

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

April 2, 2021

Apothecary – A-ha moments, those happy discoveries in better understanding your computer, discovering a lost process of the past, or an 18th-century quote that surprises you. One A-ha moment for Sharon and me many years ago was the discovery that 18th-century professional medical books do not attribute the cause of any disease to the ancient theory of the four humors. (This was an old theory dating back to at least the 2nd century, A.D., that was based on the belief that the body had four humors, which were black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. It was believed that disease could be explained in terms of an imbalance of the humors.) Unfortunately, today this theory is still featured in books and online when discussing 18th-century health issues. One does not often run across an 18th-century doctor critiquing this old theory. I was surprised to read the following written in a 1740s medical dictionary by Dr. Robert James [1703? - 1776]:

“The Antients, [sic] who were Strangers to the Circulation of the Blood, assigned various, though absurd and unsatisfactory proximate Causes of Deliriums. Thus some of them accounted for them from an Exsudation [sic] of the black Bile.”

In reference to deliriums, he mentions that they can occur during a fever. If, however, there is not a fever, and the delirium continues for a long period of time and happens after a melancholic state (characterized by symptoms of serious depression), then this particular type of delirium is called madness. So, in a nutshell, ancient Roman physicians believed that black bile was a factor in causing mental health issues. Dr. James does not completely dismiss insights from his ancient predecessors and quotes Hippocrates (circa 460 – 370 B.C.) about the brain:

“...the Brain is the most noble Part of the Body, which, tho’ in a manner inconceivable by us, the wise and bountiful Parent of Mankind Species has made the common Receptacle or Repository of the Soul, the Genius, the Fancy, the Memory, and the external Senses.”

Hippocrates had an artistic writing style. If anyone is curious and wants bibliographic info for the above, let us know.

We continue working on our career track and our site records too. We are on the schedule for programs at the Hennage starting this month and eventually for a day at the Gallery. Happy Easter!!

The Apothecaries will be presenting a program at the Hennage on Sunday, April 4th at 4:30pm, and will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Tuesday.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – The past week has seen the Shop bustling with activity, as ever. Aislinn has been hammering heel rims, calipers, and pricking irons, a kind of layout tool for Leatherworkers. Alex has continued forging out hoes, filing hinges, and adjusted some wheel boxes for Apprentice Wheelwright Mike’s hand cart. Broadus has been working on the feet for cooking pans, called spiders, as well as froes. Ken has been forging plane irons and cooking utensils with great intensity, filing the latter to perfection. Mark has fitted together parts for his andirons and finished fixing his hacksaw. Owen, for his part, has been recycling material and producing holdfasts. A wide variety of work, to be sure, but it all falls well at the foot of the anvil.

The Blacksmiths will be at the Armoury Daily.

Tinsmith – This week at the Armoury Tin Shop, the Spring-Break surge of visitors reminded us of the good old pre-COVID-19 days' crowds. We are setting up again at the Mary Stith House Yard (weather permitting) to interpret while making some inventory to send to Prentis Store, such as gill cups, porringers, mugs, and tinderboxes. We are also making a 5-gallon bucket with its lid for the Blacksmiths at Mount Vernon. Albeit not frequent, orders from outside of the Foundation are usually from institutions with similar programs to ours needing good reproductions to support the quality of their interpretation. The large container will hold oil for quench-hardening steel such as in the making of edged tools. Because our material comes in standard 18th-century sizes that are shorter than the circumference and height of the bucket, the body was pieced together from six panels. This bucket requires seven sheets of tinplate in all.

The Tinsmith will be at the Armoury Tuesday – Saturday and will be presenting a program at the Hennage on Tuesday, April 6th at 4:30pm.



iPhone Photo: Jenny Lynn

Anthony Hay Shop

Cabinetmaker – This week, the Cabinetmakers have made progress in various interesting things. John finished off a trio of petite boxes for storing various sundries. He has also been practicing cutting custom moldings on the four sides of a board for his tabletop. Jeremy has gotten the lion's share of the drawer work done on the apothecary chest, which puts us within sight of finishing the piece. Bill has stolen some time at the bench to get some support structure done on his writing table and has recently helped with some filming at the Joinery.

