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Colonial Williamsburg At Carter's Grove / Decolonizing Colonial Williamsburg

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ABSTRACT

My first research paper, “Colonial Williamsburg at Carter’s Grove: Interpreting Slavery within Public History” focuses on the Carter’s Grove Plantation property, owned and interpreted by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation from the late 1960s to the early 2000s. Throughout the time of Colonial Williamsburg’s management, extensive historical interpretation was developed around the reconstructed enslaved living quarters on the site; the Carter’s Grove property offers a representation of many of the changes that occurred within public history, especially regarding the interpretation of plantation slavery.

My second research paper, “Decolonizing Colonial Williamsburg: Indigenous History at a Settler Colonial Museum” takes a broad look at Indigenous historical interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg throughout its long history. The paper especially focuses on the beginning of Colonial Williamsburg’s outreach to Native communities starting in the 1990s and the changes in Indigenous interpretation starting after the creation of the American Indian Initiative, a dedicated program for Native interpretation, research, and outreach.

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Dedicated to my grandmothers, to whom I am indebted.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Intellectual Biography

Prior to the start of my first semester of graduate school here at William & Mary, I was unsure of where my research would take me. In my past research experience in the William & Mary undergraduate history department, I had done some work on Indigenous historical topics, namely the history of Two-Spirit people and an observational research project on Indigenous historical interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg. Though I always intended to continue this research on Indigenous history, I was unsure of exactly what direction it would take. In my first semester in the master's program, I was enrolled in the research semester "Race and Slavery in the Americas," taught by Dr. Turits. Initially, my first thoughts for my semester-long research project took me away from Indigenous history. My apprenticeship for the year was working as a graduate assistant to Dr. Allen on a grant-funded project between William & Mary and the National Parks Service. The project is centered on conducting research on the Black experience on the properties comprising the Manassas Battlefield Park prior to the Civil War. In light of my work on this project, I decided to use my first semester to attempt to further this research. My initial conception of my project was to identify and examine possible connections between the free and enslaved Black communities in the Manassas area and in the Williamsburg area pre-Civil War. The Carter family, a very prominent and wealthy slaveholding family in early Virginia, owned properties and operated plantations in both locations, hence my belief in the viability of my research question. However, as the semester continued and I had found little success in uncovering the connections I had hoped to find, I recognized the necessity of shifting my research topic.

Through my research into the Carter family in the Williamsburg area, I became aware of the Carter's Grove property. Carter's Grove is a former plantation that was owned and interpreted by Colonial Williamsburg from the late 1960s until the early 2000s. Due to my desire to enter public history post-graduation and my experiences through the NIAHD program in both undergraduate and graduate school, I had a particular interest in the ways in which Colonial Williamsburg had chosen to interpret the plantation at Carter's Grove. To answer this question, I consulted the available materials in the Rockefeller Library, mostly Colonial Williamsburg-published materials, in addition to non-affiliated newspapers and academic reviews from the time. Furthermore, I was able to access the Colonial Williamsburg Corporate Archives housed at the Rockefeller Library, which included institutional correspondences, promotional materials, interpretive plans, and guest responses to the programming at Carter's Grove. Using these sources, I was able to reconstruct a rough timeline of the changes, activities, and critiques of Carter's Grove. At Carter's Grove, there was an uncharacteristically wide variety of exhibitions; typically, Colonial Williamsburg as an institution limits its focus to a few decades of the 18th century, but at Carter's Grove, multiple centuries of history at the property were interpreted. An archeology museum was constructed on the site, as well as a bare-bones reconstruction of a 17th-century English settlement discovered at the property, and, eventually, the enslaved living quarters were also reconstructed. Colonial Williamsburg developed a "four-century" model of interpretation, discussing people and topics existing from the 17th century to the 20th century.

When Colonial Williamsburg's interpretation of the site first began in the late 1960s, the only part of the property that was interpreted was the plantation house, and the interpretation focused almost exclusively on the 18th-century white, slave-owning elites or the 20th-century owners, who restored the house and were firmly entrenched in the colonial revivalist sentiments which first motivated Colonial Williamsburg's own creation. The 1970s saw the first attempts at the portrayal of Black history at any site at Colonial Williamsburg, Carter's Grove included. Archeological surveys were performed at the site in the 1970s and 1980s, locating the remains of a 17th-century English settlement, pre-contact Indigenous settlement, and the likely location of the enslaved living quarters. The decision was then made to construct a recreation of these 18th-century living quarters. The recreation of these buildings coincided with the hiring of Black interpreters, who were the primary staff of the living quarters site. They largely interpreted in the third-person (out-of-character), though there were several dramatic performances put on at the site over its years of operation. Additionally, the content of the tour given within the mansion house of Carter's Grove changed to include the history of the enslaved people who also lived and worked at the house, though the tour still had a heavy focus on the property's white owners over the years. Although the interpretation at Carter's Grove was far from without critique, it represented a critical moment for Colonial Williamsburg where the institution took significant steps to tell the history that had for decades been purposefully ignored. However, in 2006, Carter's Grove was officially out of Colonial Williamsburg's hands due to financial struggles, due in part to the large cost of running the site. While the property itself is no longer in

operation as a part of the museum, the interpretation performed there remains of importance to Colonial Williamsburg and its plans moving forward.

One notable critique of the interpretation at Carter's Grove was of the Indigenous historical interpretation (or lack thereof) at the site. The Algonquian-speaking Native people who lived on the property that would become Carter's Grove prior to European settlement were hardly mentioned, and the Powhatan Confederacy, a main political, cultural, and military force in the 17th century, was not mentioned outside of the "massacre" of the 17th-century English settlement on the property, which occurred during the First Powhatan War. This limited and negative portrayal drew some criticism at the time, but I could find little evidence that actions had been taken to meaningfully improve these aspects of the exhibitions. Due in part to a desire to discover more about the handling of Indigenous historical interpretation throughout Colonial Williamsburg's history and in part to a desire to continue work on and expand my undergraduate research project on Indigenous interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg, I chose this exact topic for my second-semester research project, through Dr. Fisher's Settler Colonialism Since 1763 research seminar.

My initial assertion that little had been done to improve the Indigenous representation at the site proved to only be partially true. While the fact remains that Indigenous history was underrepresented at the site, through my research, I learned about some Native historical programming that occurred there in the 1990s. The 1990s marked the start of Colonial Williamsburg's attempts to include Indigenous people and history in their interpretation. They began to reach out to local tribes and put on some temporary demonstrations and performances. As a culmination of this, the American

Indian Initiative was created in 2002. The American Indian Initiative, or AII, represented Colonial Williamsburg's formal, institutionally backed decision to incorporate Indigenous history into its programming at all its historic sites, not just Carter's Grove. The AII continued to work with local Native nations, especially through the Virginia Council on Indians, while also reaching out to farther-off nations that would have had a presence in 18th-century Williamsburg during its functioning as the colony's colonial capital. Partnerships and collaborations with the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the Museum of the Cherokee People created some early, high-profile temporary events. Eventually, the outreach of the museum would extend to other nations, including the Shawnee and Choctaw. The AII grew to have regular programming, including lecture series, dramatic performances, and the continuation of these large-scale collaborations. However, despite the positive critical and community reception of these events, much like Carter's Grove, the program was hit with financial struggles. In 2015, Colonial Williamsburg went through a period of mass firings and relocations. Though the AII exited this period with five full-time staff members, they had lost all formal management as well as the budget to conduct their large-scale collaborations. This led to a stagnation of the program, carried on only by the efforts of the leaderless full-time interpreters. However, in only the past year, many changes have occurred for the AII. The AII has officially been made its own independent department within Colonial Williamsburg and has been expanding its depleted staff, with a focus on research and the reestablishing of community connections. Though much work has been done by the AII over the years to fill the institutional deficit of Indigenous

history, much more work is still to be done when it comes to integrating Indigenous history throughout all areas of the museum.

Through my research here at William & Mary, I have expanded my understanding of public history, especially the changes that have occurred within the field. My analysis of the efforts of Colonial Williamsburg to portray a more diverse and inclusive history over the years has helped me to consider how I could best accomplish this in my own future in the public history field. Detailing the successes and pitfalls of Colonial Williamsburg has encouraged me to take a deeply collaborative approach to this work, maintaining an awareness of and in as many ways possible communicating with the main stakeholders of the important histories I hope to help tell.

CHAPTER TWO:

Colonial Williamsburg at Carter's Grove: Interpreting Slavery within Public History

"Hotels in historic castles are extremely popular in Europe. Why not an 'American Castle'? A themed luxury lodging choice for families would be a wonderful addition to the Williamsburg experience," reads a write-in to the *Newport News Daily Press* in their article titled "21st-Century Ideas for 18th-Century Site: Readers offer some suggestions for the future of Colonial Williamsburg's historic Carter's Grove plantation." In 2006, the fate of the Colonial Williamsburg-owned plantation "Carter's Grove," located approximately seven miles south of the main Historic Area, was up in the air. A James City County resident made the above suggestion to the nearby *Newport News Daily Press* regarding the use of the plantation by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Historical interpretation at the site had at the time been closed for three years due to financial pressures.[1] Many of the suggestions written to the *Daily Press* followed along similar lines. "It was made for house parties," one Georgia write-in stated. "People would pay for the privilege. A good meal and some great period music, and it would be an evening to remember. I know I'd pay for it." A Yorktown resident suggested that the property might be converted into "a resort, a retreat, a vacation and a working ride and therapeutic center," stating that "[t]here are no facilities near Colonial Williamsburg that cater to this affluent and adventurous group." There were a couple of differing opinions, one with the simple suggestion that "Carter's Grove should be turned over to the National Park Service." What is striking is that so few entries seemed particularly

[1] Historical interpretation as a term refers to the analysis and presentation of history, in this case to a public audience. Colonial Williamsburg typically refers to their tour guides, actors, presenters, and other frontline employees as "interpreters," which is the term I broadly use throughout this work.

concerned with any sort of historic value of the property, and no entries mentioned or even alluded to the value of the reconstructed slave quarters on the property, which Colonial Williamsburg had interpreted since the late 1980s. That same James City County resident comparing the plantation to European castle hotels ended their write-in with this: "For those willing to pay the price for a true 'time travel' experience to the past, activities could include in-depth involvement in all aspects of running an 18th-century plantation, creating an unforgettable experience for adults and…children."[2]

In the possession of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation from 1969 to 2007, the first recorded owner of the property was Robert "King" Carter, a wealthy Virginian landowner in the early 1700s. The plantation was eventually named for the grandson of Robert Carter, Cater Burwell, who inherited the property in his grandfathers' will. Carter Burwell ordered the construction of the mansion house standing today, built between 1750 and 1753. Ownership of the plantation remained in the Burwell family until the mid-1800s, at which the property was passed through a number of owners.[3] Post-Civil War, some owners conducted restorations and additions to the mansion house to "give the feeling of a typical country place of the gentry of the eighteenth century."[4] The

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[2] "21st-Century Ideas for 18th-Century Site: Readers Offer Some Suggestions for the Future of Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Carter's Grove Plantation," *Newport News Daily Press*, October 29, 2006.

[3] Mary A Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, May 7, 1964, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc=Research Reports%5CRR1451.xml&highlight=%27, 2. The above is a research report conducted by Colonial Williamsburg shortly before their official ownership of the property, incorporating a variety of primary sources from the 1700s to the early 1900s. The report details creation of the house and the many 19th and 20th century owners of the property, focusing especially on the McCrea modernization and restoration. The report includes a variety of excerpts of letters and magazine article entries about the McCrea restoration.

[4] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 180.

1930s through 50s oversaw the ownership of the McCreas, who completed the restoration of the house and entertained a number of high-profile guests, such as the Rockefellers. In 1955, the house was described by Samuel Chamberlain "noted author, photographer, and authority on homes" as "America's most beautiful house," without hesitation.[5] After the death of Mary McCrea, David Rockefeller purchased the property in 1963, in order to "preserve and protect Carter's Grove for the enjoyment and education of future generations."[6]

Colonial Williamsburg began interpretation on the site in the mid-1960s, and in 1969, ownership of the property was officially passed to Colonial Williamsburg due to the close ties between the Rockefellers and Colonial Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg is an expansive living history museum located in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation was created in 1926 through funding from the Rockefellers as a restoration project for the main street of the small town Williamsburg, the 18th-century colonial capital of Virginia. Although for a majority of its history, Colonial Williamsburg's historical interpretation focused near-exclusively on the wealthy white (often slaveholding) Williamsburg residents and Founding Fathers, in the late 1970s, the institution, influenced by the growing Civil Rights movement and academic trend towards social history, began to slowly expand this limited interpretation. 1979 marked the first year of official African-American interpretation at the Foundation in any Colonial Williamsburg location, a change arriving after more than a decade of Colonial

[5] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 188.

[6] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 194.

Williamsburg operations at Carter's Grove.[7] The acquisition of Carter's Grove by Colonial Williamsburg also marks a period of archaeological research on the site from the 70s to the 90s, wherein they uncovered many features of the property, including a pre-European contact Native burial site, the remains of the 17th-century English settlement called Martin's Hundred, and the 18th-century living quarters for those enslaved on the property.

Carter's Grove and its interpretation follows a trend in public history since the 1970s and 80s to emphasize a focus on not only a discussion of the lives of the plantation's enslavers and the estate, but on the often hundreds of individuals they claimed ownership of who lived and worked on the property. Other museums in Virginia, like Thomas Jefferson's plantation at Monticello and James Madison's Montpelier, also during this time started to acknowledge, study, and present to the public the history of the people enslaved on the property. Before this time, interpretation of these sites, plantation house museums especially, focused nearly exclusively on the wealthy white elites who owned them. The Jeffersons, Madisons, Carters, and Burwells were at the heart of the research and presentation of these plantations. Along with this focus has typically been a romanticization of the lifestyle of the Southern gentry elite, as was the case with the McCreas' restoration of Carter's Grove and their observers' subsequent praise of it.

[7] Kelly Arehart, "Researching 40 Years of African American Interpretation," Colonial Williamsburg, April 6, 2020, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/behind-the-scenes/researching-40-years-african-american-interpretation.

Figure 1. Promotional pamphlet featuring the exterior of Carter's Grove Plantation House.

From Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Exhibition Buildings–Carter's Grove, 1970-1983, "See Carter's Grove Plantation" promotional pamphlet.

From this history of romanticized historical interpretation and the effort to deromanticize it arises a key tension between presenting the plantation sites as well the surrounding historic areas of Colonial Williamsburg as places for the education of at-times extremely painful history of injustice, exploitation, and abuse yet at the same time as "time travel amusement parks," for the purpose of bringing in large numbers of tourists and growing revenue. This tension is perhaps most apparent at Colonial Williamsburg, having garnered over the years a hard-to-shake reputation as a type of "historical Disneyland," in the words of Handler and Gable, two anthropologists who conducted a long-lasting study on Colonial Williamsburg.[8] Between luxury spas and hotels and picturesque carriage rides, it is perhaps unsurprising then that so many of

[8] Eric Gable and Richard Handler, "DEEP DIRT: Messing up the Past at Colonial Williamsburg," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 34 (1993): 8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23163002.

the *Newport News* write-ins would merge two of Colonial Williamsburg's primary concerns in their responses: visitor experience and finances. This prioritization of profit certainly applies to other institutions besides Colonial Williamsburg, the world's largest living history museum. As another response in the 2006 *Daily Press* article states, "I am from Louisiana, where they have had to use creative ideas to save a lot of their plantations. One of the most successful is using the grounds for wedding receptions and large parties….The first time I saw Carter's Grove, I thought, 'What a beautiful place to host a reception!'"[9]

As much as the history of Carter's Grove and its uses can tell us about changes in the sphere of public history, so too can the reception to these changes and suggestions for its future inform us about the attempts (or lack thereof) of Americans to address the complete histories of plantation sites. Plantations were places of mass enslavement in a country where slavery existed at the greatest scale in absolute terms in world history. Yet despite this hellish history, the visibility of slavery on plantation museums has consistently been erased in favor of wedding receptions and picturesque house tours. This paper seeks to offer a history of Carter's Grove Plantation with a particular focus on the interpretive uses of it by Colonial Williamsburg in the latter half of the 20th century. This work is divided into sections based upon these eras in the ownership of the property, first detailing the McCreas and initial operation by Colonial Williamsburg, then the beginnings of archaeological research by Colonial Williamsburg, and then addressing in length the start of Black interpretation at Carter's Grove, including its goals, interpretive structure, and the criticisms of it. To provide this history,

[9] "21st-Century Ideas for 18th-Century Site," *Newport News Daily Press*, October 29, 2006.

I draw from newspaper articles, the official Colonial Williamsburg journal, internal letters, discussions, and training materials retrieved from Colonial Williamsburg's corporate archives, and official promotional materials. Additionally, I use contemporary reviews and writings from the 20th century concerning the site to understand the critical reception of the exhibition at the time. Carter's Grove Plantation, I argue, offers a representation of this romanticization, and of the attempts to break from that white-washed presentation of history. Success, failures, and controversies of this attempt are all a part of the history of the site and offer insight into the subject of interpreting slavery at public history sites.

Colonial Revivalism and Colonial Williamsburg's Acquisition

Upon Colonial Williamsburg's opening operation of Carter's Grove in the mid-1960s, the general outlook towards the property closely resembled the revivalist attitude exemplified by the previous ownership. "This effort to reestablish the past of a famous and beautiful estate along the James River will delight the many Americans whose interest in the early days of the country takes them to restorations all over the US," a 1971 news article announcing Colonial Williamsburg's restoration of the property says.[10] The McCreas' ownership of the property, beginning with their purchase in 1927, included the "restoration–plus" of the property. Not only did they restore the plantation house, but they modernized the living conditions for their year-round occupation of the house.[11] Following the restoration, a small number of articles were published in

[10] Bea Jones, "Historic Restoration with Industry Aid," *Newsday,* April 16, 1971, https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url= https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/historic-restoration-with-industry-aid/docview/915912112/se-2.

