

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Candle and Soap Maker

By Sharon Fabian

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Today, some people make candles for fun. They add colors and scents. They make the candles in pretty shapes. Handmade candles make nice decorations. Some people like to make soap too. They make little bars of scented soap. Maybe they wrap up a few with a bow and give them as gifts.

The colonists made candles and soap too. It wasn't a hobby for them. It was a necessity.

Some colonists had the job of making soap and candles. They were called chandlers. Their soap and candles were sold in town. Soap was cut from a big block when a customer wanted to buy some. It was sold by the pound. Candles were sold in bundles of maybe ten or twelve, since the colonists used lots of candles.

Many colonists made their own soap and candles at home.

Soap making was a big job. It was done once or twice each year. The colonists made soap in the fall. This way, they could use the animal fat from the fall butchering. Maybe they would make soap in the spring too.

Animal fat wasn't the only thing they needed to make soap. They also needed wood ash. Wood ash was just the ashes from the fireplace. It was also called potash. The colonists had plenty of that too, since they heated their houses by burning wood.

There were three steps in making soap. The first step was to make lye from the potash. To make lye, they poured water slowly through the potash. This made a brown liquid called lye.

The second step was to render the fat. Rendering the fat made it cleaner. To do this, they boiled the fat with water. They boiled it in a big kettle. They always boiled it outdoors because it smelled really bad. Then they let it cool. The fat floated to the top. Everything else settled to the bottom. Now they had clean fat, called tallow, that they could use.

Step three was to mix the lye and the tallow. The lye and the tallow were boiled together in the big kettle. They were boiled until they were thick and bubbly.

Now, they had soap. It was a soft, mushy soap that they kept in a barrel. Whenever they needed to use some soap, they could scoop a little out with a ladle.

Candles were often made in the fall too. They would be the colonists' only source of light on dark winter nights.

Candles were also made from tallow. Many colonists made them by dipping. The first step was to make a wick. One way to make a wick was to braid cotton thread. The next step was to melt a pot of tallow. Next, the wicks were dipped in the tallow. Several wicks tied to a stick could be dipped at once. The wicks had to be dipped many times. They couldn't be held in the tallow too long. They had to cool a little between each dipping. Making candles took a long time.

Making soap and candles were two jobs that many colonial families did for themselves. They were two jobs done by colonial workers in town too. All of the colonists were glad to have soap and candles. Soap and candles made their lives a little more comfortable.

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### Questions

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Another word for animal fat is \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. lye
  - B. wood ash
  - C. tallow
  - D. potash
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Another word for fireplace ashes is \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. potash
  - B. tallow
  - C. soap
  - D. lye
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Soap was made from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. tallow and wax
  - B. tallow and lye
  - C. lye and potash
  - D. bubbles and dye
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Candles were made from \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. tallow
  - B. lye
  - C. potash
  - D. none of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. From the information in this article, you can tell that soap and candles probably \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. smelled bad
  - B. smelled sweet
  - C. were colorful
  - D. smelled like flowers
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Soap was made in a \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. microwave
  - B. small kettle in the fireplace
  - C. pot on top of the stove
  - D. big kettle outdoors
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Workers who made soap and candles were called \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. chandlers
  - B. candlers
  - C. boilers
  - D. soapers
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In colonial times, soap and candle making were \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. hobbies
  - B. useful crafts
  - C. both
  - D. neither

