

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

March 25, 2022

Apothecary – Mark continues work on dental care. Margaret has been looking at post-war correspondence that has given us better insight into Dr. Galt's life after the war. Sharon continues with the site records and has found an unusual entry about paying a medical bill with over 100 pounds of sugar, and it was specified as being for the shop. There was a significant amount of sugar that was used in compounding medicines.

Robin has been going through over 40 years of notebooks, files, and notes. "This is my last update. I will be retiring next week. It has been wonderful working with all of you. I wish you the best. I brag on all of my fellow Trades colleagues. Every time we have needed a reproduction of one of our antiques, you always said yes that you could make it. The end result was beautifully done. You all are awesome! Take care." ~ Robin

The Apothecary Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Tuesday (open 9:00-12:00 and 2:00-5:00), Friday, and Saturday.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – Work carries on as busy as ever in the Anderson Blacksmith Shop. Ken has been working mostly on prepping for various Livestreams, but when he can get behind the anvil, he has been making a hammer poll belt axe. Mark approaches the finish line on the saw tiller, getting it bent into final alignment and fitting pins, as well as doing the finish work on a bowl adze. Aislinn has been making slide bolts a project with lots of fitting at the bench. Alex has been occupied with orders from Farmer Ed, broad hoes and soon a coulter for a plow. For Owen, he has rakes with so many tines, and Broadus works away at drawknives and hinges still. As always, all's well that falls well at the foot of the anvil.

You may have heard that our Shop caught fire (again). Luckily, it was quickly discovered and swiftly extinguished. No severe damage was done except to the shingles, those shingles seeming to be the culprit of these woes.

The Blacksmith Shop will be open Daily.



Tinsmith – In the Tin Shop, Jenny has been working on constructing chocolate pots and examining merchant records for her research paper. Steve has been working on cups for Prentis Store and filming for an upcoming Livestream about STEM. Joel has been making tinderboxes and cups and researching the workers of the Publick Armoury.

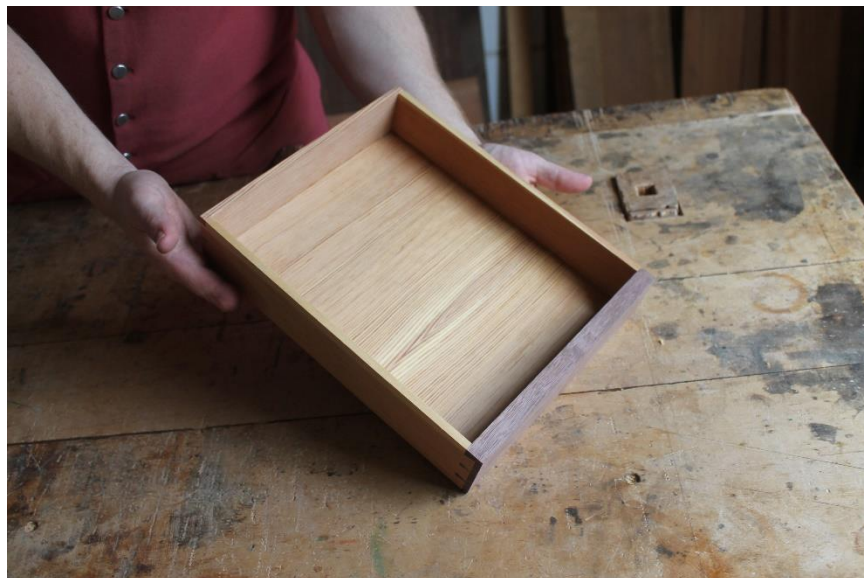
The Tin Shop will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Anthony Hay Shop:

