

WALKING TOUR OF OLD FULLERSBURG



Ben Fuller Farmhouse c.1840

Welcome to the Fullersburg Historic District, one of the oldest settlements in DuPage County. Originally known as Brush Hill, Fullersburg was the only settlement between Chicago and Naperville along Ogden Avenue (The Old Plank Road) in the mid-1830's.

Orente Grant, an Indian scout, is believed to have been the first white man in the Fullersburg area during the fur trader era when most of Illinois was still a wilderness. In 1833, following the Blackhawk War and the Treaty of Chicago, Native American people living in the region were relocated west of the Mississippi River and the territory was opened for settlement. In the spring of 1834, Benjamin Fuller arrived by horseback from upstate New York. Other families from the East Coast also settled in Fullersburg.

They were attracted to this location by the crossroads of two Indian trails, a pristine creek, stands of timber and fertile land. The crossroads would later become major thoroughfares. The Southwest Trail is today's Ogden Avenue and the North/South Trail is today's York Road. This was the center of Old Fullersburg, just 500 feet south of the intersection of present-day Spring Road.

Life in Old Fullersburg

In 1834 the stagecoach began stopping at Fullersburg, adding the town to its regular schedule in 1836. Wagon and coach traffic got so heavy that a plank road was privately built from Chicago to Naperville, reaching Fullersburg in 1850. A toll house was built at the eastern edge of Fullersburg near the county line (today's County Line Road). Over 500 horse and oxen teams passed the toll house each day, keeping Fullersburg businesses busy day and night. The Plank Road was also used to drive cattle to market in Chicago.

Ben Fuller platted the area around the crossroads in 1851 and named it, fittingly, Fullersburg, but Fullersburg was never incorporated. The location was one day's wagon ride from Chicago, making it both a trade center and an important way station for travelers. By 1860, Fullersburg was one of the leading communities in DuPage County with three hotels, three taverns, a post office, blacksmith shop, school, saw and grist mills, wagon maker's shop, church and cemetery.

With the arrival of the Burlington Railroad a mile to the south in 1865, traffic through Fullersburg rapidly declined as the center of commerce shifted to the new village of Hinsdale. The construction of the toll road (I-294) in the 1950's further transformed the area.

Today, old Fullersburg is represented by five original structures and a rich architectural and historical legacy, nostalgically reminding us of those bygone days.

Famous People of Old Fullersburg

The Old Plank Road was the main route west from Chicago, and many notable people passed through, including Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas. Lincoln spoke from a hotel porch in 1858 on his way west. Runaway slaves fleeing northward on the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War found shelter with abolitionist settlers.



Loie Fuller, a niece of Ben Fuller, was born in Fullersburg in 1862 and is recognized as Fullersburg's most famous person. She became a dancer and entertainer from the time she was a child, traveling throughout Illinois as part of a family vaudeville show. She went on to perform in New York and London, debuting in 1892 at the Folies-Bergere in Paris. Loie Fuller was internationally acclaimed for the arc lighting and flowing costumes she used in her dance interpretations. She held

various patents on special effects. She originated many modern dance techniques and performed throughout Europe and at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Vanity Fair said that "seeing Loie Fuller dance was one of three things necessary for the complete education of a man of the day". Many artists were inspired by Loie, including Toulouse Lautrec and Auguste Rodin.

► Start your tour of Old Fullersburg from the Graue Mill parking lot on the east side of York Road. Walk toward the Ben Fuller Farmhouse located at the southeast corner of the lot prominently situated on a gently sloping hill. The Greek Revival architecture, white siding and green shutters of this vintage structure immediately capture the imagination and recall the days of those residents who lived here in early settlement times.

1 Ben Fuller Farmhouse The Ben Fuller Farmhouse was originally located at 948 York Road, Hinsdale currently the site of the Graue Mill Professional Building. It was moved to its present location on property owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County in 1981 to save it from demolition. The house was



built in c.1840 using a new construction technique invented in Chicago called "balloon frame". This method revolutionized the construction of wood frame buildings by using machine-cut lumber in place of traditional hand-hewn timbers and joints. The Ben Fuller Farmhouse is believed to be one of the best examples of balloon frame architecture still surviving in northeastern Illinois. Both the Ben Fuller Farmhouse and the York Tavern were likely built with lumber processed at the Torode saw mill which originally stood on the present-day Graue Mill site. The exterior of the Farmhouse was restored in the 1980's. Plans are now underway to historically restore the interior of the farmhouse, add the summer kitchen at the back of the house which was destroyed by fire on July 4th 1980, develop exhibits of the era and open the Farmhouse to the public for viewing. Ben Fuller died in the farmhouse in 1868.

