

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

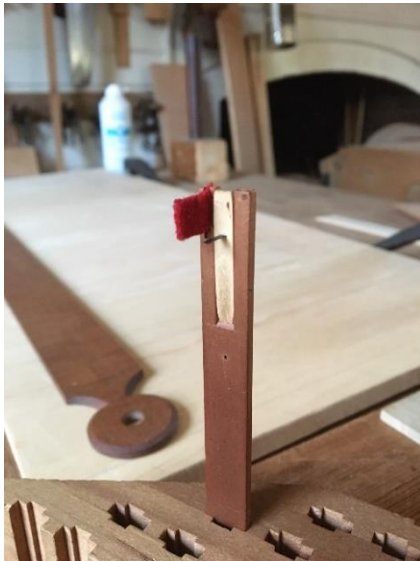
December 2, 2022

Anthony Hay Shop:

Cabinetmaker – John and Jeremy have wrapped up the final work on the Hay desk and bookcase reproduction. Jeremy applied the leather this week, which was provided by the Public Leather Works, and finished cutting and fitting the pine back boards. Writing surfaces were often covered with a wool baize material, or occasionally leather, in order to provide a slight cushioning when writing. It has been a while since anyone in the Cabinet Shop has applied leather to a writing surface, so Jeremy was sort of experimenting with the procedure, and it all seems to have gone quite well in the end. Now that the desk is completed, it's time to tally up the hours and materials to determine its sales price and start working on finding a home for it. John and Bill are continuing to study the Rhode Island knee-hole desk on display in the Art Museum in preparation for our conference next month. They have both begun pulling together material for creating demonstration pieces. Bill is ready to dive into some practice carving of the shells on the desk's block fronts, and John is just about ready to start assembling some bracket feet. More to come on both of their efforts in the coming weeks.



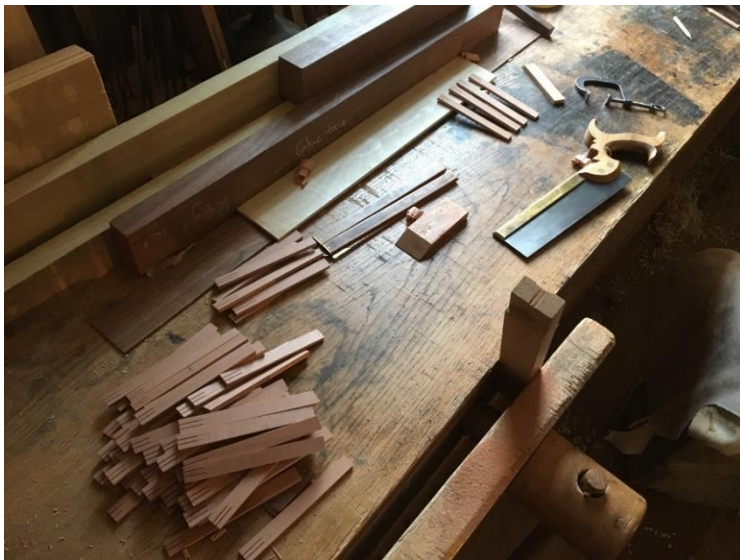
Harpsichord-maker – We have begun manufacturing parts for the new spinet based on the one made by William Harris. Already, having worked so long with the overall dimensions of parts based on the Aston spinet, everything now must be larger, and that takes some time to wrap our minds around. Always, we begin with making the jacks, the master part of the mechanism that plucks the strings via the keyboard. We need dozens of these parts, so we are in quantity manufacturing mode. Melanie has been cutting out dozens of little holly pieces that will become the pivot slips, and Ed is well into sawing out and shaping the pear wood forks that will hold the holly slips. We need sixty-one finished jacks, but we always make more just in case a mistake occurs. Mistakes never occur, right? Well ... Check out the pics here for our progress and enjoy a little bit of fun while we relieve the numbness of repetition. Come see us and see what we are starting.



