



The Fredericksburg Center  
for the  
Creative Arts  
  
Frederick Gallery



Located in the Silversmith's House

*The Place by the River  
Where  
Art and History Meet*



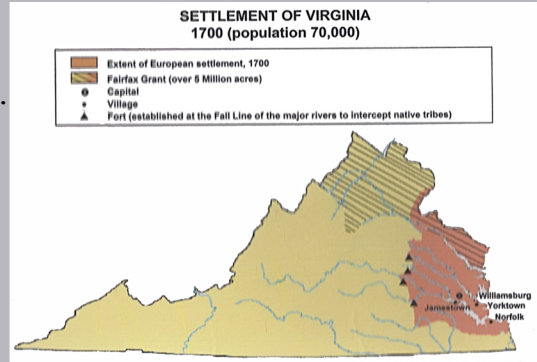
# History of the Silversmith's House

Over 225 years old

## Part I: Background

# Virginia

Founded in 1607, Virginia soon became dependent on tobacco as its economic and monetary system. Over the next century, tobacco plantations developed along the banks of the rivers of Virginia's tidewater region, with the James and Rappahannock River Valleys leading the way to Virginia's future development.



## Development of Towns

Virginia did not establish a network of interior towns until 1730. In that year, an effective tobacco inspection system was established and towns were designated as inspection sites. Fredericksburg was one of them.



An aerial photograph of a river delta, likely the Chesapeake Bay area, showing a complex network of waterways and land. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing two paragraphs of text. The background image is slightly blurred.

## Development of Towns

With overseers managing the plantations, many wealthy planters, known as the First Families of Virginia, moved to the towns where more amenities were offered. (Fredericksburg's Kenmore Manor is an example.)

The Revolutionary War disrupted the tobacco barter and credit arrangements with European merchants causing a demand for locally produced trade goods. Some skilled tradesmen formed an upper middle-class in Virginia's towns. **James Brown**, a Fredericksburg silversmith, was among those who found success in the post-colonial Virginia.



# History of the Silversmith's House

Over 225 years old

## Part II: As a Home



## James Brown's Home

The silversmith's home is a good example of the early American home of an emerging upper-middle class tradesman. It was built on Sophia Street river footage in 1785 by John Brownlow and sold to James Brown, silversmith and a father of six, in 1786-three years after the end of the Revolutionary War.

## James Brown's Home

The 20' by 40' dwelling was built in the half-timber tradition, a design that originated in 13th century Europe and became widely used in 16th century Tudor England.

The design was brought to America by 17th century settlers. During the 18th century, it became common for American half-timber homes to be covered with clapboards.



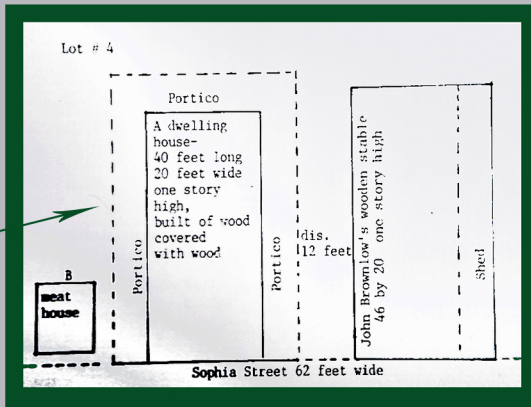
## James Brown's Home

As seen in the stairwell picture, the silversmith's home contains brick filler between the timbers. In other half-timbered homes, stone, plaster, and even wattle and daub was used to fill the spaces between load-bearing timbers.



## James Brown's Home

As originally constructed, Brown's home was surrounded by a portico on three sides, as seen here in the insurance drawing from 1796. The portico allowed work to be done on its decks in the shadow of the house during Virginia's hot summers. The main entrance was from the deck on the north side of the drawing.



## James Brown's Home

This main entrance was the door that faced George Street. Since the river was the primary transportation artery for the town, the streets running down to the river were important for the early residents. This door is still visible on the exterior of the building situated on the middle of the North wall.



## James Brown's Home



It is uncertain if the door that now fronts Sophia Street was part of the original structure. It may have been added later as Sophia Street was improved and the river became less important to the town's economic well being.

## James Brown's Home

Under the lower floor, only accessible from an outside entrance, is an earthen-floored cellar that was used as a root cellar and general storage area.



## James Brown's Home

The lower level, with its large fireplace and massive sandstone walls, served as the kitchen and laundry for the family.



## James Brown's Home

The thick stone walls and hand-hewn beams leave no doubt as to the age of the building.



## James Brown's Home

The main floor of the home served as the public rooms for the Brown family.



