

"THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER"

December 11, 2020

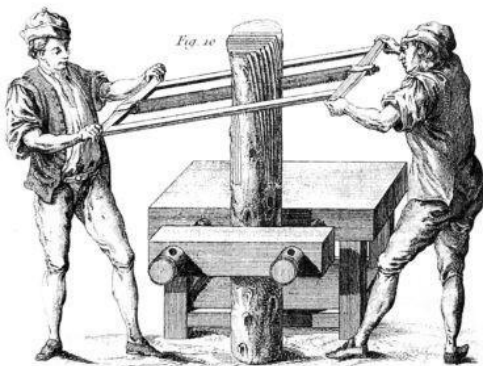
Apothecary - "This week, the Apothecary did their first Livestream on-site. We want to thank the Joiners for helping us out at the Raleigh Tavern so both Sharon and Robin could participate."

Armoury:

Blacksmith - "The Blacksmiths continue going strong. Though they miss many of their fellow Tradesmen who came onto the Armoury site in summer, they are still there for guests to see every day of the week. This week, Ken has been involved in quite a range of work: repairing a clock jack from the Randolph Kitchen with the aid of Journeyman Wheelwright Paul, who gave the pulley system the splice of life and brought it back into use. He's also been making holdfasts for some of the woodworkers and added some extra material to the axle of a cart the Wheelwrights are building, extending its length by about two inches. Elsewhere in the Shop, Aislinn has been making buckles and a leather stamp for the Artificers and continuing her work on the rack-wing calipers. Owen has finished attaching handles to a tub made by the Coopers and resumed work on his pot handles. Broadus has been forging up a second trammel and filing up his thumb latches, and Alex has been working on farming hoes, finishing up his forks, and making some staples for building projects in town. Alex also had the opportunity to talk at length with Historic Farmer Ed about hoes and their use, further improving his forgings. As always, all's well that falls well at the foot of the anvil."

Brickyard - "This week, the Brickmakers started prepping for our series of presentations at the Hennage this winter. That meant photographing a lot of brick minutiae! We also kept pulling down the kiln, although the sleety weather earlier in the week called that off for a bit. With our distillation tube from the Tinsmiths, we made some more tar with the hope of capturing turpentine, too. We've learned a lot so far, and a few tweaks ought to get us there soon. Thanks to Steve at the Tinsmiths for fashioning us our nifty copper tube!"

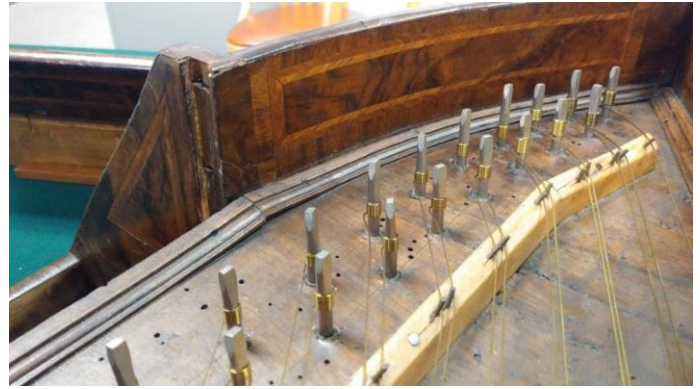
Cabinetmaker - "In the Cabinet Shop, the Harpsichord Makers have been making steady progress with the new spinet. In particular, the veneer decoration is starting to come together. In the period, we could've bought much of the decoration already prepared. For us today, we have to make all of the materials and then apply them."



For the small bentside cheek, materials were cut and then laid out. Using hide glue, the veneer decoration could then be glued to a backing material used to add thickness to the cheek wall. The decoration goes on in steps which makes the whole process go quickly and smoothly.



We have been fortunate to visit with the original Cawton Aston instrument in Collections on several occasions to study the décor. (Thank you, Amanda Keller!) For comparison, below is the original cheek décor and instrument and our 2020 version side by side. Stay tuned for the rest of the keyboard cheeks and nameboard decorations, which are coming soon.”



