

Colonial National Historical Park Jamestown

Colonial National Historical Park
Virginia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



“A verie fit place for the erecting of a great cittie”

Jamestown never became the “great cittie” John Smith envisioned in 1608, but this small colonial settlement did enable England to establish a permanent presence in North America and plant a culture that would shape a nation.

Even though it was the center of government and Virginia’s main port of entry, Jamestown had few residences—mostly ordinaries or taverns—by the 1660s, the period depicted here. Its residents were mostly officials and their families, merchants, innkeepers, indentured servants,

and slaves. In the foreground newly arrived servants talk to their master. An inspector examines tobacco at the warehouse as his workers, servants, and slaves roll hogsheads to a newly arrived English merchant ship for the return voyage to England. Planters down the street look over newly arrived African slaves. Idlers watch the activity from a tavern, one of several catering to those in town on business. Farther downriver, workers drive pilings for a new wharf, and the lyme-burner roasts oyster shells to make lime for mortar. Most brick construction of the period

was for dwellings (as in the rowhouse in the background). Other brick structures were inns or government buildings. In the distance farm buildings, orchards, pastures, and crops have replaced the forest that covered Jamestown Island before the colonists moved inland.

The merchant above shows his wares, including the plate shown at right. The tavern maidservant carries the Bellarmine jug at right. The plate, jug, and two-handled pitcher were found in archeological excavations at Jamestown.



ILLUSTRATION: NPS / KEITH ROCCO. PHOTOS AND ARTIFACTS: NPS

The Park Today

In 1893 Preservation Virginia acquired 22.5 acres on Jamestown Island, including the Old Church Tower. In 1930 Colonial National Monument (now a national historical park) was established to include Jamestown, Yorktown, and a parkway to connect sites marking the beginning and end of British colonial experience in America. The National Park Service acquired the rest of the 1,500-acre island in 1934 and jointly administers Jamestown with Preservation Virginia. An entrance fee is charged. Service animals are welcome.

At the Jamestown Visitor Center a 15-minute film and exhibits recount the story of the English settlement at Jamestown. The Voorhees Archaearium features artifacts from the archeological investigations of the 1607 James Fort by Jamestown Rediscovery, a Preservation Virginia research project. There are two museum stores.

Food is available at the Dale House Café. Williamsburg and Yorktown offer food and lodging and have gas stations (there are none along Colonial Parkway). Private campgrounds are nearby.

For Your Safety Please observe posted speed limits. Do not feed wildlife. Keep on the paths and watch your children. Stay away from the river; it is deep even near the shoreline. Do not walk or stand on the fragile ruins.

More Information
Colonial National Historical Park
P.O. Box 210, Yorktown, VA 23690
757-898-2410; www.nps.gov/colo

Preservation Virginia
204 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23220
804-648-1889
www.preservationvirginia.org

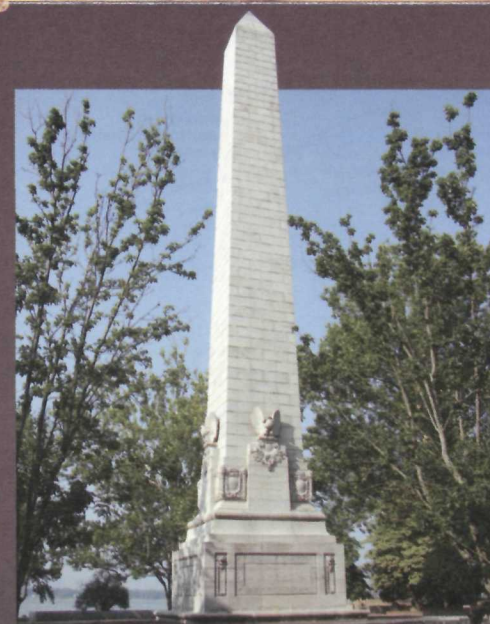


The quiet paths of New Towne come alive in the scene depicted above.

Remembering Jamestown

Beginning with the Grand National Jubilee in 1807 and regularly since then, the founding of Jamestown has been marked with commemorations. The 1857 event featured a speech by former U.S. President John Tyler, fireworks, and a great ball. The 300th anniversary in 1907 included a major exposition in Norfolk, Va., with a dedication ceremony at Jamestown for the newly constructed Memorial Church and Tercentenary Monument (right). The 350th anniversary in 1957 was highlighted by the visit of Queen Elizabeth II at the Jamestown Festival and the completion of Colonial Parkway and visitor facilities on Jamestown Island.

The 400th anniversary in 2007 was commemorated with improvements like the Archaearium; a visitor center and a research center; and events throughout the year to highlight America’s beginnings, including a return visit by Queen Elizabeth II.



The Tercentenary Monument commemorates Jamestown’s 300th anniversary.

