

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

March 4, 2023

Anthony Hay Shop:

Cabinetmaker – This past week, John had been getting lots of work done on his chairs, finishing the splats, shaping out the crest rails, and beginning the glue-up process of the backs of the chairs. Bill has been puzzling out the complicated drawer to his writing table, and Jeremy has been going through chair designing, combining features he likes into something pleasing to his eye.



The Cabinetmaker and Harpsichordmaker is open Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Apothecary – Exciting news from the Shop as Sharon has recently completed her transcription of Galt-Barraud Ledger A! As the weather warms up, we're looking forward to preparing new batches of syrup of violets with the wildflowers that spring up around the Historic Area. Mark and Margaret are also on the hunt for millipedes (see: "Millepede Wine"), so if anyone has leads on millipede sightings, let us know.

The Apothecary Shop is open Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – For the last two weeks, the Armoury has undergone periodic maintenance. While the Shop was closed, we had a brief opportunity to travel as a group for study and team building – a luxury that comes infrequently to a seven-day operation like the Armoury. While we devoted part of our closing time to winter training, we also managed a research trip to Pennsylvania. Our *Mechanic's Adviser* reports for the next few weeks will share highlights of our trip and visits to collections of other museums.

I want to start by thanking the Davee Foundation for their generous support of our educational travels, and give a special thanks to Shari Monaco, Historic Trades Administrative support, for her work in finalizing

arrangements for transportation and lodging, including some last minute changes. All the arrangements worked out perfectly. Thanks, Shari!

In the course of our trip, we visited the Landis Valley Museum in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; The Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia; historic sites relating to the Muhlenberg Family in Trappe, Pennsylvania; the Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware; and the Mercer Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. I have asked each member of the travelling party to give a write-up on one of the sites and share the experiences over the next few weeks. I will be sharing our experience with Winterthur.

The Historic Trades Department has enjoyed a decades-long working relationship with Winterthur and the University of Delaware through their graduate program in Early American Decorative Arts. We have hosted University of Delaware – Winterthur graduate students for most of my forty year career here at Colonial Williamsburg. It has been a great partnership that has introduced many graduate students to pre-industrial technology and better understanding of materials, which fosters a better understanding of early material culture, strengthening their skills as curators and conservators at museums and institutions around the country. That large fellowship network has fostered the reciprocal relationships that give us extraordinary access to collections such as the ones that we visited on this trip. It is quite rewarding to see museum professionals, with whom we shared a Historic Trades experience, now managing programming, curating collections and libraries, and performing restoration and conservation on important pieces of our common material culture.

When contacting Winterthur to arrange this trip, I reached out to Metals Curator Ann Wagner, a graduate of the UDEL/Winterthur program, and she graciously welcomed us into the collection, sharing highlights of the extraordinary ironwork in the museum. Winterthur has many of the classic American iron objects from New England and the Mid-Atlantic – styles that we residents of the Chesapeake can only dream of making, since we largely have to live within Virginia's preference for the "simple, plain, and neat" style. New Englanders, the Dutch of New York, and German-influenced iron of Eastern Pennsylvania, had a much more exuberant style than the early settlers of Eastern Virginia. We do see some of the Pennsylvania German influence in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, but alas, that is a bit out of our range of influence.

For most of our time working with University of Delaware/Winterthur graduate students, the leader of the "American Craftsman before 1800" Class was Charles Hummel, Former Chief Curator and Curator Emeritus for Winterthur. Over the years, I developed a friendship and good working relationship with Charlie, and I always viewed him as a giant in the field of scholarship in Early American Industry and Technology. Charlie authored one of the best books to analyze a surviving eighteenth-century business, the Dominy Family of craftsmen from Long Island, New York, in his work titled *With Hammer and Hand*. It is a classic study of a multi-generational business that began in the mid-eighteenth century, which examines the business through documentary and material study – as do our Historic Trades workshops. Charlie's writings were a major influence on my early career and taught me how to analyze and interpret workshop records and material culture – tools and products of the shop.

Although Charlie is in his 90's and has lost much of his mobility, when I contacted him about a possible meeting during our visit, he responded "***I would love to be your host at Winterthur, but my age does not permit that. I have alerted Ann Wagner and Catherine Roeber, in the hopes that one or both may accommodate the best hand metalworkers still functioning in this country***". High praise for our program from one of the giants in our industry. Charlie did contact me to say that he could not miss us on our visit, and so we met with him for about an hour and a half in the Winterthur Library.



More on what we saw in our next MA installment.

The Blacksmith Shop is open Sunday, Monday, Friday, and Saturday.

***Tinsmith* – The Tin Shop is open Tuesday through Thursday, and Saturday.**

***Brickmaker* – The Brickyard is open Sunday through Thursday, weather permitting.**

Carpenter – This week in the Carpenters Yard, we finished hewing the locust posts for the wagon shed project for the Farm site. We also completed the framing for the Armoury gates. They still need to be hung and the pales installed. We are also starting the process of building new sawhorses. These are always something we seem to need more of.

