

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

for August 19 - 25

Armoury:

Blacksmith – August has put up a good fight. Under the veil of humidity, under the yoke of perspiration, under the hammers, there have still been coherent objects falling to the floor to cool, Blacksmiths not among them. The Blacksmiths have gone round after round against the punches of villainous Virginia Summer, and remain on their feet. Ken has been working on pickets and cap rail for a section of hand rail at William and Mary; Steve has been making tin shears for the Tinsmiths, and brick hammers for the Brickyard; at Mark’s bench, you’ll see a nearly-finished set of ornamental table brackets, trowels for the Brickyard, and spatulas; Aislinn just finished a pair of dividers for the Tinsmiths; Jessie has pliers and thumb latches in the works.

Tinsmith – They are more than just neighbors to their coal-covered counterparts, they are an inspiration; they are not just second chair to the musicians in the Blacksmith Shop, they are a melodious, enlightening interlude. And if that were not enough, their music this week has also made teapots, horn lanterns, and fife cases.

Cabinetmaker – The Cabinetmakers are working on a number of small projects for programs around town: two small boxes with secret compartments for the “Escape the King” program, a drawing board for the Brickmakers, and repairs to Thomas Jefferson’s lap desk. They have also begun drawing the elaborate “piecrust” tea table they will reproduce for the forthcoming “Working Wood in the 18th Century” Conference. The Harpsichord Maker has just finished installing all of the strings in the new spinet and will now deal with the consequences of adding several hundred pounds of tension to a small wooden structure. He will spend the next few weeks perfecting the keyboard’s action, adjusting the plucking mechanism, and responding to the needs of the instrument as it breaks in.

Colonial Garden – This last week produced copious amounts of rain almost every evening, which has caused problems in the Garden with seedlings and created muddy spots. Some of the more delicate blooms suffered in the downpours. Harvested for the Kitchens were potatoes, tomatoes, beans, onions, and turkey cucumber. Chef Matthias from the Inn visited us and harvested flowers and greens to garnish the sumptuous meals served to our guests. A nice surprise was ice cream made from sorrel that came from our Garden. The bright lime green color gave way to a citrus, green, and creamy taste. We pulled up the last of the beets and hope another sowing of them will do better. Fall crops have been seeded this week in the propagation bed: cabbage, collards, broccoli, cauliflower, kohlrabi, chard, and fennel. Our fall and winter Garden has been planned out. The heat is back after a few days of milder temperatures. The willow hedges continue without letup, which necessitate the barbering of the hedges every other week. This week, our new Apprentice, Megan, tried her hand with the shears. Spent flowers are pulled up from beds, and seedlings are transplanted in their place in hopes that they will make a show for fall. The Paw-paws are ripening, which tells us that fall is not far off.



Farming – This year's intern, Joe Snyder, who has left for Virginia Military Institute to start his experience as a cadet!

The last of the tobacco is being cut. The cure of the leaves already cut is pretty good given the extreme heat and high humidity. Some of it will be struck (taken down) and put in a bulk to stabilize in about a week. After that, it will be sorted and tied into hands during the fall. The tops of the corn and all the blades are now being pulled and tied into bundles for fodder. Thomas Jefferson estimated that it took 3 ½ acres of corn fodder to feed a horse over the winter.

Foundry – The Foundry has been finishing cloak pins and bass drum parts, in addition to casting Coke candlestick stems and bases. We are also pursuing brass work jobs for the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Carter's Grove. Work on taper candlesticks continues.

Gunsmith – While the Gunsmiths are busy reaming gun barrels, they're also breaking and repairing the bits needed to do so. Small gun-specific tools like this would have to be made by the Gunsmith, and these are just another part of the apprentice curriculum, as well. Darrin has started work on another English-style lock, and Eric has just a couple bits to go reaming his rifle barrel.

Joinery – This week in the Joinery, the Shop will be hard at work selecting and preparing material for each hanging cupboard. Preparing material means lots of sawing, hacking, and planing, so come by to see the woodchips fly.

Military Programs – Military Programs continues to conduct operations as usual, as well as begin to brainstorm for programming ideas for next year. Also, we have begun fittings for our 80th Regiment of Foot coats, and so far, the results are very exciting.

Public Leather Works – The Public Leather Works bids a fond adieu to our Summer Intern, Miss Morgan O'Brien. We hope Morgan enjoyed being here as much as we enjoyed having her. We suspect this is not the last we'll see of her.

Silversmith – George has been working on spoons and spending time at the Foundry. Bobbie has been working on trade silver, letter charms, and a mote spoon. Chris continues working on her last two trays. Preston is working on several small fluted bowls while waiting for the next tray to polish. Lynn has begun engraving the inscriptions on the back of each tray, and in between those has been engraving the fan plate. Parker is working on several seamed cups. William has been working on fitting the base to his silver gurney bowl, as well as practicing handwriting for engraving.

Progress is being made on the copper fan printing plate



Preston's small fluted bowls, for small fluted bowl stuff

[Wigmaker](#) – Greetings from the Wig Shop! This past week, we said goodbye to one of our Junior Interpreters, Emily. She has been an asset to the shop over the past 2 ½ years and has been a Junior Interpreter since 2011 at a variety of locations. We wish Emily the best of luck as she begins her Freshman year at Virginia Tech and hope that it is just goodbye for now! Work continues on both Sara’s judicial wig and on young Thomas Jefferson’s wig, and, as always, we’ve been busy with maintenance work.