The Cabinetmakers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Wednesday.





Harpsichord-Makers – In the Harpsichord corner, we marked the marvelous occasion of Ed’s 38th work anniversary this week. We are happy to have him as a colleague and appreciate all his hard work, dedication, and expertise – can’t imagine the Harpsichord corner without him! We’ve been continuing our work on the case assembly and have been taking advantage of the stream to relax the wood’s fibers so we can bend the liner for the bentside. We are getting ready to work on marking out the keys to cut them into levers. Stay tuned for more!

The Harpsichord-makers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Saturday.



Brickmaker – This week the Brickmakers put some finishing touches on the cob oven at the Anderson Armoury. Some adjustments had to be made to the opening, but once the clay has dried the oven will be fully operational. Our next project will be to color wash the Grissel-Hay kitchen. We are currently waiting on a shipment of pigment and once that has arrived, we’ll get to work. Kenneth has extensively experimented with different 18th-century color wash recipes and now we will get the chance to apply it on a larger scale. On Thursday, Kenneth gave a presentation at the Hennage about the aesthetic styles of 18th-century brick architecture. On Friday and Saturday this week, the Brickmakers will be at the Carpenter’s Yard making our famous pine tar.

Carpenter – The Carpenters continue to build hay feeders for our Colleagues in Coach & Livestock. They are framed out of pine and riven oak, and you’ll soon see them out in the pastures around the Historic Area.

We are also delighted to have received a new handcart from the Wheelwrights, which will be immensely useful in carrying tools and materials around the yard and around town. We are putting a pine tar finish on the cart to protect it from the weather, figuring a fancy paint job for a working cart like this would be a bit overblown for simple, humble Tradesmen such as ourselves. Plus, we can never get the flames and racing stripes to look just right...

The Carpenters will be in the Carpenter Yard Daily, weather permitting.



Colonial Garden – With Spring finally here, the Gardeners have been very busy weeding the beds and pathways and preparing for the warmer weather. Our lovely potted tulips have been moved out into the Garden and have begun to bloom, the anemones continue to put on a colorful display, and the peach and nectarine trees are blooming a brilliant pink. We have begun blanching endive, a process that involves putting an upturned flowerpot over the plant to deprive it of sunlight for about two weeks. This prevents chlorophyll, the cells that give plants their green color but also a bitter flavor, from forming in the leaves, resulting in white leaves that are sweeter tasting. New hurdles have been installed to replace the old ones beneath the cherry laurel tree. Our winter radishes have been harvested and sent to the Williamsburg Inn, making room for our white potatoes to go into the ground. There are two methods for potato planting that we practice. One is to dig, plant, and mound, the other is the same except the potatoes are surrounded by a layer of straw before the soil is mounded over them. Last year, we did one row in each style, and the row without straw resulted in

more potatoes, but the row with straw resulted in larger potatoes. We are repeating the two different style rows again this year to see if the results remain the same. Our Intern helped dig the trenches, plant the seed potatoes, and scatter straw, before mounding the soil over them. Several of our summer seeds have germinated in the second hot bed. We are looking forward to the last frost so that we can plant out the spring and summer seedlings!

The Gardeners will be in the Colonial Garden Daily, weather permitting.



Keizerskroon (Dutch for imperial crown) Tulip



Peach Blossom



Placing straw over potatoes before mounding soil

Engravers – The Engravers this week are back in the swing of things. A return to printing – Finally! - and catching up on getting our class proposals ready for next year. The ideas include designing monograms and a scrimshaw class.

