



» Carpenter, Jozef Skrabucha offers some pointers to student Jon Twyman.

The Lost Arts of Restoration

Today's craftsmen learn the methods of the past [by Virginia Shepherd]

If you marvel at examples of skilled craftsmanship in Jackson Ward or Church Hill and long to see them restored to their former grandeur, you'll be glad to know that work is afoot to keep fine craftsmanship alive. Erika Gay, a specialist in historic preservation with Commonwealth Architects, is spearheading an effort to breathe new life into the "lost" building trades of brick and stone masonry, stucco and plastering, blacksmithing and ironworks, and restoration carpentry. Gay helped start the only other program of its kind in the country in Charleston, S.C., where a School of the Building Arts is now flourishing, bent on preserving the tradesman and craftsman tradition so vital to historic preservation — especially in the South.

"If not in Richmond, then where?" asks Don Charles, executive director of the His-

toric Richmond Foundation. Charles points out there are few places with greater concentrations of historic structures in the South, and such a program is vital to preserving them. The Historic Richmond Foundation, the Historic Jackson Ward Association and the city of Richmond have all joined with Commonwealth Architects to sponsor the revival of the "lost" building trades. Initially, the "Lost Trades Program" will concentrate on organizing workshops for the upcoming summer season, including classes in masonry, plastering and carpentry. Eventually, however, the program's founders hope to expand it statewide, offering students classes in the historic trades and acting as a clearinghouse and point of contact for master craftsmen, hopeful apprentices and prospective clients.

For more information on the "Lost Trades Program," contact Erika Gay at 921-1505. ■