

HISTORY AROUND THE CORNER

The first permanent settlement of our nation lies just 10 minutes away from Patriots Colony. Two fine museums await for all to join in learning the story of Jamestown as new information is revealed daily.

Residents may take a short drive to the south on Greensprings Plantation Drive to begin the story at the **JAMESTOWN SETTLEMENT**, a living history museum. Its location is just across Jamestown Road (Rt. 31, the Ferry Road) from the end of Greensprings Drive. Cross Rt. 31 and drive a mile farther. At the end of the Colonial Parkway is **HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE** on Jamestown Island where early English settlers established the colony.



The first-time visitor is often confused. The “Settlement” was first conceived and built in 1957 in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the first English settlement in the Old Dominion. At that time, the site of the first fort was believed by almost everyone to have been washed away by the James River. It seemed logical for Virginia to have a physical presence of that momentous time in Virginia history. Named “The Jamestown Festival Park,” it soon became paired with the Yorktown Victory Center. Later named “The Jamestown Settlement,” it

features an excellent museum chronicling the joining of three cultures: Native, African and European. Several films help to make the story lively and clear. Outside the Fort, a Powhatan village and three ships serve as living lessons for every fourth grader in Virginia, as well as for all visitors. Costumed interpreters make it come alive depicting life circa 1614 in Virginia.

Admission is free to all residents of James City County. A lunch room is available. Exiting the parking lot to the right, one comes to the Colonial Parkway which ends in front of the National Park Visitor Center of Historic Jamestowne. The Parkway, along with Historic Jamestowne and the Yorktown National Battlefield, are the three components of the Colonial National Historical Park. The Park Service acquired most of Jamestown Island in 1934. However, within the area of the island is a 22-acre parcel which has been owned since the 1890s by Preservation Virginia (formerly the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities or APVA.)



This is where the footprint and foundations of the original settlement have been uncovered. The river did not wash it away. National Park Passes supplemented by a fee of \$5.00 gain entry to the unique film in the Visitor Center and to the bridge to the past, across the marsh and to the old brick church tower which sits astride one of the perimeters of the first fort. Since 1994, when Dr. William Kelso began the project, visitors have been able to witness the seasonal, meticulous work of the **JAMESTOWN REDISCOVERY** crew as they unearth ever more of the story, frequently excavating artifacts that were last touched by the struggling immigrants from the old world, as well as some left by Native Americans who preceded them.

Special tours are available, and the Archaearium Museum houses a wonderful collection of the best examples of the over two million artifacts found there. In the nearby Yeardley House are the labs and offices of the project where artifacts are processed and research is done. Except for special tours and researchers, it is not open to the public. On the site, there is a café as well featuring simple but wholesome fare. Part of the Civil War fort that had covered the Jamestown fort is still plainly visible between the fort site and the Dale House Café.

To the east, remnants of the expanding town can be seen where they were uncovered in the 1930s and 1950s. They seem insignificant beside the ruin of the once beautiful Ambler house. A pleasant walk past these remnants of the past affords beautiful bird watching with sightings of ospreys, eagles, kestrels and herons along the James River. If a full day is not enough, you may keep your receipt to finish your tour later in the week. There is so much to see. It is only fair to mention that there is a moderate amount of walking required to see the Archaeological site and the Archaearium. The paths are packed dirt. There are benches along the way. Two one-way loop roads, a three mile and a five mile, provide a running route or a driving opportunity to see the rest of the Island. Sharp eyes might pick out wildlife, the remains of several civil war forts, or – with luck – an eagle or osprey nest. An interesting stop on the way to the NPS Visitor Center is the glass house where glass blowers demonstrate their craft daily.

– *Christa Mueller and Rosemary Singhoff* –