

# THE MECHANICK'S ADVISER

## January 20, 2023

### Anthony Hay Shop:

**Cabinetmaker** – This week, John and Bill are busy pulling together materials and content for their presentation at this year's *Working Wood in the 18th Century Conference*. They are making last-minute demonstration parts and getting their thoughts together to show attendees. Jeremy has gotten the difficult parts done on his corner table, joining one of the sides of the triangle table to the others with angled dovetails at 45°. He will be finishing off the table in the coming month.

**Harpsichordmaker** – From the harpsichord corner ... Melanie has finished the basic assembly of the register, which will guide the jacks. Now, it needs very careful final shaping in anticipation of mounting it early into the spinet's basic assembly. That's a ways off, though. We are re-sawing big (for us) white pine boards that will later come together for the baseboard of the case. Lots of sawing, planing, and constant sharpening of tools. The floor of the corner starts looking like a hamster cage.

Early in the process comes the bending of the oak board for the one curved wall of the case. So, we must make slats that fit into the main form and adjust them to the correct heights. Once the oak has been softened in water for a few days, we bend over the slats with the block and wing nut screws. It can stay there until needed later. It's hard to imagine that a musical instrument will become the end result of all this strange prep work. Come visit and see where we stand on this first phase.



Assembled register ready for refinement



Bending form



White pine baseboards and frame saw

**The Cabinetmaker and Harpsichordmaker is open Sunday and Monday.**

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

***Armoury:***

***Blacksmith*** – This week, the Armoury got to take a field trip to the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia. We were joined by Tinsmith Jenny, as well! We caught up with old colleagues, while they took us around their site and into their collections. The highlight of the trip was seeing a very nice pair of five-leaf "Cocks Head" hinges on an original 17th-century door. These were a rare example because they had a foliated decoration in between the top and bottom sections on each hinge. In addition to our field trip, we've remained hard at work on kitchen utensils, hardware, and wrapped up items for sale for the woodworking conference next week.



We'd also like to share our favorite Guest quote this week. A repeat visitor told us that his motivation for coming back was "getting to see the best of the best" when it comes to Trades. We always are motivated when we hear these reviews and hope the rest of our colleagues do also from this Guest's comment.

**The Blacksmith Shop is open Sunday through Tuesday and Thursday through Saturday.**

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

***Brickmaker*** – This week in the Brickyard, our favorite past time (unstacking bricks) continued with all the vim and vigor we have. As we unstack layer by layer, the gradient of brick hues becomes clearer, from lighter orange to deep red. As the kiln gets smaller, the bricks are palletized so that they can leave the Yard for future use. You'll have to forgive us for some modern intrusions as we won't be storing them on site. Otherwise, this week, Apprentices Nick and Madeleine visited their pal Sean Devlin in the Archaeology Collections to learn more about what flat roof tile looked like in Colonial Williamsburg. This visit, plus their previous research, will help greatly in the experimental phase of tile making this summer.



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

***Carpenter*** – This week, the Carpenters have split their time between the Farm site and our Yard. Mary and Harold installed the upper window trim and kept installing the siding. Bobby and I have been focusing on re-working the door. We've had to plane and half lap a new board to make it the width we need. While at the Yard, we've continued to hew the locust posts for the next couple of projects. The next step for us is making four shuttered windows. That work should start next week.

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

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

***Cooper*** – Following up on an inquiry from our colleagues in the Tin Shop about staved canteens, we're going to spend some time researching the subject in hopes of finding a good example from our period that we can try to reproduce. We started out by looking at examples of staved canteens in our collection here at Colonial Williamsburg. Included are some pictures of one of them.



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 – This past week saw another group of Guests work with us as temporary apprentices for the second of our sold-out Winter Workshops. It already looks like tomorrow's Workshop has sold out, too. Journeyman Mike was busy this past week. He poured pewter spoons to replenish our stock for the Workshops, filed the pewter patterns we made of the drumhead tensioner hooks for the Fifes & Drums Corps, and began work on the sterling silver shoe buckles that were ordered by the Milliners for one of their upcoming Hennage programs. Apprentice Leanne completed her first silver pour by pouring the molds she and Drew made last week, which contained the above-mentioned shoe buckles, as well as tray feet for the Silversmiths and some salt spoons. Leanne also continued working on her bronze Courthouse key, while Drew cut all those musket balls off their gates and has begun filing them for the Musket Range. They haven't asked for musket balls for a while now, but we know they'll come calling before long.

Leanne's first silver pour



Sterling silver castings



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

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

***Historic Farming*** – Looking over the year: Tobacco

The tobacco crop was good in 2022 with vigorous growth and just the right amount of rain. Here are some of the highlights of the year:



A good-looking tobacco plant after a good rain



We found some tobacco hornworms, but not many.



