

# Colonial Wheelwright

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This page describes the work of a colonial wheelwrights. Did you know that wheelwrights were most important to farmers, who needed wheeled carts to move and transport crops?

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## Trades

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Wheelwrights were important tradesman in colonial towns. They made wheels for wagons, carriages, and riding chairs. Because colonial roads were rocky and rugged, wheels had to be made to handle the rough conditions. Wheelwrights also built or repaired carts, wheelbarrows and wagons. Wheelwrights had to have precise measuring skills as well as knowledge of basic geometry. Wheelwrights were very important in farming regions, where farmers needed wheeled vehicles to move their crops.

Constructing such a wheel was considerably difficult and took the skills of metal working and carpentry. Wheelwrights cut, chiseled, fashioned, and shaped wheels from wood. The spokes and hubs were also made of wood. They used iron rims, often made by local blacksmiths, to fit around the exterior of the wheels. Of particular difficulty was the process of perfecting the mortise and tenon process, where the wheelwright carved a cavity (mortise) in a piece of wood and shaped the tenon to fit in the cavity snugly. This is how the spokes were fastened in the hub and rim.