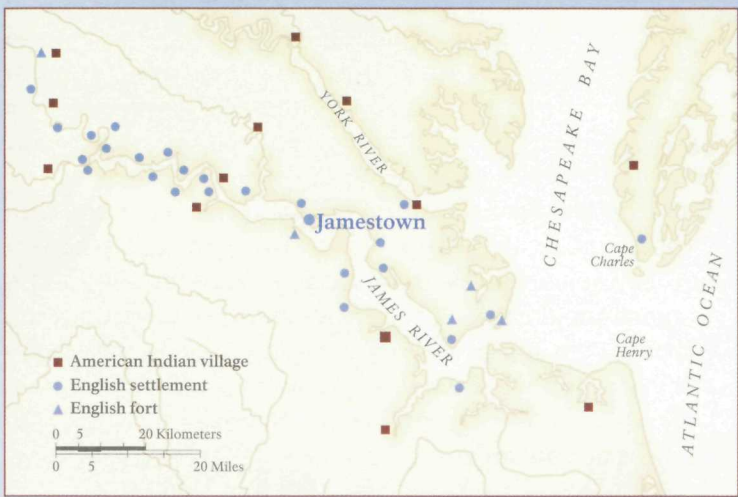
Historic Jamestowne: The Beginning

A leap of historical imagination is needed to see the human face of Jamestown as it existed 400 years ago. The place has become a national icon whose meaning is entangled with the legend of Pocahontas and John Smith. We begin to appreciate the true legacy of Virginia's first capital when we

understand its role in English colonization, the growth of representative government, and questions concerning African Americans, slavery, and American Indian policies. These major themes of American history had their beginnings at Jamestown.

It is hard to overstate just how desperate the early years were at Jamestown. By 1619 disease and malnutrition had taken all but 1,000 of those who had come to Virginia, and those threats ravaged the population for the next five years. While poor leadership, an unhealthy environment, the worst drought in 800 years, and conflict with the Powhatan tribes played a part, the nature of the enterprise weakened the settlement. For its backers, the Virginia Company of London, this was a business venture to exploit Virginia's natural resources.

Life was never easy here, but over the decades there was progress. Although men at first outnumbered women by three to one, in time family life took root. After the im-



English and American Indian communities in Virginia, 1607-1635



Site of the 1607 James Fort

sition of a harsh military government forced the settlers into self-sufficiency, the people found a product that would underpin the colony's economic future—tobacco. Cultivated by John Rolfe (an English settler who married Pocahontas in 1614), the lucrative tobacco plant established the character of Jamestown and the colony for the rest of the 1600s. Most people arriving in Virginia had one thing in mind: buy land (or get 50 free acres for buying their own passage—called a “headright”) and plant tobacco. In the rush for land Jamestown became a place where people stayed until they could move out along the region's tidewater rivers. At first the labor force consisted of indentured servants who had to work out their time before establishing their own farms. Over the decades the

demand for a permanent labor force led to the growing use of enslaved workers from the West Indies and Africa. Given the swings in tobacco prices, boom and bust proved the rule, with economic stability provided by the town's role as a port of entry and host to officials in town for the General Assembly.

Jamestown's growth from precarious commercial outpost to colonial port and administrative center was an early step in the greatest migration in modern history. Over the next 300 years, tens of millions of European, African, and Asian peoples arrived on American shores to begin their lives anew.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE JAMESTOWN SETTLEMENT

1607

Vessels carrying 104 colonists anchor in the James River on May 13. They establish the colony of Virginia, with Jamestown as capital, under a charter granted by James I to the Virginia Company of London. By summer, colonists are dying from disease and starvation. The



Seal of the Virginia Company of London

leadership of Capt. John Smith and help from Powhatan tribes preserve the colony.

1610

Only 60 of nearly 300 colonists survive the “starving time,” the winter of 1609-1610. Lord de la Warr arrives with supplies and new settlers in 1610. Elected burgesses meet in the church at Jamestown in 1619—America's first representative assembly in British North America. In 1619 Africans arrive; 90 unmarried women arrive a year later.



Hoe

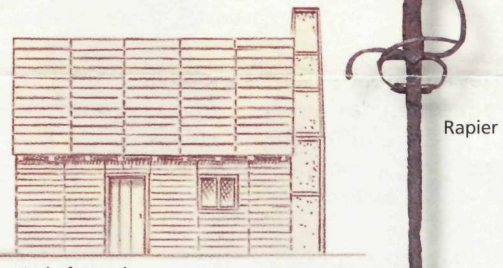


Pipe bowl



Tobacco

In 1622 members of the Powhatan chiefdom attack English settlements along the James River, killing 347 settlers in Virginia, a third of its population. James I revokes the Virginia Company's charter in 1624 and Virginia becomes a royal colony.