Colonial Garden - *"This week brought very chilly temperatures and even a few snowflakes to the Colonial Garden. Starting a large fire in the mornings has become a daily chore so that we have a place to warm our hands while working. The Gardeners are always thinking at least one season ahead; and this week, we placed orders with several seed merchants for next season's Garden and planted our tulip bulbs in pots for the spring. The Coopers have completed a set of wooden tubs for our larger citrus and holly trees, and we picked up the tubs and brought them to the Garden. Our previous pair of wooden tubs were completely rotted and reached the end of their useable life this summer. Thank you to the Coopers and to the Blacksmiths, who installed the metal handles. We couldn't be happier with the results, and now they are awaiting a coat of paint."*



*Tulips bulbs planted in pots.
They will overwinter here and then be placed around the Garden as they bloom in the springtime.*



Frost on the outside of the bell glasses protecting our lettuce



Admiring our new citrus tubs from the Coopers

[Cooper](#) - The Coopers recently completed two tubs for the Colonial Gardens that will be used as planters, with an assist from the Blacksmiths in attaching the handles. We are also honored to have received the award for best decoration in the Trades category in this year's contest.





Engraver - “Things have been hectic in the Engraving Shop as a multitude of projects and events are all converging at once, but we have managed to steady on. Lynn, working on the fan project, has finished the second plate, which will be used to print the back paper of the fan. She has also completed some smaller orders that had been building up, and in between those has been working on the necessary paperwork and management requirements for registering William as an apprentice with the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry. Due to its former focus on modern production as opposed to interpretation, the Engraving Apprenticeship is considered a Registered Apprenticeship with the DOLI, and Lynn has been working on altering the requirements of the apprenticeship in order to maintain that status while incorporating the new interpretive aspects. William, meanwhile, has been plugging along down the list of required drawings, as well as digging deeper into several research projects (William Waddill, Hans Holbein the Younger, and Admiral Lord George Anson, to name a few.) He has also been expanding his tool collection by setting up a few new gravers and acquiring a new oil dish and some oil of wintergreen, a traditional cutting lubricant with the added benefit of an invigorating aroma. The Shop has also been preparing for our upcoming #TradesTuesday livestream on December 15th and assisting our woodworking colleagues with a short segment on work-holding as part of a presentation for the upcoming Woodworking Conference.”

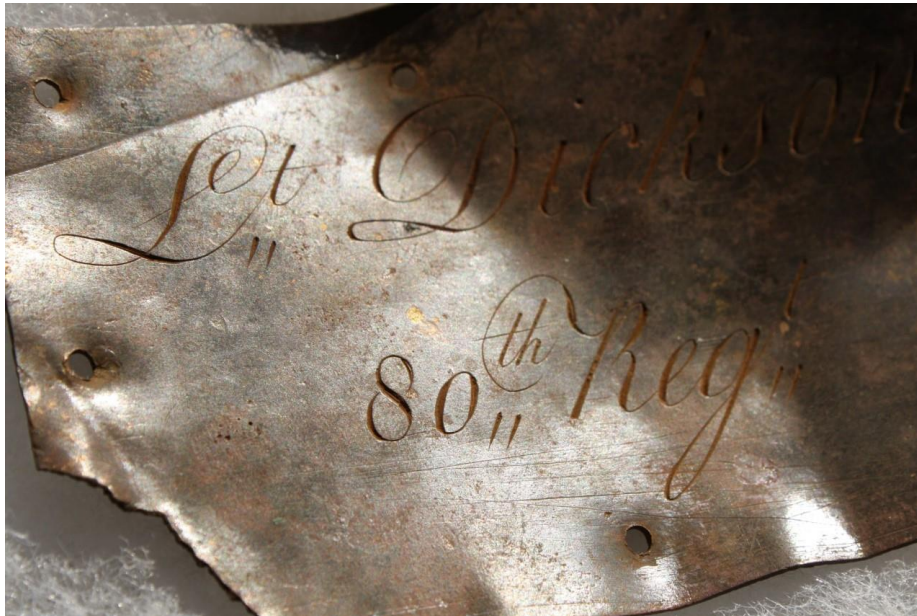
Gunsmith - “The Gunsmiths have transitioned to filing lately. Lots of filing. Probably the main tool of the Gunsmith, the file. Since it's been pretty chilly outside in the Smith Shop, it's good to have pieces to file on indoors. Darrin is shaping the two top jaw screws for his pistol locks, and Brad is working on a few lock plates. Filing the rough surfaces left from forging and getting the inside surfaces dead flat.



