

THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

July 18, 2022

Anthony Hay Shop:

Cabinetmaker – This week around the Cabinet Shop, John and Jeremy have been playing with seed-lac. Seed-lac is the raw form of finish known commonly today as shellac. It is a resin produced by the lac bug in India as part of its life cycle. The resin forms a protective shell



around these bugs while they feed on lac trees, and after the bugs die, the resin is broken off the tree branches. This removed resin is then crushed and washed to produce seed-lac. Here in the Shop, we then dissolve seed-lac into alcohol to produce a glossy surface finish, or spirit varnish.



This week's primary efforts have been focused on applying finish to the mahogany apothecary chest which John and Jeremy reproduced. The seed-lac has really been able to bring out the unique grain texture of this wood, as well as deepen the rich red color of the mahogany. Several light coats are carefully applied with a brush at first, followed by extremely light coats using a rubbing pad in order to control the final appearance. The entire thing will then be covered

with a thin coat of furniture wax for a final polish.

Harpichord-maker – From the harpsichord corner ... Our work of late has been varied and productive. It's all about veneer and lids. Melanie has been creating a recreation of the nameboard from the 1726 Cawton Aston spinet, with boxwood, holly, black-dyed holly, walnut veneers, and walnut feather pattern borders. We include pictures of the finished work with the original nameboard that was our exemplar. It is striking to see that arrangement looking so new and neat.

Sara has created her own first essays into veneer and inlay work, inspired by her attending the Marquetry and Inlay Conference at Winterthur Museum at the end of April. Walnut veneers, maple stringing, polished with oil, which makes everything stand out boldly.

Thanks to the good work of our colleagues at the Foundry, we finally found time to fit up the lids to the spinet finished in 2019 that now stands in our wareroom. The brasses really stand out against the deep walnut woodwork. Save for the installation of a lock, the 2019 spinet stands ready for sale. Anyone interested?

For the newest 2022 spinet, we've re-sawn and glued up the panels for another lid. The boards all came from a single board of local walnut that the Shop has had stashed away for 10 years. The edges of the boards are planed very accurately and glued up with hot hide glue. The next step will be to cut out the profile to fit the case and plane everything clean. It's going to be pretty.

Lastly, we spent a month servicing the 1994 Hansen and Wright spinet that our musicians use as a practice/rehearsal instrument. Deep cleaning (twice!), cleaning rust from tuning pins, re-gluing popped

veneers, and a completely new set of strings. Plus, a check of the interior by a very non-18th-century endoscope to make sure all looked structurally secure, and it is. We hope the spinet will continue to be useful for Kyle Collins and the other musicians.



2019 spinet finished and for sale



2019 Spinet new lid with new brasses



Melanie's nameboard



Melanie's nameboard in progress



Cawton Aston nameboard 1726



Sara's veneer



Sara's veneer in progress

Best to all, come and visit us at the Cabinet Shop.

The Cabinetmaker and Harpsichord-maker are open Daily.

Apothecary – Sharon is now back from a long, relaxing vacation and is getting back into the swing of things. She would like to extend her thanks to the Volunteers who stepped up and helped to cover shifts, especially over July 4th. Margaret has been busy trying out a new receipt. They are lozenges of the compound powder of gum tragacanth. The first batch wasn't as good as the second. They are messy and not as easy to make as most lozenges. The lozenges are supposed to help soften and thicken areas with thin, acrimonious humors (like irritated throats from postnasal drip) and protect the digestive tract from becoming damaged by those same fluids. Summer Workshops have been going



well, and we have had a number of modern-day pharmacists participating to learn the "old ways".

The Apothecary Shop will be open Tuesday (11:30-5:00), Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Armoury:

Blacksmith – Guests pass through, and sometimes return, but the smiths all remain if there's still coal to burn. Sure of eye and steady of hand, the file and vise at their command, white work was a major demand. To brighten and smooth, or carve in a groove, the file is a champion truly. Chisels from Ken, Mark's ferrules, and then, Aislinn's small tongs all were polished up coolly. Josh's drop leaf hinges, Alex's ladles at the fringes, and Owen's spits were a bit more unruly. Broadus worked nice and neat, a kettle near complete, with ears and a bail for the Printers. Bolts, hammers, and axes, as the moon wanes and waxes, all forged out this week. But if it's iron you seek, there is no mystique when all's well that falls well at the foot of the anvil.

