

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

For March 8 - 14, 2020

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “The Blacksmiths had a wide range of work to tackle this week. The Cabinetmakers had small favors to ask: some dainty holdfasts, and tiny L-head nails, too. The holdfasts were taken up by Ken and Alex, and the nails were Mark’s purview. Fine work, too, repairing locks and forging a key, were Ken’s chief concern. Aislinn’s been locked away, too, filing and fitting the final portfolio lock. Mark was on guard, doing hilt work for a sword. Blades were another theme for the week, though in Aislinn’s and Alex’s case, they were blades for slices (called spatulas nowadays), and in Tim’s case the blade of a fire shovel. Owen’s work was a mix of spoons, curtain rods, and the unglamorous but very necessary work of cutting down bar for use. Alex’s shutter dogs keep barking, though hopefully finished soon, and Tim got a handle on his hammer. Big or small, for Bill or Paul, you can see it all fall well at the foot of the anvil.”

Carpenter – “The Carpenters are spending most of our time making materials for the new Brickyard drying shed, including splitting and knifing shingles, hewing timber for the sawpit, and splitting clapboards. We repaired the outdoor worktables at the Geddy site and built the Garden a set of sawhorses to set their mat loom on. We have been visiting our friends in Archeology to examine tools in their collection.”



Colonial Garden – “Our week began with a grafting workshop, where we sharpened our skills of both cleft and whip grafting of apple trees. Rollin Wooley, who is retired from the Landscape Department, taught the class. The apple trees at Great Hopes were recipients of the cleft graft technique, where we replaced one variety of apple for a more disease resistant variety. Whip grafted trees were potted up with apple varieties such as Ashmeads Kernel, Pomme Gris, and Roxbury Russet. Mr. Wythe (Robert Weathers) joined us as we know that Mr. Wythe was quite adept at grafting. We now wait to see if our cuts were exact and our grafts take. A precise match of wood from both stock and graft has to be made in order for the graft to be successful.





“As the weather is warming, we continue to harvest. The cauliflower and Tuscan Cole will be delivered to Chef Mathias at the Inn to be added to the larder. To the Palace Kitchen, salad greens will go along with onion and cauliflower. Our peas have been sown and are coming up. A fabric fence has been thrown up around the pea trellis in hopes that the bunny thieves may be thwarted.

“The second hotbed has been filled and registered 90 degrees. As the temperature of the compost rises, soil will be placed over the top, and soon, we will be able to sow our second round of seeds. Just in time for the filling of the hotbed, the painters returned our two windows that were beautifully glazed and painted. It’s nice to start the spring with freshly painted hotbeds.

“The first hotbed has brought forth many sprouting seedlings, which require weeding and thinning. The early peas in back will be trellised so that they can climb towards the sun. The straw mat has increased in size and will come off the frame soon so that it can cover our hotbed. Our potted tulip bulbs continue to poke their heads out of the soil. Soon they will grace the garden with their beauty. The green gage plum continues to bloom, and soon, the peach will follow with its delicate pink blossoms. The front east quarter is in the process of being amended. A healthy amount of organic matter is being mixed into the bed after we removed most of the plants. Once we have turned all the soil and compost, we will fill the bed with flowers that we have grown over the winter in the cold frame. Spring is certainly here.”

