

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

June 24, 2023

Apothecary – It's been a busy week at the Galt Shop. Saturday brought the first Summer Workshop of the season, and participants made an excellent conserve of orange peel as well as demonstrating proper bandaging techniques.

On Monday, in addition to welcoming Guests celebrating Juneteenth, we officially welcomed our new Apprentice, Stephannie Scott. We're excited to introduce Stephannie to the world of the Apothecary and equally excited to see her flourish in compounding work and history of medicine. If you see her out and about, say hi!

Also last Monday, we hosted a Teacher Institute workshop for STEAM educators. Teachers compounded black pectoral troches (licorice-based cough lozenges) using their math skills to reduce the dispensatory's recipe by 1/32nd.

The Apothecary is open Wednesday through Friday, and Saturday (11:30-5:00).

Blacksmith – The Anderson Shop participated in Colonial Williamsburg's Juneteenth programming by hosting Master Blacksmith Darryl Reeves from New Orleans, who specializes in restoration of historic ironwork in the French Quarter and for public and private buildings throughout the city, and his apprentice, Karina Roca. Our day focused on demonstration of ironworking in the Shop, a display of publications that highlight African ironwork and ironworkers, and discussion of African American participation in, and influence on, American ironwork.

Outside of agriculture, the iron industry was the largest employer of enslaved African labor where great physical work was necessary to process fuel and iron ore into refined iron. It is also well documented that enslaved Africans were given positions of trust and responsibility in operating smelting furnaces, as furnace operators, forge men, and hammer men, all of whom have enormous influence over the quality of the finished product and ultimately on the success of the commercial enterprise.

Ironworking traditions run deep within African culture, with many surviving examples of early-African ironwork exhibiting not only forms of artistic beauty but also of great technical achievement. Many of these objects are cherished symbols of power and authority within African communities as well as objects that connect the living with spiritual presence of ancestors and the world's "Life Force." Blacksmiths in African Society hold an elevated status as intermediaries within that interchange of earth and spirit. You can see examples of this work in a recent exhibition from the Fowler Museum in California:

<https://africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/striking-iron-the-art-of-african-blacksmiths/>.

Elements of African culture appear in significant architectural ironwork in cities like New Orleans and Charleston, where African laborers – both free and enslaved – were involved in production of the monumental works for which these cities are known. You can learn a bit more from this exhibit put on by the Hermann-Grima + Gallier Houses exhibit: <https://hgghh.org/exhibitions/artistry-in-iron>.

This African influence on American ironwork has been an interest of mine for some time, and one that I hope to continue to pursue in hopes of finding similar examples of African influence in iron of the Chesapeake.



Ken, Master Blacksmith Darryl Reeves, and Apprentice Karina Roca in the Anderson Shop for Juneteenth

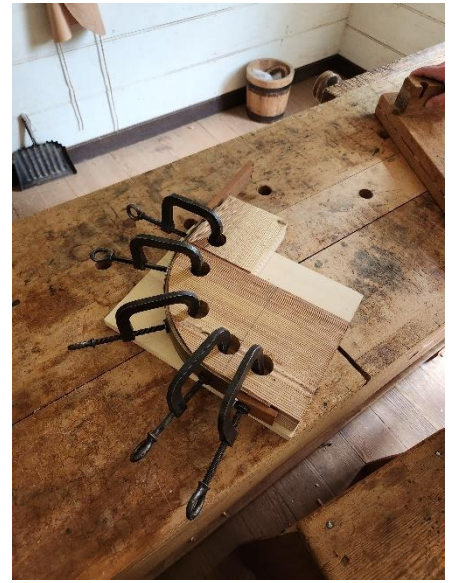


Darryl and Karina at work on Juneteenth in the Anderson Shop (left). Karina engaging a young Guest in our Juneteenth program (right).

The Blacksmith is open Sunday through Tuesday and Thursday through Saturday.

Bookbinder – The Bookbinder is open Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Cabinetmaker – This past week or so, John has been learning the ins and outs of slip seat upholstery for his side chairs, working with linen, horse hair, leather, and of course, lots of tacks. Bill has been constructing the small quadrant drawer for his writing table. He created a bending form to bend the curved side of the drawer that will allow it to rotate into place. So far, so good, but he will let it set a few days more before it is fully dried out from its soak before the bend.



The Cabinetmaker is open Sunday (11:30-5:00), Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Carpenter – The Carpenters are working at Ewing Field Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, weather permitting.

