



Colonial Williamsburg News

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG'S PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS
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Reiss Reflects on Tenure, Offers Thanks



Colonial Williamsburg President and CEO Mitchell Reiss announced in June that he will step down from his post at the end of his contract term in October.

Reiss described working here each day with his “talented and dedicated colleagues” as both a privilege and a daily pleasure.

“I am very proud of all that we have accomplished together,” Reiss said in an email message that he and Thurston Moore, chairman of the board of trustees, sent jointly to CW employees. “I especially want to thank all of the passionate donors, wonderful volunteers and members of the community for their continuing support for the mission of this very special place. I believe that Colonial Williamsburg continues to have an important role to play in our rapidly changing world as a place that speaks to all who love freedom and who revere this country’s founding ideals.”

Visitation and fundraising have both increased since Reiss’ arrival at the

Foundation in October 2014 amid significant financial challenges. During that time, Colonial Williamsburg earned reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums and also saw its commercial operations become profitable for the first time in its history. The Williamsburg Inn regained its coveted 5th star from Forbes, which it had lost in 1998. After substantial cost-cutting and restructuring, the Foundation was able to stabilize its financial health by reducing the endowment draw for operations by 90% and the total endowment draw by 42% from 2014 to 2018.

The Nation Builder corps of interpreters expanded during Reiss’ period to include more women and people of color, and Historic Area programming diversified with the introduction of such offerings as a children’s archaeological dig and “Resolved! An American Experiment.” Through the advocacy of Elisabeth Reiss, military outreach efforts expanded with the opening of the highly popular Liberty Lounge in 2016. *Trend & Tradition* began publishing in 2016; the seasonal ice-skating pavilion opened on DoG Street; and the Art Museums broke ground on its donor-funded, \$40 million expansion, to be completed next spring.

Moore thanked Reiss and his wife, Elisabeth, for their dedication, service and leadership since arriving in October 2014.

“Mitchell has worked successfully to help Colonial Williamsburg navigate unprecedented cultural and technological shifts, building a record of solid accomplishment under his tenure,” Moore said. “Among other things, he led us through a difficult but necessary organizational restructuring; improved our guest expe-

rience; invested in a diverse and inclusive workforce; and completed fundraising to expand and renovate the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg.”

The board has enlisted Spencer Stuart, a global executive search firm, to recruit Colonial Williamsburg’s next president and CEO. On Aug. 1, the board also posted [online](#) its specifications for the position.

“The board is confident the position will be filled with a world-class leader who will shepherd the rich legacy of Colonial Williamsburg forward,” Moore said.

He added, “By looking to our nation’s founding principles, which were developed here more than two centuries ago, Colonial Williamsburg can be a beacon in these rapidly changing times. Although it is going to require more hard work and creative thinking, everyone at Colonial Williamsburg is excited about the future. Our next president and CEO is going to have a tremendous opportunity to build on the important work that Mitchell and his team have accomplished. We’re confident that we will find a world-class leader to help us do so.”



There’s still time to turn in your pledge card. Our campaign continues through Sept. 30.

To find out more about how you can help right here in our area, see your United Way captain or contact Stacy Smith at ssmith2@cwf.org or Jane Lloyd at jlloyd@cwf.org.

Please choose to make a difference now. Your commitment can have a lifetime of impact.

Behind the Scenes at the Textile Lab

In a brightly lit lab on the first floor of the Collections Building in the Bruton Heights complex, conservators Gretchen Guidess and Jacquelyn Peterson-Grace balance preservation with aesthetics, all while performing intricate work that is necessary but nearly imperceptible to most observers.

Most guests and employees don't see the tasks the conservation team performs to prepare textiles for public view, but their work is on display in the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg.

Fabrics are so intertwined in our daily lives that we take them for granted, but the research and study of the textile col-



Conservators Jacquelyn Peterson-Grace (left) and Gretchen Guidess retrieve a gown stored in the textiles lab.



Jacquelyn Peterson-Grace treats and prepares a quilt from the collection for exhibit.

lected, she said, probably by more than one seamstress, judging by the difference in stitching and hemming in different areas. The dress has been cut apart and opened at the bodice, perhaps to accommodate a young girl's changing figure. "There's a story here," Peterson-Grace said. "Clothing was valued and maintained and

altered, she said, probably by more than one seamstress, judging by the difference in stitching and hemming in different areas. The dress has been cut apart and opened at the bodice, perhaps to accommodate a young girl's changing figure. "There's a story here," Peterson-Grace said. "Clothing was valued and maintained and

lay on those spots, unobtrusively restoring the integrity of the piece. Using this delicate overlay allows the original material to be visible even as the damaged areas become nearly undetectable. Other areas were stabilized with even smaller bits of painted Japanese paper.

