For two decades, *Jamestown Rediscovery*’s archaeology has brought to life the stories of early James Fort. As early as 1837, eyewitness accounts claimed that the fort built in 1607 by Captain John Smith and the first English settlers was submerged in the James River. Erosion on the western shore was so bad that a concrete seawall was built in 1900, and that fed the “lost fort” story.

Dr. William Kelso visited Jamestown in 1963 while a graduate student at the College of William and Mary in nearby Williamsburg. He heard about the lost fort and the 20 acres of the island eroded by the river current. But Kelso was skeptical. He had a theory that the standing 17th-century brick church tower was built near the center of the original fort. Kelso and others reviewed artifacts and notes from National Park Service work on the island. Kelso began excavations April 4, 1994, at a place between the church tower and the James River. Within three archaeological seasons, the *Jamestown Rediscovery* team had uncovered enough evidence to prove the remains of James Fort existed on dry land near the church tower.

Now a dozen staff members excavate, interpret, preserve, conserve, and research the site’s findings. The team has mapped thousands of archaeological features such as post holes, ditches, wells, foundations, graves, and pits. More than 2 million unearthed artifacts require the curation and conservation environment provided by the state-of-the-art, on-site Rediscovery Research Center. As our work continues, thousands of new questions are forming. How did these Europeans adapt to the North American environment? What can we learn about the people whose lives at Jamestown were undocumented? How can material culture describe the relations between the English and the Powhatan Indians? What can the archaeological remains tell us about how experiments in industry, trade, and agriculture came to include the first English experiment in representative democracy in North America in 1619?

*Jamestown Rediscovery* is an independent non-profit effort, with no ongoing budget support from state or federal tax dollars. Join us as we piece together the lives of Jamestown’s first colonists using the fragments they left behind at the first permanent English colony in North America.
Dr. James Horn serves as President and Chief Officer of the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation at Historic Jamestowne (Preservation Virginia). He is responsible for ongoing archaeological investigations, research, collections development, educational programs, fundraising, and site operations. Formerly, he served as Vice President of Research and Historical Interpretation at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Saunders Director of the International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello, and taught for 20 years at the University of Brighton, England.


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Dr. William Kelso is the Director of Archaeology for Jamestown Rediscovery at Historic Jamestowne. He holds a Masters Degree in Early American History from the College of William and Mary, a Ph.D. from Emory University, honorary doctorates in Philosophy, Archaeology and Science, and is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. In March 2012 Queen Elizabeth II named him “Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, CBE.”

Dr. Kelso pursued early American historical archaeology while serving as director of archaeology at Carter's Grove, Kingsmill, and, for 14 years, at Thomas Jefferson's homes Monticello and Poplar Forest. In 1994 he began archaeological excavations at Jamestown for Preservation Virginia in search for the remains of the 1607 James Fort, thought lost to James River erosion. Kelso and his talented team of archaeologists, curators, and conservators soon discovered the lost fort. Today they continue to explore its mysteries.

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Preservation Virginia is a private non-profit organization and statewide historic preservation leader founded in 1889, dedicated to perpetuating and revitalizing Virginia’s cultural, architectural, and historic heritage. It jointly administers Historic Jamestowne with the National Park Service to preserve the original site of the first permanent English settlement in North America. Guests to Historic Jamestowne share the moment of discovery with archaeologists and witness archaeology in action at the 1607 James Fort excavation April-October and can take a walking tour with a park ranger through the New Towne area along the scenic James River.

Preservation Virginia, originally known as The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), acquired its 22 ½ acres on the western end of Jamestown Island in 1893.

Jamestown Rediscovery began archaeological excavations on the Preservation Virginia land on April 4, 1994, at a place between the 17th century brick church tower and the James River. Within three archaeological seasons, project leader Dr. William Kelso and the Jamestown Rediscovery team had uncovered enough evidence to prove the remains of James Fort existed on dry land.

Today a dozen staff members excavate, interpret, preserve, conserve, and research the site's findings. The team has mapped thousands of archaeological features such as post holes, ditches, wells, foundations, graves, and pits. More than 2 million unearthed artifacts require the curation and conservation environment provided by the state-of-the-art, on-site Rediscovery Research Center.

