

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for June 3 – 9



Apothecary – Pictured in the photo above is the latest medication that was made with the help of our guests. Can you guess what it is? Hint: it is power over nausea, and you eat it. Modern practitioners like to talk about meds being pharmaceutically elegant. If this one reminds you of creamed spinach, an eighteenth-century Apothecary might say, “It is not bad tasting, just close your eyes and eat it. You will feel better.” Progress continues with the site business records and the details to hire a new volunteer to fill Jim’s position. The Apothecaries want to thank the volunteers and Laura Viancour for sending over some chamomile and spearmint from one of the other herb gardens.

The identity of the medication above is conserve of mint, made with mint leaves and sugar. The dose was about the size of a nutmeg.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “April showers have brought May showers, from the sky at least. The Blacksmiths, shackled in moisture, have been forging their way through the thick-walled humidity only to arrive at another source of perspiration, the fire. From the fire this week, many things have risen into being and quickly fallen back into a state of oxidation. This includes curtain rods, parts for key swivels, thumb latches, shears for the Tinsmiths, spits for reflecting ovens, fire steels, and hooks, all of which are honorably bookended by nails, our Alpha and Omega.”

Tinsmith – “Speaking of all-encompassing beginnings and endings, teapots and lanterns are ushering the days in and out of the Tin Shop this week. And there’s more still-cups, saucepans, and a map case to fit the bill!”

Brickyard – The site is open rain or shine for treading clay and making bricks.

Cabinetmaker – During this week, they expect to conclude the construction of a walnut corner chair, the carved decoration of a mahogany tea chest, and the final coat of paint on a Philadelphia-style Windsor chair. Work will continue on the interior of two cabinetmaker’s tool chests and a replica spinet harpsichord.

The Department of Historic Trades and Skills would like to send best wishes to Master Cabinetmaker Kaare Lofthheim, who has retired from Colonial Williamsburg effective June 1. He leaves us after 39 years of service: his first year was spent in Landscaping, and the last 38 years in Trades.

Carpenter – The Carpenters are hewing timbers for the Gallows, finishing up the Peyton Randolph Wellhead, working on a hotbed for the Colonial Garden, and making shingles and scantling.

Farming – The very wet weather has affected the tobacco by “Frenching”, which is a yellowing and deformity of the leaves. Twenty-one plants have been replaced with those still in the seed bed. Their leaves will be smaller when cut at the end of July because they were pitched 15 days later than the others. This reduces the weight of the leaves and, therefore, the profit from a tobacco crop. This was the last chance to pitch new plants in what they called “the long season of May”, it being too late once we get into June. That’s the nature of farming, being at the mercy of Nature!

Foundry – “The Foundry finished up our parts of the portable writing desk, and the final box looks good! We are now focusing again on silver salver feet. We initially ran into some problems with "shrinkage" in the castings, but we reevaluated the setup of our moulds and temperature of our pour, and ultimately overcame. We've also been seeing more of our Junior Interpreters of late and have quickly put them to work with such character-building exercises as shoveling sand and hauling coal. Soon, they will be sand moulding their own work and honing their finishing skills. More brass casting is in the future as well as bass drum hooks for Fifes & Drums and a pair of candlesticks.

Historic Foodways – Historic Foodways is proud to announce their next conference: “Ales Through the Ages 2018” will be held October 19-21, 2018. The event offers a journey through the history of beer, with some of the world’s top beer scholars. They will explore ancient ales and indigenous beers of the past, examine the origins of brewing, and discover the ingredients brewers have used through time. Tickets are on sale now.

Joinery – “Victory is at hand! The Apprentices, who have been hard at work on their side tables for many long weeks, are now within sight of the end! To the casual observer, this may seem like just another day in the Joinery, but for the Apprentices, this was the last obstacle between them and the end of their second level of the Apprenticeship! This triumph is well-earned. Each table has been imbued with the blood of sacrifice, the sweat of industry, and the tears of bitter, bitter frustration. But no more! With this journey behind them, they can now turn their attention to... their third level of apprenticing. Onwards and upwards, Apprentices! The journey never ends.”

Military Programs – Military Programs continues to conduct their daily programming and to assist with the Musket and Ax Ranges. This past week, they have begun operating the fire engine. "The Running of the Engine" takes place daily at 2:30pm in the yard next to the Guard House.

Public Leather Works – The Public Leather Works is ramping up for another long, hot summer and are bringing up the reinforcements. Their summer Intern, Morgan, began last week and is picking up bench skills very quickly. You might also encounter her at the Shoemaker, as she will be dividing her time between the two.



Jan and Morgan in the Public Leather Works

Silversmith – George has been working on several dozen spoons for orders and for the Golden Ball. Bobbie and Chris continue working on the silver trays, with three currently underway. Megan is beginning to polish the second of the trays, while Preston finished polishing the first. That tray is now in the hands of our Journeyman Engraver, Lynn Zelesnikar, who officially joined the shop full-time this week! Additionally, Preston has been working on two ladles and several small fluted bowls, and Megan has been working on trade silver. Parker is working on several seamed cups, a small bowl, and trade silver. William is polishing trade silver, working on a silver bowl, and working on his first small batch of spoons.

Tailor – Michael is beginning work on a reconstruction of the First Dragoon Regimental Uniform, one of his final apprenticeship projects. Work continues on the Blair Suit Project.

Wigmaker – “Greetings from Oklahoma! While Sara (who is now writing these updates for the shop) is away absorbing as much knowledge as possible to bring back and share, Betty and Debbie are making sure things go smoothly on the home front. Betty has nearly completed the base of the new wig for Young Thomas Jefferson, and Debbie has completed the new wig for George Mason! Regular maintenance continues as always and has started to increase with the arrival of summer. As always, if you have any hair needs, feel free to stop by the shop or John Coke Office to talk about your options!