The Blacksmith Shop will be open Daily.

Tinsmith – At the Tin Shop this week, Steve held the fort alone with a modified schedule "for reasons beyond our control", continuing work on the Fort State Historic Park order and various items for co-workers.

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

Brickmaker – This week in the Brickyard was rather eventful as the joyous day had finally arrived, the drying shed raising! We put down our shovels and covered our sun-drying bricks in preparation to aid the Carpenters. Although, we were surprised by how many of our friends in the Trades Department arrived to help us, which greatly improved our operation all through the day. The raising went rather quickly, which meant there was time for yard upkeep. While Master Josh practiced his sewing skills, Hugh worked on his shin sun. Otherwise, our Summer Casuals got to be involved in the raising and committed to being on-call trainee Carpenters quite well. But alas, the fun and merriment could only last so long, so we returned to our normal operations.

In our absence, the pit clay acquired a most undesirable odor which made itself known quite soon after the edge clay was removed. Every so often, the pit clay gifts us with such smells, but we've yet to divine a meaning.



The Brickyard will be open Sunday through Thursday, weather permitting. On Tuesday, July 19th, at 4:30 pm in the Hennage Auditorium, the Brickmakers will present, “Who Designed This Place? Architects and Design in the 18th Century.” Join Master Bricklayer Josh Graml as he explores how 18th-century buildings were designed and built as gentlemen architects plied their trade in Virginia. Where did their design inspirations come from? And how did they translate English architectural forms to Virginia-born tradesmen? Let’s find out!

Carpenter – This week in the Carpenters Yard, we had the big task of raising the Brickyard drying house. We want to thank all that came out and helped raise the two walls. The walls went up in just under an hour. After they were raised and braced, we got the joists up and bolted the posts down. Then we were able to back fill the holes. The false plates were installed, and the short walls pegged tight. Our goal for Friday is to get the rafters up and braced and the studs for the gables installed. It’s been a busy week, but one we’ve been working towards for a few months now. Though the frame is raised, we aren’t quite done yet. We’ve got many more days on the building, covering the roof, sides, and flooring. Be sure to stop in and see how it’s going.



The Carpenter’s Yard will be open Tuesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

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Colonial Garden – With the summer heat comes the rain and then the weeds. Fortunately, our Summer Interns, Kira and Andrew, are ready with trowels as soon as the rains are over. The weeds don't stand a chance. In the Sankofa Heritage Garden, the millet is blooming and showing signs of maturing seed. Peanuts are blooming and will start to send down pegs to make peanuts, and the okra is doing what it does best in the heat, produce. Sesame pods have begun to take shape on the stalks and promise to make quite a show in the Garden. The cymlin and maycock squash are covered in blossoms, which quickly turn into mature vegetables. We spotted a Monarch butterfly in the Garden today, their preferred food is Milkweed, and we are happy to report that we have a nice stand of plants for them to enjoy. The milkweed has also produced two large seed pods.

Cucumbers have begun to ripen, and we sent off to the Kitchen cucumber, garlic, squash, okra, and parsley. A second basket was filled for the Governor's Palace Kitchen, which contained onions, garlic, and beets. Chef Vicki brought two Culinary Interns to the Garden to harvest bay leaves and take a tour of the Sankofa Garden. They took with them Celosia, which is cooked like spinach (Efo Shoko) in Africa, and some of the African basil. We planted more carrots, beets, and turnips. With the heat, the turnips were sowed, watered in, and then covered with a frame that supports a straw mat which shades the seed bed. This provides at least a 20-degree difference from ground exposed to the summer sun and allows for germination to occur.



Millet seed



Stand of millet in the Sankofa Garden



Milkweed seed pod



Vegetables for the Palace Kitchen

The Colonial Garden will be open Daily, weather permitting.

Cooper – The Coopers continue to work on the tubs that we are making for the Weavers to use in dyeing fabrics. Jacqueline has been focusing on making buckets as part of the development of her skills. We also repaired a bucket for Foodways this week. Ongoing research includes looking into how coopers were associated with outfitting vessels built in Virginia shipyards, and in preparing for a presentation on Adam Waterford to be given this fall at the Hennage.

