

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

February 18, 2022

Apothecary – The Apothecary Shop will be open Sunday, and Wednesday through Saturday.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – Greetings from the Anderson Forge! The Blacksmiths had another week of fine hardware and diligent repairs for their compatriots about town and for within the Shop. Alex has finished the order of hoes for Farmer Ed, who collected the lot of them yesterday. For the work to commence on the plow, Alex needed to forge a nail puller to remove the hardware attached. He is quite pleased with the puller and now can mend the plow by forging thin straps of iron to match the contours of the plow's mouldboard. A challenging task indeed. This week, Broadus has entered the world of National Association of Interpretation Certified Interpretive Guide training. He rejoins the Shop after a final presentation about hammers: a humble topic that highlights the importance of our world's ingenuity, a link to our collective resolve, and a way for our Guests to affirm the necessity of the Blacksmiths. Owen worked on another rake with a third lined up behind that one, soon to be completed. Mark made a fine punch for the Master Cabinetmaker Bill and continued the work on the pit saw tiller. He is also making repairs to the bellows by sorting through the hundreds of tacks, forging new ones, and also guiding Alex and Owen in the process of those bellows tacks, too. Making a bellows tack is a very small forging, while normal-size nails are forged in one heat or thirty seconds, these require two heats for the Apprentices. As they make dozens of them, they will increase their speed, no doubt. Aislinn has work to do on pipe tomahawks, bench hammers, and pattens for shoes. Master Ken has worked on a component for the Public Leatherworkers' repairs to the bellows, chisels for the Harpsichord-makers, and a hammer poll axe, while guiding Alex and Owen in their work. Finally, we would be remiss not to mention the Brickmakers: Master Josh stopped by last week to have one of their line pins straightened and copies made of their small tools. He left wholly satisfied, for all's well that falls well at the foot of the anvil, no matter the size.



Alex's new nail puller, used to remove nails, on top of the plow's mouldboard with one of the iron straps.



A meager portion of the bellows tacks made by Alex and Owen so far.



One of the Small Tools made for the Brickmakers. Notice the bends and flat pointed ends.

The Blacksmith Shop will be open Daily.

Tinsmith – This week in the Tin Shop, Steve has been busy working on the Palmer House lantern project as well as constructing new air pipes for one of the Armoury’s forges. Jenny has been researching the tin trade, specifically shipping, and working on box construction. Joel has continued to work with a new paint medium to see its effectiveness for the Shop’s needs, constructing lids for saucepans, as well as participating in NAI CIG training for ERHI staff.

The Tin Shop will be open Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Anthony Hay Shop – **The Cabinetmaker and Harpsichord-maker Shop will be open Sunday through Thursday.**

Brickmaker – Oh what a week we’ve had in Masonry Trades! First, Apprentices Madeleine and Nick got a chance to play at being Carpenters, a task made all the easier under the paternal guiding hand and watchful eye of Journeyman Carpenter Bobby Clay. Nick was successful cutting some interrupted studs for the Carpenters’ Innermost House project, while Madeleine made the wood chips fly with a mortising chisel. Master Josh and Journeyman Kenneth were relegated to being muscle, as suits their combined athletic frames.

Meanwhile, the first few loads of beautiful clay have arrived for the 2022 brickmaking season, and the Apprentices couldn’t be happier! We offer a figurative tip-of-the-hat to our friends at the Branscome Materials Charles City operation, who never get weirded out by our super-specific requests for clay.





Carpenter – At the Carpenter’s Yard this week, we are finishing up the last of the bracing and studs for the Innermost House frame. We will complete the frame by early next week.

The dormer window that was installed on the saw house two years ago was removed by one of our Brickyard Brethren this week, as well. The experiment was a success. We were very happy with the performance of both methods of waterproofing. It needed to be removed for some site work that will eventually need to be done to help tie the new Brickyard to the existing Carpenter’s Yard.

Next week, we will be organizing the Innermost House for shipping it out and organizing the next framing material, which will arrive onsite next week. As big of a yard as it is, it will have three full frames-worth of material on it. Stop in and say hi if you can find us in between the piles of framing.



The Carpenter’s Yard will be open Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday through Saturday, weather permitting. On Wednesday, February 23rd, at 4:00pm in the Hennage Auditorium, the Carpenters will present “How Did They Survive?” for Black History Month. Join Journeyman Carpenter Ayinde Martin as he discusses enslaved people in Colonial Virginia and the survival techniques and skills they possessed.