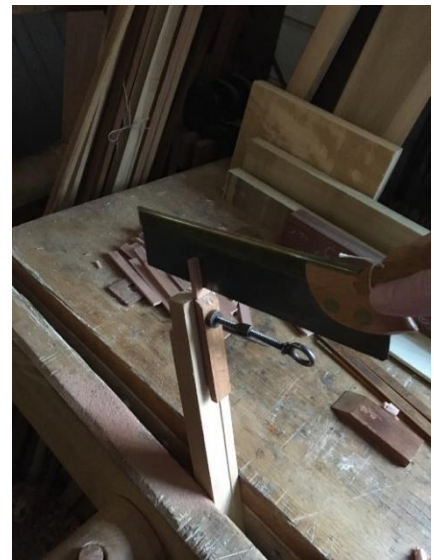
Complete sample jack



Preliminary hand saw cut for jack forks



Preliminary sawing of jack forks



Sawing jack forks



Pear wood jack Torii entrance gate for fun



Dozens of holly pivot slips in progress



Pivot slip tower

The Cabinetmaker and Harpsichord-maker are open Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Apothecary – The Apothecary Shop will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – We jolly smiths ring in the season at our anvils, turning cold iron warm and merry. The Journeymen, Mark and Aislinn, have put together our wreath, showcasing the first part of the sign bracket they have been working on for the last couple of months. Mark has got a heap of cleavers to sharpen for Foodways. Apprentices Alex and Josh have made hammers: Alex, a forging hammer for himself, and Josh, a very light little tapper for the Tinsmiths. Broadus wrapped up a pair of axle brackets for the Wheelwrights. And as always, all's well that falls well at the base of the anvil.





The Blacksmith Shop will be open Daily.

Tinsmith – The Tin Shop will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Brickmaker – The Brickyard will be open Sunday through Thursday, weather permitting.

Carpenter – The Carpenters will be at the new Historic Farming site, Ewing Field, Tuesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

Colonial Garden – With the weather cooling, there is a little more time to contemplate the Garden in its winter state. The placement of bell jars to protect plants on cold nights results in the singular sight of flowers under glass. The early setting of the sun allows for the counterpoint of our “lantern” lit against the dusk sky. A crisp and sunny morning picks out droplets of ice on the exposed (but cold hardy!) leaves.



The Garden on a chilly evening



Calendula officinalis



A "lantern" and *Lonicera sempervirens* f. *sulphurea*



Brassica oleracea

Foodways has also visited the Garden, as is their wont. Radishes, both German Bier and Spanish black varieties, have been taken away along with lettuce (Brown Dutch and White seeded), cardoon, sorrel, and Welsh onions. Even some sweet potatoes may have fallen into their basket!



Lactuca savita, *Cynara cardunculus*, and *Raphanus sativus*



Allium fistulosum, *Rumex acetosa*, *Ipomoea batatas*, and yet more *Raphanus sativus*

The Gardeners even took time between slug disposals (over two dozen this week!) to put together the holiday wreathes for the site.



Craftiness in progress



'Tis the season!

The Colonial Garden will be open Daily, weather permitting.

Cooper – Some assembly is still required, but the Coopers' decoration is getting close.



The Cooper Shop will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Engraver – This week in the Engraving Shop, William finished up the last of his inscription work on his plate and is now drawing the design for the cartouche that will go around the inscription. A new small plate has been set up for practice. It is the seahorse on the Bodleian Plate. This will make a great comparison to the sea horse William has already done. William has also set up our UPS access so that three custom orders can go out for shipping. Lynn is still setting up the Bodleian plate drawing, working on the Shop's Christmas wreath, and reading up on Mr. Hogarth as time allows.

The Engraving Shop will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Fifes & Drums – The Fifes and Drums Corps will be continuing their Field Music program on Tuesdays and Wednesdays through December 28th at 4:30pm. They will also be participating in the Yule Log Program, Grand Illuminations, the Community Tree Lighting, and the Christmas Guns, so there is plenty of music coming up soon!

Foodways – This week at the Palace Kitchen, Foodways kicked off with our final brew of the fall season. For this Porter-style ale, we were able to use the malted barley that our friend Andrea taught us how to toast in our oven during *Ales Through the Ages*. Having never used our own malt before, this was an exciting experiment in 18th-century brewing for all of us here at Foodways. The dark malt of the barley proved to have less sugars than we usually see from our malts when we brew, and the quantity of grain available was also less than we typically prefer. These factors seem to have caused the yeast to be less active than normal at the start of fermentation, so under Frank's expertise, we added additional sugars to the process, which will hopefully pick up the strength and quality of the ale. I suppose we shall see in a month if we were successful!

We also mounted the large task of moving Barbara's butchering block from the Anderson Armoury back to the Palace Complex in preparation for our butchering activities that will take place this month. With the block being made of several monstrously heavy blocks of wood that are able to hold a 125-pound hog as it is butchered, we needed additional backup in order to move the pieces. Fortunately, our friends down at the Wheelwrights offered to lend a much-appreciated hand (and hand cart) for the move. On Wednesday, in the rain and the cold, Joel from the Wheelwrights trudged up with a cart; accompanied by Barbara, Dom, and Abbey, they sacrificed their dry winter clothing to the soggy elements and successfully transported the block to the Palace. We cannot thank Joel and the entire Wheelwright Shop (as well as the Blacksmiths for housing the block the last few years) enough for helping us out despite the weather!

