

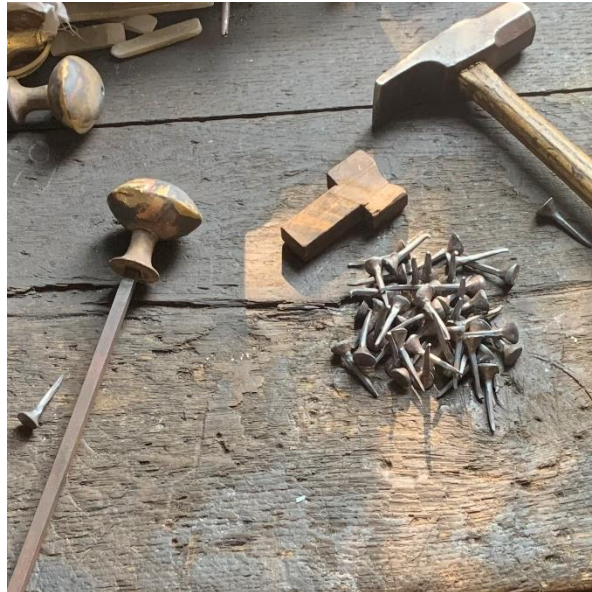
# *THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER*

## *August 4, 2023*

*Apothecary* – The Apothecary is open Wednesday through Saturday.

*Blacksmith* – The Blacksmiths remain busy this week as we forge on through the heat of July.

The master and journeyman both working on locks, Mark finishing the brass the knobs for a three-bolt lock for the Bray school he has made.