The Gallery visits have been great. It is so nice to see more and more Guests. William has been working hard on moving forward in his apprenticeship. He has been running test prints on a recently finished copperplate. This is the point of looking closely to make improvements in cuts needed and any cleanup and burnishing to do. It is a satisfying part of the copperplate process. Up to this point, the Engraver has been

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looking at a reverse image the whole time. The perspective really changes when it is printed. It is a whole new design. Next week should bring us more test printing and a return to learning lettering. The ole' ABCs to us is our bread and butter. Monograms, cyphers, inscription, Script, Roman, Old English, and more. Lettering will be a constant through the entire apprenticeship. The test of an Engraver's ability is not ornament. It is possible to hide lots of mistakes or "happy accidents" in there. Lettering holds a lot of discipline and rules. No room for mistakes.

We are looking forward to a busy weekend. We hope everyone has a wonderful Easter and Spring Break.

The Engravers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Friday.



Foodways – This week, Historic Foodways enjoyed the beautiful weather and the significant increase in Guests while cooking at the Public Armoury and the Governor's Palace. Barbara made some excellent Chelsea Buns at the Armoury, which boosted morale all around the site. Frank demonstrated some beautiful pastry work on an Apple Pie at the Governor's Palace (pictured below). Brendon and Megan learned how to make

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Cut and Laid Tarts and did some seasonal pickling. We have started planning which recipes we will use for our upcoming beer brewing on April 11th.

Foodways will be at the Armoury on Sunday and Monday.



Foundry – The Foundry cleaned up another 500 musket balls for the Range and drilled Harpsichord hinges.

The Founder will be at the Armoury on Tuesday.



Gunsmith – This week at the Gunsmith, we have been working on odds and ends in our smith Shop while our building has been closed for maintenance. Darrin has been helping Brad forge lock parts, mainly lock

plates and steels/batteries/frizzens. Darrin forged out some tumbler blanks and bridle blanks for the pistol locks, while Richard helped a little boy with his Toy rifle.

The Gunsmiths will open on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.



Historic Farming – The tobacco season began today with the burning of wood on the seed bed to kill weed seeds. The tobacco seed is mixed with ash and then spread on the carefully chopped and smoothed soil. Thus began the 13-month crop. It's called this because by the time that a seed bed was planted, they were finishing up packing (prizing) hogsheads of the previous year's crop for the shipment to England.

The Farmer will be at Prentis Field Tuesday through Saturday.



Burning wood on the seed bed to kill weed seeds.



The seedbed planted and ready to go.

Joinery – This week, the Joiners were taught the basics of glass-cutting over on the modern side of town by Carpenter Foreman Bill Selk. The dormer window needs eight pieces of glass, while the Saunders House project will require a total of *seventy-five* pieces, so the Apprentices will have plenty of time to practice. The glass for the dormer window needs to be historically accurate, which made the process a little bit more difficult. Period glass has defects and imperfections that can disrupt the straight lines the cutting knife leaves behind. Once the line has been scribed, a bit of steady pressure should be able to separate the glass along the line. However, if the scribe has run right through an imperfection in the glass (say, a large bubble or area where the glass pooled more thickly), it can shatter or lead to the break running in an undesirable direction. This is less likely in the hands of an experienced worker, but for three Apprentices? All eight pieces of glass for the dormer are ready to go, but there were many unusable shards by the end of the process. We would like to note that none of this was due to Bill's instruction; he was a fantastic teacher, and we are exceptionally grateful that he was willing to take time out of his day to help us. Enjoy these pictures of Peter and Bill sizing the glass, and the Apprentices learning the basics of using a glass-cutting scribe.

The Joiners will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Wednesday.





Milliner and Mantua-marker – We’re adjusting to our new Saturday home at the Raleigh Tavern and are thoroughly enjoying introducing Guests to the 18th-century version of traveling dress. Our green silk Brunswick is progressing, with the back pleated panel and sleeve extensions finished and the petticoat nearly so. The shapes of the sleeves and front of the jacket have been taken from our “pattern” gown (since we’re still not cutting directly from the body yet!), and we’ve also begun hemming the trim. Alexa, who is serving as our “customer,” couldn’t resist trying on the pieces, just to see how they’re all coming together!





