

ALICE MORSE EARLE



***HOME LIFE
IN COLONIAL
DAYS***

Alice Morse Earle

Home Life in Colonial Days

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Kendall Pierce

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Introduction

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Between the austere necessities of survival and the intimate rituals of comfort, *Home Life in Colonial Days* traces how early American households transformed scarcity, labor, and belief into the texture of daily living, revealing a world where every hearth, tool, and handmade garment served at once as a defense against hardship, a measure of ingenuity, and a quiet declaration of communal identity, so that home became not a retreat from history but its workshop, where endurance, cooperation, and careful skill forged the habits, expectations, and material culture that sustained families and laid foundations for a society, all under the press of seasons that dictated time, food, and light, and under inherited customs adapted to new landscapes and supplies.

Alice Morse Earle's *Home Life in Colonial Days* is a work of social history focused on domestic life in colonial America, first published in 1898. Writing with the curiosity of an antiquarian and the care of a historian, Earle illuminates everyday practices that broader political narratives often overlook. The book belongs to a genre that treats household spaces, tools, and routines as primary evidence for understanding a culture. Its setting spans the American colonies, attending to the experiences of ordinary people whose work filled kitchens, workshops, yards, and fields, and whose resourcefulness shaped the material and moral contours of their communities.

The book offers a guided tour through the fabric of daily existence rather than a chronological account of events.

Readers encounter rooms, objects, labors, and customs as portals into a larger world, moving at a measured pace that favors observation over drama. Earle's voice is lucid, steady, and precise; her tone blends respect for the past with a desire to make its textures legible to modern eyes. The narrative privileges concrete detail—how things were made, kept, or used—while quietly suggesting what these practices meant for household order, comfort, and identity. The result is immersive, informative, and remarkably accessible.

Central to Earle's approach is the conviction that material culture records human intention. Implements for cooking and lighting, methods of spinning and weaving, and the layout of homes and outbuildings collectively reveal beliefs about work, time, and sufficiency. The book traces how gender and age structured domestic responsibilities and how community life rested on reciprocal aid. It shows the seasonal cadence of tasks and the way local resources and imported goods intertwined. By attending to the ordinary, Earle uncovers the moral economies that governed households, where thrift and patience joined with skill to produce stability amid uncertainty.

For contemporary readers, these themes challenge simplified myths of the colonial past as either uniformly austere or uniformly heroic. The book re-centers the ingenuity of women and children, whose largely unrecorded labor sustained families and neighborhoods. It offers perspective on sustainability, repair, and craft at a moment when such practices again seem urgent. It clarifies how technologies—from lighting to textiles—shape social relations and expectations of comfort. Above all, it restores the complexity of home as a site where culture is made daily, reminding us that ordinary routines can carry extraordinary historical weight.

Earle builds her account from concrete sources, drawing on documents such as inventories, diaries, letters, and town records to substantiate description with evidence. Readers will notice the precision with which she names objects and procedures, a method that invites careful attention and rewards curiosity. Because the book reflects the scholarship and language of the late nineteenth century, it also bears the assumptions of its time. Approaching it with a critical eye enhances its value: the vivid detail stands as a durable resource, while moments of dated interpretation highlight how historical understanding itself changes.

To read *Home Life in Colonial Days* today is to enter a patient conversation with the past, guided by a writer who trusted that the smallest tools and habits could unlock the largest questions. Earle's pages offer a durable framework for teachers, students, and general readers seeking to connect the tangible with the historical. They also speak to makers and practitioners who find meaning in process and craft. The book still matters because it shows how a society takes shape in kitchens, bedchambers, yards, and workshops, where necessity becomes tradition and tradition becomes memory—an enduring lesson in how ordinary life composes a civilization.