Historic Farming - "Ed is processing flax for the Weavers. The pulled plant is retted (rotted) in the early fall and broken and hackled to produce the fine 'line flax' shown below."



Military Programs - “This week, Josh has continued with his work on the 80th King's colour, adding in the regimental ornamentation based on the research we have found. Ian traveled to Gloucester to photograph an officers' trunk plate dug in 2018, as well as a few French regimental buttons found in the same site, and an English gun flint. Very soon, Military Programs will be adding programming in the Art Museum two to three days a week, at the ‘To Arm Against an Enemy’ exhibit on the bottom floor.”



Milliner and Mantua-maker - “We're now officially half-way through our wedding gown program, and progress has been steady and on-schedule thus far. Last Saturday, we cut and prepped the fronts of the gown, finished the sleeves and stomacher, and nearly completed the petticoat (just the waistband to go!). This week, Brooklyn has been tirelessly pinking yet more yards and yards of gown trim. This should be the last of it, so her hands - and our ears! - will finally get some rest. We'll begin arranging and attaching it all during this week's installment of the program on Saturday.



“All of the various millinery pieces that complete the “half-dress” outfit in our source portrait are also coming along quite nicely. Rebecca cut and stitched the figured silk cloak, copying its measurements and piecing details from a cloak she studied last year at the MFA in Boston. It’s lined in a very thin, semi-sheer silk and trimmed with an elaborate netted and looped trim that we’ve been experimenting with all week. After multiple attempts and much discussion and debate, we think we’ve finally landed on a technique and design that mirrors the portrait’s details as closely as possible with the materials we have at hand.

“Janea has (mercifully!) finished the excessively extravagant treble elbow ruffles, which are long enough to reach to the lady’s fingers. There are exactly nine yards of lace in the pair, which surprised even us when we calculated it in the end! The matching lace ‘collar’ (we have yet to determine its 18th-century name) has also been brought back to life, in spite of our personal feelings on this one particular piece of millinery...! Brooklyn generously modelled it to give a sense of how it will be worn. Anyone care to venture a guess as to the number of yards of lace that went into this piece?!”



That’s 4.5 yards of lace...and that’s only half of the pair!



The lace collar in development, modelled oh-so-elegantly by Brooklyn.

Public Leather Works - “Good afternoon, friends and neighbors. The first full week of December is nearly in the books, and The Agents of Leather have their collective noses to the proverbial grindstone. Apprentice Agent Andrew has completed and delivered the first of the valises to the Tinsmiths and is well into the second. Journeyman Agent Jan is working on his leather breeches and is still hopeful for a completion before the new year. Master Agent Jay has been directing traffic and has found time to tie up some loose ends regarding Operation Double Secret Probation as well as several other bench projects. Perhaps most exciting of all, however, is the brainstorming for potential digital content. Here are just a few of the ideas we have come up with:

- An all-Trades song and video in the vein of the 1985 Chicago Bears ‘**Superbowl Shuffle**’
- A series of videos discussing the pros and cons of various types of leather featuring interviews with the animals themselves
- A reality TV series combining ‘**Undercover Boss**’ and ‘**Wife Swap**’ in which Masters of various Trades swap places with other Trades. For example: The Master of the Weaver Shop swaps with the Master Gunsmith and each spend a week trying to learn the other’s Trade. Or whole Shops swap for a week.
- An 18th-century Spelling Bee (with no standardized spellings, no one can lose!)
- ‘**Trades Jeopardy**’: Three contestants from three different Trades compete in a trivia contest. Hosted by Beth Kelly or Cliff Fleet.