## James Brown's Home

When Fredericksburg was chartered in 1727, the legislation establishing the town called for homes to measure at least 20' by 20' with a nine-foot roof pitch. Consequently, the roof pitch is very steep 13:12 ratio. This means that most of the upstairs floor space is fully usable.



## James Brown's Home

The upper floor was considered to be a half story in the original structure (lower tax rate issue). This floor contained two bedrooms, one with a fireplace and a fairly large landing that repeats the floor plan of the main floor.



## James Brown's Home

His home remained in his family for several decades and then was bought by another family.



1880

## James Brown's Home

It became a tenement in the early 20th century.

1928



A faint, sepia-toned portrait of James Brown, an older man with white hair, is visible in the background. He is wearing a dark coat and a white cravat. The portrait is centered and occupies the upper half of the image.

## James Brown

As for James Brown, he was elected to the Fredericksburg City Council in 1795, was a Vestryman and Warden of St. George's Church for a number of years, and elected magistrate in 1807.

He hosted Fredericksburg's first July 4th celebration on Brown's Island (now Scott's Island) in 1805, initiating a tradition that lasted for more than a century thereafter.

He died a prosperous man at the age of 76 in April 1808.



# History of the Silversmith's House

Over 225 years old

## Part III: As a Gallery

## The Gallery

In 1961, the house was condemned to make room for a parking lot. The structure, a block from downtown Fredericksburg, was purchased by the city as part of a tract for a parking lot.

Merchants had put up \$4,000 of the \$16,000 purchase price and the city council felt obligated to use the site for that purpose.



## The Gallery

In February, 1962, after months of controversy, the City Council formally ordered the building's destruction.



## The Gallery



Circa 1950's

Mrs.R. T. Reed, president of Historic Fredericksburg, Inc,(HFI) a non-profit organization, had waged a 2 year battle to save the building. Mrs. Reed and HFI raised \$4,000 and bought a house a block up the street. The City Council agreed to trade buildings and the Silversmith's home was saved.

## The Gallery



In 1963, after restoration, the HFI leased the two lower floors for a new art gallery, The Fredericksburg Gallery of Modern Art.

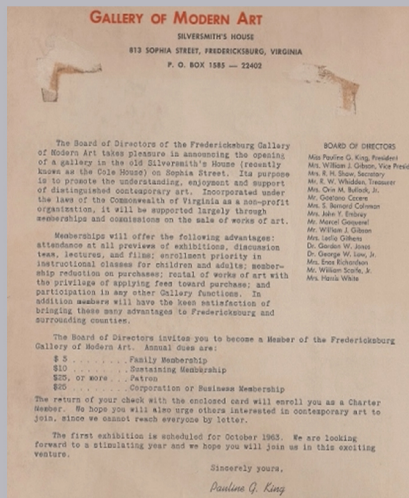


## The Gallery

Miss Pauline King, professor of art at Mary Washington College, was president of the new organization.



Miss Pauline King and Mr. G. Cerere



## The Gallery

After much work, the Gallery had it first show in October 1963.



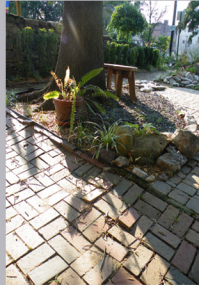
## The Gallery

The organization eventually became the Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts and bought the building in 1972.



## The Gallery

The Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Art organization (FCCA) is an active nonprofit visual arts organization. It has been engaged in some extensive renovations over the years. One of which is the installation of a patio and extensive garden and grounds improvements.



## The Gallery

Other renovations have included a new roof, new lighting, new custom-built shutters, reconstruction of the side walls of six dormers, installation of a system of art storage racks to protect artwork awaiting hanging, installation of a new high-efficiency HVAC, renovation of the Members' Gallery and new signs.



## The Gallery

The FCCA reconstructed the front steps and repointed the mortar in the unique stone archway under the front porch.



Setting Time-Capsule



## The Gallery

In 2011, repairs were made to the chimney. The preservation of the building is a ongoing process.



## The Gallery

FCCA's juried art exhibits are well subscribed and usually include artwork from nationally recognized artists, as well as from regional artists located in Virginia, Maryland, and DC.





The FCCA, Frederick Gallery, is the oldest Gallery in Fredericksburg and a Partner of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. FCCA's members have contributed most of the time and funding needed to ensure this historic structure will still be in existence in the future for the enjoyment of the next generation of art and history lovers.



FCCA is always looking for people  
who want to join this worthwhile effort.  
Please join us.

Visit us on the web at:  
[www.fccava.org](http://www.fccava.org)

*The Place by the River*  
*Where*  
*Art and History Meet*