

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

November 13, 2020

Apothecary - “How long does it take to make a medicine? Some can be completed fairly quickly, just long enough to macerate an ingredient in a solvent for several minutes. Some are labor intensive, such as hand rolling pills. The nomination for the formula that takes the longest to compound goes to Vinegar of Roses, which takes forty days. Mark recently finished this preparation that was prescribed for headaches. He also finished a blog on the project and submitted it. His third blog was recently published. Sharon continues to diligently transcribe the site records with all its issues of handwriting, which was executed for the edification of the author and not contemporary study. It’s always a challenge reading these records, especially when working with a vintage microfilm reader. The latter was recently found to have an unexpected redeeming quality. It appears that wi-fi seems to work better if one is sitting next to this metal relic of earlier technology.

“Speaking of technology, Robin has been looking at some new publications relating to the health of 18th-century African Americans and including them with our Shop archives. Someone looked at a couple of pages in a Shop notebook and said, ‘Was that typed?’”

Brickmaker - “The Brickmakers got one last delivery of firewood for the upcoming Burn this week. Journeyman Kenneth is getting pretty proficient with the heavy machinery. With the clamp fully stacked and capped this week (we put the final two courses of brick, known as plating, up top), the Brickmakers experimented with making some tar. After working out some of the kinks in the system, we managed to produce about two gallons of the stuff, and everyone we showed it to made a big deal about sniffing it. There’s some general excitement about town now that we’ll have the means to make tar, pitch, and maybe even turpentine soon. Wheelwright Paul and Carpenter Matt helped us out with some supplies and research, so perhaps they’ll find their stockings filled with tar this Holiday Season!”

Cabinetmaker - “As projects around the Cabinet Shop continue to progress in preparation for January’s Woodworking Conference, Apprentice Cabinetmaker Jeremy has taken some time recently to dive into understanding possible methods used to layout the carved lid and door panels of the apothecary chest which he and fellow Apprentice John are building. Both Apprentices spent some time earlier this year studying *The Rules of Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture* by James Gibbs, to better understand some of the principles of layout and proportions, and how that may be incorporated into furniture design work. Jeremy has been applying some of those skills while studying the apothecary chest. The lid, doors, and feet of the chest show a repeating series of s-curves. By understanding the proportions used to create these curves, it becomes possible to scale this pattern up or down to any desired size with relative ease. The hope was to find a way to lay this pattern out on the actual workpiece consistently using simply dividers and a square. Jeremy found that there may be a correlation between the radius used to layout the repeating arcs and the size of the panel itself. After drawing a series of disconnected arcs, he connected them by drawing a freehanded curve between each one. He worked under the assumption that a skilled craftsman capable of carving these patterns would have the experience and skill to draw a simple curve between two arcs in order to tie them together in a seamless

fashion. And now that that challenge is behind him, it's time to move onto some real tiny dovetails!"



[Colonial Garden](#) - *"This week, we continue to fortify against the rabbit and have found another rather small and new adversary to battle, a vole. It has secretly dug holes around our seedlings, nibbling at the roots. We are on the watch to firm up the soil and chase the little thief away.*

"The strawberry patch is in the process of renovation. The plants are being moved away from the fence, and any space that is left open will be filled with plants that we started earlier in the year. The alpine strawberries are fruiting, now that the days are shorter but not much cooler. Planting of violas continue as we find them around the Garden. They will provide beautiful and very edible flowers for Foodways and the Inn. The last planting bed was filled this week. Both softneck and hardneck garlic were planted among ridges of 'small salads', such as winter and garden cress.

"With warmer than usual temperatures, weeds continue to flourish, and we continue to prepare for the cold. Firewood was put up and covered, and the last of the hoops were

built over the broccoli. The hoops support a tarp that is pulled over at night to protect from the cold, but for now, it keeps the bunny away.”

Engraver - “The tray inscription is complete, and Lynn is now working on the inscription plate for an accompanying jewelry box. She is also working on all the paperwork and bureaucracy that comes with establishing a new Shop. William is continuing down the list of drawings, breaking the monotony with a bit of engraving and scrimshaw. Both Engravers have produced a few small decorative plates for the Shop’s Holiday wreath.”



Historic Farming - “The rainy weather is a good time to sort tobacco and tie into hands. The leaves re-hydrate because of the humidity and put them in a condition called ‘case’. Their pliability allows them to be handled without breaking them. This year’s tobacco leaves cured a little lighter, as you can see in the photo. The hands, consisting of four to six leaves each, will be ‘sweated’ for a while in a bulk to give them a deeper and more rich brown color. All work done, in the 18th century, to satisfy the government-appointed Tobacco Inspector, who assures that it is of good quality before shipment. Farmer Ed is his own Tobacco Inspector, and his standards are exacting.”



A hand of tobacco 2020

Military Programs - “This week, Josh Bucchioni is beginning to paint the 80th Colours, based on the research we have put together on flags of the British Army in the period. On Veteran's Day, John Settle and Kent Brinkley presented their research on veterans of the American Revolution for the Facebook Livestream, discussing what happened to soldiers of the army after the war. Ian MacDougall is continuing work on a searchable index for soldiers in the Virginia State Garrison Regiment, connecting records from the Public Store Records, Pensions, and veteran records, with the intention of connecting a larger narrative to the soldiers in Williamsburg during the Revolution.”

Printer and Bookbinder - “A Very Soggy Good Day from the Printing Office and Bookbindery!”