[11] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 170.

architectural and country living magazines praising the McCreas' efforts. "This fine house," one British magazine says, "has been rescued from the fate which has overtaken not a few of its neighbors and is once again in the hands of appreciative owners." Even higher praise comes from the *Town and Country* Magazine: "Carter's Grove has been restored, not only physically but spiritually. It is not merely a benign monument to our social history; it is, actually, a fine, dignified, comfortable country house that is lived in practically the year round by Mr. and Mrs. Archibald M. McCrea. As is the case with most old houses, it is representative of progressive building."[12] "Progressive building," as the article describes it, refers to the continual construction conducted on the building, identifying a legacy that begins with Robert Carter's first acquisition of the land. The emphasis on the "spiritual" restoration of the physical building could generously be considered a selective understanding of the history of the property, the reduction of the suffering of the house and its construction to mere aesthetics, or, less generously, it could be considered an explicit approval of and even longing for the racist social order and subjugation of the pre-Civil War South.

The McCreas and the articles from the early 1930s are firmly entrenched in the colonial revivalist tradition, a movement beginning post-Civil War that emphasizes the architecture of the colonial period in the British cultural sphere, and functions as an expression of national pride in the origins of the United States. This colonial revivalist movement coincides directly with the restoration of the main Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg. Within only a handful of years during the 1920s and 1930s, Duke of Gloucester Street, the main street of Colonial Williamsburg, was transformed from a

[12] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 162.

functioning main street into a replica of the town as it existed as the colonial capital of Virginia over a hundred and fifty years prior.[13] The mission of the Foundation at this time was heavily focused on the historical architecture of the capital and its historical authenticity. Praise for the Foundations' efforts in this sounded very similar to those offered to the McCreas.

Throughout their ownership (and continuing after the death of Archibald McCrea in 1937) the McCreas hosted a number of important figures, ranging from political figures and military officials to architects and historians. Again, the praise afforded the property was unanimous, and followed a very similar pattern of appreciation for preservation and beauty. Abby Aldritch Rockefeller (the wife of Colonial Williamsburg funder John D. Rockefeller) wrote to Mary McCrea, telling her that she has "set a standard that will be hard for Williamsburg to live up to," identifying explicitly the similarity of the missions between the two properties. Other letters described the house as "the most notable of the Colonial houses remaining in this country," "the finest example of Colonial Architecture in Virginia," and a "worshipful" work, one of America's "richest treasures."[14] Allen Franch, a historian, called it "a service to your contemporaries and to coming generations." Going further, he stated this: "I cannot suppose that Carter's Grove will ever be allowed to relapse to its former decay, but will always be guarded as a memorial of the Old South and of you two, who restored the old

[13] Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg: The Restoration of Virginia's Eighteenth Century Colonial Capital* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2002).

[14] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 182.

house to equality with its former greatness. As a historian, I deeply appreciate the achievement."[15]

The colonial revivalist movement, though focused on architecture and structural beauty, carries with it the clear connotation made explicit with Franch's description of the house. What is created through a reconstruction devoid of historical interpretation beyond the purely architectural is more than just a "preservation;" it creates a monument. A memorial, as Franch puts it, to the "Old South." The McCreas rebuilt Carter's Grove and revitalized what they viewed as a tradition of architectural beauty connecting back to the antebellum owners of the house. What the construction results in is a recreated image of a place of extreme suffering–with all the suffering sufficiently extracted and ignored. It can easily be compared to revisionist constructions of the pre-Civil War South, except instead of substituting the realities of slavery and the horrors of bondage with images of happy slaves and benevolent masters, it erases the visibility of the institution at all. However, comments like those of Franch and the *Town and Country* magazine demonstrate that erasing the visibility of slavery does not necessarily erase evidence of its existence in the minds of colonial revivalists. The "former greatness" of Carter's Grove and the Old South, and the lifestyles of the revered white gentry, were made possible only through the system of mass enslavement. The importance of the enslaved through this colonial revivalist framework is purely found within their labor, not their humanity.

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[15] Stephenson, "Carter's Grove Historical Report, Block 50 Building 3," 182.

"Allen Franch" in the report may refer to "Allen French," an instructor at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of several works on Revolutionary America.
"Allen French Papers, [1898]-1957," Concord Free Public Library, https://web.archive.org/web/20090108041452/http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/A_French.htm.

Though the late 1960s acquisition of Carter's Grove by Colonial Williamsburg occurred decades after the height of the colonial revivalist movement, the initial interpretation of the property had seemingly strayed little from this framework of thought. In promotional material, Colonial Williamsburg billed the site as a "stately home" overlooking the James River, where "George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other American patriots enjoyed gracious hospitality. For generations, guests of Carter's Grove have been both numerous and distinguished."[16] A short interpretation of a Carter's Grove tour from the 1960s is filled with anecdotes about the McCreas and the 18th-century gentry residents in particular, tracing the lineage of the house back to Robert "King" Carter. Many of the myths of Carter's Grove are reiterated in this tour, each of them credited to "tradition." Some of these include that Colonel Banastre Tarleton during the Revolutionary War rode his horse up the central stairway, "slashing the railing with his sword to arouse his men who were quartered" at the house, as well as the rejected proposals of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in the parlor, termed because of these stories the "refusal room."[17] There are occasional references to the decorative or architectural features of the house and "the excellent workmanship of craftsmen of the eighteenth century."[18]

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[16] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Exhibition Buildings–Carter's Grove, 1970-1983, "See Carter's Grove Plantation" promotional pamphlet. Cited according to the John D. Rockefeller Corporate Archive Citations Guideline.

[17] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Public Affairs–Carter's Grove, 1960s circa, "Short Interpretation of Carter's Grove," 2.

[18] "Short Interpretation of Carter's Grove," 3.

Slavery and enslaved people are mentioned with great infrequence. In the kitchen, the narration is limited mostly to the "lady of the house," and her domination of the space and the household activities generally. "We forget," this section reads, "that overseeing the household servants took skill and hard work."[19] The only explicit reference to enslavement in this framework comes from the section for the "Plantation Office" room: "Managing a plantation was like running a small town. The owner was responsible for the health and welfare of hundreds of people--his own large family, his indentured servants, and his numerous slaves."[20] The enslavers are presented in a paternalistic fashion, at least in the very few references made to their holding of people in bondage; during the 1700s, during Burwell family ownership, there were upwards of 40 to 50 people enslaved on the property.[21] The white gentry interacting with the Carter's Grove property was at the center of the tours of this time. The topic of slavery is brushed over, addressed only in the context of demonstrating the "hard work" involved in managing such a large and expansive operation. The tour closes on this description:

> The Carters and the Burwells, along with the Harrisons, the Byrds, the Randolphs, the Jeffersons, and the Washingtons, all were products of this plantation society where men learned responsibility early and served their colony well, using their right to representative government conscientiously, perfecting it over the years, and, in most cases, standing ready to defend it when it was threatened.[22]

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[19] "Short Interpretation of Carter's Grove," 2.

[20] "Short Interpretation of Carter's Grove," 6.

[21] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–Carter's Grove Training, 1993-1995, "Carter's Grove Slave Quarter Training Program March 1, 2, and 3, 1993." The 40 to 50 people estimate is specifically for the year 1770.

[22] "Short Interpretation of Carter's Grove," 7.

These families are placed on a pedestal, their contributions to American independence and the United States are valorized, and the "plantation society" that made them is therefore justified and itself glorified as the creator of such preeminent men. This interpretive guide, and the priorities of Carter's Grove as a site at this time, project a longing for the white gentry colonial past that is, as previously stated, functionally similar to the neo-Confederate longing for the antebellum South. The intense suffering at these sites, and their full history, would not be fully addressed for several more years.

Archaeology at Carter's Grove

The beginning of this move towards a full of Carter's Grove started with Colonial Williamsburg's archaeological excavations. The first archaeological surveys on the Carter's Grove property were conducted in 1970. The work was overseen mostly by Ivor Noël Hume, who would continue to conduct archaeological work on the property through the 1980s. The purpose of the first surveys was to "gather data to aid the re-establishment of Carter's Grove as an eighteenth-century working plantation."[23] The focus was on locating 18th-century landscape features and areas of plantation work, but they quickly discovered evidence that the property had been a occupied prior to the 18th century and Robert Carter's purchasing of the tract. In the initial archaeological surveys, a Native American burial site was found west of the main house. In the original report from 1971, this discovery was described only in brief. "Considerable evidence of prehistoric Indian occupation was found in Field 9," the report reads.[24] Ivor Noël Hume

[23] William Kelso, "A Report on Exploratory Excavations at Carter's Grove Plantations," March 1972, Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports\RR0273.xml&highlight=carter%27s%20grove.

[24] David Murcia, "Carter's Grove Archaeological Report, Block 50 Building 3," Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, May 1989, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc=

posited after a 1979 excavation that the English of Martin's Hundred settlement, yet another occupation of the property prior to the Carters and Burwells, chose this location due to the previous occupation by the Native people, though further excavations could neither confirm nor deny this theory.[25] Martin's Hundred Settlement, and its subset known as the Wolstenholme Towne, was first located in 1976 by the Colonial Williamsburg Archaeology team. A headline from a 1978 article from a Long Island newspaper reads "Town Razed by Indians in 1622 Found," featuring the central photograph of the human skull of one of the uncovered English settlers buried there.[26] The town itself was a settlement established in 1618 by the Virginia Company to attract settlers to work tobacco plantations essentially as sharecropping farmers, giving the company a share of their profits in exchange for their transportation to the colony. During the First Powhatan War, a conflict with the Powhatan Confederacy, a political confederation of over 30 member tribes in the Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina area, 78

ResearchReports\RR1561.xml&highlight=burial#p11; William Kelso, "A Report on Exploratory Excavations at Carter's Grove Plantation," 71. The 1971 report noted Indigenous settlement through three main points. First, in areas east of the zone with the ossuary, "plowing has destroyed any Indian layers that might have been present." Second, "9 or 10 closely spaced Indian secondary or bundle burials" were found, probably dating between 350 to 1600 CE, within the North American Late Woodland Period. The site represents "the first Indian ossuary found on the James River and is thus a very important discovery to prehistoric archaeology." The final point locates "the area of the field west of CG 1015" as the main occupation zone. Later archaeological research determined the property to be a site for Indigenous settlement perhaps as far back as the Archaic period (dated as around 6500 to 1200 BCE), though probably the occupation was non-continuous. The terminology of "prehistoric" to refer to archaeological discoveries dating potentially to 1600 is indicative of a larger historiographical issue with pre-colonial Indigenous history. Because many Indigenous civilizations utilized oral history instead of a written historical record familiar to Western historians, for a long time Euro-American scholars have treated this precolonial history as an unknowable monolith of "prehistory," which of course does not accurately reflect the complexity of this history. First Contact has often been treated as the beginning of history in North America, ignoring centuries of Indigenous history which, while harder to analyze especially through traditional historical research practices, does not negate its existence.

[25] David Murcia, "Carter's Grove Archaeological Report, Block 50 Building 3," 4.

[26] "Town Razed by Indians in 1622 found," *Newsday,* July 06, 1978, Nassau ed. https://proxy.wm.edu/login ?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/town-razed-indians-1622-found/docview/964319720/se-2.

of the 140 inhabitants of Martin's Hundred were killed in 1622, after which few colonists returned to the track, and by the start of the 18th century, Martin's Hundred "ceased to be an entity."[27]

The uniqueness of the site for Colonial Williamsburg stemmed in part from the wide breadth of time periods encompassed in the site's historical interpretation. Typically, Colonial Williamsburg interpreted (and continues to interpret) with a historical focus almost exclusively on the Revolutionary and pre-Revolutionary period of Williamsburg. Most of the reconstructed and restored buildings in the main Historic Area on and off Gloucester Street are presented close to how they would have appeared in the 1770s. Though the art museums at Colonial Williamsburg, the Rockefeller Folk Art Museum and the DeWitt Wallace Fine Arts Museum, stretch this focus, interpreting outside of the 18th century was very much breaking new ground for Colonial Williamsburg at the time.[28]

Although the artifacts and evidence for habitation on Carter's Grove stretched all the way back to Indigenous settlement in the Archaic period (dated as around 6500 to 1200 BCE), the authorized interpretive plan in the 70s focused on a "four-century" model. "The history to unfold will begin with the European settlement of the wilderness area in the 1600s," according to the Foundation president at the time. This history would "proceed through the subsequent colonial years of rural homesteading, into the

[27] Andrew Edwards, "Archeology of a Seventeenth-Century Houselot at Martin's Hundred, Virginia," October 2004, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Department of Archaeological Research, 7-10.

[28] Christina Westenberger, "A Summertime Art Museums Tour," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, August 11, 2022, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/trip-planning/a-summertime-art-museum-tour/. DeWitt takes pieces from the late 17th to the early 19th centuries, meanwhile the Folk Art Museum has a very 20th century slant.

era of complex plantation economy with its post-Revolution developments, through the nineteenth and twentieth-century agriculture decline, and conclude with the period of restoration renaissance in the 1930s."[29] This focus on European colonization as the start of history in the Americas is not untypical, though only compounded by the contents of the archaeological museum created on the property.

The main focus of the archaeological museum was the artifacts recovered from the Martin's Hundred Settlement, not any of the Indigenous artifacts also uncovered on the property. A review from Theresa Singleton, a Smithsonian associate, in the *American Anthropologist*, describes the exhibition as having "excellent design" which is "complemented with interpretive text characteristic of Noël Hume's popular writing style."[30] Most of the exhibitions in the museum, their titles and text descriptions, were based entirely on Ivor Noël Hume's book written about the excavations. Though Singleton also describes the exhibit as sometimes too hard to follow for someone unfamiliar with the book, she says that "by far the greatest problem with the archaeology exhibits is that they fail to examine the cultural differences between the English colonists and the Powhatan Indians that gave rise to the Indian attack on Martin's Hundred." Aside from a "small orientation exhibit" at the entrance to the museum titled "The People of Carter's Grove," which provides some information on Algonquian Native groups and their predecessors in the area, there was little mention of Native people in

[29] "News In Brief," Colonial Williamsburg Journal, Volume 03, Number 04 (Summer 1981), 21.

[30] Theresa Singleton, "Reviewed Work: Carter's Grove: The Winthrop Rockefeller Archaeology Museum, Wolstenholme Towne, the Slave Quarter, and the Mansion," *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 2 (1993): 527. http://www.jstor.org/stable/679929.

the museum and no effort to present their history and culture.[31] However, "even more appalling," Singleton says, than their lack of inclusion, is the "repeated use of the term 'massacre' to describe the Indian attack. It is simply outrageous for a newly established museum to portray Native Americans in such a demeaning way, at a time when museums are beginning to develop more inclusive and sensitive presentations."[32] Another criticism sent in a letter from William W. Cole in November of 1982 reads:

> I feel we are ignoring a vital aspect of the site by omitting the Indians in all but a negative way–the "massacre" at Wolstenholme Towne. The Indians deserve better treatment than that, and I believe we have an obligation, when intimating that we are telling the whole story of "change over time," to present the I[n]dian occupation in as thorough and sympathetic manner as we present the white and black occupation.[33]

Both criticisms accept the lack of material evidence as a difficulty in presenting this history, but similarly, both consider the lack of any meaningful attempt to present Native history at the site outside of a negative light unacceptable. Despite these criticisms, there appeared no concerted effort to improve the presentation of Native history specifically, and no initiative to present the pre-colonial history of the site was ever created.

However, while the archaeological research done at the site presents a failure to prioritize Native history, later archaeological work done at Carter's Grove began to serve more the "greatest strength" of "American historical archaeology," defined by John Moreland in the *Annual Review of Archaeology* in 2006 as "the capacity to give voice to

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[31] Singleton, "Reviewed Work: Carter's Grove," 525.

[32] Singleton, 527.

[33] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Historic Buildings–Exhibition Buildings: Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1864-1982, William W. Cole to Mr. Brown, November 22, 1982.

the voiceless, to render articulate those who do not appear in the texts."[34] In the 1980s, the focus of Colonial Williamsburg's archaeology team shifted to locating the living quarters for the enslaved on the property. Among the artifacts uncovered in the process were English and European- manufactured ceramics, glass bottles, cutlery, tobacco pipes, and a large number of buttons.[35] This information (and information compiled from other surviving plantation records) would later be used to reconstruct the living quarters of the enslaved people on the property, including the furnishings and interior, as well as used within the interpretation of the site.

Black Interpretation at the Carter's Grove Mansion

Prior to 1979, Colonial Williamsburg's presentations of diverse histories were sparse. The reconstruction of the Historic Area has its own checkered history with regard to diversity and equity–as the Duke of Gloucester Street was the functioning main street of Williamsburg, the Rockefeller and Foundation buyout of the street pushed off a large number of black residences. The Duke of Gloucester Street was, at the time, surprisingly integrated between black and white residences. The buyout and relocation of these residences actually resulted in a resegregation of Williamsburg.[36] This plus the

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[34] John Moreland, "Archaeology and Texts: Subservience or Enlightenment," (*Annual Review Anthropology* 35 no. 135-51137 2006) 137.

[35] Patricia Samford, "Carter's Grove Slave Archeology Report, Block 50," Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, 1988, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc= ResearchReports \RR1629.xml&highlight=slave.

Martha Katz Hyman, *"In the Middle of this Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot:" The Material Culture of Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Virginia and the Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg,"* Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, 1993, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/ view/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports\RR0350.xml&highlight=slave.

