

# 1735 TIMES

Brought to you by the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Inc.

VOLUME 16 | FALL 2025



CHRISTCHURCH1735.ORG

## Celebrating One Year: Taking in the View



A few weeks ago, I celebrated my first year with the Foundation for Historic Christ Church. My desk is cluttered with notes and reminders about projects, deadlines, ideas, dates, and goals – and as I look out my window, the view inspires me to do more.

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of so many talented volunteers and staff, this year has been rewarding and *fun!* The “regular” events, including the

speaker series, concerts, patriotic events, and the parish crawl, were exhilarating.

Your openness and willingness to try new things allowed us to be creative. We welcomed new people to HCC&M with events like the colonial tea, where more than 50 guests were mesmerized by Dr. Amy Stallings in her stunning, handmade blue silk period costume and her flawless reenactment as Lady Berkeley. The event was so successful that we are planning to do it again in the spring. Mark your calendars for the Saturday before Mother’s Day, May 9<sup>th</sup>. It’s a wonderful opportunity to bring mothers and daughters, granddaughters, friends, and family together for an educational and elegant afternoon.

The HCC&M Lottery is another example of trying something new. Moving away from the labor-intensive, weather-dependent “Raise the Roof” event also proved to be exciting and profitable. We announced the three cash prize winners in October at the *John H. Hunt II Chesapeake History Forum*. Thank you to everyone who supported HCC&M’s first Lottery, and congratulations to the winners!

Together, we have invited new people in, shared the many stories of this magnificent place, feasted at historic Sabine Hall, and completed meaningful projects. Thanks to your generosity, and with support from Grace Episcopal Church and Campbell Memorial Presbyterian Church’s Agape fund, the purchase and installation of a backup generator system to protect the buildings in case of a power outage is complete. The River Counties Community Foundation, The J. Edwin Treakle Foundation, and individual gifts helped fund the roof project – cleaning and treating the historic slate to deter

future mold growth and repairing some damaged or discolored slates. Now we are embarking on a campaign to raise \$80,000 to clean, paint, and preserve the Ionic entablature (the wooden architectural feature that sits just below the roof and is repeated throughout the building) and make ready to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence.

The campaign to preserve the entablature continues. To support this critical preservation project, visit [ChristChurch1735.org/donate](http://ChristChurch1735.org/donate) and select “Preserve Entablature.” To learn more about the project visit [ChristChurch1735.org/research/projects/entablature](http://ChristChurch1735.org/research/projects/entablature)



We have partnered with business leaders, explored new grants, and now, through the support of Jessie Ball duPont and the Lightful Bridge program, we can make our donations go further. The *Bridge to 250* match giving campaign will last from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31 or until we raise \$20,000 **online**, whichever comes first! For complete details, please go to [christchurch1735.org/donate/lightful-bridge](http://christchurch1735.org/donate/lightful-bridge).

Thank you for your generosity and deep commitment to HCC&M. I am proud of what we have accomplished together this year, and I am excited for the future! The view from where I sit is breathtaking.

With gratitude,

Jill M. Sears

Development Director

## Burying Ground Freshening

Over the next several months volunteers and our part-time grounds person Glenn Warner will begin working on a new project in the modern burying ground at Historic Christ Church. Helping lead the effort is Scott Mapes, whose family members were volunteers and are buried here. Recently, Scott made several proposals to the Burying Ground Committee for ways to beautify markers and provide family members with vases and a space to arrange flowers.

We are in the process of identifying markers that need to be cleaned or otherwise serviced. Scott’s initial focus will be to clean markers with built-in flower vases. Many of these vases are full of water or mud. Sediment (mud) will not be removed from the grounds; our goal is to make the vases usable again.

Another step will be to elevate and level the markers, the majority of which have been in place for decades. We have made some improvements in a few areas in recent weeks, but we need to get beyond Virginia’s freeze/thaw season to complete this phase of the project.