Cook – We have had a few busy weeks in the Kitchen as we change to our summer schedule. Barbara will start being down at the Anderson Armoury Kitchen during the week with our summer Intern, Winston. She was also accompanied this past Sunday by one of our lovely Volunteers, Doris, who will be joining the Armoury team this summer. Up at the Palace, Frank had a beer-based interview with *The Washington Post* and is also getting ready to launch our latest collaboration with Ale Works, the newly named “Windmill Wheat”.

Our days off have changed to Monday-Tuesday, but this past Monday, the Foodways staff was here onsite in order to lend our hands to the programs that were held in honor of Juneteenth. For the day, we had three different Kitchens open with special programming, all of us making African, West Indian, and Carib dishes that would have been brought to Virginia by the enslaved men and women working in the kitchens of both affluent households and businesses here in town. At the Randolph Kitchen, Dom was with Mrs. Janice, doing pigs feet, pork ribs, and a chicken gumbo. At the Armoury, Barbara and Winston did Johnny Cakes, Ash Cakes, and a rabbit stew. At the Palace, Frank and Abbey moved their operations from the Kitchen to the Scullery, where they did a West Indian Pepper Pot Soup and Black-eyed Pea Fritters. We also experimented with Sorghum, a native African grain that would have been used like rice or barley. It was important for us to give recognition and attention to the foods of the enslaved here in Virginia, as it was crucial not only to their personal survival, but also crucial in keeping their culture and heritage alive here in the colonies.

The Palace Kitchen is open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Cooper – The Cooper is open Sunday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Engraver – Greetings from the Engraving Shop. This week, William has completed another custom order! This is a pewter plate, made by the Foundry, that he has engraved with a Masonic symbol on the face and a custom monogram on the back. Part of the apprenticeship does involve lots of monogram practice. It’s not always easy to combine certain letters and get them to balance out. Here, he has done a good job with the monogram “A.J.L.” The “L” in the center is the last name and drawn in a larger size, typical for a traditional monogram. William has also produced the first test print for his Ships copperplate! It turned out wonderful!

There will be some areas to tidy up and Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Trades mark to still engrave, but a huge Huzzah! to William. This plate took a lot of work, and he pushed himself on lettering and the cartouche design.

This week, Emma has been working with Emily on drawing basic shapes and shading, getting her feet wet with more Engraving tool control work, and producing some stunning conte' crayon sketches.

Emily has been working on lettering, figure shapes, and shading. She and Emma share a love of horses, so they have found common ground in their artwork. Lynn has been doing mid-year meetings for Goal reviews, repair on the Boston Massacre plate, a Brickyard project, and reading up on Paul Revere and William Byrd II.





The Engraver is open Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Farmer – The Farmer will be at Ewing Field Friday and Saturday, weather permitting.

Fifes and Drums – The Fifes and Drums will be performing Wednesday through Friday at 4:40 pm in Market Square, Saturday at 12:30 pm starting at the Capitol and marching to the Palace, and Saturday at 1 pm on the Play House Stage.

Founder – Apprentice Founders Drew and Leanne have completed their first cast iron pours. Everything went well, and we cast two Colonial Williamsburg seals and have begun the cleanup work necessary to turn those rough castings into finished pieces to be used as Donor gifts by our Development Team. In other work, Drew finished the Musket Range's order of 500 musket balls, and Leanne has continued the finishing work on the bronze pieces as mentioned in the last update. We had wanted to do some silver work this week, but with all the rain, we will need to postpone it until we have more favorable weather conditions. As you know, we

can't pour any metal while it's raining – the rain water simply comes down our chimney and can fall right into the molten metal.

We also heard from Journeyman Mike a few days ago. He will be leaving the physical therapy facility this coming week and will be heading back home where more physical therapy will continue. He's doing well and can't wait to be back at the Foundry.



The Foundry is open Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Gardener – The Historic Garden is open Daily, weather permitting.

Gunsmith – The Gunsmith is open Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Harpsichordmaker – The Harpsichordmaker is open Sunday (11:30-5:00), Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Joiner – The Joiner is open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Leather Breeches Maker – The Leather Breeches Maker is open Sunday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Masonry – This week, the Brickyard has felt rather gloomy in recent days with the onset of our humid, and rather rainy, weather. With production stalled, the Summer Crew was able to roam the town and, most importantly, have a viewing of *The Last Brickmaker in America*, featuring the impressive Sidney Poitier. They returned with a new appreciation for the work and a zest for life.

