

Roger Williams University

DOCS@RWU

Documentation

Gray's Mill: Gray's Grist Mill, Our Whole Grain Story

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/baker_documentation

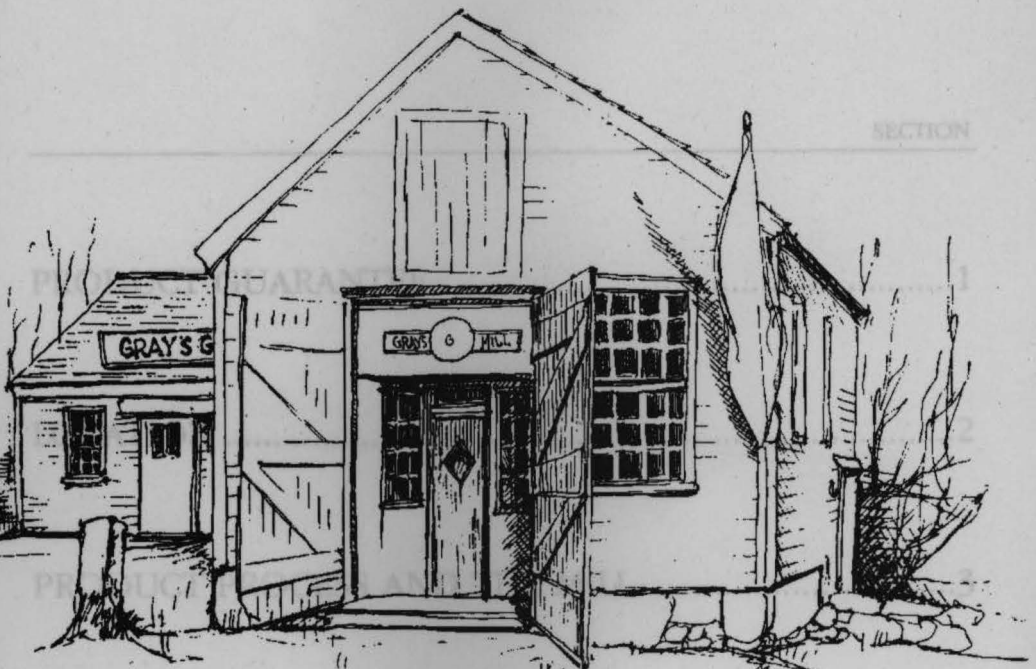


Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#)

**GRAY'S
GRIST MILL**

*A Natural Whole Grain Tradition
Since 1675*

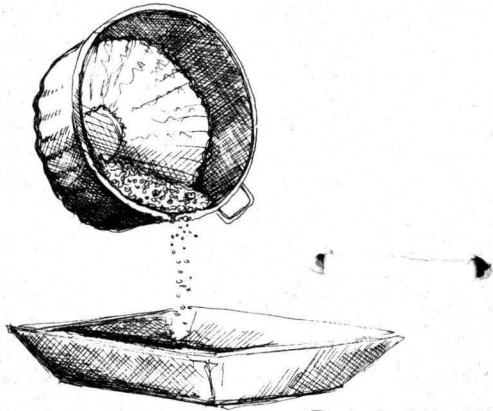
Our Whole Grain Story



(On the Original Site of The Philips Tabor Mill Circa 1717)

We're Not Just Selling Flour
and Cornmeal,
we're Selling History.

About Gray's Grist Mill ...



Gray's Grist Mill is one of the country's oldest continually operating Grist mills. Established before 1700 and documented by deed in 1717 as belonging to Philip Tabor, the mill was part of a blacksmith shop until 1750 when it became a grist mill. In 1880 it was purchased by Philip S. Gray and since that time had been in the Gray family. In 1980, Ralph Guild, a New York City businessman, who has summered for over 25 years in Westport Harbor, bought the mill. Hart had one stipulation when he sold the mill...It must continue to be run as a working mill.

