

# W IS FOR WOOL

**In early America most clothing and other textiles were made of wool.**

## **Here is how wool is processed**

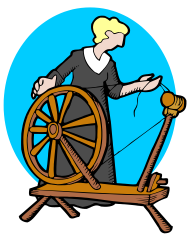
The sheep or lamb is sheared

The wool is scoured – washed

The wool is cleaned of dirt through a process called “Teasing” this process opens and pulls apart the lock fibers to remove dirt and brambles.



The wool is carded: the wool fibers are pulled between wire covered paddles to align the fibers. These fibers are removed from the card in a “rolag” or rolled shape ready for spinning.



The wool is spun into yarn by using a drip spindle, a walking (“Great”) wheel, or a wool spinning wheel. This spinning process draws out and twists the wool fibers into a continuous thread – yarn.

The wool is spun into skeins. Reels, swifts, and niddy-noddys are winding and measuring devices for the wool yarn.

The wool can be dyed in a dye bath solution—for more on dyeing see below.

The wool yarn can be used as warp or weft for weaving on a loom to create cloth or rugs.

## **Here is how wool is dyed**

Dyes were made from natural materials until the early 1900’s when synthetic chemical dyes were discovered. Natural dyeing is an inexact craft. The colors produced are affected by a host of natural variables – the season, the plant’s age, the amount of rainfall, the soil, the water used to process the dye, and even the quality of the wool used. Any plant that yields a color when boiled, any bark that releases a juice when softened, and even the earth itself can be used as dyes. Some beetles, shellfish, and minerals can be used as dye sources. Some popular materials for dyeing wool in early American included walnut hulls, onion petals, goldenrod and various berries.