[36] Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg,* 24; Nora Ann Knight, "'Disreputable Houses of Some Very Reputable Negroes': Paternalism and Segregation of Colonial Williamsburg," thesis (Bard College, 2016), 22.

segregationist policy the Foundation imposed for Colonial Williamsburg visitors, despite its hiring of black service workers, does not paint the living history museum a historic champion of the diverse histories it currently seeks to represent.[37]

However, even before 1979, there were some areas of high representation for African Americans in Colonial Williamsburg. A major example is the black coachmen, employed by the Foundation to facilitate the popular carriage rides around the Historic Area. Additionally, black workers were hired for jobs in landscaping, construction, hospitality, exhibition buildings, and in the archaeological work the Foundation performed.[38] However, despite the visibility of black people, Black history was a relatively untouched topic for the Foundation, much like the topics of Native peoples in Virginia, women's roles and experiences, and the general experiences of non-elite lower-class workers. Pushed in part by the Civil Rights movement, the historical trend towards a social history and a generally inclusive history within academia spread to the public field of history. Colonial Williamsburg was no exception to this, and starting in the late 1970s, began expanding its programming to include these typically excluded histories.

Colonial Williamsburg's first concerted effort at Black interpretation–and with it, the interpretation of slavery in and around Williamsburg–began in 1979. Carter's Grove too was subject to this change, though the shift was not necessarily fast-moving. In a 1981 discussion regarding the interpretation of Carter's Grove, executives discussed

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[37] Knight, "'Disreputable Houses,'" 31.

[38] Ywone Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979: African American Coachmen, Visibility, and Representation at Colonial Williamsburg," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2014), pp. 9-35 https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2014.36.1.9

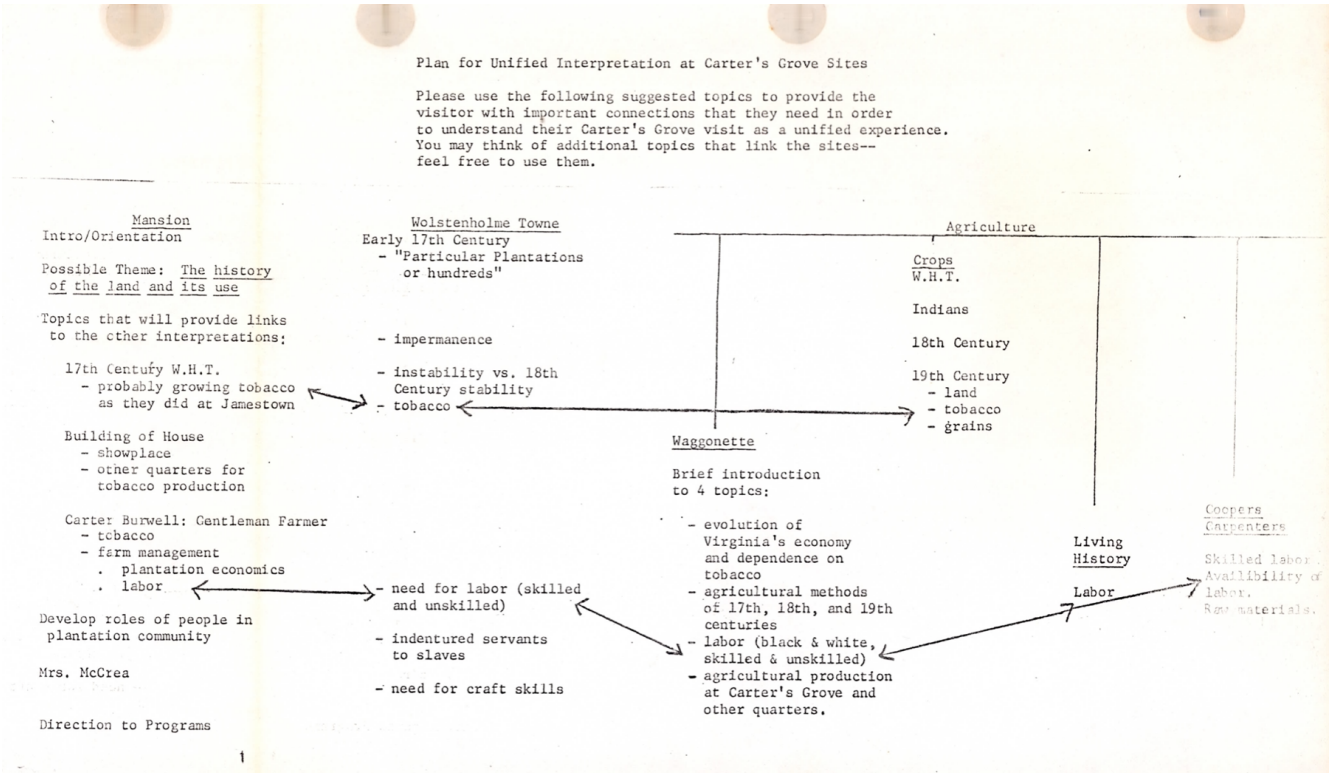
"how to interpret different periods of agriculture on the site outdoors." Within this discussion, the topic of "the black experience at Carter's Grove" was mentioned only briefly, and the suggestion was made that "this subject might best be dealt with in its post-Civil War aspect."[39] This desire to begin talking about Black history after the Civil War reflects an obvious hesitancy to broach the topic of slavery. Despite the initial lack of enthusiasm for this programmatic shift, Carter's Grove did begin interpreting Black history in multiple locations at the site, including within the house itself, addressing the topic of slavery, rather than only post-emancipation.

By 1983, the site was attempting to create a unified experience throughout the entire site in order to "improve the overall experience for the visitor immediately" and to "help the interpreter prepare for the forthcoming expanded interpretation of Carter's Grove." In the early 1980s, the goal of the interpretation at the site was to tell the story of Carter's Grove as "a story of this land and the diverse groups of people (including American Indians, Anglo-Virginians, and Afro-Virginians) who over countless generations will have made their mark on it." They began to address "'the other side' of plantation life," through what started out as somewhat limited programming regarding Black history.[40] Part of the effort was to fit the diverse time periods and variety of

[39] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Exhibition Buildings–Carter's Grove, 1970-1983, Carter's Grove Interpretation Discussion June 5, 1981, page 3. This presentation of agriculture was part of the ongoing effort to use Carter's Grove as a "functioning plantation." Though the site was never used at the full capacity that a fully "functioning plantation" might, there was throughout the site's operations tobacco grown and some sustenance gardening maintained.

[40] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Collections Conversation & Museums–Carter's Grove Development Files Plan for Integrated Interpretations at All Carter's Grove Sites, 1983, "Plan for Integrated Interpretations at All Carter's Grove Sites" from Nancy Beaman and Nancy Milton October 3, 1983.

peoples into one master narrative. Despite their efforts, though, the site was described by the *Daily Press* as "an odd mix of history," with individual exhibitions that were "unlinked to a major theme," united only by location.[41] Building thematic connections between the sites, though attempted, never fully unified the experience at Carter's Grove, as the disjointed exhibitions at the site remained a point of critique throughout its operation.


Plan for Unified Interpretation at Carter's Grove Sites

Please use the following suggested topics to provide the visitor with important connections that they need in order to understand their Carter's Grove visit as a unified experience. You may think of additional topics that link the sites-- feel free to use them.

Mansion
Intro/Orientation

Possible Theme: The history of the land and its use

Topics that will provide links to the other interpretations:

17th Century W.H.T.
- probably growing tobacco as they did at Jamestown

Building of House
- showplace
- other quarters for tobacco production

Carter Burwell: Gentleman Farmer
- tobacco
- farm management
  . plantation economics
  . labor

Develop roles of people in plantation community

Mrs. McCrea

Direction to Programs

Wolstenholme Towne
Early 17th Century
- "Particular Plantations or hundreds"

- impermanence
- instability vs. 18th Century stability
- tobacco

- need for labor (skilled and unskilled)
- indentured servants to slaves
- need for craft skills

Agriculture

Crops
W.H.T.

Indians

18th Century

19th Century
- land
- tobacco
- grains

Waggonette

Brief introduction to 4 topics:

- evolution of Virginia's economy and dependence on tobacco
- agricultural methods of 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries
- labor (black & white, skilled & unskilled)
- agricultural production at Carter's Grove and other quarters.

Living History

Labor

Coopers
Carpenters

Skilled labor
Availability of labor.
Raw materials.

1

Figure 2. Suggested Connections for Interpretation at Carter's Grove.
From Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Collections Conversation & Museums– Carter's Grove Development Files Plan for Integrated Interpretations at All Carter's Grove Sites, 1983, "Plan for Integrated Interpretations at All Carter's Grove Sites" from Nancy Beaman and Nancy Milton October 3, 1983.

Though this plan attempts to integrate these "diverse groups of people" together, Native people are only mentioned under "Crops" (under "Agriculture") and similarly, black is used one and in conjunction with

[41] "Carter's Grove An Odd Mix of History," *Daily Press,* March 7, 1994, https://www.dailypress.com/1994/03/07/ carters-grove-an-odd-mix-of-history/.

Singleton, "Reviewed Work: Carter's Grove," 528.

white, specifically for the comparison of black and white labor. Additionally, "slave" is only mentioned once, also in conjunction with a comparison to "indentured servants." Though certainly more mentions of "diverse history" than before, this 1983 plan sets off to a slow start.

In 1985, six years after the start of official African American interpretation, the interpretive goal of the property was to tell the "variety of ways its [Carter's Grove] owners over three centuries used the house, the land, and the river." The three centuries referenced are the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. As listed in the Charter Document for the exhibition of the "Mansion and Stable at Carter's Grove and their immediate surroundings," the suggested topics for interpretation of each are as follows:

> For the Burwells – master-slave relationships; plantation management; the social prominence of the Burwells; influence of English architectural pattern books; construction of the mansion.
>
> During the nineteenth century – mixed farming in antebellum Tidewater; Civil War and Reconstruction; the impact of Emancipation; innovations in transportation, especially steamboats and railroads; Yorktown Centennial celebration; agrarian reform and the mechanization of farming; lapsing of Williamsburg as a market.
>
> To the McCreas – the Colonial Revival and early historic preservation; the impact on American society and economy of industrialization, immigration, urbanization, an[d] the invention of the automobile; the Depression in Virginia; new standards of living, especially as regards privacy and entertaining; domestic servants.[42]

The interpretive plan laid out in this charter, while not overly radical in its presentation of the plantation's history, is still a step away from the whitewashed decorative arts tour couched in the logic of colonial revivalism that existed before. The plan outlines an acknowledgment and discussion of the mass enslavement on the property, though the focus still falls largely on the family owners as the main cast of historical characters. In further description, the charter explicitly details the Carters' and Burwells' "dependence

[42] "Interpretive Planning Team Charter Document," 10 Oct 1985, John D. Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1.

on the labor of [their] slaves," as well as the fact that the 19-century owners of the property's economic activities were "made possible by slave labor until 1863."[43]

In the "Becoming Americans" storyline outlined at the end of the plan, there is even a critique of the colonial revivalism of the McCreas. "The McCreas and others like them sought to re-create the agrarian past," it says, "or rather, an idealized version of it…the McCreas fell sway to the agrarian myth," which refers to the idolozation of these wealthy landowners as hardworking men of agricultural cultivation, ignoring those who actually performed this agricultural labor.[44] The McCreas are not presented as the saviors of the "Old South" and the pseudo-mythical past of Colonial and Revolutionary America. Rather, while the couples' contribution to preservation is acknowledged, their modernization and subsequent habitation and impressive range of social hostessing of the property are identified with the desire to be a part of the idealized and whitewashed legacy of the house. "In the face of massive immigration, urbanization, and industrialization," the outline reads, "members of the Anglo-Saxon upper classes took refuge in their concept of the colonial period's patriotism, simplicity, and graciousness."[45] Though not explicitly decried, the significance lies in the framing of this idealized colonial bygone era as a "myth" and only a "concept" of the past and not the full picture of reality.

[43] "Interpretive Planning," 3.

[44] "Interpretive Planning," 4.

[45] "Interpretive Planning," 4.

The Reconstruction of the Living Quarters for the Enslaved

A further step towards meaningfully presenting this full reality came with the reconstruction of "slave quarters" on the plantation. The reconstruction consisted of four wooden structures: a two-family house, a larger house for a family and single men, a house for the foreman, and a corn crib.[46] Built on the location determined by the archaeology team to be the most likely location of the living quarters for enslaved people on the property, this site provided a new level of visibility for the history of enslavement at Carter's Grove. As a physical landmark, this reconstruction actively re-interrupted the picturesque vision of architectural and natural beauty imagined by the McCreas and many others. Additionally, the positioning of the quarters on the path between the Reception Center on the property and both the mansion and archaeological museum places it as the first exhibit a visitor might encounter upon arrival to the site. Its preeminence contributes to shifting the overall perspective of the site from that of the white elites, both within the colonial and early 20th-century contexts, to further emphasize the perspective of those being kept by them in slavery.

[46] Curtia James, "To Live Like a Slave," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 14-24, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/foundation/journal/slave.cfm.

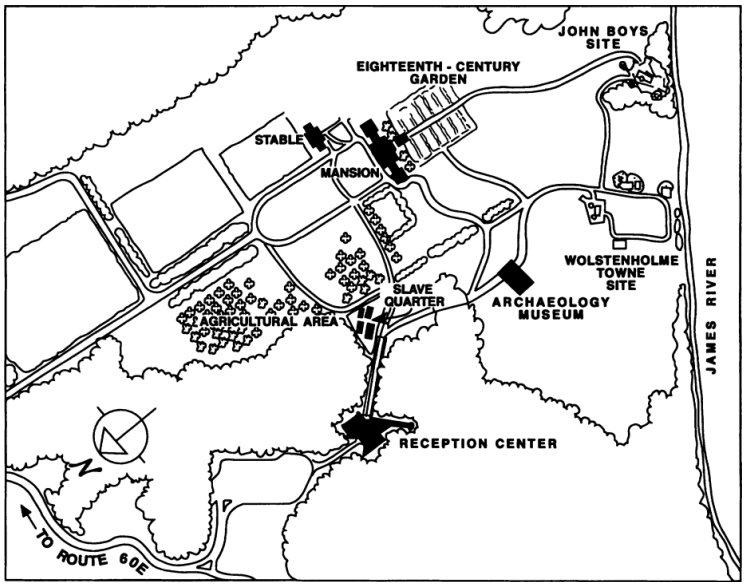


Figure 3. Map of the Exhibition Sites at Carter's Grove
Map of the property and significant sites at Carter's Grove–the slave quarters are unavoidable entering from the reception center. Image as found in the *American Anthropologist*, June 1993 Review.

While the recreated quarters were still in construction, Rex Ellis, the then-assistant director of African American interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg, was quoted by the *New York Times* in 1988 on their goals for the site. "Williamsburg was never a place for blacks to come to," Ellis said. He continued:

> We're in the embryo stages in interpreting ethnic history. The typical response of museums has been one of silence. We're going to have to show rebellion, violence and racism in a way we haven't done at Williamsburg. How we do that is extremely important. We must be true to the record or we stand in danger of rewriting history ourselves. The subject of slavery is certainly painful, which is one of the reasons it needs to be dealt with. We need to learn from all of history, including the uncomfortable parts of history.[47]

The sentiment of the project was to present an accurate depiction of plantation enslavement. In the 1988 Development Files for the site, the Interpretive Plan for the reconstructed living quarters within the plan's rationale details some of the difficulties

[47] Patricia Leigh Brown, "Restoring a Past Some Would Bury," *The New York Times,* 12 Sept 1988. https://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/12/us/restoring-a-past-some-would-bury.html

the Foundation has had in interpreting African American history, even several years after 1979. "Interpreting black history was," the plan states, "until very recently, relegated to programs that spoke of the black experience but rarely utilized anything other than live actors and performers (all of whom were black) to tell the story."[48] Although the Foundation had begun interpreting non-white history, it was not well-integrated into the entire experience at Colonial Williamsburg, and the responsibility for addressing it lay mostly on the heads of black interpreters. With the new interpretation of the mansion, some of this was alleviated, but the "construction and eventual interpretation at Carter's Grove have the potential of either fueling the flames of discomfort to a greater degree or providing an atmosphere where all interpreters can begin to deal successfully with the difficulties of interpreting slavery."[49] The goal of the interpretive plan was not only to expand the specific programming engaging the history of slavery, but also to "begin a process of interpretation and training that aids in interpreters in dealing more comfortably with slavery issues."[50]

Yet despite this move towards an integrated interpretive plan, the historical interpretation of the living quarters for the enslaved was performed mostly by black third-person interpreters dressed in period costumes, as opposed to first-person interpretation. As a living history museum, Colonial Williamsburg has become known for its first-person interpretation of sites; "first-person interpretation" refers to an actor-

[48] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Collections Conservation and Museums–Carter's Grove Development Files: Slave Quarter Interpretive Plan, 1988, "Slave Quarter Interpretive Plan," 2.

[49] "Slave Quarter Interpretive Plan," 3.

[50] "Slave Quarter Interpretive Plan," 3.

interpreter presenting history by portraying a certain historical character. This is most obvious in actor-interpreters portraying well-known historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson or George Washington (and other figures of Colonial Williamsburg's "Nation Builders"), but it is also used for performances or presentations and for lesser-known historical figures or fabricated historical characters in Colonial Williamsburg.[51] However, the nature of performing first-person interpretation can be unpredictable in terms of audience reaction, particularly when performing an enslaved character. As explained in a 2014 article published in *The American Historian*, "slave reenactors' seemingly unrestricted and unprotected availability to questioners, and their obligation to stay in character–in order words, their vulnerability–is probably the most uncomfortably realistic, and troubling, aspect of performing enslavement." The expectation that the interpreter (especially female interpreters) inhabit "roles officially defined as submissive, seems to break down customary inhibitions."[52] First-person interpretation, particularly when inhabited on a daily basis, can by itself be an emotionally taxing method of historical portrayal and these "emotional wages" only increase with the difficulties of inhabiting an enslaved character.[53] Rex Ellis, throughout his time with the Colonial

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[51] The Nation Builders, as Colonial Williamsburg describes them, are "real historic figures associated with 18th century Williamburg who made significant contributions to the American story." They are first-person actor-interpreters who portray significant or well-known individuals, including Jefferson and Washington, but also more recently other lesser known figures like James Armistead Lafayette (a former enslaved man who worked under the Marquis de Lafayette as a spy during the Revolution) or Ann Wager (the white headmistress of the Bray school for free and enslaved African Americans). "Meet Our Nation Builders," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/explore /nation-builders/.

