

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

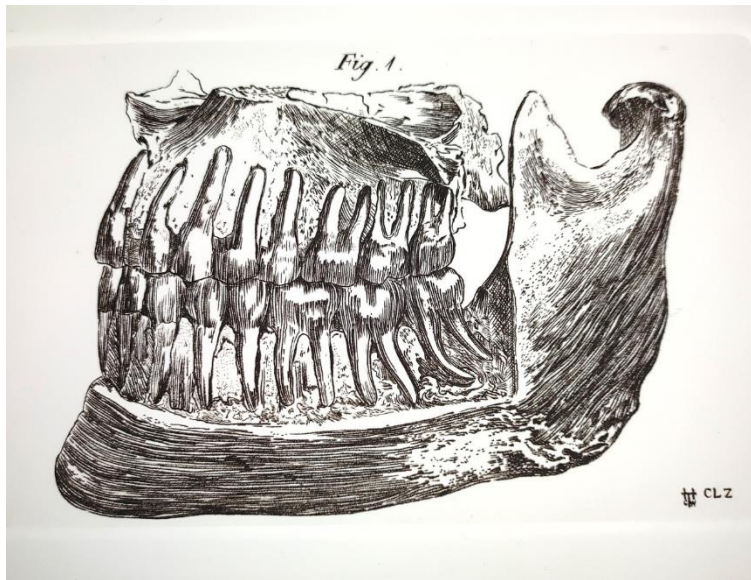
April 19, 2021

Apothecary – Sharon finished transcribing and proofing the first Galt - Barraud daybook and has started on the second one. Mark has been busy studying, and Robin is making progress writing study notes on mental health. Sunday, the three of us picked violets, and Mark made a syrup from the fresh flowers. We really like the way this looks. It is the only medicine that we make that has this deep blue hue. Syrup of violets was used in the 18th century as a laxative for children. We have an original container that held this product.



Engraver Lynn Zelesnikar finished the first print of her work of an 18th-century illustration on dentistry. This is from the second edition of John Hunter's book, *The Natural History of the Human Teeth*, published in London in 1778. Study the detail in Lynn's work. We plan to frame it and display it upstairs in the Shop. Thank-you, Lynn. We propose that a future copy can be used when interpreting in the Shop. The plate in her left hand is another project in progress.





The Apothecaries will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Tuesday and at the Art Museum Gallery on Friday (unadvertised).

Armoury:

Blacksmith – Ken’s work has been choppy lately, not in terms of quality but in terms of use: Axes large and small for the American Indian Interpreters. Mark continues work on trade knives for the same, making and assembling their handles. The two most experienced Smiths in the Shop have matching themes this week, for in addition to tools for our American Indian Program, both are making tools for the hearth: Ladles remain a hot topic for the Master, along with the andirons now completed by Mark, and a spit still ongoing. Aislinn finished a tiny pair of compass for Jan at the Public Leather Works and has been working on a traveler for the Wheelwrights and a broiler, a sort of round, rotating gridiron. On the Apprentices’ benches, you can see froes and hoes from Broadus and Alex, respectively. Broadus has had a breezy week, and he’s flying high as he nears completion of his spiders. Owen, meanwhile, continues to improve his holdfasts. And as always, nails are a welcome warm-up. But no matter what highs you reach, or what depths you breach, it all falls well at the foot of the anvil.

The Blacksmiths will be at the Armoury Daily.

Anthony Hay Shop

Cabinetmaker – We Cabinetmakers are only a few months past our 2021 *Working Wood Conference*, but we are already getting a sense for next year’s projects. Wednesday morning, we took a trip to the Art Museum to see a piece already on display in the Williamsburg exhibit, a Desk & Bookcase from the original Anthony Hay Shop. John and Jeremy will be reproducing this piece, both for the Conference and their apprenticeships. Back in the Shop, John has gotten the top for his sideboard table flattened and has molded the edges before finally attaching the top to the table. It’s starting to shape up! Jeremy has started work on carving the outside faces of the doors to the apothecary chest. They have a slightly recessed shape to add visual interest to the finished chest. Jeremy has also been hunting for good hardware to add to the piece and outfitting the interior spaces of the drawers. Bill has been working on some of the structure of his



table around the drawer section and hopes to start that part of the table soon.



The Cabinetmakers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Monday.

Harpsichord-Makers – This week in the Harpsichord corner, Ed and Melanie have been working on the keyboard layout for the new spinet. (Look for some pictures next time as things progress). In addition, they are planning the next steps for finishing the jacks – the bristle spring tests done this week look promising!

The Harpsichord-makers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Saturday.