Scott also plans to create a potting area that will be located between the back parking lot and the burial grounds. A bench will be located on an existing brick pad and will include a table and a recycling bin for old flowers. Scott will provide a supply of burial vases that he will paint to create a uniform look that matches the markers. Family members will be able to pick up vases at the potting area, and Scott also plans to supply local florists with vases. The potting table and vases will be available by March 1<sup>st</sup>. Thank you, Scott!



Volunteer Scott Mapes will create burial vases that match the beautiful bronze markers in Historic Christ Church’s modern burying ground, shown here on Memorial Day.



2 2025 Highlights



3 Collection Spotlight:  
1913-1914 Photographs



4 VA250 Passport

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## Save the Date

Spring 2026 Concerts

• • • • •  
**Poisoned Dwarf**  
**April 11 – 4:00 p.m.**



Poisoned Dwarf is a Celtic music group that plays virtuosic, innovative, and passionate renditions of traditional Irish and Scottish music on acoustic instruments. Five talented musicians, including Mei-Li Garcia (Beane), create a driving sonic energy that has been captivating audiences for over a decade with whistles, flutes, violin, guitar, percussion, and uilleann pipes together with exciting and lyrical vocals. Poisoned Dwarf performs at a wide variety of musical venues from highland festivals to theaters, from churches to sophisticated listening venues throughout the East Coast, to the occasional pub, just for fun. Don’t miss this high energy concert!

**Cantori Choral Ensemble**  
**April 19 – 4:00 p.m.**



In keeping with choral music which would have been performed during the eighteenth century, Cantori Choral Ensemble will present a program of all a cappella music. Included in the selections will be familiar folk songs, songs of love both sacred and secular, and well-known spirituals.

Under the direction of Agnes French, former Director of Music at Grace Episcopal Church in Kilmarnock, the Cantori ensemble features choral singers and professional musicians, including Mei-Li Beane, formerly of Kilmarnock. The group celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025.

# 2025 Highlights



## Roof Repairs

August - A team from the Durable Slate Company in Maryland cleans the 1897 roof and repairs and replaces damaged or missing slates.



## Security Backup

September - Technicians from Northern Neck Generator install a 1,000 lb. propane tank and generator that power a backup security system for the church, museum and campus.



## Hands-On History

July - Volunteers Eppie Pole and Zan Gifford (not pictured left) lead a group in quill pen writing and calligraphy in one of almost a dozen activities children experience at Hands-On History Day, which celebrated its 23rd anniversary this year.

## Colonial Tea

May - Attendees to the Colonial Tea on Mother's Day weekend enjoyed a captivating portrayal of Lady Frances Berkeley by Amy Stallings, shown here with Maggie Hansen, granddaughter of HCC&M volunteers Della and Keith Kidd. The budding historian Maggie would also join her grandparents on the parish crawl to Scotchtown and St. John's in June. After walking literally in the footsteps of Patrick Henry at Scotchtown, Maggie proudly proclaimed that she was never washing her shoes again!



## Listening to America Podcast

May - The morning after their presentation inside Christ Church on religious liberty and the First Amendment, Clay Jenkinson and presidential historian Dr. Lindsay Chervinsky used the Bayne Center to record a podcast about Patrick Henry for Jenkinson's *Listening to America* program. Hear both their discussion in the church and the Henry podcast here: <https://ltamerica.org/listen-2/> (#1660 and #1655).



## Declaration of Independence

July - Jim Russell of the Richard Henry Lee Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution leads the audience at the annual Public Reading of the Declaration of Independence. Eighteen adults read the Declaration while four children read the names of its 56 signers by the colony each represented.



## Oyster Shuckers Extraordinaire

October - Volunteers Mark Christmas (left) and Wells Goddin shucked over 200 oysters at this year's *John H. Hunt II Chesapeake History Forum*, where Kate Livie gave an outstanding presentation on the "James Adams Floating Theater 1914-1941." John and Becky Bowden fried oysters, staff members steamed shrimp, and the event also included cocktails and a light supper after Livie's talk.