[52] Joanne Pope Melish, "[Re]Living Slavery: Ask a Slave and the Pitfalls of Portraying Slavery for the Public," *The American Historian*, August 2014, 38.

[53] Amy M. Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). Tyson's work, though not focused on the subject of interpreting slavery in the first-person, discusses extensively the emotional toll of first-person character interpretation on an individual.

Williamsburg Foundation, repeatedly cautioned against the use of first-person interpretation to regularly staff Carter's Grove.[54] The day-to-day staffing of Carter's Grove remained in third person interpretation, which is a form of historical interpretation more familiar to audiences unaware of the unique functions of living history museums. Third-person interpretation refers to an out-of-character presentation of history, which can allow the interpreter to discuss topics not only within the time period and knowledge of their character, but also a further reaching history with connections to the modern day.

Even with third-person interpretation, however, there is still acknowledged potential for difficult experiences when interpreting slavery. The training materials for on-site interpretation seem to anticipate that this interpretation would be uncomfortable or even outright emotionally triggering. Within training material for interpretation at Carter's Grove includes multiple examples of providing interpreters "practical advice to successfully address issues or concerns that may arise when interpreting slavery." One such material includes five "Golden Rules" to do so. The first rule, "Calmly Acknowledge the Emotional Behavior," reminds the interpreter not to "confuse a general discomfort with emotional behavior." The guidelines explicitly refer to "blatant behavior, i.e. the guest is moved to weeping and wailing; they are calling you a liar and revisionist; they are threatening to report CW to some organization." The anticipation apparent in these guidelines is that some visitors be angered by an accurate portrayal of the lives of the enslaved, perhaps assuming these visitors will hold an Old South revisionist idea of

[54] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Research & Historical Interpretation–Historic Trades–Subject Files: Agricultural Program and Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1980-1984, Carter's Grove Agricultural Committee Meeting Minutes May 2, 1984.

benevolent slavery. The other potential anticipation in the guidelines is that the depiction might be traumatic for some visitors. The guidelines continue, "Mind you, this stuff is rare but when it comes to a subject that has so many opinions, hurts, etc., you need to be prepared!"[55]

Yet, despite that third-person interpretation was most commonly used at Carter's Grove for its daily staffing and tours, some aspects of first-person interpretation were also portrayed there. Curtia James, an employee of Colonial Williamsburg, describes some of this interpretation in a 1993 article published in Colonial Williamsburg's own journal series. Her article was titled "To Live Like a Slave," and it detailed two full days of first-person interpretation performed at the location. Some of the scenes performed included a Baptist preacher giving an oration about the "paradox of slavery from a religious perspective," an argument between two enslaved people over escaping versus staying, a carpenter teaching his son to use a wood shaver, the performing of field and housework, and even children playing their roles as the enslaved; James describes them as "exud[ing] a refreshing spirit of freedom."[56]

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[55] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–Carter's Grove Junior Interpreter site rotation & interpretive topics, 2002, "Interpreting the Enslaving Virginia Storyline with Confidence and Comfort."

[56] The inclusion of children at the site was done through a Junior Interpreter Program, wherein children could volunteer for day-long shifts. They went through an interpretive training process and in 2002, these were the daily topics their interpretation would focus on:
"Family: (Tuesdays and Thursdays) family, relatives, fictive kin, marriage, births, deaths, separation (reasons), free/enslaved Black interaction, community
Work: (Wednesdays and Fridays) seasonal work on a farm; corn, tobacco, livestock, orchards, age appropriate work, chores in the home, maintaining home, crops, etc.
Leisure: (Saturdays) Saturday night gatherings, nightwalking, courting, storytelling, games, music, dancing (survival skills)".
Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–Carter's Grove Junior Interpreter site rotation & interpretive topics, 2002, "Daily Interpretive Topics."

The two days of interpretation, including the interpreters sleeping within the quarters themselves, were long planned and anticipated for three months prior, according to James. James begins the article, however, by expressing her previous ambivalence about the interpretation at the site. "My concern," she said, "was whether the site could broach a subject that I wanted no one to forget, but that I, ironically, felt hesitant to face." At her first visit to the site, she described her initial reaction to the site as "chilling," and described her curiosity about the perceptions of the nearly all-white crowd visiting the site. During the ten-minute presentation offered by the third-person interpreter, James recalls the interpreter saying that only two percent of the population of colonial Virginia lived in the conditions presented in the mansion house: "If you happen to be two percent of the population then you can look back and say what a romantic period. But if you happen to be everybody else, welcome home. Because the average person lived in a 15-by-15-foot house with a dirt floor just like these."[57] This interpretation, just like the interpretation given at the mansion, works to dismantle notions of an idealized past that white Americans in particular attempt to harken back to. The statement attempted clearly to encourage the audience to identify with the conditions of the enslaved, regardless of race, though the anticipation of a majority white audience is clear through some of the wording of the interpretation. The "average person," that the interpreter mentions in James' recounting of her experience is understood by the audience to mean the average free white person. The interpretation at the site makes the assumption that a white audience member will first attempt to

[57] Curtia James, "To Live Like a Slave."

identify with the slave-owning white gentry, and therefore must specifically work to dismantle this connection, one generated solely by race.

As such, one of the main goals of the interpretation at the Carter's Grove living quarters appeared to be this attempt to place visitors "in the shoes" of the enslaved, or as much as can be possible on a few-minute-long tour on their historical vacation. A 1999 article in the *New Journal and Times* of Norfolk describes the dialogue between the on-site interpreter and the group of visitors, described as "basically a white one." The question of why more enslaved people did not attempt to escape was asked to the interpreter, interrupting the initial description of the quarters. The interpreter, a man the article identifies as Joseph Garcia, patiently answered her question by talking the visitors through the sun-up to sun-down toil of a typical day for an enslaved worker, intended to lead the group to a more empathetic understanding of the lives of the enslaved (though an explanation of the difficulties and dangers involved in the actual act of escape as well as the impact of family connections might also have been included in the discussion). Then, after describing the conditions of living for the enslaved "foreman" of the farm, one materially improved from those forced to work domestically and agriculturally, Garcia asked his tour group, "Who would like to be foreman?" After some in the group raised their hands, Garcia picked out one of the hand-raisers to be the "foreman," and set up a scenario in which the foreman's wife (another one picked from the crowd) was to receive 50 lashes from his own hand and in the case of his refusal, he would lose his position and potentially have his children sold off. Several

people within the group were described as “disturbed” and “uncomfortable” after the tour had concluded.[58]

The *New Journal and Times* article quoted Gene Mitchell, another interpreter at the site, as saying “What we try to do is make slavery real to our visitors…We don’t exaggerate, we stick to the historical facts and let you wear the slave’s shoes for a while.”[59] The third-person interpretation at the site was geared explicitly to make the experiences of the enslaved relevant to the visitors, with an awareness of the predominantly white visitor base typical of Colonial Williamsburg especially during the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Though much of the interpretation’s effort seemed to be to pull visitors’ focus from identifying with the owners in a colonial revivalist and McCrea-like fashion to identifying with the enslaved, the stated interpretive goal in the training

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[58] Edward Williams, "Travel Close to Home Colonial Williamsburg: Efforts to Depict Slavery Get Mixed Reviews." *New Journal and Guide,* July 14, 1999. https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical- newspapers/travel-close-home-colonial-williamsburg/docview/569497471/se-2.

[59] Williams, "Travel Close to Home Colonial Williamsburg.”

An article published a month later in the same venue made a number of factual and semantic corrections to the initial article which are as follows:
“First of all, there were three outstanding events in 1619 and among these are the arrival of the 20 Negroes at Jamestown. Secondly, Virginia was not the first colony to enslave African men, women and children. The colony of Massachusetts instituted slavery in 1642 and Virginia in 1662. Thirdly, the James River is the back-drop at Carter’s Grove, not the Elizabeth River. When visitors leave the slave quarter site, they proceed to the Carter’s Grove Mansion, not the Governor’s Mansion, which is located in the historic area. Finally, I address proper and respectful reporting. Throughout the article, you refer to Garcia as Mr. Garcia and never make reference to his ethnic origin. In making reference to Gene Mitchell, you are inconsistent when addressing her as Ms. once and you identify her ethnic origin. The correct name of the free Black woman who resided in Williamsburg during the Civil War is Rocktilda Robinson. The person who Ms. Gene Mitchell portrays and I portrayed during my previous employment with Colonial Williamsburg.”
The corrective article was written by Sandra Johnson, a former employee of Colonial Williamsburg and interpreter at the site. Although she makes no corrections to the type of interpretation (which is described similarly elsewhere) described by the article, these factual errors are somewhat glaring.

Sandra Johnson, "Colonial Williamsburg Article is Not Totally Correct on our History." *New Journal and Guide,* August 25, 1999. https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/colonial-williamsburg-article-is-not-totally/docview/569487539/se-2.

materials for the site was for the education of the public on the community of those enslaved. "The overall message we feel is essential for visitors to leave with," the training materials read, "is that THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED AT THE QUARTER SUCCEEDED IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND A COMMUNITY IN SPITE OF THE SLAVERY SYSTEM." The main interpretive objectives listed for the most part all relate to showcasing the "family-based" community that both "African-born and native-born blacks" were able to create within the "oppressive and inhuman system of slavery."[60] Another goal was to "explain the influence of the colonial black experience on life in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America," which was aided by the expansion of the first-person interpretation at the site, in particular the 40-minute presentation introduced in 2000 called "The Soul of a Sharecropper." In this presentation, a free black woman character "discusses her situation after the civil war," expanding Black interpretation past slavery, offering more continuity between Colonial Williamsburg's traditional focus on the 18th century and the 19th and 20th centuries.[61]

Carter's Grove Criticisms

The efforts at Carter's Grove were not without criticism. Theresa Singleton's review of the property in the *American Anthropologist* described the exhibit at the slave quarters as "highly effective," and also described the same interpretive process of engaging visitors by "asking questions and by soliciting volunteers for role playing." She

[60] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Education Research & Historical Interpretation–Training & Historical Research–Memos re: Carter's Grove Slave Quarter composition, furnishings, garden, 1985-1989, "The Carter's Grove Slave Quarter Training Program May and June 1989," 1.

[61] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Collections Conservation & Museums–Carter's Grove Development Files: Interpretation, 1965, 1989-2002, "First Person Interpretations at Carter's Grove for 2000."

also said that a success of the site is the emphasis on the landscape as one "which Black numerically dominated, contested, and exerted their influence over whenever possible."[62] However, the criticism she identifies is universal to "exhibitions that depend upon interpreters to convey the major ideas," which is that if the visitor were to miss or ignore the interpretive orientation to the site, they might "view the quarter as a quaint living area comparable to, although more spartan than, furnished log dwellings found at other outdoor museums."[63]

The issue of the furnishings of the living quarters raises another point of criticism. Maria Franklin of the University of Berkley California in 1993 wrote "Rethinking the Carter's Grove Slave Quarter Reconstruction: A Proposal," wherein one of her criticisms was the lack of material culture in the quarters and the bare-bones presentation of the living conditions. "The reconstructed slave quarter as a whole," she said, "relays a strong and troubling visual message regarding enslaved Afro-Virginians." She continues:

> The message is that they possessed both a culture of poverty and a poverty of culture. Visitors are struck by the drafty cabin interiors and the meager possessions. They ogle the hard dirt floor and wonder to each other how it is that a person could have slept there. On-site interpreters, costumed as Burwell's enslaved Africans, answer questions and speak with visitors about work and living arrangements at the quarter, and cabin architecture. Yet a vital part of this educational process is still missing. Of primary importance to enslaved blacks would have been their community in the quarters.[64]

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[62] Theresa A. Singleton, "Reviewed Work: Carter's Grove," 526-527.

[63] Singleton, "Reviewed Work: Carter's Grove," 527.

[64] Maria Franklin, *Rethinking the Carter's Grove Slave Quarter Reconstruction: A Proposal*, (University of California Berkley), 1993. https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/anthpubs/ucb/text/kas079-011.pdf, 149.

Despite the interpretive objectives behind the scenes to demonstrate the "family-based community," the actual material reality portrayed by the scene did not well reflect this. A very similar criticism came three years prior, in a letter to the then-director of Carter's Grove from Rhys Isaac of La Trobe University. Though he calls the "buildings themselves and indeed the whole site" very well done, he says that "the clarity of presentation" was "suddenly gone" upon entering the homes. "The interior spaces," he says, "had objects in them but I could get no sense from the objects or their arrangement of the kinds of lives to which they belonged." To Isaac, there was no sense of "an interpretation of the intensely collective, indeed communal lives that we know characterized the quarter where 'families' did not have houses or rooms to themselves, let alone individuals."[65] Like Franklin, he emphasizes the community of enslaved life, and found the reconstruction to lack a well-communicated sense of this community and communal way of life from the material objects in the quarters. The director penned a response to Isaac, saying that "You may be sure, however, that we are grateful for them [Isaac's observations] and will consider them carefully."[66] No doubt Isaac's concerns were considered, but by the time of Franklin's critique a few years later, they were not sufficiently addressed.

Another criticism of the site, one that is almost universal to all other sites within Colonial Williamsburg, is that Black history and most non-white non-male history in

[65] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–General Correspondence Folder 575 Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1989-1991, Rhys Isaac to Larry Henry Re: Slave quarter reconstruction October 9, 1989, 1.

[66] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–General Correspondence Folder 575 Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1989-1991, Larry Henry to Rhys Isaac October 27, 1989, 1.

general is presented as less factual and more uncertain, which ties into the lack of cultural materials Franklin and Isaac identify. Due to the difficulty of finding site-specific evidence for non-white and non-wealthy individuals at Carter's Grove and Colonial Williamsburg generally, some employees at Colonial Williamsburg had the tendency to view Black history as less factual than white history, as observed by Handler and Gable in their study of the institution, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, published in 1997. Both "frontline" and "backstage" employees, they said, "felt uncomfortable with that topic [slavery] and consequently tend to avoid or gloss over it." The justification for this, "while avoiding the taint of explicit racism," was the belief that black history was "'undocumented'–it verged on fiction; it never quite had the same just-the-facts authenticity as the stories they could tell about the elite white inhabitants of the town."[67] This perception of Black history as a non-factual grey area bled over into the way in which interpreters discussed it, leading them to be less likely to speak in certainties about Black history, rather hedging responses with disclaimers of a potential lack of authenticity. Despite that plenty of White historical narratives (such as all the "traditions" held by the interpretation of Carter's Grove mansion, like the Tarleton's horse ride up the staircase or the tales of the refusal room) are not verifiable, this hesitancy tended to only be extended to Black history. Franklin, in her criticism, references Handler and Gable's work on the topic, saying that "the heaps of museum pieces and dozens of reconstructed 'original' buildings associated with eighteenth-century whites elevates their past to 'historical reality,' while what is seen as the scarcity of slave-related material culture and documents means that the past of enslaved

[67] Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 84.

Africans must remain in the realm of the unknown."[68] Franklin also cites a similar hesitancy in the staff that Handler and Gable identify due both to the staff's familiarity with the history of the white elite of Williamsburg and due to their contrasting unfamiliarity with enslaved Africans, who appear, Franklin says, as "an alien group" to them.[69]

In order to combat this "dichotomy" within Colonial Williamsburg's interpretive programs, Franklin offers specific ways in which the interpretation at the "black presence" sites, in particular Carter's Grove, could be improved. Her first suggestion is that the "range of the 'written and the wrought' used to furnish black sites" is expanded to "include anthropology and folklore materials not typically consulted." Her second is that the "current goals for furnishing sites" also be expanded to include "not simply a secondary dialog on what black culture may have been, but to add clearly defined objectives geared towards emphasizing cultural processes." This includes materials on how Black culture evolved and how an Afro-Virginian cultural identity was created, which, Franklin says, would provide a "far more meaningful interpretation of the lives of enslaved Afro-Virginians when compared to the current method of merely searching for objects that could be tied to persons of a certain age, occupation, gender, etc., of a particular time period and location."[70] The emphasis on the specificity of details, as

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[68] Franklin, *Rethinking the Carter's Grove,* 147-148.

While their book on Colonial Williamsburg was published in 1997, they had published multiple articles previously on Colonial Williamsburg; Franklin cites specifically "On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg" from a 1992 publication of the *American Ethnologist.*

[69] Franklin, *Rethinking the Carter's Grove,* 148.

[70] Franklin, 148.

Franklin argues, prevents Colonial Williamsburg from drawing from a broader cultural context among the enslaved in the Chesapeake, even though doing so would effectively create a more accurate picture of the lives of the enslaved.

However, while the Carter's Grove Plantation site strove for accuracy and "the historical facts," there are still other concerns that exist at all historical sites attempting to present the realities of enslavement, some of which have been alluded to throughout this paper. The concern of Curtia James, the author of the previously mentioned "To Live Like a Slave," of whether the site "could broach a subject that [she] wanted no one to forget, but that [she], ironically, felt hesitant to face," is representative of a larger concern about sites like this.[71] This concern is broadly defined as finding the line between presenting truthfully the horrors of slavery for the purpose of education and remembrance or simply portraying for an audience the deep pain and trauma of those enslaved for the profit of an institution. Particularly at a location like Colonial Williamsburg, "historical Disneyland," where tickets for the plantation site are sold alongside luxury stays at their on-site hotels and amenities, the presentation of this history begs the question: what is the line between education and entertainment? It is under this system of profits that turns the emotional labor, the "emotions, knowledge, and lived experiences" of the interpreters of this history, into "commodities in the economic system of cognitive capitalism."[72] Given this presumed inevitability of the

[71] James, "To Live Like a Slave."