The Historic Foodways staff will be in the Palace Kitchen Sunday through Thursday.

Foundry – This week, we finished up our work that is headed to the Grand Illumination Auctions. All in all, we made twenty pewter spoons and two pewter tapersticks! Hopefully, they'll end up in the hands of some very happy Guests. This week also saw the finishing work begin on the drumhead tensioner hooks we cast for the Fifes & Drums Corps, so those are well underway. To finish out the week, Apprentice Leanne cast some bronze to make some extra keys for the Courthouse. The castings came out great thanks to excellent molds from Apprentice Drew and Leanne! Happy Holiday Season from us all at the Foundry!





The Foundry will be open Sunday through Wednesday, and Saturday.

Gunsmith – The Gunsmith Shop will be open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Historic Farming – We sorted and tied tobacco hands this week. Sometimes the tobacco doesn't cure quite right and has spots of green in the leaves. This is trash. Sometimes leaves will have a ragged edge or be worm-eaten, and it is trash. And sometimes it has a beautiful nutmeg brown color that makes it good. That is what sorting is all about. After sorting, the good leaves are tied into "hands," which are 4- to 6-leaf bundles tied on the stem. A healthy person between the ages of 18 and 45 could potentially tend to 10,000 tobacco plants. That's around 10,000-16,000 hands to be tied. See why they call it a "13-month crop!"



Sorting tobacco leaves



A leaf with good color



Apprentice Kevin Tobias' first hand of tobacco

Prentis Field will be open Tuesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

Joinery – The Joiners are keeping busy with various projects during the Holiday season. Brian is reproducing a section of a fluted pilaster from the parlor of Smith's Fort, which is located in Surry County, Virginia. He will present on the pilaster at CW's annual *Working in Wood* conference this coming January.

Peter and Scott are eagerly engaged in building their Journeyman projects. Peter is busy laying out parts to construct a copy of a vaulted arched doorway from Menokin, which was a Lee family home located in Warsaw, Virginia. Scott has constructed the case for the Eastern Shore corner cupboard he is building. He is currently working on parts for the face frame.

Laura is working on her second peg rail, which is one of her Apprentice projects. She is working on making pegs for it. She also made three beautiful Christmas wreaths to hang on the front of the Shop for the Holiday season. The wreaths include shavings and squares as decorative elements.



The Joinery will be open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Military Programs – Military Interpretation at the Guardhouse is open Daily. On Saturdays, December 3, 10, and 17, the Guardhouse will close at 4:45pm so that the staff can report can prepare for their part in the Grand Illuminations

Milliner and Mantua-maker – The Milliner and Mantua-maker will be open Sunday through Thursday.

Musket Range – The Musket Range is open Friday through Tuesday, with sessions at 9:30am, 11am, 1:30pm, and 3pm. The Range will continue to be open on its normal days throughout the Holiday season coming up, and it will not close over the winter.

Printer and Bookbinder:

Printing Office – This week we have been pasting notices onto the newly painted bulletin board at the Old Post Office. Guests can find many of these reproductions at Prentis Store.



The Printing Office will be open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Bindery – The Bookbindery will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Public Leather Works – The Public Leather Works staff will be working Sunday through Thursday.

Shoemaker – The Shoemakers will be working at the Public Leather Works Tuesday through Saturday.

Silversmith – Work continues as always at the Silversmith Shop. Megan has trimmed the excess material off the edge of her bowl and is now planishing it. Chris continues work on her tray and is filing the silver feet and the wire rim. Bobbie is laying out mote spoon designs and is going to pierce a miniature mote spoon soon. Preston is planishing his five-inch bowl and is raising more small, fluted bowls. George cast three ingots on Monday and is working on filing them and checking for defects. Megan and Bobbie are both transcribing the will of Ann Craig in order to see if James Craig is mentioned.



Megan's bowl



Chris' tray



Bobbie's mote spoons



Preston planishing his bowl



George sawing the rough edge off the ingot

The Silversmith Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Tailor – The Tailor Shop will be open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing – The Weaving Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Wheelwright – The Wheelwright Shop will be open Sunday through Thursday.

Wigmaker – Greetings from the Wig Shop! This past week, we finished up the items needed for the upcoming Christmas Ball(s) at the Palace. We're excited to see everyone in their finery! Edith has been working hard on a new knotted base for future use. Benton has begun the frizzing process for the hair to be used at the crown of his Brigadier wig. Debbie is settling into her new role as Master Wigmaker and has been working on maintenance to allow the Apprentices time to work on their projects.



The Wig Shop will be open Sunday through Thursday.

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

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