



The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
P.O. Box 1776
Williamsburg, Va. 23187-1776
colonialwilliamsburg.org

Understanding Our Shared Past: Black History Month 2021

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Jan. 25, 2021) – Colonial Williamsburg invites guests, the community and virtual audiences around the nation and world to commemorate Black History Month in February with a range of research, interpretation and other programming examining the lives of enslaved and free early Black Americans.

Special in 2021 are the ongoing archaeological investigation of the original permanent site of the city’s historic First Baptist Church on South Nassau Street, and the second monthly program in the new discussion series “US: Past, Present, Future,” titled “CW Conversation: Residents Not Citizens.”

“The journey for the Black citizens of Williamsburg to gain equal protections under the law has continued since the city’s founding in 1699,” said Stephen Seals, Colonial Williamsburg actor-interpreter, program manager and community liaison. “To have the opportunity to share this story with the wider world is the reason so many of us work in the museum field, and we invite guests to join us as we examine our past together.”

In January Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists working under the guidance of First Baptist Church and its descendant community began the second, 18-month phase of excavation of the site occupied by 1818 and until 1956 by one of the nation’s oldest Black churches, established secretly in 1776. Priorities include investigation of two possible graves on the site, location and commemoration of any others, and the continued search for evidence of the first structure where the congregation worshipped. Excavation continues weekdays weather-permitting 9 a.m.-4 p.m. throughout February.

“CW Conversation: Residents Not Citizens” streams live at 4 p.m. eastern time Feb. 20 at colonialwilliamsburg.org/us and on Colonial Williamsburg’s [Facebook](#) page. Scheduled participants include former City Council member Bobby Braxton, Colonial Williamsburg interpreter and supervisor and longtime generational city resident Janice Canaday, and attorney and former York-James City-Williamsburg NAACP Branch President Brian J. Smalls. US: Past, Present Future kicked off Jan. 16 as a national conversation series exploring the vital intersection of current events, our shared history, and the enduring promises of America.

As it does every February, during Black History Month Colonial Williamsburg will showcase its year-round character interpretation and programming examining the real stories of the enslaved and free Black people of the 18th century. Programs are offered at 1:30 p.m. daily in the Hennage Auditorium at the Art Museums including “Nation Builders Discuss the Institution of Slavery” and “Across the Board,” examining the relationship between a young Thomas Jefferson

and his enslaved manservant Jupiter. Historic Site interpretation includes “Freedom’s Paradox” at the Peyton Randolph House.

At the Art Museums, guests are invited to take the self-guided tour “By African American Hands.” The tour showcases objects crafted by Black artists and artisans including pottery by David Drake of South Carolina and an armchair attributed to the joinery at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello between 1790 and 1815, a period in which enslaved Black craftsman John Hemings worked in and later led the shop.

Other Black History Month programs at the Art Museums include special “Expert Insights” Wednesdays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. throughout February and “A Quilter’s Housetop,” at 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays, in which guests celebrate the life of Alabama quilter Susana Allen Hunter and then make a mini-quilt to take home.

Archaeological investigation and programming at Historic First Baptist Church – Nassau Street are possible thanks to the generous support of the Lilly Endowment Inc., the Ford Foundation, the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, and individual donors.

The Colonial Williamsburg Regional Visitor Center is currently closed to guests for use as a temporary regional COVID-19 vaccination center, and will remain closed to guests until it is no longer needed for this important initiative. During this time, we encourage guests to park for free in the Art Museum of Colonial Williamsburg lot located at South Nassau Street and Newport Avenue next to Bicentennial Park. The Art Museums building, located at 301 S. Nassau St., will open its doors at 9:15 a.m. daily to for access to its ticket office and restrooms prior to the Art Museums’ regular 10 a.m. opening. The Museum Café will also be open during this time to serve guests. Colonial Williamsburg ticket services remain available 9:15 a.m.-4:45 p.m. daily in the Historic Area at the Lumber House on the south side of Duke of Gloucester Street near the foot of Palace Green.

The health and safety of guests and staff is Colonial Williamsburg’s highest priority, and site operations and programming are subject to change to ensure compliance with state COVID-19 guidelines. 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. [Colonialwilliamsburg.org](https://colonialwilliamsburg.org) lists additional guest comfort and safety guidelines to provide the safest experience for guests, the general public and Colonial Williamsburg’s staff.

All Colonial Williamsburg employees have received special safety training to limit the risk of COVID-19 spread or infection. The training includes general and site-specific safety requirements such as basic sanitization procedures, use of face coverings where appropriate, and social distancing requirements to follow with colleagues and guests. Signs posted throughout the Historic Area, the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg and sites including Liberty Ice Pavilion will remind guests of safety precautions to protect themselves and others from risks associated with COVID-19 exposure.

Sites and programs are open to guests with Colonial Williamsburg or Art Museums admission except “A Quilter’s Housetop,” which requires a special \$5 ticket in addition to Colonial Williamsburg or Art Museums Admission. Additional information is available by visiting colonialwilliamsburg.org/bhm, by calling 1-855-296-6627 toll-free, and by

following [Colonial Williamsburg](#) and on Facebook and by following [@colonialwmsburg](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Media contact: Joe Straw
757-509-1723
jstraw@cwf.org

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, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center, pools, retail stores and gardens. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization; philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and operations sustain its educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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