

# Colonial Williamsburg

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## **ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER FOLK ART MUSEUM RE-OPENS IN NEW, EXPANDED QUARTERS WITH 11 ALL-NEW EXHIBITIONS**

### **Museum Consolidation Makes Collections More Accessible To Guests While Providing Additional Exhibit And Program Space**

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. – Colonial Williamsburg’s Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, the nation’s leading center for the research, preservation and exhibition of American folk art, re-opens in new, expanded galleries. Construction of the folk art museum, adjacent to the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, began in late 2004. Curators installed 11 impressive new displays of folk art from the Colonial Williamsburg collections in 10,400 square feet of exhibition space comprised of 11 galleries.

“Moving the Folk Art Museum closer to the Wallace Museum and to the downtown Williamsburg area of Merchants Square will make this wonderful collection much more accessible to our guests,” said Ronald L. Hurst, Colonial Williamsburg’s vice president of collections and museums and Carlisle H. Humelsine chief curator. “In addition, we will gain much-needed program space plus the Folk Art Museum’s popular gift shop will have space in the new location as well.”

The roster of opening exhibitions at the new Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum is indicative of the remarkably wide range of folk art media and helps to explain the ongoing allure of this popular venue. Opening exhibitions include:

- An Introduction to American Folk Art;
- “We the People: Three Centuries of American Folk Portraits;”

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- “Inspiration and Ingenuity: American Stoneware;”
- “Down on the Farm,” a selection of farm-related paintings and objects with special appeal and activities for families with children;
- “In Memoriam: Mourning Art in America,” objects of mourning honoring loved ones;
- “We See America,” landscapes and patriotic folk art representing the many far-flung corners of the nation;
- “Cross Rhythms,” an intriguing array of folk musical instruments;
- “Chasing Shadows,” a showing of the foundation’s historic silhouette collection, and
- “Flowers, Birds & Baskets: Patterns in 19th-Century Bedcoverings.”
- “Exciting Expressions: Painted Furniture,” interesting examples from early America, and
- The Carolina Room, newly conserved and reinstalled from the 1957 building.

The original Folk Art Museum building, which opened in 1957 on South England Street across from the Williamsburg Lodge, was built in memory of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller by her husband, Colonial Williamsburg benefactor John D. Rockefeller Jr., and housed Mrs. Rockefeller’s personal collection of 424 works. In 1992, the museum was renovated and expanded with the addition of a new wing that doubled the facility’s size. Portions of the collection, however, first were displayed as early as 1935 at the Ludwell-Paradise House, one of the many restored 18th-century buildings on Duke of Gloucester Street, Williamsburg’s historic main thoroughfare.

Over the years, the museum’s holdings have been enhanced by the addition of objects of furniture, paintings, carvings, textiles and decorative wares. Today, they comprise more than 5,000 folk art objects made in America during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and embrace most categories of American folk art by well-known folk artists. Among them are 16 painted works by 19th-century folk artist Edward Hicks, the largest number owned by any single institution, 15 portraits spanning the career of Ammi Phillips, 28 paintings by Mattie Lou O’Kelley, drawings by Lewis Miller and multiple works by Erastus Salisbury Field, Joseph Hidley, Charles Peale Polk and William Schimmel. The museum also is home to one of America’s most treasured folk art portraits, “Baby in Red Chair.”

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Although both museums are contained within the same facility, the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum each will retain their own identity and name. Collectively, the two venues will be known as The Museums of Colonial Williamsburg.

The new folk art museum was designed by Samuel Anderson Architects. Based in New York, the firm is well known for its work on museums, conservation laboratories and libraries. Construction was undertaken by VIRTEXCO Corp. of Norfolk.

Entrance to The Museums of Colonial Williamsburg is through the Public Hospital of 1773 on Francis St. between Nassau and South Henry Sts. Operating hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is by any Colonial Williamsburg admission ticket, Annual Museums Pass or Good Neighbor Pass.

Established in 1926, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is the not-for-profit educational institution that preserves and operates the restored 18th-century Revolutionary capital of Virginia as a town-sized living history museum, telling the inspirational stories of our nation's founding men and women. Within the restored and reconstructed buildings, historic interpreters, attired as colonial men and women from slaves to shopkeepers to soldiers, relate stories of colonial Virginia society and culture — stories of our journey to become Americans. As Colonial Williamsburg interprets life in the time of the American Revolution for its guests, it also invites them to interact with history. Williamsburg is located 150 miles south of Washington, D.C., off Interstate 64. For more information or reservations, call toll-free 1-800-HISTORY or visit Colonial Williamsburg on the Internet at [www.ColonialWilliamsburg.com](http://www.ColonialWilliamsburg.com).

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