

Ground Breaking, Ribbon Cutting Highlight Colonial Williamsburg's Juneteenth Celebration

By [Jillian Appel](#)

June 21, 2025



(Jillian Appel/WYDaily)

WILLIAMSBURG — As part of its Juneteenth celebration, Colonial Williamsburg hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the recreation of the [African Baptist Meeting House](#) on Nassau Street, as well as a ribbon cutting for the restored [Bray School](#).

The African Baptist Meeting House and Burial Ground was the original permanent location of the First Baptist Church, one of the earliest African American congregations in the United States.



“The African Baptist Meeting House once stood as a beacon of faith, hope, and self-determination for Williamsburg’s earliest black residents — enslaved and free. In lifting up this space again, we’re not just reconstructing a building, we’re restoring a dignity to a community’s voice, honoring a legacy that has long deserved recognition,” said Dana Tomlin, Chief of Staff for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



At 10 a.m. after the groundbreaking ceremony, a ribbon cutting was held at the Bray School to officially open it for public viewing. The Bray School, one of the oldest known institutions in North America dedicated to the education of enslaved and free Black children, operated from 1760 to 1765.

The building was moved in February 2023 from its location on the campus of William & Mary to its new home at Colonial Williamsburg, where it has been fully restored.

