

Colonial Williamsburg

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Colonial Williamsburg to break ground on Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center



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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (April 11, 2023) – A [groundbreaking ceremony](#) for The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s new [Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center](#) will be held on April 21 at 4 p.m. across the street from the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg. The [archaeology center](#) will be completed in 2026 and will be open to the public seven days a week, offering guests an interactive window into the Foundation’s current archaeological projects as well as the 60 million artifacts that currently make up the archaeological collection.

“Research is the backbone of our public education programming, and archaeology has played a key role in that research for nearly 100 years,” said Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of the Foundation. “By making our globally renowned collection more accessible to the public, The Campbell Archaeology Center will give visitors the opportunity to play a leading role in their own exploration of history.”

Colonial Williamsburg is the birthplace of historical archaeology, a subfield of archaeology which uses material culture to understand the development of the modern world. Decades of archaeological work in the Historic Area have resulted in one of the world’s largest archaeological collections of 17th-through-early-19th-century artifacts from colonial America. In addition to providing expanded storage facilities to properly steward this collection, the Campbell Archaeology Center will include classrooms, exhibition space and a public archaeology teaching lab with room for visitors and community members to physically engage with artifacts.

“Most people don’t realize how much work happens in the lab,” said Jack Gary, Colonial Williamsburg’s director of archaeology. “Only 40 percent of a project takes place at the excavation site. The other 60 percent happens in the lab. Right now, our visitors engage with us in the field, but there’s no way for them to follow these projects to completion because we don’t have a facility that can accommodate them. This new archaeology center will change all of that.”

The Campbell Archaeology Center is one of the Foundation’s [signature projects](#) leading up to the commemoration of America’s 250th anniversary in 2026. The building, designed by the architecture firm of Clark Nexsen, will join several new sites on Nassau Street to help create what will become a major visitor corridor to the Historic Area. [The Williamsburg Bray School](#) is slated to open in September 2024. [First Baptist Church](#) and the [Custis Square gardens](#) will follow in the fall of 2026.

Funding for the Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center has been provided in part by a lead gift from the late Forrest E. Mars, Jr, former Colonial Williamsburg trustee and long-time donor, who chose the name in honor of the Campbells’ service to the institution. Colin Campbell, a chairman emeritus of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, served as the organization’s president and CEO from 2000 to 2014, during which time he expanded the Foundation’s educational programs and increased its endowment. Nancy Nash Campbell is chair emerita of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Together, the couple received The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s prestigious Churchill Bell Award in 2014. Gifts from other generous donors are advancing the project.

Additional funding is needed to complete the construction of the building and to create an endowment for building maintenance and the Foundation’s archaeology staff. For additional information about the project, including impactful naming and support opportunities within the center, visit colonialwilliamsburg.org/cac.

Evolution of archaeology at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Colonial Williamsburg’s approach to historical archaeology has continued to evolve in response to advances in technology and broader social trends which inform not only the types of questions being asked but also who is asking them.

“Modern archaeology is publicly engaged archaeology,” said Gary. This approach can be seen in current projects such as the First Baptist Church excavation and the Williamsburg Bray School restoration in which the descendant communities have played key roles in guiding and defining the work. Gary predicts that the community’s role in publicly engaged historical archaeology will continue to grow in the coming years. “I think we’ll see an increase in community engagement. The questions about our collective history will come from the communities in which we live and work. And that’s exciting. That’s where they need to come from in order for archaeology to remain relevant.”

There is no shortage of work for the community to engage with at the Foundation. Despite nearly 100 years of excavations, 80 percent of the Historic Area has yet to be examined using modern archaeological techniques. The Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center will ensure that archaeology continues to thrive at the Foundation for generations to come.

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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia's 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers and 18th-century inspired culinary options from historic taverns situated along historic Duke of Gloucester Street. Colonial Williamsburg Resorts complement the experience, offering guests five unique hotel properties including the iconic Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star, AAA Five Diamond Williamsburg Inn, newly renovated Williamsburg Lodge-Autograph Collection, Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel and Suites, the Griffin Hotel, and authentic 18th-century Colonial Houses. The resort offers a range of events and amenities including four historic taverns, 15 food and beverage outlets providing exquisite culinary experiences from casual to elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 36 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a world-class full-service spa and fitness center, pools, meeting and flexible event spaces, and scenic gardens providing the perfect venue for weddings and special events. Merchants Square, built alongside the Historic Area in 1935 as one of the first planned shopping districts in the United States, features more than 40 specialty boutiques with products ranging from apparel to fine jewelry, art, specialty foods and gifts. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg's educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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