

# Anvil Campground marks 65 years as a family-owned Williamsburg business



Anvil Campground has been in owner Chris Jump's family for three generations and 65 years. (Rodrigo Arriaza / Virginia Gazette)

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Before [Busch Gardens](#), Water Country USA and countless other Williamsburg businesses and attractions first opened their doors, there was Anvil Campground.

In 1953, original owner Ralph Raymon Jump bought a soybean farm, where he lived in a small cinder block house with his wife and son, Jerry. As the story goes, a traveler approached the Jump family in the spring or summer of 1954 asking if he could park his camper overnight on their property.

“Ralph not only said yes, he also plugged an extension cord into a socket in his home and passed the cord out the window to the man, thus providing an electric hook-up for the first of countless campers to come,” said Patricia Jump, wife of second-generation owner Jerry Jump.

Thus, Anvil Campground was born.

The soybean fields were leveled by hand to make way for six original numbered campsites. And 65 years later, the four-acre campground is still running strong as a family-owned business.

“I’ll never forget, they told my grandpa Ralph that he was never going to make any money because we were so far out of town,” current owner Chris Jump said. “Three miles from Williamsburg, and back then that was way out of town, but now everything has grown around us.”



A photo of Anvil Campground from 1978. (Courtesy of Chris Jump)

The campground’s name takes its inspiration from the family’s history in blacksmithing. Chris said his grandfather and great-grandfather, James Riley Jump, contributed to the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg from 1929 to 1935 as blacksmiths, making original wrought iron works including tools, locks, hinges, shutter dogs and gates.

Through the years, the business was passed on from Ralph Jump to his son, Jerry, who ran the campground until his death in 2005.

“(The campground) is in your heart and soul. Jerry was 12 when he moved there, and he was there when the first camper came and stayed, so he grew up in it,” Patricia Jump said. “He would get excited and enthusiastic and put all his energy and gather input from people to make his projects go.”

Today, Anvil is home to around 60 campsites, four rental cabins and a number of modern amenities for campers. Patricia Jump said much has changed at the campground since she first began working there in 1974.

“The first laundromat was the washer and dryer in my house. They put the quarters in the palm of my hand instead of in a slot,” she said. “I remember being really busy and having lots of campers. When we moved over, the idea was to add to it, improve it and make it better, and we did little by little.”

Chris Jump took over the family business in 2005 at 23 years old after his father's death, and bought the campground outright in 2011.

Now 37, he said he's worked along with his brother Raymon, the camp's operations manager, to modernize Anvil by adding wifi, games and activities for families, and marina-style connectors at each campsite where RVs can easily connect to electricity, running water and cable.



RVs parked at Anvil Campground. (Rodrigo Arriaza / Virginia Gazette)

“We’ve brought it up to camping in the present day,” he said. “Now, there’s so much money in the industry and people spend so much money on their RVs, a lot of people have even sold their houses to buy an RV and travel, so they really expect and they want really high-end things.”

New additions for this year include new premium RV campsites with concrete pads, stone fire pits, picnic tables, grills and swings.

Last November, Anvil Campground was selected as one of four campgrounds across the country to be named among the National RV Parks Association's parks of the year, taking home the National Small RV Park of the Year award.

Chris and his mother Patricia credit the campground's success and longevity to the family's attention to customer service and changing with the times.

"What definitely differentiates us is just how we take care of people and make everyone feel like they're family," he said. "I've been here for almost 14 years and it's been in the family for a long time, so we just take the feedback and adapt, because we're just trying to make them happy, so it's just been a gradual thing."

Chris Jump says he hopes to pass the family business onto his two young sons one day, if they're interested.

"In an ideal world, if one of my sons would like it — I want them to do whatever they want to do, but you just never know if they'll be willing and able to do it," he said. "It's a hard transition, but it just worked out for us, and after loads of work, here we are."



Anvil Campground first opened on Mooretown Road in 1954, and marks 65 years in operation in Williamsburg as a family-owned business. (Courtesy of Chris Jump)

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