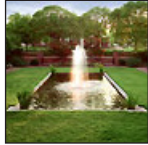


Wonderful Weddings—Just Add WILLIAMSBURG

Wedding inspiration abounds in Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area. From the beautiful gardens to the stately horse-drawn carriages to the charming gazebos, it's no wonder so many people fall in love here, get married here, and come back year after year for their anniversary. Much has changed since the 18th century in the way we celebrate weddings. For example, weddings today are considered spring and summer events, but in the 1700s, Christmas was the most popular time to wed. Nevertheless, by incorporating some of the more meaningful traditions from colonial times, you can host a wedding that has historical meaning yet is still uniquely your own.

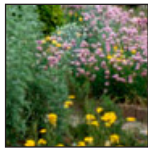


Keep it close to home...



Weddings in the 18th century were almost always held in the bride's home (which, of course, was her parents' home). While this exact tradition would be impractical for some couples today, the level of personalization it reflects is very appealing. When it comes to entertaining, little is more personal than inviting people into a private home. If the house isn't suitable for the wedding itself, perhaps for the rehearsal dinner or a bridesmaids' luncheon. My wedding was held near my husband's hometown, and my in-laws had a gathering at their house for all the out-of-town guests the day after the wedding. It was a wonderful way for us all to visit once the excitement was over.

Flowers with meaning...



Brides of centuries past did not carry the elaborate bouquets seen today. What they did carry were fresh cuttings that had significance and were chosen with great care. Herbs were a common choice in the 18th century and were thought to have magical qualities. Other popular choices for small floral bouquets were orange blossom, which denote purity and beauty; roses which represent love; and lily of the valley, which mean happiness. How romantic to research the meaning of your favorite flowers and pick the ones that represent characteristics you cherish in your relationship! This could also be applied to table arrangements

at the reception.

Fun for the WHOLE family...



Wedding weekend events of today often include not just the bridal party, but all out-of-town guests. This is actually a throwback to the 18th century, when weddings were purposely held at a time when the family was already gathered and often consisted of several days of entertainment. The idea of entertaining a large group for multiple days can be daunting, so take all factors into account when selecting a location.

If you have your wedding in an area with a variety of shopping and sight-seeing options nearby (like Williamsburg, hint hint!), it will be easier to plan and more enjoyable for your guests.

Bridal-party gifts with a flair...



Surrounding the bride in a bridal party is a tradition that has been around for centuries. At one time, the bride's maid's job was to dress like the bride in an attempt to fool any evil spirits that might be lurking about during the ceremony. Of course, today we know how invaluable a bridal party is to pre-wedding planning and alleviating wedding-day stress. Great care should be taken when choosing a gift to thank those who have taken part in your special day. Engraved mementos add that personalized touch and remind them of the wonderful experience of the event.