The granite stones at Gray's Mill have been turning out Rhode Island Jonny Cake Meal since 1878. Two dedicated millers, Roland Grayton Hart and his son John Allen Hart kept Gray's Mill going non-stop for over 100 years. Starting in 1982 Tim McTague began learning how to make R.I. meal the Gray's Mill way from John Hart who was willing to share his 62 years experience so that the Jonny Cake tradition will pass on to another generation.

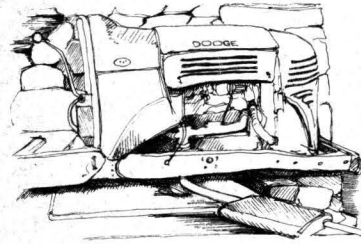
Natives of the State and those who live away but still long for the taste of real Jonny Cakes are proud to know that some of the fields of Little Compton still yield the golden harvest of Narragansett Indian Flint Corn. The flint corn fills the few remaining corn cribs and the little Mill by a pond in Adamsville, R.I. which still grinds true Rhode Island Jonny Cake Meal for those who know the local culinary tradition.

Gray's Mill is famous for Rhode Island Jonny Cake Meal but those who know us best know that we do more. Our other traditional favorites are New England Brown Bread and Muffin Mixtures (Corn, Wheat and Rye,) which have been used for centuries.

We also make whole wheat and rye flours incomparable for their freshness and fine texture. Last but not least is a new whole grain pancake mix that even John Hart thinks is pretty good.

All the meals, flours and mixes from Gray's Mill are freshly ground whole grain products of the highest quality. Some may be lightly sifted but no additives or preservatives of any kind are used. We've been in the business for over 100 years and we feel that plain whole food is not only the best for your health but tastes the best too. Our choice is simple. It always has been. "We're not just selling flour and cornmeal. We're selling history."

How the Mill works ...

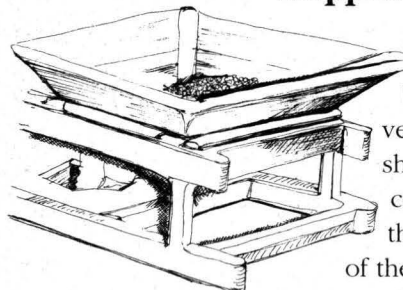


1946 Dodge Truck: The mill is powered by a 1946 Dodge truck engine. It's what is left of the old Cain's mayonnaise truck that used to deliver to Newport. Just pull the choke, get it up to second gear, and a belt pulley starts the wheels turning! In the early 1950's when the water power began to be unreliable, (today the pond is dry much of the year,) John Hart parked this truck under the floorboards of the mill and let the truck's motor run the gears of the mill.



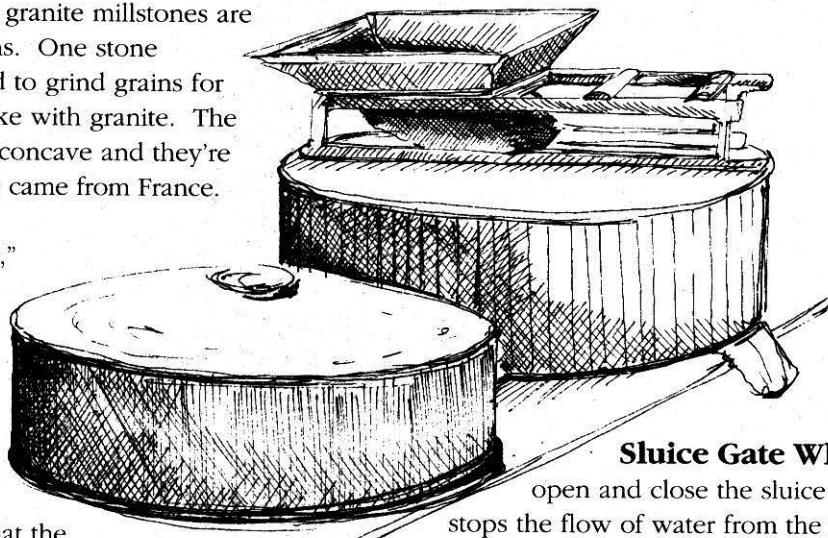
Corn: It all starts with Narragansett Indian Flint Corn. This was the original corn of the Narragansett Indians of Southeastern New England. The corn is dried for six months before it is ground. The corn is grown locally by a former school teacher who lives in Little Compton. The corn is husked, shelled and packaged in bags to be ground at Gray's Grist Mill for Jonny Cakes and other Gray's whole grain products.

