

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for August 26 – September 1

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “At the forge, we are confronted with a looming farewell to Steve Mankowski, whose 30 years of making ironwork here have produced thousands of objects in use around the museum and among other institutions around Tidewater Virginia (and Beyond!). Aside from the achievement of the sheer volume of objects made, Steve has, in mind and body, developed the workmanlike agility that gives him an incredible fluency in traditional ironwork, which has been a gift to all those who have worked alongside him.

“Mark has been working on chisels and brick hammers; Aislinn has been working on brick hammers, compasses, and rotating broilers; Ken is working on another form of cooking grills – a grid iron, and thumb latches; Jessie is working on thumb latches, squares, pliers, and shutter dogs.”

Tinsmith – “In the tin-coated iron department, Jenny has been making teapots and tinderboxes; and Joel has been making horn lanterns for the Museum of the American Revolution.”

Brickmaker – “Brickmaking will end on September 16th to focus on dismantling last year’s clampe and constructing this season’s. We’ll still have clay in the pit, however, so we’ll be able to offer some treading for a few weeks afterward.”

Cabinetmaker – “The Cabinetmakers continue working on two small boxes with secret compartments for the “Escape the King” program. Bill completed work on a drawing board for the Brickmakers, and Brian is ready to deliver the small lap desk to Thomas Jefferson. They have taken the first steps in the elaborate “piecrust” tea table project for the forthcoming “Working Wood in the 18th Century” Conference. Bill is working on the drawing for the carved edge of the table while Brian has sawn out the cherry blank for the column. He has also looked into the space requirements to bring our Great Wheel Lathe back in the shop. Ed is ‘plucking’ along with the new strings of the harpsichord, replacing as necessary. He will spend the next few weeks perfecting the keyboard’s action, adjusting the string tension, and reworking the jack posts.”

Farming – “The corn ears have been harvested by the squirrels, and the Farmer has cut all the tops and blades off the corn. The stalks will be grubbed out soon. Everything except the stalk below the ear was used. The grain is for human consumption and is ground into meal and grits. The tops, fodder, and even the husk off of the ear are for the livestock. Fodder for horses was a way to make money by selling it to the Army, when the tobacco market fell to pieces because of the war.”

Foundry – “The Foundry has been finishing cloak pins and bass drum parts, in addition to casting Coke candlestick stems and bases. We are also pursuing brass work jobs for the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Carter’s Grove. Work on taper candlesticks continues.”

Gunsmith – “At the Gunsmith, Eric has finished the full-body workout of reaming his rifle barrel and is now on to draw filing the exterior to finished shape. Careful attention is paid to the taper and flare of the barrel, eliminating any humps or dips in the surface. Darrin is forging another set of parts for a rifle lock. Meanwhile, Richard is making a new spring for a door lock on one of the carriages for Coach and Livestock.”

Joinery – “Each of the Apprentices has selected the material for their hanging cupboards, and they are now in the process of dimensioning that material. The Master of the Shop gently suggested that perhaps the exterior of the cupboard, which is a fairly simple box, should be completed by the end of the week. The Apprentices took this suggestion in their usual manner: panic, working at a fevered pitch, profuse sweating, and generally acting like wolves with a foot caught in a trap.

This weekend, however, the goal will be mixing and applying paint to the now-finished tool chest for the Foundry. Panic may still occur.”

Military Programs – “Military Programs continues to conduct all of our normal programming, as well as work on the 80th Regiment of Foot Project. Also, the Department would like to welcome Ryan Quint, our newest addition to the staff.”

Music – “The Music Department has arranged for new photographs to be taken for the ‘Palace Concert: Instruments From the Collection,’ which opens Tuesday, September 4. We are also beginning to formulate thematic ideas for the ‘Monsters, Mayhem, & Musick’ concerts and are very excited at the prospects. We are working on a new home for the spinet at the Deane Servant Quarters. We are also preparing for some auditions to fill the positions of Soprano and Viola da Gamba/Baroque Cello players. We will be doing our ‘Bird Fancier’s Delight’ program at the Hennage for the rest of August on Thursdays and will resume ‘An Afternoon with Governor’s Musick’ in September and October. As the ‘Changing Keys’ exhibit has come down at the Museums, one of the organs has been moved to the Palace Supper Room, and we will be able to have the square piano moved to the Palace in January, if all goes well. We look forward to using it in our President’s Weekend Program, ‘Music for a New Nation’.”

Public Leather Works – “Last week, the Public Leather Works said Good Bye to our summer Intern. This week, we say Hello to our new Fall Intern. Jared Fox will be joining our staff on September 2nd. He has been a Junior Interpreter at a number of sites so is no stranger to Colonial Williamsburg.”

Silversmith – “The end is nigh! Bobbie has begun polishing the sixth of seven silver trays, as Chris is nearing completion on the last. While waiting for the tray, Bobbie has also been working on a pair of small cups. George has been working on a lot of spoons, and in order to keep himself sane, has also started working on meat skewers and raising a silver mug. Preston continues working on his small fluted bowls. Lynn and William have been traveling to the Geddy House on Thursdays to provide Trades interpretations on site during the Foundry’s day off. Lynn has been engraving the inscriptions on the silver trays, as well as moving along much faster than she expected on the fan plate. William continues to practice varying script styles for engraving work, as well as attempting to finish his Gurney bowl. Parker has been making handles for his seamed cups this week.”



Wigmaker – “As frequently happens when working on projects that take over 100 hours to make, the Wig Shop is spending lots of time working on the same wigs as the past few weeks. Betty has blended the hair for the Jefferson wig, and weaving has begun. She is being assisted in this process by both Regina and Debbie. Sara has been buttonhole stitching for days (not an exaggeration, the part of the process she is on takes about 15 hours) and is almost completed with the base of her judicial wig. If all goes according to plan, she will be able to start attaching hair on Monday or Tuesday. We are a shop full of people who love fall, so we have been enjoying the cooler mornings the past few days and look forward to the new season starting soon, hopefully with some new wig designs to put on interpreters across the Foundation!”