[72] Roslynn Arnesia Powell, "Ask an Interpreter: An Exploratory Study of the Emotional Labor of Interpreting Slavery at Historical Sites in the United States" (thesis, North Carolina State University 2023), 89.

commodification of history, how can an institution address the history of slavery with the dignity and respect required while still profiting from it?

The act of ignoring the history of slavery and those who lived and suffered under it that permeated Colonial Williamsburg's representation of the property prior to the 1980s was considered unacceptable by a new generation of museum professionals, particularly in the uncritical glorification of the property and the owners of it. Glorifying a lifestyle upheld by slavery, and even praising the management of the plantation as a sort of training ground for the great men of the Revolution, either constructs slavery as a necessity or outright preferences the system and white supremacist social order inherent in it. In stepping away from this mindset, essentially the glorification of the "Old South" through a colonial revivalist framework, Colonial Williamsburg certainly improved its historical interpretation of the Carter's Grove property (and all their other sites within the Historic Area). But portraying this history both well and ethically is a far more complicated endeavor than solely the act of inclusion.[73]

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[73] Perhaps there is no better example of this and no better display of the tension between education, entertainment, audience and interpreter trauma, and historical accuracy than the 1994 performance of a slave auction. "For the first time," a *Washington Post* article from the time reads, "the tourist attraction that calls itself living history was depicting the most shameful chapter of Williamsburg's past–the buying and selling of human beings." This performance, put on by Christy Coleman and the African American interpretation department, was met with protests and news coverage, and became one of Colonial Williamsburg's most well-known controversies. It drew a crowd of upwards of 2,000, a majority of which were white. The performance lasted 21 minutes and saw the separation of families. Some protestors withdrew their objections after viewing, but the performance on October 10th remains the sole performance, although the interpreters of the event held it was due to the emotional toll of the re-enactment itself, not due to outside protests, that prevented another performance–Christy Coleman herself said that the repetition of the event would "diminish its power." The 1994 performance remains controversial to the current day, epitomizing the perhaps not fully answerable questions regarding slavery and public history.
Tamara Jones, "Living History or Undying Racism? Colonial Williamsburg 'Slave Auction' Draws Protest, Support," *Washington Post,* October 11, 1994, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/ 1994/10/11 /living-history-or-undying-racism-colonial-williamsburg-slave-auction-draws-protest-support/5a6ec396-e6f8-4a71-a185-8ece86afa166/.
"'Slave auction' divides crowd in Williamsburg," *The Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1994, https://www.baltimoresun. com/1994/10/11/slave-auction-divides-crowd-in-williamsburg/.

In 2003, the site at Carter's Grove was closed indefinitely by Colonial Williamsburg. The reasons given were the financial deficit of the Foundation and the cost of maintaining a site of the scale of Carter's Grove, especially removed as it is from the main Historic Area.[74] By 2006 and the publishing of the *Newport News Daily Press* article in the opening of this work, Carter's Grove Plantation existed still in a grey area within the institution, without any official operations. Colonial Williamsburg briefly opened and operated Great Hopes Plantation starting in the 2000s, a site much closer to the Historic Area, intended to portray a plantation that was owned by farmers "'of the middling sort' or of even more modest means."[75] However, despite that Colonial Williamsburg continued to attempt to portray rural slavery (at least until Great Hopes' recent closure), the perception of the museum as only a pleasant tourist destination lingered, as the write-ins to the *Newport News Daily Press* clearly demonstrated. The suggestions that Carter's Grove become a "themed luxury lodging choice," "a resort, a retreat, a vacation and a working ride and therapeutic center," a location for "house parties" with a "good meal and some great period music" all follow the same logic that guided the McCreas and Colonial Williamsburg's initial stewardship of the property.

Erin Krutko Devlin, "Colonial Williamsburg's Slave Auction Re-Enactment: Controversy, African American History and Public Memory" (thesis, W&M ScholarWorks, 2003), 110. For more information and analysis on the slave auction re-enactment, see the above William & Mary student thesis.

[74] "Carter's Grove to Close in 2003," *Daily Press,* October 24, 2002, https://www.dailypress.com/2002/10/24/ carters-grove-to-close-in-2003/.

[75] "Great Hopes Plantation," Great Hopes Plantation : The Colonial Williamsburg Official History & Citizenship Site, https://www.slaveryandremembrance.org/almanack/places/hb/hbgrthopes.cfm?s=14. It is difficult to determine the exact date of Great Hopes' closure, but it appears to have been closed at some point during the recent pandemic.

Despite the decades of work put in by black and white interpreters alike to prioritize Black history (at least within certain locations at the property), the legacy of the site remains one deeply entrenched in colonial revivalist logic. The brutal system of labor that built both the house itself and the lifestyle of the white gentry the owners is, in the minds of many of the *Daily Press* write-ins, easily ignored or easily accepted. Even more than a decade later, the willingness of museum-goers to even hear about the history of the enslaved is mixed–a *Washington Post* article in 2019 describes the disgruntled reviews of visitors to the presidential plantation houses of Monticello and Montpelier. One review they noted reads, "For someone like myself, going to Monticello is like an Elvis fan going to Graceland. Then to have the tour guide essentially make constant reference to what a bad person he [Jefferson] really was just ruined it for me."[76] Although much of the audience attending plantation house museums anticipate hearing about slavery to some extent, it is equally evident that there is another portion of the audience that wants to continue to hear only about the accomplishments of men like Jefferson and Madison, without confronting head-on their legacies as the enslavers of hundreds of people.[77]

Madison's Montpelier in particular faced a recent turning point in the institution. In 2021, after a year of behind-the-scenes disagreements, the Montpelier Foundation agreed to "structural parity" with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC).[78] The

[76] Hannah Knowles, "As Plantations Talk More Honestly about Slavery, Some Visitors Are Pushing Back," Washington Post, September 8, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/09/08/plantations-are-talking- more-about-slavery-grappling-with-visitors-who-talk-back/.

[77] Candace Forbes Bright, Derek H. Alderman & David L. Butler, "Tourist plantation owners and slavery: a complex relationship" (Current Issues in Tourism, 21:15, 2018), 4. DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2016.1190692

[78] Montpelier Descendants Committee, https://montpelierdescendants.org/.

MDC is an organization of the descendants of those enslaved by James Madison at Montpelier. The descendants had informed and coordinated with the Montpelier Foundation for decades but had never been authorized to have official control over the representation of their own ancestors. They had assisted with several aspects of the public presentation at Montpelier, including the reconstructed South Yard living quarters for the enslaved, and the award-winning exhibition *The Mere Distinction of Colour*, which traces and connects the history of slavery to modern-day injustices, making it a rarity among plantation sites.[79] Even at plantation house museums that address slavery, few make the effort to acknowledge the modern-day legacy of slavery. But for plantation museum institutions, the act of engaging with a descendent community, while an incredibly important step, is not enough. The act of allowing the community official control over the site of enslavement for their ancestors, the "structural parity" that the MDC successfully fought for itself, is crucial in detaching the institutional history of the sites from colonial revivalism and Lost Cause rhetoric. Telling the stories associated with enslavement while operating under an institution that prioritizes itself with the control of the narrative can fall into the very same pitfalls as any other institution attempting to tell the history of slavery for profit. In this sense, the family histories and experiences of the descendants are used for the benefit of the institution. Even if the ultimate goal of the institution is the education of the public, it is difficult to ignore the intertwined success of the educative goal with the success of the institution itself.

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[79] "The Mere Distinction of Colour," James Madison's Montpelier, https://www.montpelier.org/resources/mere- distinction-of-colour.

S. P. Hanna, Alderman, Potter, Carter, Bright, "A more perfect union? The place of Black lives in presidential plantation sites," (Memory Studies 15, no.5, 2022).

The question of how to educate the public on the history of enslavement when so much of the history has always existed under the white gaze and when many of the traditional sources used are told from the perspective of the white enslaver is not easy to answer, and it is one that inevitably contains many facets. Not only is it necessary to tell the "historical facts," as Colonial Williamsburg so often emphasizes, but it is also necessary to contextualize the ways in which this historical narrative has previously been spun. It is necessary to not just move past the logic of colonial revivalism but to unpack this logic, acknowledge and deconstruct the mindset that presents slavery as necessary or benign, and render as impotent as possible the misinformation and stereotypes that have been created for the justification of this. While the actual act of doing this is an ongoing process, one which some museums attempt with more passion than others, adding descendants' voices is a crucial part of this. Particularly when the voices of African Americans and their ancestors have been repeatedly ignored within institutions, their knowledge and perspective complicate the traditional historical narrative of white elites and challenge the primacy of this history.

Community engagement is an important next step for many museums, Colonial Williamsburg included. But without acknowledging the ways in which an institution itself has contributed to the harm done to these communities, this progress can only mean so much. Colonial Williamsburg is, in some ways, crawling its way out of the colonial revivalist logic that has dominated its own institutional goals since its inception. Through archaeological work done on the First Baptist Church, one of the first churches in the United States for free and enslaved African Americans, and work with the modern-day descendants and current First Baptist congregation, and other work like the

American Indian Initiative, Colonial Williamsburg has made some steps towards this.[80] Carter's Grove is representative of a lot of the work done on this slow crawl. From the failures of the early archaeological work to highlight pre-colonial Native peoples to the criticism of the living quarters reconstruction, the property presents a timeline of the starts and stops of this process. While Carter's Grove as a site for historical interpretation might be financially out of reach for the Foundation, the story of this site presents numerous opportunities for Colonial Williamsburg to critically engage with its own almost hundred-year-long history, from the glorification of the McCreas and the 18th-century gentry to the later attempts to reintroduce the history of those who lived, worked, and suffered on the site. In doing so, Colonial Williamsburg could challenge directly the whitewashed history that to this day treats plantation houses as picturesque visions of a bygone era, and could continue to work to elevate the individuals whose suffering was consistently devalued, and whose culture and humanity were ignored.

[80] "First Baptist Church Excavation Project," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/research-and-education/archaeology/first-baptist-church/.

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Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–Carter's Grove Junior Interpreter site rotation & interpretive topics, 2002, "Interpreting the Enslaving Virginia Storyline with Confidence and Comfort."

Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–Carter's Grove Training, 1993-1995, "Carter's Grove Slave Quarter Training Program March 1, 2, and 3, 1993."

Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–General Correspondence Folder 575 Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1989-1991, Larry Henry to Rhys Isaac October 27, 1989.

Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, African American Interpretation & Presentation–General Correspondence Folder 575 Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1989-1991, Rhys Isaac to Larry Henry Re: Slave quarter reconstruction October 9, 1989.

Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Collections Conservation & Museums–Carter's Grove Development Files: Interpretation, 1965, 1989-2002, "First Person Interpretations at Carter's Grove for 2000."

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Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Education Research & Historical Interpretation–Training & Historical Research –Memos re: Carter's Grove Slave Quarter composition, furnishings, garden, 1985-1989, "The Carter's Grove Slave Quarter Training Program May and June 1989."

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CHAPTER THREE:

Decolonizing Colonial Williamsburg: Indigenous History at a Settler-Colonial Museum

"American Indians, Native Americans, and/or Indigenous peoples were a regular and frequent presence in 18th-century Williamsburg," reads the "American Indian Experience" page on Colonial Williamsburg's website. "These diverse Native nations," it continues, "had an influence on American culture, democracy, and its struggle for independence. The explorations of these American Indian nations and their role in our collective story then and now is essential in understanding modern American life."[81] This quote, lifted from the first link that appears when searching online for information on Indigenous people at Colonial Williamsburg, represents a far cry from the institution's previous presentation of Indigenous history. Like many other public history institutions, Colonial Williamsburg has throughout much of its long history "ignored or grossly underplayed Native Americans' importance," an action that in and of itself aids in the colonial project, which imagines Native people as vanishing or disappearing.[82] Now, as evidenced by the statement that "Indigenous peoples were a regular and frequent presence in 18th-century Williamsburg," Colonial Williamsburg has, in the past two decades, attempted to break their long-imposed silence in their interpretation.[83]

Much has been written about Colonial Williamsburg over these past few decades, a notable example being anthropologists Richard Handler and Eric Gable's

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[81] "The American Indian Experience," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/visit/itineraries/american-indian-experience/.

[82] Buck Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations to the Colonial Capital: Civic Engagement and the Production of Native Public History," In *Replanting Cultures: Community-Engaged Scholarship in Indian Country* (State University of New York Press, 2022), 245

[83] "The American Indian Experience," Colonial Williamsburg.

1997 book, *New History at an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg.*[84] Handler and Gable's work addresses at length Colonial Williamsburg's attempts to create a more diverse and inclusive history, especially their attempts to portray Black history at the museum. In addition to Handler and Gable's well-known critiques of Colonial Williamsburg's corporate prioritizations and uncertainty in their portrayals of Black history, there are numerous others works (including multiple theses and dissertations) which discuss Colonial Williamsburg's relationship to African American history. Less work so far has been done on Colonial Williamsburg's relationship to Indigenous history. Buck Woodard, supervisor of the American Indian Initiative at Colonial Williamsburg for close to ten years, recently published a chapter in the 2022 anthology *Replanting Cultures: Community-Engaged Scholarship in Indian Country* titled "Return of Indian Nations to the Colonial Capital: Civic Engagement and the Production of Native Public History."[85] His chapter details much of Colonial Williamsburg's activities regarding Indigenous history throughout his time with the institution from the early 2000s to 2016. This work is intended to add to this limited scholarship surrounding Indigenous history at Colonial Williamsburg and build off Woodard's work, expanding the chronology through the entire extent of Colonial Williamsburg's engagement with Native history.

To better understand the position of and changes made in the representation of Native history in Colonial Williamsburg, it is firstly relevant to understand the motivations behind the creation of the institution itself. Colonial Williamsburg's inception is owed to

[84] Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

[85] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations."

W.A.R. Goodwin, then the rector of Bruton Parish Church, located in Williamsburg, Virginia. In 1924, he approached John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his wife Abby Aldrich Rockefeller with the idea to completely restore the main street of Williamsburg to its appearance in the late 18th century. Goodwin's intent with this reconstruction was to provide an educational experience that would also "imbue the modern era with a new sense of Americanism." Goodwin wanted to give Americans a stronger sense of national identity specifically to make it "less of a likelihood that anarchists could destroy the country's economic and political framework."[86] The conception of the institution was always inherently nationalistic, intended to unite Americans against what Goodwin and many others at the time viewed as problematic social trends. This intent, paired with the Rockefellers' passion for architectural history, led to a living history museum focused on aesthetics and a rose-colored, praise-heavy interpretation of the founding white men of the United States.

Although the initial intent behind the creation of Colonial Williamsburg was to uplift the accomplishments of the "Great Men" of American history and to preserve the founding ideals of the nation, over the past several decades, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has made efforts to expand historical interpretation beyond elite white (often slave-holding) men. Starting in the late 1970s, following the broader social trends of the Civil Rights movements and other museums' burgeoning attempts at telling a diverse history, Colonial Williamsburg began to make a concerted effort to tell the histories of the large Black population in Williamsburg, both free and enslaved, through the creation of interpretation centered around this history. Over the years since, efforts to portray

[86] Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 8.

women and other non-elite classes of individuals have also been made. Native history, too, has been included within this change, though as Buck Woodard points out in his chapter of *Replanting Cultures,* due in part to the relatively unstudied nature of the post-contact era for Indigenous communities in the Chesapeake area, attention to these other groups "preceded attention given to Native peoples."[87] The lack of visibility for Native people on the East Coast generally and the popular perception of disappearance of Native people in Virginia after European contact were also likely contributors to Colonial Williamsburg's slowness to address this history. While Colonial Williamsburg's efforts began in the 1990s, the most significant and visible progress made towards remedying this is the creation of the American Indian Initiative in the early 2000s. The American Indian Initiative (AII) was created as a dedicated program for Native historical interpretation, research, and collaboration with Native nations, both local to Virginia and out of state.[88] All this to say, Colonial Williamsburg has undeniably put in work to tell a more inclusive and diverse history. However, using the terminology of Glenys Enchavarri's piece on "Decolonizing Museums," Colonial Williamsburg has also always existed as a settler colonial institution, which Enchavarri defines as "any museum that was founded by and for the dominant culture of the U.S. settler colonial state,

[87] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations," 247.

[88] Although I alternate between using the terms "Native" or "Indigenous" or tribal names when appropriate, Colonial Williamsburg has standardized the use of "American Indian" throughout the institution. According to Colonial Williamsburg's website, this is largely due to practical concerns for clarity, but the article also cites the use of "American Indian" by the federal government and the National Museum of the American Indian.

Peter Inker, "Why We Use the Term American Indian," Colonial Williamsburg, November 23, 2021, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/living-history/why-we-use-the-term-american-indian/.

representing hegemonic beliefs and ideals."[89] Many settler colonial museums, Colonial Williamsburg being no exception, have in their history upheld narratives that benefited the settler colonial structure; these may include narratives of white supremacy or constructions of Native peoples as primitive or as a disappearing people.

As Amy Lonetree says in her 2012 book *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in Nation and Tribal Museums*, "colonization is not over, nor has the holocaust in the Americas ever been fully recognized."[90] Telling a diverse and inclusive history is deeply important, but it is not the only thing an institution needs to do to progress past its own history of exclusion. Decolonization in the context of museums, borrowing heavily from Amy Lonetree's analysis, refers to the active deconstruction of colonial ideologies and an examination of the historical legacy of colonialism. "[W]hile it is accurate to say that the past five hundred years do not constitute the entire span of Indigenous history," Lonetree says, "this period has had a disproportionate impact on our communities and cultures…The continuing legacies of these policies in Indian Country are very much a part of our contemporary experience and lives continue to be lost because of them."[91] It is important to present the history and culture in an unbiased and respectful manner, while also recognizing and analyzing the continuing effects of colonialism. Especially when telling Indigenous histories, institutions should make an

[89] Glenys Ong Echavarri, "Decolonizing Museums: Perspectives from Indigenous Museum Professionals," *MuseumsForward* (thesis, 2021), 2.