The Cooper Shop will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Engraver – This week in the Engraving Shop: Erica had a chance (on our Research Day) to try her hand at the copperplate press! Erica worked with Lynn to learn the steps in warming, inking, cleaning, paper prep, and printing two copper plates she has recently completed. It was a great success! Erica is picking up the engraver's trade with ease. Also this week, she has been working and making great progress on her monogram designs. We will be talking about and planning her next project right away.

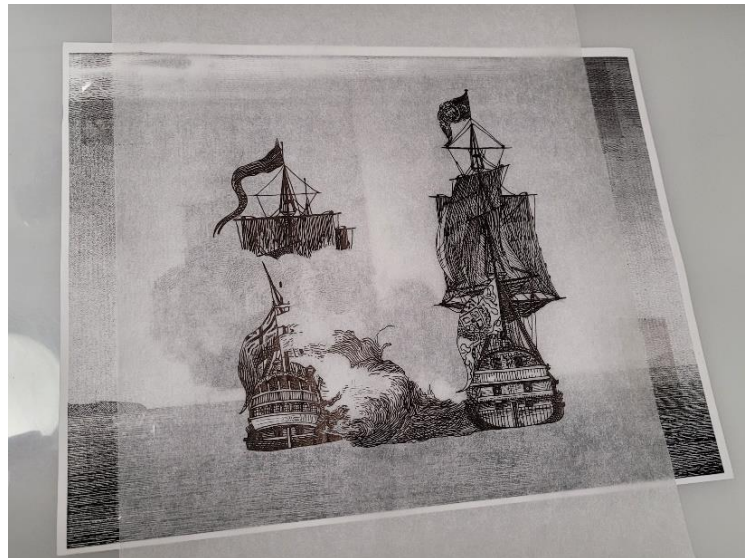
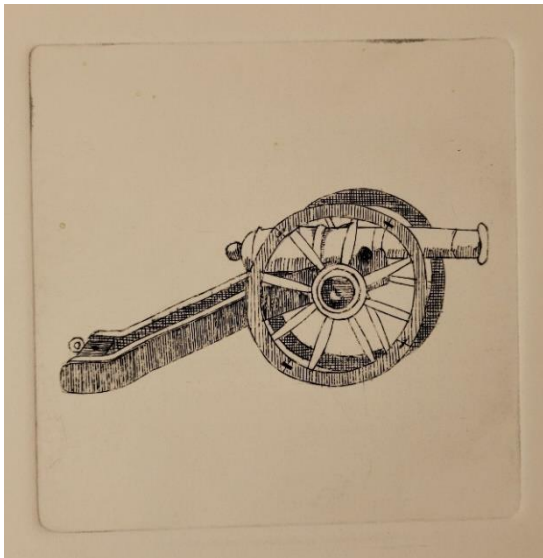


William has been making progress on his new drawing of his ship print. This one, based on the original print, will contain much more detail. He has also been steadily working on his cutting script lettering and monograms, which are improving, and has begun a new, small copperplate of a monster. The 18th-century monsters seem to have these very human-like eyes. Very interesting.

Lynn has been working on setting up and has started cutting eight graduation cups for some of the Fifes and Drums graduates. Also, a ring has been engraved for the Silversmiths. For the Shop's next Hennage talk coming up in August, William will be working with the Foundry for a joint presentation on the



sundial project the two Shops are working on. So, Research Days lately have been filled with drawings, writing up programming, and printmaking.





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

Foodways – The Foodways Staff will be at the Palace Kitchen Sunday through Thursday.

Foundry – The Foundry will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday (11:30-5:00).

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

Historic Farming – Ed attended the bi-annual meeting of the Tidewater Agricultural Network this week at the Accokeek Foundation/National Colonial Farm in Maryland on July 12th. This network is comprised of historic sites that have active agricultural programs, and the focus of the meetings is agriculture. He founded this group of twenty-five members from eight different 17th- and 18th-century historic sites in the Tidewater region of Virginia and Maryland in 2018 to facilitate a network of sites doing similar programming. The Accokeek Foundation shared its very interesting programming that is focused not only on 18th-century history, but also on Indigenous and African American culture, and sustainable and regenerative methods of farming.