Cabinetmaker – It’s been a busy week in the Shop as we grow accustomed to our new 7-day schedule. Jeremy continues work on the drawer bottoms of the small drawers in his desk gallery, which have black walnut drawer fronts, with the remainder being southern yellow pine. John is making headway on a new project of his, a six-legged drop leaf dining table out of mahogany. He’s been working on the off-set turned legs at the lathe after producing the central table box structure earlier. Bill is working on a frame for the carved plaque he recently finished, inspired by the Williamsburg Lodge 6 Masonic Master’s Chair. Jeremy is freshly back from a trip to MESDA in North Carolina for a conference he attended on scholarship. John has spent much of his research time reading a text on the mahogany trade in anticipation of a group Zoom meeting with the author later this month. Bill has spent his research time either planning our next conference or producing the “Trades Tuesday” Livestreams for the Trades Department.



Jeremy’s Desk



A drawer from Jeremy’s desk



Dining table



Legs for John's table



The foot on one of John's table legs

The Cabinetmaker and Harpsichord-maker Shop will be open Daily.

Brickmaker – This week for the Brickyard Crew saw the conclusion of our work at Bypass and the first steps into our new Yard as the major construction dissipates. Out at Bypass, Apprentice Nick received helpful pointers from his horse pals as they are quite eager to be able to see the fruits of our labor. Now that we have finished, they will have full use of their stables; but alas, we will miss their company.

Back in the soon-to-be Brickyard, we were joined by our pals the Carpenters who were eager to barrel through the task of replacing the split rail fence that once formed the boundary of the Yard. Journeyman Matt Sanbury put his expertise to the test through rallying the crew into placing the fence with remarkable speed. This allowed the dream team of Master Josh, Apprentice Madeleine, and Journeyman Bobby Clay to mark out the boundaries of our building. All would be lost if not for Bobby's dedication to our cause.



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

Carpenter – This week, we are finishing up the new tool house for the new Farming site. The frame will be completed by the end of the week and stacked in the yard. We aim to raise and cover that building later this year. Earlier this week, we helped our Brickyard brethren to stack the fence that encloses their new Yard. We will also be building them a new set of gates in the coming season. Next week, we're aiming to start on the Brickyard drying house #1. Most of the materials are ready to go. We still have one timber to finish hewing, then it needs one cut with the pit saws before it's ready to be incorporated into the ready of the frame.

We are researching the impact of enslaved people and free Blacks in the trades, tool inventories from merchants in the Native/Anglo trade, and tool inventories of the woodworking trades in Williamsburg.

The Carpenter's Yard will be open Tuesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

Colonial Garden – The actual beginning of spring brings more than just blooms to the Historic Garden! Much-appreciated rain has fallen, but thanks to the efforts of Steve Chabra and his assistant, the public interpretive space has a new canvas tarp that will provide protection from both weather and sun.

Witness the efficacy of the waterproofing!



Before the rain began, however, spring planting was started in the front quarter. Two rows of white Irish potatoes (*Solanum*) were put in the ground. By way of experiment, one row was given a topping of straw before it was covered, in hopes of providing cooler soil through the summer. A comparison of the growth rate for the potatoes is sure to be posted in this publication. Two raised beds of onions (*Allium*), to wit: Brown Spanish and Red Florentine, have also been planted.



The blithe Apprentice positions the straw JUST SO.



Here be onions. The rows of potatoes lie at the other end of the bed.

We continue to supply Foodways from our winter planting of vegetables. Chard (*Beta*), kale (*Brassica*), and lettuce (*Lactuca*) joined our most impressive head of cabbage (also a *Brassica*) on a short trip up the Palace Green. One of the more commonplace queries for the Gardeners is the fate of our produce. It is always gratifying to see the face of a Guest light up with comprehension upon responding that some of the leafy green goodness being used in the Palace Kitchen is from our very Garden!



Feed me Seymour!

The Colonial Garden will be open Daily, weather permitting.

Cooper – I have started working on a tobacco hogshead for Farmer Ed, while Harry is making gunpowder half-barrels for the Magazine. What would normally be our research time the last few weeks has been spent primarily on reviewing and interviewing candidates for our open Apprentice position, though we are also reviewing and updating our price list based on changes in materials costs over the last few years.

