

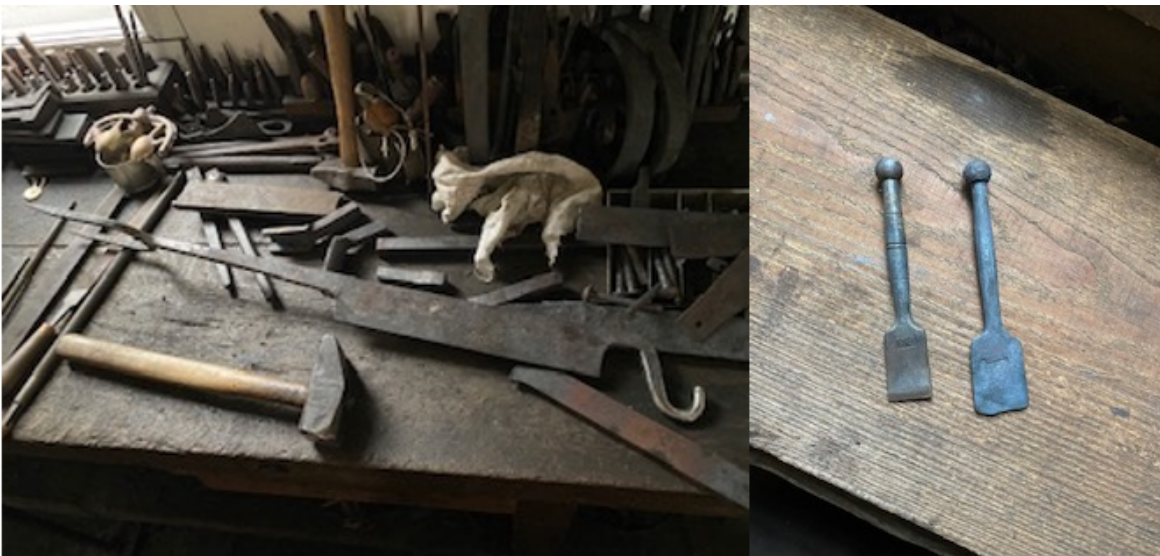
THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

August 11, 2023

Apothecary – We've been busy as always! Sharon solved another set of medical mysteries from the Galt-Barraud account books: aqua mercuriale, as it's listed in entries there, refers to black mercury water/Aqua Phagedaenica & was made with corrosive mercury sublimate. (She's also discovered several similar preparations of lead acetate listed under different names according to their medicinal strength.) Stephannie has compounded her first medication, a handsome conserve of mint for nausea & upset stomach, and it makes a great pair with the orange peel conserve prepared weekly by workshop participants! Margaret has been researching the material culture of institutional mental health care, compiling information on Public Hospital patient clothing over time, and comparing conditions to Bethlem, St. Luke's, and other like places. (Some patients in Williamsburg were issued fitted clothing like gowns, jackets, and breeches as early as 1773/4!)

The Apothecary is open Wednesday through Saturday.

Blacksmith – This week at the blacksmith shop, we enjoyed a much cooler week than last. Many of the same projects have continued to be worked on. Josh now has five gridirons done and is ready to fit up the sixth and final of this style. He also spent some time drawing a second style from collections which features a drip pan to catch grease from the food cooking. This new one will definitely be a skill builder in accurate layout, precise joinery, and sequential assembly. Broadus also is nearing completion on his chisels and had time to get to the tool shop to do some finish grinding on them. Broadus also is working on buttonhole punches for the Leather Breeches Makers. Alex continues his work on large, socketed chisels. Mark has begun work on some block knives for an outside commission. He has forged out one and just needs the finish work on it. Ken has been finishing up a variety of hammers- claw hammers, bench hammers, and rounding hammers for the tinsmiths.



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

Department of Historic Trades and Skills

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Bookbinder – Good Day from the Bookbindery.

Research shows that quite a few books circulating in the colonies were "books in boards," that is, books that were sewn to cords, attached to boards, and covered in paper or canvas. They were more economical, especially after the 1760s when bookbinding leather became increasingly expensive. Volunteer Bob Lyon and Barbie have been covering several books in this way, including Tom Thumbs Primer, much to the delight of our tiniest guests. The book covered in green paste paper is an 18th Century example. Thank you, Mary Hannah! German marbled paper and blue paper could be found covering books in Williamsburg. Dutch Gilt paper was also used here-- more to come on that subject in the future.



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

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

Carpenter – This week in the carpenters' yard, we've been installing clapboards on the end of the farm's new wagon shed. We have a bit more on one side before we start on the other. The task is relatively straightforward; what's slowed us down is the processing of the material. We've had to clean, straighten, and join the board's proceeding with the installation.



