

What Is A Gristmill?

A **Gristmill** is a facility where grain is ground into animal feed, flour or meal. Gristmills were vital to the development of piedmont North Carolina. Without them it would have been difficult for the early settlers 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 Wake County had over 70 gristmills.



Mill stones used for turning corn into cornmeal.

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.



The bolters at Yates Mill are used to sift the flour.

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.

Yates 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



Mill stone furniture.

A farmer could trade grain for milling services by paying a toll. In North Carolina the toll was set by law at $1/8^{\text{th}}$. That is, for every 8 kernels of corn the farmer had milled, he left behind 1 kernel of corn as the millers pay. 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.