

# What is a Grist Mill?

A **Gristmill** is a facility that where grain is ground into animal feed or flour. Gristmills were vital to the development of the Midwest. Without them the early settlers would not have been able to feed themselves or their livestock. Since every settler had to journey to the mill, they were a hub of many activities where families exchanged news and socialized. At one time Iowa had 500 gristmills.



Pine Mills Millstones are used for grinding buckwheat and rye into flour.

**Grist** is grain that has been ground or is in the process of being ground. It may or not be bolted (sifted) into flour or ground further. Grist is any material that is being processed by a mill.

To make bread flour grain (most commonly wheat) is first cleaned to remove chaff, dirt, other seeds and debris. It is then ground to remove the outer covering of indigestible bran and to reduce the white inner part of the grain to flour. The result is *whole grain flour*. A machine called a bolter, using different size screens, sifts out the *white flour* from the *bran*.



The three roller mills on the right made the bread flour from wheat. The miller bagged the flour at the chutes center.

A farmer could trade grain for milling services by paying a *toll*. In Iowa the toll was set by law at 5%. That is, for every hundred pounds of grain the farmer had milled, he left behind 5 pounds as the millers pay. Or the farmer could sell grain for cash or buy meal or flour for cash. Most farmers paid by toll as they wanted their own grain back. Thus they could spend several hours at the mill socializing as they waited their turn.

Pine Creek Grist Mill served a wide range of needs for the local community. The mill could:

*Shell and clean corn for seed*  
*Grind corn into feed for livestock*  
*Grind and bolt corn into cornmeal for human consumption*

*Clean wheat for seed*  
*Produce wheat flour for bread*

*Clean buckwheat and rye for seed*  
*Grind buckwheat and rye into meal and bolt them into flour*



The bolter sifted the meal into flour