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

Cook – This week at the Palace Kitchen, we have been busy working on some long-term preservation of seasonal fruits and vegetables. Frank has been stringing up chili peppers to dry (the kitchen looks like we have some chic 70's bead curtains made of chilis all about), Barbra has been pickling seasonal veggies and candied fruits in sugar, while Abbey has been making all sorts of soft fruit jams for the third level of her apprenticeship. In the 18th century, these preservation methods were key to ensuring that when items went out of season for the year, the household could still have these delights out on the table. Barbra has been involved with a couple of collaborative projects. She has been working with Michail Twitty, a renowned historian of African foodstuffs, as he prepares for a November conference to present recipes of African heritage through the lens of 18th-century foods. He will present our 18th-century macaroni (mac n cheese), black-eyed pea fritters, and our favorite at the kitchen, BBQ pork. She also baked bread using Farmer Ed's revitalized 18th century Red May Wheat so that they could bring the grain front and center to our friends over in Hospitality, as they work together to bring our historic wheat into the dishes they prepare at the Inn, Lodge, Taverns, and Bakery. Both endeavors have proceeded with great success. Frank has also been working on the 18th-century recipes that will be included in the new Colonial Williamsburg Cookbook, which will highlight 18th century culinary plants, with both modern recipes brought from our Chefs and our 18th-century recipes from the kitchen, side by side. Both Abbey and Dom have begun translating our 18th-century recipes from their historical texts into modern recipes to meet the standard of a modern kitchen.



Enjoy the picture of our lovely summer table spread over in the kitchen.

The Palace Kitchen is open Sunday and Wednesday through Saturday.

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

Engraver – The Engraver is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Farmer – The Nationbuilder at the Ewing Field program has been going really well. It is a program where guests of all ages can chat with someone who loves agriculture. The Nationbuilder has usually been Colonel or General Washington and sometimes James Madison. The guests love it!



Colonel Washington tells tales of his boyhood on the farm.



Showing a tobacco hornworm always captures interest.

The Farmer is at Ewing Field Wednesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

Fifes and Drums – We bid farewell to our graduating seniors at the start of this month. They will be missed, but the Sr. Corps has been doing a great job stepping up and sounding like a Corps double their size. We have a lull in special events and will use this time to get used to our new Sr. Corps, prepare for a new class of October recruits and get more tunes up and running to play in the Historic Area. Our next big event will be Constitution Day on September 17. Lastly, congratulations to James Schleif for passing up to the rank of Private!

The Fifes and Drums will perform 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 – While we continued with our various seals, we also incorporated other work this week. We cleaned up a batch of buttons to head over to the Military Programs' staff. A day was spent casting pewter, replenishing our stocks of spoons and buttons, as well as relearning the taperstick mold. Soon the latter will be used to practice blowpipe soldering. We also started experimenting with core making for Journeyman Wheelwright Murphy's velocipede wheel boxes. None have been successful yet, but we think we know where we went wrong, and we shall try again! Finally, many thanks to Journeyman Silversmith Chris for showing us around the modern buffing machine and soldering setup.



The Foundry is open Sunday and Wednesday through Saturday.

Gardener – Two delightful flowers graced the Historic Garden this week. A carefully cultivated purple passionflower unfurled its unique blossom to the delight of bees and guests. At the other end of the garden, the okra in the West African vegetable plot bloomed despite the depredations of rogue deer that cut a swath in the sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*).



The bloom of Passiflora incarnata only lasts a single day.

Abelmoschus esculentus arrived in Virginia in 1679.

This week also marks the departure of Intern Will, who persevered through the hottest summer days. Will turned beds, built trellises, and proved capable at many tasks. However, it will be his natural gift at interpreting to the public, which will be missed the most!



Will displays some of the soil alchemy he has learned from the gardeners.

The Historic Garden is open Daily, weather permitting.

Gunsmith – The Gunsmith is open Sunday, Monday, Friday, and Saturday.

Harpsichordmaker – From the harpsichord corner, greeting...

As Melanie completes the veneer decoration on the case, Ed has begun sorting and sizing the bone covers for the keyboard—small but important steps. The veneer will be scraped flush and sanded for its final finish, and the bone goes on the uncut keyboard so that later we may saw out the wood levers and the bone together.



Come see the work as we progress to new stages! Melanie and Ed.

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 Wednesday through Saturday.

Masonry – The Brickyard is open Daily, weather permitting.

Military Programs – Military Interpretation at the Guardhouse is open Daily.

Milliner and Mantua-maker – The Milliner and Mantua-maker are open Sunday and Thursday through Saturday.