Three times in recent years the findings of Jamestown Rediscovery have made Archaeology Magazine’s annual list of the 10 most important finds in the world. In 2010 Archaeology Magazine recognized the rediscovery of the footprint of the fort’s 1608 church, the first significant English church structure in North America. In 2013 the magazine acknowledged the team’s discovery of the bones of “Jane,” which are the first forensic proof of survival cannibalism in any European colony in North America. In 2015 Jamestown was selected for the identification of four prominent leaders buried in the chancel of the 1608 church and the discovery of a mysterious reliquary in one of the graves.

Jamestown Rediscovery is part of an independent non-profit and receives no federal or state tax money for its operation. The rest of Jamestown Island has been owned by the National Park Service since the 1930s. The “Jamestown Settlement” living history museum is on the mainland and is operated by the Commonwealth of Virginia.
Jamestown History Highlights

1587  John White and 117 men, women, and children are sent by Sir Walter Raleigh to plant the Cittie of Raleigh on the Chesapeake Bay but are put ashore at Roanoke Island in what is now North Carolina. This becomes the famous “Lost Colony.”

1606  King James I issues a charter to the Virginia Company of London for land on the mid-Atlantic coast.

1607  May 14 104 male settlers arrive at the site they name “James Cittie” and establish the first permanent English settlement in North America. They have crossed the Atlantic in six months on the Godspeed, the Discovery and the Susan Constant, commanded by Captain Christopher Newport. The opening of sealed instructions from the Virginia Company reveals 13 people will form a ruling council, including Capt. John Smith who had been imprisoned for mutiny during the voyage.

      May 26 200 Indians attack Jamestown, killing two. The settlers respond by building a three-sided wooden fort.

      Aug. 22 Bartholomew Gosnold, the main organizer and leader in this colonization of Virginia, dies and is buried just outside the James Fort palisade.

      Dec. 29 After being captured, Smith is brought before Chief Powhatan, the powerful leader of thousands of Indians in eastern Virginia. Smith later claims the chief’s daughter Pocahontas saved his life, though his account is disputed by modern historians.

1608  June 2 Smith leads a five-week exploration of the Chesapeake Bay and the Indians who live on its shores. Smith will be wounded by a stingray near the mouth of the Rappahannock River. He barely survives.

      Sept. 10 Smith is elected President of the colony; he will soon order: “he that will not work shall not eat.”

      October Newport brings the “Second Supply” with 70 new immigrants, including the first two women at Jamestown, Mrs. Thomas Forrest and her maid, Anne Burras.

1609  July The "Third Supply" of nine ships and 500 immigrants leaves England, but a hurricane scatters the fleet and wrecks the flag ship Sea Venture with Thomas Gates, George Somers and John Rolfe on a reef in Bermuda. All 150 on board are saved and begin rebuilding two boats from the wreckage.

      October After Capt. George Percy replaces Smith as leader, Smith is badly wounded in a suspicious gunpowder explosion and forced to return to England. He will never set foot in Virginia again.

1610  Winter Chief Powhatan has warriors lay siege to James Fort, trapping about 300 settlers. In this “starving time,” settlers eat horses, snakes, rats, cats, dogs, and shoe leather to avoid starvation that kills all but 60 of the fort residents by springtime. One of the settlers trapped is a 14-year-old girl who arrived on a supply ships that went through the hurricane. After she dies, she is cut to be cannibalized.

      May 23 Lt. Governor Thomas Gates and other survivors of the Sea Venture arrive at Jamestown in two ships built in their 10 months on Bermuda. Gates decides to abandon Jamestown, but his convoy coming down the James River meets the resupply led by Governor Thomas West, Lord De La Warr, who demands a return to Jamestown.

1611  Rolfe experiments with growing tobacco seeds from the Caribbean, Nicotiana tabacum; native Virginia tobacco was Nicotiana rustica. His experiments will provide Virginia with its money-making business.

1613  April Pocahontas is captured from a Patawomeck Indian village by Capt. Samuel Argall and brought to Jamestown. During her captivity she studies English and the Christian religion.
1614  April 5  John Rolfe and Pocahontas marry at Jamestown.

1616  May  Rolfe, Pocahontas, their son, and a group of Indians depart for England. They will spend nine months there promoting the Virginia colony, but as they begin their return Pocahontas dies and is buried in Gravesend, England. Her son is raised by relatives in England.

