

# **“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”**

## **For December 22 - 28, 2019**

**Apothecary** – “Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to each of you. The wreath was a Shop project inspired by the antique drug jars in the Shop. The jars feature a variety of motifs including angels, shells, and Latin labels. The label on the wreath is for Tincture of Myrrh. Myrrh is a resin from several species of trees that grow in north-east Africa and Arabia. It has a long history of use that dates back to antiquity. In the 18th-century, it was mixed in an alcohol base to make a tincture and used topically to treat “foul ulcers,” translate infected sores. Modern pharmacy books state that it has antiseptic properties and is used in mouthwashes and gargles. Mark, our new employee, is currently making a fresh bottle of this medicine.

“We found out this week that we will have a pharmacy student from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy that will be studying with us in the spring. PCP, as it is affectionately called, is America’s oldest pharmacy school. They will be celebrating their 200th birthday in 2021. Two of our Volunteers are alumni of PCP. We are excited to have this opportunity to work with one of their students.”







Myrrh trees

### **Armoury:**

**Blacksmith** – “The time has come to test the mettle and the metal of our applicants for our vacant Apprentice position, as interviews are underway in our Shop. Though this draws the senior members of the Shop, Ken nevertheless has been working on a fireplace shovel, while Mark has made hardware for a bucket from the Coopers and Aislinn a pocket-sized pair of pipe tongs, called a smoker’s companion. It’s curtains for Owen, or more specifically curtain rods, and Alex’s and Tim’s shutter dogs are a-barkin’. However the trials of the week resolve, we still know that all’s well that falls well at the foot of the anvil.”

**Cabinetmaker** – “We here in the Cabinet Shop are working right along. With less than one month until our ‘Working Wood Conference’, Bill and John are preparing materials, including examples of the different stages of work, perspective drawing, and the upper case of the high chest itself. Ed and Melanie continue their register work, each making their own replica of the one in the historical instrument. This critical piece will serve as the basis for dimensioning the rest of the instrument, so no pressure!”

**Colonial Garden** – “This week brought cold and damp weather, and the Gardeners built a large fire each morning to warm our hands. Work continues on repairing and re-glazing our hotbed windows. We have also replanted some of the lettuce seedlings that were eaten by slugs. We planted our tulip bulbs into pots and will keep them tucked away under a blanket of pine straw until they emerge this spring, and then we will place them around the Garden for everyone to enjoy. This year, we are particularly excited for a new red and white striped tulip that we acquired from a local bulb merchant. We were able to send lettuce, garlic, Jerusalem artichokes, and peas from our hotbed to the Palace Kitchen.”

**Farming** – “Glad it rained the other day, as it re-hydrated the tobacco leaves so that I could strip the leaves off the stalks. The leaves took in enough moisture that they transitioned from as crispy as a potato chip to as floppy as a dish cloth. This allows me to handle them without ruining the integrity of the leaf. It is a condition that they called ‘case’. Sometimes, it was called ‘order’ as well. So when the tobacco is

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in case or in order, it can be stripped off the stalk as shown in the photo. Next time it is rainy and humid, I'll sort it out for good color. After that, I'll tie it into hands... All the stuff that everybody knew when tobacco was king."



Stripping tobacco

**Joinery** – “Our stalwart Joiners are hard at work. Peter hopes to complete the frame of his door, if not the panels for it, early this week. Scott has worked hard to turn the feet of his food safe and will be finishing the fourth soon. Amanda is extracting the material she needs from the hickory logs that she felled. This green wood will be used to turn the posts for her chair. Finally, Brian is working on fitting the mortise and tenon joints for his high chest of drawers.”

**Milliner and Mantua-maker** – “My dear readers, I am delighted to inform you that work is nearly complete in M--- Hunter’s millinery on Miss B--- Farrow’s new gown. Some trim remains to be applied, but I have heard from a very trustworthy source that, “like, the gown is, like, totally wearable, you know? But, like, some trim still has to, like, be put on? But that, like, will go on really quickly?” The influx of notable visitors such as Mr. T---s J---n increased drastically while Miss Farrow was in shop, and the milliners were delighted to serve so many shoppers bringing news of the city.

“Miss R--- S---, when not working on a new petticoat for the joiner’s apprentice Miss A--- D---, has been preparing a presentation on her visits to cloaks in New England collections.

“Mrs. C--- J--- recently surveyed every sack gown in our collection to gather data on construction details and trim treatment and found many ways that the mantua-makers can improve their historical accuracy when stitching sacks. Her work on a linen gown, copied from a printed cotton one made for her last Christmastide by Miss S---, progresses quickly.

“Miss A--- H---, after finishing a purple worsted wool gown to a point of wearability (“It’s, like, wearable? The hem has to be, like, totally cut shorter, but, like, the rest of it is finished?”), has set her

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attention to making new millinery to go with the gown. She completed the elbow ruffles yesterday and has cut out the neck tucker, “because, like, we’re totally, like, over representing handkerchiefs?” It is my personal belief that Miss H---’s new neck tucker will see no use until the weather warms, and until then Miss H--- will be expressing a preference for neck handkerchiefs for the simple utility of staying warm. A certain Mr. J--- B---, who will soon be giving up his military career for a life of carriage driving, has been buzzing around the millinery shop and bothering the apprentices to fill a most oddly shaped jar with hair powder. I am told the jar was made to contain a spicy and chunky dipping sauce from New Spain. Dearest friends, I recently came by a most intriguing missive. An apprentice with “Crow’s Toes” sent greetings to an apprentice known to have “Rocks for Brains,” as well as a “Mithras,” a “Mulled Cider,” and a “Coal Squash.” Such unflattering names must have a significance! I request that anyone with information on the potential identities of these personages discreetly contact any of my agents in town.”