Brickmaker – The Brickmakers' invasion of the Carpenters Yard is in full swing! As most of you know by now, the Brickyard is going to be moving. While preparations for the new site are made and the old site is closed, we have managed to annex a portion of the Carpenters Yard, where we will be doing programming this summer. This week, Lauren Neff from Coach & Livestock, along with the dynamic duo of Pat and Mike, helped us move approximately 300 bricks from the old Brickyard up to the Carpenters Yard. We also had a barrel of burnt shell brought up. Nick will be using these bricks to build some sample panels as a way to practice bricklaying for his apprenticeship. We will also be mixing up some mortar on site. On Friday, we will be loading oyster shell into the lime kiln as we prepare for another test firing. This will be our first time firing with shell so stay tuned for the results!

Carpenter – The Carpenters Yard is busy and full of projects. Hay feeders for Coach & Livestock are complete and ready to go out into pastures.



We're cutting in the corner braces for the grape arbor, which we'll put up soon in the Colonial Garden.



Visitation has been steady at the Yard the last couple of weeks. Lots of work for people to see.



We're using red cedar for the grape arbor framing, with black locust posts and pegs. Should hold up in the weather for many decades.



We've been helping our colleagues in Operations with repairs at the Peyton Randolph Property. Twenty years after we built the Kitchen and Outbuildings, some of the steps and siding need replacement. We've been planing up the new weatherboards that the Millwork Shop has fabricated to make sure they have a hand-planed surface. This material is "toasted" or heat-treated tulip poplar, which makes the siding more durable. Beautiful stuff, isn't it?



The Carpenters will be in the Carpenter Yard Daily, weather permitting, and will be giving a presentation on Tuesday, April 20th at 4:30pm in the Hennage Auditorium.

Colonial Garden – Warmer weather is here to stay. For our region of Virginia, mid-April is the point in the year when we no longer have a risk of freezing temperatures. The next few weeks will be very busy in the Colonial Garden as we begin to sow seeds for summer plants directly into the soil and transplant many of the plants that we started in our hotbeds. Larger potted plants that we put down into an empty hotbed for the winter to protect them from freezing have been placed around the Garden and our seedlings started this spring were potted up into larger containers as they await their turn to be planted. We sowed seeds for cucumber and an early variety of melon into the hotbeds to fill the frames once the other plants are moved out into the Garden. This week, we sent ingredients for a lovely spring salad to the Foodways Kitchen as well as swiss chard, kale, and asparagus. The Garden is full of color. New plants blooming this week include Persian lilac (*Syringa x persica*), eastern red columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), broad beans (*Vicia faba*), and money plant (*Lunaria annua*).



Broad beans, also known as fava beans, have an attractive flower before producing their edible pods.



Persian lilac in full bloom



Seedlings in the hotbed ready for larger pots

The Gardeners will be in the Colonial Garden Daily, weather permitting.

Foodways – Historic Foodways kicked off the week with the first beer brewing of the season. The Apprentices got to practice grinding malt. We brewed a strong brown ale which is fermenting nicely so far.

The Colonial Garden provided us with some beautiful produce, and Barbara made one of her signature salads at the Armoury. Megan successfully boiled her first plum pudding with some much-needed supplies from the Leatherworkers and the Blacksmiths. Frank welcomed the spring weather with a dish of asparagus and eggs, using asparagus freshly cut from the Palace Kitchen Garden. Brendon baked numerous cakes as a thank you to some of our colleagues.

Foodways will be at the Armoury on Sunday and Monday.

Engraver – This week at the Engraving Shop, William's research into printed textiles has begun to bear fruit. Four different methods of preparation have been tested with printer's ink on a proven plate in an effort to determine which is the best course for future experimenting, three on linen fabric (wet, dry, and dry with a paper backing) and one on leather. The results so far are promising and have been shared with the Weavers and the Milliners, both of whom have been instrumental in the process so far and have an interest in the future results. The current concern is the colorfastness of the print, as the printer's ink does not work the same as a dye.

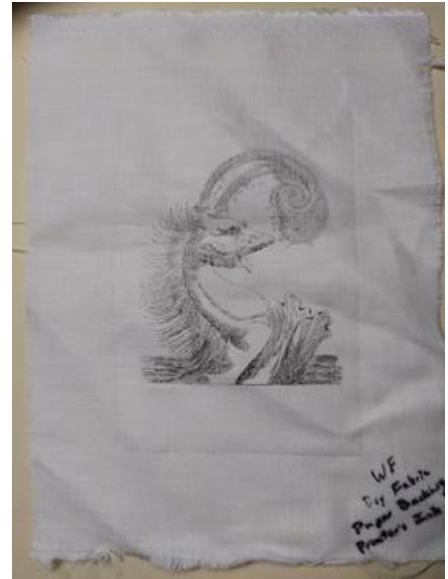
In the mid to late 18th century, copperplate printed textiles were produced by the European powers as direct competition to hand painted and block-printed Indian calicoes and chintzes. The process was a highly guarded secret at the time, and technology progressed rather quickly to the point that copper plates were replaced by copper rollers. As such, the process for printing on fabric from copper plate is not as well documented as block or roller printing, but a few key documents have helped to bring some crucial details to light. With these details and some input from the Weavers, preparations are being made to print both with mordants for madder dyeing and directly with indigo. Stay tuned for future updates!



