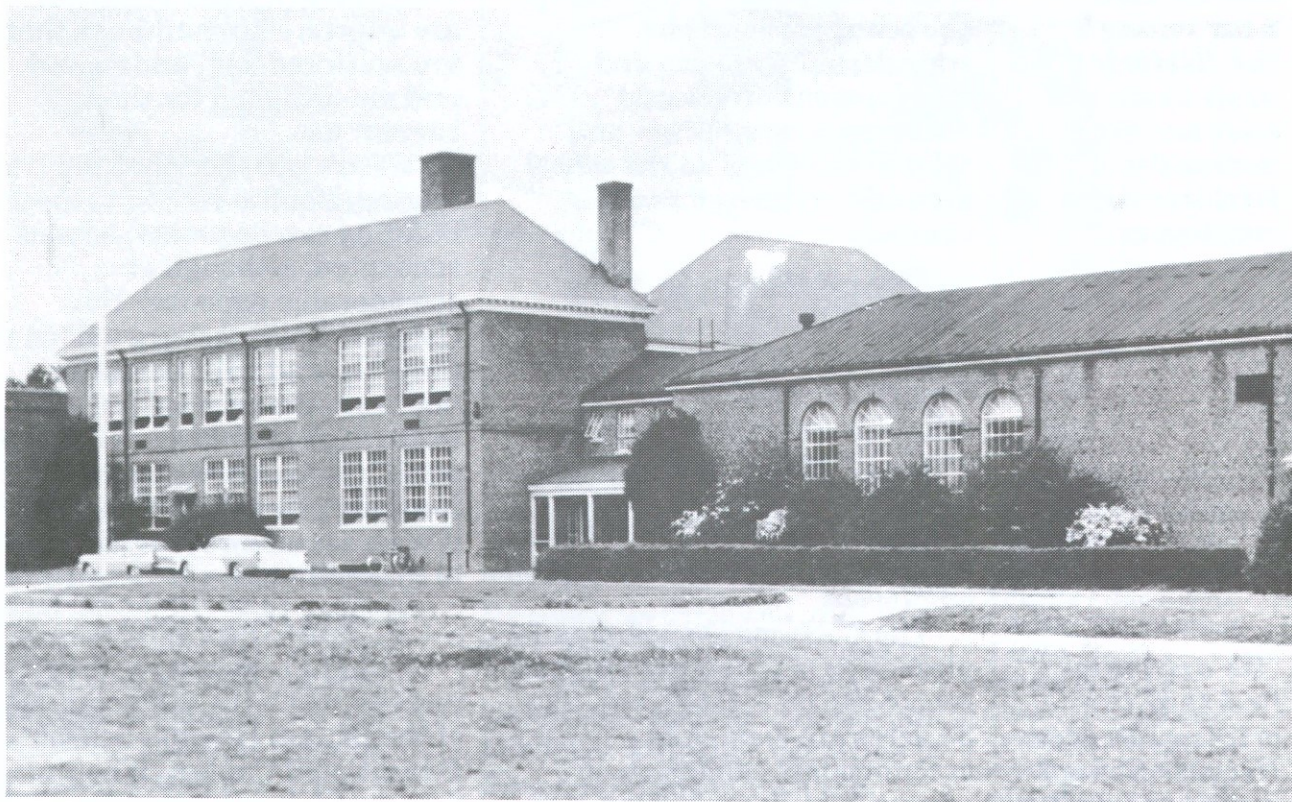


Educational Role of Bruton Heights School to Continue if Site is Acquired by Colonial Williamsburg



**By Charles R. Longworth
President, Colonial
Williamsburg**

In 1939, Colonial Williamsburg conveyed the Bruton Heights property to the School Board as part of a transaction through which the Foundation obtained an existing, outdated school for black pupils located in the Historic Area.

Bruton Heights School opened as a modern facility for black students in 1940. Since 1966, it has been an integrated

school. The school served the community for 48 years, advancing and graduating thousands of young people to more education or useful employment. Bruton Heights did its job well.