Synopsis

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Alice Morse Earle's *Home Life in Colonial Days* is a late-nineteenth-century social history that reconstructs everyday domestic experience in the American colonies. Drawing on probate inventories, diaries, travelers' reports, almanacs, and surviving artifacts, Earle arranges her material thematically to move through a household's spaces and routines. She emphasizes the ordinary rather than political events, showing how material conditions shaped habits, manners, and expectations. Regional differences surface, yet a shared reliance on household industry and communal practices remains central. The book's method is accumulative: brief sketches of tools, furnishings, and customs build a composite portrait of how homes were made, supplied, governed, and remembered.

Earle begins at the threshold, explaining how houses were sited and built from local materials. Timber frames, large chimneys, and the central hearth determined room arrangements and daily movement. Scarcity of glass, hardware, and finished goods is a recurring constraint that encourages improvisation and repair. She catalogues typical furnishings—chests, trestle tables, bedsteads, and storage pieces—while noting the gradual appearance of imported wares. Lighting and heating practices, from rushlights to foot warmers, reveal the discipline of labor and thrift. Floors, walls, and textiles display a blend of utility and display, with careful maintenance rituals signaling order, cleanliness, and status within the household.

From the hearth outward, the kitchen organizes labor, diet, and sociability. Earle describes open-fire cookery with cranes, kettles, spits, and bake ovens, and the utensils required for grinding, pounding, and preserving. Gardens, orchards, dairies, and smokehouses support a year's provisioning through salting, drying, pickling, and cellaring. Corn, grains, and seasonal produce underpin meals, while cider, small beer, and later tea and coffee mark habit and taste. She traces the flow of ingredients through trade and the periodic disruptions that altered consumption. Communal work—husking bees, quiltings, and shared butchering—eases heavy tasks and provides occasions for exchange, news, and regulated festivity.

Clothing and textiles occupy a central place in Earle's account of household industry. She follows flax and wool from field and flock through spinning, weaving, fulling, cutting, and mending, showing how garments measured diligence and means. Dyeing, knitting, and shoe- and leatherwork round out a calendar of domestic production. Soap-boiling, starching, and intensive laundering illustrate the effort behind cleanliness. Sumptuary expectations and local ordinances appear in the background, regulating adornment and public presentation. The book attends to the division of labor across age and gender, underscoring how women's and children's skills, taught early and practiced daily, sustained both comfort and community standing.

Children's lives, education, and discipline emerge from hornbooks, primers, and schoolroom practices that interweave literacy with religious instruction. Earle outlines dame schools, town schools, and apprenticeships as pathways into work and responsibility. Household governance is firm, with duties assigned and time marked by seasons, bells, and simple timekeepers. Sabbath observance structures the week; meetinghouses, long

services, and warming devices testify to endurance and communal norms. Play and leisure exist but are modest and supervised. Through these vignettes, Earle shows how learning, belief, and authority reinforced each other, forming habits of attention, obedience, and mutual accountability within families and neighborhoods.

Travel, trade, and communication expand the household's horizon. Poor roads, ferries, horseback travel, wagons, and winter sleds shape distance and pace, while taverns function as nodes for lodging, rumor, and exchange. Post riders and newspapers slowly stitch distant towns together. Earle situates courtship, weddings, and funerals within domestic ritual, noting hospitality customs and gift economies that expressed obligation and rank. She surveys home remedies, herbals, and midwifery within a medical culture of necessity. Indentured service and enslavement appear as elements of many households, especially outside New England, revealing how domestic order rested upon unequal labor and law as well as kinship.

Without dramatizing crises or imposing a single thesis, Earle's synthesis restores texture to colonial domestic life by tying objects to habits and private routines to public norms. Her careful collation of scattered records makes visible the ingenuity, restraint, and cooperation demanded by scarcity and distance. Attentive to change over time yet anchored in specific practices, the book helps readers connect material culture to social hierarchy, religious discipline, and communal solidarity. Its enduring value lies in the way it turns ordinary things—tools, garments, foodways, rooms—into evidence, offering a durable framework for understanding how households built the foundations of American society.

