

GRADE 4: MODULE 2A: UNIT 2: LESSON 2

Colonial Trades:

The Shoemaker

The shoemaker, sometimes referred to as a cobbler in modern times, always had work to do. Colonial people did a lot of walking, so they would wear out their shoes pretty quickly. The shoemaker would make new shoes, and the cobbler would mend old shoes. The cobbler wasn't considered as skilled, so a shoemaker didn't like to be called a cobbler.

Some of the tools they used were:

- awl: a pointy-tipped metal tool for punching holes in leather
- burnisher: heated tool used to finish the edge of the soles and heels
- marking wheel: tool that marks the points to stitch the sole to the upper part of the shoe

- size stick: device with a sliding bracket to measure the person's foot
 - sole knife: half-moon-shaped knife used to cut out the leather for the sole
 - stretching pliers: tool for stretching the leather on the upper part of the shoe
- The shoemakers didn't make the leather they used to make the shoes. People called tanners actually made the leather clean and ready. Fine, strong leather could be made from the skins of cattle, elk, or deer.

The Shoemaker's Role in a Colonial Village

Colonial people needed strong shoes and boots. They often worked outside for much of the day and walked long distances. The craftspeople who made the leather shoes that many colonists wore was called a shoemaker.

The shoemaker used several tools in his work. He would whittle, or carve, a set of different-sized shoe-shaped forms called **lasts**. To make the top part of the shoe, the shoemaker would shape

flexible leather around the last. The top part of the shoe was called the upper.

The bottom of the shoe, or the sole, was cut from thick leather. The shoemaker used a pointy tool called an **awl** to punch small holes in the upper and the sole. He sewed the upper to the sole with heavy thread. Then a wooden heel was attached with tiny nails.

Some shoemakers had a shop in a village, but many shoemakers traveled from place to place. While they traveled, they stayed with families who needed shoes. He would stay long enough to make shoes for the family and their neighbors. Then he would pack up his lasts and awl and travel to the next place where people needed shoes.

Both men and women were shoemakers. African American people, many of whom were slaves, were also shoemakers. A shoemaker who owned his own shop was called the master of the shop. Women who owned shoemaking shops were called the mistresses of the shop.

Colonial people took very good care of their shoes. In the summer, many people did not wear shoes because they did not want to wear them out before the cold winter. People with more money bought fancy shoes. The shoemaker helped colonists keep their feet warm, dry, and protected.

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