

Cultural Resource Management and Interpretation

A Cooperative Venture

In 1607, the first permanent English settlement in North America was established in Virginia. This settlement represented a cooperative venture between the Virginia Company (investors seeking to increase their wealth by reaping the benefits of the abundant natural resources purported to be located in this new world) and the British government, which hoped to expand its dominion into territory not already claimed by Spain and its other European rivals. John Smith who arrived with the first settlers on May 13, 1607, described Jamestown as "... a verie fit place for the erecting of a great cittie" None of those involved with this venture could have guessed the ramifications of this small settlement on the banks of the James River. It was here that representative government got its foothold on American soil, a bi-cameral legislature was established, Native American policies including the establishment of reservations were formulated, and African Americans were brought in from the West Indies and Africa to eventually serve as the predominant labor force for the South and divide a young nation in two. These are the major stories of Jamestown, and yet there is so much more to be told about this small settlement that struggled to survive for 92 years before losing its place as the capital of Virginia to Williamsburg in 1699. The articles in this issue of CRM focus on aspects of the Jamestown Archeological Assessment (JAA) as integral parts of the cultural resource management program at Colonial National Historical Park or challenge the policies and procedures in retrieving this information. This article will examine the benefits of the JAA to the interpretation of the site.

It is amazing that most Americans believe that Plymouth was the first permanent English settlement in North America, a myth reinforced every year at Thanksgiving. Some visitors to Jamestown ask to see Plymouth Rock and if the three ships docked at the Jamestown Settlement, the Commonwealth of Virginia state park adjacent to the Original Site, are the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. The recent Disney film on Pocahontas resulted in a noted increase in visita-

tion with many children wanting to have their picture taken next to the statue of Pocahontas and asking for the location of the waterfalls and the talking tree. This general sense of confusion has been a challenge to interpreters at Jamestown for most of the 60-plus years that the National Park Service has been interpreting the site.

In the 1930s, the decision was made to neither reconstruct nor try to recreate this 17th-century village. Instead brick formations marked the site of the original foundations and a pastoral setting with only a large obelisk monument, a reconstructed church, and statues of John Smith and Pocahontas dotting the picturesque view of the James River. For the 350th anniversary of Jamestown in 1957, the Service built a visitor center that in 1976 was enlarged to include a large picture window overlooking the New Towne site. Additional archeological testing resulting in a series of booklets on aspects of 17th-century life at Jamestown and brick audio stations placed near the foundations were modest improvements to the interpretive program. The primary stories were told through waysides, special events, guided ranger tours, and first-person living history programs that were developed in the 1970s, and continue to be one of the most popular programs at Jamestown. While the non-intrusive approach has proven to be the best course in light of the recent archeological findings, Jamestown was not necessarily awe-inspiring or fulfilling to the visitor and the park staff. It seemed as though once the story of the settlers landing and the major events of 1619 (representative government and the arrival of African Americans) were told, there was not much left to say. One of the objectives of the JAA was that it serve as a catalyst to reinvigorate the interpretation of Jamestown. The full story from prehistoric times to knowing who lived at each of the house sites and what they did would assist the park in establishing the identity of Jamestown and to relate the vibrancy of this small community and its impact on Virginia and the entire nation.

As in 1607, the JAA was a cooperative venture since the interpreters at Jamestown were given access to the various archeologists, historians,



Field school conducting Phase II survey of New Towne structure that is open to the public. Photo by Tony Belcastro.

anthropologists, and other experts from The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF) and The College of William and Mary through training sessions and briefings on the most recent findings. Newsletters were developed by the partners on their findings and distributed to the academic community and interested professionals free of charge. Arrangements were made with Eastern National, a Park Service cooperating association, to produce and sell them to the public at a modest fee. The park staff created a special file in the library and used bulletin boards in the office for current reports, press releases, etc., so that materials reached the staff immediately. This information was translated into temporary exhibits displaying some of the recent finds, site bulletins, and interpretive tours of New Towne. Working with the staff at NPS Harpers Ferry Center, the Park developed a new brochure of Jamestown that relates these recent findings to the public. Artwork commissioned for the brochure depicts New Towne in the 1660s, its heyday, with architectural renderings of the structures based on the findings of professionals at CWF and artifacts actually recovered from the site.