Historical Context

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Alice Morse Earle's *Home Life in Colonial Days*, first published in 1898, surveys domestic routines and material culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century English colonies of North America. Writing amid the Colonial Revival, Earle drew on diaries, church and town records, probate inventories, and museum collections to reconstruct everyday practices. Her focus is households rather than high politics, situating kitchens, textiles, tools, and childrearing within broader economic and religious frameworks. The book reflects a late nineteenth-century interest in preservation and tangible artifacts, yet it grounds description in verifiable sources, offering readers a documented picture of how homes functioned under early American institutions.

Colonial home life unfolded across varied settlements—Puritan towns in New England, tobacco plantations in the Chesapeake, mixed farms and ports in the Middle Colonies, and rice and indigo estates farther south. English common law structured property, inheritance, and marriage, including the doctrine of coverture that limited married women's legal independence. Local governance centered on institutions such as the New England town meeting and the county court; churches ordered communal rhythms, from the Congregational meetinghouse to Anglican parishes. Earle situates domestic routines within these frameworks, showing how households served as economic units shaped by climate, available land, and the legal and ecclesiastical order.

Labor inside colonial homes depended on intertwined systems: family work, apprenticeship, indentured servitude, and slavery. By the early eighteenth century, slavery was legally entrenched, exemplified by Virginia's 1705 slave code, while New England and the Middle Colonies also held enslaved people in domestic and agricultural roles. Apprentices bound to masters learned trades that supplied household goods. Servants and children contributed to dairying, textile preparation, and seasonal harvests. Earle's treatment acknowledges this composite workforce and the hierarchies it created within households. She documents tasks rather than narrating biographies, using inventories and advertisements to show how dependence on coerced and contract labor structured daily routines.

Material culture anchors the period Earle describes. Households raised flax and sheep, spun on great and treadle wheels, and wove on looms; fulling mills finished cloth locally. Soap boiling, candle dipping, brewing, and cheese making filled the annual round, while iron pots, spits, and cranes enabled hearth cookery. Local potters and smiths supplied essentials, yet Atlantic commerce brought refined ceramics, printed cottons, tea, and sugar as the eighteenth-century consumer revolution advanced. The Navigation Acts regulated this trade under mercantilism. Earle catalogs tools and furnishings to demonstrate how imported novelties blended with homemade goods, reshaping work, taste, and expectations within colonial homes.

Religion and schooling framed domestic order. Congregational New England enforced Sabbath observance and church discipline, while Anglican vestries in the South administered parish relief and moral oversight. The Massachusetts Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647 mandated local schooling to promote literacy, and Harvard College (1636) and the College of William & Mary (1693) formed an

educated clergy. Printing arrived early, with the Cambridge press operating by 1638 and newspapers such as the Boston News-Letter appearing in 1704. Earle links catechisms, primers, and household devotions to everyday routines, underscoring how instruction and piety governed work rhythms, reading practices, and family hierarchy.

War, climate, and disease shaped the domestic sphere. Conflicts such as King Philip's War (1675–1676) and the eighteenth-century Anglo-French wars forced some towns to garrison houses and maintain watches. Epidemics and high infant mortality altered family strategies. The late stages of the Little Ice Age meant long winters, prompting central chimneys, heavy bedding, warming pans, and wood-intensive heating. Timber-frame construction, clapboard siding, and small leaded windows characterized many early New England houses, while brick became common in Tidewater elites' dwellings. Earle's descriptions of architecture and household equipment situate private life within these pressures, emphasizing practical adaptations over romantic homestead imagery.

Communication and commerce transformed homes in the eighteenth century. Postal routes expanded after 1692 under the imperial patent, and stagecoaches and improved roads connected inland towns to ports. Newspapers multiplied, and almanacs carried recipes, remedies, and advisories. Port cities—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston—imported books, instruments, and fashionable wares, fostering genteel rituals such as tea drinking at specialized tables with silver or pewter services. The Great Awakening (1730s–1740s) altered religious practice and domestic devotions. Earle traces these shifts through objects and manuals, highlighting how literacy, print, and imported goods reshaped manners and family authority within a still labor-intensive household economy.