Now, its life as a public school has ended. The last graduation ceremony was held on June 12. But, like all commencements, that can mark the beginning of a new life. The Bruton Heights School can continue to play an important educational role, keeping the

Above: Bruton Heights School, a Williamsburg landmark. Its final graduation ceremony was held on June 12.

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name and tradition of service to the Williamsburg area. Re-use of the Bruton Heights school building and site as an educational center is consistent with the school's life as a place of learning for many of the children of Williamsburg and James City County.

Colonial Williamsburg would like to use the school as the centerpiece for our educational planning and development. We would construct a new library and related buildings on the school grounds, creating a small campus.

Near Historic Area

Why does Colonial Williamsburg need the Bruton Heights School and property? The school property is the last available site of sufficient size located near enough to the Historic Area to assure easy walking access for Historic Area employees.

The Costume Department is already in place across from the school site on First Street. The 33 acres are enough to accommodate expansion of educational and other services to the Historic Area without harming the neighbors or the Colonial Parkway. The low density of buildings and careful planning would assure the protection of the Historic Area from light and visual intrusions, a value Colonial Williamsburg and the City have respected for many years.

We need space for expansion. The Franklin Street area is overcrowded. We need more space for research, for program planning and development, for training interpreters, and for

preserving our priceless museum collections. These are the spaces that house the people who make Colonial Williamsburg the world-famous place it is; who produce many programs, from fife and drum reviews to the program, “Williamsburg in Black and White.”

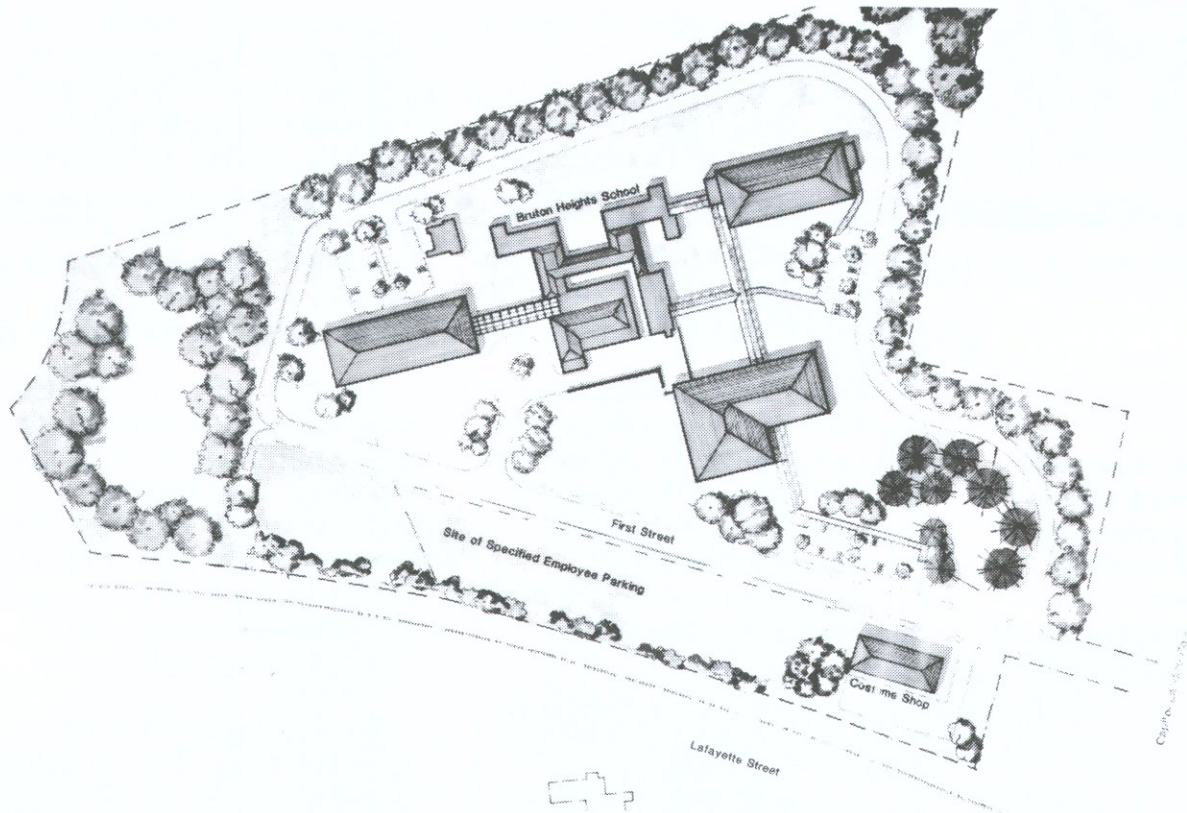
Currently, these activities are quartered in buildings that are scattered, old, undersized, and not designed for their current use.