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

Printer – Hello from the pressmen of the Printing Office. We have been experimenting with a laid paper from New York State this past week. We have tested how this paper dampens and prints, and we are happy to report it will be used in our various products. Testing also showed promising results for red and black writing inks for the Book Binder's many blank books.

One of the more common questions from our guests is, "How long does it take to dry the ink?" We have found we can print one side of a dampened sheet of paper using modern ink with a cobalt drier, cover it overnight to keep the paper moist, and then print the other side the next morning with no offset of ink from the first side. We then made an ink in the shop without any modern drying agent but also without any lead-based drier and found we had to wait 24 hours before no ink came off while printing the other side.

The Printer is open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Shoemaker – Our intern Tyler's last day was on Thursday. He will be taking a well-deserved rest before heading back to school. While in the shop, Tyler made four and a half pairs of slippers, which will be used throughout the Historic Area. Nicole has built up a last and is patterning a pair of uppers for Robert Weathers (Mr. Wythe). She also continues work on a fine pair of channel pumps with overshoes for Mark Hutter (Tailor Shop). Victoria is progressing on a last buildup for herself and a pair of slippers for Josh Graml (Masonry Trades). Once her last is built up, Victoria will begin to learn pattern-making. Val is almost done with a pair of common shoes for Ron Carnegie (George Washington). He will then start on a much-needed pair of shoes for himself.

The Shoemaker is open Sunday through Thursday.

Silversmith – The Silversmith is open Sunday through Friday.

Tailor – The Tailor is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Tin Plate Worker – Tin Shop August 11, 2023. Steve was in the shop this week.

A family of four enters the tin shop on the 5th with a mom and a dad and their two girls (about 9 & 11 years old). I greet them, and as usual, but especially when I see kids, I invite them right away to handle the tinware in front of them and tell them about the shop. They ask many interesting questions, and I am very engaged in our conversational interpretation. Finally, a classic inquiry from the eldest girl: "What is the item that you prefer making?" My answer: "Well, at this stage in my career, and because I've made at least one of everything you see here, I would say something new, something I've never made before." Laughs. Me: "Well, there is one object, and it might be because I like coffee, but I like to make coffeepots." Eldest girl: "So you like coffee?" Me: "I like coffee a lot." So, she hands me a woven coaster/potholder: "Here," she says, "this is for you." Me: "Oh! Wow! Thank you very much." They leave: "Thank you." Me: "Thank you for your visit. Also, have a good visit."

The mother peeks back in and tells me that her daughter made it in the car on their way to Williamsburg and said she would give it to someone she liked. With my hand over my heart, I said, "Thank you, I am very touched." I got her name to put on a note to accompany her work.



"L," Hand-woven, Acrylic fiber, 2023

This encounter happened on the last day of a week of interpreting alone in the shop, and this was a shot in the arm. It made my day, my week. There are certainly more of these interactions than those that show up in the visitor satisfaction surveys, but they count as much. Note to myself: I do not scare all the kids.

The Tin Plate Worker is open Wednesday through Saturday.

Weaver, Spinner, and Dyer – Calling all dye submissions!! Next Friday, August 18, will be our Dye Day this month. If you want anything dyed, please bring it to us no later than this Sunday at noon. We look forward to the challenge of your submissions!



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

Wheelwright – This week on Prince George:

Work continues on the Velocipede, as Murphy has painted and varnished the wheels and is preparing to do the same to the body. Ayinde has framed out the bed of the Tinker's barrow and has repaired a box for the Foundry. Paul is continuing to make repairs to the undercarriage of the wagon. Stop by to check out our work or for a chat!



The Wheelwright is open Sunday and Tuesday through Thursday.

Wigmaker – The Wig Shop has been busy with maintenance, as usual. The Summer heat is doing no one any favors, least of all our wigs. Perspiration is an evil foe when it comes to the washing and restyling of our wigs, and the humidity just wreaks havoc on the drying process as well. Wigs take longer to dry, and curls do not like to cooperate when the humidity is so high, so that restyling can take longer this time of year. But we persevere! Edith has begun weaving a blend of human and horsehair for the new Mr. Wythe wig, which is, as she says, "a beautiful caramel honey" color. We think Mr. Wythe will look quite dashing in this new shade. Benton, Stella, and Debbie continue to work on netted caul for future projects. Benton and Stella have recently organized the source materials on hand for better reference, and research continues into men's styles and Marie Antoinette's hair. As always, please bring in your hair more often than usual during these hot months, and feel free to contact us for any hair-related needs or questions.

The Wig Shop is open Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Director – Ted will have open office hours for Historic Trades and Skills (HTS) staff as follows:

Monday: 10 – 11 am
Tuesday: 10 – 11 am
Wednesday: 2 – 3 pm (Virtual through Teams)
Thursday: 2 – 3 pm
Friday: 10 – 11 am

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

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