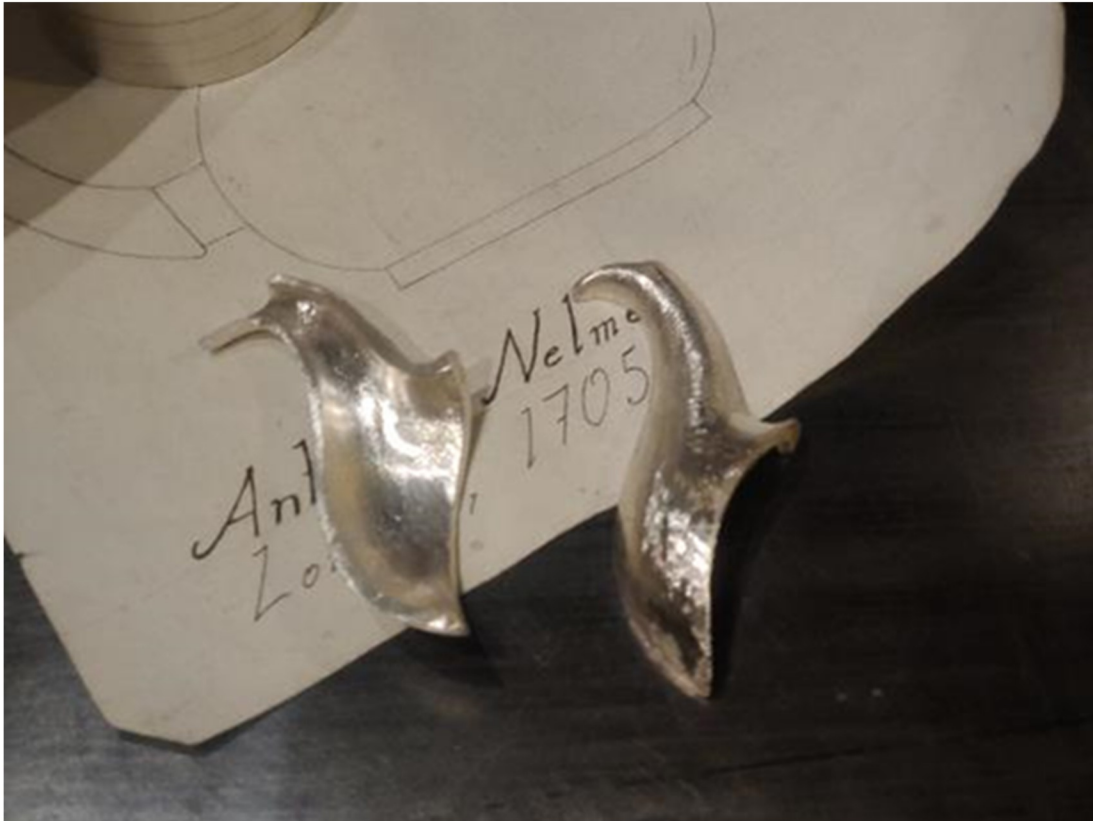
Farming – “Check out the photo below. Doesn’t look like much, does it? There is a lot behind this tree, though. This is a 15-year-old Hewe’s Crab Apple tree planted at Great Hopes Plantation. It was planted on a ground-up parking lot and tended closely for many years to coax a tree out of these conditions. Notice the cut-off branches with the little swigs sticking out. These are “cleft” grafts taught to the Historic Gardeners and Farmers during a recent workshop presented by the top heirloom apple expert in Tidewater Virginia - Rollin Wooley. Rollin worked for many years at CW as a Landscape Supervisor and retired a few years ago. During that time, he helped the Historic Farmers establish the orchard at Great Hopes. As Trades people, we are on a continual quest to enhance our skills. Not only did we develop a new skill, but the new cleft grafts should invigorate the production of apples on this tree...in another 10-15 years. As the saying goes: the best time to plant an orchard is ten years ago.”



Milliner and Mantua-maker – “Dearest readers, excitement abounds in Margaret Hunter’s millinery. Miss A--- H--- has at last finished a project. Her new blue and white striped jacket is the envy of the town. Miss R--- S---, when not supervising the younger generation of the shop and arranging things in preparation of a private customer, has continued work on a purple cloak for an exhibit to be mounted by Ms. B--- R--- of Signore Sidisi’s *centro di costumistica*. Mrs. C--- J--- likewise continues work on a pair of pocket hoops, while also juggling about fifty different research projects (or one major one for a committee on gender and sexual diversity).”

Silversmith – “The trays have made their return, as Bobbie has soldered the first of the rims together this week. Lynn has been engraving a pewter tea service (two pots, one sugar, one creamer.) Chris continues cleaning and fitting the various

components of her tea pot. Preston is working on several small bowls and preparing a large batch of silver for transfer to the store. Parker is still practicing his saw piercing and is making a second punch strainer body in silver. William finished three love tokens this week and is now prepping to reattempt spoons under George's tutelage."



The halves of Chris' teapot, cast by the foundry



The (smaller) example tray and the first rim of this round

Weaver – “Karen, Annie, and Ellie are hard at work with final preparations for the upcoming Winterthur group visit. They are scouring and mordanting fibers so that the visitors can help with dyeing on Saturday. Aubrey continues to spin linen for her Journeyman's project but now is also patiently waiting for the sun bleaching process to finish. Once all her yarn has reached the desired coloring, and there is an open loom in the Shop, she will be able to begin the project. Joe continues to work on the diamond diaper project currently on the countermarch loom. With 21 yards warped on, this may take a while. The whole Shop is excited that Ellie's overshot coverlet is up and running on the counterbalance loom. She has worked out all the quirks and is pleased with her work. Rightfully so!”

Wigmaker – “Greetings from the Wig Shop! We would like to officially welcome our new Apprentice, Edith Broward Edds, to the Shop! Edith moved to Williamsburg with her husband and two children from Texas last year and has been working as a Historic Interpreter here at CW ever since. She has a cosmetology background and a love of the history of hair, so we couldn't be more delighted to have her join our team. Feel free to stop by and say hi as she puts her hands to work weaving, making hairpieces, and learning our Shop Interpretation. Enjoy these photos of her first day!



“We would also like to let everyone know about a change in our interpretation. For many years, we’ve been talking in the Shop about yak hair being used to make wigs in the 18th century. However, as we were going back through all of our sources and research this fall and winter, we discovered that all of the references to yak hair are 20th-century sources discussing the 18th century and cannot find any reference to it at the time. Because of this, we have removed the discussion of yak hair from the interpretation as we continue to investigate where this information originally came from. Therefore, the Wigmakers also send out a small request: should you, in any research, happen to come across a mention of yak hair in an 18th-century source, please let us know!”