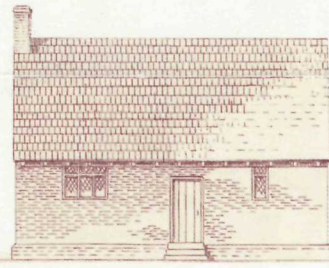


Early frame house

Rapier

1649

After the English Civil War, Charles I is tried by Parliament and beheaded. Under Gov. William Berkeley, the colony remains loyal to the Crown, but submits to parliamentary control in 1652 when commissioners approach Jamestown in warships. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, navigation acts halt the colony's extensive trade



Brick house

with the Dutch and weaken its economy. In 1662 the General Assembly passes a law calling for building with brick to lessen the danger of fire and foster permanent development.

1667

During the Anglo-Dutch Wars, two forts are built at Jamestown. Dutch warships attack Virginia's tobacco fleet. As the flow of indentured servants ebbs, the legal status of Africans and Virginia Indians erodes and slavery is established. By 1690 there are 9,300 enslaved Africans among a white population of 53,000. By the early 1700s Virginia is dependent on slave labor.

1676

Angered by what they see as a weak response to Indian attacks on their farms, backcountry settlers led by Nathaniel Bacon begin their own military campaign. Governor Berkeley raises troops against Bacon; during Berkeley's absence from Jamestown, Bacon burns the town. The rebellion ends with Bacon's death, but the town never recovers.



Rowhouses

The Statehouse burns in 1698. The next year the colony's government moves to Williamsburg.



Wine bottle



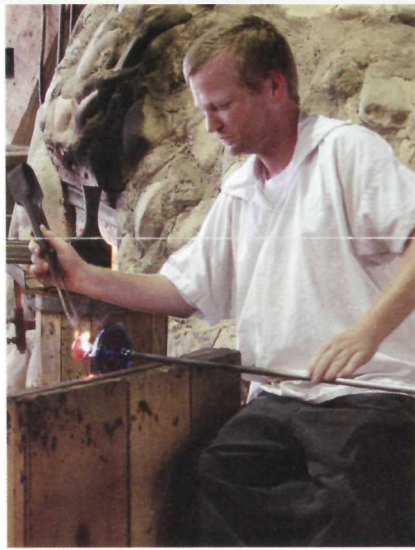
Recreated foundations outline excavated New Towne structures.



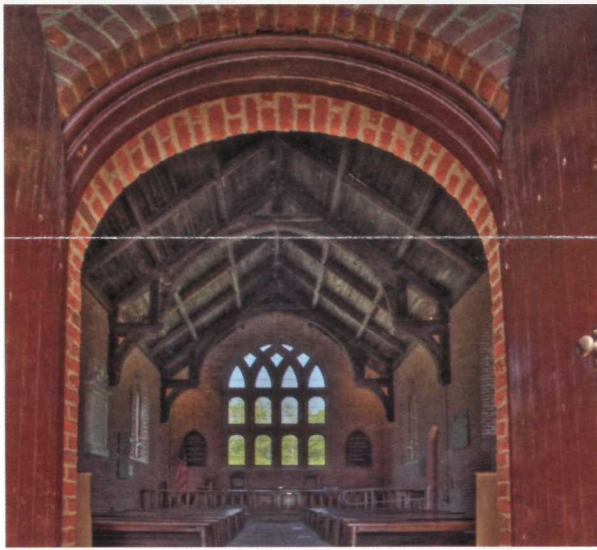
Nathalie P. and Alan M. Voorhees Archaearium



New Towne Viewer recreates historic scenes.



Glasshouse worker shapes molten glass.



Memorial Church, built in 1907

TOURING HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE

The walking tour of the historic town site includes Old Towne and New Towne. In the Old Towne section visit the site of the 1607 James Fort, the remains of the 1600s Church Tower, and the 1907 Memorial Church. Share the moment of

discovery with archeologists at work. Visit the Voorhees Archaearium and see artifacts that tell the story of James Fort. Just past the Tercentenary Monument is New Towne; brick replicas mark the Excavated Foundations of the expanded settlement.

You can also take the three- or five-mile Island Drive (below). Begin at the far end of the parking lot. The drive lets you glimpse the natural environment that settlers encountered. Interpretive wayside exhibits and signs along the way discuss the early history of Jamestown Island.

The nearby Jamestown Settlement, administered by the Commonwealth of Virginia, has a museum, full-size replicas of the three ships that brought the settlers, and reconstructed interpretations of the English fort and a Powhatan village. A separate admission fee is charged.

Just inside the park entrance is the Glasshouse, where artisans demonstrate glassblowing tech-



IMAGES NOT OTHERWISE CREDITED: NPS