[90] Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 114.

[91] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 114.

active effort to acknowledge and benefit the present-day communities that are most directly affected by the history they tell.

This work is intended to outline the ways in which Colonial Williamsburg has interpreted (or sometimes has not interpreted) Indigenous history throughout its tenure as an institution. To accomplish this, I have drawn heavily from the materials housed in the Colonial Williamsburg Corporate Archives, including but not limited to email and letter correspondence, promotional materials, training material, and educational resources. The Colonial Williamsburg self-published journal (now titled *Trend & Tradition*) and its in-house circulated newspapers are also used to help reconstruct past programming and exhibits. Furthermore, this work considers the outside reception to Colonial Williamsburg and its programming through outside newspapers, including Native-run newspapers. Additionally, having lived in Williamsburg for approximately four years now and completed my undergraduate degree in history at William & Mary and now, my master's degree, I have had a considerable experience in the Historic Area. Especially in 2023 and the beginning of 2024, I have taken tours of many different historic sites as a part of my classwork and have made a particular effort to attend the programming put on by the American Indian Initiative. I speak briefly through my own experiences of Colonial Williamsburg and my viewing of the current programming available related to Indigenous history, though I stress the observational and potentially non-representative nature of this.

While my analysis will adopt the framework of decolonization, I also want to clarify the intent of this essay first and foremost. This work seeks primarily to uplift the work of the American Indian Initiative and to encourage Colonial Williamsburg as an

institution to continue to support the staff of the AII. I also seek to remind Colonial Williamsburg that the work of portraying Native history should not be relegated only to the AII, but rather this effort must be diffused throughout the entire institution. Additionally, I believe that the 100th anniversary of Colonial Williamsburg offers a unique opportunity for the institution to be self-reflective in its past portrayals of American history. Colonial Williamsburg explicitly wants to tell "a more complete, more relevant story of America;" this is an admirable effort, but one which cannot be told without first acknowledging the history of the institution itself.[92] The Foundation's guiding principle, that "the future may learn from the past," must also be true of itself. To tell the most relevant, complete, and accurate American history, the museum must look to its own past to identify the ways in which it fell short of this ideal, or even obscured this ideal entirely.

Pre-American Indian Initiative

Though programming for Native history topics was limited prior to the creation of the American Indian Initiative, there are some examples of the portrayal of Native people and their history. Equally so, however, there are absences made all the more obvious by moments of brief inclusion. Carter's Grove Plantation, a property owned and managed by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation from the 1960s to the early 2000s, provides examples of both these conspicuous absences and, eventually, a concerted attempt to portray Native history. Carter's Grove was a plantation first established in the 1700s by the prominent Virginia landowner and enslaver Robert "King" Carter, which was eventually chosen as a site for restoration in the early 1900s by the wealthy

[92] "Strategic Plan: 2020-2026," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/about-colonial- williamsburg/strategic-plan/.

McCrea couple. After the death of the McCreas, the property eventually passed into Colonial Williamsburg's hands.[93] Among the first activities conducted by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in the 1970s were a number of archeological surveys, conducted primarily for the purpose of gathering information to "aid the re-establishment of Carter's Grove as an eighteenth-century working plantation."[94] However, very quickly, the archeological reports revealed the unsurprising information that the property had been a site of settlement prior to European arrival. In the original 1971 report, the archeological team determined that in most areas, "[historical] plowing has destroyed any Indian layers that might have been present," but they also found an Indigenous burial site on the property, west of the main mansion house. They dated this burial site to somewhere between 350 and 1600 CE, within the North American Late Woodland period and said that the site represents "the first Indian ossuary found in the James River and is thus a very important discovery to prehistoric archeology."[95] Later archaeological survey determined that the property was a non-continuous site for Indigenous settlement potentially as far back as 6500 BCE. Interpretation for the pre-

[93] For more information on Carter's Grove, please see the first chapter of my thesis portfolio, "Colonial Williamsburg at Carter's Grove: Interpreting Slavery within Public History."

[94] William Kelso, "A Report on Exploratory Excavations at Carter's Grove Plantations," March 1972, Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports\RR0273.xml&highlight=carter%27s%20grove.

[95] William Kelso, "A Report on Exploratory Excavations at Carter's Grove Plantation," 71. The terminology of "prehistoric" to refer to archaeological discoveries dating potentially to 1600 is indicative of a larger historiographical issue with pre-colonial Indigenous history. Because many Indigenous civilizations utilized oral history instead of a written historical record familiar to Western historians, for a long time Euro-American scholars have treated this precolonial history as an unknowable monolith of "prehistory," which does not accurately reflect the complexity of this history. European contact has often been treated as the beginning of history in North America, ignoring centuries of Indigenous history which, while harder to analyze especially through traditional historical research practices, does not negate its existence.

European contact Indigenous settlement was never developed at the site. The most substantial references to Native people occurred within the context of interpretation around Martin's Hundred, specifically the subset known as the Wolstenholme Towne, an English settlement decimated during the First Powhatan War, the archeological remains of which were also found on the Carter's Grove site.

The interpretation of this pre-18th century site, part of which could be found in the archeological museum built in the 1980s on the same Carter's Grove property, was centered around the archeological findings at Martin's Hundred. Theresa Singleton, a Smithsonian associate, wrote a 1993 review of the different sites at Carter's Grove, offering a mostly positive review of the museum, except her critique of what she called "by far the greatest problem with the archeology exhibits," which is that they "fail to examine the cultural differences between the English colonists and Powhatan Indians that gave rise to the Indian attack on Martin's Hundred." Aside from a "small orientation exhibit" at the entrance to the museum titled "The People of Carter's Grove," there were few mentions of Native people in the museum and even fewer that do not reference the "massacre" at Martin's Hundred. Singleton said that "even more appalling [than the lack of inclusion of Native people] is the repeated use of the term 'massacre' to describe the Indian attack. It is simply outrageous for a newly established museum to portray Native Americans in such a demeaning way, at a time when museums are beginning to develop more inclusive and sensitive presentations."[96] Singleton was not the only one

[96] Theresa Singleton, "Reviewed Work: Carter's Grove: The Winthrop Rockefeller Archaeology Museum, Wolstenholme Towne, the Slave Quarter, and the Mansion," *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 2 (1993): 525. http://www.jstor.org/stable/679929.

to make this criticism; a letter sent by William W. Cole into the Foundation in 1982 reads:

> I feel we are ignoring a vital aspect of the site by omitting the Indians in all but a negative way–the "massacre" at Wolstenholme Towne. The Indians deserve better treatment than that, and I believe we have an obligation, when intimating that we are telling the whole story of "change over time," to present the I[n]dian occupation in as thorough and sympathetic manner as we present the white and black occupation.[97]

Both criticisms cite the negative language of "massacre" as an issue with the interpretation of Indigenous people–more specifically, those of the Powhatan Confederacy, which was a confederation of thirty or more Algonquian-speaking Native tribes, including the Pamunkey, who remain to this day on a reservation roughly 40 miles north of Williamsburg. The lack of nuance involved in describing the first major armed conflict between Virginia tribes and the English settlers is one aspect of the criticism, and it is one only exacerbated by the lack of information on Native people. Indigenous settlements existing prior to the English and the activities of the Powhatan Confederacy remain essentially unacknowledged.

While these specific criticisms were not directly addressed, in 1994, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Forum for Women in History created a piece of dedicated programming for Native people as a part of the "Five Women of Carter's Grove" series. This series consisted of first-person interpretation of five women from five centuries, intended to represent the different populations that lived on the property over the years. This program was conceived as a celebration of Women's History Month, proposed by this forum of Colonial Williamsburg-affiliated women who wanted to give women's

[97] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg Virginia, Historic Buildings–Exhibition Buildings: Carter's Grove Interpretation, 1864-1982, William W. Cole to Mr. Brown, November 22, 1982.

history “a higher profile at Colonial Williamsburg.”[98] The women portrayed in this programming event included a 16th-century Native woman, a 17th-century English indentured servant, the 18th-century wife of a plantation owner, a 19th-century African American sharecropper, and the 20th-century owner of the property before Colonial Williamsburg’s acquisition, Mary McCrea.[99] It is worth noting as well that the Carter’s Grove site as a whole was a unique project for Colonial Williamsburg in its interpretation of such a wide breadth of time periods. With some exceptions, namely the Art Museums, the DeWitt Wallace Fine Arts Collection and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, which have a slightly wider frame of chronological interpretation, Colonial Williamsburg is typically very dedicated to interpreting the late 18th-century, especially the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary era.[100] This tight focus on the 18th-century becomes particularly limiting for the museum when it comes to interpreting Native history; not only does it make it more difficult to interpret the history of the local Virginia tribes, whose political and martial influence was greatest in the 17th century, but it also limits Colonial Williamsburg’s ability to discuss the long-lasting impact of colonialism on these communities. The notable archeological discoveries of pre-18th century life at the Carter’s Grove property precipitated this differing interpretation at this

[98] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Forum for women in history 1993-1997– “Five Women of Carter’s Grove” promotional pamphlet.

[99] Curtia James, “Five Women of Carter’s Grove,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Spring 1994), pp.53-59.

[100] Christina Westenberger, “A Summertime Art Museums Tour,” Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, August 11, 2022, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/trip-planning/a-summertime-art-museum-tour/. DeWitt takes pieces from the late 17th to the early 19th centuries, meanwhile the Folk Art Museum has a very 20th century slant.

location, and ultimately enabled this centuries-spanning programming for Women's History Month.

The full programming for this lasted about a week, with special tours of Carter's Grove highlighting these five women continuing throughout March. Each day of the week, from Tuesday to Saturday, presented a different century and a different woman. According to the promotional programming information, "each day's activities will consist of a study of the world at large, and the influences most prevalent in the particular century, a look at what is happening on the land known as Carter's Grove, and an introduction to 'the woman of the century' who best represents the women's world of her era." Saturday, the last day of this week-long programming, featured a "16th Century Native American woman," with the day's programming centered around Native culture in the 16th century, especially prior to "the English invasion of the New World."[101] The morning program consisted of a lecture on "exploration of the New World in the 16th century," intended to "set the scene for the contrast and comparative study of the Native Americans." The "study of the Native Americans" took place in the afternoon programming, which included a panel discussion of "the Native American culture in the Tidewater region" and "contemporary Native American life and lifestyles as influenced by their past culture." The panel included Indigenous academics and tribal leaders, as well as some non-Indigenous academics. Following the panel was the first-person interpretation of the "16th Century Native American woman," as the programming repeatedly refers to her, by Nokomis Lemons (Rappahannock), which was intended to

[101] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Forum for women in history 1993-1997–Women's History Month / Saturday March 5th / Native American Interpretation Programming, 1.

address “her family life, tribal traditions, and position within the culture.” The last aspect of the day’s program was third-person interpretation by the panel members of different scenes set up around the grounds of the property. These scenes were as follows:

> A Native American woman and her child preparing a skin for clothing, as the child is instructed in the practical necessities and the spiritual value of nature’s offering, as part of daily existence.
>
> A demonstration of cooking and use of natural substances for food and medicinal cures.
>
> A demonstration of archery, which emphasizes the link between hunting and protection of the tribe.
>
> An explanation of ‘primitive’ skill and tools, and the women’s role in the impl[e]mentation of these.
>
> Children’s Game and Activities, which promote learning through play. Storytelling, which demonstrates the record of culture as passed down through oral tradition.[102]

The day of programming was then ended with a “large gathering around the sacred bonfire with traditional music and dance.”[103]

While this program offered a diverse representation of women, the semantic issue with describing each woman as “best represent[ing] the women’s world of her era” is perhaps most apparent with the decision to center the white gentry wife as the representative of the 18th century.[104] The white gentry elite made up a very small percentage of the population, and on the Carter’s Grove property itself, the majority of

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[102] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Forum for women in history 1993-1997–“Women’s History Month / Saturday March 5th / Native American Interpretation Programming,” 1-2. The scare quotes around “primitive” seem to imply that this reductive and offensive descriptor of Indigenous lifeways is challenged within the interpretation, however, one must wonder why choose to use this word at all without specifying a desire to correct it.

[103] “Women’s History Month / Saturday March 5th / Native American Interpretation Programming,” 2.

[104] “Women’s History Month / Saturday March 5th / Native American Interpretation Programming,” 1.

women were enslaved. While the decision to position the interpretation of a Native woman (from one of the nations comprising the Powhatan Confederacy) for the 16th-century representative makes sense given the spatial dominance of Indigenous people, it does little to combat the pervasive interpretation that Native people completely disappeared or were entirely displaced from Virginia and the East Coast in general following European contact. To the credit of the program, however, the afternoon panel not only featured Native scholars and the chiefs or assistant chiefs of the nearby Chickahominy, Nansemond, and Rappahannock, but also specifically focused, at least in part, on the modern-day experiences of Indigenous people. Ultimately, this criticism I make of the "Five Women of Carter's Grove" programming is essentially the same as the contemporary critiques of the Carter's Grove site as a whole: there simply is not enough said about Indigenous people.

Although outside of the physical programming, in the late 1990s, Colonial Williamsburg also began to partner with Native nations on their Electronic Field Trip series. The Electronic Field Trips were a series of educational videos and classroom materials produced for schools, intended especially for locations otherwise unable to visit Colonial Williamsburg in person. The series included titles such as "Hostages of Two Worlds," "Missions to America," and "Jefferson's West," which all heavily featured Native people and their history and were first published in 2000 to 2003. "Hostages of Two Worlds" centered on the Brafferton Indian School at the nearby William & Mary College and the experiences of the Native students sent there; many of these students, often attending the school through coercion or heavy incentives offered to their respective tribes, became cultural brokers between their people and the English,

utilizing their dual educations from the English and their own people. Though the Brafferton closed in 1777, a long before the Indian boarding schools of the 19th and 20th centuries, the educational materials for this Electronic Field Trip do touch briefly on these boarding schools and their legacy of them; namely, their role in "laying the foundation for the pan-Indian movement of the late twentieth century."[105] The "Missions to America" Electronic Field Trip was focused more broadly on first contact between the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the European, while the "Jefferson's West" field trip centered on Lewis and Clark's journeys in the American West.[106]

For the most part, finding examples of interpretation for Indigenous people before the 1990s, especially in the main Historic Area at Colonial Williamsburg, is an exercise in identifying scarcity. This is especially apparent considering that these previously noted examples of Indigenous history either took place at Carter's Grove, about eight miles away from Duke of Gloucester Street, or through the Electronic Field Trips. In the late 1990s, Colonial Williamsburg did attempt to integrate Indigenous history into their ongoing overarching interpretive storylines, which would have been utilized within the main Historic Area at Duke of Gloucester Street. The master plan of interpretation for all Colonial Williamsburg from 1996 to 2005 was titled "Becoming Americans: Our Struggle to Be Both Free and Equal," which included six storylines under this main

[105] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Electronic Field Trip, Hostages of Two Worlds, "Hostages of Two Worlds Historical Background," 8.

[106] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Electronic Field Trip, Missions to America.

Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Electronic Field Trip, Jefferson's West.

theme.[107] Indigenous history was primarily incorporated into the storyline called "Taking Possession," which centered around key points of cross-cultural interaction between European Americans, African Americans, and Indigenous people as well as land acquisition by white Virginians.[108] However, one example of interpretive material from the 1990s reads as follows: "The extant records suggest that the appearance of Indians especially in native dress, was a relatively rare occurrence in the capitol city…Local Indian populations, never great before European contact, had by the third quarter of the eighteenth century been reduced to such a low level as to be almost inconsequential to life in Williamsburg."[109] While it is certainly true that Native populations in the Chesapeake declined from the time of first European contact to the 18th century, the assertion that Native people were a rare occurrence in colonial Williamsburg appears particularly contradictory when the previous page of this material notes the students of the Brafferton school living at William & Mary as well as the trade relationship with nearby tribes, particularly the Pamunkey tribe.[110] Although the development of the "Taking Possession" storyline better represents the role of Indigenous people in Williamsburg through the American Revolution, these materials are evidence of the work that needed to be done not only in terms of the interpretation of Native history, but also the research on it in post-contact Williamsburg. Particularly when this is paired

[107] "Becoming Americans," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Publications, https://cwfpublications.omeka.net/collections/show/4.

[108] "Taking Possession Storyline: Resource Book," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Publications, https://cwfpublications.omeka.net/items/show/176.

[109] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Subject Files–Native Americans 1994-2008, "Indians," 5. Although this material is not paired with an exact date, my best estimation would be that it was written in the mid to late 90s.

[110] "Indians," 4.

with the tendency to uncritically use terms like “massacre” to describe early wars with peoples like those comprising the Powhatan Confederacy, what results is an interpretation of Indigenous history that is easy to ignore and often negatively coded. The Five Women of Carter’s Grove program seems to be one of the first instances of Colonial Williamsburg addressing this criticism. Given the extreme sparsity of Native interpretation, the creation of the American Indian Initiative represented an important step forward.

American Indian Initiative: Creation to 2015

As the previous section detailed, by the 1990s, Colonial Williamsburg had begun some outreach and collaboration with local nations and community members. However, an official initiative dedicated to Native interpretation, outreach, and programming did not come about until the early 2000s. In 2002, the Rockefeller Foundation provided a matching grant of $100,000 “for the support of the research and design of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation interpretative programs about the role of native American[s] in early Virginia,” according to press materials from the same year.[111] The language of the press materials acknowledged that the “Native American story in colonial Virginia” has been only a “small component” of Colonial Williamsburg’s programming, but intends that through this grant, they will “assimilate the story into [their] long-term strategic programming objectives.”[112] In an “Indian Initiative” meeting in November of 2003, several project ideas were discussed to formally begin Colonial Williamsburg’s

[111] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–initial planning & meeting minutes 2003-2004– “Rockefeller Grant Supports Native American Interpretation Press Materials.”

