

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for July 8 - 14

Apothecary – The Apothecary welcomes their new intern, Ed Kaczenski, from Western New England University School of Pharmacy. He will be here for six weeks.



Ed Kaczenski

Armoury:

Blacksmith – This last week at the Blacksmith Shop, we were honored to host a wonderful group of Craftsmen from the Artist Blacksmith Association of North America, which is holding a conference just outside Richmond. They gathered around the forge and watched in awe as our own Ken Schwarz and Steve Mankowski set to work on a drawknife and a large wheeler's axe, completing both amid a flurry of “ooohs”, “aaahs”, and questions. It was an intriguing demonstration that involved ample amounts of welding steel to iron, as well as the accompaniment of strikers with sledge hammers, all with an afternoon fire which is prone to be lazy (not hot enough) and dirty (full of ashes which can liquefy into a film that makes welding near impossible). For the remainder of the week, the Blacksmiths took turns visiting the conference. In seeing practitioners from various regions across the country, exercising many different modes of work and ascribing to infinite motivations, but each wonderfully inspiring, you may have a similar conclusion as Jessie Reid: in the eyes of an Apprentice at the Armory, our three Journeymen and the Master of our shop have incredible skill and unmatched discipline, and there is no similar concentration of hard- earned and tested talent in the entire country.

Tinsmith – Teapots are in order in the Tinsmith's Shop. In the hierarchy of civic duties, tea being at the top, second this week on the Tin pyramid are sheet iron camp kettles, followed by the hearty tasks of fine tuning shears, mounting shears, and making handles for paint spatulas.

Carpenter – The Carpenters are building a hotbed box for the Colonial Garden, hewing timbers for a new gallows for the city, and sawing framing.

Colonial Garden – Temperatures soared, and plants wilted under the glare of the sun. The Gardeners are watering throughout the day and wishing for a few showers to take up the slack. Work this week consisted of preparing the shell pad for our new cistern, shearing the willow hedge, planting out the last of the flowers, and weeding. The corn is tasseling nicely, and the ears are filling out. Harvested vegetables are turnips, carrots, beets, dill, and cucumbers. Forming nicely are melons such as Citron, Pocket, and Rattlesnake. Also harvested was an “Armenian” melon (snake or serpent melon), and the three Gardeners agreed that the taste was more like a cucumber, so it was summarily cut up and placed in a jar to pickle. Blooming in the Garden are the last of the leeks, a profusion of Cleome, and African marigolds. The marigolds bring bright yellow and orange to the sea of green this time of year. Tomatoes have vined their way up through the trellises and are forming fruit. Garden visitors this week consisted of hungry squirrels, a deer that snacked on our fruit trees, and the bunny that won’t leave and has found our beans.



Harvested vegetables

Farming – All of the tobacco has been topped and is maturing two to three weeks ahead of the usual time. This is probably due to the prolific rainfall in the spring. The leaves are the largest that we have seen in years. The downside to this is the loss of a quarter of the plants in low spots from too much water. We are still getting a break from the hornworm infestation, but the aphids and flea beetles continue efforts towards destruction. The Teachers Institute participants have been a great help in destroying these pests. The corn has tasseled at around ten feet high, and ears are forming. The cotton continues to grow and is starting to form some squares which will become bolls.”

Foundry – The Founders are casting more tray feet for the Silversmiths, as well as casting and finishing some pewter taper candlesticks for Prentis Store.

Gunsmith – At the Gunshop, Eric finished work on his rifle barrel and will begin the arduous task of reaming the barrel smooth. We spend about twelve to fourteen man hours doing hot work, and the rest of the hundred or so hours of the barrel are done inside to finish the rough tube. Darrin is continuing work on his rifle lock, and Richard is practicing engraving for his pistol locks.

Joinery – The Joiners are beating the heat the only way they know how: by working harder and faster! The replacement benches for the Pulaski Club are at the forefront of the Apprentices' minds. To that end, they've been cutting joints and swinging mallets like crazy, hoping to have the benches completed before the end of next week. From there, it's anyone's guess as to what they will start next. Paneling is next in their apprenticeship, so perhaps a simple hanging cupboard? Only time will tell!

Military Programs – Military Programs has been incredibly busy this past week with the 4th of July Ceremonies. The Department conducted the "Salute to the States" Program, helped set up ropes and barricades for the evening fireworks and then then managed access for guests attending, and maintained safety and security. All of this in addition to frequently covering the very busy Musket Range and still presenting our normal programming.

Public Leather Works – The Public Leather Works looks like someone blew up a deer, with buckskin scraps flying everywhere. Multiple pairs of breeches are once again underway. Jan is making impressive progress on his canteens for Mount Vernon.



Jan in the Public Leather Works

Wigmaker – Greetings from the Wig Shop! The wig for the Smithsonian has been coming together nicely. Sara has completed the base and, with the help of the rest of the shop, has begun weaving and stitching the rows of hair onto the completed base. So far, we're right on time for where this project needs to be for the end-of-August deadline! Debbie's primary focus right now is a hand knotted base for another project. Some of you know that we had the opportunity to study an original wig at the Massachusetts Historical Society this past winter, which we are now reproducing, beginning with the base. Because the hand knotted bases take so much time to accomplish (generally 40-70 hours of labor), and we will be reproducing this wig twice, Debbie has a lot of work ahead of her before the rest of the project begins. Both of these projects have already had over 40 hours of work put into each since they were begun in mid-June!