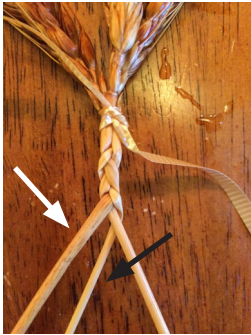


Example Corn Dollies



The art of weaving with wheat stems (straw) is practically as old as wheat itself and has played an important role in harvest rituals for many different cultures. The ancient Egyptians believed in a spirit that lived in the wheat. By saving the last wheat stems and weaving them into an ornament, the farmer provided a home for the spirit until the next growing season. Similar beliefs and rituals were found in ancient Greece and Rome. The Roman goddess of the fields was Ceres, whose name is the origin of the word *cereal*. Red poppies, believed to bring luck, were Ceres's favorite flowers. This may have led to the tradition of tying decorative red ribbons to wheat weavings.

In 18th-century Britain, wheat weavings were known as *corn dollies*. Here, the word *corn* was used as a generic term for any type of grain, and *dolly* probably originated from the word *idol*. Traditionally, corn dollies were made using the last stems of harvested grain. Wheat was most common, but oats, rye, barley, and corn were also used. The woven ornaments with the heads of grain still on the stem were hung on inside walls where they made it safely through the winter. These sacred grains were then planted the next season to ensure the fertility of the entire crop. Today, corn dolly is a generic term for art made from woven straw.