1619  George Yeardley brings “The Charter of Grants and Liberties” to form a new government in which white men of property get to pick representatives to make laws for themselves. The July meeting of the “House of Burgesses” is the first representative assembly in English North America.

August  The first Africans arrive in Jamestown, traded off a ship that raided them from a Portuguese slave ship.

1622  March 22  A surprise Powhatan Indian attack planned by Powhatan’s brother, Opechancanough, kills 347 colonists, setting off a war that lasts a decade.

1624  June  The Virginia Company loses its charter and Virginia becomes a royal province due to mismanagement of the colony. King James dies, but his son and successor, Charles I, allows Virginians to keep their General Assembly to make local laws for themselves.

1644  Indian uprising kills 500 Europeans in outlying plantations.

1652-1660  During the English Commonwealth, the Virginia General Assembly pledges loyalty to King but is forced to accept the Cromwellian government.

1660  Royal Colony re-established.

1676  Bacon’s Rebellion threatens royal government and burns Jamestown.

1677  Peace signed with the Powhatan Confederation.

1693  The Rev. James Blair establishes the College of William and Mary at nearby Middle Plantation (which will soon be named “Williamsburg”). It is now the second-oldest college operating in the United States.

1698  Jamestown’s statehouse destroyed by fire.

1699  Capital of Virginia moved from Jamestown to Williamsburg.
Activities at *Jamestown Rediscovery*

When you visit Jamestown Island, you walk in the footsteps of Captain John Smith, Pocahontas, and the men and women who settled England’s first permanent colony in North America. Here is the birthplace of our democracy.

**See the Moment of Discovery** – Twenty years of archaeology at the original site of James Fort continue! You can see the research as it happens and perhaps witness a moment of dramatic discovery as an artifact is unearthed.

**Tour with an Archaeologist** – Explore the site of the 1607 James Fort with an archaeologist that has helped uncover the remains of this first settlement. Weekdays from April – October, archaeologists excavate at the 1607 James Fort site and offer an 11 am daily tour.

**Explore the Archaearium** – In this award-winning museum, visitors learn about unique objects from James Fort and the stories they tell about life for the English and Powhatan people who met and formed a new culture in Virginia. We have found more than 2 million artifacts, and here you can see more than 1,000 of the most spectacular objects.

**Pick at the Ed Shed** – This new site for interactive learning and play will make young people a part of the project. Participate in picking through the soil that the archaeologists are exploring; you may find something for our collection! Open in the spring, summer, and fall (schedule varies).

**Meet a Settler** – Encounter Anas Todkill, one of the first settlers; or Rachel Stanton and her chicken; or Captain Bruster, who will muster you into your militia duties to help protect the fort. Living history programs and tours are offered on special weekends in the spring, summer, and fall.

**Have an Adventure** – Participate in Jamestown Adventures, a popular scavenger hunt game for young people. Find the clues, solve the puzzles, and receive a special prize.

**Earn A Junior Ranger Badge** – Explore the island and learn about the history of Jamestown through this scavenger hunt. Complete the hunt and earn a Junior Ranger Patch and certificate. (Purchase the booklet for a nominal fee in the museum store inside the Visitor Center.)

**Picnic By the James River** – Enjoy lunch or a snack on the banks of the James River at the Dale House Café. Dine on sandwiches, wraps, ham biscuits, soups, BBQ, or Carrot Tree Kitchens’ famous carrot cake. Children’s menu available.

**Watch the Wildlife** – Walk the trails and observe bald eagles, turtles, and many varieties of indigenous wildlife that thrive on the island.

**Take the Island Drive** – Walk, run, bike, or drive the loop road around Jamestown Island. This three and five mile one-way road through the forest and around the swamps of Jamestown is awe-inspiring in its wilderness view and majestic wildlife. Stop at Black Point and take a short walk to the sandy beach. Stop at the numerous waysides and see the "Gallery in the Woods," a series of interpretive paintings illustrating the earliest industries attempted by the settlers.

**See Glassblowers In Action** – See glassblowers produce wine bottles, pitchers, candleholders and various other glass objects at the Glasshouse of 1608. Witness one of England’s first industries in North America. Glassblowers use tools and methods similar to those of the 17th century.

