

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for June 24 - 30

Armoury:

Blacksmith – You may have seen a wheel passed back and forth this week from the Wheelwrights to the Blacksmiths, as we make the tire and fit it, as well as other hardware for this vehicle, which seems to know that it is doomed to carry coal. For the Wheelwrights, we are also making a pair of axes; and for the Carpenters, some chisels, as well as nails for shingles. The forge has also seen curtain rods, key swivels, angle vises, parts for scissors, a froe, spoons, trivets, as well as nuts and bolts.

Tinsmith – They are not unlike composers, amassing their finely-tuned instruments with great care and precision, whose melodies are heard in every dwelling of the capitol. Playing this week a selection of war and peace: teapots and cartridge boxes. Also, more bellows pipes for the ruckus next door at the Blacksmith Shop. Those may be the only objects they do not inscribe with a stamp of approval. Point taken!

Cabinetmaker – The Cabinetmakers are in the initial phase of planning for next year’s ‘Working Wood in the 18th-Century’ Symposium. The topic is set, possible speakers have been contacted, and furniture-study trips are in the works. Details will be coming soon! In the meantime, Bill is on the last stretch of finishing his tool chest. In addition, he has taken on the task of completing the Robert Walker corner chair built by the recently-retired Kaare Loftheim. Brian has finished the Windsor chair in all its green, verdigris glory. Steve Delisle, the Tinsmith, delivered four canisters for the tea chest, and Brian is carving oval lids for two of them. Two gaming tables made in the shop eighteen years ago arrived from the Raleigh Tavern requiring some repair work.

Colonial Garden – This was the week to survive the heat. The extreme heat caused many plants to wilt during the day but were revived by morning. We planted the last of the beans where the peas came out, and set out sweet potato slips to fill in the front bed. Spent poppies and larkspur were removed to make way for the castor beans, which are already growing by leaps and bounds. Harvested this week and sent to the Kitchens are cucumbers, turnips, radishes, squash, and broad beans. The tomatoes have reached the top of their trellis and have begun to form fruit. The small melons are forming nicely, and we have some beautiful baby watermelons hiding under the massive canopy of leaves. A few rain storms this week have saved us many steps with the watering can, but of course, then came the weeds!

Farming – Joe Snyder is working as an Intern this summer before he heads to Virginia Military Institute, where he will become a “rat” as they call incoming freshman. He is doing a great job working the crops and interpreting to guests. The cowpeas are coming up in the corn. These “black-eyed peas” were eaten by people, and the vines were fed to livestock. The cotton is taking off now that we have hit consistently hot weather. The hornworm load on the tobacco is less this week, but we live in expectation of the next glut of our enemy.

Foundry – We are continuing work on the bronze auction bell. We have all of the parts, we just need to finish filing the clapper and ferrule, and then make a sleeve for the handle out of bronze sheet. Unrelated, a new batch of silver feet is also in the works.



Gunsmith – Work continues at the Gunsmith, where locks are coming together quickly, and barrels are right behind them. Eric finished welding his barrel tube last week, and now is adjusting the shape of the exterior before the barrel is reamed. There are two skelps nearly ready for cupping and welding, too. Richard is continuing with his pistols, making some extra small parts like screws to anchor the hardware to the stock. Darrin continues with lock work, with springs nearly fit and nearing completion.

Joinery – This week in the Joinery, the Apprentices will be replacing the benches in front of the shop. They have most of the parts planed up and will be focusing on cutting the numerous joints required to hold the benches together.

Military Programs – Military Programs continues to conduct their daily programming, assist with the Musket and Ax Ranges, and operate the fire engine.

Milliner and Mantua-maker – Yesterday, we Milliners and Mantua-makers celebrated our annual “Gown-in-a-Day” program. One day a year, we simulate the conditions of our 18th-century counterparts by reproducing their working day as closely as possible to test our trade skills. This year’s “customer” was Apprentice Joiner Amanda Doggett, who selected a beautiful striped linen in shades of gold and brown for her new common gown and matching petticoat. Over the course of the 11-hour day, our 4-woman team completed not only the gown and petticoat, but also a checked apron and handkerchief (out of linen made by our Weavers) and a trimmed straw hat appropriate to her tradeswoman role. We always learn so much when different trades collide in this way. Did you know that both fabric and wood have grain lines that dictate how and where a piece can be manipulated and used? Who knew we had so much in common! Since Amanda’s new gown is representative of the clothing that doesn’t survive in museum collections today, we look forward to tracking it over the course of its working life to mark wear patterns specific to Amanda’s trade and unique to her use of it. Stop by the Joinery to see the finished outfit! Thank you to the Joiners for partnering with us this year to make this program happen, and especially to Amanda for being such a willing, patient, and delightful customer. We thoroughly

enjoyed having you as part of our shop for the day! We'd also like to extend our very sincere thanks to all of our Colonial Williamsburg co-workers across many departments, who stopped in to check on the gown's progress and even returned after hours to see the finished product. Thank you for your encouragement and your interest! We'd also like to thank Karen Schlicht for her fabulous baking skills that kept us energized as we stitched for 11 straight hours! And last but certainly not least, many thanks go to Fred Blystone for the tasty morning treats and for spending the day with us, capturing every stage of the program with his incredible photography. We couldn't have done it without all of you! Now to begin plotting for next year...

Music – The Music Department has been working hard! We've prepared and presented about a half-dozen new programs over the last two months, and we're not done yet! We finished "Music at the Raleigh" for the spring season, and now our summer series at the Hennage Auditorium has begun on Thursday afternoons. Tonight (Friday) is the first of our Capitol series of concerts featuring music related to Jefferson's time in Paris. Hope to see you at one of our programs!

Public Leather Works – The Public Leather Works is watching Jan finish up work on a major project for Mount Vernon. We are very busy working with our Junior Interpreters, blowing the cobwebs off and rediscovering rusty skills. And sweating, lots of sweating.

Silversmith – George has been working on several dozen spoons for orders and for the Golden Ball. Bobbie and Chris continue working on the silver trays, the first of which is engraved and on display, while the others are in progress! Preston has been working on two ladles and several small fluted bowls, as well as polishing the trays as they are completed. While waiting for the next tray to be ready for engraving, Lynn has been knocking out small engraving work on trade silver and custom orders. Megan has been working on trade silver and letter charms. Parker is working on several seamed cups and trade silver. William is polishing trade silver, working on a silver bowl, and working on his first small batch of spoons.

Wigmaker – Greetings from the Wig Shop! With the hot summer weather, wig maintenance has begun to pick up, so everyone has been busy behind the scenes keeping our interpreters looking their best! Meanwhile, in the interpretive shop, work continues on the wig for the Smithsonian. Betty and our Junior Interpreters have begun weaving blond human hair, and Sara is making progress on the base, which should be done by the end of the month. Debbie has been reunited with her shuttle and gauge and has begun hand knotting a base for a completely different project! Stay tuned for more info!