Since 1994, when the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) initiated their search for the original fort and its discovery in 1996, there has been an increasing effort to relate these new discoveries to the public who are fascinated by discovering or rediscovering the past. The APVA produces popular publications on each year's findings. In the fall, their lecture series on Jamestown and related sites are booked to capacity. This spring the National Geographic Society produced an exhibit on the *Jamestown Rediscovery* project featuring some of the finest artifacts and the skeleton of one of the first settlers to die at Jamestown. In June the exhibit was put on temporary display at the Jamestown visitor center.

In the fall of 1998, the park sponsored two blue-ribbon weekends of special lectures by the archeologists and historians from CWF and William and Mary. Special park ranger guided tours and an evening program on the "Burning of Jamestown" during Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 enabled the park to focus on the evolution of the settlement from a fort to a capital city. After seeing an advertisement on the park's web page, a 12-year-old boy from the State of Washington enticed his father to bring him to Virginia just to see these programs. Eric Deetz, staff archeologist with APVA, presented dig tours of the first fort site. All of the programs were well attended with the public asking for similar programs in the future.

This five-year assessment also sparked the staff to seek funding to revise one of its most popular education programs on Jamestown Archeology. Funded through the Parks as Classrooms program in 1998, the park staff worked with archeologists and staff from APVA and CWF and educators in James City County to develop an education program that not only incorporates the new findings but has resource based activities and can be adjusted for all ages. The final product will include teacher lesson plans that can be used for various age groups, a video on the process of discovery, and a companion poster.

Although the Service has received several draft volumes on various research topics, including *A Comprehensive Archaeological Survey of Jamestown Island; Jamestown Island Land Ownership Patterns, Historical Data: Volume II;* and "A verie fit place to erect a great cittie" *Comparative Contextual Analysis of Archaeological Jamestown*, with the remaining volumes due in the coming months, this does not mark the end of the comprehensive study of Jamestown. Additional studies and archeological surveys are needed to identify or retrieve resources threatened by an eroding shoreline and to explore sites that were identified during the Phase I survey. In 1998, the park received funding for a study on the African Americans at Jamestown and Green Spring. Based on Doug Owsley's findings (see "Lessons from the Past," p. 17) and the significance of Jamestown to African-American history, the need for specific information on the African Americans who worked and lived in Jamestown, those who owned or traded them, and their connection to the outlying plantations was deemed a critical need in both areas of cultural resource management and interpretation. During African American History month in February, the early findings from this study and slavery in general will be presented through special lectures at Jamestown. Future research will focus on illuminating the stories of all of Jamestown's inhabitants, including Native Americans.



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Continued research on both APVA and NPS property is imperative as we move toward 2007 and the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. Major efforts by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the National Park Service, and APVA are underway in a cooperative manner to re-examine the interpretive facilities and programs to ensure that the story is told effectively and accurately. Knowing the location of the original fort and structures is important, but understanding and interpreting the events and the people who secured England's presence in North America are critical to ensuring that Americans treasure this site as their

nation's birthplace. The successful marriage of historical and scientific research developed by J. C. Harrington in the 1930s was fulfilled by the Jamestown Archeological Assessment. To paraphrase John Smith, this small peninsula did become "a verie fit place for the erecting of a great" nation.

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1699 Exhibit—A Symbol of Transition

On April 27, 1699, Virginia's legislature voted to move the capital from Jamestown to Williamsburg. To commemorate this event and the tercentennial of the city of Williamsburg, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation will feature a special exhibit at its DeWitt Wallace Gallery. Titled "1699: When Virginia was the Wild West," it will open on May 1, 1999, and close early in the year 2000.

The exhibit is symbolic not only of the movement of the capital but of a transition in the partnership between the National Park Service and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. After five years of joint efforts in the Jamestown Archeological Assessment, the two institutions have embarked on this new endeavor.

Colonial Williamsburg initiated planning for the exhibit when the Assessment was in its final phase. And, just as The College of William and Mary joined in the Assessment, four other institutions are co-sponsoring the exhibit: the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and Historic St. Mary's City.

Museum staff from Colonial National Historical Park and Colonial Williamsburg selected 103 objects from the Jamestown museum collection for the exhibit. The wide range of objects includes weaponry, tools, architectural remnants, and domestic items that typify the rudiments of daily survival. In contrast, the colonial capital's sophistication is revealed in the decorative arts, as represented by a sample of Jamestown's North Devon sgraffitoware, a Chinese porcelain tea bowl, and ornamental plaster figures.

The research partnership between Colonial National Historical Park and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation made it easier for this exhibit to become a reality. It is probable that cooperative efforts will render additional rewards as Jamestown's 400th anniversary approaches.



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