Otherwise, this week, our Apprentices were able to retrieve the tiles that were fired at William & Mary. These tiles will give valuable insight into how these tiles may fire in the kiln and how they handle water.



The Brickyard is open Daily, weather permitting.

Military Programs – Military Interpretation at the Guardhouse is open Sunday through Friday, and Saturday (9am-12pm and 2-5pm).

Milliner and Mantua-maker – Keeping with tradition, we hosted the 30th year of our “Gown in a Day” Program on Wednesday. One of the goals of this event is to try to reproduce 18th-century working conditions as closely as possible: we come in at 7am and work until 6pm to see how much stitching can be done within that "average" workday. For that reason, we always schedule the program for the longest day of the year, hoping to take advantage of maximum daylight hours. This year, unfortunately, nature had other ideas and decided to grace us with the darkest, rainiest, windiest day of the season...but we persevered and so did our Guests!

This year's "theme" celebrated Juneteenth by focusing on the material culture of the Bray School. Together with Nicole Brown, we developed a hands-on program that invited Guests to intimately engage with the lives of the Bray students and their teacher. Ishbel and two of our previous NIAHD Interns had created several sets of clothing appropriate in size, textiles, and styles to the garments that would have been worn by the young girls who attended the school. These were left on the counter for visitors to explore. A set of workbags were also available for handling, reproduced from a British instruction manual for creating charity clothing. Each bag includes a printed label with the name of the girl - Nancy, Hannah, and Mary Ashby - who would have stitched it and to whom it would then belong. Inside each bag, we put items specific to the child to help to individualize her experience; based on collaborative primary research, we assembled things like slates, marbles, and sampler pieces to tie each child back to documentation that speaks to her unique interests and personality.



Virginia cloth Bray student gown



Osnaburg Bray student gown



Bray student workbags

In many ways, we were able to recreate one of the primary 18th-century functions of a millinery shop: that of a social space where people gathered to visit together, catch up on news and learn new things, sit and relax, and simply enjoy being in the company of other members of a community. All the while, Mrs. Wager's gown took shape on the periphery of the space, with four to six people working simultaneously on various pieces to get it all done. This year's gown was a beautiful white satin weave worsted wool with a narrow purple stripe that was chosen for its year-round utilitarian functionality – and to spark an intentional conversation about fiber properties and textile choice (wool in summer??!!). The style Janea cut was appropriate to the first half of the 1760s, based on two extant English gowns, and was designed with the comfort and range of motion a teacher would require when chasing after her active young students. Going through the process of having her gown cut to her body quickly made Nicole realize the primary benefit of 18th-century mantua-making: clothing is made for the person, with her body, deportment, and lifestyle all taken into account. She's thrilled to have a garment that will allow her to drive her riding chair, kneel to talk to children, and stand comfortably in summer heat – all without having to change her clothes to accommodate differences in range of motion or activity level.



Cutting to the body

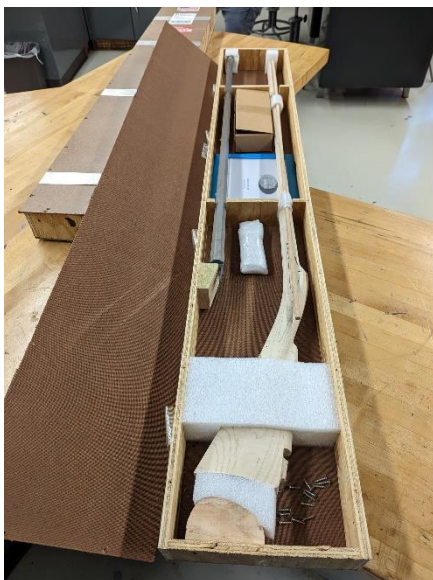
By 5:53 pm, we succeeded in meeting our goal: the gown was finished and presented to the twenty persistent Guests who had remained or returned, despite the rain, to see its completion. Our “customer” was most pleased, and as soon as the millinery is ready (it needs a tucker and some elbow ruffles), we'll share a formal portrait. In the meantime, we want to say thank you most sincerely to Nicole for her company, her expertise, and her most gracious interpretation throughout the day. A thank you is also due to the Tailors for lending us their intern, Percy (thanks, Percy!), and to Mathew and HC&D for sending a chain of helping hands throughout the day (thanks Kristen, Joey, Sydney, Aileen, Gretchen, Jenn, and Megan!). Now on to plotting for next year's adventure ... If anyone has suggestions for next year's "theme" or “customer”, please don't hesitate to share them!

