

GRAIN

CORN



Up to the 1870's Iowa was the wheat capitol of the United States. Early settlers grew corn mostly for feed and their own consumption. Early histories of Iowa tell how some of the earliest settlers in the area lived almost entirely on corn meal their first winter in Iowa.

America's first European explorers found the native Indians growing a strange new crop they called "Indian Maize." American settlers soon called this crop "corn," corn being an English generic term for any cereal grain. The Indians and settlers grew what we call field corn for their tables, grinding it so it could be eaten became a major challenge for the first settlers far from established mills. Some soaked the corn in lye to make hominy, some placed the corn into a depression burned into a tree stump and then pounded the corn into mush with the end of a log. The result according to the early settlers was "barely edible."

The coming of a mill within easy travel distance proved a great boon to the settlers ensuring a plentiful supply of feed for both animal and humans both. Ben Nye's first mill is described as a "corn cracker located in a miserable hole beneath his saw mill." As miserable as their location may have been, Nye's first set of mill stones fed many a pioneer family.



WHEAT

From the 1840's to the 1880's Iowa was the wheat basket of America. Iowa had 500 grist mills to supply both local and the nations need for flour. Starting in the 1870's the wheat crop began to fail to the soil being depleted of nutrients. Following were invasions of Cinch bugs and wheat rust that decimated the crop. Many Iowa farmers simply abandoned their farms to move west to find new land. Behind them new immigrants came that switched the farms to corn and other crops.

Hermann Hutchendorf considered the production of wheat flour so important that he modernized the mill in the 1880's to improve its production. Hutchendorf scrapped the traditional millstones for wheat flour production (although he retained them for Buckwheat and Rye flour production). He had Barnard & Lees of Moline Illinois design and install a state of the art roller mill plant for flour production.

Flour is obtained by grinding wheat berries. The berry consists of three distinct parts: bran, the indigestible outer covering of the kernel; the germ containing the embryo and the endosperm, the part of the kernel that makes the white flour.

There are several varieties of wheat, each having differing amounts of protein and gluten. Gluten gives bread dough elasticity, strength and gas retaining properties. Wheat is the only grain that contains enough gluten to make raised bread.