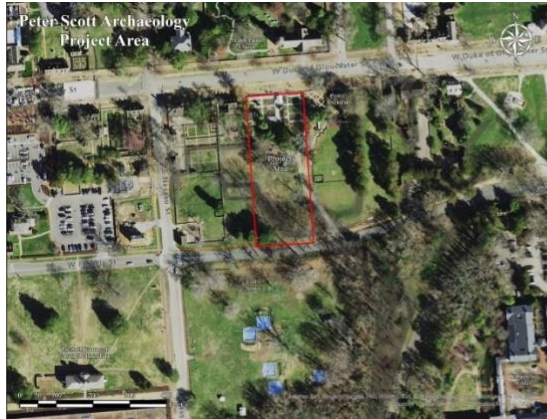


Colonial Williamsburg

Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists break ground on newest excavation

Reinvestigating the Peter Scott site



Project area of Peter Scott archaeological site; the Peter Scott archaeological site during the 1958 excavation.

Images courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Jan. 24, 2025) – What was old is new again as Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists return to a site last excavated in the 1950s in search of answers to unsolved mysteries.

Beginning in late January 2025, visitors to Colonial Williamsburg will have the opportunity to engage with the excavation of the Peter Scott site, located across from Bruton Parish Church on the site formerly occupied by the colonial nursery and demonstration garden. Scott was a furniture maker who lived and operated his business on the site for over 40 years. The excavation, which is expected to last a minimum of 12 months, will ultimately inform the planned reconstruction of Scott’s house and associated outbuildings and contribute to the overall interpretation of the site.

“We plan to start by targeting some of the exciting features that we already know exist on this site including the foundation of the tenement building and a furnace,” said Jack Gary, Colonial Williamsburg’s executive director of archaeology. “Visitors won’t have to wait long for some really cool artifacts to start coming up out of the ground.”

Portions of this site were excavated in 1958 by renowned British archaeologist Ivor Noël Hume as one of the first projects that Noël Hume worked on after he became chief archaeologist and director of Colonial Williamsburg's archaeology program in 1957.

Noël Hume's excavation focused on the foundation of the tenement house as well as some of the other more permanent structures on the site including a furnace. However, the excavation was unable to determine the furnace's function, whether the building functioned as both a residence and a workshop, the presence of additional 18th-century buildings, and whether there were enslaved laborers living and working on the site. Although artifacts from the 1958 excavation were recovered, the collection is small and not illustrative of Scott's life. Gary's team plans to pick up where Noël Hume left off, excavating enough of the site to answer these questions and more.

"Returning to one of the Foundation's early archaeology projects with new techniques and new research questions is a full-circle moment," said Gary. "This site had an important role to play in the lead up to the American Revolution. We weren't able to tell the site's full story when it was first excavated over sixty years ago, but we plan to tell it now."

Who was Peter Scott?

Peter Scott was a well-connected cabinetmaker who made furniture for some of the city's most prominent figures including Robert Carter, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington. From 1733 until his death in 1775, Scott rented a tenement house owned by John Custis IV, whose extensive ornamental garden has been the subject of Colonial Williamsburg's recent [Custis Square archaeology project](#). As a tenant, Scott paid rent to John Custis, then to his son Daniel Parke Custis, and finally to George Washington, who married the late Daniel Parke Custis's widow, Martha Dandridge Custis. After Scott's death, the tenement house was occupied by Continental Soldiers for about a month until it was destroyed in a fire.

Several examples of Scott's work can be found in The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's collections including dining and tea tables, desk-and-bookcases and the [Speaker of the House of Burgesses chair](#) which stood in the Virginia Capitol from the 1730s until 1780 when it was taken to Richmond for use in the new Capitol. Reconstructing the Peter Scott house will provide visitors with the rare opportunity to connect these items to the very place they were crafted.

Research associated with the Custis estate also reveals that the placement of the buildings on the Peter Scott site played an integral role in Custis's ability to retain control of the viewshed between his home and Bruton Parish Church. In much the same way that the Governor's Palace functioned as the terminal vista of Palace Green, Custis Square's position as the terminal vista from Bruton Parish Church illustrates the lengths to which Virginia's elite planters would go to communicate their power and wealth through the

landscape. Restoring this vista will help make the social and political climate of 18th-century Williamsburg even more tangible for visitors.

Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists will be excavating at the Peter Scott site Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. weather permitting. Visiting guests are invited to witness archaeological investigation and discovery firsthand in the center of Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area.

Archaeology at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

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 a collection of over 60 million artifacts, one of the world's largest archaeological collections of 17th-through-early-19th-century artifacts from colonial America. Despite nearly 100 years of excavations, 70 percent of the Historic Area has yet to be examined using modern archaeological techniques.

Colonial Williamsburg is currently building a new archaeology center to house its extensive collection and offer guests increased access to the Foundation's current archaeology projects. [The Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center](#) will open to visitors in 2026, ushering in the next century of archaeological investigation and discovery at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

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About The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

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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