

Colonial Williamsburg

Writing Guidelines for Colonial Williamsburg's Journal

Story Proposals

Consideration of the assignment of an article idea begins with the submission of a 100-word proposal—a concise description of the story and the point it will make.

An assignment is considered made when a letter of agreement between the magazine and the writer is executed and reaches the journal.

Articles submitted without assignments are cheerfully welcome, read as there is opportunity, and rarely accepted. Unsolicited manuscripts are considered as offered on speculation; there is no commitment to rewriting advice, editing, payment or publication.

Kinds of Stories Sought

The magazine publishes popular history stories written specifically for the journal's readers, and does not, in general, consider reprinting academic theses, articles written for other periodicals or books, or articles reworked from previous publication, or adaptations of slide-show or video scripts or lectures or oral presentations. The magazine is not academic, and does not seek or publish footnotes. Manuscripts must be engaging, readable, educational, informative, brief—from 2,000 to 2,250 words—and readily lend themselves to illustration. The magazine asks writers to provide suggestions for illustrations, and for further reading.

Preferred are articles that use a set of facts to illustrate a larger theme or idea, especially as that theme or idea relates to topics and circumstances of today. The piece need not be about Colonial Williamsburg *per se* though stories that, for example, employ illustrative examples from Colonial Williamsburg programming are highly useful. The journal is attempting to move away from stories that are, in the end, collections of facts, or amount to biographies, and toward pieces that are deeper and more thoughtful. There are, however, exceptions, especially for such things as discoveries; reinterpretations of documents, maps, or facts; situationers on important and on-going historical or archaeological investigations; fresh interpretive initiatives; and the like.

Stories must conform to conventional and accepted professional journalistic standards, written with the reader uppermost in mind, and must be submitted in electronic form, with 1.5-inch margins on all sides. Preferred are manuscripts composed according to the rules of the Chicago Manual of Style.

Writing Experience

Because the journal staff is small, the magazine hasn't the time to work with beginning writers as closely as they deserve to prepare and perfect their manuscripts for publication. The magazine's aim is to make the publishing experience rewarding and pleasant, and it discourages submissions from writers who have misgivings about rewriting, reorganization, copyediting, or editing. The journal is not a likely place for a writer to make his or her initial appearance in a national publication. Though proposals from anyone with a story idea are welcome, *Colonial Williamsburg* attempts to make the highest and best use of its resources by relying on experienced professional writers—individuals previously published in, for example, such magazines as *Smithsonian*, *American Heritage*, or *National Geographic* or who have written and published popular-history books.

Payment

The journal pays \$2,000 for manuscripts assigned and accepted, plus \$200 for non-exclusive Web rights. Only contributions for which a letter of agreement has been signed and returned are considered assigned. There is a kill fee for manuscripts assigned and rejected. No fees are paid for articles submitted on speculation, unless they are accepted and a letter of agreement has been executed.

Scheduling

Journal stories are scheduled a year or more in advance. For example, in October of 2009, as the journal wrapped up work on the magazine to be mailed in January, it was closing out its schedule for the summer 2011 issue.

Deadlines

Scheduling considerations aside, the journal encourages writers to submit their manuscripts as far in advance of the deadline as possible. Articles submitted after deadline are likely to be held for the next serviceable space in the schedule.