

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

For January 26 – February 1, 2020

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “Swords! Spears! Cannon! Now that I have your attention, I am sorry to say that none of these things were forged in the Shop this week. That said, the Smiths saw plenty of them at the American Revolution Museum on Tuesday.

“The interviews for the new Apprentice are finally over, and Journeymen and Master consider the candidates. That hasn’t stopped Mark from working on a ladle for the Tinsmiths, Aislinn on bands for a wheel hub, and Ken forging up bands for a Carpenters’ mallet and hinges galore. Owen and Alex have made up hammers for themselves and continue working on smaller projects, too. Last is Tim, with a fireplace shovel in the works. Wherever the cards may fall for the next Apprentice, they all fall well at the foot of the anvil.”

Cabinetmaker – “We here at the Hay Shop are happy to report the conclusion of another successful ‘Working Wood in the 18th Century’ Conference! The four days of pre-conference activities and classes, presentations on stage, and companion activities were very busy, but very well executed.

“The Hay Shop would like to thank all involved for their efforts, including the staff of the Cabinet Shop, Joinery, Weaver, Milliner and Mantua-maker, Steve Delisle at the Tinsmiths, Richard Sullivan at the Gunsmiths, Daniel Corneliussen of Music Programs (CW harpsichordist), the staff at the St. George Tucker House, and the Anderson Armoury for crafting woodworking tools that sold like hotcakes.

“We would also like to thank our colleagues in Collections and Conservation for their presentations and assistance with this year’s Conference, including Tara Chicirda, Chris Swan, and Rachel Asbury Cole. We also had several outside speakers this year lend their knowledge and skill, including Daniel Ackermann (Curator of Collections, MESDA), Windsor Chairmakers Elia Bizzarri and Seth Elliot, and Steve Latta of Thaddeus Stevens College. The staff at Black Creek Workshop also hosted a small group for an open house and demonstrations. We also thank our partners at the Williamsburg Lodge and Conference Center for their hospitality and work in preparing and serving meals and hosting us.

“In coordinating, arranging, and troubleshooting this massive undertaking, we would also like to specially recognize Whitney Thornberry Austin, Manager of Educational Conferences, Forums, and Symposiums, and Bill Pavlak, Master Cabinetmaker, for their efforts in running this Conference. Their work does not go unnoticed nor unappreciated by their colleagues across the Foundation.

“One last thank you to anyone we might have missed, and to all that have supported us in this yearly endeavor.”

Colonial Garden – “Winter arrived this week with very low temperatures, to which we replied with very large fires to keep us warm. Harvested and sent to the Palace this week were a lovely head of brown Dutch lettuce, borage flowers, leeks, and radishes such as Black Spanish and Bier. A lovely spot of color for the Governor’s table. Planning is on our mind for the spring Garden, as well as taking inventory of our seeds.

“Thanks to Karen at the Weaver for the thread for our straw mat project. The Carpenters brought us sawhorses to hold up the ‘machine’ that will be used to make straw mats, and we will commence shortly to try our hand. The mats are needed to insulate hotbeds and bell jars in colder months.

“Next week marks the beginning of the process of collecting horse dung to heat our hotbeds. We are gathering up the hay from the pasture that the sheep are kept in behind our Garden; and on Monday, we’ll travel to pastures that have the best leavings for our task. The two ingredients come together, and through the process of composting, create a heat that warms the hotbed so that our seeds germinate. “

Farming – “Gourdseed Corn: It’s time to pick the seed for this year’s corn crop from last year’s ears. As with all things in Trades, we try to get our objects as close to the past as possible. For Farmers, this includes living things as well. The picture of the ear of corn is a good match to that of the 18th century as it is around six-inches long and has eighteen rows, but not all of the ears gathered are like this! In fact, most are larger with more rows of corn. This, of course, is because farmers selected for ‘better’ ears for at least 200 years until this variety of corn went out of favor in the 1950’s. Ironically, CW’s Historic Farmers have been selecting for an inferior ear since we received eight seeds from the USDA seed bank in 1982. For the past 38 years, the selection process is not for bigger ears but for the right ear. This is merely one of many examples in every Trade Shop of how far we go to ‘get it right’, and in that process, deliver an experience to our Guests that is genuine and authentic. It took 200 years to get a good ear of corn. We have been at it for 38 years. Hopefully, we will get them all back to what they were in only 162 years!”



Milliner and Mantua-maker – “Dearest readers, I have heard most elaborate tales of stitchery from the Margaret Hunter Millinery Shop! Miss H--- is stitching upon a delightful blue and white striped cotton jacket suitable for our warm Williamsburg weather. She practices her hand at mantua-making by fitting any gown or jacket thrown at her by her fellow apprentices. Miss S--- remakes three gowns simultaneously: a reddish wool gown for a tradeswoman, a goldish silkish damaskish gown for an illustrious Mrs. George W--- to wear at a party in February, and a teal wool gown for herself. She will also be continuing her excursion into cloaks with a visit to The Collections--a mysterious place akin to El Dorado, with its rooms said to be full of textiles, decorative art, and the like. Mrs. J---, when not supervising Miss H---’s foray into fitting and not fitting Miss H---’s own cotton jacket, has been stitching upon a pair of striped pockets with striped pockets within the pockets and additionally bound in stripes. She also completed patterning a pair of stays and dressed the hair of Miss M--- R--- who is formally trained in cookery but is in our city commonly found in many of our most popular Sites. Mrs. W--- is not yet returned from her voyage to the south.”

Public Leather Works – “The Public Leather Works is grateful to have Jan back on light duties. He's primarily working behind the scenes on Shop administrative work. He has also attended various training sessions, as have the other members of the Shop. Andrew finished up a log carrier for the Printers and is now working on replacing some straps for one of the coaches for Coach & Livestock.”