

Early Pioneer Trades and Jobs

The Farrier

The farrier's functions overlapped with those of the blacksmith. When the horse was part of everyday life, shoeing them was a major part of blacksmiths's work. The farrier shod horses and oxen with iron shoes made at his own forge as well as treating animals' injuries and diseases, similar to the modern veterinarian.

The Blacksmith

The blacksmith was so important in pioneer life that many communities offered him a parcel of land to set up shop for an agreed length of time. Blacksmiths made everything that could be made of iron by hand: weapons, cooking utensils, horseshoes, cutlery, even padlocks. Many times farmers had knowledge of this craft and often did their own repairs. However, when the job required more sophisticated tools and knowledge, the blacksmith's skills were called upon.

The Forge-The forge was used by the blacksmith to heat iron so that it could be shaped into tools, horseshoes, or other objects. Early forges were often built of stone or brick. Later models were made of iron and were specially designed to be portable. The bellows forced air under the fire to make it burn hotter. Early bellows were made of leather and wood and were later replaced by a crank mechanism.

The Anvil-The anvil was the most important tool of the blacksmith. It was placed within arms-reach of the forge so that the blacksmith could turn one to the other without unnecessary steps.

The Cabinetmaker

Cabinetmaking, or joiners as they were often called, were the most skilled craftsmen in the carpentry trades. A carpenter's bench could be found in the woodshops of many craftsmen. Common benches had two vises-a vertical vise and a box vise. Most workbenches had square holes in them in which bench hooks, or "stops" were placed to hold wood being planed smooth.

The Cobbler

The cobbler, or shoemaker, made shoes out of home-tanned leather, hand-twisted flax and wooden pegs. The shoes were molded over a form called a "last." Lasts were wooden or iron models of a human foot. In the early days, both the left and the right

shoes were the same shape. Shoes were expensive and often many family members shared the same pair of shoes.