This close, careful work prepared the piece for display in the Art Museums in early August. Items in our collection are displayed on rotation to make sure more items may be viewed and to prevent damage from overexposure.

The team's work is one stage in a multi-step process that involves a group of highly skilled employees. Guidess, a conservator of textiles, and Peterson-Grace prepare the physical textile piece for exhibit, while curators work on the label text or other displayed information about its provenance, the techniques used in its creation and its historical significance. An exhibitions team determines the physical placement and lighting for the quilt's display, and docents and education staff collect the information they will share with visitors who view the exhibit. ▶

lection's clothing, linens for bed and table, window treatments and the upholstery of furniture reveal so much about the details of life in the times portrayed in the Historic Area.

The team provides treatment for pieces to preserve and stabilize them when time, the environment and handling may have caused them to degrade.

Peterson-Grace, who is working at the Foundation on a post-graduate fellowship, carefully smooths her gloved hands over the fabric of a child's gown on a table. The garment has been

would have been altered rather than discarded."

To display the gown, she is preparing a customized mannequin, stuffing and shaping a cotton-covered torso to fit its dimensions exactly.

An example of the team's work is a circa 1850 quilt from Chester, Pennsylvania, which now hangs in the lab. Some very small areas needed treatment because the dye's interaction with the cotton fabric had created small holes. Peterson-Grace painstakingly added tiny bits of sheer polyester fabric over-

Behind the Scenes at the Textile Lab *continued*

It is especially rewarding when a display is mounted. “It’s the culmination of all of our activity and the dialogue between curators, conservators and the exhibitions teams,” Guidess said.

One item being prepared for rotation into the British goods exhibit next summer is a wooden box decorated with flame stitch embroidery on its exterior and a plush upholstered lining of pink silk. The brilliant pink, likely produced by a safflower dye, is extremely sensitive to light and could fade considerably while on display. “But,” Guidess said, “items in the collection should be seen; that’s the point of the collection.”

They stress that it is important to appreciate its vibrant color during the brief period when it will be on display. “Our aim is not to make it new but to stabilize the piece and prevent additional degradation,” Peterson-Grace said. “The fact that it will look better as a result of our treatment is a bonus.”

The box may have been used for jewelry or keepsakes and it is likely that it once sported a mirror in its lid. Intriguingly, the box harbors a secret compartment where treasures were once hidden.

Exhibits are planned years in advance and take considerable time to prepare. For textiles, physical constraints of the conservators themselves must be considered in that scheduling. “A conservator can’t hand sew for long hours on end,” Guidess said. “Project management is critical in scheduling the work to prepare pieces for display. Once the exhibit schedules are announced, those deadlines are firm.”

To view the work of the textiles conservators on a behind the scenes tour of the Collections Building, call x7081.



Gretchen Guidess closely examines a memorial painting on velvet to determine whether the piece needs to be treated.



Left: Treatment of delicate textiles is performed only when necessary and with care to preserve the integrity of the original work. Above: This box, lined with silk dyed bright pink, contains a secret compartment and may have held jewelry or other small items. It will be part of an exhibit featuring British goods.



Your Story: Joel Voron

by Chuck Reusing



POSITION: Integrated Pest Management Specialist in Collections, Conservation and Museums (CCM)

YEARS OF SERVICE: I have been employed by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for almost eight years and in my present position since March 2016. I began my career with Colonial Williamsburg as a gardener in the Landscape department.

WHAT I DO: My primary responsibility is to protect the collections from pests, including wood-destroying insects. Our museum pest management program is a multi-layered approach that relies heavily on exclusion, environmental factors, proper storage of items, and continual monitoring.

We do not use chemicals around our historic collections, as this could damage them. Most museum pest control issues can be resolved by changing one or more basic conditions that attract pests. My job is to find the safest, most effective solution to the pest control problem, whatever it might be. Sometimes that means being a pest detective, asking what has changed and why are these pests here when they were not before? There are many fellow employ-

ees who report potential problems. I inspect to determine if the problem is cyclical, random or an ongoing risk.

