

13 Colonies Saddlemaker

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This page describes the work of a colonial saddle maker. Did you know that colonial saddlemakers made saddles last typically lasted 25-30 years?

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Harness Maker

Because few colonists could have had much money, let alone owned a carriage, harness makers catered to the rich. A custom-made harness could cost a month's wages, take thirty hours to fashion, and would last 25-30 years. Harness makers also made and repaired other leather goods such as couch cushions, pistol buckets, razor cases, cartridge cases, bags and pouches, water buckets, and horse riding accessories.

Becoming a harness or saddle maker was hard work. Apprenticeships usually started around age 13, and apprentices had to learn the complexities of fashioning systems of cutting, stitching, and assembly that connected a horse to a carriage. They also had to learn to make the special thread used in leatherwork that was made of flax or hemp and coated in beeswax. Harness and saddlemakers learned to use specialized knives, awls, and dividers that cut leather. Such craftsman also knew how to make different saddles such as sidesaddles for ladies, racing saddles, saddles for luggage (called portmanteaus) and saddles for carriage drivers (called postilions) and how to make saddles of different colors, textures, and waterproofing strength.


