



Colonial Trades:  
The Carpenter

In a time when most buildings were built from wood, carpenters were very important members of a colonial village. The main business of the colonial carpenter was cutting and then connecting or “joining” wooden board into strong wooden homes and shops.

While most farmers in rural areas were their own carpenters, in villages carpenters were hired to do repair work, build additions to existing buildings, or make other outbuildings.

Some tools they used were:

- saw: tool with a thin, sharp blade used for cutting wood
- broadax: a large ax with a wide cutting blade
- hammer: hand tool made of steel used for driving in nails
- awl: a pointed tool used for making small holes in wood
- mallet: tool resembling a hammer but having a large head of wood
- plane: a tool used to shave and shape wood
- drawknife: woodcutting tool with two handles at right angles to the blade; used to shave wood

The carpenter worked from a building’s foundation to its roof. He laid floors, framed walls, raised rafters, carved moldings, and hung doors. Carpenters would also finish the inside of buildings by joining together pieces of wood to make doors, window frames, staircases, and other wood pieces within a house or building.