The admission to Historic Jamestowne is $14 per adult includes both Historic Jamestowne and Yorktown Battlefield. Children under age 16 are admitted free. National Parks passes and Preservation Virginia memberships are accepted, but a $5 fee may apply for entrance to Historic Jamestowne. For further information, call (757) 229-4997.
ALMOST ALL THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND HISTORIANS TOLD ME IT Couldn’t be done: find the site of the 1607 James Fort on Jamestown Island. No way. Clearly, they said, the fort site—the place of England’s first permanent New World settlement—was long lost, washed away by James River shoreline erosion. The lost theory made perfect sense. After all, the first settlers chose the island to seat the Virginia Company of London colony because the river channel was close enough to the shore to moor their ships to the trees. Since the area near the channel had long eroded away, the conclusion that the fort site went with it was hardly illogical.

Of course, I did not know that when, as a tourist in 1963, I first went to Jamestown Island Historical Park looking for the fort. My goal was to walk where Captain John Smith walked and gain some sort of context for the near-mythological but gruesome Jamestown story I had read—the one where most everyone but Smith was incompetent and chose to die rather than work. That was when a National Park Service ranger told me the “long lost erosion” story. But I also learned that there was a colonial soil layer buried under a fort I did find, the 1861 Confederate earthwork appropriately named Fort Pocahontas. The thought occurred to me at that moment: maybe someday some archaeologist might take a look under there.

That someday came to me thirty years later, after becoming an archaeologist and after a decade of discussions with the landowner, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. As the 400th anniversary of Jamestown appeared on the horizon, the APVA, now called Preservation Virginia, was ready to consider a plan to find the 1607 James Fort. Two thousand and seven would be a birthday party year for the nation. We all agreed that discovering the lost fort would be the very best birthday present imaginable.

But to be honest, when the first shovel went to earth in 1994, I felt as if I was mostly whistling...
in the park. The crowd of knowledgeable skeptics almost undermined any confidence that I had. Nevertheless, I told myself, at the very least it was up to someone to prove that the fort site was NOT to be found.

LIKE ANY ARCHAEOLOGICAL VENTURE, DIGGING had to start where there appeared to be the best chance for success. Where was that? The one remaining above-ground relic of seventeenth-century Jamestown is a brick church tower. Early records made it clear that the original church was “in the midst” of the fort. It followed that if that tower in any way marked the midst of the fort, then digging between it and the river shore might just intersect the remnants of a fort wall. It would take a dedicated group of experienced archaeologists and field school students that first summer season to prove it.

We did.

On the very first day, removal of eight inches of modern soil revealed an earthen pit that proved to be full of arms, armor, parts of muskets, swords, ammunition bandoleers, ceramics, and coins—all military and old enough to be signs of James Fort. Expansion of the first trench revealed traces of decayed upright logs in a linear trench along the riverbank. There was a good chance that this marked one of the decayed fort walls.

Eureka moment number one. There were more to come.

Records also indicated that the corners of the triangular fort extended out beyond the wall lines to form circular cannon positions known as bulwarks. So, once part of one wall of the triangular enclosure appeared, it made sense to follow it in the hopes of coming to a place where the line changed direction, hopefully in a circular shape. Eventually two of the bulwarks’ circles were found—one attached to the river wall.

Eureka moment number two.

The third wall of the triangle remained elu-
sive. Our original guess at the size of the fort, two acres, was an overestimation, leading the excavation astray. It was not until 2003 that a search beneath the Fort Pocahontas earthwork revealed the well-preserved west palisade line.

Eureka moment number three.

Then the north bulwark's junction with the west wall appeared just as predicted. There remained the final litmus test: Were the measurements on the ground going to match the dimensions reported by the secretary of the colony, William Strachey? He said that the east and west curtains, or walls, were one hundred yards long and the river wall 140 yards. Our ground measurements proved to be within a few feet of Strachey's dimensions.

Absolute eureka time.

By 2006, much of the lost fort was found, just in time for the festivities the following year, which included the visits of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine, and close to 500,000 others. It is impossible to describe just how I felt when I realized that the below-ground fort was basically all there for viewing. But clearly, the standing church tower, the original anchor point guiding our trowels, was not in the midst of the fort. Rarely, but sometimes in archaeology, close enough counts.