Tar on Ed's hand after fifteen minutes of checking leaves for worms (left). Mike Cecere cutting a tobacco plant (center). Tobacco hanging to cure (right).



Apprentice Kevin Tobias' first hand of tobacco



Chris Custalow planting "rustica" tobacco that North American Indians grew.



Tobacco Hogshead carrier made by Wheelwrights.

***Joinery*** – The road to *Working Wood in the 18th Century 2023* continues (but the end is in site - next weekend!). Brian and Peter continue to prepare for their respective presentations. Brian's pilaster has some new parts to it. Since pilasters, like other popular architectural forms, are often modeled off of Greek and Roman examples, not only is there the upright section with fluting (decorative channels), there is also a decoratively molded base and capital. Much like the columns they are meant to imitate, there can be a range of styles used. Brian has based his off of Smith's Fort (Warren House), a historic home in Surry County. Peter, meanwhile, is working on the very top of his portico, where the arch sits. He's busy shaping out the curves, which is aided by a plane specially made for the job. This is because most of the planes in the Joinery are meant to be used in a straight line on a flat board. Special shapes call for special tools. The photo below shows one of the four pieces he needs to complete. Two of the curves meet together to make the full arch. When finished, this portico will have raised panels covering it.

Scott has been making headway on his corner cupboard. In addition to the face frame added on last week, the casing has now enclosed around the shelves with two returns. These returns fill in the space

between the face frame and the back of the cupboard, which faces the wall. Eventually, these returns will have pilasters as well, lending a nice polish to the finished item.

Laura has made a couple sample dovetails, so now it is time to apply these to making boxes. Her first box will actually be a drawer for her workbench. After deciding on the size of the drawer, she's just begun to prepare her stock of pine boards, planing them to the correct size and ensuring they are flat and square.



**The Joinery is open on Tuesday.**

***Leather Breeches Maker*** – We are pleased to report that the Leather Breeches Maker Shop opened on the 15th of this month with great success! We have had the opportunity to speak to amazing Guests and are happy to say that our new Shop has been well received. We are very thankful to our fellow Trades for the help provided in moving items and getting the Shop ready. Thanks also goes to Curatorial for their advice in this process. The work of making is well underway with two new pairs cut this week and the finishing up of other pairs. We look forward to your visit soon!



Apprentice Emma cutting a new pair of breeches on the first day (left). Master Jay and Journeyman Jan, opening day (right). **The Leather Breeches Maker is open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.**

**Military Programs** – 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.

**Musket Range** – 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** – We are not only printing pamphlets. We also have some newly stitched Gardening books to trim. These will go to Prentis Store for sale.



**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, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

***Silversmith*** – Multiple projects are on the docket at the Silversmith Shop. Megan continues to work on the tray rim and is laying out a mote spoon to pierce. Chris has been filing and fitting the steel plates used to flatten the trays. Bobbie has been chasing the body of her new tray. Preston has soldered the base onto a small silver bowl. George has been rolling sheet silver from our ingots and has been hammering out more spoons. Bobbie has been deciphering more of Ann Craig’s will.



Megan’s mote spoon with a pressing and a drawing of the original spoon in collections (left). Chris’ tray and one of the steel plates she has been fitting (right).



Bobbie chasing her new tray (left). We would like to thank our friends at the Leather Beeches Maker for giving us a piece of leather for use in the tray chasing (center)! Preston’s small silver bowl (right).



George's spoons

**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 finally finished all the blankets! The final run was pulled off the loom just moments ago (Thursday afternoon). The next warp is already loaded, and we are beginning threading. We predict the threading will take us around nine hours to complete, and then we will be ready to weave a red, green, and white cotton pinstripe. This fabric is copied from the sample book Joe and I studied at the Met back in November. I find it rather moving to be making something that hasn't been made for centuries. Bringing it to life again sparks such a unique feeling. We are looking forward to seeing what it will become in the skilled hands of our Milliners/Mantua Makers.

**The Weaving Shop will be open Sunday through Thursday.**

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

**Wigmaker** – Hello from the Wig Shop! We have been making our way through all of our maintenance lately. As programming goes down for the Winter, our maintenance picks up because it's a perfect time for everyone to bring in their items. So, if you need us, you're likely to find us elbow deep in shampoo, conditioner, mousse, and hair! Edith has made great progress in the linen netting for her Journeyman Project and is continuing to collect the other materials needed. Benton has been separating, frizzing, and weaving horsehair for his Brigadier wig. Debbie has nearly finished the curls for Robin and has been concentrating on maintenance. As always, please feel free to reach out to us for any tonsorial needs.

**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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