

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

August 18, 2023

Apothecary – The Apothecary is open Wednesday through Saturday.

Blacksmith – This week at the forge, Ken has been showing the apprentices the process of making H-L hinges, in preparation for the dozens needed in upcoming building projects, including the Bray School. Mark has been working on a couple of block knives for woodwork. Alex has been forging cleavers and hardening and tempering framing chisels, so they are ready for grinding. Broadus has worked on buttonhole chisels for leatherworkers. Josh is working on one more grid iron, this time with a pan for collecting drippings from meat.

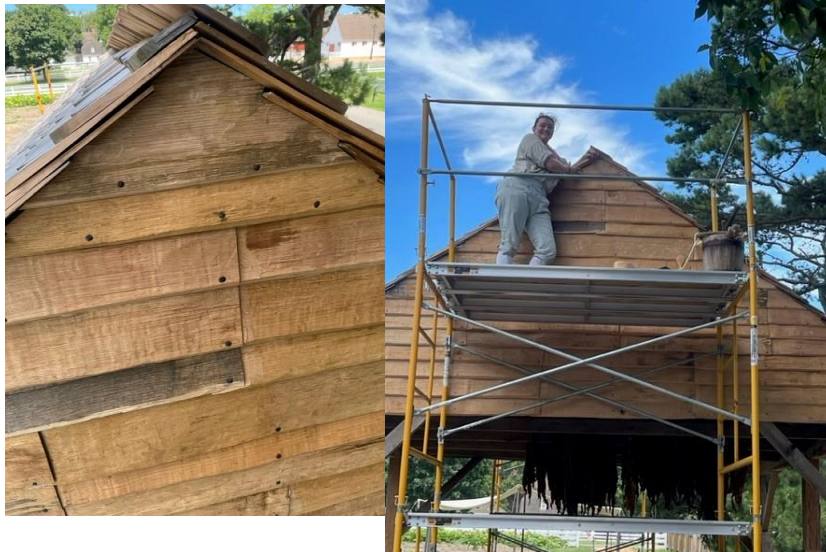
The Blacksmith Shop is open Thursday through Tuesday.

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

Cabinetmaker – This week, John has been cutting in the tenons to the side of his cellaret lower case, experimenting with the best way to create the joint efficiently. Bill will be getting around to the next layers of finish on his writing table, which is now turning a lovely shade of dark red, brought out by linseed oil and eventually seedlac.

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

Carpenters – This week at Ewing Field we've completed the remainder of the siding for the wagon shed. We still have 5 gates to assemble and hang in the upcoming days, but it certainly feels good to be complete with the building.



The Historic Carpenters are open at Ewing Field Sunday – Tuesday and Friday, Saturday weather permitting.

Cook – This week in the kitchen we have been happily working away on dishes using gifts from our friends at the Colonial Gardens. Cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, grapes, and other assorted seasonal goods have been coming to us in abundance. We have also been using what will most likely be the last round of soft fruits for the season, like plums, peaches, pawpaws, and figs. We will be posing for new headshots for the CW website on Friday morning, so that our page can show the team as it is now, with Frank, Barbra, Dom, and Abbey. Abbey has also been in touch with our fellow food historian and interpreter Marc Meltonville (who we last saw on our trip to England in January after partnering with him on some of the recipes for his book, *The Tavern Cook*, which is now published.) As a fellow archaeologist and 18th century cook, Frank has suggested that Abbey utilize his wealth of knowledge as she begins to outline and begin the introduction for her graduation paper, which will focus on 18th century archaeology of food. They will be having a zoom meeting in the coming weeks to flush out some of her ideas.



This week's table, with Dom sharpening knives and Barbra making rags.

The Cook is open at the Palace Kitchen Wednesday through Sunday.

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

Engraver – The Engraver is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Farming – The Farming Trade is collaborating with the Weaving Trade on the dye plant called indigo. There was an indigo craze in the 1750's and early 60's in the Tidewater region and planters like Phillip Ludwell were successful in growing and processing it for export. The pull of the tobacco trade was too strong though and the indigo craze fizzled when the prices for tobacco went up after the French and Indian War. Trades is all about doing it to understand it so we struck a deal- Farming will grow it and the Weave shop will process it. We are heartened that it was successful the first year and about 30 pounds of plant material was given to the Weavers last month. They have done exciting things with it so check out their post as well.



Doesn't look like much, but this was a money-making plant!

The Farming Trade is open at Ewing Field Tuesday- Saturday, weather permitting.

Fifes and Drums -- 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 – The Founders continued working on the CW seals this past week. The Musket Range also stopped in and picked up their order of 500 musket balls and placed an order for 500 more. We fired up the forge and cast as many as we could before their pewter pot ran dry. We also began work on an order of pewter spoons that will be headed over to Military Programs. The core making experimentation continues without any successful results. When we think we figured one obstacle out, another presents itself... but we're not giving up. We would also like to extend our thanks to Wheelwrights Paul and Murphy and Carpenter Ayinde for repairing our molding bench and sand bin.



The Geddy Foundry is open Sunday and Wednesday through Saturday.

Historic Gardeners – This week, to stay cool, the Historic Gardeners have been thinking about fall. We sowed seeds for many hearty greens, and even a few flowers, that will flourish as we move into cooler weather. We started most of these in clay pots where they can be closely monitored for insect damage and protected from the intensity of the summer sun.

