

The conservatism of the early English colonists in North American, their strong attachment to the English way of doing things, would play a major part in the furniture that was made in New England.

The very tools that the first New England furniture makers used were, after all, not much different from those used for centuries-even millennia: basic hammers, saws, chisels, planes, augers, compasses, and measures.

These were the tools used more or less by all people who worked with wood: carpenters, barrel makers, and shipwrights.

At most the furniture makers might have had planes with special edges or more delicate chisels, but there could not have been much specialization in the early years of the colonies.

The furniture makers in those early decades of the 1600's were known as "joiners", for the primary method of constructing furniture, at least among the English of this time, was that of mortise-and-tenon joinery.

The mortise is the hole chiseled and cut into one piece of wood, while the tenon is the tongue of protruding element shaped from another piece of wood so that it fits into the mortise; and another small hole is then drilled (with the auger) through the mortised end and the tenon so that a whittled peg can secure the joint-thus the term "joiner".

Panels were fitted into slots on the basic frames.

This kind of construction was used for making everything from houses to chests.

Relatively little hardware was used during this period.

Some nails-forged by hand-were used, but no screws or glue, hinges were often made of leather, but metal hinges were also used.

The cruder varieties were made by blacksmiths in the colonies, but the finer metal elements were imported.

Locks and escutcheon plates-the latter to shield the wood from the metal key-would often be imported.

Above all, what the early English colonists imported was their knowledge of familiarity with, and dedication to the traditional types and designs of furniture they knew in England.