

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for January 27 – February 2

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “This week, the Blacksmiths learned, or rather were confronted with, a bit of physics and hollow myth: shiny, new Tin Coffee Pots are not endless founts of said warm beverage. Though dismayed, we were reminded that the magical thing about those Tin men and Tin women next door is that the emptiness of those vessels represents the opportunity of fresh coffee at some point in the future. Here's to the future! But with the fahrenheitic rise to spring warmth, it seemed that we had skipped the rest of winter and spring-boarded into a future season. One day, we are throwing open the windows, and the next, we are crowding round the forge. Speaking of which, here's a bit of a jape for those who might choose a cold day to visit:

*”Cozy 'round the forge and warm you'll stay.
Cozy too close: there'll be Hell Toupee!”

“Round the forge these days, Ken is finishing the assembly of railing for William and Mary; Mark is filing and finishing a number of tools; Aislinn is forging and assembling a hand vise; and the Apprentices are whittling down that pile of slide bolts and holdfasts, spoons and bench dogs, hammers and nails. All's well that falls well at the bottom of the anvil, especially the temperature.”

(*Jape accredited to Alex Hinman)

Tin Shop – “Cold are the days in the Tinshop, but it never seems to dull the glowing reflections of the Tinsmiths in their metal. As they reflect on their work, what could be more important than benchmarks? One must always work with accuracy and integrity, and this is why you'll find measuring cups being made here this week. Also, a stamp box for stamps. Why measure if you cannot prove your adeptness? They are proving it now, with a tin box full of letter and number stamps. And just for good measure, they are experimenting with new punches. More on that next week!”

Cabinetmaker – “Hello from the Cabinet and Harpsichord makers! The 2019 ‘Woodworking Symposium’ is in the books, and the shop is getting back to normal. We have a new Cabinetmaking Apprentice, John Peeler. He started last Wednesday and comes to the shop with considerable interpretive, teaching, and woodworking skills. Bill and Brian will continue working on the Walker tables from the conference. John will be gathering together and sharpening his tools. Ed and Melanie continue working on their harpsichord.”

Colonial Garden – “We’ve had quite a lot of cold weather recently, so the Gardeners have made a number of nice fires this week to keep ourselves and our guests warm. We’ve been heaping compost and preparing beds for planting fava beans, and we harvested radishes, turnips, kale, and lettuce for the Wythe Kitchen. Our Garden has made it through some very cold temperatures, 19 degrees to be exact. No losses. We will be removing the peas from the hotbed as they have reached their maturity. The Brickyard installed a new brick pad in the Garden, and it is sturdy, beautiful, and the perfect place to sit on a bench and admire our plants.”

Gunsmith – “With reaming completed on Eric’s rifle barrel, it is time for rifling, or the process of cutting spiral grooves into the barrel to make the bullet spin for accuracy. The process is straightforward because of a shop-built rifle saw (machine) that we use, that requires six hours of easy labor to slowly remove the metal from the bore. In today’s

machining terms, we would call this a broach. Darrin case hardened his English style lock, and it sparks great after some fine tuning.”

Joiner – “This week in the Joinery, the Apprentices will work on their projects from the conference. Even though the conference is over, there is still plenty of work to be done. Once these pieces are either finished, or at a point at which they can be safely tucked away, the Apprentices will return to their hanging cupboards. In the meantime, come check out what their presentations were all about!”

Taylor – “This week, the Taylors will be continuing work on current projects. Master Hutter is continuing his work on the first reproduction of the John Blair suit. Mike is constructing the pieces of the uniform coat on which he is working before assembling them together. The uniform coat is that of the 1st Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons, raised in Virginia in 1776. Tim is finishing up work on two shirts before commencing with his first apprenticeship project: shag-edged women’s cloaks. Also this week, the Taylor Shop will be welcoming back a former academic intern, Miss Engel, from the College of William & Mary, who will be returning for a second semester to work in the shop as an occasional volunteer. She will be continuing her work in shop from last semester reproducing an extant pair of women’s hoops.”