Agricultural Specialist KC Carr gives a tour of the Accokeek Foundation's agricultural programming

Prentis Field will be open Tuesday through Saturday, weather permitting.

Joinery – Please welcome our new Apprentice, Laura Hollowood, to the Joiner’s Shop! You may recognize her time as an Orientation Interpreter. She comes to the Shop with a great deal of hand skills and interpretive experience, having worked at Gunston Hall, Mount Vernon, and at the Smithsonian Institute. Please drop by to say hello and wish her well.



Several weeks ago, Scott Krogh finished work on his reproduction of the Finnie House fireplace mantle. He presented it to the Guests at this past January’s *Woodworking Symposium*. We’ll keep it here in the Shop on display for a few months, but then we’ll look to sell it. It would be a great addition to anyone’s home.



Scott’s now working on an Eastern Shore Corner Cupboard. Stay tuned as the project develops! Peter, Laura, and Brian took a study trip to Menokin Plantation to measure the vaulted archway and fan light from the house. If you’re unfamiliar with Menokin, it was the plantation home of Francis Lightfoot Lee, built in 1769 near Warsaw, Virginia.



Alice French, Menokin's Director of Education and Programming, in the pink hard hat, took Laura, Peter, and Brian on a hard-hat tour of the house's ruin from basement to second floor.



In 1968, the paneling and interior woodwork was removed and placed in storage. For Peter's final project as an Apprentice, he's studying vaulted archways and curved woodwork. We have samples of this work at the Raleigh tavern and the Capitol, but since the woodwork was removed from Menokin in 1968, it gives an opportunity to study construction techniques.



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

Military Programs – After a busy time last week, Military Programs is back in the swing of it. Ren has been working on a quartermaster’s stable jacket and watering cap for the 17th Light Dragoons. Just a few finishing touches are left to be done with regimental buttons and silver lace to indicate rank. Thursdays, the military hairdressing at the Wigmakers has continued to go very well. On Wednesday and Thursday, the staff did our Recruiting Party program as part of our 10 am “Military Activities.” This program has continued to improve and has been well received each time. Alex’s mother caught several images of our Thursday’s program. The staff has been approved to go to the Frontier Culture Museum on the weekend of August 27th. Members of the staff will be portraying soldiers of the State Garrison Regiment in the summer of 1780 as they guarded over and moved prisoners across Virginia. We have begun to prepare and gather our supplies for the coming “campaign.” The staff is continuing to work toward a skills ladder.



Ren's watering cap and stable jacket



Thursday's Recruiting Campaign

Milliner and Mantua-maker – Friday is Monday in Millineryland, so the highlight of our week on Tuesday, which was our Friday, was a special trip to Collections. The expedition was successful. With a dozen scraps of silk to choose from, the silk fabric was found to match the braid on a Pelisse. This fashionable high
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waisted woman's coat is a circa-1819 deep gold silk that will grace the new Costume exhibit. We will be making a big silk and straw hat and will use some of our vintage woven straw braid (It has been in the Shop for about 50 years, as one can see from the 1976 hand-typed invoice. Milliners throw very little away.) and vintage straw flowers from the 1960's or 1970's or earlier (bought at the Los Angeles Millinery Supply Company about 10 years ago) to decorate this confection. The pelisse is small, and the hat that was in vogue at the time was pretty big, so our challenge will be to follow the fashion but not overwhelm the mannequin. So Janea has spent time on the Internet looking at original hats in various museum collections, looking up historical definitions for fabrics described in late 1810's fashion plates, and generally having a really fun time. We'll share more pictures as the hat materializes.

In other news, Kate is stitching channels for stays, Rachel is powering through bedgowns for our fellow Tradeswomen and continuing to work with Nicole Brown on the Bray School Project, and Rebecca is on vacation. And today, our Junior Interpreter, Summer, has come to spend time with us. She is making a cap of fine muslin.