The Cooper Shop will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Engraver – The Engraving Shop will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Foodways – The Foodways Staff will be at the Palace Kitchen Sunday, Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Foundry – The Foundry will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Gunsmith – Today is a dark day in the Gunsmith Shop, making it difficult to see fine details. Darrin is at the point with his steel (frizzen) springs where he is doing the engraving and filing in the decorative details on the tiny finials. It may have to wait for a sunny day. Brad has been working on his first bullet mold. He is at the point where he is filing the ends to mate and match tightly. Cutting in the cavity where the casting will occur would be last, but we will save that until next time. We are studying *Rifles of Colonial America Volumes I and II*, *The Perfect Gun*, and *Essay On Shooting*.



The Gunsmith Shop will be open Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Historic Farming – The first task of getting Prentis Field ready to plant was loosening the dreaded chickweed by pulling a harrow with Eli the horse. Once loosened, school groups descended upon it to pick out the weeds and put them on the compost pile!



Picking up chickweed

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

Joinery – The Joiners have been hard at work on a number of projects. Brian is coping and assembling three nine-light window sashes for the Saunders House restoration. This work is nearing completion, and he'll begin glazing them with Peter sometime in the next two weeks. In the meantime, Peter has been working on storage for the Anderson Armoury. He has completed a shelf and is finishing up construction on two drawers for the Apprentices there. Scott is working on preparing the last two moldings for the Finnie mantel. Once these pieces are completed, the final step will be to attach them and paint the mantel.

On Research Days, Brian has been studying historical methods of layout and design. Scott has been researching the tradespeople who constructed Mount Vernon, and Peter has been working his way through *By Hand and Eye* from Lost Art Press.

The Joinery will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Milliner and Mantua-maker – March has flown by! We've been keeping ourselves busy with our two programs a week at the Hennage and have been quite flattered by the feedback we've received from both Guests and colleagues who have made it over to attend. With just one performance remaining for each, we'd just like to extend our appreciation and thanks once more to all who have worked with us to make them possible, especially Edith and her unrivaled hairdressing prowess. We're honored to be your walking portfolio of 18th-century styles each week!



In other news, Kate did a pre-recorded session for an upcoming kid's Livestream that focuses on STEM in trades. Using an example stitched by Janea, she demonstrated how a baby shirt can be cut from a single rectangle of fabric with minimal waste. Our young viewers will be able to use a piece of paper and follow

along as she reveals how just two folds and four simple cuts with the scissors magically reveal this simple garment.



The Milliner will be open Sunday. The Shop will be closed March 28 - April 8 for annual maintenance. On Monday, March 28th, at 4:00pm in the Hennage Auditorium, the Milliners will present “Re-animating 18th-century Fashion.” Through study and making, we bring 18th-century pictures to three-dimensional reality, give replicas of extant garments movement and sound, and realize clothing from 18th-century descriptions. This illustrated talk (fashion show) explores how we recapture 18th-century life and work with clothing.

Music – Greetings from The Governor’s Musick! We are currently performing our program celebrating women in early music on Wednesday and Saturday at the Raleigh Tavern through the end of March. We are also excitedly preparing for our return to the Palace Ballroom on Tuesday and Saturday evenings in April. First up is a program celebrating the glories of spring – it kind of feels like this past winter lasted for two and a half years, doesn’t it???

Amy performed with a small group of alumni Fifers and Drummers just before the service in the parking lot of Nelson Funeral Home to play some medleys to honor Mr. John C. Moon, who came on staff at Fife and Drum around 1972, bringing with him a wealth of repertoire and discipline. He had been the youngest Drum Major in the Scots Guard, a group whose job it was to protect the Queen. Both rooms of the Chapel were filled, mostly with CW F&D alumni and people from other fife and drum organizations who had been inspired by Mr. Moon. Bill White, Russ Cole, and Mark Logsdon all got up to speak and remember their experiences.