Political crisis brought domestic production into public debate. Nonimportation campaigns after the Stamp Act (1765) and Townshend Acts (1767) encouraged homespun, spinning bees, and tea boycotts; the Continental Association (1774) coordinated colonial enforcement. Women's textile labor and provisioning thus gained political resonance without altering legal status. Earle underscores such moments to reveal how households mediated imperial policy and local identity. Her narrative, characteristic of the Colonial Revival, prizes artifacts and crafts, yet it also documents constraint, scarcity, and dependence on Atlantic systems. The result is a grounded portrait that both celebrates ingenuity and cautions against idealizing colonial comfort or simplicity.

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Foreword

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The illustrations for this book are in every case from real articles and scenes, usually from those still in existence—rare relics of past days. The pictures are the symbols of years of careful search, patient investigation, and constant watchfulness. Many a curious article as nameless and incomprehensible as the totem of an extinct Indian tribe has been studied, compared, inquired and written about, and finally triumphantly named and placed in the list of obsolete domestic appurtenances. From the lofts of woodsheds, under attic eaves, in dairy cellars, out of old trunks and sea-chests from mouldering warehouses, have strangely shaped bits and combinations of wood, stuff, and metal been rescued and recognized. The treasure stores of Deerfield Memorial Hall, of the Bostonian Society, of the American Antiquarian Society, and many State Historical Societies have been freely searched; and to the officers of these societies I give cordial thanks for their coöperation and assistance in my work.

The artistic and correct photographic representation of many of these objects I owe to Mr. William F. Halliday of Boston, Massachusetts, Mr. George F. Cook of Richmond, Virginia, and the Misses Allen of Deerfield, Massachusetts. To many friends, and many strangers, who have secured for me single articles or single photographs, I here repeat the thanks already given for their kindness.

There were two constant obstacles in the path: An article would be found and a name given by old-time country folk, but no dictionary contained the word, no printed description of its use or purpose could be obtained, though a century

ago it was in every household. Again, some curiously shaped utensil or tool might be displayed and its use indicated; but it was nameless, and it took long inquiry and deduction—the faculty of "taking a hint,"—to christen it. It is plain that different vocations and occupations had not only implements but a vocabulary of their own, and all have become almost obsolete; to the various terms, phrases, and names, once in general application and use in spinning, weaving, and kindred occupations, and now half forgotten, might be given the descriptive title, a "homespun vocabulary." By definite explanation of these terms many a good old English word and phrase has been rescued from disuse.

ALICE MORSE EARLE.

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CHAPTER I

HOMES OF THE COLONISTS

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When the first settlers landed on American shores, the difficulties in finding or making shelter must have seemed ironical as well as almost unbearable. The colonists found a land magnificent with forest trees of every size and variety, but they had no sawmills, and few saws to cut boards; there was plenty of clay and ample limestone on every side, yet they could have no brick and no mortar; grand boulders of granite and rock were everywhere, yet there was not a single facility for cutting, drawing, or using stone. These homeless men, so sorely in need of immediate shelter, were baffled by pioneer conditions, and had to turn to many poor expedients, and be satisfied with rude covering. In Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and, possibly, other states, some reverted to an ancient form of shelter: they became cave-dwellers; caves were dug in the side of a hill, and lived in till the settlers could have time to chop down and cut up trees for log houses. Cornelis Van Tienhoven^[1], Secretary of the Province of New Netherland, gives a description of these cave-dwellings, and says that "the wealthy and principal men in New England lived in this fashion for two reasons: first, not to waste time building; second, not to discourage poorer laboring people." It is to be doubted whether wealthy men ever lived in them in New England, but Johnson, in his *Wonder-working Providence*, written in 1645, tells of the occasional use of these "smoaky homes." They were speedily abandoned, and no records remain of permanent cave-homes in New England^[1q]. In

Pennsylvania caves were used by newcomers as homes for a long time, certainly half a century. They generally were formed by digging into the ground about four feet in depth on the banks or low cliffs near the river front. The walls were then built up of sods or earth laid on poles or brush; thus half only of the chamber was really under ground. If dug into a side hill, the earth formed at least two walls. The roofs were layers of tree limbs covered over with sod, or bark, or rushes and bark. The chimneys were laid of cobblestone or sticks of wood mortared with clay and grass. The settlers were thankful even for these poor shelters, and declared that they found them comfortable. By 1685 many families were still living in caves in Pennsylvania, for the Governor's Council then ordered the caves to be destroyed and filled in. Sometimes the settler used the cave for a cellar for the wooden house which he built over it.

