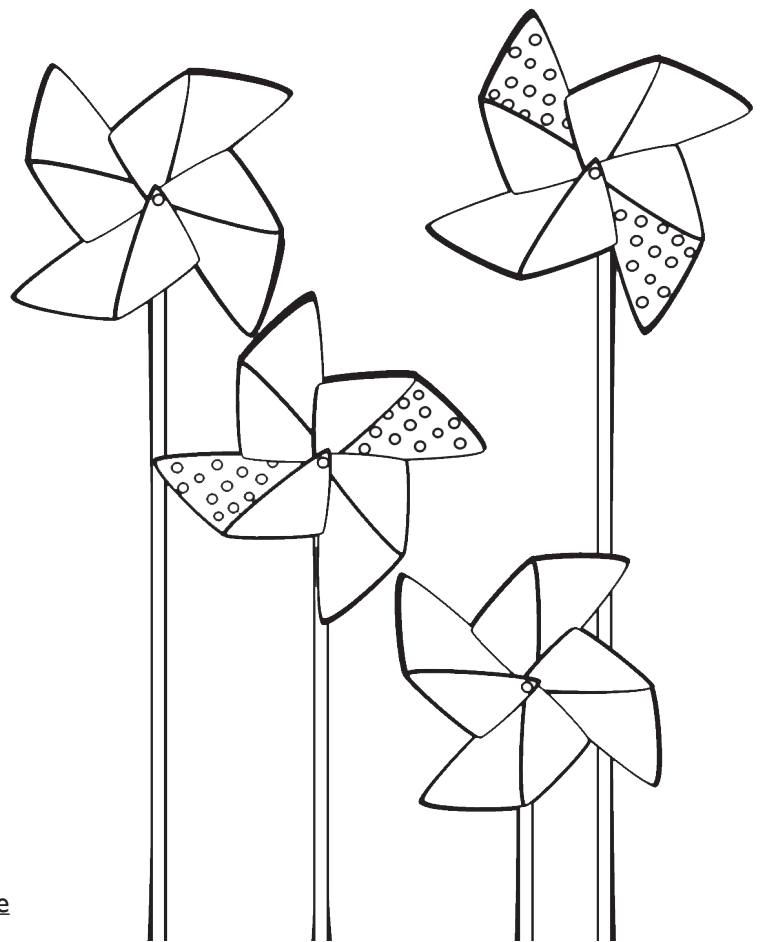
European Windmill - This European style tower windmill was one of the most widely used during the Middle Ages



Modern Wind Pump



Pablo Picasso's 1955 sketch of Don Quixote. Don Quixote was a fifteenth century Spanish novel in which the main character attacks windmills believed to be giants.



Pin Wheels