The hearth was the original “living room”. In Colonial times, when one walked into a home they entered a large single room with a large fire place along one wall. All daily activities (preparation of meals, candle making, etc...) and “living” took place in this area; especially in the winter months. (Colonial American Home Life, Warner, pg. 28)

Houses were cold, dark and drafty so the hearth was the central place in the house where everyone would gather together to eat, read, spin flax or wool, embroider or do other chores that they needed to do.

Candle making

Candle making in Colonial times was not a hobby or a luxury – it was a necessity. Without candles, there was no light at night for sewing, reading the Bible or almanac or, indeed, being able to see your hand in front of your face. Colonial women usually had the job of making candles or tapers, but in more populated areas, a chandler made and sold candles. To begin the process of making the much needed candles, the candle maker first had to gather wick material (thin strips of cotton or linen), animal fat called tallow, a pole or rod for lowering the wick material into the heated tallow, and a large pot for melting the tallow. Beeswax could be substituted for animal fat, but was a costly item, and therefore not commonly used. Women found that rendering bayberries yielded an aromatic candle wax, but the ratio was eight pounds of bayberries to one pound of bayberry wax, so the amount of work involved in gathering the bayberries often was not worth the small amount of wax yielded.

Autumn time was a very busy time for making candles for the winter. Heavy large kettles were set up in the fireplace where they would melt the tallow or wax.

A wick was inserted into the mold and the hot wax or tallow was poured into the mold. Then the candle was left to cool and set. They would make about 200 candles in a day.

Wick Making

Wick making was often and child's chore in Colonial America. According to the Historic Harrison website, wicks were made by dipping pieces of hemp into saltpeter. Hemp was twisted and doubled to create a loop at one end. As time went on, Colonial shops offered readymade wicks. They would also cut strips from the cloth of old clothes.
Tallow Process

Tallow candles were made by boiling animal fat until the water was removed and dirt could be skimmed away. According to Historic Harrison, making candles from tallow was difficult because inaccurate temperatures caused deformities. Wick were repeatedly dipped into tallow to thicken them enough for a night's use.

1- Candle Molds

The difficulties associated with tallow making led to the development of pewter and tin candle molds. Wicks were placed inside the molds, followed by hot tallow. Tallow was allowed to cool before candles were removed from the molds. This improved the candle making process.

2 – Lantern

These were mainly used as candle carriers. A lit candle was taken from a table or shelf and put in the lantern. The candle was protected from blowing out while walking outside. Can be carried on windy nights.

The candle could be left inside and the door was opened once inside the house or building.

In the 1600s and 1700s they did not light the room. The lit whatever they were doing. For example, reading or needlework.

It also protected the house from fire.

3 – Foot Warmer

In winter, sometimes the poorly sealed homes and meetinghouses seemed to hold no heat at all. For this reason, settlers who could afford them used foot stoves and warming pans. A foot stove was a small metal and wood box-shaped container with perforated sides and top into which a settler placed hot coals from the fireplace. Its handle made it easily portable and placed under a settler's feet with skirts or blankets draped over her legs, it warmed one or two people quite well.

Houses were not heated well. They could also use the foot warmer in a sleigh or carriage.

Foot warmers were a popular wedding gift.

4 – Toaster

This tool was used to toast bread using the fireplace. The toaster turned on a pivot using one’s foot in order to protect the hand from getting burned.

5 – Bed Warmer or Warming Pan

Colonists put warm coals inside bed warmers and placed it between the sheets before getting into bed. Bedrooms were called Chambers during this time period.

Information:
Colonists used the fireplace to heat their homes. They had to cut down a lot of trees in order to have a plentiful supply to get them through the cold months. Also, they used the fireplace to cook their meals which used even more firewood.

6 – Wooden and Pewter Plates
Many early colonists ate off of wooden plates. It was the least expensive type of plate. Pewter plates were more expensive but less expensive than silver. Pewter and especially silver were symbols of wealth.