Walk northward from the parking lot toward Salt Creek and follow the plank walkway which passes under the York Road Bridge. Your first sighting on the other side will be the great wooden waterwheel which powered the Graue grist mill in its early days of operation. Listen for the sound of falling water as it cascades over the Graue Mill Dam, look for flocks of waterfowl and enjoy the picturesque beauty of the site in all seasons.

2 Salt Creek The headwaters to Salt Creek originate at the Busse Woods Forest Preserve in Schaumburg. Salt Creek reaches its confluence with the Des Plaines River in Riverside. Salt Creek and the Fullersburg area were likely known to French voyageurs and fur traders.



Salt Creek was named in 1834 when John Reid, hauling supplies between Galena and Chicago, got his wagon stuck while crossing the creek. He tried to unload his goods as quickly as possible, but a barrel or two of salt dissolved into briny foam and ever after the stream (originally called the Little Des Plaines) became known as Salt Creek. From the 1600's to 1833, Potawatomi people lived in huts along the banks of Salt Creek north of the parking lot. They relied upon the creek for drinking water, fishing and transportation. Today, the 30 mile length of Salt Creek provides a rich natural resource for recreational land and water trails, scenic beauty and open space. The Fullersburg area draws 100,000 visitors each year.

► *Follow the brick path past the waterwheel and proceed to the point of land overlooking the Graue Mill Dam.*

3 **Graue Mill Dam** The first dam located here was built in 1837 and was made of brush and mud. It proved unstable and was soon replaced by a dam made of logs. However, the log dam periodically washed out, prompting Frederick Graue, owner of the mill, to build a new dam in 1889 using crib and plank construction.



This dam was replaced in 1914 by the first concrete dam at the site which washed out in 1917. The present dam was built in 1935 during the Great Depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Nature artists and photographers are drawn to capture the picturesque beauty of the Graue Mill Dam on canvas and through the lens. This historic dam site, a popular tourist attraction, is one of the most scenic and visited places in DuPage County.

► *Follow the paved trail west of the Graue Mill Dam to Washington Street.*

4 **Site of the Mammoth Spring Company Ice House** An icehouse owned by John Ruchty stood at this location from 1880 to 1910. The building was 100 feet long, 50 feet wide and 30 feet high, with double walls 18 inches thick filled with sawdust. Here, several thousand tons of ice cut from Salt Creek each



winter was stored for delivery the following summer by horse drawn wagons to homes throughout the area. A historic marker commemorates the site.

► *Cross Spring Road and proceed south on Washington Street to the Faith Fellowship Church.*

5 **Faith Fellowship Church** The fifth stop on your tour is this lovely Victorian country church built in 1881 originally known as St. John's Evangelical Church.



Members of the first congregation were from Hanover, Germany. Services were conducted in Low German (Plattdeutsch) until the late 1920's. The church was remodeled and a basement added in 1925. The quaint and charming interior of the church reflects the rural lifestyle of its members who were mostly area farmers. A cemetery located on a scenic wooded hill behind the

church dates back to 1877. Citizens of Fullersburg buried here include members of the Graue family. Today, the congregation conducts services as non-denominational Protestants.

► *Proceed northward on Washington Street and return to the paved trail. Go east toward the Frederick Graue House.*

6 **Frederick Graue House** The Graue House, built in 1859 in the Italianate architectural style, was the residence of Frederick Graue and his family when they operated the Mill. The structure and land were purchased by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County in 1989 to preserve the site. In today's urban



environment, it is unusual for both the House and Mill to have survived in their original locations and to be open to the public. A million-dollar project, completed in 2002, restored the exterior of the house to its original state and renovated the interior for adaptive reuse. The first floor of the house is available for rental for meetings, receptions and other special events. The first floor also provides gallery space for the display of special exhibits. The second floor houses archival collections and the administrative offices of the DuPage Graue Mill Corporation. Many outdoor events are held on the grounds each year.

► *Proceed northward along the brick path toward Graue Mill.*

7

Graue Mill and Museum

Graue Mill is named after its first miller, Frederick Graue, who built this sturdy red brick structure in 1852. It took five years to construct using bricks made from clay taken from the Graue farm and fired in a kiln near the site. White oak timbers used in the construction were cut from a tract along the I & M Canal



near Lemont. Three generations of the Graue family ground grain here for local farmers for more than 60 years. For a short period before the Civil War, probably around 1858, the Mill was used as a station on the Underground Railroad. Runaway slaves were given shelter until they could be secretly transported to Chicago and finally to freedom in Canada. But the Graue Mill was not the first mill to be built on this site. In 1837, Nicholas Torode, one of the earliest white settlers in DuPage County, constructed a saw mill here, supplying lumber to nearby residents. The site was abandoned by the Torode family when the saw mill burned down in 1849.

