

# Silver



From Mine

To Masterpiece

**By Kate Eagen Johnson**

**W**ILLIAMSBURG, VA. — It is absolutely fitting that a new display of Colonial Williamsburg’s permanent silver collection marks the 30th anniversary of the opening of its DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum. The exhibition “Silver from Mine to Masterpiece,” on view through January 7, 2018, features approximately 170 objects ranging in date from a circa 1530 tumbaga — an ingot of melted-down Aztec and Inca treasure recovered from a Spanish shipwreck off Grand Bahama Island — to a tureen by New York silversmith William L. Adams made circa 1835. Roughly two-thirds of the objects are British in origin. The rest are American.



As called out in the label, “Many silver-hilted smallswords were imported into the colonies, but some were also made here. This example marked by Thomas Edwards is the only published sword credited to his workshop; stylistically it is identical to those by other early New England silversmiths.” Smallsword marked by Thomas Edwards (1701–1755), circa 1740, Boston. Silver, steel/iron; length 33 inches.

**Page Above:**

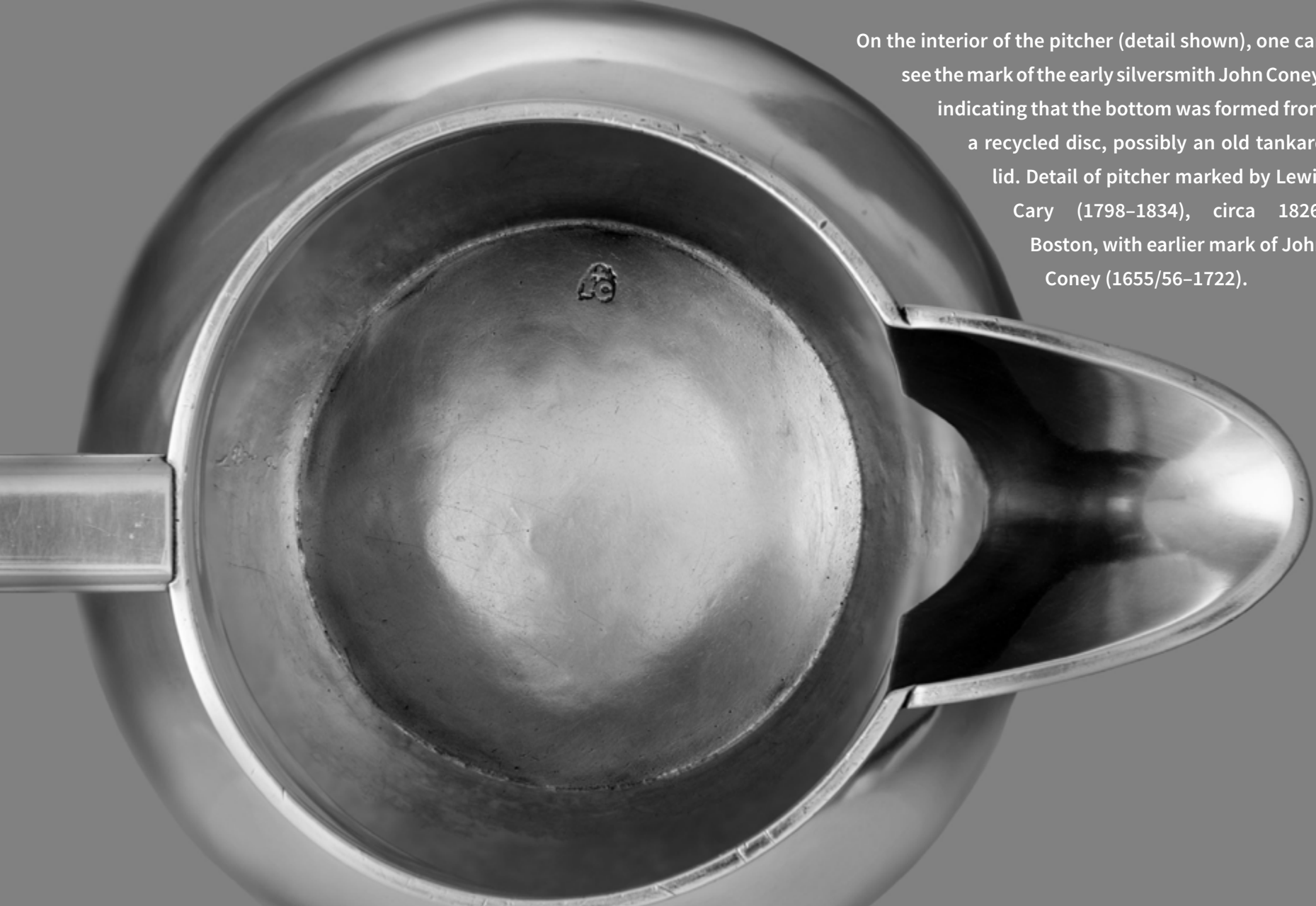
Teapot marked by Daniel Parker (1726–1785), circa 1760, Boston. Silver, wood; 6 1/8 by 8 7/8 by 4 7/8 inches.



The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum's galleries give visitors access to wonderful art and artifacts that are either inappropriate for, or not fully appreciated in, Colonial Williamsburg's historic room settings. A bit of background is in order to better understand the connection between the silver collection and the development of this museum space.

A partnership between the Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller Jr resulted in the establishment of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 1926, the leading place-based museum of American history.

Three varieties of milled banding ornament this Empire-style form. Sugar dish marked by Harvey Lewis (circa 1783–1835), circa 1815, Philadelphia. Silver, 7 1/8 by 8 3/8 by 4 1/4 inches.



On the interior of the pitcher (detail shown), one can see the mark of the early silversmith John Coney, indicating that the bottom was formed from a recycled disc, possibly an old tankard lid. Detail of pitcher marked by Lewis Cary (1798–1834), circa 1826, Boston, with earlier mark of John Coney (1655/56–1722).

For most of CW's first half-century, curatorial decisionmakers acquired English decorative arts of the finest quality to represent the fact that colonial governors and wealthy Southern colonists possessed a penchant for English-made silver and other furnishings. Early curators incorporated often spectacular objects into grand and glorious room settings that illustrated Eighteenth Century ideals of beauty, gentility and taste, if not the actual historical circumstances of colonial Virginia. Nowhere was this more evident than in the elaborate interiors of the Governor's Palace, a reconstructed building designed by Perry, Shaw & Hepburn that opened to the public in 1934. The décor of the Governor's Palace was on a near equal footing with palaces and other aristocratic domiciles in England.

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Hot water urn marked by Samuel Kirk (1792–1872), circa 1824–1827, Baltimore. Silver, wood; 12 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> by 9 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> by 10 inches.



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