

Drop Spindle Spinning

Wool preparation was an important task in colonial America. Wool was used almost exclusively for clothing and household textiles. While cotton was an important crop in the southern states, it was too labor intensive and expensive for the early colonists in the North to be able to either process it themselves or to purchase finished cloth. This continued to be the case until the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1792. However, even after this, wool continued to be the most used fiber.

From raising the sheep to weaving cloth from the finished yarn, every member of the family was involved in the production of wool. Children learned at a very young age to use a drop spindle.



1. Attach a length of yarn to spindle at the base.



2. Hook the yarn around the spindle below the base.



3. Loop the yarn around the top of the spindle about an inch below the tip.



4. Ready to spin.



5. Start with a small amount of fleece.



6. Pick apart the strands of the fleece with your fingers until you have a large, fluffy handful.



7. Lay the yarn on the spindle over the fleece that you have prepared.



8. Hold the yarn and fleece firmly between thumb and forefinger.



9. Spin the spindle clockwise.



10. As the spindle spins, the yarn will "grab" the fleece and spin it into yarn.



11. Release small amounts of fleece by pulling with your right hand while releasing pressure with your left.



12. At the same time, keep the spindle spinning.



13. When the yarn gets too long to reach, unhook the yarn on the top and bottom of the spindle.



14. Wind the yarn around the base of the spindle and repeat.

15. Continue spinning until you have filled the spindle or until you have the amount of yarn that you need.