

Were there barbers and hairdressers in colonial Williamsburg?

You probably would have had your hair cut at home. People also went to barbershops. Charlton House was one Williamsburg barbershop that was in operation around 1770. Edward Charlton advertised that he could give a man a shave and a haircut or “dress” a lady’s hair and sell her fake curls to add to her hairdo.

He could make a wig for a lady or a gentleman. If you were a gentleman’s son, he might have made you your first wig, or *peruke*, when you were as young as eight or nine. Some rich girls wore wigs by the time they were teenagers.



*Barber, barber, shave a pig,
How many hairs will make a wig?
“Four and twenty, that’s enough.”
Give the poor barber a pinch of snuff.*

Wigs could be made of horsehair or goat hair. The best ones, however, were made from human hair. Poor girls sold their hair to wigmakers so that gentry men and women could wear wigs. The people who bought the wigs would usually shave off their own hair so the wig would fit better!

Wigs of white hair were considered the most stylish. They were also the most expensive. If you couldn't afford a white wig, you powdered yours to make it look white.

Poor people didn't wear wigs. They were too expensive.

