

Colonial Williamsburg

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Colonial Williamsburg Mourns the Passing of David Rockefeller

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (March 21, 2017) – Colonial Williamsburg mourns the passing of philanthropist, businessman and lifelong Foundation supporter David Rockefeller.

The youngest and last surviving child of founding benefactor John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as a boy David Rockefeller was central to Colonial Williamsburg’s establishment after he and his father met the man who conceived the city’s restoration, Rev. W.A.R. Goodwin. To commit his backing discreetly, the elder Rockefeller signed a 1926 telegram to Goodwin simply as “David’s Father.”

“Throughout his life, Mr. Rockefeller remained a devoted steward of Colonial Williamsburg and its critical mission,” said Henry C. Wolf, chairman of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation board. “He was also a dear friend and a regular guest. The entire Colonial Williamsburg community remembers him with fondness and gratitude, and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family and friends.”

David Rockefeller’s commitment is reflected in the major endowments he established at Colonial Williamsburg for innovation in Historic Area interpretation, including African-American programs. He created a significant presidential discretionary fund, supported the expansion of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum – established from his mother’s collection – made gifts of art to the museum and, with his late wife Peggy, donated to the stable complex.

“David was deeply interested in American history in all of its dimensions. He was also one of the outstanding philanthropists of the last century, making institution-changing commitments to leading organizations in science, art, higher education and international relations among other fields,” said Colin G. Campbell, chairman emeritus of Colonial Williamsburg. “Nancy and I treasured our friendship of more than three decades with this warm and wonderful man.”

David Rockefeller visited Williamsburg quite often in recent years including to speak at the dedication of the Bruton Heights complex, at the annual Antiques Forum, where he gave a well-received talk on his lifelong passion for collecting, and at a book signing at the time of the publication of his autobiography. His last visit was in June of 2016, just a week after his 101st birthday. On that occasion he visited with friends, took two carriage rides, and visited the Historic Area and the Art Museums.

“Like his father and so many other members of their family, Mr. Rockefeller’s devotion to Colonial Williamsburg established a legacy reflected in everything we do,” said Colonial Williamsburg President and CEO Mitchell B. Reiss. “We mourn him with heavy hearts, but his memory sustains our commitment to sharing our nation’s enduring story.”

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Colonial Williamsburg operates the world's largest living history museum, preserving Virginia's 18th-century capital as a fully functioning city. Fun, engaging experiences transport guests back in time and highlight the relevance of America's founding era to contemporary life. The Revolutionary City experience includes more than 500 restored or reconstructed buildings, historic trade shops, 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 Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center managed by Trilogy Spa, 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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