Colonial Garden – This week, the Gardeners planted pease (*Pisum sativum*) in the Garden as we usually do this time every year. It was dry enough that we could work the soil, and with the help of our NIAHD Volunteer, Kira, the rows were marked, and the seed sown. We strive to sow the seed as early as possible, much like the competition between Thomas Jefferson and his neighbor to see who could bring forth the first pea of the season. The trellis will come later as the Sycamore trees are being pollarded for their sticks this very week.

The project at hand is watching the compost for the hotbed heat up. The temperature today is a little over 135 degrees F. In the morning, steam can be seen rising from the pile. This year, we have inserted an iron bar in the pile that will heat with the pile, and then, when it is withdrawn daily, we can see how hot it has become. The Gardener will be able to ascertain whether the pile is continuing to heat or cool. When the temperature recedes, this is an indication that the pile needs to be turned. Once again, learning a process without using modern tools such as a thermometer. A good teaching moment, but one that will not replace the thermometer, for obvious reasons.

The birds are pairing up and have become active around the Garden. We look forward to their antics and welcome their voracious appetites as they can consume an enormous number of insects. Cleanup and pruning continue. When the plants are dormant, it is time to prune. This is nice work when the weather is nice. Many thanks to Joseph in Coach & Livestock for bringing the leavings from the sheep pastures. We are amassing a huge compost pile that will provide useful compost for the Garden. Spring is on its way!

The Colonial Garden will be open on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, weather permitting.

Cooper – The Cooper Shop is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Engraver – In the Engraving Shop this week, William finished up several trade silver items for the Silversmith Shop and continued to dig a little deeper into William Waddill's family connections. He is trying to build a bigger picture of Waddill and his connections here in Williamsburg and see if he can find out more about his business and extended family.

Lynn has been finishing up a presentation piece and working with Erica (Intern) on building monograms and looking and comparing 18th-century styles to later 19th- and 20th-century styles. Her drawing of monograms has begun and is coming along nicely. Lynn is also putting together a timeline and looking into Ann Geddy's life and her time running the Geddy business for a future Women's program. We have also assisted this week at the Foundry, as the Apprentices there have been in NAI training.





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

Fifes & Drums – Fifes and Drums continues to work toward picking out its new recruit class of 2022, which should be one of the biggest ever! We have also welcomed back the Senior Corps in time to perform for the upcoming President's Day celebration. Finally, we are working toward plans for this year's upcoming *Drummer's Call* event, our first in-person since the pandemic.

Foodways – The Foodways Staff will be at the Palace Kitchen Sunday through Wednesday, and Saturday.

Foundry – The Foundry will be open Sunday, Monday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Gunsmith – The Gunsmith Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.

Historic Farming – Plowing is coming soon at Prentis Field, and Blacksmith Alex Hinman is doing some repairs on our plow's mouldboard. This plow is a replica made from an original in the collections of the Landis Valley Farm and Museum in Pennsylvania. It is the only known reproduction of a barshare-type plow in America. Retired Historic Farmer Wayne Randolph did extensive research on it; Steve Chabra made the wood parts; Ken Schwarz worked on the metal parts for us; and Ed trained the oxen to pull it. The first furrow was plowed in October of 2008. It took us a couple of years to tweak the settings on it, but we have been plowing well with it for 14 years. There is a 150-year-old-plus British saying that I use every year when plowing starts: **"Speed the Plow!"**



Alex Hinman is replacing the sheathing strips on the mouldboard, 2022.



Ed was training little two-year-old Duke and Dan in 2008.



The first furrow was plowed by Wayne Randolph in 2008.

Joinery – The Joinery will be open Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Milliner and Mantua-maker – The Milliner will be open Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

Music – The Governor’s Musick ensemble is busy preparing for the spring season. Brady and Karol are in much-overdue NAI certification training this week and will be able to rejoin the ensemble next week. The Governor’s Musick will be reviving a new version of our *Women in Early Music* program in honor of Women’s History Month, and this will be at the Raleigh Tavern Apollo Room on March 16, 23, 26, and 30. Shows will begin at 1:00pm and 3:00pm and last 45 minutes. Amy has written a realization of the figured bass for Karol aria, “Amor commanda” from Handel’s opera *Florimante* for this program. In April, the Governor’s Musick will be at the Raleigh Tavern on Wednesday afternoons and will have two Palace Concerts a week on Tuesdays and Saturdays, which will let guests out each night just as CW Lights opens. For the rest of the Spring, Governor’s Musick will have Palace Concerts on Tuesdays.

