



## **Honoring the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Peter Oliver's Freedom**

*Weeklong Celebration June 13-21, 2025*

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (MAY 28 2025)— Winston Salem will host a weeklong celebration honoring the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peter Oliver's freedom June 13-21, 2025. Peter Oliver, an enslaved man in the late 1700s, lived and worked in Salem as a Moravian Single Brother. Known for his skilled craftsmanship in pottery, firefighting service, entrepreneurial spirit and perseverance, Oliver gained his freedom on June 13, 1800.

On June 13th, 1800, Peter Oliver was able to sign the documents for his freedom in a Lancaster, PA courthouse. Peter Oliver's freedom was not accidental. Guided by Pennsylvania's abolition laws and through a strategy of Oliver and the Moravian Church, Oliver stood before a Lancaster judge who declared him free "to all intents and purposes." Historical records suggest Oliver may have contributed to the financial cost of his emancipation, a testament to his perseverance. After securing his freedom, Oliver returned to Salem, where he lived as a freedman, respected tradesman and church member until his death.

This milestone will be commemorated through a series of events that reflect his enduring legacy and impact on the community. The Creative Corridors Coalition is coordinating with a variety of community organizations that have a connection to Peter Oliver's life and story along with decedents of Peter Oliver. In addition to Creative Corridors, organizations involved in planning the events include the Historic Bethabara, Home Moravian Church, Moravian Archives for the Southern Province, Old Salem Museums & Gardens, Triad Cultural Arts, and numerous historians and educators.

Following is a list of events and programs being held in conjunction with the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Peter Oliver's Freedom:

### **Friday, June 13 – Family Remembrance Walk**

The week begins with a guided Family Remembrance Walk at 3:30 p.m. on Friday, June 13. The tour will start at the Single Brothers' House and take family members and other attendees to points of interest related to Peter Oliver's life including Home Moravian Church, the Fire House, Pottery Site, Oliver's Farm Site, Graveyard, and the Doctor's House. Speakers will

include selected family members and historians with content provided by Sabrina Garity, assistant director of the Moravian Archives for the Southern Province. An informal reception will be held at the Creative Corridors offices at 500 South Church Street (Second Boy's School) in Old Salem immediately following the walk.

#### **Saturday, June 14 – Peter Oliver's Freedom Day at Old Salem**

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Old Salem Museums & Gardens will host a celebration featuring powerful storytelling, hands on demos, and guided tours at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. honoring Peter Oliver, skilled craftsman and the only documented enslaved individual in Salem to purchase his own freedom. In partnership with the Creative Corridors Coalition, this special event will shine a light on Black history and post emancipation life in early Salem. All activities are included with Old Salem general admission.

#### **Monday, June 16 – Songs of Freedom and African American Spirituals**

At 6 p.m. Home Moravian Church will host a special music program featuring organist Jonathan Williams and vocalist Rev. Kenneth A. Pettigrew, pastor of St. Philips Moravian Church in celebration of Oliver's act of freedom. The event is free and open to the public but registration is encouraged: [click here](#)

#### **Tuesday, June 17 – Peter Oliver Life and Legacy Lecture**

Sabrina Garity of the Moravian Archives for the Southern Province, will present a lecture highlighting the life and legacy of Peter Oliver at the Archie K. Davis Center at 457 S. Church Street at 5:30 p.m. [Link to Event Tree to RSVP](#)

#### **Wednesday, June 18 – Peter Oliver Vault Tour**

A special tour of the Peter Oliver Archives will be held at 4:30 p.m. at the Moravian Archives for the Southern Province in the Archie K. Davis Center. [Link to Wednesday Vault Tour Tickets](#)

#### **Thursday, June 19 – Symposium on Peter Oliver & Film Premiere**

From 2 to 4:30 p.m., The Peter Oliver symposium will take place at Reynolds Place Theatre, Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts in downtown Winston Salem. The symposium will be hosted by Creative Corridors and consist of a overview of Peter Oliver, brief summary of Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery project, a panel discussion, and keynote talk by Jon Sensbach, Professor of History, University of Florida who did foundational research on Peter Oliver in the 1990s.