We have a year-round termite prevention program at Colonial Williamsburg. I have a commercial Virginia pesticide applicator's license in three categories and I am also a master termite technician. My responsibilities cover the majority of the buildings at CW and occasional consultation for Hospitality or Property Management. My professional license must be renewed every two years through continuing education classes. In May, I received a Gonzales field experience grant that I used to attend the International Integrated Pest Management Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, which was a fantastic learning experience.

I am a contributing attendee of The Museum Pests Working Group, an organization of collection managers, conservators, entomologists and other professionals interested in issues surrounding the implementation of integrated pest management in museums, libraries, archives and other collection-holding institutions. On the group's website, MuseumPests.net, I have written content on museum pest control best practices, offering solutions on the control of pests in a museum and collections setting. This site is used quite extensively by museum professionals from across the globe.

My secondary responsibilities include addressing issues in some of our modern spaces that might have nuisance pests or occasional invaders. I also remove stinging insect nests when they pose a threat to guests and employees.

WHAT I DO TO IMPROVE THE GUEST EXPERIENCE: All of my work is essentially behind the scenes, although our pest control practices help ensure the safety of visitors to Colonial Williamsburg by reducing the use of pesticides in our buildings and museums and by taking care of stinging insects.

Sometimes I have the opportunity to interact with guests when I speak to them about our pest control practices during tours of our Preventive Conservation Lab.

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE: In the Fall of 2017, a delegation of visitors from Tsinghua University, the Summer Palace and the Palace Museum in Beijing visited Colonial Williamsburg. Through a translator, they were able to ask me how we control and prevent termite problems. Due to my prior training at Clemson University, I was able to give them advice on how to deal with their termite species, which appear to be more "robust" than ours. Being able to share collective knowledge about museum pests with other institutions is very rewarding to me.

INTERESTS/HOBBIES: I enjoy traveling to the mountains in Virginia and other states. I also enjoy kayaking and going to the beach.



Using a tool he created, Joel Voron taps the wall near the foundation of the Bassett Hall teahouse, listening for the hollow sound that would alert him to possible termite damage.

If These Walls Could Talk

The Bracken Smokehouse and the Barraud Privy

by Dani Jaworski

As is well known, there are 88 buildings in the Historic Area that were designated as “original” structures in the early years of the Restoration. What might not be as well-known is the fact that two of them, the Bracken Smokehouse and the Barraud Privy, are not now located on their original sites. They stood in the way of development, but instead of being demolished they were moved to other Historic Area sites.

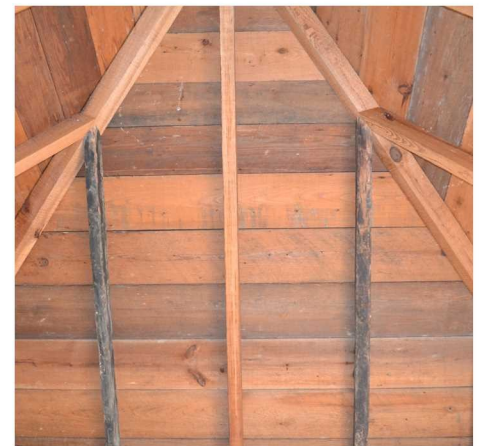
The “Bracken” smokehouse was originally part of the Casey property outbuildings that stood where the William & Mary Bookstore and the Bruton Parish House and Shop are now located. When the property was sold to the Foundation, the circa-1800 smokehouse was moved to the Bracken Tenement property and placed on 18th-century smokehouse foundations that the restoration archaeologists had discovered. While a great deal of the siding had to be replaced, many of the framing elements were reused in the smokehouse you see today.

The “Barraud” privy was originally located about 60 feet



Smokehouse on the Casey property c. 1910.

west of its current location. The circa 1800 privy that was sitting on the otherwise empty lot was moved to the west onto 18th-century privy foundations found at the northwest corner of the Barraud property in 1941. Most of the framing, flooring, and the seats survive in place today.



Above, from left: smokehouse on the Bracken property; reused studs (left) and rafters (right) seen in the Bracken smokehouse today. Below, from left: privy still on the lot west of the Barraud property c. 1927; privy on the Barraud property; surviving interior elements in the privy.



Community News



The Foundation held its first administrative naturalization ceremony on Flag Day, June 14. Eighty-six candidates were naturalized under a tent on the South Lawn of the colonial

Capitol. Joe Ziarko, who interprets George Mason, offered welcome remarks and Emily James, who portrays a free and independent African American woman in 18th-century Williamsburg, gave the keynote address.