The Milliner and Mantua-maker will be open Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Music – Greetings from the Governor's Musick! Our new Harpsichordist, Kyle Collins, gave his first Hennage presentation last week, on battle sonatas written for the keyboard. These battle sonatas were musical descriptions of battles, from the call-to-arms to the onset of fighting, to mourning the fallen, and the rejoicing of the victors. It was a wonderful program on a relatively unknown musical genre, and Kyle did a great job! Our next Hennage presentation is Jenny's Catch Club program. Participation in these singing societies was a favorite pastime for many of the gentry, and they resulted in a wealth of musical material. You may recognize a tune or two—

Our program on the Virginia gentry's favorite diversions opens in a week, and we are all researching our parts of the interpretative speeches that accompany the music. Wealthy Virginians enjoyed hunting, making and listening to music, drinking, dancing, and, of course, it was all made possible by the popularity of tobacco.

Good health to all.

Printer and Bookbinder:

Printing Office – The Press, this week and next, is completing 2000 copies of Alexander Purdie's *POSTSCRIPT* containing Virginia's "Declaration of Rights," an essential step before Virginians write their Constitution. Copies are available for the public to purchase at Prentis Store.



Photos credit: etaoin shrldu

The Printing Office will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday (11:30-5:00), and Saturday.

***Bindery* – The Bookbindery will be open Sunday (11:30-5:00), Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.**

Public Leather Works – Greetings! We at the Public Leather Works have been keeping busy with odds and ends. We had a changing of Interns this week, bidding a fond farewell to Jamie. Italia, who is finishing her first week, has learned the joys of sharpening tools and the very start of stitching in leather. She has also emersed herself in the research side of our work and recently has been reading Joseph Plumb Martin's *Private Yankee Doodle*. Emma has been working on patterning a soft sided valise, a piece of luggage, based off an original belonging to George Washington.



The biggest news in our Shop is that our dirty bench has undergone a massive overhaul! The dirty bench has been in the Shop for a very, very long time and is used when we apply dye, wax, oil, etc. It had gotten to the point where the surface was so uneven and had so much gunk built up, we needed help! The Wheelwrights had some time and came to the rescue. Under the direction of Master Paul, Apprentice Murphy worked wonders with the bench! We observed a slight confusion working with a square bench rather than a round wheel, but it was fleeting. The result was miraculous, and we have been using it with great results! Thank you to Murphy for all the hard work. A round of applause for the Wheelwrights! ... I'll see myself out...

As always, if you need anything let us know.

A corner of the bench, pre work



The new and improved bench!

The Public Leather Works will be open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Shoemaker – Val helped with the drying shed raising and will spent some of last Friday doing the UKG online training. Victoria has been looking into infant footwear and has been N.A.I. recertified. Victoria also spent some time copying notes regarding the making of slippers. Following a recommendation from a Guest, Nicole just finished reading *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen Paperback*, by Christopher McDougall. In the book, the author writes about running among indigenous people and how the footwear worn, affects performance. Val and Nicole also went over the making of pesch heels, and she presently has a pair in the press. The heels consist of leather shavings and starch paste, which are then compressed. When dry, they are the base for the covered heel. Val and Nicole also went over the making of white wax, beeswax and rosin, which are placed into a bag and then beaten into a paste. We use the wax for the finer work that we periodically do.

In the Shop, Victoria has begun working on her slippers. Nicole has finished repairs for Alex Hinman and has almost completed a pair of pumps for Mike McCarty. Val is working on a pair of shoes for Steve Delisle and is almost done with repairs for Robert Weathers.

The Shoemakers will be at the Armoury on Sunday, Monday (11:30-5:00), Thursday, and Saturday.

Silversmith – The Silversmiths are busy as usual with their list of projects. Tam is soldering her first silver rings and piercing letter charms for the store. Preston is showing Megan how to hammer up her first piece of silver holloware, a 5-inch Gurney bowl, and is continuing work on his fluted bowls. Megan is polishing spoons and making bottle tickets for the shop. Chris is working on chasing in the silver tray body before soldering the rim to the piece and making silver rings for the shop. Bobbie has soldered the rim to her silver tray and is now working on cleaning it up. George has been forging out more ingots for spoon blanks. Reading continues on trade silver and jewelry.



