



PAMPLIN HISTORICAL PARK & THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

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Makin' Somethin' Outta Nothin'

Pamplin Historical Park offers craft workshops inspired by African American crafts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PETERSBURG, VA – Pamplin Historical Park & The National Museum of the Civil War soldier is excited to provide an opportunity for interested visitors to participate in a workshop on 19th-century crafts on November 17, 2007. During the workshop, historian Wisteria Perry will teach the art of making baskets from pine-needles as well as household items from gourds – both everyday items available to slaves in the mid-19th century.

The gourd is part of the *cucurbitaceous* family of vegetables that includes pumpkins, squash, cucumbers and zucchini. Human use of gourds is believed to span 10,000 years, and they have even been found in Egyptian pyramids. Introduced by African slaves to Virginia, gourds are not generally eaten as food. Instead, they provide the raw material for storage containers, water dippers, and musical instruments. Wisteria Perry, who recently demonstrated her gourd-craft skills at the Smithsonian Institute's 41st Annual Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., will teach participants how to grow, dry, cut, and decorate gourds to produce beautiful and useful items for the home.

Making household items from common and available materials was important to Virginia's slaves. Even pine-needles could be turned into useful, and often beautiful, tools. Workshop participants will learn the art of making coiled baskets from pine-needles. This form of basket-making is another skill that was brought by African slaves to the New World. While baskets of this type were unfamiliar to their European masters, the baskets made by slaves from local materials had been produced by Native Americans for centuries. Each workshop participant will begin constructing their basket during the workshop and will go home with the skills necessary to complete their project. "Once you have a basic understanding of how the process works," says Wisteria Perry, "it's simply a matter of repeating the steps until you are finished. Of course, depending on how large your container will be, that could be quite a lot of pine-needles later."

Two workshops will be held at the Park's Education Center on November 17, 2007. Sign up for the morning session from 9:00 a.m.–noon or the afternoon session from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The workshop fee is \$20.00 (\$18.00 for Park members) and includes all materials. Reservations are required, and can be made by calling the Park's Marketing Department at (804) 861-2408.

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One of "Virginia's Best Places to Visit" according to the Travel Channel, and recently designated as a National Historic Landmark, Pamplin Historical Park & The National Museum of the Civil War Soldier is a 422-acre Civil War campus located in Dinwiddie County, Virginia offering a combination of high-tech museums and hands-on experiences. The Park has four world-class museums, four antebellum homes and costumed living history every day. The Park is also the site of the Breakthrough Battlefield of April 2, 1865 and America's newest participatory experience, Civil War Adventure Camp. For more information, please call 804-861-2408 or visit www.pamplinpark.org.