In the 1930's, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County acquired the Mill and surrounding property, and shortly thereafter, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) restored the building, waterwheel, millrace and dam. The building was not open to the public during this time. In 1950, a volunteer group of local citizens repaired the waterwheel and gear system making the old millwheel turn again. The Mill became a museum in 1951. From April to November, visitors can watch the basic milling process using the original 150-year old grindstones and enjoy spinning and weaving demonstrations. Underground Railroad exhibits are displayed in the cellar where slaves were hidden and a collection of Civil War era artifacts can be seen in period rooms.

The Graue Mill site blends art and actuality to re-create life as it was in the mid-19th century.

Graue Mill is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as an Illinois Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark.

► *Follow the walkway along the eastern side of Graue Mill over Salt Creek north to the York Tavern.*

8

York Tavern

Ben Fuller started several businesses in the area



and owned most of the land around the Ogden Avenue/York Road crossroads. One of his early enterprises was "The Farmer's Home" built in 1843, now known as the York Tavern. The Farmer's Home, first

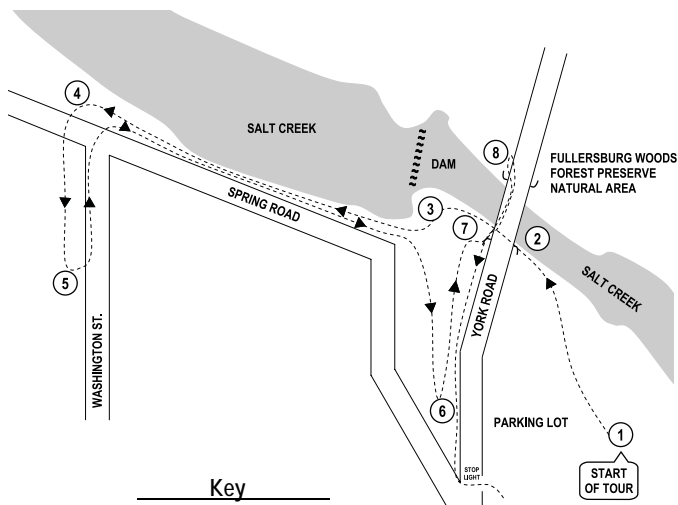
licensed by the county in 1846, served the community as a grocery store and tavern. Fuller used heavy half-timbered frame construction to build The Farmer's Home and filled the spaces between the logs with unfired bricks to insulate, strengthen and fireproof the structure. This type of construction known as "fachwerk" was a popular building style in Europe, dating back to medieval times. It was hard work to construct such a building which required the felling of many large trees and processing them manually into hand-hewn logs. This tedious half-timbered construction style was soon abandoned by settlers in favor of "balloon frame" construction, the style Fuller selected for his residence. The York Tavern was historically rehabilitated in 2006. York Tavern is believed to be the oldest continuously operating privately owned eating and drinking establishment in DuPage County. An example of the "fachwerk" construction style can be seen at the Tavern behind a framed glass exhibit. This display was preserved for public viewing as part of the rehabilitation of the structure.

► *To end your tour, retrace your footsteps southward over the walkway along York Road to the traffic light and return to the parking lot.*

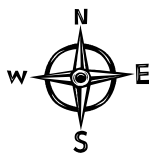
The Ben Fuller Farmhouse, Graue Mill and Museum, Frederick Graue House and location of the former Mammoth Spring Ice Company sites are owned, maintained and operated by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.

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Walking Tour Map



1. Ben Fuller Farmhouse
2. Salt Creek
3. Graue Mill Dam
4. Site of the Mammoth Spring Company Ice House
5. Faith Fellowship Church
6. Frederick Graue House
7. Graue Mill and Museum
8. York Tavern



Fullersburg Historic Foundation

The purpose of the Fullersburg Historic Foundation (FHF) is to promote Old Fullersburg for its historical significance, raise funds to restore the Ben Fuller Farmhouse, develop educational programs and exhibits and support the preservation of the heritage sites of the Fullersburg Historic District.

The Walking Tour of Old Fullersburg is published and distributed by the Fullersburg Historic Foundation as a public service.

Interested in becoming a Fullersburg Historic Foundation donor or volunteer? There are many ways to become involved.

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