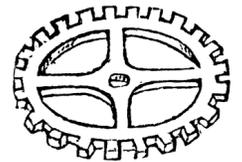


## “The Grist Mill”

by David Madden, 2009

*From a book on Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, entitled “SPRUNG FROM THE SOIL”. Gristmills were commonly found in the countryside in the first half of the nineteenth century. The necessity of having a family’s rye, wheat and Indian corn ground meant that a gristmill was usually among the first businesses set up in a new community. Towns would often encourage millers to settle within their boundaries with grants of land and water rights.*



For quite some time, snow and ice  
 Locked the wheel in a frozen vise,  
 But now, again, the water flows  
 And to the mill the housewife goes.  
 She brings with her a sack of wheat  
 Which her hungry family will eat  
 After it’s been ground for flour.  
 She comes at an early hour  
 To have all day for baking bread  
 That her family may be well fed.  
 After the miller takes his toll,  
 He pours the grain into a hole  
 In the upper, or runner, stone.  
 He opens the sluice; with a groan  
 The runner wheel begins to spin  
 Above its lower bed stone twin.  
 Not quite touching, the runner moves  
 Over the bed stone. Both have grooves  
 That, like scissor blades, cut the grain.  
 A chest stands ready to contain,  
 As it moves off the stones, the grist  
 Which the miller, as his sons assist,  
 Scoops into the customer’s sack,  
 Then to her home she hurries back.