Just as the walls were appearing, excavation ten feet inside and along the lines began to expose the remnants of buildings: posthole patterns marking where structures supported by in-ground upright timbers once stood. Each of these buildings had clay, pit-like cellars and short life spans. When they fell apart or were pulled down, the open cellars caught the crumbling mud walls. Then refuse was thrown in: arms, armor, coins, and ceramics from circa 1610. Jamestown almost failed that year. With food gone and no perceived hope of resupply, on June 7, 1610, everyone boarded their ships and sailed away from Jamestown.

But not for long. After a thirty-hour trip toward the ocean, they were intercepted by a fleet of supply vessels under the newly appointed governor for life, Lord De La Warre. Evidence that the new governor soon built timber row houses showed up archaeologically along the west wall. These structures appeared to be the first permanent houses in the fort and were erected on cobble footings and brick foundations. Then a timber-lined well was found nearby which served the row houses’ occupants, undoubtedly structures fit for

Colonial Williamsburg, Summer 2011
The chancel burials from 1608 are outlined, center, with colored flags marking the postholes for the church timber supports.

...the governor and his council. At the same time, it was reported that De La Warre “cleansed the town.” The trash and razed mud building debris probably from that operation wound up in cellar pits.

Next excavations could turn closer toward the center of the fort. There, postholes revealed the location of an underground blacksmith shop and bakery and a substantially built central storehouse with an attached well in a cellar. The clay walls of the cellar held a rapidly deposited mass of garbage and trash dumped in after the well water went bad, undoubtedly more of the 1610 De La Warre clean up.

Then in 2010 excavations uncovered remains of Jamestown’s substantially built church, the first Protestant church in America, and the church where Pocahontas, chief Powhatan’s favored daughter, married tobacco planter John Rolfe. Remains of the church included enormous postholes with impressions of upright timber columns exactly twelve feet apart found near, but slightly southeast of, the center of the fort. The holes defined a rectangular pattern suggesting an overall twenty-four-foot building width and a probable sixty-foot length. The Jamestown church, built in the spring of 1608, was described as “a pretty chapel,” with dimensions matching the archaeology.

The discovery of four perfectly aligned graves at the east end of the post pattern left no doubt about the building’s identity. These have to be the church’s chancel burials, traditionally the place reserved for very high status people.

Despite the revelations of the past seventeen years, the archaeology at James Fort is far from over. Besides uncovering the rest of the 1608 church, there are areas within the fort triangle left unexplored. Potential building sites along the interior street and the palisade extension to the east, probably the area of the five-sided Jamestown that John Smith alluded to in 1608, will be investigated in the years to come. The Civil War fort already partially excavated is also on the agenda for 2011–12—a research contribution to the Civil War Sesquicentennial commemoration.

So far, we have found more than 1.5 million artifacts at James Fort. Almost daily, someone asks me to name my favorite. Of course, they are all pieces of a puzzle that breathe life into the otherwise vague and almost mythical documentary Jamestown story. But truth be known, to me there have been certain objects that have proven to evoke more about early life and death...
at seventeenth-century Jamestown than others. Three things immediately come to mind.

While searching for the elusive west fort palisade in 2003, a single grave aligned with the predicted wall line was discovered. Excavation initially uncovered the outlines of a coffin upon which lay a spear-like object: a captain’s leading staff. The burial turned out to be that of a man who died in his middle thirties, presenting the strong possibility that these were the remains of Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, the vice admiral of the first Jamestown fleet, who died in August of 1607 at thirty-six. These facts sparked a closer look at Gosnold’s biography. He was the most experienced Atlantic explorer among the 104 first settlers, and he was instrumental in finding the money and securing the charter for the Jamestown venture through family connections. Few historians had recognized the importance of Gosnold before the discovery of these remains. Captain John Smith’s passing admission that Gosnold was the mastermind behind the Jamestown venture instantly took on new meaning.

The 1610 De La Warre artifact-rich trash also wound up in the cellar well. One object in particular proved to be a gift from the past that keeps on giving: a five-by-eight-inch discarded slate tablet covered with faint inscriptions: words, symbols, numbers, and drawings of people, plants, and animals. There are layers upon layers of inscriptions, ranging in quality from mostly fragmented to mostly complete.

