

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for December 23 - 29

Apothecary - “Sharon is working on site records and documentation for 18th-century meds for the play on midwifery. These were meds that could be used by midwives for a patient. Some of these may or may not be used by a man-midwife. Robin downloaded primary source directions for dealing with complications featured in the play.

“John Galt studied with Colin McKenzie, and the latter trained with William Smellie. Secondary sources quote an 18th-century student’s comments on McKenzie’s midwifery classes and that he closely followed Smellie. We are using Smellie’s textbooks to provide info on Galt’s education as McKenzie did not publish.”

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “As we approach the shortest, darkest day of the year, and the wettest, dreariest of months since November, the fires are ever brighter at the forge. This week, we have been bitten by bench dogs, chained to locks, pounding out bench hammers, swinging through hinge parts, and bound by hub bands. We return over and over to nails, tiny slivers of hardware hope.”

Tin Shop – “Another glimmer of hope for the Blacksmiths this week was a shiny new coffee pot, made by the uprightest of smiths, them of Tin. One will also find cups, reflecting ovens, and lanterns in stock.”

Cabinetmaker and Harpsichord Maker - “Happy Holidays from the Anthony Hay Shop. Bill and Brian continue working on the Snap top Table for the ‘Woodworking Symposium.’ Brian is working on the Leg/Column sliding dovetails. He’s cutting the slot in the column first and then fitting the dovetailed leg to the column. The columns have been turned on the lathe and are ready for the Symposium. We’ll need to pull the Great Wheel Lathe out of storage, bring it to the shop, and assemble it. Bill has completed routing the table top and is now working on the carving. The challenge with any carving is finding the right tool. He’s developing a list of the essential carving gouges needed for the top. As with all projects for the Symposium, we take the work to a point and move on to the next step. This means we have a lot of parts but not a finished piece. At least, not until after the Symposium.

Gunsmith - “Richard has been applying the octagonal section to a rifle barrel this week. The round tube is hammered octagonal, then a top swage flatter is used to overlap and smooth hammer blows. Darrin is inlaying silver into his tomahawk head. Eric case-hardened his rifle lock, making the internals more wear-resistant. He and the Shop continue to ream the rifle barrel he welded in November.”

Joinery – “The Joinery is fully focused on preparing for ‘Working Wood in the 18th Century!’ Each Apprentice is hard at work on their respective projects; planing, sawing, and cutting joints. The shavings have rapidly piled up and are in danger of burying their benches. Excitement is high, and everyone at the Joinery can’t wait to present in January!”

Military Programs – “Military Programs continues to conduct evening Illuminations on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Additionally, we are planning for Christmas Guns, which will be taking place next Monday, December 24th.”

Silversmith – “Bobbie has finished the paten, and it is awaiting engraving. Lynn has been working on several drawings during the recent dreary days, waiting for good weather to begin engraving the paten and a set of silver buttons to match those on the Taylor’s hunting jacket. Chris has been working on a batch of mourning rings and several recent repair orders. George is raising a silver mug and reorganizing his bench, while Preston has several small bowls in various stages of production. Parker has started working on two silver beakers. William continues working through chain production, as well as planishing another 5-inch gurney bowl and working on spoon wire.”

Taylor - “This week, the Taylors will be decorating for Christmas - sprigs in the windows and boughs on the mantle - and putting some hot apple cider on the fire for passing Wassailers. While the Master is away for the Holiday, the Apprentices will play...in this case, Tim will be making a little suit for a cat. Based on an account of a young Taylor’s apprentice in South Carolina in 1775, who, having been left alone in the shop all Christmas Day while the Master and his wife went off to party, amused himself by making a suit for a cat that lived in the house. The suit being made and put on the cat, the cat ran away only to reappear as soon as the Master returned well into the evening. Far from the beating the apprentice imagined he would get, the Master was delighted at the ingenuity of his young apprentice and much to the boy’s shame, hung the little suit in the shop for all to see. It has become a tradition that new Apprentices in the Tailor Shop today make a cat suit at Christmas. Tim will be working on this suit on Sunday, December 23. The finished suit will be displayed in the shop, as well being featured on CW's Christmas Day blog.”