Tam soldering silver rings



George forging out another ingot for spoon blanks



Bobbie's tray: The iron clips are holding the silver rim in place so that it can be soldered together.



Three gurney bowls in progress: The left and middle are Megan's first silver bowls. The right is Preston's bowl that he is showing Megan how to create.



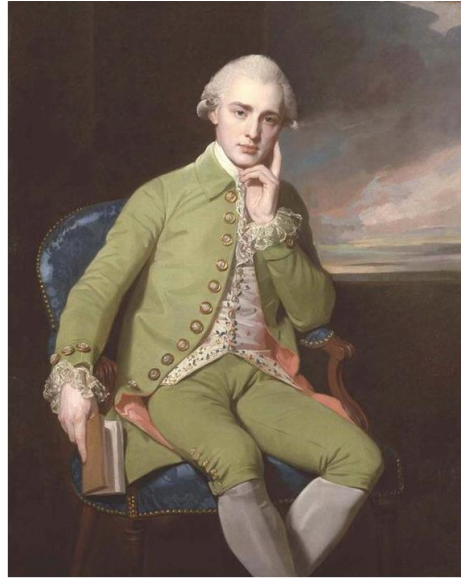
Tam's first silver rings

The Silversmith Shop will be open Sunday through Wednesday, Thursday (11:30-5:00), and Saturday.

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Tailor – Visitation in the Tailor Shop has continued to be busy after the Fourth of July Holiday. Even with many Guests, the Tailors are staying busy with projects. Journeyman McCarty and Master Hutter have been working on a coat inspired by fashionable accounts from 1773 and a portrait by George Romney.



A perfect color combination for a London or Williamsburg Spring!

Intern Patten has been working on a pair of summer breeches. They are made from a light weight, but sturdy, hemp and cotton blend fabric. Summer clothes were often made up as “washing garments.” This meant they were constructed to hold up to repetitive wearing and laundering.



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

Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing – Pamela's first project is off the loom! Soon, the approximately 18 yards of beautiful blue and white "log cabin" check will be making its way down to the Milliners to become clothing for our staff. We're all very proud of her! The loom that had held her project is now being set up with a fine cotton dimity, and another is already up and running in the front room. We expect the newer of

the two to be up and running in a few days, and we're already working on the next project to come after our dueling dimities. Like turning wool into yarn, our Shop keeps right on spinning!

The Weaving Shop will be open Tuesday through Saturday.

Wheelwright – Repairs and nearly completed projects at the Deane Shop this week! Master Wheelwright Paul is currently disassembling the Powder Magazine hand cart to replace its rotten components with hammer and saw, as seen in the pictures below. With many cases of rot damage, more replacement parts of the vehicle might be necessary as he takes it apart. But since most of the vehicle remains in good condition, Paul won't have to replace entire components, only the offending areas. And with a fresh coat of paint, it'll be good as new. If weather allows next week, the hay cart project will be given some more coats of Spanish brown paint and delivered to Coach and Livestock. Fingers crossed on the forecast! The Apprentices are also working on the respective joinery of their Market House hand cart. Both Paul and Murphy are continuing to research the Plow project for Prentis Field, while Joel is looking into sources regarding paint and paint making.



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

Wigmaker – Hello from the Wig Shop! This past week, we welcomed Edith back after a very long two weeks. After allowing us to live vicariously through her visit to the MET to look at the ancient Egyptian wig they have on display, she jumped right back into the wig for Mr. Jefferson and has been weaving more hair to be applied to the nape. She also jumped right back into maintenance. Benton has been separating horsehair diligently for his Brigadier wig. He has also been experimenting with an older wig we have in our collection, trying to determine the best way to style it for display. Debbie's demo base is coming along. The outline tape is in place, and she continues to knot in circles. Another dozen rows (about three hours' worth of knotting... maybe) should find it at a finishing point. We are also in preparation mode for our Fall Workshop, hashing out which activities to offer and what supplies are needed. Maintenance is steady as the summer heat and humidity continue to wreak havoc on everyone's hair, and we encourage our colleagues to bring in their wigs and hairpieces more often than may seem necessary. As always, please feel free to reach out with any tonsorial needs, no matter how small or large.

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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