

Texas Museum Features 170 Windmills

“It’s a dynamic museum because the windmills are always moving,” says Coy Harris, executive director of the American Windpower Center and Museum in Lubbock, Texas. Outside, about 60 windmills on the 28-acre property provide a symphony of old water windmill squeaks and modern wind turbine whooshes. When the wind picks up, the smallest turbines make the biggest noise.

Another 110 of the oldest and most unusual windmills are housed inside a 36,000 sq. ft. visitor center, along with collections of windmill weights, salesman windmill models and other related items. A 34 by 172-ft detailed mural of the history of the windmill from the 1700’s to the present creates a beautiful backdrop for the collections, as well as for the social and community events booked at the center.

“The goal of the center is to save a disappearing artifact,” Coy says. In the 1960’s, Billie Wolfe, a home economics teacher at Texas Technological College, recognized the windmill’s importance, and that they were vanishing from the American landscape. She started collecting them, one at a time, with the support of the college and started a museum. The collection got a significant boost in 1993, when private Nebraska collector Don Hundley agreed to sell his entire collection – including 48 windmills, 171 weights and 56 pumps – to the museum. Hundley had turned down other collectors, including the Smithsonian, because they wouldn’t guarantee the collection would stay together.

Harris, CEO of Wind Engineering, helped Wolfe establish the nonprofit National Windmill Project to raise money and move and reassemble the windmills.

The city of Lubbock donated the land in the summer of 1997. Wolfe passed away later

that year and never got to see the center and the result of her years of work.

Three windmills pump water to irrigate the property. A modern V47 Vestas 500kW wind turbine supplies the electrical needs of the building – plus extra kilowatts that are sold to the local power utility.

Visitors can walk inside the base of a 165-ft. tall turbine with a 150-ft. diameter wheel to learn how it works. They can inspect a replica of the first windmill built in America in 1621 that was used to grind grain. Outside they can check out an unusual twin-wheel windmill built in the 1920’s that used one gearbox and one tower to pump more water than single windmills.

“Inside we have one of the first all-metal windmills that looks like a kid’s pinwheel and cost \$145,” Coy notes. There are wood and steel versions, and even Australian and Argentine models. At one time, 700 companies manufactured windmills, he notes.

Videos and more information are available on the center’s website. The center is open year round Tuesday to Saturday and on Sundays from May through September. Admission is \$5/person, \$10/family of four and free to active duty military and their families.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Windpower Center and Museum, 1701 Canyon Lake Dr., Lubbock, Texas 79403 (ph 806 747-8734; www.windmill.com).

Visitors can inspect a replica of the first windmill built in America in 1621, or check out an unusual twin-wheel windmill built in the 1920’s.



The American Windpower Center and Museum in Lubbock, Texas, has about 60 windmills outside and another 110 inside a 36,000 sq. ft. visitor center.



Veteran Advocates Draft Horse Therapy

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Before Mike Sams returned home after an 11-month deployment in Iraq and 24 years of service with the National Guard, he arranged to buy a neighbor’s team of draft horses and equipment.

“The first thing I wanted to see after my family was the horses,” he says. “There are lots of therapy programs with saddle horses. Draft horses are different because you can do farm work with them.”

Sams is passionate about spreading that message to other returning veterans who need to make the transition back to civilian life. That includes his own son-in-law Seth Connell.

“At first I was pretty intimidated. They are big animals,” says Connell. “But after the first day plowing with them, I started to build the confidence that I’d kind of lost during my two deployments to Iraq.”

He says he felt refreshed by the orchestra of harness, plow iron and horse and the clean scent of soil as the plow turned the earth under him.

“You can talk to these horses, and they’re not going to talk back, and they don’t laugh at you. If you are kind of down and feel blue that day, they’ll make you happier,” Connell adds. “Farming in general has given me something to look forward to again – a feeling of self worth.”

“You’ve got to want to do it; horses require more work,” Sams emphasized to Connell and other veterans, who have attended a workshop about getting into farming and food production. “But they start every day. They don’t get flat tires. And if you get cold you can walk.”

Horse power can be an economical option

over tractor power for some chores. When logging, for example, they can get into places where tractors can’t, and horses’ hooves cause less damage than big tractor tires.

Sams and his son, Matthew, use horses with a wheeled cart built out of scrap parts to haul big round bales to their beef herd. An 8 hp gas motor controls hydraulic arms similar to a tractor bale unroller to load and unload up to three big round bales at a time. A fifth-wheel style hitch at the front, allows the cart to make tight turns.

Sams buys used equipment at local auctions and from retiring horse owners, but notes new equipment is still being made for horses. For example, he has a power cart made my Pioneer that has an engine, pto, hydraulics, and everything needed to hook up any implement. Horses can be used for all types of tillage including minimum and no-till. The width of the implements and aggressiveness of the tillage determine how many horses are needed to pull the equipment.

Sams encourages anyone interested in draft horses to find a local draft horse association and find a mentor. He learned how to work with them 35 years ago when he worked for a dairy farmer who used horses to haul manure out of the barn daily. Sams had several horses and 130 head of cows, but had to sell them and the farm before his last deployment. Since returning in 2006, he has started farming again with 147 acres of land and 50 beef cows. He also has 13 saddle horses and eight Belgian draft horses.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mike Sams, 10144 95th Ave. S.W., Staples, Minn. 56479 (ph 320 241-2227; y4ranch@hotmail.com).



Mike Sams says farming with draft horses can help returning veterans make the transition back to civilian life. He built this wheeled cart to haul round bales to his beef herd.



Draft horses can be used for all types of tillage, including minimum and no-till.