

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

For May 19 - 25

Apothecary – “I set things up for our pharmacy student so she could make a medicine with Peruvian bark. This medicine was used in the 18th century to treat the intermittent fever, which is a good description for malaria. This condition was present in 18th-century Williamsburg. As some of you know, this medicine is the natural source of quinine. My student looked up information from her school's database on drugs and found the flowchart for diagnosing and treating malaria and shared it. While lab tests for malaria can be run in less than an hour, results can be inconclusive. The tests may need to be repeated. We looked at the indications for using quinine and other drugs to treat this disease that today kills over a quarter of a million children in Africa every year. There is not any way from the 18th-century Williamsburg records to discover how many people died from it in our area. The account books that Sharon has been studying rarely ever list a diagnosis for any of our patients. Even Dr. de Sequeyra’s records don’t list statistics on this disease. I looked up the latest info on the World Health website. Both of us were surprised to discover that a new vaccine for malaria was introduced last month. They are starting to use it in Africa.”

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “As the week’s storms abate, the Blacksmiths are lifted on the winds of fortune, as wondrous work on the weathervane points them in the right direction. But not all work takes them to such lofty heights. Aislinn has been beating out brackets for a pole lathe, Ken has been working on locks and a sliding bolt, and Mark has been doing the arduous but much appreciated task of straightening and sorting nails. The Apprentices, meanwhile, look strapping working on iron straps for cladding brick molds, and are also working on rakes, spoons, punches, and door handles. But no matter how elevated or base the work, it all falls well at the foot of the anvil.”

Tin Shop – “Lanterns are again on the menu for the Tinsmiths, this time with horn windows. They’ll be sent to the Stables at the Palace, to illuminate the darkest recesses with the same glow you could see in their Shop this stormy week. They are also working on coffee pots, much to their neighbors’ delight.”

Cabinetmaker – “Hello from the Hay Shop. During the two weeks when the Shop was closed for maintenance, the Harpsichord Makers, Melanie and Ed, took a trip to the Carolina Music Museum in Greenville, SC to look at instruments in their collection and visit with an old friend, Allie Cade. This last week since we opened, they’ve been studying the harpsichords in the Colonial Williamsburg collection and polishing the keys on the current spinet.

“Bill, Brian, and John took a shop trip to Pennsylvania and toured the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Mercer Museum, and Winterthur Museum. We have over two Gigabytes of pictures to sort through. This last week, John glued up and fitted the drawers for his tool chest. Bill is shaping the walnut legs for our second tea table. He and John are also researching John’s next project, a table. Brian continues to work on the carving on the Walker tea table and turning the walnut top.”



Colonial Garden – “The Gardeners continue to turn soil and, of course, weed. Sweet potatoes have been transplanted from the hot beds into the Garden, skirret has been divided up and transplanted as well, and we have harvested more carrots, beets, radishes, peas, sorrel, and leeks for the Kitchen. Garlic scapes formed on the hard neck garlic and were harvested for the Inn. The campanula, or Canterbury Bells, have bloomed for a very pretty show. Foxgloves and poppies are still blooming well. The rain did set us back on drying the rye, but it was much needed for the rest of the Garden. Some very pudgy swallowtail caterpillars have made their appearance, and we are extremely excited to announce that our prickly pear cactus is forming fruit for the very first time!”

Farming – “The cotton was planted by Nation Builder Farmers School participant Mary Carter and a very interested guest.”



Joinery – “The Joiners are still in the grip of their respective projects, struggling against a world of changing humidity, warping wood, and disagreeable mortises. Scott works tirelessly to perfect the copes on his door. Peter slogs onward through the wretched quagmire that is his hanging cupboard. Amanda fervently works to cut and fit her brick mold, honorably fulfilling the duties of a Joiner to their friends and fellow tradesfolk. And finally, the Joinery is pleased to welcome their new Junior Apprentice, Charles, who will be working with them for the next fifteen months. He has been a steady companion by their sides these last three years, at least on nights and weekends. Now he joins their ranks as a fellow full-time woodworker, braced against the worst that this cruel trade has to offer. Welcome, Charles. Stand fast, friend. The true challenges are yet to come!”

Milliner and Mantua-maker – “The Tri-annual maintenance of our Shop has resulted in a wonderful new floor for the upstairs of our Shop. Our thanks to Matt Webster and his team for making sure this happened. And that Marie lady who advises on minimalist -clean, clutter free spaces would be proud of us (or at least we are working on that, while still following approved museum collections policies). Eighteenth-century Milliners and Mantua-makers had a habit of practicing bits and pieces of many related trades, for instance: quilting, embroidery, fringe-making, laundry, and fan-making, etc. Most of these related trades involve needles and sewing scissors. But as you can see, the modern Milliner has explored the skills repertoire.”



Music – “The Musicians have one more spring Palace Concert series on the travels of Charles Burney before moving to the Capitol Hall of Burgesses on Tuesday nights for the summer. We are also preparing for our annual 3rd of July concerts at the Hennage Auditorium, “Music for a New Nation.” We have had music stands repaired by the Cabinetmakers, and Ken Schwarz is helping us get our stands modified for better use. We continue to provide music in the Geddy and Wythe Houses, and at the Palace for free flow on Wednesdays. Thanks go out to the Milliners for making more linen drawstring bags for us.”

Public Leather Works – “In the Public Leather Works, work continues on the 80th Regiment accoutrements, with Andrew sewing the bodies of the cartridge pouches. Meanwhile, Jan is finishing up hats for senior Fife and Drum Corps leaders, and a cavalry helmet to go with the 1st Light Dragoons uniform being made by Mike of the Taylors. Jay finished a pair of leather breeches for Colonel Washington and is pleased at how they fit.”

Silversmith – “Bobbie has polished the top of the first caster in preparation for soldering the finial and cutting the piercework. She also finished a pair of mote spoons this week and continues working on the tankard lid. Chris is raising the body and lid of her teapot, as well as preparing to flat-chase a set of bottle tickets. Lynn continues work on the canoe printing plate, along with engraving several recent orders. Preston has primarily been working on the tankard body this week. George keeps plugging away at the multitude of chasing tools to be refurbished, while finishing four spoons for a recent order and cleaning out a new dust collector for the basement. Parker has been raising a small tumbler. William’s second Gurney bowl is finished, and he is now working on two small seamed dram cups in addition to some minor engraving.”



Bottle tickets laid out for chasing



Chris' teapot begins to take shape