

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for September 23 - 29

Apothecary – “We are getting ready for our second pharmacy student, who will be arriving October 1. Sharon continues working with the site records. Lastly, we are going to experiment with making a cold medicine that we have not made before.”

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “This week, to keep your spirits on the up and up, the ever-mindful Blacksmiths have been making handrail for various sets of stairs here at CW, and also at William and Mary. While Ken and Aislinn are on railing detail, Mark has been finishing up drill bits for the Carpenters, striking knives, and a pair of dividers - just born from the forge. Jessie has been working on shutter dogs and framing squares; Alex and Owen are working on nails, and also brackets for the Wheelwrights’ lathe.”

Tinsmith – “Drummers really, to the tune of production, beating out bellows pipes for their sooty neighbor Smiths, as well as tea kettles, and porringers.”

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.”

Colonial Garden – “We’ve had quite the number of rainy and overcast days this past week in the Garden. Thankfully, the hurricane missed us, and we only had a few instances of rain pushing us indoors. The drop in temperature and the cloud cover has been quite pleasant and has allowed us to do a truly phenomenal amount of weeding throughout the Garden and made removing the corn stalks and turning the soil there much easier. We have planted rye in the area where the corn was, and we have removed almost all of the Celosia, as it had started to lose its brilliant magenta color. The peas in the hotbed were mended; and endive, many types of lettuce, and digitalis were sown in the propagation bed. The citrus trees were moved back to the center of the Garden now that the hurricane threat is gone. The spinach has germinated and been thinned out, and we’ve prepared the ground and formed beds where the potatoes had been and planted many varieties of beets, radish, carrots, and purple turnips in the new beds. We’ve also moved a large number of swallowtail and monarch caterpillars off of the skirret and onto the parsnips, where they can eat to their heart’s content. A few days later we found a monarch chrysalis in the Castor beans that we are watching with great anticipation!!”

Farming – “The 18th-century Sheriff has not fined us for nurturing the second growth of the tobacco plants as they would have at that time, but the plants are starting to play out due to lack of soil nutrients left in the hill. The first growth has cured and was struck yesterday and put into a bulk. This stabilizes it until stripping the leaves off the stalk and tying into hands of 4-6 leaves. The leaves are larger than usual this year and are a slightly lighter brown. This is likely due to all the rain this year. The first cotton boll of the year opened this week. We should have enough open to pick in about three weeks.”

Gunsmith – “At the Gunshop, Eric and Darrin are forging a few more rifle barrels. Eric’s barrel is a bit lighter than his first, making the welding easier, but care has to be taken not to crack the thinner iron. Darrin continues work on his second rifle lock, as well.”

Joinery – “The Joiners are very ready for the autumn to begin in earnest. While some of the material that they work with is resistant to changes in humidity, this last week saw boards that have dried for almost thirty years develop an impressive crown. This can be especially frustrating when cutting and fitting joints. Dovetails require square material, and if the wood is warped so badly that it looks like an unhappy grimace, your face will look identical the moment you attempt to fit

your tails to the pins. So, from the Joiners: Let autumn commence! Let there be shorter days and frosty mornings! Let there be hot cider steaming in your mug! Let there be an end to the legion of mosquitoes, ticks, beetles, and spiders that plague your every waking hour!”

Military Programs – “Military Programs is preparing to depart on our staff trip to Pennsylvania next week. On our trip, we will be visiting Fort Ligonier, Carlisle Barracks, and Army Heritage and Education Center, and finally Gettysburg.”

Silversmith – “Chris continues to work on the final silver tray. Bobbie has been piercing the handles of several teaspoons, as well as revisiting the spice casters she started before the order for the trays. George has been working on several meat skewers and has been raising a silver mug from an ingot. Preston continues working on several small bowls and a tankard. Lynn has finished engraving the fan plate and is working on several smaller pieces of silver for the shop, such as bottle tickets and trade silver. William finally soldered the base to his first bowl and is beginning the finishing process. He has already begun planishing his second bowl and has also begun to cut a multitude of short lines with his engraving tools in copper, to practice tool control. Parker has completed the raising of his copper beaker and started planishing.”



Bobbie's pierced-handle teaspoons

William's bowls

Wigmaker – “While our normal operations in the interpretive shop continue, including work on both of our major projects and regular maintenance, it’s starting to get a bit spookier in the John Coke Office (our modern work space). The Halloween event is scaled down this year, but we have wigs for witches, pirates, and foppish gentry that we are contributing to the festivities. So if you see any of the ladies of the Wig Shop looking dazed around town, it’s just a temporary side effect of keeping fantasy separated from 18th-century reality.