Dolley Madison's velvet gown is also nearly finished. We were able to do a quick fitting with Michelle last week, and the sleeves and bodice have been pinned to size and are ready to be stitched into place. The hem also needs to be faced with an inexpensive silk to protect it, as it has a train in back, and then it will be time to attach the bodice to the skirt and call it complete!

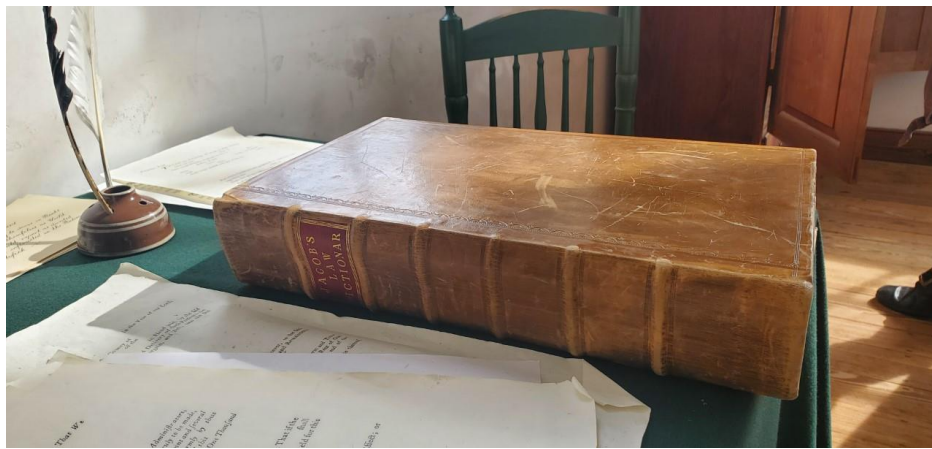
The Milliners will be at the Weaver Shop on Friday and the Raleigh Tavern on Saturday.

Music – Greetings from The Governor's Musick! Spring is in the air with its changeable weather, and at least one of our brains (this writer's) is a little addled trying to keep up with all the changes coming our way and the logistics they entail for a group with disparate schedules and rehearsal needs. We are going to start having a Trades & Skills presence at the Raleigh Tavern next week, which we are all excitedly preparing for. We're trying to bring some respite to the guests in the long lines at the Governor's Palace, setting ourselves on the kitchen porch of the Robert Carter House and providing a little entertainment to those hardy souls who were waiting to get a peek at the lodgings of His Majesty's Representative in the Commonwealth. We've been asked to provide music on April 18th as part of the CW Light Show in the Palace Gardens coming up. We've added Saturdays to our Museum presence. Amy and Karol are being approved to perform! Best wishes to all—

The Musicians will be at the Art Museum on Wednesday and the Raleigh Tavern on Friday.

Printer and Bookbinder – This past Thursday, the Bookbinders were at the Raleigh Tavern with an assist from the Printing staff; yet before the day got too busy, Peter and Barbara went on a treasure hunt to the Clerk's room in the Courthouse.

The Printers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Sunday, while the Bookbinders will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Thursday.

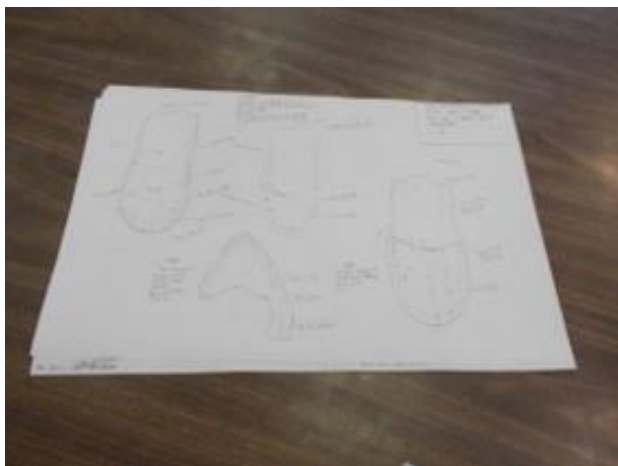


Public Leather Works –

The Leatherworkers will be at the Armoury on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday.

