

# Colonial Candlemaker

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## 13 Colonies Navigation

This page describes the work of a colonial chandler  
(candlemaker).

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## Trades

### Colonial Candlemaking

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Being that electric lights did not exist at the time, candlemaking in colonial times was an important trade. Although women made candles in smaller towns and villages, a tradesman called a chandler made candles in larger towns.

To make a candle, a chandler would first craft the wick with thin pieces of cotton or linen. Next, he would heat up tallow or animal fat before dipping the wick into it. The wick would be dipped into the burning animal fat several times. This “dipping” was done until the candle was the desired size. Once the candle had hardened, the wick was trimmed and the candle was ready to be used. Such candles, made from tallow, gave off unpleasant odors. Chandlers also made candles from whale oil. These kind of candles didn’t smell any better than tallow candles but were more durable

Wealthy people could buy candles made of beeswax, but these were expensive and not available to everyone. Some chandlers attempted to make candles using berries from the bayberry shrub, but this process of very time consuming and not cost-effective.