## Lottery Winner

October - Volunteer Keith Kidd was the third prize winner in HCC&M's first ever Lottery. Keith generously donated his \$500 prize back to HCC&M. Thank you, Keith!



# I Sat to the Paintr

In 1968, children of Robert Hill Carter of Redlands (1892-1962) donated to Historic Christ Church a copy of a portrait of Robert Carter painted in 1727. Since the 1970s, thousands of visitors have seen the portrait in the museum. The portrait – the final one made of Robert Carter before his death in 1732 – was almost never painted.



Robert Carter sat for this portrait on September 1, 1727. The well-known Richmond artist Helen Schuyler Hull copied the portrait in 1968 for Dr. Burr Noland Carter II, who donated it to Historic Christ Church in memory of his parents.

the scores of bequests of lands, slaves, houses, pounds sterling, bank stocks, mills, horses, coaches, and livestock that stretched over 28 sheets of paper were gifts of personal items such as clothing, wigs, swords, canes, pistols, and mourning rings.

Books, silver, watches and rings also were to be passed on, and in a section dividing these between his three eldest sons John, Robert and Charles, Carter mentions his portraits:

*"my pictures each Child to have his own picture my son [John] to have my first picture and his mothers also my gold watch and diamond ring my Son Robert to have my other picture & his mothers picture & one half of my other rings & watches my son Charles to have the other half."*

Carter's bequest shows clearly that a year before he "sat to the Paintr" he already had two portraits of himself at Corotoman as well as portraits of his two wives. What Carter called "my first picture" almost assuredly is at Shirley in Charles City County, where it likely has hung since the late 1730s alongside the portrait of Carter's first wife and John's mother, Judith Armistead. It was to Shirley that eldest son John would move following his marriage to Elizabeth Hill in October 1723. It is not hard to imagine the portraits he inherited of his father and mother were among the first items to adorn the brick mansion he completed there in 1738. With a similar style and background, the paintings look to be by the same artist, and Robert and Judith appear to be in their late 20s to early 30s, an age that would fit Judith's lifespan (1665-1699). A painting of John also hangs at Shirley, most likely one of those Carter referred to when he said "each Child to have his own picture."

Identifying the likely second portrait – what Carter calls "my other picture" – is more problematic. Carter's will directed that it go to his second oldest son Robert, son of Carter's second wife Betty Landon Carter (1683/84-1719). But Robert Carter II would die on May 6, 1732, three months before his father, and it is not known if the portrait were included in the estate that his son Robert Carter III inherited when he turned 21 in 1749. Two possible candidates exist – one at the National Portrait Gallery and another a copy of Robert Carter as a young man purported to be made from an original at Oatlands – but evidence for both is not clear.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the portrait from September 1727 is that which hangs at Sabine Hall in Richmond County, built in 1738-1742 by Carter's fifth son Landon Carter and still owned by Carter descendants. The painting captures Carter as an older man, five years away from death, gaunt in the face and much smaller in size than he appears in the Shirley portrait (and the National Portrait Gallery painting if indeed that is Carter). No records have been discovered as to how Landon acquired it or how it got to Sabine Hall.



Portrait of John Carter at Shirley in Charles City County

Thanks to the urging of his son-in-law Mann Page and the generosity of his descendants, visitors to Historic Christ Church get to peer into Carter's eyes at this very same moment, one marked by sickness and the trials of age but an unwavering commitment to public service for his beloved "Country" of Virginia.

Perhaps it was that familiar companion that persuaded Robert Carter to resist sitting for the portrait. In the summer of 1727, another attack of gout had left him crippled. A "Lameness" that sprang up in his right ankle on August 22 compelled Carter three days later to take "to my Crutch Continue very much in Pain & very lame." Despite swelling in his feet, broken nights of sleep, a stomach "horribly Opprest with wind," and a pain that radiated from his neck to his backbone, Carter pushed through, handling matters of business both "Publiq" and those concerned with his affairs at Corotoman.

