

The Blacksmith

Excerpted from "The Smithy: Blacksmith, Nailsmith, Locksmith, Tinsmith and Gunsmith"

From the Collections at [Historic Bethlehem](#) [PA]

As noted, tool production by the blacksmiths during these years was on a relatively limited scale. Approximately 163 tools were listed as being made by the blacksmiths. Of this number, only twelve tools, six drawing knives, five "tomahawks" and one hatchet, were made specifically for military purposes. The five "tomahawks" were for use by Pennsylvania's Indian allies, while the other tools were likely used in the construction of forts north of Bethlehem. The remaining tools were for non-Moravian clients, fellow Bethlehem artisans or for other Moravian settlements.

Most of the tools were relatively simple and were meant for cutting and shaping wood, leather or soil. The largest category was that of woodworking tools. Fifty-two percent of all the tools that could be safely attributed were for the various allied woodworking trades. The most commonly produced tools wrought by the blacksmith included draw knives, axes, hatchets, wedges and various knives. Of these, axes were the most common. On November 11, 1756, "36 Faling Axes" worth £13.10.0 were credited to Francis Corbin, a non-Moravian client. During the seven years in question a total of 41 "faling" axes were made in the shop. Other axes mentioned included one broad ax, two "plaining axes" (adzes?), one "squaring" ax and two nondescript axes. All told, 47 axes were manufactured in the shop. Seven hatchets, including one "large" and one "small" hatchet were also made. Other woodworking tools produced included one twibill, seven draw knives, two chisels, one "gouge," three wedges, three hammers, one holdfast and one "splitting knife" (froes?) for the community cooper. They also produced eight "cutting knives: "six for the cooper and one each for the turner and wheelwright. The cooper ordered two nondescript knives as well.

Aside from woodworking tools, the blacksmiths produced only a few items related to other trades. For the apothecary they made a "spade" and in 1760, Stephanus Blum made Dr. Frederick Otto "sundry instruments... on his moving to Lititz" for the price of £1.2.8. For Sebastian Knauss, Blum made "sundry wheelwright tools" for the price of £3.8.0, "some tools" for Paul Schneider and a "tool" for the nailsmith. Bethlehem's tanner requested the production of two "shaving irons" and one "iron," and the "skinner" or white tanner (tawer) asked for one "winding" and one "dressing" iron. Finally, the saddler ordered thirteen "bits" as well as "some bits" for use in his shop.

In order to cultivate crops, mix earth and shovel coals, the blacksmiths made a quantity of hoes, shovels and spades. Nearly ten percent of all tools produced were in this category. Fourteen "corn hoes" were hammered out, four of which were for the Moravian mission on St. Thomas in the Caribbean, the rest were for use by local Indians. The smiths made a "grubbing ax" (mattock?), two shovels for the potter, a "new spade" for Timothy Horsefield and a "fire shovel" for the hatter.

While most orders were small, a few were substantial. In September, 1756, the Bethlehem smiths manufactured an order of tools intended for their Moravian brethren establishing the new community of Bethabara in North Carolina. The order, valued at over £6, included four rimers, one wimble brace, eight pincers, one "small anvil," one "breakhorn," one "shear for iron," one "iron for driving Eggs (?)," "2 nailor iron," one iron saw, eight puncheons, two "handscrews," "one square, one pair of compasses, three center bits and one small hatchet. Four years later, another shipment of tools went to Bethabara including a twibill, a "squaring" and "plaining" ax and a holdfast, all worth £1.16.6.