



Colonial Trades:
The Wheelright

Wheelwrights were craftspeople who made wooden wheels. The wheels were held together by spokes and a hub and then covered with iron. The wheels of the carriages and wagons had to be strong and sturdy because the colonial roads were very rugged. Also it was very difficult to make the wheels perfectly round.

The wheelwright trade required a person to be strong and able to work with wood and metal. It also required the tradesman to be very careful and accurate. Precise measurement skills were important to make sure that all the parts of the wheel would fit together so the wheel would roll smoothly.

Some tools they used were:

- hammer: tool used to join pieces of wood together by fastening them with nails
- saw: device for slicing through wood
- ax: tool for shaping wood or chopping it into smaller pieces
- plane: a tool used to shave and shape wood

The wheelwright needed the blacksmith to supply a big hoop of iron, called an iron tire, which would fit around the wood. The wheelwright heated the iron tire, which expanded just enough to fit around the outside of the wheel. He then poured water over the wheel to cool the metal, which caused the iron tire to shrink a bit. This held all the parts of the wheel together and made it strong.