A week later, his daughter Judith and son-in-law Mann Page arrived from Gloucester County. Still ill, Carter and Page took Carter's chariot to his little mill, where Carter managed to walk about for an hour. On the way back to dinner at Corotoman, Page urged Carter "mighty" to have his "Picture drawn." Carter denied it, he said, just "as strongly."

Two days later Carter changed his mind. On September 1, 1727, after notations about sending six bushels of wheat to both his little mill and his "great Mill," Carter recorded in his diary that he "sat to the Paintr." Carter failed to divulge the reason for his change of heart, and unfortunately for historians of colonial Virginia portraiture, he failed to name the artist.

The date of Carter's diary entry, however, is critical in helping establish a timeline to document his surviving portraits. Just over a year earlier, on August 22, 1726, Carter had first signed his will, an act that he confessed left him "very uneasie." Among



What is believed to be Robert Carter's first portrait is this one likely painted in the 1690s that hangs at Shirley in Charles City County alongside a portrait of Carter's first wife Judith Armistead.



Field trips to Historic Christ Church & Museum, it seems, are nothing new. Among the hundreds of photographs that survive of the church since the mid-19th century are several taken ca. 1913-1914 in what might be the first field trip on record here. The photographs were donated by Idalia Bland Minnigerode, who was 15 or 16 years old when she and some of her classmates visited Christ Church.

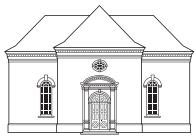
A native of Middlesex County, Virginia, Minnigerode was born in 1898, the daughter of Thomas and Florence Bland. She attended school in Middlesex and in 1918 graduated from the University of Mary Washington, known then as Fredericksburg State Normal and Industrial School for Women. At age 29 she married Charles Minnigerode and settled in Newport News, Virginia, where she raised two children.

Sometime before her passing in 1991, Minnigerode donated four photographs along with a handwritten note about her experiences at Christ Church. Minnigerode recalled that the first time the class visited the door was not locked "and we walked right in. There was no congregation and the Church was never used." Inside, Minnigerode and her friends discovered "writing on the walls, many names and addresses from even far away places." The Foundation would remove most of this graffiti in the 1960s except in the gallery, where numerous etchings from the 1880s-1890s survive.

Minnigerode remembered that the pews and pulpit had not been "cut or defaced" and that the baptismal font "had not been broken." Accounts published in 1902 and 1907, however, report that the font had been broken into four pieces, which later photos confirm. It is possible Minnigerode saw the font after it had been repaired following public appeals to Carter descendants and others to help save Christ Church.



The class returned the next year and found that the church and churchyard looked the same. The students ate their lunch "out under the trees" as they always did. Despite years of "desertion," Christ Church remained for Minnigerode and her classmates a "lovely church" in "such good shape" and a special place to take a field trip.



## Historic Christ Church & Museum

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## VA250 Passport



Historic Christ Church & Museum is one of 70 premier historic sites across the Commonwealth featured as a destination in the newly launched Virginia 250 Passport. This collaborative, statewide initiative encourages Virginians and visitors to commemorate America's 250th by engaging with the Commonwealth's foremost historic sites and museums.

Participants can pick up a passport free of charge from signature sites such as the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, Colonial Williamsburg, and Mount Vernon as well as at the VA250 Mobile Museum, select VA250 events and all 12 Virginia Welcome Centers.

The Virginia 250 Passport serves as a travel guide, discount book and keepsake. Travelers collect unique stamps while visiting passport sites across five regions of the Commonwealth: Central Virginia, Northern Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, Southwestern Virginia and Tidewater. They can receive up to a 15% discount at participating locations that charge admission. Collecting at least five stamps makes them eligible to enter a drawing in December 2026 that includes cash awards and museum memberships.