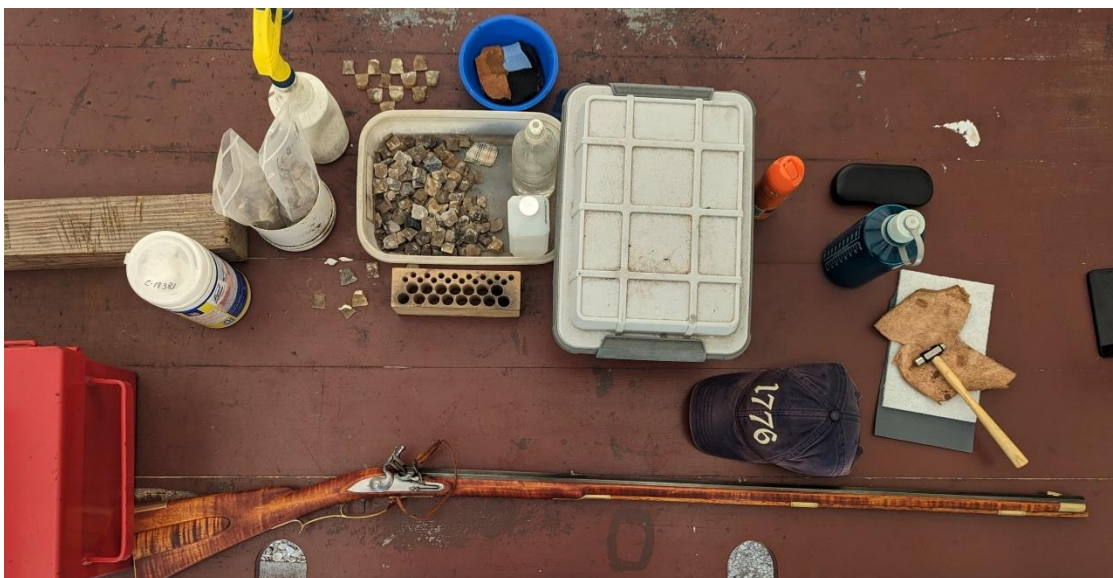
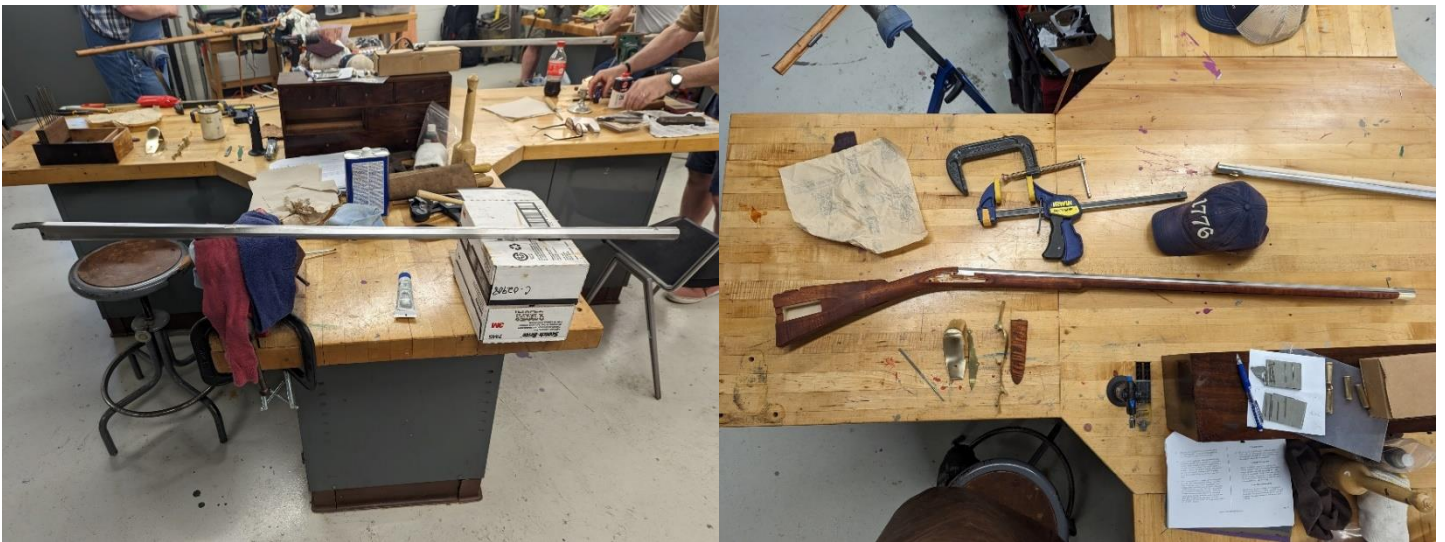