[112] “Rockefeller Grant Supports Native American Interpretation Press Materials.”

interpretation of Indigenous history in the Historic Area, many of which would eventually be realized over the years. These ideas included a lecture series at the Hennage Auditorium (located within the Art Museums), outreach to the "Indian Community," stocking and selling of "Indian-made goods" at Colonial Williamsburg venues, curriculum development and media, staff training, research, a performance series, Indigenous subjects and themes in Historic Area programming, further external collaborations with Indigenous museum educators and the nearby College of William & Mary, and, finally, an exhibit in the Art Museums centered on Native objects, one which never came to fruition.[113]

Notably, at this time, these early planning documents emphasized the recommendation not to portray first-person Native interpretation at the outset, instead recommending only third-person interpretation. First-person interpretation is often one of the defining features of a living history site; it refers to an actor-interpreter portraying history by portraying a certain historical character. This character can be based on a specific historical figure (Colonial Williamsburg is well known for its portrayals of figures like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson as a part of its "Nation Builder" line-up) or the character can be based on some generalization of a contemporary individual. In contrast, third-person interpretation refers to presenting history outside of a particular character. One of the most notable differences between first and third-person interpretation is that through third-person interpretation, an interpreter can discuss topics expanding past only the time period and knowledge of their character. When it

[113] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–Formation of CW Indian Interpretation 2003, "Interoffice Memorandum."

comes to Indigenous interpretation at living history sites, the fraught history of Native portrayals within white institutions remains a specter over these interpretations, especially at the time of the AII's formation. Laura Peers discusses this topic at length in her 2007 book, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions.* Since the 1970s, many historic sites, especially "frontier" sites, had begun to add Native historical components, including interpretation, locations, and artifacts, in addition to hiring Indigenous staff members. Of interpreting at these settler-colonial sites, often to a majority white or non-Native audience, Peers describes the tendency for Native staff members to feel like they are "playing themselves." "The 'playing' they do," Peers further explains, "is not of such a ludic nature as that by non-Native interpreters. These people are ambassadors, not actors; they represent their communities, past and present…The kind of representation that these interpreters do involves both 'acting for,' as in on behalf of; making present again; and 'standing for'; at the same time, it also involves being themselves, as well as representing people of the past."[114] These complications of self-representation, community-representation, and past community-representation is compounded by portraying first-person characters. Additionally, first-person interpretation, particularly when inhabited on a daily basis, is already an often emotionally taxing method of historical portrayal, made more difficult for non-white interpreters, who must also contend with racist behavior and stereotypical and assumptions from some of their audience.[115]

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[114] Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham etc. Alta Mira Press, 2007), 66.

[115] Amy M. Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Joanne Pope Melish, "[Re]Living Slavery: Ask a Slave and the Pitfalls of Portraying Slavery for the Public," *The American Historian*, August 2014. The topic of the

In a 2004 meeting with the American Indian Initiative, Laura Peers was featured as a guest, where she impressed the importance of being conscientious about the kinds of interpretation put forth by Colonial Williamsburg. "First-person interpretation by itself will reinforce negative attitudes," as the meeting summary reads. Notably, her recommendation was that "[a]ll programs must end in the present," and that it would be appropriate to "reconstruct how 18th-century people would have perceived Indians," so long as the interpreters "go on to explain events up to present day."[116] This recommendation intentionally breaks out of the traditional 18th-century slant of Colonial Williamsburg in such a way that asserts the continued presence of Indigenous people and engages in modern-day issues, tied directly to the legacy of colonialism. On a similar point, Kevin Brown of the Pamunkey tribe, wrote in a letter to the *Virginia Gazette* in 2005 after an article about the lack of Native programming in the Historic Area and another article offering a response from a Colonial Williamsburg employee detailing the AII's early activities. In his letter, Brown says, "I don't think Colonial Williamsburg will find many Indians willing to dress in traditional clothing and act as historical interpreters, because we are so busy trying to convince people that we don't live in tepees." He emphasizes that that he and his people are "living in the modern world, just like you" and "have jobs and bills, just like you. White people already have a one dimensional idea of Indians. An inclusion of a reconstructed pre-contact village

"emotional wages" of first-person interpretation at living history sites is the topic of Tyson's book, as she describes her own experiences interpreting at these sites. The intensification of this emotional labor is evident not only for Native interpreters, but also Black interpreters, especially when tasked with interpreting enslavement in the first-person.

[116] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–initial planning & meeting minutes 2003-2004–"American Indian Initiative Meeting, 3 March 2004."

would only fuel that one-dimensional mentality."[117] Solely performing first-person interpretation would exacerbate Colonial Williamsburg's pre-existing issue with its limited time period it chooses to interpret, and, as Brown suggests, simply might not be something many Indigenous people are willing to do. This response from Brown also highlights equally the importance of communication between Colonial Williamsburg and the Indigenous people whose history the institution hopes to represent; Laura Peers, in her recommendations, also stressed the importance of doing "serious research about what Native American presence would have been in Williamsburg, both historically and in modern day."[118] Both she and Danielle Moretti-Langholtz, professor of cultural anthropology at William & Mary, the other guest at this meeting, stressed above all the importance of developing long-term collaborative relationships with Native communities.

During the early years of the AII, there were some successful "high-profile" collaborations between Colonial Williamsburg and tribal organizations.[119] One of the first large, high-profile and recurring programs put on by the AII was "'Friends and Brethren': The Cherokee in Williamsburg," also called "The Return of the Cherokee" or just "The Cherokee in Williamsburg."[120] This programming first ran in 2004 and came as a result of a collaboration with the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the Museum of the Cherokee People, members of which came to Colonial Williamsburg from North

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[117] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Native American Programs 2005, Kevin Brown, "Indian Reservations," *The Virginia Gazette*, July 9, 2005.

[118] "American Indian Initiative Meeting, 3 March 2004."

[119] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations," 247.

[120] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative 2005-2006, "'Friends and Brethren': The Cherokee in Williamsburg."

Carolina to take part in the weekend programming activities. These activities included reenactments of previous Cherokee delegations' visits to Williamsburg, the 18th-century colonial capital. In the 18th-century, many different Native nations visited Williamsburg to discuss "trade, alliances and peace" with the Governor's Council, as Colonial Williamsburg's promotional material for the event says, among these nations prominently was the Cherokee.[121] Following this first collaboration, Colonial Williamsburg and the Museum of the Cherokee People worked together again on a new Electronic Field Trip titled "Emissaries of Peace," featuring members of the Eastern Cherokee nation in the video materials. This Electronic Field Trip was first published in 2007 and centered on Cherokee culture and life, especially the diplomacy of the Anglo-Cherokee War during the French and Indian War. The "Return of the Cherokee" programming followed in the footsteps of the success both of its previous iterations and this new Electronic Field Trip.[122] Up until 2016, Cherokee people from the Eastern Band of Cherokee, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and the United Keetoowah Band returned to Colonial Williamsburg to participate in this yearly programming.[123]

While this programming was well-received, Buck Woodard, who first joined the American Indian Initiative in an official capacity in 2007 (though he had consulted with Colonial Williamsburg on Native history projects in previous years), identifies a few

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[121] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–Friends and Brethren, the Cherokee in Williamsburg 2006, promotional material.

[122] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Electronic Field Trip, Emissaries of Peace.

[123] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–Return of the Cherokee & The Beloved Woman 2015, "The Return of the Cherokee Week."

deficiencies with Colonial Williamsburg's early outreach in *Replanting Cultures.* Firstly, he says that even by 2007, Colonial Williamsburg as an institution had "little mastery of, or expertise in, minority historical narratives."[124] Although by this time Colonial Williamsburg had been committed to interpreting non-white history for several years, it still constituted a relatively short part of their long history. Glenna J. Wallace, chief of the Eastern Shawnee tribe, offered this humorous recounting in a 2009 publication:

> Scholars at Williamsburg… acknowledged they spent years and years researching and writing the history of the Colonial time period, only to realize they had written an exclusively white history. They had left out the blacks. Back to the drawing board. After several more years of research and writing, American history was now presented in black and white vignettes. Light bulbs go on again–Native Americans were here before either the whites or the blacks. Back to the drawing board again.[125]

Colonial Williamsburg, though still relatively ill-accustomed to telling non-white histories, was perhaps even more ill-accustomed to telling history outside of "black and white vignettes." Especially due to the lack of research performed on the activities of Native people in the Chesapeake after European first contact, "the American Indian presence in Williamsburg was only superficially included in the institution's master narrative and program plan."[126] Similarly, the second deficiency Woodard identifies with Colonial Williamsburg's early efforts was the lack of knowledge of contemporary Indigenous communities, "those stakeholders with historical connections to the very museums

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[124] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations," 247.

[125] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–So Far from Scioto & The War Party programs 2009, Glenna J. Wallace, "Eastern Shawnee Tribe," published in *From This Corner*, November 2009.

[126] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations," 246.

spaces CW wished to interpret."[127] He describes a hesitancy among Colonial Williamsburg staff and an uncertainty about how exactly to engage with Indigenous communities, compounded by misunderstandings about historical interpretation. Colonial Williamsburg, as Woodard says, requested from visiting interpreters "historical" representations, particularly colonial historical representations, and were met with "traditional" representations from Native people. By this, Woodard means that Colonial Williamsburg anticipated representations strictly accurate to 18th-century life, while the Native interpreters rejected this strict adherence to one time period, rather choosing rather to discuss topics and making demonstrations that stretched from pre-contact to the present day. This rejection of Colonial Williamsburg's traditional "colonial" narrative, the "unwillingness of the Native population to whole cloth accept the majority historical narrative, and to 'play' supporting roles in an otherwise predetermined retelling of the past," in Woodard's words, and the institution's poor reaction to this, raised barriers on both sides. The conflict between these two conceptions of what constitutes authenticity was representative of the negotiated nature of Native public history.[128]

In 2008, Buck Woodard took over as the head of the AII, and with his leadership placed an emphasis on collaboration and partnerships between Colonial Williamsburg and Native nations. The relationship between Colonial Williamsburg and the Cherokee Nations continued during this time, and the Cherokee returned for weekend

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[127] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations," 246.

[128] For more on authenticity as it functions at Colonial Williamsburg, see: Eric Gable, Richard Handler, and Anna Lawson, "On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (November 1992): 791–805, https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1992.19.4.02a00090. Though the work is nearing three decades old, some of their fundamental points about the treatment of white and non-white histories still rings true. For more in-depth discussion of authenticity as it relates to Native sources of knowledge at Colonial Williamsburg, see Woodard's chapter in *Replanting Cultures.*

programming year after year. Another Cherokee-centered piece of programming was the "Beloved Woman," which featured high-profile Native actors and featured Nanyehi or Nancy Ward as the titular Cherokee Beloved Woman. In addition to this partnership and collaboration with the Cherokee, Colonial Williamsburg grew relations with and developed programming for other Native nations whose 18th-century ancestors visited the colonial capital at Williamsburg, including the Shawnee. Two of the programs developed for the Shawnee presence in Williamsburg were "So Far From Scioto" and "The War Party." "So Far From Scioto" told the story of "three young Shawnee emissaries who were brought to Williamsburg in late 1774 as security to ensure compliance with a peace agreement that ended Lord Dunmore's War in the Ohio Country," while "The War Party" chronicles the Shawnee's decision to ally with the British or remain neutral in the Revolution.[129] Paired with these also was a programming event called "Scioto: Unplugged," a question and answer session with the actor-interpreters out-of-character.[130]

Public response to the increase of Native programming, especially these larger, collaborative events, was positive. *Indian Country Today* published an article in 2009 titled "Colonial Williamsburg embraces American Indian presence" which addressed the "So Far From Scioto" programming and quoted many positive reactions to the performance. Varna Bennion, a Potawatomi from Sacramento, California was quoted

[129] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–So Far from Scioto & The War Party 2012, "'So Far From Scioto' and 'The War Party' Return to the Revolutionary City," 1.

[130] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–So Far from Scioto & The War Party 2012, "'So Far From Scioto' and 'The War Party' Return to the Revolutionary City," 2.

as saying, “I thought it was awesome–extremely good. I loved their costuming, their hairstyles, everything was right on. The indignation was also right on. When my great-grandmother was growing up, it was taboo to be an Indian. This was fabulous. I am glad I can now say I am Potawatomi.”[131] A 2013 guest write-in to Colonial Williamsburg also offers praise for the programming, saying, “We would love to see more Native American programming! ‘So Far From Scioto’ & ‘War Party’ have been outstanding!!! We also greatly appreciated the chance to talk with the actors about themselves and their work at ‘unplugged.’ What an opportunity, and we learned so much!”[132] Additionally, Woodard repeats some positive interview quotes from the actor-interpreters involved in this programming in his chapter: “And you feel it [American history] is important, so we come to Williamsburg. We [Shawnee] want to be part of that. We want to be part of that history, part of telling our story as well as conveying how it connects into the American story–because we are part of the American story.”[133] Many of the other quotes in the chapter convey a similar sense of being glad to be able to represent their communities or Native people generally outside of Hollywood stereotypes–or the much longer-lasting historical stereotypes of Native people as “savages” or “noble savages.” Both inside and outside of Colonial Williamsburg, the work that the AII put on seemed to largely receive approval.

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[131] Vincent Schilling, “Colonial Williamsburg Embraces American Indian Presence,” Indian Country Today, December 23, 2009, https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/colonial-williamsburg-embraces-american-indian- presence.

[132] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative 2011-2014, “Guest Suggestions and Comments,” from a visitor for Boerne, TX.

[133] Woodard, “The Return of Indian Nations,” 256.

Despite the creation of these highly successful programming collaborations, however, guests still expressed a certain lack of familiarity with the Indigenous history happening at Colonial Williamsburg. One visitor comment sent in 2012 reads:

> I have noticed over the years your increased emphasis on African Americans and slaves of that period, and I applaud you for that. I believe you also must recognize the Native Americans - it could be argued that they were in fact even more mistreated than were the slaves.
>
> We saw and heard from many talented black re-enactors; would it be appropriate to have some Native representation as well? Weren't Natives integral in the life of central and eastern Virginia at that time also? Surely they all hadn't been killed or forcibly removed by then?[134]

This visitor comment is perhaps representative of a few facets of guest experience at Colonial Williamsburg. Firstly, the tendency to equate and compare the historical interpretations of different groups–in this case, African Americans and Indigenous people–especially in regard to their visibility in the Historic Area. This recurring theme harkens back to Glenna Wallace's 2009 comment–*back to the drawing board.* The expansion of the historical narrative beyond the white history that was so central to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's conception does rightfully prompt further questions about who continues to be left on the outside, and less rightfully appears to prompt a desire to compare these histories against each other. The second noteworthy facet

[134] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–Visitor Comments 2009-2012, Email correspondence from guest from Tequesta, FL to Allison Jones, forwarded to Buck Woodard, June 1, 2012. Similar comments can be found within this same folder, one example is a guest experience survey from 2009 which criticized the portrayal of Black people as exclusively enslaved or formerly enslaved, despite the significant free Black population. Additionally, the comment criticized the perceived "ZERO educational effort put into the history of Native Americans in the area." Another example of this criticism comes from a verbal complaint made to a Colonial Williamsburg employee working at the DeWitt Wallace Art Museum– "her [a guest at the museum's] beef was that DeWitt had totally failed to have any mention whatsoever [of Native people]."

exemplified in this write-in relates to the last sentence of this excerpt, the question of Indigenous death and removal. The phrasing implies the idea that at a certain point, Indigenous people were effectively removed from the area, through death or by force. The presumption of the eventual disappearance of Native people from the colonized space is one of the primary functions of colonial rhetoric, often referred to as the trope of the "Vanishing Indian," wherein Native people are imagined to be a gradually disappearing people and culture. In an email response to this visitor comment, Woodard related some highlights from the 2012 spring programming of the AII, including "So Far From Scioto," "The War Party," "Scioto: Unplugged," and some times and locations a guest would be able to visit other Native actor-interpreters at work.

Ultimately, comments such as this are evidence of the difficulties of injecting the much-needed Indigenous story into such a large institution as Colonial Williamsburg– large both in terms of geographic space and institutional infrastructure. The main Historic Area itself comprises over 300 acres, making it the world's largest living history museum.[135] When this is compared to the relatively small amount of staff involved with the AII, it becomes evident that creating consistent opportunities for interpreting Indigenous history to the guests, thereby preventing the impression of a lack of Native presence in colonial and revolutionary Williamsburg, is a difficult endeavor. However, the efforts of the AII should not be underplayed. During the first years after its creation, the Initiative had succeeded in building Indigenous interpretation essentially from the ground up. By 2015, the AII had built relationships and partnerships with near and far

[135] "Know Before You Go," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/visit/know-before-yougo/#:~:text=Colonial%20Williamsburg%20is%20the%20world%27s,two%20world%2Dclass%20art%20museums.

Native nations and put on large-scale events featuring dozens of people from these nations. Just this large-scale presence of Native people in Colonial Williamsburg interrupts the picture of a supposedly completed colonial project; local tribal members of the Pamunkey, Rappahannock, Mattaponi and others assert the continued presence of Indigenous people in the Chesapeake, and the return of nations like the Cherokee and the Shawnee make especially apparent the important political relationships involving Nation nations that did not end with the colonial period, nor the Revolution. When compared to the institutional silence prior to the 1990s, the simple act of portraying Native people as active participants in the politics, trade, culture, and warfare of the 18th century performs to a certain extent the act of decolonization.