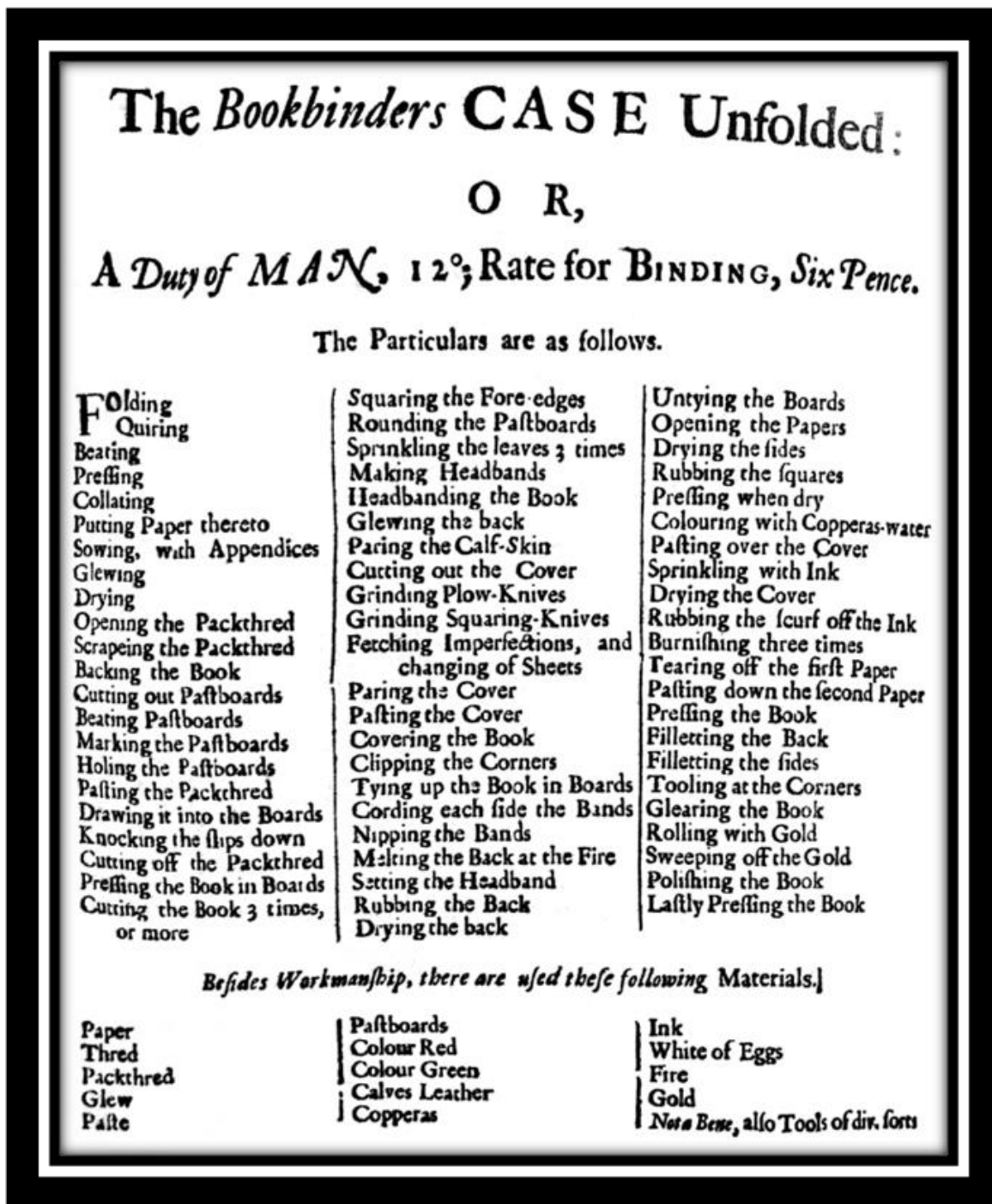


Ken meanwhile does some repairs to an 18th century lock still in use from nearby Shirley plantation, the great house there having been completed in 1738. This is a "drawback" lock, from the inside of the door you have access to a knob which may be pulled back to open the door, however from the outside the only way to work the lock is with a key, giving the keyholder a greater deal of control over who has access to the house. The repair needed is general cleaning and a new spring as the original was broken.

**Josh carries on work on gridirons for the mount Vernon kitchen project.  
Alex has developed a good pile of socket chisels and begins on meat cleavers.**



**Broadus has a similar pile of firmer chisels and works on farm gate hinges.  
As always, all's well that falls well at the base of the anvil. The Blacksmith is open Sunday through Tuesday  
and Thursday through Saturday.**



We highly recommend the book "Trade Bookbinding in the British Isles, 1660-1800", by Stuart Bennett. A gem found by our volunteer, Bob Lyon, it is helping to put together a more well-rounded view of our craft, and of the people who practiced it. We often find ourselves informing folks that putting a book together is sometimes a 30-step process- but as this document attests to, that bit of information just might be in the eye of the beholder. Cheers!

The Bookbinder is open Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

***Cabinetmaker*** – This week in the Hay Shop, Bill put a coat of boiled linseed oil on parts of his writing table. You can see how much the color and grain have popped in this photo of the top being oiled. After the oil dries for about 10 days, he'll begin working up coats of a seedlac varnish to enhance the grain even more and give the whole a glossy look. Meanwhile, John has had his fill of chopping mortises for his cellarette stand. Now, he'll get to work filling those mortises with tenons... The Cabinetmaker is open Sunday (11:30-5:00), Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.



**Carpenter** – The Carpenters are working at Ewing Field Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, weather permitting.

**Cook** – As summer moves along over at the Palace Kitchen, we have been pleased to see the slightly cooler weather roll in this week. For the first time since the heat turned up, we were able to get a cake as well as a pie out to the table. With the heat in Virginia in the summer, pastry and cakes are detrimentally affected and do not tolerate the temperature. Pastry turns into gooey paste and cakes never have the body and lift they need to keep from becoming dense and stogy. Dom made a beautiful Nun’s cake, which is a pound cake with caraway seeds, orange blossoms, nutmeg and a little touch of mace. Frank also put together a Potato Pie, with layers of potatoes, onions, and hard-boiled eggs with salt, pepper, nutmeg, and butter in between each layer. Abbey assisted on the decoration of the pie and Dom ensured it was baked to perfection. Along with our lovely gifts from the Colonial Gardens (cucumbers and melons galore), we have also been excited to have a second cropping of artichokes out on our plants at the Palace, which we thought we had seen the last of in May. Enjoy the snaps of the fruits of our labor and happy August!