These cave-dwellings were perhaps the poorest houses ever known by any Americans, yet pioneers, or poor, or degraded folk have used them for homes in America until far more recent days. In one of these miserable habitations of earth and sod in the town of Rutland, Massachusetts, were passed some of the early years of the girlhood of Madame Jumel^[2], whose beautiful house on Washington Heights, New York, still stands to show the contrasts that can come in a single life.

The homes of the Indians were copied by the English, being ready adaptations of natural and plentiful resources. Wigwams in the South were of plaited rush or grass mats; of deerskins pinned on a frame; of tree boughs rudely piled into a cover, and in the far South, of layers of palmetto leaves. In the mild climate of the Middle and Southern states a "half-faced camp," of the Indian form, with one open side, which served for windows and door, and where the fire was built, made a good temporary home. In such for

a time, in his youth, lived Abraham Lincoln. Bark wigwams were the most easily made of all; they could be quickly pinned together on a light frame. In 1626 there were thirty home-buildings of Europeans on the island of Manhattan, now New York, and all but one of them were of bark.

Though the settler had no sawmills, brick kilns, or stone-cutters, he had one noble friend—a firm rock to stand upon—his broad-axe. With his axe, and his own strong and willing arms, he could take a long step in advance in architecture; he could build a log cabin. These good, comfortable, and substantial houses have ever been built by American pioneers, not only in colonial days, but in our Western and Southern states to the present time. A typical one like many now standing and occupied in the mountains of North Carolina is here shown. Round logs were halved together at the corners, and roofed with logs, or with bark and thatch on poles; this made a comfortable shelter, especially when the cracks between the logs were "chinked" with wedges of wood, and "daubed" with clay. Many cabins had at first no chinking or daubing; one settler while sleeping was scratched on the head by the sharp teeth of a hungry wolf, who thrust his nose into the space between the logs of the cabin. Doors were hung on wooden hinges or straps of hide.

A favorite form of a log house for a settler to build in his first "cut down" in the virgin forest, was to dig a square trench about two feet deep, of dimensions as large as he wished the ground floor of his house, then to set upright all around this trench (leaving a space for a fireplace, window, and door), a closely placed row of logs all the same length, usually fourteen feet long for a single story; if there was a loft, eighteen feet long. The earth was filled in solidly around these logs, and kept them firmly upright; a horizontal band of puncheons[3], which were split logs smoothed off on the face with the axe, was sometimes pinned around within the

log walls, to keep them from caving in. Over this was placed a bark roof, made of squares of chestnut bark, or shingles of overlapping birch-bark. A bark or log shutter was hung at the window, and a bark door hung on withe hinges, or, if very luxurious, on leather straps, completed the quickly made home. This was called rolling-up a house, and the house was called a puncheon and bark house. A rough puncheon floor, hewed flat with an axe or adze, was truly a luxury. One settler's wife pleaded that the house might be rolled up around a splendid flat stump; thus she had a good, firm table. A small platform placed about two feet high alongside one wall, and supported at the outer edge with strong posts, formed a bedstead. Sometimes hemlock boughs were the only bed. The frontier saying was, "A hard day's work makes a soft bed." The tired pioneers slept well even on hemlock boughs. The chinks of the logs were filled with moss and mud, and in the autumn banked up outside with earth for warmth.