The Community Affairs and Public Safety departments partnered with HeartSafe and the Chamber to arrange for CW employees, contractors and volunteers to receive free onsite Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training this summer. Participants learned where Foundation AEDs are located and how to utilize them in an emergency.



The Foundation supported the Williamsburg Community Foundation Williamsburg James City County Public Schools scholarship again this year.

The WJCC scholarship is awarded to a CW employee or child of a CW employee. This year's recipient is Jacob Barton, a graduating member of the Fifes & Drums.



Virginia Children of the American Revolution presented a \$19,000 check to Colonial Williamsburg for our Building

Detectives program at the Robert Carter House, which demonstrates how architectural historians and curators uncover the history of old buildings.

Former state president Molly McCue presented the check.

Benefits News

Wellness Credit for 2020

You may receive a savings on your health insurance premiums next year by providing proof of a doctor visit for a well-woman exam or for a physical. Just schedule and then report your annual physician visit or your well-woman checkup by uploading by Dec. 1 either a note from your physician's office stating the date you were seen or an EOB (Explanation of Benefits) from your insurance company to the Virgin Pulse website (formerly Simply Well).

How to sign up for Wellness Revolution

Visit www.wellnessrevolution-cw.com or the **SimplyWell** app

- Select Register
- Enter your last name and date of birth (DOB)
- Enter your identifier
 - Employees:** enter your employee ID number
 - Spouses:** enter SP-Employee's ID number
 - Domestic partners:** enter P-Employee's ID number.
- Enter the registration code: colonialwilliamsburg
- Then follow the prompts to complete registration. Visit www.wellnessrevolution-cw.com or download the **Virgin Pulse** app.
- Once registered, log in and click on Rewards and then Actions to upload your documentation.



CW in the News

Karen Stone, director of Environmental Health and Safety, and Andy Engel, manager of program development for the Teacher Institute, were recently featured in *Next Door Neighbors* magazine.

Employee Picnic

Join your colleagues on Wednesday, Aug. 21 from 3 to 7 p.m. for food, games, prizes and fun at our End of Summer Employee Celebration. Bring blankets and chairs to the Bruton Heights grounds and RSVP by email to cwevents@cwf.org or calling x7279.





Landscape Announces Arboretum Level II Status

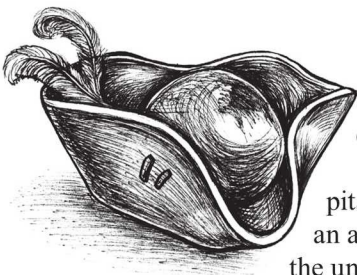
The Colonial Williamsburg Arboretum has achieved Level II status as certified by the American Public Gardens Association. Level II arboreta have at least 100 species of woody plants, a paid staff, and have enhanced public education programs and a documented collections policy. Our arboretum features 25 period species of oak trees and more than 30 historic gardens. The Colonial Williamsburg Arboretum is home to 20 Virginia state champion trees and one national champion tree—the jujube (*Ziziphus jujube*).

Employee Discount and Tipping Added Reminder

Good news! The Hospitality discount for employees and volunteers has been extended through Dec. 30.

Our 50% meal discount when dining in CW restaurants and taverns is a delightful benefit of being part of the Foundation family.

To support our colleagues in Hospitality, please note that there will be an automatic 18% gratuity added to the undiscounted price of your meal.



Lead Interpreters for the Department of Historic Interpretation

Five front-line interpreters are beginning new roles as lead interpreters: (from left) Al Lovelace, Val Tabb, Stacy Loveland, Brandon Lyles, and Jon Smeland.

The group's first task will be assisting with New Hire and Groups Cross Training.



Volunteer of the Quarter

Rick Brown, a volunteer since February 2018, may be “new” to the team, but he has already made a major impact. Rick played a major role in the Foundation achieving Arboretum Level II Accreditation and consistently goes above and beyond for Landscape Services.

EMPLOYEE YARD SALE

Colonial Williamsburg's Corporate & Foundation Relations Department will sponsor the Fall 2019 Employee Yard Sale on Saturday, Sept. 7 from 8 a.m. to noon at the corner of First Street and Capitol Landing Road. Register by Sept. 5 to participate. For more information, call Sophie Hart at x7272.

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