Mrs. Wager’s completed gown

The Milliner and Mantua-maker is open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Musket Range – Andy recently attended the WKU/NMLRA Gunsmithing Seminar in Bowling Green, Kentucky. While there, he took part in a six-day class in constructing a kit rifle. He learned skills in wood and metal finishing, inletting, and more, to enable him to work on and maintain the Musket Range's firearms.







The Musket Range is open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday with sessions at 9:30am, 11am, 1:30pm, and 3pm.

Printer – The Printer is open Sunday through Thursday.

Shoemaker – The Shoemaker is open Sunday, and Tuesday through Thursday.

Silversmith – The Silversmiths have been quite busy with a multitude of projects these past weeks. We've also added a new member to the Shop. Stop by and meet our summer Intern, Jacob!

Megan is raising her mugs, making rings, and working on chasing for her tray. Bobbie is continuing to raise her sweetmeat basket, making tray rims, and cutting out discs that will become medallions. Chris has been resizing client rings and working on her tray.



Preston has been raising a large bowl for a client. George continues to hammer out spoons, seamed cups, and ingots.



The Silversmith is open Sunday through Friday.

Tailor – Journeyman McCarty has begun a coat for the summer, made from a worsted wool. Wool, especially worsted wools, having a greater evaporation rate than cotton, is a great choice for the heat and humidity of the Tidewater. Linens, silks, wools, and cottons of the thinnest and thickest varieties were available to 18th-century Virginians. Lightweight fabric, often shades of white, was the common choice for summer clothing. Tailors would pattern men’s summer clothes with more ease, described as “loose and light.” These garments also required sturdy construction to deal with the regular laundering that sweat-soaked summer clothing necessitate.

The Tailor is open Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Tin Plate Worker – **The Tin Plate Worker is open Tuesday through Saturday.**

Weaver, Spinner, and Dyer – This month's Dye Day will be the 30th! We have been spinning up a woolen storm and have nine skeins of Leicester Longwool yarn destined for the dye pots this month. The skeins have already been scoured and mordanted, and all that's left for Dye Day preparations is to cook down some dyes. This process involves simmering dyestuff in water for several hours to extract the proper chemicals for dyeing. The dye material is then strained out, and the liquid is stored until we are ready to dye. The whole process can take several days, even weeks, which is why we only do a Dye Day once a month. If you have anything you would like dyed this month, please bring it to us no later than 12:00 pm Sunday.

The Weaver is open Sunday, and Thursday through Saturday. It will be open on Monday for two Workshops ONLY.

Wheelwright – **The Wheelwright is open Sunday through Thursday.**

Wigmaker – This week, maintenance continues as usual. Edith has made great progress on the new wig for Robert W. and has employed the aid of Junior Interpreter Alexa with some stitching of the base. Benton

continues to work on his silk netting and has been elbow deep in Full Bottom wigs for our Evening Programs. Intern Stella has nearly completed construction of her first hairpiece and will learn to style it this coming week. Debbie has been working on maintenance items and her netting, as well. She also met with some of our esteemed Librarians, so they could go through several boxes of old files from the Shop breakroom to see what may be archived and what should be disposed of. Please note, Edith will be away from the Shop for the next week, so we ask for a little grace in the turnaround times for some items. As always, please feel free to reach out with any hair-related needs or questions.

The Wig Shop will be open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

The Mechanick's Adviser is a publication of the Colonial Williamsburg Department of Historic Trades & Skills.

Editor: Shari Monaco

Contributors: Apothecary – Margaret Perry; Blacksmith – Kenneth Schwarz; Cabinetmaker – John Peeler; Cook – Abbey Shoaf; Engraver – Lynn Zelesnikar; Founder – Drew Godzik; Masonry – Madeleine Bolton; Milliner and Mantua-maker – Rebecca Godzik; Musket Range – Andrew Prochnow; Silversmith – Megan Cantwell; Tailor – Michael McCarty; Weaver, Spinner, and Dyer – Pamela Russo; Wigmaker – Debbie Turpin