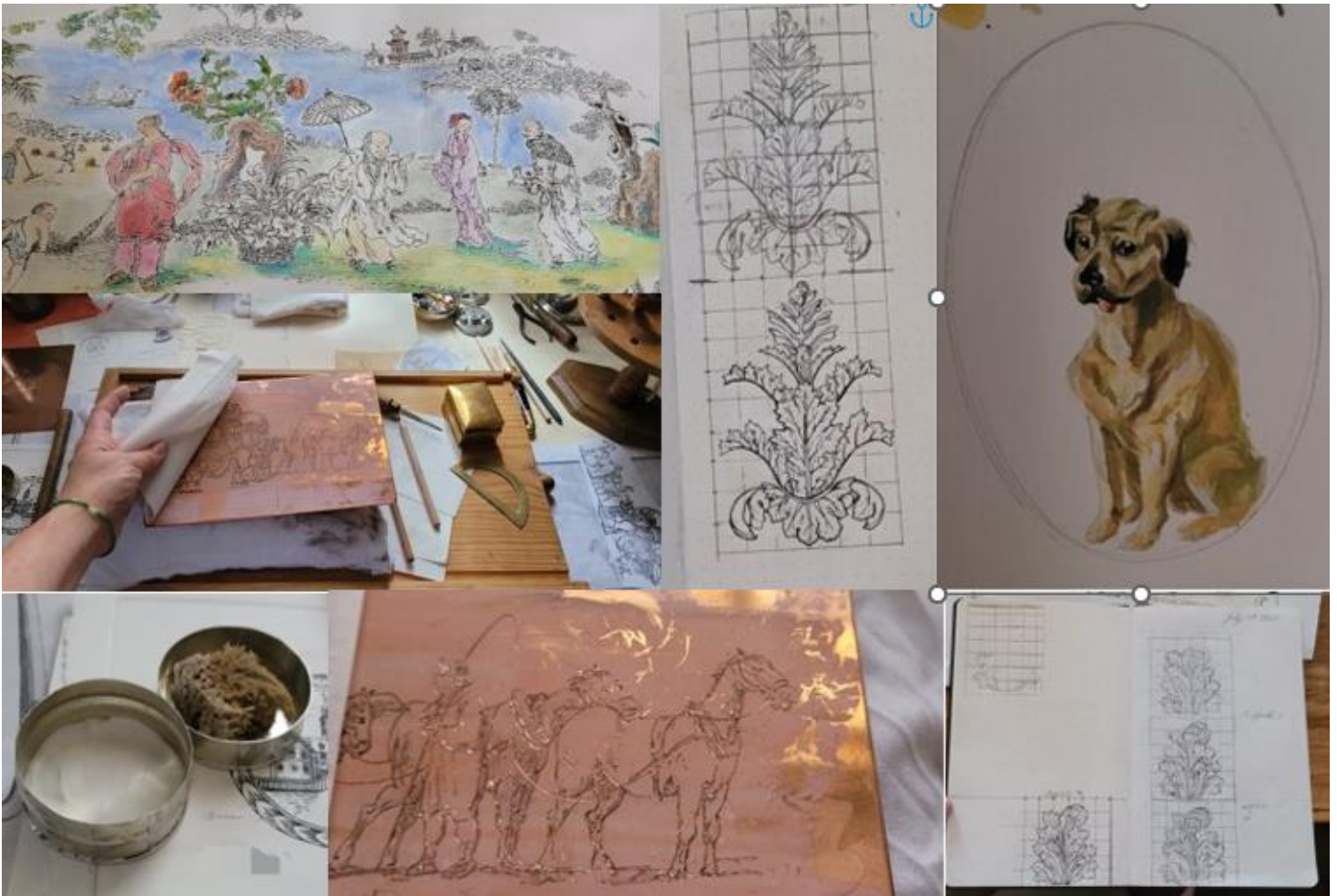
**The Palace Kitchen is open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.**  
Department of Historic Trades and Skills

*Cooper* – In addition to the items we make for use throughout Colonial Williamsburg, the Coopers Shop often undertakes custom order work for other museums and historic sites. Among our current projects are a pair of tubs ordered by the Old Barracks Museum in Trenton, New Jersey. Attached are an image of one tub under construction, and an image of a completed tub.