These log houses did not satisfy English men and women. They longed to have what Roger Williams called English houses, which were, however, scarcely different in ground-plan. A single room on the ground, called in many old wills the fire-room, had a vast chimney at one end. A so-called staircase, usually but a narrow ladder, led to a sleeping-loft above. Some of those houses were still made of whole logs, but with clapboards nailed over the chinks and cracks. Others were of a lighter frame covered with clapboards, or in Delaware with boards pinned on perpendicularly. Soon this house was doubled in size and comfort by having a room on either side of the chimney.

Each settlement often followed in general outline as well as detail the houses to which the owners had become accustomed in Europe, with, of course, such variations as were necessary from the new surroundings, new climate,

and new limitations. New York was settled by the Dutch, and therefore naturally the first permanent houses were Dutch in shape, such as may be seen in Holland to-day. In the large towns in New Netherland the houses were certainly very pretty, as all visitors stated who wrote accounts at that day. Madam Knights visited New York in 1704, and wrote of the houses—I will give her own words, in her own spelling and grammar, which were not very good, though she was the teacher of Benjamin Franklin, and the friend of Cotton Mather:—

"The Buildings are Brick Generaly very stately and high: the Bricks in some of the houses are of divers Coullers, and laid in Checkers, being glazed, look very agreable. The inside of the houses is neat to admiration, the wooden work; for only the walls are plaster'd; and the Sumers and Gist are planed and kept very white scour'd as so is all the partitions if made of Bords."

The "sumers and gist" were the heavy timbers of the frame, the summer-pieces and joists. The summer-piece was the large middle beam in the middle from end to end of the ceiling; the joists were cross-beams. These were not covered with plaster as nowadays, but showed in every ceiling; and in old houses are sometimes set so curiously and fitted so ingeniously, that they are always an entertaining study. Another traveller says that New York houses had patterns of colored brick set in the front, and also bore the date of building. The Governor's house at Albany had two black brick-hearts. Dutch houses were set close to the sidewalk with the gable-end to the street; and had the roof notched like steps—corbel-roof was the name; and these ends were often of brick, while the rest of the walls were of wood. The roofs were high in proportion to the side walls, and hence steep; they were surmounted usually in Holland fashion with

weather-vanes in the shape of horses, lions, geese, sloops, or fish; a rooster was a favorite Dutch weather-vane. There were metal gutters sticking out from every roof almost to the middle of the street; this was most annoying to passers-by in rainy weather, who were deluged with water from the roofs. The cellar windows had small loop-holes with shutters. The windows were always small; some had only sliding shutters, others had but two panes or quarels of glass, as they were called, which were only six or eight inches square. The front doors were cut across horizontally in the middle into two parts, and in early days were hung on leather hinges instead of iron.

In the upper half of the door were two round bull's-eyes of heavy greenish glass, which let faint rays of light enter the hall. The door opened with a latch, and often had also a knocker. Every house had a porch or "stoep" flanked with benches, which were constantly occupied in the summer time; and every evening, in city and village alike, an incessant visiting was kept up from stoop to stoop. The Dutch farmhouses were a single straight story, with two more stories in the high, in-curving roof. They had doors and stoops like the town houses, and all the windows had heavy board shutters. The cellar and the garret were the most useful rooms in the house; they were store-rooms for all kinds of substantial food. In the cellar were great bins of apples, potatoes, turnips, beets, and parsnips. There were hogsheads of corned beef, barrels of salt pork, tubs of hams being salted in brine, tonnekins of salt shad and mackerel, firkins of butter, kegs of pigs' feet, tubs of souse, kilderkins of lard. On a long swing-shelf were tumblers of spiced fruits, and "rolliches," head-cheese, and strings of sausages—all Dutch delicacies.

In strong racks were barrels of cider and vinegar, and often of beer. Many contained barrels of rum and a pipe of

Madeira. What a storehouse of plenty and thrift! What an emblem of Dutch character! In the attic by the chimney was the smoke-house, filled with hams, bacon, smoked beef, and sausages.