One exception is carrots, which we seeded directly in the ground. To prevent the seeds from drying out, the Gardeners constructed a stick frame to support a straw mat, which will cast shade on the carrot bed until the seeds germinate. Another good garden activity for hot days is cleaning seed. The gardeners collected seeds from carrots and beans earlier in the season that need to be removed from their dry flowers and seed pods before we store them. The native fruit-producing trees and vines in our garden also start to produce in August and we were able to take a basket of muscadine grapes (*Vitis rotundifolia*) and pawpaws (*Asimina triloba*) to the Historic Cooks at the Palace Kitchen. The snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*) flowers that bloomed beautifully in the spring and early summer met their match with the heat and had to be pulled from the garden beds, but the cockscomb (*Celosia argentea var. cristata*) plants are still putting on a stunning display of color and texture in the garden.



A shade for the carrot bed



Celosia argentea var cristata in bloom



Cleaning seeds in the Historic Garden

The Historic Garden is open seven days a week, weather permitting.

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

Mason – This week found the brickmakers hard at work in the brickyard plugging away at bricks for the upcoming work at the gunpowder magazine. These are some big bricks; much larger than the ones we made earlier this season for the First Baptist Church project. We're running through a lot of clay making these things! Our friend Mr. Hudson over at the Joiners' Shop is fabricating a mold for us right now. This will be a coping brick, also destined for the magazine. Coping bricks are the half-round bricks found atop walls; Colonial Williamsburg hasn't made this particular brick since the 1930s!

Additionally, Journeyman Kenneth has been seen cavorting with the Wheelwrights this week while he straightens out a little brick paving for them.



Behold the bounty! At last count we were around 10,000 bricks!

The Brickyard is open Daily, weather permitting.

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

Milliner and Mantua-maker– It's been a busy week in the Margaret Hunter shop! We said our goodbyes (for now) to our summer intern, Ishbel. Apprentice Kate has been working on patterning a pair of 1790's stays and is currently doing stitch tests to determine whether some fabric in our stock is appropriate for this project. Journeywoman Rebecca is preparing for a conference presentation and finished a bedgown for our newest engraver, who models it below. Mistress Janea has been hard at work planning our keynote presentation for our upcoming 2024 conference, building a framework for an illustrated lecture to show how we use different kinds of collections to inform our practice of our trade. Her needle has been flying through petticoats as she makes progress on her time-studies and has tackled items from our unfinished projects drawer, finishing some lovely handkerchiefs.



Engraver's Apprentice Emma modelling her new striped linen bedgown, Intern Ishbel working on a quilted petticoat.

The Margaret Hunter shop is open Sunday, alternating Wednesdays, 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.

The Printing Office – David Wilson has begun the typesetting of the final two pages of Clementina Rind’s Gazette from September 2, 1773. We have news from China which has taken more than a year to reach us, along with reports of battles between Russians and Turkish forces. Other items of note include information of the structure of the East India Company and news about tea to be sent to America. I wonder what will happen to the tea.



Image: Masthead of The Virginia Gazette from The New Printing Office.

The Printer is open Sundays through Thursdays.

Shoemaker– The Shoemaker is open Sunday through Thursday.

Silversmith –



Jacob poured his first silver ingot



Megan is planishing her matching mugs



Chris is working on her tray



Bobbie is soldering buttons for the medallions



Preston is working on large and small bowls



George is hammering out ingots to draw into wire

The Silversmith Shop is open at the Sign of the Golden Ball Monday through Friday.

Tailor – The Tailor is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Tin Plate Worker – The Tin Plate Worker is open Wednesday through Saturday.

Weaving, Spinning, Dyeing – The Weavers and our Farmer have partnered up recently to try our hand at preparing indigo for dyeing. We have taken indigo plants grown by Ed on site and processed the raw plant material into usable dye. This powdered form of indigo was shippable and storable making it excellent for global trade. While we found success with this first round of processing, we look forward to honing our technique for future batches of dye. If any should care to see the effects of indigo dye on fiber do stop by the shop Friday, August 18!



Pictured is the indigo crop grown by Ed and our processed indigo dye

The Weaver's Shop is open Sunday and Thursday through Saturday. It will be open on Monday for workshops ONLY.

Wheelwright – The Wheelwright is open Sunday and Tuesday through Thursday.

Wig Shop – Greetings from the Wig Shop! We’ve been busy as usual, trying to beat the heat while working on maintenance. Edith has been working with Stella and Alexa on Robert W.’s newest wig. Debbie has begun a base for a new wig for Dan M. as well. Benton has been doing extensive research into Robert Lyon’s mortgage dated 1751, from the York County Records, Book of Deeds Volume V. He has found references to bought hair (87.5 pounds!), 46 pre-made wigs, and four enslaved men (William Duncan, George Ridley, John Ashwell, and Thomas Hewet). Conversations with the Tailors, Silversmiths, and Cabinetmakers, as well as with Tara C., Curator of Furniture, have given us some insight into the use of certain terminology for the period. We’re excited to learn more from this document in the coming days. As always, please feel free to reach out to us with hair related needs or questions.



On the left, outline for Dan M.’s wig; On the right, Human & Horsehair on the tressing frame for Robert W.’s wig

The Wig Shop is open Friday through Tuesday.

Director – Please schedule a time if you would like to meet with me next week, I am looking forward to seeing you at the Town Hall meetings next week.

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

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