

Mercer Museum Vocabulary

Colonial- Of or relating to the 13 British colonies that became the original United States of America

Tile- a thin slab or bent piece of baked clay, sometimes painted or glazed, used for various purposes, including roofing and architectural decoration

General Store- store, usually in a rural area, that sells a wide variety of merchandise, as clothing, food, or hardware, but is not divided into departments.

Whale oil- oil rendered from whale blubber, formerly widely used as a fuel for lamps and for making soap and candles, and a machine lubricant.

Blacksmith- a person who forges objects of iron.

Lenape- A group of closely related Native American peoples formerly inhabiting the Delaware and Hudson River Valley and the land in between. The Delaware formed a variety of political alliances in their westward migration after losing their lands to white settlement in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Cooper- a person who makes or repairs casks, barrels, etc.

Gallows- wooden frame, consisting of a crossbeam on two uprights, on which condemned persons are executed by hanging.

Canal- a long narrow arm of the sea penetrating far inland.

Concrete- an artificial, stone like material used for various structural purposes, made by mixing cement and various aggregates, as sand, pebbles, gravel, or shale, with water and allowing the mixture to harden.

Archaeology- the scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of their artifacts, inscriptions, monuments, and other such remains, especially those that have been excavated.

Chronology- the sequential order in which past events occur.

Industrial Revolution- The social and economic changes brought about with the shift from handmade and hand-powered tools to large-scale factory production, occurring in America from the late 1700s through the mid-1800s.

Game- wild animals, including birds and fishes

Curing- the act or a method of preserving meat, fish, etc., by smoking, salting, or the like.

Salting- To cure or preserve by treating with salt or a salt solution.

Potting- A method of preserving meat. It is cooked, then placed in a crock and covered with a deep layer of melted fat or lard. Meat preserved in this manner was often used on long voyages.

Drying- Meat preserved by cutting into thin strips and drying it in the sun.



Smoking– preserving meat by hanging it in the smokehouse. The smoke from the hickory completed the process. Then it was hung in the cellar and used throughout the year.

Spider Pot- an iron pot with a long handle and legs used to cook items in Colonial times

Flint- a hard, fine-grained quartz that sparks when struck

Wool Cards- wire-toothed brush used to detangle and straighten wool fibers before spinning

Drop Spindle- a wooden spike weighted at one end with a wheel and an optional hook at the other end. A primitive device used for spinning wool and other fibers into thread; precursor of the spinning wheel.

Chamber Pot- a bowl-shaped container kept in the bedroom under a bed and used as a toilet at night

Bellows- a device for producing a current of air/oxygen to keep a fire going

Butter Mold- a device used to form and mark butter to distinguish one farm's butter

Jacob's Ladder- A child's toy made out of six square wooden blocks and ribbon.

Barter- To trade goods or services without the exchange of money

Fleece- the wool that is shorn from a sheep at shearing time

Churn- a vessel that agitates milk or cream to make butter

Broadside- large sheet of paper usually printed on one side

Anvil- heavy iron block with a smooth face, frequently of steel, on which metals, usually heated until soft, are hammered into desired shapes

Loom- hand-operated or power-driven apparatus for weaving fabrics

Nippers- device for nipping, as pincers or forceps

