

Colonial Williamsburg

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A New Celebration of “Light and Liberty” Marks the Nation’s 241st Birthday this Fourth of July



“LIGHT AND LIBERTY GO TOGETHER.”

— THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1795 —

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (June 14, 2017) – Colonial Williamsburg marks America’s birthday with a full day of fun this Fourth of July, culminating in an all-new celebration of “Light and Liberty,” saluting the nation with a soundtrack of patriotic songs to accompany free fireworks over the Governor’s Palace.

“Independence Day is a spectacular day of fun and fireworks every year at Colonial Williamsburg, but for the nation’s 241st we have a special treat in store,” said Mitchell Reiss, president and CEO of Colonial Williamsburg. “This day, more than any other, reminds us why our core mission remains so vital, and we invite our neighbors and guests from around the nation and world to join us for a new, reimagined celebration of America’s enduring story.”

This year’s fireworks display, “The Lights of Freedom,” is the first led by Creative Director of Signature Events Bill Schermerhorn, who joined Colonial Williamsburg in 2016 from Macy’s Inc. An alumnus of the College of William & Mary, Schermerhorn served as creative director for Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade and 4th of July Fireworks, winning two Emmy awards during his tenure of more than three decades.

The new program kicks off at 9 p.m. and is inspired by the words of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in 1795 that “Light and Liberty go together.” It is accompanied musically by “The Lights of Freedom,” a medley of 18th-century and popular Americana songs with the title selection co-

written by Schermerhorn and Grammy award-winning composer Doug Katsaros. This year's recorded score features performances by Colonial Williamsburg musicians and by The Gentlemen of the College, a William & Mary a cappella group.

"I believe the music completes the show. It's like watching a ballet and the fireworks are the dancers," said Schermerhorn, whose own birthday falls on July 4. "Everyone should feel their personal American story being celebrated."

Independence Day festivities begin at 8 a.m. with the Shields Tavern Breakfast Celebration with Thomas Jefferson and Martha Jefferson, featuring a traditional Chesapeake Bay breakfast buffet. A special ticket is required; \$38 and \$76 for couples.

Historic Area sites open to ticketed guests at 9 a.m., with the special holiday program "Go Fourth and Explore" offered at the Wythe, Geddy and Randolph houses and at the Armoury.

A reading of the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson from the Capitol balcony begins at 9:30 a.m. Next for the public at 10 a.m. is Salute to the States, a special military muster on Market Square celebrating the original 13 colonies. A second reading of the Declaration of Independence by Patrick Henry begins at noon on the Courthouse steps.

At the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. to guests with Art Museums or Colonial Williamsburg admission, the exhibit "America's Folk Art," opening July 1, showcases selected items to celebrate this year's 60th anniversary of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum.

From 1-3 p.m. the public is invited to bid on select and exclusive items during a live auction on the Market Square Stage. Throughout the day light sticks in red, white or blue are available to purchase for \$2 each at the Market House and other Historic Area retail locations for illumination during the evening program.

The special hourlong program "Mr. Key's Poem: Our National Anthem" at 2:30 and 4:30 p.m. in the Art Museums' Hennage Auditorium, features Colonial Williamsburg actor-interpreter Bryan Austin as Francis Scott Key. Words from his "Defence of Fort M'Henry," set to the tune of "To Anacreon in Heaven," form the "The Star Spangled Banner," which became the United States' official national anthem in 1931. Musicians Kelly Kennedy and John Turner share popular songs of the early 19th century. Tickets are \$5 and \$4 for students, seniors, children and members of the military.

For dinner, the Williamsburg Lodge Family Fourth of July Celebration begins at 4:30 p.m. with food, fun and entertainment for the whole family; special ticket required; \$89.95, \$50.95 for youths ages 3-10, children under three free. At Chowning's Tavern, a special Chowning's Independence Day Celebration event offers ticketed guests an indoor setting and runs from 6 to 9 p.m., with an all-you-can eat buffet, games, a beverage ticket and take-home engraved glass. A special ticket is required; \$76. Also starting at 6 p.m. is the lavish four-course Thomas Jefferson Wine Dinner at King's Arms with the author of the Declaration of Independence. A special ticket is required; \$145. The Williamsburg Lodge Family Fourth of July Celebration and the Thomas Jefferson Wine Dinner include special reserved fireworks seating on the Palace Green.

Tickets and additional information are available at Colonial Williamsburg ticketing locations, online at colonialwilliamsburg.com by calling 855-296-6627 and by following Colonial Williamsburg on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/colonialwilliamsburg) and @colonialwmsburg on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/colonialwmsburg) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/colonialwilliamsburg).

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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia's 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences, highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 400 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center, pools, retail stores and gardens. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg's educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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