Most importantly, we want to welcome our newest Apprentice, Shelby Christensen. She joins us originally from Michigan, where she studied Sociology at the University of Michigan. She moved to Richmond a year and a half ago with her partner and two cats. She spent a summer as an instructor at a timber framing school and has worked as a historic preservation carpenter.

The Carpenters will be at the Carpenter's Yard Tuesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

Colonial Garden – This week marks two events relating to the hotbed. The first hotbed was filled with the awaiting manure that has been heating in our back work yard. When the temperature cooled to 110F, we heaped 6-8 inches of soil on top of the manure. The next day, the hotbed measured 100F. Two days later, the hotbed was sown with parsley, calendula, various flowers, and artichoke. In preparation for the second hotbed, our entire Shop, and Summer Intern, picked up fresh horse manure from the Bassett Hall pasture.

Two large flowerpots were filled with soil and sowed with Indian Cress (*Nasturtium*) then placed in the corners of an unheated hotbed. The plants will vine out and spill out over the pathways making quite a show. Another spring activity was pruning the Muscadine grape vines on our arbor. The peach tree is the next and the last of the spring pruning, just in time as spring is arriving early. Not to be fooled, we are ever ready for an icy blast which we know is quite possible this time of year. We're happy for the fact that we have straw mats waiting in the wings to cover the hotbeds when needed.

Weeding continues as always. The asparagus bed is usually the first very weedy spot that needs attention before the spears start to appear. And yes, two asparagus spears have already poked their heads above ground.

Blooming are anemones, daffodils, tulips, Redbud tree, and wild plum. The Green Gage plum is still giving quite a show.



The Colonial Garden is open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, weather permitting.

Cooper – The Cooper Shop is open Sunday, Monday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Engraver – The Engraving Shop is open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Foodways – The Palace Kitchen is open Sunday through Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Foundry – The Foundry is open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday (11:30-4:30).

Gunsmith – The Gunsmith Shop is open Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday.

Joinery – Hello from the Joiner Shop! We've had quite a few Homeschoolers and Guests through the Shop, even with this roller coaster weather. Projects are moving along and starting to take shape. Scott's corner cupboard is living up to its name and fitting perfectly in one corner of the Shop. He's looking to have it finished by the fall.



Scott assembling the mortise and tenoned frame for the lower door of the cupboard

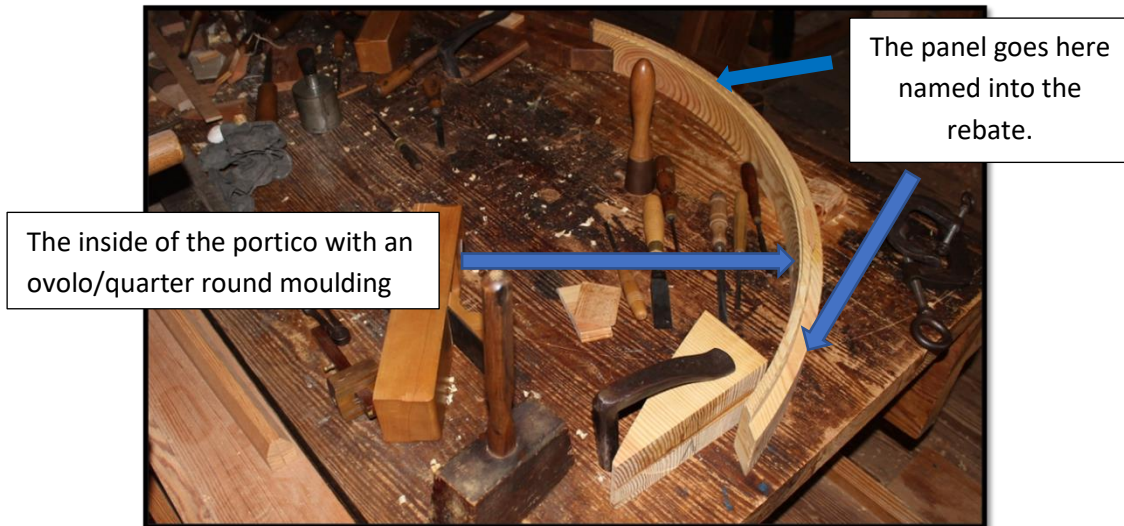


Laura is dimensioning some yellow pine stock for her work bench drawer using a marking gauge. She'll use this board for one of her drawer sides.





Brian is refining the reeding on the Warren House Pilaster using a hollow moulding plane.



The inside of the portico with an ovolo/quarter round moulding

The panel goes here named into the rebate.

Peter has sawn out the curved stiles for his portico, chopped out the mortise for the mid rail, and has secured the piece to his work bench to plane out the rebate for the panels and carving out the ovolo moulding.



Menokin Portico showing the frame and panel construction



Steve is inspecting his work on his walnut pipe box. His next step is to dovetail a small drawer.