**The Cooper is open Sunday, and Thursday through Saturday.**

**Engraver** – The Engravers this week: Emma has started her formal technical drawings and been experimenting with watercolors as well as working on tool control. And lots of drawing and reading in between. Lynn has been working on the copperplate for the Wheelwrights, doing interviews with the Founders, and working with Emma. William is away this week on Vacation. Emily was with us this week and she was practicing her cursive writing with Emma and Lynn’s assistance. The Engravers would like to say thank you to the Tin Shop folks!! They again have helped us out on containers. This time with small, lidded containers for our white watercolor. We use it for setups. The metal is painted with it (white watercolor) allowed to dry then we can draw on the metal. With the lids we can now eliminate the buildup of dust and metal chips finding their way into the paint. The dust will scratch up the surface of the metal. Thank you again Tinsmiths!



The Engraver is open Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday.

***Farmer*** – All tobacco has been cut and is curing in the now roofed shed that the Historic Trades Carpenters are building. The area in tobacco will be put into turnips and swedes (which we call rutabagas today). These crops show innovative methods that some planters were using to keep their land going despite the ravages of soil depletion brought on by tobacco planting. They were intended for cattle and sheep at the time but will likely show up in soups and stews at the CW Inn or Taverns. The cotton is coming along nicely and hopefully there will be plenty of it for the Weave shop to spin during picking in October.



*Bee in a cotton flower*



*The cotton plant in the summer*

**The Farmer is at Ewing Field Wednesday through Saturday, weather permitting.**



***Fifes and Drums*** – The Fifes and Drums will be performing Wednesday through Friday at 4:40 pm in Market Square, Saturday at 12:30 pm starting at the Capitol and marching to the Palace, and Saturday at 1 pm on the Play House Stage.

***Founder*** – The Foundry is open Wednesday, and Friday through Sunday.

***Gardener*** – Our carrot project is drawing to a close. Seeds were planted last year of Scarlet Horn carrots and protected over the winter season with long straw. This spring, the carrots would no longer be edible; the plant then goes into the cycle of producing seeds. We will have seed for years and are happy for the opportunity to share this experience with guests.



One of three baskets of seeds saved. Inside of the carrot in the second season. No longer edible, the core turns woody and bitter. All the energy of the plant goes to producing seed.

**We said goodbye to our intern Andrew last week. This image is of Andrew on his last day in the garden. Reorganizing the two front quarters' display of potted tuberose and dwarf pomegranates, he swept the brick clean and raked the front quarter smooth.**



**We continue to harvest cucumbers and melons. As July draws to an end, we begin the task of planning the fall and winter garden.**

**The Historic Garden is open Daily, weather permitting.**

***Gunsmith*** – In the Gunsmith shop this last week, Darrin finished welding the wrought iron skelp into the barrel tube with the assistance of Richard and Brad. It was welded from a really nice piece of iron which is difficult to find these days. Many times, the iron will want to open up and split along the grain and ends up not working out.



Here is a breech pin (plug) Darrin forged out and it is not usable. What appears to be a better grade of wrought iron was located and the smithing continues.

The Gunsmith is open Sunday, Monday, Friday, and Saturday.

*Harpichordmaker* – From the harpsichord corner, greetings...

The Sigal Music Museum in Greenville SC has two more Harris family spinets: One by Joseph Harris, father of our William Harris, and another by William himself made in 1765, the year after the date of his instrument in Colonial Williamsburg's collections. We hope we can soon visit there for a couple of days and examine the work of father and son together, side by side. Considering that Joseph trained William and the latter continued and took over his father's business directly, chances are that William worked on his father's spinet as well. This will be a special opportunity, but for now, we will continue with our work here. But this research is very much on our minds.



Spinet, William Harris, London, 1765, and inscription.



Spinet, Joseph Harris, London, ca. 1750.



The Harpsichordmaker is open Sunday (11:30-5:00), Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

*Joiner* – The Joiner is open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

*Leather Breeches Maker* – The Leather Breeches Maker is open Thursday through Sunday.

**Masonry** – This week in the Brickyard the crew is reveling in this cooler weather after quite a bit of heat in the previous weeks. As we continue our production, we've also changed to a bigger mold intended for the powder magazine. This change in brick size required a bit of a learning curve as changes in mold size often do, which we will see again later in the summer. Currently the joiners are working on what will be the third brick of the summer, a coping brick mold which will be for the magazine wall.