Wet fabric, no backing



Dry fabric, no backing



Dry fabric, paper backing for support

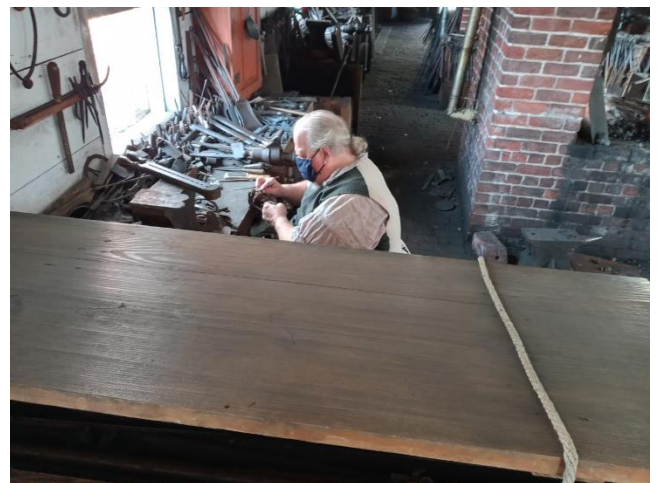


~1mm thick leather

The Engravers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Friday.

Foundry – The Foundry has been working on musket balls at the Armoury and harpsichord brass in the Shop.

The Founder will be at the Armoury on Tuesday.



Gunsmith – Here in the Gunsmith Shop, work progresses, albeit slowly since we are down to two people for a few weeks. Brad continues with the lock plates by folding/forging the bumped-up part to a 90° to form the pan and bridal. In the photo with the lock plates, the lowest plate has not been forged over yet. Darrin forged out some pistol tumbler blanks and tumbler bridges. The tumblers are then milled down in the tumbler mill to bring the sides parallel to each other and to the right thickness, also forming the interior axle from which it will rotate.



The Gunsmiths will be in their Shop on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Historic Farming – Prentis Field has been plowed and harrowed in preparation for planting. Corn will be planted next week after hilling, cotton the first week of May, and tobacco in mid-May. Shown in one of the photos is Ed doing the final plowing as it was done in the 18th-century: plowing and driving at the same time. With oxen, it takes a driver

for the team and another person to work the plow. Many planters that could afford horses began making this transition in the third quarter of the 18th century to reduce the labor required to plow in half. There were those that clung to oxen, though. The advantage to oxen is that most farmers already had cattle. Capture a steer when it is young and train him for a couple of years. Fully grown and trained at four years, he is called an ox. Now work him for about six years. An ox starts wearing out at about ten years old. At that time, one transitioned to other oxen coming up.

In the other photo can be seen harrowing. This is the breaking of the rough surface caused by plowing. The spike teeth of the harrow break up the dirt clods and knocks the surface down smooth to produce loose soil to plant in. Think of it like a giant rake working the land over. Horses are preferred for harrowing as they move faster than oxen. I have harrowed plenty of land with oxen, and I can tell you that, because they move slowly, the time going over the field to break it down is at least double. In the 18th century, horses could harrow up to two acres of land a day while a team of oxen is around one acre.



Plowing



Harrowing

The Farmer will be at Prentis Field Tuesday through Saturday.

Joiner – This week, the Joiners will continue work on the sashes for the Saunders House. Scott and Amanda have both begun cutting their mortises, while Peter is prepping a story stick. For those interested in the intersection of Joiners and Carpenters, Peter contributed to a livestream with the Carpenters last week focusing on the dormer constructed there. The video is posted on Colonial Williamsburg's Facebook page. The Joiners will once again be at the Raleigh Tavern Wednesday for those who would like to catch up with their progress.

The Joiners will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Wednesday.

Milliner and Mantua-maker – Janea is working on trying to understand the 18th-century "job descriptions" of several of the enslaved women who worked and lived at the Millinery Shop. It appears that mending, hemming, and darning are key to the laundress's skill. So, I am practicing on some beautiful blankets made by the Weavers.

The Milliners will be at the Weaver Shop on Friday and the Raleigh Tavern on Saturday.