The Joinery is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Leather Breeches Maker – The Leather Breeches Maker is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Military Programs – Military Programs staff continue to make use of their winter to attend trainings and prepare for the spring season. Staff also continue to work on their goals and projects. Kevin and Matthew are researching bat and ball games and recreational games that soldiers played, and anyone who sees military staff playing Cat on the Market Square or by the Magazine are encouraged to come and join in! Alex continues to prepare for his Hennage Talk on defending the Delaware River and other research pertaining to fortification and military engineering. Ren is working to finish their project with Michael Ramsey on the 71st Highlanders and will be going to the Archives to work on transcribing the pocketbook of John Lysle, a member of the 71st, which includes his account of the battle of Yorktown. Chris continues to learn the skills necessary to become an Armorer and is working on critically needed maintenance to the muskets in our collection to get them looking ready for our main season!

We have an adorable addition to the Military table display this week. The baby booties were made as part of a collaboration between Ren and the Shoemakers. They are a recreation of the Davenport pair by Shoemaker Apprentice Victoria. Made from scraps of British uniforms provided by Military Programs, deerskin soles, and silk ties, the original booties were made by Sgt.

James Davenport and his wife Esther from a captured British uniform. We hope to help facilitate questions and interpretation about soldier's families, camp followers, and prisoners of war, so Guests have a more holistic understanding of a soldier's life and the army as a career. A career that, for better or worse,



shaped not just soldiers' lives but that of their wives and children.

Military Interpretation at the Guardhouse is open Daily.

Milliner and Mantua-maker – The Milliner and Mantua-maker will be open Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday (9:30-3:00).

Musket Range – February is in the books, and March has arrived. Our seventh year-in-operation anniversary. We cannot wait to see what the next seven years has in store for us. We would like to introduce our new Instructor, Andy Prochnow. Andy came to us from the Florida Park Service, where he was a Park Ranger at Fort Clinch Park, which was a 3rd system fortification from the Civil War era. Andy brings us experience in the emergency services where he was a dispatcher and firefighter. He and his wife Kristian moved here recently for her job in the Navy. Help us make him feel welcome to the CWF Family.

The Musket Range is open Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday with sessions at 9:30am, 11am, 1:30pm, and 3pm.



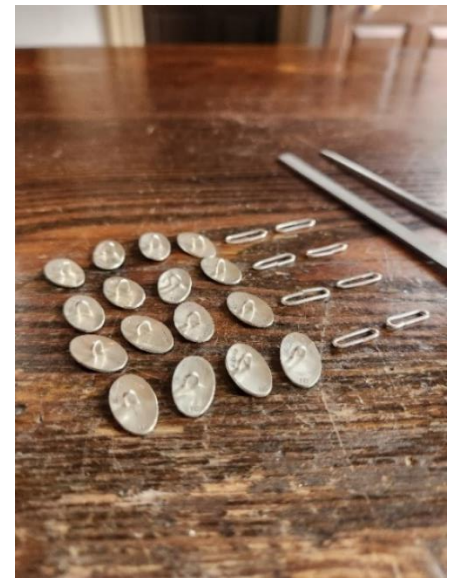
Printer and Bookbinder:

Printing Office – The Printing Office is open Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Bindery – The Bookbindery is open Tuesday through Thursday, and Saturday.

Shoemaker – The Shoemakers will be working at the Leather Breeches Maker Tuesday through Saturday.

Silversmith – A whole host of items are being created at the Silversmith Shop. Megan has filed and fit the base for her bowl and is working on polishing the bottom before soldering it into place. She is also working on her first sleeve buttons. Bobbie and Chris have finished two types of sleeve buttons for the Milliner's program. Bobbie has made silver octagonal buttons, and Chris has made them in brass. Chris is continuing to stone her tray. Bobbie is chasing and setting the well of her tray. Preston has been working on more silver bowls and helping Megan with hers. George has been hammering out another ingot that will eventually become silver sheet.



Megan's sleeve buttons in progress



Chris' sleeve buttons in progress



Bobbie's finished sleeve buttons



Preston's finished bowl (left). George annealing a silver ingot (right). The dull red color indicates it has reached 1100F.

The Silversmith Shop will be open Sunday through Thursday.

Tailor – The Tailor Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing – We have selected the date of our first Dye Day of the year: March 22nd. Over the next few weeks, we will be preparing our materials for the dye pot and cooking down dye stuffs. The preparation process takes a few days at the least, and weeks at the most. If you have anything you'd like us to dye, please bring it to us no later than the 15th.

The Weaving Shop will be open Sunday through Thursday.

Wheelwright – The Wheelwright Shop will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Wigmaker – This week has had the Wigmakers elbow deep in full bottom styling. The full bottom is a late-17th-century to early-18th-century wig that involves many loose, flowing, luscious curls (think of Captain Hook).

We're also continuing regular maintenance. Edith, Debbie, and Benton continue working on their respective projects. It's been a busy week!

The Wig Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

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

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