We are satisfied that the original Bruton Heights school building can be preserved and renovated, although at considerable expense. But Colonial Williamsburg will do it properly, and will thereafter maintain the original building to our high standards. The later additions are not as well constructed as the original and it may not make economic sense to retain them.

Ten-Year Span

It might take ten years or more to reach the full potential of the Bruton Heights School Educational Center. When completed, it will serve for many more years. Over time, the educational programs headquartered there will teach the history of early America to millions of students, families, and individuals. They will come from the Williamsburg area, of course, but also from every state in our land, and from all the continents of the world. The center will be an important place, one in which we can take pride.

There is also an obligation to protect the special features of the property, for it was settled



and built upon in the 18th century. Our archaeologists know of several structures that once stood on the site. There is a good possibility that we may recover valuable artifacts and information on 18th-century buildings. Certainly, we will investigate the sites prior to any construction and treat them sensitively.

Our use and management of the property will control noise, traffic congestion, and pollution that might come from the site under other circumstances. When we can build the educational center, we will move our warehouses away from the adjoining site, and landscape it for some employee parking.

Preserve Memory

Colonial Williamsburg's ownership of the Bruton Heights School property will

preserve its memory as a school for black residents of our community. To facilitate this we will hold our community forums for minority concerns and African-American programs in the school auditorium; make classrooms and the auditorium available for public use when it does not interfere with the Foundation's own programs and other needs for the space; and create a permanent exhibit there focusing on the period when Bruton Heights was an all-black school.

We would also house at our Bruton Heights School Educational Center Colonial Williamsburg's growing collection of black history material developed through the annual community forums. We hope these modern materials could some day find a permanent home in the

Above: This architectural sketch presents a suggested campus setting for the Bruton Heights Educational Center. The existing Bruton Heights School is in the center. It is flanked by two buildings which would house related educational activities. Below and to the right of the school is a proposed new library building.

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Williamsburg Regional Library or a similar facility.

In sum, the site would continue to be used for education and the name Bruton Heights would be retained.

Benefits to Community

Additionally, our ownership would benefit the community in many ways.

First, it will contribute to city and county revenues. We will pay a fair price for the site and the funds, if the localities so choose, could be used for other school expenses. Preservation, renovation, and maintenance of the school building by Colonial Williamsburg will not cause a drain on tax dollars that could come from residential development. It is estimated that Colonial Williamsburg would pay \$380,000 annually in city taxes on the property when it is fully developed.

Second, ownership of the property will strengthen the local economy, of which we are a mainstay. We continue to invest in people, programs, and buildings to accommodate our growing educational activities. Colonial Williamsburg will be here for a long, long time. The center will help create new jobs.

In sum, Colonial Williamsburg is vitally interested in acquiring the Bruton Heights property. I believe our ownership and management of the Bruton Heights property will be in the best interests of all elements of the greater Williamsburg community.

When completed, I am confident that all of us will be proud of the Bruton Heights Educational Center and the important contributions it will make to preserving Williamsburg's proud heritage.

This special issue was prepared to explain why Colonial Williamsburg wishes to purchase the Bruton Heights School property. It will also appear in the *Virginia Gazette* on Wednesday, June 28.