"Historic Christ Church & Museum is honored to be a part of the Virginia 250 Passport. It is a special moment in our nation's history, and HCC&M is proud to share Christ Church's story and the important role the pursuit of religious liberty played in the American founding," said executive director Robert Teagle.



VA250 Director of Interpretation & Public Engagement Kevin Hampton spoke at the Foundation for Historic Christ Church's Annual Meeting in May 2025.

## 2026 Calendar of Events

### NNK250 Signature Speaker Series

March 15 | 2:00 p.m.



HCC&M is Lancaster County's host site in a series of talks that continue the Northern Neck's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States' founding. More information to follow.

### Spring Training

March 24-26 | 8:30 a.m. - Noon

Join the HCC&M volunteer team for our annual spring continuing education sessions as we get ready for the 2026 visitor season. Enjoy engaging presentations on the history of Christ Church and colonial Virginia by leading scholars. Participate in hands-on workshops with your fellow volunteers. Play HCC&M Jeopardy!™ and win a prize.

### Visitor Season Begins

April 3 | 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



Carter Reception Center & Museum. Guided Tours of 1735 church. Gift shop favorites.

### Poisoned Dwarf

April 11 | 4:00 p.m.

Poisoned Dwarf performs inside Christ Church. Reception in the churchyard at intermission.

### Kirkin of the Tartan

April 12 | 1:30 p.m.



Traditional Scottish blessing & celebration. Full tartan/Scottish church service. Bagpipes, drums, & marching parade with the Kilmarnock District & Pipe Band and the St. Andrew's Society of Williamsburg

### Cantori Chorale Ensemble

April 19 | 4:00 p.m.

Cantori Chorale Ensemble performs inside Christ Church. Reception in the churchyard at intermission.

### Colonial Tea at Historic Christ Church

May 9 | 2:00 p.m.

Enjoy an afternoon tea with an array of delicious finger foods, sweets and a special appearance by a character from colonial Virginia.



### 68th Annual Meeting of the Foundation for Historic Christ Church

May 21 | 4:00 p.m.

### Memorial Day Service

May 25 | Music – 11:00 a.m. Service – 11:30 a.m.



Sponsored by the Northern Neck Chapter, Military Officers Association of America; the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Inc.; and Grace Episcopal Church, Kilmarnock.

### Virginia in 1776

June 3, 10 and 17 | 10:00 a.m. – Noon

Rappahannock Institute for Lifelong Learning (RILL) class led by Robert Teagle.

### The Virginia Declaration of Rights

June 11 | 5:00 p.m.



On the eve of its 250th anniversary, Tony Williams, a Senior Fellow at the Bill of Rights Institute, discusses the historic Fifth Virginia Convention and one of its enduring legacies: the Virginia Declaration of Rights written principally by George Mason. Wine & cheese reception with author and book signing.

### "Give Me Liberty: Virginia & The Forging of a Nation"

June 22 – August 3 | 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Sundays 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.)

Special traveling exhibition from the Virginia Museum of History & Culture explores the unique and essential people, events and sites in Virginia that helped bring liberty and democracy to a nation.

### Public Reading of the Declaration of Independence

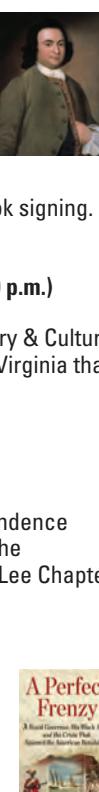
July 2 | 4:00 p.m.

Patriotic celebration and reading of the Declaration of Independence inside Historic Christ Church. With the Cobbs Hall Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Richard Henry Lee Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution

### "A Perfect Frenzy"

July 8 | 5:00 p.m.

Author Andrew Lawler speaks on his 2025 book *A Perfect Frenzy: A Royal Governor, His Black Allies, and the Crisis That Spurred the American Revolution*. Wine & cheese reception with author and book signing.



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