

BIRD BOTTLE

In Colonial Williamsburg, even the birdhouses are historically accurate. Baltimore orioles, catbirds, martins and even grosbeaks found, on their annual migration to Williamsburg last spring, glazed earthenware birdhouses modeled after one used two centuries ago.

The clay birdhouses are authentic reproductions of an 18th century bird bottle which was excavated from the James Geddy House Yard by Ivor Noel Hume, director of archaeology for Colonial Williamsburg. Another Williamsburg archaeological site has yielded a number of fragments for the bird bottles which are known to have been owned and used by Tidewater's colonial residents.

The 1716 inventory of John Burdett, who kept an ordinary at Edinburgh Castle on Duke of Gloucester Street, included "16 bird bottles" among the earthenware items, along with a garden pot, a chimney flower pot and the like.

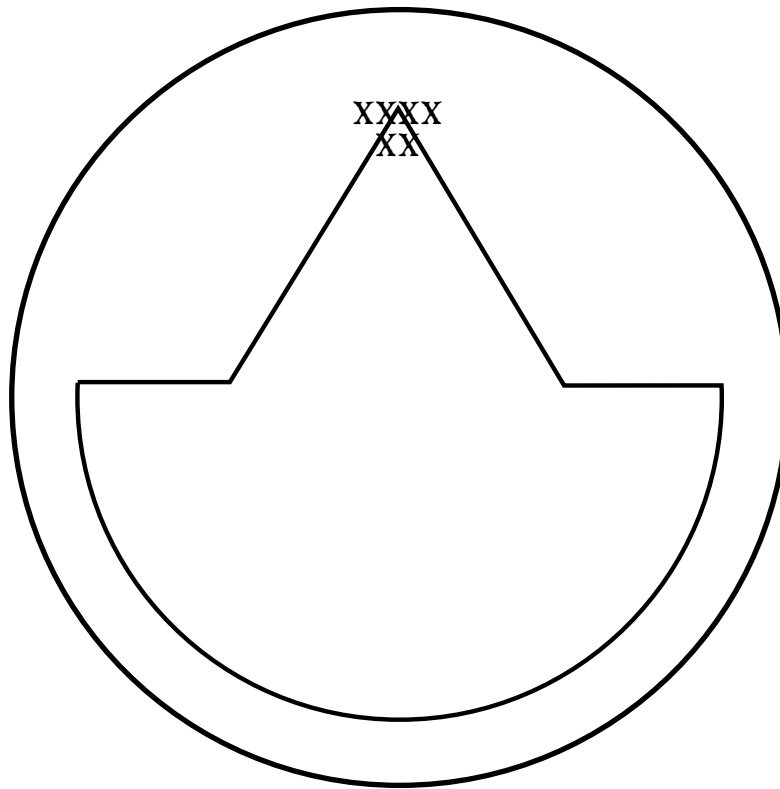
It is not known where Burdett bought his bird bottle, but on March 12, 1752, the following advertisement appeared in the Virginia Gazette:

"To be Sold, at a Store near the Church in Williamsburg, at very low Terms, for ready Money only, A large Assortment of Stone and Earthen Ware."

Among the sundry items listed for sale were "Butter pots of various sizes" and "Martin pots".

The reproduced bird bottles have been fashioned from clay found in James City County by James E. Maloney of Lightfoot. Maloney was furnished drawings of the 18th century original. The clay is coated with a transparent glaze to make the birdhouses waterproof and provide prospective inhabitants with adequate insulation.

Bottle Birdhouses Handcrafted
at
Williamsburg Pottery



XXXX Use a large headed nail or screw to hang the
XX back opening of the bird bottle on.

A twig is inserted to form the perch.

Helpful Hints:

- Do not hang in an area that receives full sun
- East or west facing locations are best – walls that face south should not be used due to the amount of sun the location would receive. This can result in heat build-up within the bottle.
- Placing a perch in the bottle can actually be detrimental to smaller birds attempting to create a nest. The perch can enable larger birds to gain easy access and destroy the nest.
- As with any nest box or feeder, it is helpful to place it near trees or shrubs to provide cover.
- If the bird bottle does not become inhabited in a year or so, consider trying new locations until you find one suitable to you and your birds.