

# Colonial Williamsburg

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
P.O. Box 1776  
Williamsburg, Va. 23187-1776  
[colonialwilliamsburg.org](http://colonialwilliamsburg.org)

## Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg Herald Completion of \$41.7 Million Expansion

*65,000 square-foot expansion, funded entirely by donors, creates a 25 percent increase in exhibition space and dedicated entranceway to the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum*



**The three-year, \$41.7-million, 65,000-square-foot expansion of the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg creates a 25 percent increase in exhibition space and a new dedicated entranceway on South Nassau Street. Exhibition highlights include the new “Early American Faces,” which features Charles Willson Peale’s “Washington at Princeton” and “Portrait of an Enslaved Child” by Mary Anna Randolph Custis.**

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (July 27, 2020) – Colonial Williamsburg invites guests to experience anew its two world-class art museums – the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum – with the completion of a \$41.7 million, 65,000-square-foot expansion creating additional exhibition spaces, and, for the first time, a dedicated entrance pavilion on South Nassau Street.

The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg showcase treasures from the Foundation’s collection, which includes more than 67,000 period antiques and works of art and 7,000 pieces of folk art. Co-located since 2007, the Art Museums were previously accessible through the reconstructed Public Hospital of 1773 on Francis Street, which effectively hid them from view.

Funded entirely by donors and designed by Samuel Anderson Architects of New York, the expansion broke ground April 2017. It creates a 25-percent increase in exhibition space along with other spaces including the sunlit Wolf Hall that welcomes entering guests. The Art Museums remained open through most of the expansion, closing only March 16-June 14, along with other public buildings at the Foundation, to limit health risks associated with COVID-19.

“Colonial Williamsburg’s collection reflects the scope and diversity of our shared history, and its objects tell remarkable stories that allow us to interpret that history,” said Ronald L. Hurst, Colonial Williamsburg’s Carlisle H. Humelsine chief curator and vice president for museums, preservation and historic resources. “We’ve been successful over the years engaging guests through the Art Museums’ remarkable exhibitions and programming, however now, thanks to generosity of our donors, we can offer an even more inviting, welcoming experience and share our even more with our guests.”

New exhibition highlights include the powerful “Early American Faces,” a collection of important paintings and watercolors that illustrate the stories of diverse early Americans from many walks of life; “The Art of Edward Hicks” a collection of works – including versions of “The Peaceable Kingdom” – by one of America’s best-known folk painters, many of which will be on view together for the first time since 1999; and “American Folk Pottery: Art and Tradition” which features nearly 50 objects made by American potters from 1790 through 2008.

“Colonial Williamsburg’s mission brings us face to face with our shared history, allowing us to reflect and engage with one another about its importance and complexity,” said Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. “At the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, we showcase the relevance of our material culture, from practical items of the past to familiar masterpieces. The museums expansion creates a larger showcase for the Foundation’s collections, and serves as a gathering place for guests and the community to have meaningful conversations about how far we have come as a nation and how far we have to go to form a more perfect union. We invite everyone to join us, and we thank the generous donors who made this all possible.”

Expansion highlights include:

- A more welcoming guest experience that features a new lobby, grand concourse, café with revised menu and store bathed in natural light by windows that overlook the city’s Bicentennial Park (the café and store do not require tickets)
- New permanent galleries devoted to specific areas of the foundation’s collection, in addition to regular rotating exhibition galleries. New dedicated galleries will showcase coins, currency and medals; archaeology; musical instruments; costumes; maps, prints and drawings; toys and dollhouses; tools; weapons and scientific instruments; period clothing; architectural preservation; paintings; silver and metals
- Improved guest services, including general and accessible parking and upgraded mechanical/climate-control systems for efficient operations and exhibition presentations

The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, established in 1985, showcases the best in British and American fine and decorative arts from 1670-1840. It is home to the world’s largest collection of southern furniture and one of the largest collections of British ceramics outside England. Among the items on display are:

- “Washington at Princeton,” by Charles Willson Peale and iconic portraits of other founders, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, whose painting by Gilbert Stuart was rescued by First Lady Dolley Madison from British forces’ 1814 burning of the White House during the War of 1812. Each is on display as part of “American Faces.”
- George Washington’s citrine watch seal, set in gold and bearing his coat of arms. The seal is visible in Peale’s 1776 portrait commemorating the liberation of Boston.
- A rare painting of Queen Elizabeth I dated between 1590-1600 that recently returned to display as part of the ongoing exhibition “British Masterworks: Ninety years of collecting at Colonial Williamsburg.”

- An ornate jewelry box made in modern-day Mexico between 1660 and 1710 that was presented to Colonial Williamsburg by Queen Elizabeth II of England during her 1957 visit, also part of “British Masterworks.”

The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Arts Museum, established in 1957, is the world’s oldest continually operating institution dedicated solely to the collection, exhibition and preservation of American folk art. It houses the nation’s premier collection from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Among the items on display:

- “Portrait of an Enslaved Child,” an 1830 watercolor with pencil and ink by 22-year-old Mary Anna Randolph Custis, probably at her parents’ Arlington plantation in northern Virginia. Due to the light sensitivity of the original in Colonial Williamsburg’s collection, an enlarged reproduction is part of the exhibition “Early American Faces.”
- “Baby in Red Chair” by an unknown artist, one of the first pieces of folk art acquired by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, wife of Colonial Williamsburg founding benefactor John D. Rockefeller Jr.
- “Music and Dance in Beaufort County” a watercolor c. 1785 of an al fresco scene showing two groups of African Americans interacting in South Carolina, also part of “American Faces.”
- The Hippoceros, a one-of-a-kind creation of North Carolina sculptor Edgar McKillop that combines the traits of a hippopotamus and rhinoceros and is one of the best-known pieces in the museum
- Noah’s Ark, animals and figures: an iconic toy set from the 19th century, part of the exhibition “German Toys in America.”

In addition, visitors can expect more interaction with costumed interpreters from the Historic Area at the Art Museums, including Historic Trades interpretation and tours with Colonial Williamsburg Nation Builders.

The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg are open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. to guests with Colonial Williamsburg or Art Museums admission. Individual and family Art Museums memberships provide guest benefits and advance both institutions. For additional information or to purchase memberships, visit [colonialwilliamsburg.org/joinart](http://colonialwilliamsburg.org/joinart). Information is also available by following the [Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg](#) on Facebook and following Colonial Williamsburg on [Facebook](#) and [@colonialwmsburg](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Colonial Williamsburg reopened at reduced capacity on June 14 and continues to follow site-specific safety guidelines as part of the foundation’s COVID-19 business resumption plan and in accordance with the state’s plans for reopening. During Colonial Williamsburg’s reopening, most interpretive programming has been moved outdoors. For the safety of employees and the public, ticketed guests can expect limited interaction with interpretive staff. Site entry is limited by state-mandated capacity guidelines for social gatherings, and guests are encouraged to proceed quickly through interpretive sites to accommodate as many visitors as possible.

Face coverings are required while inside foundation-owned buildings and their use is encouraged outdoors as well. Guests are also asked to adhere to social distancing guidelines during their visit to Colonial Williamsburg sites, when walking along Duke of Gloucester Street and in other publicly accessible areas. Most doors, faucets and other high-traffic touchpoints are

now touchless, and there are significantly enhanced cleaning protocols throughout the foundation's open locations.

*Note: High-resolution images and caption content are available to [download here](#).*

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