

How did people pay for what they bought?

In colonial Virginia, you could pay for goods with coins. The coins had been made in other countries and were brought to Williamsburg by merchants and traders. The most common coins were Spanish silver.

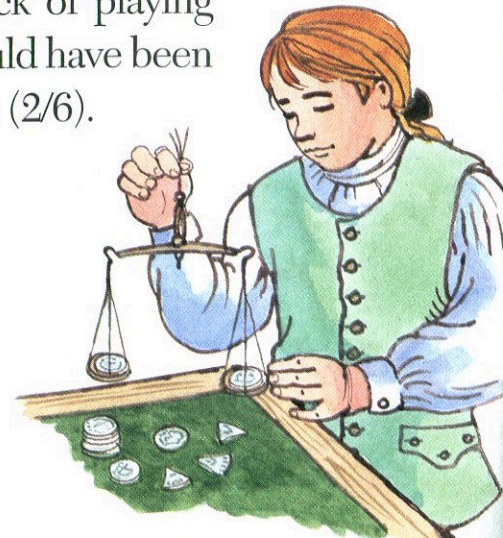
The *value* of the money was based on the English system. Merchants weighed foreign coins to figure out their value in *pence* (d), *shillings* (s), and *pounds* (£). To make change, they would cut up a coin.

A pound in any form was a great deal of money. It was several weeks' pay for many people. If you were lucky, your parents might give you a few pence to spend at the market. You could buy a pencil for 3.25 pence or a pack of playing cards for 7.5 pence. But a pound of chocolate would have been beyond your budget at two shillings and sixpence (2/6).



*I had sixpence,
jolly jolly sixpence.
I had sixpence
To last me all my life.*

*I had twopence to spend,
and twopence to lend,
and twopence to take home
To my wife.*



The most common way grown-ups made a big purchase, such as a horse, was by using a tobacco certificate. A tobacco certificate was something like a check. But instead of being backed by a certain amount of money in the bank, it was backed by a certain amount of tobacco in a warehouse. You could buy a horse, a wagon, or a whole set of furniture with a tobacco certificate.

You could also trade, or barter, instead of using money. If you were selling corn and you wanted to buy a rooster, for example, you might give so many bushels of corn for the rooster.

