



## Uncovering History in Petersburg

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The first in-depth assessment of the historic Battersea site in Petersburg is underway. It's the 1768 estate of Colonel John Banister, first mayor of Petersburg and a prominent figure in Colonial Virginia.

Archeologists are working to learn as much as possible about the house he lived in. The historic home is located just off Washington Street. They hope the home's artifacts tell them more about the family who lived there and the owner, Colonel John Banister.

The Bannister family helped found Virginia, this country and the City of Petersburg.

While the house he lived in has sat empty for the past couple of decades, the city bought it and the 37 acres in the mid 1980's. Donations are what's kept it preserved and its a donation that now has archeologists digging for history.

Sifting through the dirt, archeologists are un-covering parts of Petersburg's early history. The man who built this house, John Bannister helped Washington win the Revolution and had British Troops occupy his land. Recorded history tells Bannister's story.

"He was really the first primary civic leader in the city," says local architect, Terry Ammons.

There were dozens who lived and worked here and archeologists are digging up parts of there lives.

"This bag has a piece of what we call Verstervault stoneware. Its a bowl or jug used during Bannisters time period," says Josh Duncan, Archeologist for Cultural Resources Inc.

While mystery's lie beneath the soil an amazing example of architecture sits on top.

"Battersea is unique not only because its sight is preserved and its remarkably designed house, but it gives a real good insight into the Colonial Petersburg," says John Zeugner, Battersea Inc.

Shate Cummings is helping the team dig for the past. Part of a local groups Leadership program she's got to un-earth history.

"I found the projective point, it looked like was something else new."

Cummings hopes the experience will help her get in college.

"Everything is always something that somebody's seen before, so when you see for the first time, its like hooray. So I got that chance."

Battersea is now under control of a private non profit that works with the city looking for funding. The group hopes one day to open Battersea not only as a tourist attraction but also to help educate those about the city's early history.

The group needs several million dollars to get the house open.

The archeological dig is being donw through a grant from the Cameron Foundation.