Shoemaker – Nicole is starting to fix the shoes of Palace cook Barbara. Val has finished Tinsmith Joel's shoes and will begin repairs on those for Robert Weathers. Rob continues work on the shoes for the Joiner Amanda, and Alexa has just pasted in the linings on some slippers. Last Monday, the Shop went to Colonial Williamsburg's Archeology Lab, where we met with Tamara Eichelberger. The purpose of the visit was to go over the shoes found at the Custis Well, which Tamara is currently researching. The shoes from the Custis Well were found during previous digs at the site and are being reexamined as part of the current Custis Square Project. Below are some pictures taken on our visit. We shared drawings that our Shop has taken of the Custis well shoes and went over shoemaking in general and gave our thoughts regarding the discovered shoe remnants. Some of the shoes showed evidence of repair and leather offcuts have been found. There is the possibility that some shoe repair may have been done on the site, perhaps by the enslaved. We enjoyed the visit, and with Tamara's knowledge, left with a better understanding of the Custis site. We also made a quick trip to Collections, where we were able to look at one of Colonial Williamsburg's most recent acquisitions, the famous black pearl of the Borgias.

The Shoemakers will be at the Armoury on Wednesday through Saturday.



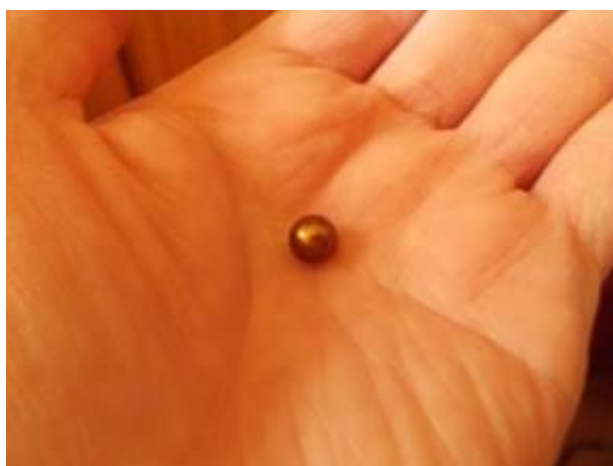
Schematic of Custis well shoe fragments by Rob.



Tamara, Nicole, and Rob discussing the Custis Well finds.



Remnants of a girl's shoe found at the Custis site.



Tailor – The Tailors can now be found 9am-5pm at the Weavers' Shop on Sundays and Mondays, and 10am-5pm at the Museum on Wednesdays. This past week, Apprentice Tim finished a pair of trousers and an under jacket for one of the Actor Interpreters. Journeyman Mike and Master Mark interviewed applicants for their summer Intern position. The successful candidate will start in May.

The Tailors will be in the Weaver Shop on Sunday and Monday.

Wheelwright – An exciting week at the Wheelwright Shop. Joel continues with the horse cart project. With successful completion of the hand cart for the Carpenter Yard, Michael has advanced to level 3 in his apprenticeship! Level 3 involves design and construction of his first pair of wheels. Come by and congratulate Michael on his accomplishment!

The Wheelwrights will be at the Armoury on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Wigmaker – Mr. Wythe has tried on his new wig, and it is nearly ready to be worn on the street! Alexa and Madeline, our student volunteer from William & Mary, have completed weaving the middle rows for the Marquis's new wig. We have begun caul (base) construction and hope to have that completed within the next few weeks. Edith continues to work on her Lady's Bun while at the Gallery on Thursdays and is in the process of lacing the outline tape. Lacing is a series of stitches to anchor the outline tape in place so we can remove the small nails currently holding the twill tape. As we enter the busier... and warmer!... seasons, we will continue to see our maintenance work increase as well, but we're happy to report that we've selected our

Summer Intern and look forward to working with them starting in June. As always, feel free to request a wig or hairpiece through your supervisor.

The Wigmakers will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Sunday and the Art Museum Gallery on Thursday.



* Photos are of the woven hair and the beginning of the outline process.

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

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