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HISTORIC SIGN PAINTER & MAKER
*Hand-crafted signs in the style of
18th and 19th century artisans*

Chandler

Candlemaking in colonial times was an important, albeit an expensive and laborious trade. Raw materials used by chandlers ranged from indigenous plants to pig and cow fat to beehives to whale brains.

Although women made candles in smaller towns and villages, a tradesman called a chandler made candles in larger towns.

A chandler would first craft the wick with thin pieces of cotton or linen, then heat up tallow or animal fat. The wick would then be dipped into the burning animal fat several times until the candle reached the desired size. Once the candle had hardened, the wick was trimmed and the candle was ready to be used.

Tallow was the cheapest, readily available candle ingredient for most colonists. However, tallow gave off a foul odor because they're rendered fat from sheep, pigs and cattle.

Beeswax was dipped just like tallow but it made a far superior candle. The light-colored wax solidified to a hard candle with no scent. Wicks didn't melt the wax as quickly as they dissolved the softer tallow. A beeswax candle would burn without the endless tending required by tallow, much brighter and far longer.

Some chandlers made candles from the bayberry shrub. The berry could be skimmed and made into brittle but aromatic candle wax. Combined with beeswax, the tapers were sturdy, burned cleanly, and quickly became a prized method of illuminating Colonial-era homes.

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