Brady is reading *Life After Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* by Peter Holman, in preparation for his April 6 presentation in the Hennage Auditorium on Carl Friedrich Abel and Ann Ford - the last two virtuosos of the viola da gamba in 18th-century London. Kyle has been researching John Watson's *Changing Keys: Keyboard Instruments for America 1700-1830*. This book is a great guide to learn about the instruments in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection, and their location on the premises. He has also been reading some of John Watson's articles on the work of conserving and restoring antique keyboard instruments. Kyle has been practicing on both the square piano and spinet, both of which are rarely encountered in academic settings.

Printer and Bookbinder:

Printing Office – The Printing Office will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Bindery – Good day from the Bookbindery. A while back, I was commissioned to make several books for one of our Guests. I took it on gladly, and as I had completed similar books in the past, was confident all would turn out fine. Five books later, here I am talking to you.

My motto has always been, “Do or don’t - there is no try.” Star Wars fans will know exactly where this came from! Success has always been a black or white area for me; but as of late, and frankly after years of political strife, a world-wide pandemic, and now a war that is tugging on the heart strings of the world, I am tired, and many of those around me are tired, too.

It is time to give ourselves the grace we so willingly bestow on others. Recently, I heard two quotes that deserve further examination. The first was shared by Richard Smith, the Guest who ordered the books that I am having a challenging time executing properly, “Better is the enemy of good enough.” I have heard this explained that ‘close is sometimes good enough, and exact is far too costly’. Sometimes that cost can be your confidence or peace of mind, and not just a monetary cost. Richard expressed he could live with knowing that he had done the best he could and that trying to make it better was not going to necessarily result in a better product. He also said he could see that I was doing my best the first time, giving maximum effort the first time. Thank you, Richard. I truly appreciate these encouraging words.



The other one was from my dear friend Janice Canaday, as told by her Grandfather, James Wesley Brown, “Nothing beats a failure but a try.” Oh, how I love that. I intend to keep this close from now on.

These are both sentiments that we could all stand to mull over and take to heart, as we move into a new season in our collective lives. Do you have any quotes that have helped you through troubled times? If you care to share, please share them with me at bswanson@cwf.org.

I will continue to try, with excellence.

Barbara Swanson

Apprentice Bookbinder

The Bookbindery will be open Sunday through Tuesday, and Friday.

Public Leather Works – Greetings once again from the Public Leather Works. This week has filled the Leather Works family with much joy. The weather has started to turn warmer, the bullfrogs are singing in the creek, and the crabapple tree is in blossom.

However, every silver lining has a cloud, and ours has been the lack of response to The Jellybean Challenge. We are hopeful that this means special care is being taken to ensure an accurate and scientific finding. To facilitate this, the deadline is being extended to April the 7th. This should allow adequate time to stock up on the winning bean(s) before the Easter celebrations. As before, submit your findings to: jtilley@cwf.org.

The Public Leather Works will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Shoemaker – The Shoemakers have begun interviewing for our new Apprentice, and we are looking forward to being a three-person Shop again. Shoemaking will remain at the Armoury this spring, but we've moved back to the shed behind the Blacksmith Shop. We've enjoyed having a Shop space large enough to accommodate school groups!

Apprentice Nicole is working on a pair of common shoes for Barbara Scherer to replace one of the first pairs of shoes she made about four years ago. Val is keeping us caught up on repairs and is making a pair of shop slippers for Tim Logue. Nicole has enjoyed participating in the Milliners' fashion program at the Hennage.

