

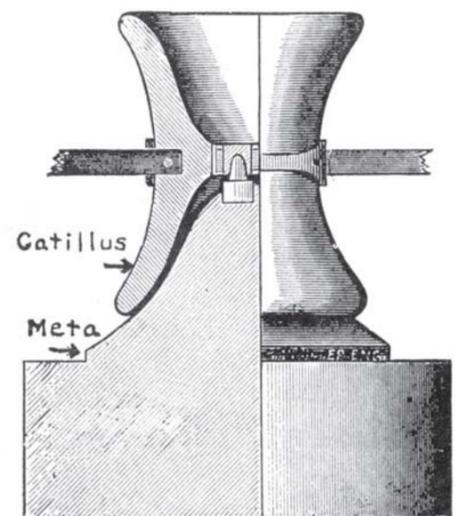
The History of Milling



African grinding with a Metate

Since man first began to practice agriculture he faced the problem of grinding grain into edible meal or flour. Only after grain is ground can bread or porridge be made from it. First came the Metate used by both early man in the Middle East and American Indians. With the Metate, the grain is ground by hand between two stones. This is arduous work. Unless a very hard stone is used, a certain amount of stone would wear from the Metate and enter the flour it made. A diet of this flour soon wore down the teeth of those that ate it.

The Romans developed rotary mills where the grain passed between a stationary and rotating stone. These could produce true flour and with better stone, no grit. Eventually the Romans developed the flat millstones and basic design of the water powered grist mill used till the early 19th century.



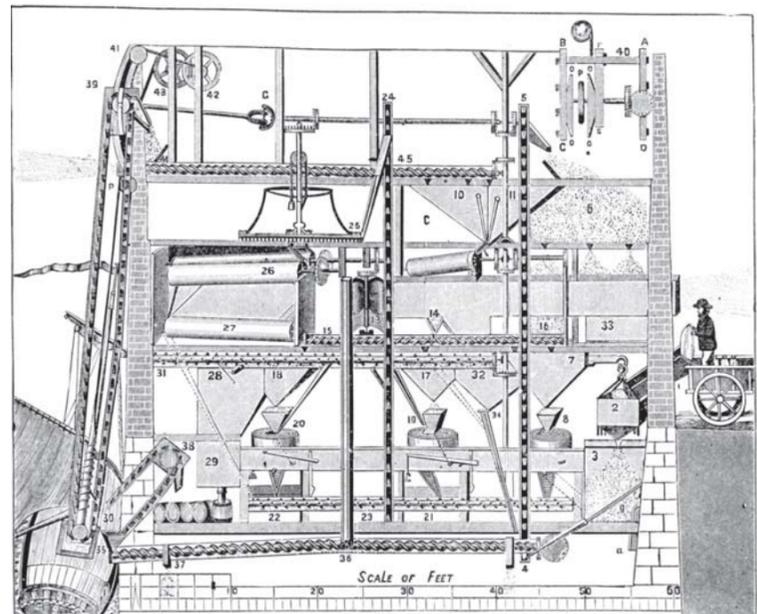
Turned by slaves, this type of Roman mill called a Catillus was found in the ruins of Pompeii.

The greatest advance in milling came in 1785 when American inventor Oliver Evans introduced his totally automated flourmill. His inventions of the bucket elevator, grain worm and hopper boy (flour cooler) vastly reduced the labor required and produced higher quality flour. Oliver's inventions were so revolutionary that at first millers refused to believe that such a thing as an automated mill could even exist! Ben Nye's first mill would have followed Oliver Evans design.



Pioneer mortar and pestle made from a hollowed out tree stump.

The next great step forward in milling came with the invention of the steel roller mill. Invented in Hungary in the mid 19th century, the steel roller mill made the traditional millstone obsolete and the large scale industrial production of flour practical. Roller mills break the grain into smaller and smaller particles in multiple passes. They heat the grist less and produce higher quality flour. In 1890 the then owner of Pine Mill installed a three stand double roller mill plant in the mill keeping the mill in the forefront of milling technology.



Oliver Evans own drawing of his automated mill.