In Virginia and Maryland, where people did not gather into towns, but built their houses farther apart, there were at first few sawmills, and the houses were universally built of undressed logs. Nails were costly, as were all articles manufactured of iron, hence many houses were built without iron; wooden pins and pegs were driven in holes cut to receive them; hinges were of leather; the shingles on the roof were sometimes pinned, or were held in place by "weight-timbers." The doors had latches with strings hanging outside; by pulling in the string within-doors the house was securely locked. This form of latch was used in all the colonies. When persons were leaving houses, they sometimes set them on fire in order to gather up the nails from the ashes. To prevent this destruction of buildings, the government of Virginia gave to each planter who was leaving his house as many nails as the house was estimated to have in its frame, provided the owner would not burn the house down.

Some years later, when boards could be readily obtained, the favorite dwelling-place in the South was a framed building with a great stone or log-and-clay chimney at either end. The house was usually set on sills resting on the ground. The partitions were sometimes covered with a thick layer of mud which dried into a sort of plaster and was whitewashed. The roofs were covered with cypress shingles.

Hammond wrote of these houses in 1656, in his *Leah and Rachel*, "Pleasant in their building, and contrived delightfull; the rooms large, daubed and whitelimed, glazed and flowered; and if not glazed windows, shutters made pretty and convenient."

When prosperity and wealth came through the speedily profitable crops of tobacco, the houses improved. The home-lot or yard of the Southern planters showed a pleasant group of buildings, which would seem the most cheerful home of the colonies, only that all dearly earned homes are cheerful to their owners. There was not only the spacious mansion house for the planter with its pleasant porch, but separate buildings in which were a kitchen, cabins for the negro servants and the overseer, a stable, barn, coach-house, hen-house, smoke-house, dove-cote, and milk-room. In many yards a tall pole with a toy house at top was erected; in this bird-house bee-martins built their nests, and by bravely disconcerting the attacks of hawks and crows, and noisily notifying the family and servants of the approach of the enemy, thus served as a guardian for the domestic poultry, whose home stood close under this protection. There was seldom an ice-house. The only means for the preservation of meats in hot weather was by water constantly pouring into and through a box house erected over the spring that flowed near the house. Sometimes a brew-house was also found in the yard, for making home-brewed beer, and a tool-house for storing tools and farm implements. Some farms had a cider-mill, but this was not in the house yard. Often there was a spinning-house where servants could spin flax and wool. This usually had one room containing a hand-loom on which coarse bagging could be woven, and homespun for the use of the negroes. A very beautiful example of a splendid and comfortable Southern mansion such as was built by wealthy planters in the middle of the eighteenth century has been preserved for us at Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington.

Mount Vernon was not so fine nor so costly a house as many others built earlier in the century, such as Lower Brandon—two centuries and a half old—and Upper Brandon, the homes of the Harrisons; Westover, the home of the Byrds;

7 Early colonial lamps shaped like antique Roman lamps—shallow metal receptacles with a projecting spout into which a rag or wick was placed and burned in tallow, grease, or oil, producing a smoky, dim flame.

8 In the text, porringer refers to the small, often shallow silver cups listed in colonial inventories; English collectors, however, commonly use the word to mean a deeper covered cup with two handles.

9 A small shallow cup (also called a taster) with bosses in the bottom used to reflect light and judge the color and quality of wine; frequently appears in colonial wills and inventories.

10 An obsolete spoon metal mentioned here (also called occamy, alcamy, arkamy, etc.), historically made as an alloy of brass and arsenic and used for table implements in earlier centuries.

11 A common colonial term for large waxed and bound leather jugs used to hold ale, beer, or metheglin; the largest leather vessels were sometimes called bombards and occasionally giskin.

12 A New England commemorative meal marking the Pilgrim settlers and their landing; such social observances (also called Forefathers' Day or Forefathers' suppers) have been held annually by Plymouth and other communities since at least the 18th–19th century traditions.

13 Tisquantum, commonly called Squanto, was a Native American of the Patuxet who in the early 17th century acted as interpreter and taught the Plymouth colonists planting and survival techniques; he is recorded as assisting the Pilgrims around 1621 (he died within a few years thereafter).