The Shoemakers will be at the Armoury Monday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Silversmith – The Silversmiths are continuing to work on their many projects and are very happy with the spring weather. Megan continues working on her ingot and is also saw piercing a mote spoon. These were used for straining tea leaves and require very delicate and precise cuts to create the intricate designs in the bowl. She has also researched and chosen a chatelaine to create as a future project. Chris continues to work on the teapot and has soldered the hinges for the lid onto the piece. Bobbie is working on fitting silver wire that will serve as a decorative rim to a large silver tray. Preston continues work on his small bowls and on polishing jewelry for the retail store. George continues his work on cups and is also filing and cleaning up some silver castings of feet and handles that will be used for future projects. Chris Custalow visited the Shop to continue working on his copper bracelet reproduction. He sourced the copper, cast it into an ingot, drew it into wire, wrapped it into shape, and is now at the stage of soldering it in place with silver solder. We look forward to its completion soon!



Megan's mote spoon was coated in white water color, left to dry, then the pattern was drawn on in pencil. It is now ready to drill and saw pierce.



Bobbie is carefully measuring, cutting, and filing this silver wire rim for her tray.



George's castings in various stages of completion. These will be used for cup handles and footings.



Chris Custalow is fluxing his bracelet in preparation for soldering.
Department of Historic Trades and Skills



The bracelet is cleaned and ready for soldering.

The Silversmith Shop will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Tailor – The Tailors are adjusting to a new schedule. The Shop is open to guests 9am-5pm, Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays.

In this last week, Apprentice Logue recently finished his waistcoat for Master Howlett of the Public Leather Works, Master Hutter finished a small upholstery project for Mount Vernon, and Journeyman McCarty continued stitching on a second pair of black satin breeches. On our Saturday Research Day, the Shop focused on the patterning of a late-1750s officer's uniform. Apprentice Logue gathered several images of portraits of British officers, and we speculated on how a young George Washington's uniform would have looked when he was the colonel of the Virginia Militia.

A detail of Apprentice Logue's fine work on Master Howlett's waistcoat. The buttons were cast at the Foundry and are copies of buttons found archeologically in Williamsburg.



The bedstead with installed sacking bottom for Mount Vernon. Sacking bottoms provided a sturdy, but giving, base for the mattress and bed.



The Tailor Shop will be open Sunday through Tuesday, and Friday.

Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing – The Weaving Shop will be open on Sunday through Wednesday, and Saturday.

Wheelwright – Another week of somewhat fair weather at the Deane, at least at the beginning of the week. The Wheelwrights were able to hoop the Stage Wagon Wheels on Sunday morning. Apprentice Murphy is at the lathe shaping out chisel handles, with Master Wheelwright Paul and Apprentice Joel powering the great wheel. In addition to his lathe project, Murphy has collected the larger oak pieces that will make up the body of his Brickyard wheelbarrow. Speaking of barrows, Joel finished his wheelbarrow repair, giving it a fresh coat of yellow ochre paint before delivering it to the Gardens. He is currently dimensioning the last of his hand cart fellies to the proper size. Finally, Paul has completed dressing his fellies for his cannon wheel project. He is finishing ‘ringing out’ the first of the pair (pictured below), joining the fellies to their corresponding tenon at the end of the spokes.



The Wheelwright Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Wigmaker – Robert's wig is nearly complete as Edith adds the final two rows to the outside edge to cover up the binding that holds the netting to the outline tape. Benton continues to work on his secret project, and Debbie continues to work on the “CW Lights” wigs. Wigs that need maintenance insist on being seen to, despite our best efforts to put them off for another day. School groups have returned with a vengeance, and we have received quite a few questions as of late that Debbie has not heard before in the fourteen years she's been in the Shop. It's keeping us on our toes! We have also rearranged the Shop furniture slightly to better accommodate the increased capacity limits and to better take advantage of a sometimes limited light source. As always, feel free to reach out if you have any tonsorial needs, and don't forget, for any person needing black ribbon to cover up modern hair ties, we have plenty, please come get some! We're happy to sew black bows to black elastic bands for you as well. We hope everyone has a great week!



The Wig Shop will be open on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

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

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