Throughout this time at Colonial Williamsburg, Indigenous programming experienced a period of expansion, both in terms of the amount of programming and in the depth of the offered programming. The AII was able to interpret the political and martial history of Native nations in the Williamsburg area, but also the traditionally held and cultural histories of local and foreign Native tribes. Programming expanded to include female interpretive roles, character interpretation for 18th-century Brafferton alumni like Henry Bawbee and John Langston, and several lecture-based series.[136]

[136] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Indian bios for New CW Visitor Guide, "Henry Bawbee." Henry Bawbee was the son of the Wyandot Chief Bawbee who enrolled in the Brafferton in the late 1770s.

Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, Coffee House characters Cherokee & Pamunkey, "Coffee House Interpretation." John Langston was one example of a character interpreted at the Charleton Coffee House. The historical John Langston was a Pamunkey student at the Brafferton in the 1750s.

American Indian Initiative: 2015 to Present-Day

In 2015, big changes occurred throughout the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. For the American Indian Initiative, funds were allocated to facilitate the hire of five full-time actor-interpreters.[137] While the hiring of a full-time interpretive staff was a major boon for the AII, it came at the same time as the loss of the AII's management, as part of the corporate reshuffling brought on by Colonial Williamsburg's then-president Mitchell Reiss. During this time, the Foundation outsourced over 200 jobs and completely laid off over 70; by the end of 2016, Buck Woodard had officially left Colonial Williamsburg.[138] From the end of 2016 until the hiring of Martin Saniga in 2020, the new full-time staff had no official management through the Initiative. Instead, they were housed within the main performing arts department, and as such lacked the centralized organization of previous years. As a result of this and funding reallocations, the large-scale projects that characterized the earlier years of the AII's operations stagnated. For the handful of years without AII management, the full-time interpreters were left to carry on Indigenous interpretation with little formal support. Martin Saniga was eventually hired as the supervisor of American Indian interpreters in 2020, marking the return of some amount of structure to the program. Under Saniga, the AII began developing new interpretation and expanding itself as a program once again.

"Too many people just don't know that American Indian programming exists at Colonial Williamsburg," Saniga said in 2021 promotional material for Native American

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[137] Woodard, "The Return of Indian Nations," 263.

[138] Steve Roberts, "Colonial Williamsburg to Outsource Operations, Announces Layoffs," Williamsburg Yorktown Daily, June 29, 2017, https://wydaily.com/business/2017/06/29/colonial-williamsburg-fundamentally-restructures- citing-dire-financials-business-news/.

Heritage Month.[139] Just as before, visitors often remained unaware of the opportunities to view and learn about Indigenous history. Especially with the lack of larger programming events in the past few years which, although often temporary, were highly visible, Indigenous historical interpretation experienced a relative state of dormancy, kept alive only by the efforts of the full-time staff members of the Initiative. A major development and aid for the visibility of the AII came with the introduction of Colonial Williamsburg's first Native historical figure into its "Nation Builder" program at the end of 2022. The Nation Builder line-up, as previously mentioned, consists of portrayals of "real historic figures associated with 18th-century Williamsburg who made significant contributions to the American story."[140] The Native historical figure added to the lineup was Oconostota, a war chief of the Cherokee at Chota, a veteran of the French and Indian War and a part of a 1777 Cherokee delegation to Williamsburg.[141] Oconostota was written and portrayed by Kody Grant, one of the full-time actor-interpreters hired in 2015, who had also previously worked with Colonial Williamsburg on projects like "So Far From Scioto." Notably, the Nation Builder performances are most often given as first-person, in-character interpretations. Last year, in the spring of 2023, I had the opportunity to view a performance of Kody Grant as Oconostota. Like other Nation

[139] "Colonial Williamsburg's American Indian Initiative Takes Center Stage During November's Native American Heritage Month," Colonial Williamsburg, October 25, 2021, https://media.colonialwilliamsburg.org/media/documents/Colonial_Williamsburgs_American_Heritage_Month_2021-2.pdf.

[140] "Meet Our Nation Builders." Colonial Williamsburg. https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/explore/nation-builders/?from=navexplore.

[141] "Colonial Williamsburg Introduces First American Indian Nation Builder," Colonial Williamsburg, March 7, 2022, https://media.colonialwilliamsburg.org/media/documents/OconostotaNationBuilder.pdf.

Builder presentations, it began in this first-person interpretation, then was followed by a brief question and answer portion with the out-of-character actor-interpreter.

During the one presentation of Oconostota I was able to attend last year, the talk was centered around the concept of freedom and what that means to the Cherokee people. The Cherokee concept of freedom was compared and contrasted against the preconceived idea of what freedom means based on typical whitewashed American imaginings of the Founding. The presentation was designed to encourage the audience to become more aware of cultural differences, especially how ideas such as that of "freedom" can be culturally specific, not necessarily universalized. Through his performance as Oconostota, Grant intended to explore topics like this–freedom, respect, notoriety–and what they mean in a culturally specific context, in addition to humanizing the historical figure. As he shared with me when we spoke last year, part of his intention behind choosing Oconostota as the figure to portray was Oconostota's position as an aging warrior, someone who held a great deal of respect in his youth and may be at risk of losing it in his old age. The goal was to remove the "stereotypical mystery of the Indian man in the historical mind."[142]

The function of Oconostota as a member of Colonial Williamsburg's Nation Builder lineup is very significant, both in that his presence brings a new elevated level of visibility to the activities of the AII, and that the performance itself forges an important connection and understanding with the audience. Additionally, it serves as an acknowledgment of the role Native people played in the foundation of the United States and the marked effect Native nations had in warfare, politics, and culture which is so

[142] Kody Grant in discussion with author, April 2023.

often overlooked or ignored after the initial post-contact period. However, it is also worthwhile to deconstruct the language of "Nation Builder." The term most obviously prioritizes the creation of the United States as a nation, and the expansion of the Nation Builder title to individuals outside of the traditionally held list of American founders (i.e. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, often wealthy white slaveholding men) folds them into this greater story of nation-building. The language of Nation Builder positions the importance of these individuals primarily (or at least, most visibly) on their contributions to the colonial enterprise that is the United States. However, Oconostota's presence as a Nation Builder leaves a subtle point unsaid, the point of exactly what nation Oconostota has helped build. His impact on both the United States and, even more significantly, his own people, is explored through his performance. Though the language of Nation Builder initially seems clear, especially taking into account its traditional lineup, I believe the title leaves sufficient ambiguity for an interpretation that can question the supposition of the inevitable creation of the United States.

Although the figure of Oconostota is no longer a part of the Nation Builder program due to Kody Grant's departure from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 2023, the possibility of adding another Native Nation Builder to the lineup lies on the horizon for the AII. 2023 and 2024 were years of significant change for the American Indian Initiative, the most notable change being that the AII was made its own official department of Colonial Williamsburg, rather than a program housed under different departments. As its own department, it now operates under the leadership of three co-managers, Fallon Burner, Chris Custalow, and Russell Reed. In addition to being co-

managers of the AII, Fallon Burner holds the title of Indigenous Research Historian and Program Designer, Chris Custalow the Indigenous Communities Engagement Manager, and Russell Reed the American Indian Encampment Site Manager. During the past few months, some of the primary activities of the AII have involved the onboarding of new staff and the re-sparking of community connections. A position specifically for outreach to tribal communities (especially through AIANTA, the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association) was formalized with Custalow's new management position.[143] Russell Reed, as manager of the American Indian Encampment, oversees the activities of the site which is as of now staffed five days a week during the afternoon.[144]

The American Indian Encampment is the permanent location run by the American Indian Initiative within Colonial Williamsburg. The site, located on the corner of Botetourt and Nicholson, one block back from Duke of Gloucester Street, was first utilized under Buck Woodard's leadership as the "Cherokee Camp." It served as a semi-permanent location for Cherokee interpreters and trade-persons during the Return of the Cherokee week, where "members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and the United Keetoowah Band offer traditional material culture through demonstrations of basket-making, textile weaving, and wampum belt construction."[145] The encampment then, as now, was intended to serve as a rough portrayal of the encampment that would have housed the incoming

[143] Fallon Burner and Chris Custalow in discussion with author, April 2024.

[144] "Historic Site: American Indian Encampment," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/locations/american-indian-encampment-site/.

[145] Corporate Archives Collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, American Indian Initiative–Return of the Cherokee & The Beloved Woman 2015, "The Return of the Cherokee Week," 1.

delegations of tribal members. Although these encampments themselves were not permanent structures, the significance of the encampment as a permanent feature of Colonial Williamsburg is twofold; firstly, it accomplishes something very similar to the large-scale presence of visiting nations in the assertion of a continued presence. Secondly and similarly, it combats notions of Native people as fleeting, vanishing, or wandering. It locates them firmly both within the 18th century and the present day.

With this specific situation in time and place lies another significance of the encampment: the interpretation. Unlike the Nation Builder presentations, the interpreters at the encampment never take on a first-person interpretive position. They greet visitors and briefly explain that although they are dressed in costume and are interpreting the 18th century, they are also happy to take questions concerning all time periods, from pre-contact to contemporary Indigenous issues. In my brief experiences at the encampment site, visitors do take them up on this offer. For example, though a lot of questions tend towards their dress and the activities going on at the site, one guest's question about one of the interpreter's dual tribal affiliations led to a discussion about the politics of present-day tribal membership and recognition. The following discussion addressed complex topics like blood quantum, the Cherokee Freedmen controversy, and the changing legal criteria surrounding an American Indian identity.[146] By discussing such a variety of topics outside of the 18th-century, the encampment site breaks free from this common drawback of living history museums, that they can often "only portray a specific time, place and people, and often only a single settler-colonial

[146] American Indian Encampment visits by author in April 2023 and April 2024.

historical narrative."[147] The space itself can also feel markedly different from other spaces in Colonial Williamsburg. Food cooked live over a fire, the casual conversation with and among the interpreters, and the children playing stickball in the grass all contribute to an atmosphere that differentiates itself from the quiet, reverential atmosphere that can permeate some other Colonial Williamsburg locations.

When I met with Fallon Burner and Chris Custalow, two of the AII co-managers, "Indigenize" and "decolonize" were the words of emphasis in our conversation. The staff of the AII has made efforts to diffuse their research work into Indigenous histories throughout the other departments at Colonial Williamsburg and in turn, have encouraged greater communication about Indigenous historical research. Although the efforts to interpret Indigenous history have largely been carried out by the AII over the years, other areas of Colonial Williamsburg outside of the AII have also worked on Indigenous historical topics, an example of which lies in the Nation Builder program. The actor-interpreters for each Nation Builder perform their own research and write their own presentations, and each actor-interpreter for the Nation Builders has performed some research for connections to Indigenous history. For instance, Mark Schneider, the actor-interpreter for the Marquis de Lafayette, wrote and developed an ongoing presentation titled, "Kayewla: The Marquis and the Oneida," which details Lafayette's relationship with the Oneida people before and after the Revolutionary War.[148] Within their own department, Burner and Custalow related to me their efforts to decolonize the

[147] Pierre Walter, "Decolonizing US settler-colonial narratives in living history museums: the Pilgrims as first people?" (*Journal of Heritage Tourism,* 2022) DOI: 10.1080/1743873 X.2022.2144739, 178.

[148] "Performance: Kayewla: The Marquis and the Oneida," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/events/performance-kayewla-the-marquis-and-the-oneida/.

management structure; despite the appearance of top-heavy management, their multiple-manager approach is one based on shared authority, both among them and their frontline interpreters.

This upcoming year marks the beginning of many anniversary celebrations at Colonial Williamsburg. Last year was the year of remembrance for the Brafferton School as the 300th anniversary of the permanent construction of the school building, and featured programming in collaboration with William & Mary and the Muscarelle Museum, including a Brafferton-focused exhibit in William & Mary's Swem library.[149] Because 2024 marks 250 years since the arrival of the three Shawnee emissaries in Williamsburg (the same story told in the "So Far From Scioto" show from previous years) and the Shawnee-Dunmore War, the upcoming year will see more programming centered around this story.[150] This year's programming is also anticipated to see the return of the Indian Trader Program, the continuation of the American Indian Life Series, and for the first time programming centered on Afro-Indigenous descendants.[151]

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[149] Sara Piccini, "The Brafferton at 300: Rediscovering a Complex Past," William & Mary, March 8, 2023, https://www.wm.edu/sites/braffertoninitiative/news/brafferton-at-300.php.

"Remembering: William & Mary Brafferton Indian School 1723-2023," William & Mary Libraries, https://libraries.wm.edu/exhibits/remembering-william-marys-brafferton-indian-school-1723-2023.

[150] Fallon Burner and Chris Custalow in discussion with author, April 2024.

[151] "Presentation: Two-Spirits in American Indian Life." Colonial Williamsburg. https://www.colonialwilliamsburg. org/events/presentation-two-spirits-in-american-indian-life/. The American Indian Life series is a third-person interpretive presentation given in the main Historic Area. In the past, these short, roughly twenty to thirty minute lectures were given on the Charleton stage, though the most recent one I have attended took place within the American Indian Encampment. Previous subjects of these presentations included the variation in populations of Virginia Indians and the cultural meanings surrounding hostage/captive-taking. The currently running presentation is "Two-Spirits in American Indian Life," a talk given by a two-spirit interpreter. Two-spirit, as defined by the Colonial Williamsburg website, is "Indigenous people who embody male and female spirits." The presentation discussed the meaning of the term "two-spirit" as well as the role of two-spirit people in cultural, spiritual, and military life for a variety of different tribes and nations, with audience questions at the end. I attended this presentation in April 2024.

At the time of my writing, it is still possible to walk down the Duke of Gloucester Street and see no evidence of Indigenous history at Colonial Williamsburg. This, however, is not necessarily reflective of all the work done by the American Indian Initiative that is not always directly visible to the public. The extensive research, the diffusion of Indigenous history into other departments, the creation and maintenance of relationships with stakeholder nations, the development of new content and programming, and the building up of institutional support is all work that remains, for now, not fully visible to the public at Colonial Williamsburg. However, this is changing. With the onboarding of new staff and the creation of Indigenous historical content outside of only the AII, the permanent visibility and substantive interpretation of Indigenous history is growing.

In some ways, Colonial Williamsburg represents a positive model for other museums to follow, especially with the official creation of the AII as its own department that is managed, researched, and interpreted by Native people. This, in addition to the allocation of resources over the years to the AII and to the collaboration with stakeholder nations, are both important steps towards rectifying decades-long silence regarding the presence and power of Native people. However, the question of whether or not Colonial Williamsburg can be decolonized still remains. More broadly, the question still remains if completely decolonizing settler-colonial institutions is even

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The Indian Trader program features an interpreter walking up and down Duke of Gloucester Street, engaging with visitors and discussing the local trade that took place within Williamsburg. Though I have not had the opportunity to see this program yet, the AII staff is currently working to revitalize it.

possible.[152] But especially in a museum with the history that Colonial Williamsburg has–that of an unabashed allegiance to the morality and inevitability of the American nation-state–the question is perhaps posed with an increased sense of irony. Even besides the ideology behind Colonial Williamsburg's inception, the creation of the physical space itself is reminiscent of the act of colonialism. Before the restoration of the Duke of Gloucester Street and the surrounding area, this main street of Williamsburg was a functioning, if sleepy, town center. Businesses and homes were bought out by the Rockefellers, clearing the space of what was a significant number of Black residences and resegregating a surprisingly integrated Duke of Gloucester Street, for what was essentially a shrine to the American founding, purposefully void of the Black and Indigenous people that sometimes contributed to and sometimes resisted this founding.[153] By recreating Williamsburg in its colonial state, the creators also reenacted on a symbolic level the act of colonization.

The circumstances and motivations behind the creation of Colonial Williamsburg take on a particular significance in these upcoming years, given the dual anniversaries of Colonial Williamsburg and the United States. In recent years especially, Colonial Williamsburg has made some shows of institutional support for Indigenous people, including Colonial Williamsburg's widespread participation in Orange Shirt Day in 2022. Orange Shirt Day, created in 2013 as a "grassroots movement to raise awareness and show support" for Indigenous peoples, especially in reference to the assimilationist Indian boarding schools (and residential schools, as they were called in Canada) which

[152] Glenys Ong Echavarri, "Decolonizing Museums: Perspectives from Indigenous Museum Professionals," *MuseumsForward* (thesis, 2021).

[153] Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, 24.

forced or coerced thousands of Native children away from their homes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.[154] Additionally, the new management staff of the AII recently made a presentation of the activities and future plans of the American Indian Initiative to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Board of Trustees, an opportunity typically only made available to the Foundation's president or other highly ranked corporate official. Outside of the AII, Colonial Williamsburg has also shown a greater commitment to community responsibilities; through their archeological excavation of the original foundations of the First Baptist Church, one of the earliest congregations for free and enslaved Black worshippers, they have worked together with and consulted with the First Baptist descendant community since 2020.[155]

Engagement with descendant communities and modern-day Indigenous nations appears to be Colonial Williamsburg's best opportunity to accomplish decolonial acts. Following the lead of the American Indian Initiative, which has since its inception engaged with contemporary issues and topics for Indigenous people and their communities, Colonial Williamsburg should extend its gaze beyond its tight and traditional focus on the 18th century to better reckon with its own institutional history. For "the future to learn from the past," Colonial Williamsburg must learn from its own past.[156] Acknowledging Colonial Williamsburg's own role in perpetuating silences in the historical record and in pushing propagandistic or stereotypical portrayals of history is

[154] Fallon Burner, "Orange Shirt Day: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation," Colonial Williamsburg, September 30, 2022, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/deep-dives/orange-shirt-day-2022/.

[155] "First Baptist Church Excavation Project," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/research-and-education/archaeology/first-baptist-church/.

[156] "Strategic Plan: 2020-2026," Colonial Williamsburg, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/about-colonial- williamsburg/strategic-plan/.

an important step, as is giving these affected communities a voice within the institution to continue their histories past the Revolutionary period.

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