

Colonial Williamsburg

Colonial Williamsburg to Unveil Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center

Immersive 40,000-Square-Foot Center Opens April 25



Images courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation are available to download [here](#).

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (April 17, 2026) - Archaeology at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is ready to be viewed – and experienced – through a new lens.

The Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center will open to the public on Saturday, April 25 at 9 a.m., boasting 40,000 square feet of collection, research and education space dedicated to advancing archaeological research and deepening public engagement with Williamsburg’s rich history.

A [ribbon-cutting event](#) marking the opening of the center kicks off a full weekend of festivities, public engagement and the study of Williamsburg’s past. Following the ceremony, guests can explore the Archaeology Center, meet members of the archaeology team and learn how archaeological discoveries shape the understanding of 18th-century life.

Visiting the Campbell Archaeology Center will be free and open to the public. Once the center is fully operational, visitors can immerse themselves in archaeologists’ daily work, including behind-the-scenes views of the laboratories and other facilities that help researchers uncover new aspects of Williamsburg’s – and America’s – history.

“We believe Colonial Williamsburg will be able to offer a one-of-a-kind experience,” said Jack Gary, associate vice president of Historic Resources and Kahler family director of Archaeology at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. “So much of what we do as archaeologists goes unseen by the public. With the opening of the Campbell Archaeology Center, visitors will have the opportunity to engage with our process after we discover artifacts in the field and bring them into the lab for further examination.”

In addition to experiencing Colonial Williamsburg's ongoing archaeological projects, visitors can view a selection of the Foundation's extensive collection of artifacts on display throughout the center.

"Archaeology has played a pivotal role in Colonial Williamsburg's first 100 years, from the discovery of many of the buildings that were recreated to recent revelations that enable us to learn about our nation's history," said Ron Hurst, Colonial Williamsburg's chief mission officer. "The Campbell Archaeology Center brings our archaeology right to our visitors, allowing us to showcase our community-engaged approach and educate in a way we've never been able to do before."

The Campbell Archaeology Center is unique in that it is dedicated solely to archaeology. Among the many highlights:

- An early 18th-century brick foundation viewed through a glass floor
 - The foundation of a building constructed around the time of the founding of Williamsburg was discovered by Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists and incorporated into the design of the new center.
- Wall of Wonder
 - A wide variety of artifacts found in and around Williamsburg, including wine bottles, ceramics and other items that show everyday life in 18th-century Williamsburg
- Follow "The Squabbit"
 - Is it a squirrel, is it a rabbit? It's a Squabbit (inspired by an artifact) that
 - visitors can follow from lab to lab, helping them learn what happens as an artifact goes from the ground to washing to identification to analysis.

Colonial Williamsburg is the birthplace of historical archaeology, a subfield of archaeology that 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.

"Even though Colonial Williamsburg has 100 years of artifacts, nearly 70% of the Historic Area has not been excavated in a modern way, meaning we have so much more to uncover and learn from," Gary said. "This center enables us to be good stewards of the materials we excavate. What we have here – and will continue to unearth – is a national treasure, and now, we can provide the community with an emotional connection to our shared history."

The Campbell Archaeology Center is one of the Foundation's signature projects commemorating 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 a major visitor corridor to the Historic Area. The site of the Williamsburg Bray School, one of the earliest institutions dedicated to Black education in North America, opened to the public in 2025, and the African Baptist Meeting House, one of the first Black church congregations in the nation, will be dedicated in October 2026. Nearby, the Custis Square excavation site offers a self-guided tour that explores the life and opulent gardens of plantation owner John Custis IV.

Funding for the Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center was provided in part by a lead gift from the late Forrest E. Mars, Jr., former Colonial Williamsburg trustee and longtime donor, who chose

the name in honor of the Campbells' service to the institution. Colin Campbell, a chairman emeritus of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation who passed away in 2024, 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 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.

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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 Four-Star 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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