The Governor’s Musick has been called upon to help out other Departments. Last week, Amy made a recording of three country dances for Sarah Andrews for use during the Home Educator’s experience February 26 through March 6. Sarah has junior interpreter dancers in the Palace Gardens dancing to these tunes from 10:00am to 4:00pm daily during this time. This week, Amy made a recording of the country dance, “Well-hall”, from Playford’s *Dancing Master* at Jamie Fore’s studio for a new show that Alex Morse is putting together for the spring. Amy is still helping out at Fifes and Drums by passing tunes to Rebecca Sterner and is spending her Fridays making repairs to costuming at the Costume Design Center. Jenny and Amy will be playing Friday morning in the Leckie Gallery of the Museum when Donor Mosey Leckie will be there with a group of people. Amy has been practicing a little harpsichord, and she and Jenny have practiced some duets to do for Ms. Leckie.

The Governor’s Musick is also busy planning and preparing for the year. Amy is working to plan out the rest of the year with Evening Programs. Jenny has been working to keep up her violin playing skills on the repertoire chosen for our upcoming concerts and is also working her vocal muscles to keep her voice in shape. One never knows when one will be called upon to sing a catch, glee, madrigal, or even aria duet, and Jenny is always ready to step up to that plate.

Winter is almost over, and the Governor's Musick is looking forward to all the wonders of spring, the warmer weather; the bulbs, shrubs, and trees in bloom; the birth of baby lambs, and all the optimism these elements of nature inspire in us all.

Musket Range – The Musket Range continues to prepare for our upcoming seminar in March, aimed at teaching Firearm Safety to Museum and Living History Professionals. We are also looking forward soon to hiring a Musket Range Supervisor. Last year turned out to be almost our best year ever, with the total number of tickets sold only 50 fewer than in 2016, and that was with almost 2000 fewer tickets available!

Printer and Bookbinder:

Printing Office – The Printing Office will be open Saturday. It will be closed February 20-25 for annual maintenance.

Bindery – The Bookbindery will be open Saturday. It will be closed February 20-25 for annual maintenance.

Public Leather Works – Due to the maintenance shut down, the Public Leather Works is doing some work for our pals at the Public Armoury and putting new leather on some bellows. We give a shout out to Mark and Aislinn for demo and prep, getting them ready for us. This was Emma's first experience with the Joy of bellows. We will be back in the Shop just in time for Home Educator's Week.



The Public Leather Works will be closed February 20-25 for annual maintenance.

Shoemaker – The Shoemakers at the Armoury are closed this week.

Silversmith – The Silversmiths are very busy pouring ingots, forging, filing, and polishing their plethora of projects. Chris's teapot is coming along well, as are George's cups and Preston's small bowls. Bobbie and Megan are working on saw piercing and filing a large number of letter charms. Bobbie is also turning a new handle for a silver ladle. The ladle was a reproduction made for use as a prop; and after many years of being

handled, knocked about, and gestured with, it began to split. The new handle is looking quite lovely and quite sturdy. Megan continues forging her silver ingot into sheet and has cast five more ingots, two copper and three silver. The largest of the copper ones will be used for practicing forging down at the Blacksmith Shop. A new, thin ingot mold was cast into with silver after having successfully been used for Chris Custalow's copper pour a few months ago. We are incredibly pleased with this new mold.



Bobbie's ladle handle



The copper ingots along with a nugget of overspill



The silver ingot from the thin mold

The Silversmith Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

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

Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing – The Weaving Shop will be open on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Wheelwright – The Wheelwright Shop will be open Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

Wigmaker – This week, Edith completed her base for Robert's wig and will begin adding the rows of hair that Benton has already woven. The alteration to Mike's wig was completed, and now Debbie will ply her fingers to weaving hair with Benton. Our goal is to complete Robert's wig in the next week or two. Edith has been in contact with some international museums in an effort to plan a future trip for the Shop, but more to come on that. Maintenance continues as the typical Virginia weather fluctuates, and we're teased with a hint of Spring.



The Wig Shop will be open on 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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