These are just a few of the tantalizing ideas coming from the Public Leather Works. Weigh in and let us know which of these is your favorite, and let's see if we can't make it happen!!! Until next week, this is the Agents of Leather signing off!”

Shoemaker - "Our shoe maintenance tip was going to be 'Cleaning and Conditioning' this week, but we've had some questions about repair work, so we'll address that first:

'When to Have Them Repaired'

Repair work is key to getting a long return from your handmade shoes. The simpler the repair, the faster we'll typically have them back to you. When you walk holes in the soles, don't wait until the hole is large to bring them in - especially if the hole is near the edge because you might end up walking through the interior stitching, which takes longer to repair. If the top starts to separate from the rest of the shoe, bring them in. Heels are often the first thing to need repaired. If you've worn through the first layer of your heel - even if it's only in one spot - it's time to bring them in. Don't wait until there is a dramatic visible slant to your heel. If you find that your heels are grinding down particularly quickly, we can add hobnails or iron rims to slow down the wear. Keeping your shoes conditioned and not leaving them by fires or heaters goes a long way towards preventing tears on the tops of your shoes, but tears do happen so please bring them to us before those tears get bigger. The work we do and the surfaces we walk on do a number on our shoes. Being proactive with bringing in your shoes for minor repairs saves us time in the long run, so we can continue to make new pairs. When in doubt about needing repairs, just ask us, and we'll be happy to take a look. Eventually, your shoes will get to the point that they aren't worth repairing anymore. The sooner we know, the sooner you're on our list to get a replacement pair.

Just a reminder, if your shoes need to be fixed this winter/spring, drop them off at the Shoe Office (Greenhow Brick Office basement). They don't need to go through CDC at this time if they've already been issued to you. Please tie them together and put a label with your name and contact information inside the shoes.

Here is an example of an extreme repair that our Shop just finished:





Silversmith – “This second week of December has been focused on the re-arrangement of workspaces within the Golden Ball Kitchen as Master George has turned carpenter, preparing and building a modified workstation to better accommodate the Shop’s changing needs in response to Covid-19 safety precautions.



Interpretation continues on Mondays at the Raleigh Tavern and Wednesdays at the Art Museum. Journeyman Chris has continued work on her small teapot while Journeyman Bobbie recently finished the top rim and feet for her salt cellar. Apprentice Parker has been laying out the gridwork for piercing a punch strainer.”

Tailor – “Work began this week on a fine suit for a fine gentleman. The customer is thrilled that he will soon have a suit made by CW Tailors. Journeyman Michael finished a pair of trousers and a waistcoat that will make their way to the Museum for exhibition. Apprentice Tim finished a wool flannel under-waistcoat that will certainly keep its wearer toasty warm this winter.”

Weaver – “As the Weavers are pushing forward on both our looms in front of the public, behind the scenes, we are already deep in preparations for our next projects. Long before the first shuttle has ever been thrown, a Weaver will have already planned out every last aspect of a project so that there will be no unpleasant surprises. The length and width of

the warp needs to be predetermined, and the calculations need to be done before yarn can be wound onto tubes that will eventually be put through our warping mill and become the warp itself. Any color variation such as you may find in a stipe or chech design are preprogrammed in this step. Once all the warp yarns have been wound around the back beam and placed on the loom, each individual yarn is pulled through a heddle to determine any texture or design that may be woven into a finished textile. The density of the project is locked in by the size reed the yarns are sleyed through, determining your thread count, or more accurately, your ends per inch. The Weavers call this the EPI. All of the mathematical calculations, planning, troubleshooting, and yarn ordering has to be done ahead of time. Next time you are in the Shop and see one of us behind the loom weaving, there is a pretty good bet that our minds are miles away! A Weaver is always preparing for the next project."

