

Saddle Rock Grist Mill by Alice Kasten

Drive around the Great Neck area, and you will find signs pointing to the Saddle Rock Grist Mill. The Mill, the property of Nassau County, used to be visited by school children, who learned its history and brought home sacks of grain produced between its stones. But as no one has been able to visit lately, many have forgotten the importance of the Mill.



Saddle Rock Grist Mill as seen from Bayview Ave bridge.

The mill was built around 1700 to grind the grain that was produced on the farms that filled the Great Neck peninsula. Originally it was used to grind corn, and that flour was then sold to the world markets. First owned by Robert Hubbs Jr, it was sold to Henry Allen in 1702, and passed through the Allen family, eventually being sold to Richard Udall in 1833. The Udalls improved and updated the mill, using it to grind not only corn but many other grains as well. They also used the mill as a dock for ships purchasing the products of Great Neck's prosperous farms.

The mill continued to pass through the Udall family, and eventually became the property of Louise Udall Eldridge, the same Louise Eldridge who helped to found the Great Neck Library, Park District, and Village of Saddle Rock. Mrs. Eldridge restored the mill, and upon her death it became the property of the Nassau County Historical Society. It was deeded to Nassau County in 1955 to insure restoration. One of the few remaining tidal mills on Long Island, it is on the National Registry of Historic Places.



Saddle Rock Grist Mill, 2015, from the East.

The Mill has been restored numerous times, most recently in 1992, but increasing natural disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy, and decreasing funding have taken their toll. The Mill, once the site of school field trips, has been closed for years, awaiting the funding that will make it safe for visits.

Nassau County received a \$45,000 grant for architectural evaluation that was used to generate an engineer's report. That report shows that it will take hundreds of thousands of dollars to make the building structurally sound, and spurred by Great Neck Historical Society member and County Legislator Ellen Birnbaum the County is actively seeking State and Federal grants to meet that goal. Students at the Saddle Rock Elementary School have also written letters of support to the County.



It is the hope of the Great Neck Historical Society that one day our children will be able to visit this important landmark. If your group would like a presentation about the Grist Mill, please contact us at greatneckhistorical@gmail.com.