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Winter Antiques Show's 2001 Loan Exhibition  
"The Best Is Not Too Good For You:"  
Colonial Williamsburg Celebrates 75 Years of Collecting

The 47th annual Winter Antiques Show's special loan exhibition in 2001 is "The Best Is Not Too Good For You:" Colonial Williamsburg Celebrates 75 Years of Collecting, an eclectic presentation of many unexpected treasures. Each year one prestigious institution is selected to showcase its rich holdings at the Winter Antiques Show. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation collection numbers over 60,000 objects that illustrate colonial Chesapeake Society and the larger Anglo-American world. The diversity of Colonial Williamsburg's vast holdings, from mahogany tables and porcelain tureens to folk art and a Cherokee pipe, will be highlighted. [For the fifth consecutive year, the Winter Antiques Show's loan exhibition is being sponsored by the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies.]

The Winter Antiques Show, to be held from January 19th through January 28th, 2001 at the 7th Regiment Armory on Park Avenue in New York City, features over 70 exhibitors displaying American, English, Continental and Asian objects. The Winter Antiques Show benefits East Side House Settlement, a social services agency that among other things supports after-school programs for the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx, the nation's poorest congressional district.

Colonial Williamsburg offers much more than the history of the elite Virginians, their ladies, and children. Eighteenth century society as a whole—enslaved peoples, yeoman farmers, skilled tradesmen, middle-class merchants, politicians, and soldiers are portrayed by re-enactors who today walk Williamsburg's streets in order to teach what life was like at the time of the American Revolution. "The Best Is Not Too Good For You:" illustrates the economic and decorative influences on these people and others like them in the American colonies by displaying exquisite pieces of English, French, German, and Chinese decorative objects as well as American paintings, furniture, silver, and folk art.

Colonial Williamsburg acquired its first "antique" in December 1926—a handsome brick house on the Duke of Gloucester Street built in the 1750's for William Ludwell III. The property was purchased for Colonial Williamsburg Foundation through Dr. William Archer Rutherford Goodwin, a local cleric and educator, who had persuaded philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to restore Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia from 1699-1780. By the end of 1931, the foundation had made more than one thousand acquisitions. Today the collection totals over 60,000 pieces. "The Best Is Not Too Good For You:" presents paintings, prints and maps, furniture, ceramics and tools from this collection dating as far back as 1672 and as recently as 1929.

“The Best Is Not Too Good For You.” features beautiful 18th-century pieces that furnished some of the finest houses of the period. One item often desired by wealthy households is illustrated by the mahogany tall clock made by William Claggett of Newport, Rhode Island (1745.) Claggett, originally from Boston, moved to Newport where he made clocks and navigational instruments for the merchant princes of the Atlantic triangular trade. Another desirable possession during the mid-18th-century was a mahogany chest-on-chest like the one made by Thomas Affleck for David Deschler of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1775.) Trained in Edinburgh and London, Affleck left in 1763 for Philadelphia where he joined other British émigrés in raising the level of specialized craftsmanship available to wealthy patrons in America’s largest city.

Painted within a decade of each other on opposite sides of the Atlantic are two oil paintings. *High Life Below Stairs* by John Collett of London, England (1763) depicts servants mimicking the behavior of their refined employees. Collett, whose satirical paintings are useful to social historians, sheds light on class differences and everyday activities. During the same period in Suffolk, Virginia, John Durand painted a similar theme with a double portrait of Samuel and Elizabeth Carr in 1774.

Woodcarvings and birth certificates illustrate folk art in the Colonial Williamsburg collection. Birth and Baptismal Certificate for Elias Hamman (attributed to the Strasburg Artist) is dated circa 1806 and was executed in the *fraktur* style of broken, abstract lettering derived from medieval German lettering. The meaning of Hamman’s certificate is heightened by its visual symbolism, which emphasizes the strength drawn from knowing one’s place in nature and accepting the sacraments. *The Fiddler*, made of black walnut, glass eyes and brass wire, by Edgar Alexander McKillop of North Carolina (1928-1929), is a very different example of folk art. McKillop, a blacksmith by trade, was given the walnut tree by his neighbors for cutting it down for them. He began carving, and the result was this stocky, staring musician.

An unusual piece from Colonial Williamsburg is the “Banjo” Chair made in New Hampshire during the 1920s, of birch, maple, ebony, and tulip poplar with electrical wire. In a time when everyday life inspired art and music, the chair assumes the shape and decoration of a banjo complete with inlaid strings and tuning pegs. The chair is intended as art rather than used as a practical piece of furniture.

Two of the rarer pieces in the collection are a printed map, circa 1612, and a British etching. One of the most important printed maps of America ever produced it is the first map dedicated to the Chesapeake Bay. Published in London, England in 1612 and based on Captain John Smith’s explorations in 1607 and 1608, the detailed map of Virginia became the prototype for maps of the region for the next half century. A significant etching, one of 220 in a two-volume set, documenting an elegant part of Virginia’s foliage --*Magnolia, altissima, Flore ingenti candido* – was published by colonial English naturalist Mark Catesby of London, circa 1743. His work, totaling 220 plates, is regarded as the most important of the time on North America’s natural history.

Among the museum's clothing, tools and accessories displayed in the loan exhibition are some unique 18th-century pieces. A bed valance from Boston circa 1770 was included originally in a larger set of hangings that enclosed a high post bedstead owned by the Gore family of Massachusetts. There are some examples of men's fashion, including the richly decorated gentlemen's waistcoat and gentlemen's fan both from the mid-18th century. Massachusetts craftsman Seth Pomeroy made the elegant pipe tongs circa 1760. He called upon his exacting background as a gunsmith to create a refined tool of elegant design and great craftsmanship. A 1750 watch made by George Graham of London, England, is an exquisite example of mid-18th-century precision workmanship, using gold, brass, iron, steel, glass and enamel.

Colonial Williamsburg draws heavily on archaeology to study 18th-century life. One treasure displayed at the loan exhibition is the pre-1785 pipe, which is probably Cherokee in origin. Excavated from the site of the Charlton Coffeehouse in Williamsburg, the pipe reminds us that such objects were essential elements of meetings between Virginia's governor and the colony's Indian allies.

"THE BEST IS NOT TOO GOOD FOR YOU:" is an inscription on a two-handled cup from Staffordshire, England dated 1697. These braggart pots or drinking vessels emblazoned with such inscriptions were made in Staffordshire potteries during the late 17th-century, most likely as presentation pieces.

"The Best Is Not Too Good For You:" Colonial Williamsburg Celebrates 75 Years of Collecting takes us into Colonial Williamsburg's vast art holdings, which are used to illustrate 18th-century life in the American colonies. The exhibition is curated by Philip Zea, curator of furniture at Colonial Williamsburg and designed by New York exhibition designer Stephen Saitas.

For more information, visit the Colonial Williamsburg website at [□ HYPERLINK "http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org"](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org) [□□www.colonialwilliamsburg.org](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org) and the Winter Antiques Show website at [□ HYPERLINK "http://www.winterantiquesshow.com"](http://www.winterantiquesshow.com) [□□www.winterantiquesshow.com](http://www.winterantiquesshow.com) .