14 A colonial name for maize/Indian corn used by English settlers, who sometimes compared or termed it a kind of 'wheat' even though it is the New World grain maize.

15 A portable famine or travel food made from parched Indian corn beaten to a powder and kept in a leather bag; the term (nookick) was also used by missionary John Eliot in his Algonquian translation of the Bible for flour or meal.

16 A coarse wooden or heavy iron wire comb with large teeth used to draw flax stalks through and break off the seed-bolles (called "bobs"); rippling with this implement separated seed for saving or sale.

17 A tent-shaped stack made by tying flax bundles (bates) at the seed end and spreading the stalk bases outward to dry; the term is also used for similar sheaf stacks in grain harvesting.

18 A square arrangement of stakes in running water where bates of flax or hemp were submerged and weighted with boards and stones to 'water' (ret) them for several days so the leaves and softer fibres would rot.

19 A hand-held rod (also called a distaff or, in the text, sometimes a rock) used to hold unspun flax or wool while a spinner drew off fibres by hand before or instead of using a spinning-wheel.

20 A coarse, mixed-fibre cloth traditionally woven with a linen (or tow) warp and a woollen weft, used historically for sturdy winter garments and household textiles.

21 A regional term for a vertical spool-holder used in hand-weaving to hold many filled spools or quills one above another while the weft is wound or fed.

22 A trough-mounted wooden hammering apparatus used in fulling (or milling) to beat wet cloth with soap or fullers' earth, thereby thickening and consolidating woollen fabric.

23 Yarn spun on a throstle, a type of power-driven spinning frame (water- or steam-powered) that produced stronger, more even twist suitable for warp yarns in early industrial textile production.

24 An old soap-making phrase meaning to begin the lye-making process by pouring water through wood ashes so that alkaline liquid (lye) 'leaches' out for use in soap production.

25 A type of coarse straw used for homemade brooms in the period; it is distinct from broom-corn (which was not widely grown in Connecticut at that time) and was locally used with other vegetal fibres for broom-making.

26 A historic term for decorative paper-cutting — the art of cutting ornamental designs from stiff paper with scissors, often mounted and framed as keepsakes in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

27 A short cloak or loose outer garment worn in the 17th and early 18th centuries, here listed among clothing supplied to settlers as a lined outerwear piece.

28 A loose, robe-like dressing-gown for men popular in the 17th–18th centuries, often made of silk or damask and worn at home; it derived from East and South Asian garments and became a fashionable informal costume in Europe and the colonies.

29 A durable cotton cloth originally produced around Nanking (modern Nanjing) in China, typically with a

yellowish hue; it was widely imported in the 18th century and used for garments even in colder seasons.

30 A scented, greasy hair dressing made from oils, fats, and sometimes perfumes used in the 17th–18th centuries to style hair and help powder adhere; it was applied before pomading and powdering wigs or natural hair.

31 A large hairpiece or queue worn at the back of the head—often made from human or animal hair and tied with ribbon—used in the 17th–18th centuries to augment a man’s natural hair or wig.

32 Rings given out or worn to mark and remember a death, commonly inscribed with names or dates; in the 17th–18th centuries they were frequently distributed at funerals as tokens of mourning.

33 Large, four-wheeled, canvas-covered freight wagons developed in 18th-century Pennsylvania, noted for their broad wheels and curved beds; they carried goods and emigrant families westward and remained in use into the 19th century (later as “prairie-schooners”).

34 Name given to wagon outfits that ran between the Delaware River region and the city of Pittsburgh; these were freight teams serving inland trade in Pennsylvania in the late 18th–early 19th centuries.

35 An early American mail-coach service mentioned as plying between Boston and Portsmouth and noted for using six horses on bad roads and punctual runs; commentators place such services in the late 18th to early 19th century.

36 A Dutch word (diminutive of 'sack') for small cloth or velvet bags used in Dutch-Reformed colonial churches to