Music – Greetings from The Governor’s Musick! We are busy with our new spring projects: we are helping with the Palace lines during the busy Spring Break and Easter season and will be participating in the new Evening Programs venture, “CW Lights”. “Music in the Museums” continues, as advertised on Wednesdays, 10am-12pm and 2-4pm, and informally on Saturdays at the Levanti Gallery at the Museum. We have two Trades at the Hennage presentations coming up: “How to Play the (18th-century) Violin” on April 28th, and “Is it a Viol? Or a Cello?” on June 10th. Rehearsals for “The Music That Binds” are starting up soon. We hope you all are enjoying the warmer weather!

The Musicians will be at the Art Museum on Wednesdays, the Raleigh Tavern Dining Room on Fridays (except April 23), and on the Palace Garden grounds for “CW Lights” on the evenings of April 18, 19, 23-25, and May 2.



(left to right): Brady presenting to a group in the Raleigh Tavern Dining Room; Karol in the Raleigh Tavern; Karol playing for the Palace line.



Danny and Jenny in the Raleigh Tavern.

Printer and Bookbinder – Good day to you from the Printing Office and Bookbindery!

When not interpreting, these past couple of weeks have found many members of the Historic Trades and Skills Community out and about in the Historic Area - not only covering breaks but helping to direct and entertain the guests who are standing in long Spring-Break lines. It has been truly wonderful to catch up with friends we don’t usually get a

chance to see. It is times like these that I am reminded that at Colonial Williamsburg, we truly are one great big family. Let the shenanigans commence!



Until next time, stay safe out there.

The Printers will be at the Art Museum Gallery on Sunday, while the Bookbinders will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Thursday.

Public Leather Works – The Public Leather Works is struggling to catch its breath after a very busy Spring Break. The past week was all about sword belts, with Jan stitching Hungarian knots until his fingers bled, well not really, but I'd wager he was getting powerful sick of them. We are looking forward to a pile of candle spots for the Kings Arms Tavern as well as a few odds and ends. As was said last week, as there are no large projects underway, now might be a good time to talk to us about your upcoming needs.

The Public Leather Works will be at the Armoury on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, and at the Raleigh Tavern on Friday.

Silversmith – The Silversmiths have had quite a week: interpreting at the Raleigh Tavern on Monday, the Gallery on Tuesday, Preston preparing and delivering a talk at the Hennage Auditorium on Thursday, and everyone working on their NIA outlines. At the same time, we have been making and polishing spoons, rings, trade silver for the Prentis Store, and filling a custom order for spoons for a historic tavern museum in New Jersey. We are looking into the manufacture of some new dies for making mourning rings and clasped hand rings, as our old die has seen better days.



The Silversmiths will be in the Raleigh Tavern on Monday and the Art Museum Gallery on Tuesday.

Tailor –

The Tailors will be in the Weaver Shop on Sunday and Monday and in the Art Museum Gallery on Wednesday.

Weaver – Another Dye Day is upon us. The usual preparations have begun in earnest, with scouring and mordanting taking place behind the scenes. This Dye Day, we will be dyeing raw fiber in the form of locks of wool from our very own flock of Leicester Longwools, skeins of handspun, even some commercially spun yarn, and a few yards of finished fabric, as well. Who knows, maybe a cap or apron might be tossed in to overdye, as well? For all of these, if an even and consistent color is to be applied, the fibers must be prepared. Everything to be dyed is first scoured in hot water with a bit of mild detergent to ensure everything is clean and nothing will act as a resist to our dyes. Next, most everything will be mordanted to create a bridge between the fiber and the dye, allowing for a better result. Some dyes do not require a mordant, so we need to plan that ahead of time to keep from making more work for ourselves than we need to. Then the dyes themselves are cooked down and prepared. All of this happens in the days leading up to the explosion of colors you see on our drying lines after the day is done. This Dye Day, however, there is one extra step. All our pots have been emptied and scrubbed, then refilled with fresh water. They were thick with



pollen when we went to check on them. This must be the price we all pay to have new lambs. Oh well, happy Spring everyone!

The Weavers will be in their Shop on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Wheelwright –

The Wheelwrights will be at the Armoury on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Wigmaker – Work continues on the Marquis's wig. The caul and reinforcement tapes have been stitched into place, and stays are being added, after which, we will begin sewing on the rows of hair! The spring season has definitely begun for us, and the wigs are starting to show up in need of some TLC. We promise to get them back out to our colleagues as soon as possible but continue to ask for your patience. We have included a couple photos of Mr. Wythe wearing his new wig as well as a photo of the nearly complete caul for the Marquis.



The Wigmakers will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Sunday and the Art Museum Gallery on Thursday.

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

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