The Brickyard is open Daily, weather permitting.

**Military Programs** – Military Interpretation at the Guardhouse is open Daily.

***Milliner and Mantua-maker*** – The last few weeks have been very busy at the Margaret Hunter Shop! Mistress Janea and Intern Ishbel have done some great work on reverse engineering new construction styles for 18th century jackets, aided by a trip to collections to examine a few originals with Neal Hurst. Janea has also finished her new white cotton bedgown, which has already seen a great deal of use in the recent warm weather, while Journeywoman Rebecca is working on the same style of jacket for Apprentice Emma at the engravers.



We have also been busy with planning meetings for our 2024 [Symposium on Historical Dress: Collections, Collectors and Collaborations](#). Everyone is welcome and encouraged to submit papers, not to mention to visit the shop in the meantime to ask about what we are plotting and planning!



Apprentice Kate has been working simultaneously on some of her Apprenticeship and Professional Development goals by taking on a few different stay-making projects. This week she patterned and made a pair of baby stays. Our shop had a pair- originally made as a reproduction of Rhode Island originals by Apprentice Doris several years ago- though many years of handling and examination have left them fairly worn out. Practicing taking patterns from items in the shop is a critical part of our apprenticeship process as it helps teach how to examine, study, and notate the details of extant items we are studying; Kate immediately put that knowledge to use in her study of a 1790s pair worn by Anne Van Cortlandt Van Rensselaer.

The Milliner and Mantua-maker is open Wednesday through Sunday.

**Musket Range** – This week at the Musket Range we replaced our old tarp with a new one. This is one of our yearly tasks at the range. We had help from Alex from Military Programs and Justin our fearless leader. We would like to thank them for the extra hands! The new tarp will be welcome on not only rainy days but also provides shade for the upcoming Dog days of August. We continue to operate at capacity and look forward to our new hire whose first day will be August 13th. After training we will be able to open to six shooters per session. The Musket Range is open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday with sessions at 9:30am, 11am, 1:30pm, and 3pm.



**Printer** – The Printer is open Sunday through Thursday.

*Shoemaker* – TVictoria is midway through a pair of slippers for Josh Graml of the Masonry Trades. She is also working on building up a last for her first pair of turn shoe pumps. Tyler is at the same point with a pair of slippers for stock. Nicole is closing uppers for a pair of fine pumps for Mark Hutter of the Tailor Shop. This will be the last pair of shoes needed to completed before she begins the boot making portion of her apprenticeship. Val is starting the second of a pair of shoes for Ron Carnegie, who portrays the later Washington. The shop is gearing up for our filming which will be this coming Tuesday. The Shoemaker is open Sunday and Tuesday through Thursday.

*Silversmith* – The Silversmiths have been busy as ever working through their list of commissions and retail restocks.

Megan has been busy planishing her matching mugs and chasing her tray.





Jacob has been busy making trade silver and lent a hand in pumping the bellows while Chris poured a gold ingot.



Chris poured a gold ingot that will be drawn into wire for rings.



**Bobbie has been working tirelessly on the 42 medallions.**



**Preston is continuing work on the large bowl as well as several smaller bowls, he recently finished a Gurney bowl.**



**George has been working on Hanoverian and Old English Teaspoons.**



**George and Chris also had the chance to visit The Chrysler Museum of Art to study the Norfolk Mace, the only existing pre-Revolutionary symbol of civic authority of its kind in the US.**



**The Silversmith is open Sunday through Friday.**

***Tailor*** – The Tailor is open Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday.

***Tin Plate Worker*** – Steve is back from a two-week research trip to London and Derby, partially funded by a Mary and Donald Gonzales Field Experience Fund grant. The trip was a great opportunity to meet interesting people, visit museums and of course, being in the presence of artifacts and works of art he had only known in print (or virtually) until now. The focused research in the tinsplate work trade was invaluable. The formidable quantity and quality of museums also offered a window into various periods of history but with a focus on the 18th century.

