

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

For June 2 - 8

Apothecary – “Our pharmacy student from Campbell University in North Carolina spent a month with us. She is interested in history and belongs to an 18th-century reenactment group. In the picture, she is collecting some chamomile flowers to make chamomile oil. This was her last week, and we will miss her. Starting June 9th, we will have a summer Intern for ten weeks.”



Armoury:

Blacksmith – “Though the last week of May brought sweltering weather, the Blacksmiths were able to beat the heat, like they do every day. Many hands pitched in to kindle the spindle of the weather vane. Aislinn adjusted an axe for the Wheelwrights, and the brick molds under the Apprentices’ care were shod, ready to face the rigors of this year’s brick season. All else in the shop was much the same as the prior week, with directionals for the vane, chisels, locks, spoons, and rakes under the hammer. It’s a hot one at the foot of the anvil.”

Tin Shop – “The Tinsmiths welcomed the newest Wheelwright, Mike, with an oil can. May it last him many years and stain his clothes only a little. Horn lanterns large and small are on display, and coffee pots flow freely. Shine on, Tinsmiths, shine on.”

Cabinetmaker – “Hello from the Hay Shop. The Cabinetmakers are close to the finish line on their current projects. The walnut legs are almost complete as Bill scrapes and files a crest onto the foot. Planning for the ‘Woodworking Symposium’ continues as Bill contacts speakers and finalizes topics.



“John has fit the drawers, and they’re sliding like pistons. The backboards are shiplapped and set into a rebate. The next step will be painting the drawer fronts and the case.



“Brian has glued the pivot block to the column and has finished turning the 29-inch diameter top on the great wheel lathe.



“The Harpsichord Makers have been resawing boards for the harpsichord lid in addition to Melanie tuning up the wareroom spinet, and Ed sharpening a new blade for the veneer frame saw.”

Colonial Garden – “The Gardeners are incredibly excited to announce that our prickly pear cactus has bloomed for the very first time! The elderberry is in bloom as well, and the cucumber plants have set their first flowers. We’ve harvested peas, radishes, fava beans, strawberries, and lettuce for the Palace Kitchen and have begun water sealing our hurdles. Our corn and cypriot melons have come up despite the squirrels’ best efforts at digging them up. Sweet peppers and globe basil have been transplanted next to the bay laurel tree. We have retrieved our citrus trees, dwarf pomegranates, geraniums, and aloe plants from the greenhouse and are placing them out into the Garden. The third hot bed has been emptied of potted plants, and the corn poppies have been cleared away to ready the area for some other ornamentals. We’ve been busy making trellises for beans and cucumbers, but mostly we have been watering seemingly nonstop all week in this heat! To end on a very exciting note, our little house wrens fledged!”

N.B. “Thankfully it rained last night, which is a relief as we were hand watering at a rate that eventually would not keep up with the sun and current unseasonable temperatures.”

Farming –



Cotton is up!

Joinery – “Travail, trial, and triumph at the Joinery! The three Apprentices will be working on three doors this week. Scott is in the last leg of cutting his copes for his walnut door and hopes to assemble the whole thing by mid-June. Amanda has the pine ready for her door. While pine is less fashionable, this door is destined for the Brickyard, and will certainly be the fanciest thing to grace that benighted swamp in years. Peter has attached the face-frame to his hanging cupboard and will be working on his own walnut door, the smallest of the three. He hopes to have his cupboard done and mounted on the wall by mid-June, which would be a most auspicious way to observe the occasion of his thirtieth birthday. Hopes are high at the Joinery! But will the seeds of passion and diligent practice bear fruit? Time will tell.”

Silversmith – “Bobbie is making progress on the second spice caster and beginning to lay out the pattern for piercing on the first. Chris is raising the body and lid of her teapot. Lynn continues work on the canoe printing plate and cleaning her ingots from last week. Preston is working on several small bowls and the tankard body. George continues to fix the chasing tools while also completing spoons. Parker has raised his copper beaker and is now planishing it. William has started cutting his copper plate, in addition to working on two seamed cups.”

Tailor – “It is our pleasure to introduce Mr. John Blair, Sr.

Last week, a gentleman visiting the Tailor Shop embarked on a new career as a model ... at age 85. Mr. Patrick Mahoney, a retired attorney from Washington, D.C., was touring town with his wife and sister-in-law, when they stopped by the Tailor Shop. Master Hutter immediately recognized that Mr. Maloney was the right size and body type to fit into the recently completed reconstruction of a suit worn by John Blair, Sr, in 18th-century Williamsburg. At 5 foot 7 inches tall, with a 36-inch chest and 30-inch waist, Messrs Mahoney and Blair are not common sizes.

“After interpreting to the guest and his family, and discussing the importance of the original Blair coat, Mark asked Mr. Mahoney if he would like to try it on. It fit nearly perfectly. Mr. Mahoney was pleased for the chance, and the Tailors were pleased to find someone that actually fit the coat. Someone said, ‘You should put the whole thing on!’ Mark took the opportunity to ask Mr. Mahoney if he was interested in doing so ... Mrs. Mahoney said, ‘Yes!’ The group graciously agreed to return the next day, allow us to dress Mr. Mahoney completely, and to take a few photographs for our records and reference.

“This reconstruction of the intricately detailed suit ... with 103 buttonholes ... took approximately 125 hours in sewing time, and countless hours in studying, documenting, and analyzing the original. It is made from a silk suiting Department of Historic Trades and Skills

called Drouget; the pattern copies that of the original silk velvet. The fabric was custom-woven by a firm in Lyon, France, and was generously supported by a gift from Bob and Tina Eichelbaum.

“Stop by the Tailor Shop to see the reconstructed suit and to hear the fascinating story of the original.”



Mr. John Blair, Sr., in front of the Blair House



Wigmaker – “Greetings from the Wigmakers! Since our last update, we had the pleasure of presenting the Bromfield wig that we reproduced to Anne and Kimberley from the Massachusetts Historical Society. It was featured in a blog post last week, and we’ve included some of the finished photos here as well (below). Now that we’ve sent that wig on its way, we’ve been focusing on getting caught up on regular maintenance and have a few new projects coming that we can’t wait to tell you about!”