On one side a line of capital letters, I” EL NEV FSH’T’HT LBMS, and likely a date, 1598, appear written above a strangely self-deprecating English sentence: “T AM NON OF THE FINEST SORTE.” On the opposite side, written in Elizabethan secretary-hand style, is clearly the name Abraham, and possibly a list of the equipment used or ordered by Abraham Ransacke, a metals refiner at Jamestown in 1608.

Artwork superimposed on the slate includes sketches of three men, a woman, four flowers, two fleurs-de-lis, and four lions on one side, and two men, three birds, and a tree on the reverse. Three of the men are drawn dressed as soldiers, and one appears to be wielding a sword, apparently threatening the woman he holds by the shoulder with his left hand. It is apparent that another and more accomplished artist drew a civilian man wearing a ruff collar, a decorative doublet vest, and “venetians” trousers—all dress usually reserved for the elite.

On one side, the drawings also include four rearing lions, three flowers, and three fleurs-de-lis. The lion is in the “rampant” position, a common symbol on crests and shields. On the opposite side, three fairly detailed pictures of birds of prey appear: what may be a short-legged green heron and an eagle, a sea gull, or even possibly a cahow, a native only to Bermuda, and a palmetto tree.

So, what do these inscriptions tell us so far about life at Jamestown? Are the block letters some schoolboy practicing? Only eleven letters from the twenty-four-letter Elizabethan alphabet are included, so the letters likely do contain a message. Perhaps they are only initials of people. To what end? A Welsh tradition might be a clue. In Wales, it was a custom to put a curse on someone, or the opposite—wishing them good luck—by putting their names or initials on a slate and tossing it into an open well. Sounds plausible if you ignore the fact that the Jamestown slate was found in thick rubbish that was purposely dumped into the already abandoned and partially filled-in cellar above the well.

And who used this slate? It is tempting to suggest the author-artist is William Strachey himself. It was he who wrote about his harrowing hurricane shipwreck on Bermuda, thought to be the source for the story line in Shakespeare’s Tempest. Strachey may have arrived at James-

Colonial Williamsburg, Summer 2011
town with his pocket slate—his "rough draft" notebook—which he had used since 1598 and lost during the aforementioned De La Warre clean-up. Strachey's family coat of arms does include a rampant lion and fleurs-de-lis. Moreover, when he was marooned on Bermuda, he could have sketched the unfamiliar-to-him cahow and the palmetto. In addition, Strachey's hope for inheritance died in 1598 with his indebted father, keeping him practically penniless among his well-off fellow law students at Gray's Inn. His desperate financial straits at that time could explain the date on the slate and the sentence about lacking "finest sorte" status.

The cellar well also held an intriguing group of clay tobacco pipe stems upon which the maker, probably one Robert Cotton, had impressed the names of a number of the major movers and shakers in the Virginia venture: Sir Charles Howard, Lord High Admiral of the English Fleet and Queen Elizabeth's closest courtier; Sir Walter Ralegh, New World explorer and Elizabethan courtier; the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesly, Shakespeare's major patron and top Virginia Company official; Lord De La Warre, Sir Thomas West, major Virginia Company investor and Virginia's first resident governor; Captain Samuel Argall, maritime explorer and lieutenant governor of Virginia; Captain Francis Nelson, admiral of the second Virginia supply fleet; Sir Walter Cope, Virginia Company councilor and London antiquarian; and

Robert Cecil, Lord Salisbury, King James's secretary of state, prime mover behind the 1604 peace Treaty of London between England and Spain, and leader of the Virginia Company of investors in 1609.

It is tempting to suggest that Cotton made these pipes as a way to prove to investors that the Jamestown colonists were hard at work trying to produce things that would sell in England. Of course, making money on tobacco pipes turned out to be a pipe dream. But Cotton was heading in the right direction. In the end, growing and exporting tobacco would ensure that Virginia would live on.

Whatever the meaning of the inscribed slate and the named pipes, there can be no doubt that these artifacts are as exciting as finding the proverbial trunk of lost letters in the attic. But these things only have meaning because they were found sealed in the abandoned cellar well at the epicenter of the lost—then found—Jamestown. In fact, that rather crude and fragile English fort site is really my most treasured favorite artifact. From that place eventually grew the British Empire, spreading lasting traditions of democracy, rule of law, private enterprise, and the global English language. Life on a good part of the earth has never been the same.

William M. Kelso is director of archaeological research and interpretation at Historic Jamestowne. This is his first contribution to the journal.