Other historians and panelists participating in the symposium include Martha Hartley from Old Salem Museums & Gardens; Mike Wakeford, MUSE Winston-Salem; Michelle Lawrence, Salem Academy; Geoffrey Hughes, Archaeologist; Earl Ijames, North Carolina Museum of History; and Sabrina Garity, Moravian Archives for the Southern Province. George Jones will offer closing reflections as a decedent of Peter Oliver. The event is free and open to the public but registration is encouraged: [Click here](#)

**Thursday, June 19 –Documentary Film Premiere about Peter Oliver**

At 7 p.m., also at the Reynolds Place Theatre, Milton Rhodes Center, a documentary entitled “The Life and Legacy of Peter Oliver” will premiere. Written and filmed by students in Wake Forest University English 175 class during the Spring 2023 semester, and directed by Brianna Healey with production by Dr. Meredith Farmer, this student-driven documentary weaves together rare archival materials, expert insights, and heartfelt interviews with Oliver’s descendants. It brings to light Oliver’s path to freedom, his deep commitment to family, and his enduring impact on Winston-Salem’s history. The film also explores present-day efforts to commemorate Oliver’s legacy through the creation of The Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery, currently underway on the very land he once farmed. The event is free and open to the public but registration is encouraged: [Click here](#)

**Friday, June 20 – Bethabara Walking Tour & Moravian Archives Vault Tour**

From 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. walk in Peter Oliver’s footsteps at Historic Bethabara Park. See the places he lived, worshipped, and worked and learn how he persisted in advocating for himself in a time when most enslaved people were unable to do so. The tour will include foundations, buildings and a look at some pottery artifacts, as well as a pottery demonstration. The event is free, but registration is encouraged at [this sign up page from Bethabara](#).

Also on Friday, at 5:30 p.m. a second opportunity for a vault tour of the Peter Oliver Archives will be held at the Southern Moravian Archive Archie K. Davis Center. [Link to Friday Vault Tour Tickets](#)

**Saturday, June 21 – Winston Salem Juneteenth Celebration**

From 12:30 to 8 p.m. the Winston Salem Juneteenth Celebration will take place, presented by Triad Cultural Arts, Bailey Park. Peter Oliver will be lifted up as an African American trailblazer for Winston-Salem and Creative Corridors will have a table sharing information and activity highlighting the Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery project. For more information on Winston-Salem’s Juneteenth Celebration visit [Triad Cultural Arts Juneteenth webpage](#).

**About the Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery**

The Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery will be an outdoor ellipse and gallery in downtown Winston Salem, NC. It will be the first public space in the community to tell the inspiring story of an individual’s journey from enslavement to freedom. This powerful story is about Peter Oliver, an enslaved man who lived and worked in the town of Salem in the late 1700s. Oliver was a man of many talents—he lived and worked in the Single Brothers’ House as a Moravian Single Brother, participated as a firefighter in Salem, and was a skilled tradesman trained in Moravian pottery. Through perseverance and his entrepreneurial skills, he signed his name to become a freedman on June 13, 1800. The Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery will be located on the very land that Oliver farmed and lived as a freedman with his wife and children, illuminating the rich and varied legacy that he and his descendants helped forge in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. The Peter Oliver Pavilion Gallery was designed by internationally acclaimed landscape architect,

Walter Hood. For more information on the Peter Oliver Pavillion Gallery visit [creativecorridorscoalition.org/popg](http://creativecorridorscoalition.org/popg)

### **About the Creative Corridors Coalition**

Creative Corridors Coalition is a nonprofit organization founded in response to the N.C. Department of Transportation's 2007 plans to rebuild a section of highway through downtown Winston-Salem. Established to provide a voice and a process for residents of Winston Salem and Forsyth County to influence the design and implementation of roadway infrastructure projects in and around the downtown area. By engaging world-renowned bridge designers, landscape architects and public artists, Creative Corridors has led six major projects that blend functionality with cultural and aesthetic value. The Coalition is governed by a Board of Directors and made up of residents and organizations devoted to promoting the city and county and creating a vibrant, inclusive future for Winston-Salem. For more information, visit [creativecorridorscoalition.org](http://creativecorridorscoalition.org).

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