Hopper: The shelled corn is poured into the hopper which will grind an average of three bushels of corn an hour. As a vertical rod called the "damsel" shakes the grain downward, the corn kernels are dropped through the "shoe" into the eye of the stone.



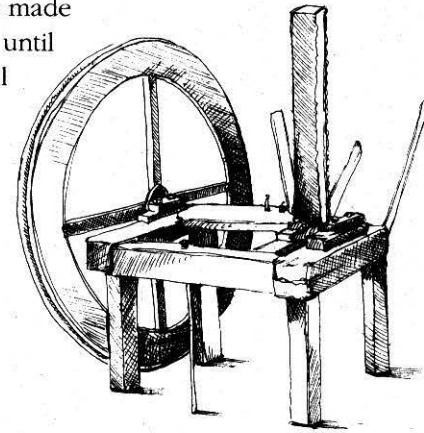
The Millstones: The 15 inch thick granite millstones are disk shaped, weight a total of 1 1/2 tons. One stone grinds Jonny Cakes and another is used to grind grains for other flours. You only grind Johnnycake with granite. The grinding surface of the runner stone is concave and they're carved in spoke patterns. The feedstone came from France.

The top stone, called the "runner stone," turns; it's the friction against the lower "bed" or "nether" stone that reduces the grain to meal. The patterns in the two stones cut across each other with a scissors action and push the grain toward the outside edges of the stones. At the center, the grain gets cracked first, but it's at the perimeter that the finest grinding happens.

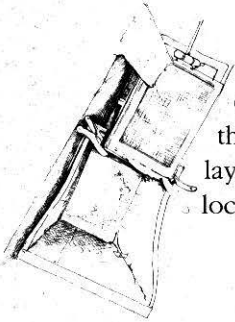


Sluice Gate Wheel: This is used to open and close the sluice gate, which starts and stops the flow of water from the millpond across the street providing power to the water wheel to grind the grain.

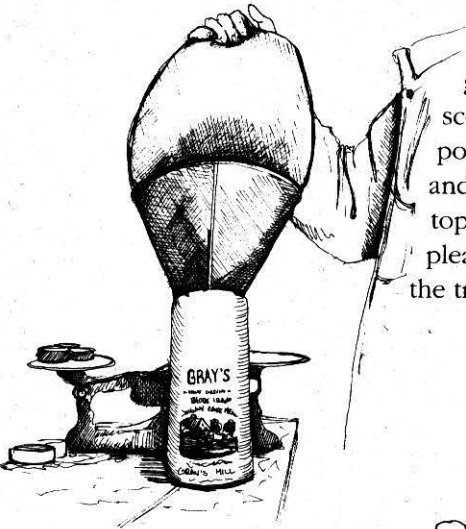
This dates back to 1740 when water was rushing over the falls from the man made millpond and was used up until 1938 when the mill was still operated by water power. The water was held back by sluices and released through millraces which forced the huge turbines to turn. The 1938 hurricane knocked out the turbine.



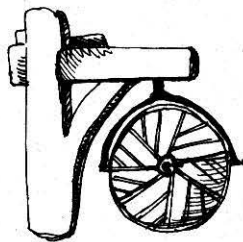
Chaff Bin: The ground flour comes out of the grain spout and a mesh screen sifts out the coarser pieces of the corn's bran (outer layer) into the chaff bin. The mill gives this to local farmers for animal feed.



Bagging Room: Bags of just-ground flour are hauled into the bagging room, where it is scooped onto a scale, then poured through a funnel and bagged by hand. The tops of the bags are then pleated and fastened with the traditional miller's knot.



The Stone Crane: This lifts the runnerstone when the millstones need to be sharpened, cleaned or repaired.



Gray's Grist Mill