“From my hotel in South Kensington, I was able to simply walk to great museums like The Victoria & Albert and with a bit more steps, even the Queen’s Gallery. Because a good part of any day is spent moving around, and notwithstanding the threat of rail strikes, I also took advantage of a very efficient public transport system. Here are the highlights of this trip:

On the 18th, went to the Guildhall Centre/Guildhall Galleries/City Centre Identified paintings and objects review/Historic architectural review Collections Guildhall and City History Exhibit and then meeting with Master Erica Stary of The Worshipful Company of Tinsplate Workers Alias Wire Workers and Reverend Jeremy Crossly (Lord Mayor’s Chaplain and Tinsplate Workers’ Guild Chaplain). We examined items and architecture/transformation of St. Margarets Lothbury, a Christopher Wren designed church and the Tinsplate Workers Guild Church.



19th, Wallace Collection, British Museum and Sir John Soane’s House. 20th, examined important tinsplate objects (lanterns, paintings and speaking trumpets) at the storage location for the National Maritime Museum. On the 21st, Caird Library for a first examination of the Woolwich Arsenal “tin shop” “charge making” watercolour. This was one of the most important goals of this trip because we base many details of our recreated shop on this unique image. 22nd to 24th was mostly taken with museum visits: V&A, Tate, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Museum of Natural History but also Guildhall Library Research for the History of Tinsplate work and Workers Guilds/apprenticeship system. On the 24th I meet with both Master Erica Stary and Master David Mortlock of The Worshipful Company of Wheelwrights for a visit of the Ironmongers’ Hall. July 25th Heritage Crafts Association symposium in the morning and Installation Dinner for Master John Swain at the Mansion House (Lord Mayor’s residence) in the evening. On this occasion, I was admitted as a Freeman in The Worshipful Company of Tinsplate Workers alias Wire Workers. The Company received its charter from Charles II in 1670.



July 26th started with a visit to the National Maritime Museum / Queen's House and to the Caird Library for a second examination of the Woolwich Arsenal "tin shop" watercolour.

The 27th Derby / Museum of Making to see their efforts to revive tinsmithing in the UK.

Tinsmithing went from extinct to endangered last year and the workshops at the Museum of Making are an effort in making the technique known to makers.

-Exhibition of works by Joseph Wright of Derby

The last museum visit on the 28th was at the Buckingham Palace-Queens' Gallery and the Special Exhibit "Dressing the 18th century." The Tin Plate Worker is open Tuesday through Saturday.

*Weaver, Spinner, and Dyer* – We have finally refined our indigo into a shelf stable and usable dye! The 13lbs of raw indigo plants condensed down to .8oz of powdered dye. Judging by our calculations, this means that our processed indigo is around 40% pure. This fits with 18th century primary source procedure! As with any new endeavor we know what we'd like to change with future batches, but we're pleased with the results overall. The Weaver is open Sunday, and Thursday through Saturday. It will be open on Monday for two Workshops ONLY.



*Wheelwright* – Last week we said Godspeed to our intern Ralph. He hit the ground running and didn't stop until the end. Thanks Ralph. Keep in touch. The Wheelwright is open Sunday through Thursday.



*Wigmaker* – Hello from the land of hair! We have been kept busy with maintenance these last couple weeks, which is good, as it means all those wigs that have suffered through the Summer heat on their wearers' heads so far are getting some much-needed TLC. Edith and Debbie have created the outline to a new wig for Robert W. to replace a wig that needs to be retired and will be getting help from JI Alexa and Intern Stella. Everyone has been working on maintenance and the hand knotting of cauls. Stella completed her hairpiece and Edith has been helping her style her hair each morning, using the piece. As always, please feel free to reach out to us for any hair related needs or questions and stay hydrated out there!



The Wig Shop is open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

*The Mechanick's Adviser* is a publication of the Colonial Williamsburg Department of Historic Trades & Skills.

**Editor:** Ted Boscana

**Contributors:** Blacksmith – Broadus Thompson; Cabinetmaker – Bill Pavlak; Engraver – Lynn Zelesnikar; Farmer – Ed Schultz; Gardener – Eve Otmar; Masonry – Madeleine Bolton; Shoemaker – Val Povenelli; Silversmith – Megan Cantwell; Weaver, Spinner, and Dyer – Pamela Russo ; Wheelwright – Paul Zelesnikar