In this edition of ‘The Mechanics Adviser’, we find Journeyman Supervisor and Printer Peter painstakingly creating ultramarine colored paste paper for a portfolio folder that will house the Apprentice Tailor’s paper patterns. Pete instructed members of both Shops this week on the proper way to create a perfect piece of paper, and as you can see, he has really perfected his own technique. Thank you, and beautiful job, Pete! Senior Journeyman Bookbinder Dale will be helping to construct the folder.



The talented Peter creating a thing of beauty out of flour, water, and powdered dye.

For a closer look at 18th-century Paste Paper, please visit www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk and click on 'Decorative Papers at Nostell Priory'.

As we reflect on Veterans Day, I am pleased to report that our very own Veteran, Journeyman Bookbinder Donald, has consented to share a little of his military experience with us. Thank you for your service, Don!



When did you join the service, and what job, also known as an MOS, did you perform? I enlisted in high school in 1997 in the Army. I went in as a signalman, but by the time I was done, I had also trained as a logistics specialist, a tank driver for a cavalry unit, a weapons specialist, and worked as a Military Police Officer.

I understand that you served your country in Iraq. Can you tell us a little about that? I was in Iraq from late 2005-2007, serving in the capital of Baghdad, also in Ramadi and Fallujah.

Would you care to share any lessons you learned from your time in Iraq that are pertinent to your everyday life? Serving in Iraq gave me a true appreciation for just how complex people are, and how diverse cultures can be. For instance, the Iraqi people were ethnically any number of groups such as Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish - and as far as religion, they are just as diverse, and included both Muslims and Christians. But perhaps, especially back then, that part of the world was just all considered to be Muslim, with no distinction being made for anything

else - especially on T.V. During war time, we tend to take the personal aspect out, but at the end of the day, the Iraqi people are just like us. They have different belief systems, morals, standards, religions, and ways of looking at things. They also love and want the best for their children, just like we do. I learned more about diversity in Iraq than any college course I have ever taken, and I have tried to apply this to my life ever since. I take care to incorporate this important lesson here at Colonial Williamsburg as an Interpreter. I may not be able to completely change a guest's mind, but I can certainly leave them wanting to know more and questioning things that may need to be questioned.

My experiences during the war and interacting with the citizens of Iraq allowed me to look at history through a different lens. Do we take the time and care to tell the stories of the lesser-known people, whose lives are just as important as the famous politicians and notable characters of the time? These questions are important and deserve to be examined.

As a soldier, do you identify with the Revolutionary War Soldier?

Yes! I remember really questioning how a guy from Virginia ended up in Iraq- many of us did. I can clearly envision a British soldier here in 1781, wondering why they were fighting with men that they probably had more in common with, then say, the politicians and rulers of the time. I think that can apply to many soldiers, throughout the ages.

~Finis~

Today, you can find Soldier and Journeyman Bookbinder Donald busily making books at the Bookbindery: *The Veteran in a New Field*.



Finally, from all of us here, to all of you, good day, and stay safe out there.”

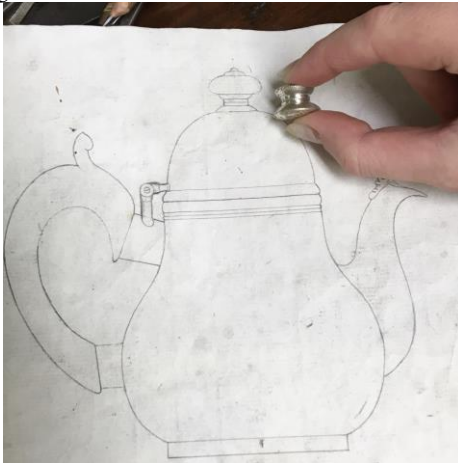
Public Leather Works - “The Public Leather Works has been creating a number of retirement gifts that we can't talk too much about yet. We have also been building a little bit of an inventory against potential Holiday sales, and the usual array of odds and sods, like a handful of sheaths for the Farming Program and a new apron for the Master Blacksmith. Please visit us Thursdays in the Gallery.”

Shoemaker - “Nicole is finishing Megan Sirak's shoes and working on shoes for Brendon Mooney and slippers for Barbra Swanson. Rob continues work on Zac Pinsent's shoes and overshoes and has also developed a reading list for the Shop to use for some behind-the-scenes reading. Alexa continues work on shoes for Megan Cantwell and is making arrangements (once the Shop goes down to one public day per week) to work with some of the other fashion trades during their gallery/tavern days. Any fashion trade requiring Alexa may contact her directly, as well. Val continues work on shoes for Daniel Cross and

is currently fixing a pair of shoes for himself. The Shop's last scheduled day at the Public Armoury is November 21st, after that we will be moving back to our old site and preparing for our first day in the Raleigh Tavern, which will be on December 5th.

"Lastly, if anyone has lost some property on November 11th in the area around the Waters Storehouse, please contact Security as it was dropped off there this morning (the 13th)."

Silversmith - "This week marks the fourth Thursday that the Silversmiths have expanded their interpretation into the presentation schedule at the Art Museum. Journeyman Chris continues chasing some new bottle tags as well as doing the filing and cleaning of a cast finial knob which will be part of the teapot she's currently completing. Apprentice Parker continues work on a steel replacement belt hanger for George Washington's small sword as well as preparing to do the layout work for a pair of matching pierced punch strainers. Journeyman Bobbie has been preparing cast parts for a salt cellar along with finish work on the trays."



Weaver - "Our Shop dyed a couple fleeces of yarn over the last few Dye Days so that we can make some Medley cloth as a Shop project soon. The hope is that we can take two separate fleeces that have been dyed two separate colors and card them together before spinning. This should give the yarn and the fabric a variable, changing effect. The purple locks of wool turned out beautifully, but we've had to put our blue locks back into the dye pot for a second time. We are all excited to try this project!"

