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"Every American Should Stand Here Once": Jamestown's 400th Anniversary Commemoration and the Creation of an American Origin Narrative

Elizabeth Howard
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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**“Every American Should Stand Here Once”: Jamestown’s 400th Anniversary
Commemoration and the Creation of an American Origin Narrative**

Elizabeth Howard

McLean, Virginia

B.A., Yale University, 2008

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts


Department of American Studies

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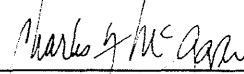
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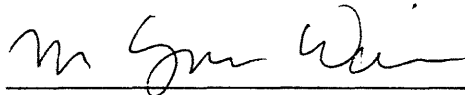
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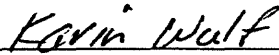


Committee Chair

Associate Professor Charles McGovern, History and American Studies
College of William and Mary



Associate Professor M. Lynn Weiss, English and American Studies
College of William and Mary



Associate Professor Karin Wulf, History and American Studies
College of William and Mary

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the way that narratives of American origin are created, sustained, and altered, utilizing the 400th anniversary of the English settlement of Jamestown, Virginia as a lens. Jamestown is a location with centuries of recorded history and ever-shifting significance in the American imagination. The 2007 commemoration was billed to potential visitors not only as Jamestown's 400th anniversary, but also as America's 400th birthday. The complex history of the site, including conflict between English colonists and native people and the beginnings of English use of African slave labor, was packaged and marketed to appeal to as many potential visitors as possible. This thesis utilizes the methodology and framework of cultural history to look at alterations to museum exhibits and other physical sites, as well as external factors like the Virginia legislature issuing a formal apology for its participation in slavery and Virginia's native tribes applying for official federal recognition, to analyze the origin narrative supported by Jamestown's 400th anniversary. The 2007 commemoration had to contend not only with 1607, but also with the variety of ways that 1607 has been understood, historicized and memorialized in the intervening years. The evolution of Jamestown and the way that its history and public memory have changed over time result in a framing not only of America's past, but of its present and future as well, creating a unique American origin narrative. An understanding of the factors at play in that process of narrative creation can be utilized to study other significant sites and to highlight a fundamental piece in the puzzle of American identity.

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“After each hallowed spot has been seen, the tourist will appreciate the real spirit that has made possible the commemoration of the three hundredth anniversary of the first settlement in America of English speaking people. From the sturdy little band of pilgrims who landed at Jamestown three hundred years ago have come the spirit and the courage, the zeal and the energy which have conquered the powers of Europe, chained the lightning’s flash and harnessed the mighty torrents of Niagara. Here began our history; from out of this deserted island, a mighty nation came into existence and, in the ivy-clad churchyards of Virginia, quietly sleep the statesmen, warriors and presidents, who with others, were directly responsible for American Independence. In the midst of these historic associations, every citizen should be proud to uncover, and reverently say, ‘Thank God, I am an American.’” – William H. Lee, 1907¹

“The Jamestown 400th anniversary commemoration will look not only to the past but to the future. The four centuries since Jamestown’s founding have witnessed the most remarkable advance in human freedom the world has ever seen. Yet this work is self-evidently unfinished. Today’s generation and those to come must build on this foundation and strive to make the promise of freedom – the birthright of every human being – real for all Americans and all peoples around the world.” – Federal Jamestown 400th Commemoration Commission, 2004²

Jamestown, Virginia is a location with centuries of recorded history and ever-shifting significance in the American imagination. In 2007, the historic tourist sites at Jamestown, Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement, along with their respective governing bodies, observed the 400th anniversary of the original English arrival at the site. The commemoration was billed to potential visitors not only as Jamestown’s 400th anniversary, but also as “America’s 400th birthday.” Organizers packaged the complex history of the site, including conflict between English colonists

¹ William H. Lee, *Laird & Lee’s Guide to Historic Virginia and the Jamestown Centennial; The Historic Sights of the Old Dominion Graphically and Realistically Portrayed with Authentic Descriptions of the Important Events and Associations that Have Made Famous Jamestown, Williamsburg, Yorktown, Smithfield, Norfolk, Hampton, Newport News, Old Point Comfort, Fortress Monroe, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Cape Henry, Petersburg, Richmond and the Noted Battlefields of the Civil War. Full Statistics and Itinerary. Also Concise Directions for Visiting These Many Famous Places with the Greatest Possible Saving of Time and Expense; Beautifully Illustrated by Numerous Halftones, Maps and Diagrams* (Chicago: Laird & Lee Publishers, 1907), 9-10.

² “Jamestown 400; Planners Describe 2007 Goals,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 17, 2005 (city edition), E-6.

and native people, and the beginnings of English use of African slave labor, and they marketed it to appeal to visitors from Virginia, the United States and overseas.

The original settlement at Jamestown languished for decades following the abandonment of the city for Williamsburg. However, an active reclamation of Jamestown and its history began in the years leading up to the 300th anniversary in 1907, which was observed with the Tercentennial Exposition. Today, tourists experience representations of the history of Jamestown through Historic Jamestowne, the original settlement site, and Jamestown Settlement, a living history museum. Many of the features that can be seen at both sites premiered only within the two or three years preceding the 2007 anniversary, making the experience of Jamestown comparatively new for those who visited the location. However, alongside these new features are monuments and memorials that commemorate both the 300th and 350th anniversaries, as well as people, groups and concepts tied to Jamestown that were honored in the ensuing years. The exhibits, events and publications that were part of the 400th anniversary festivities at Jamestown, as well as the pre-existing presentations of its history, use the ongoing project of memorialization to consciously reframe collective memory regarding Jamestown and its role in the birth of the United States of America.

As the author of a 1957 article reflecting on Jamestown's historical and mythological legacy in American literature observed, "Until after the American Revolution the founding of the Jamestown colony in 1607 seemed an event of no great historical importance except perhaps to Virginians; and in Colonial times even

Virginians rarely remembered the beginnings of the ‘Ancient Dominion.’”³ As soon as the United States of America became an independent nation, however, there was a need among those who were no longer British subjects to define the origins of that new nation. Thus, the project of memorialization in Jamestown, Virginia has been ongoing for at least two hundred years. Jamestown, the site of the first permanent English settlement in America, became a birthplace of sorts for the United States, though that title was hardly undisputed. The English settlement on Roanoke Island, which preceded Jamestown in 1584, had essentially been declared a failure when its colonists disappeared without a trace. The Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth in 1620 and the Puritans who followed to populate the Massachusetts Bay Colony were frequently lauded as the first Americans, particularly via the recognition that came when President Lincoln established the national Thanksgiving holiday in 1862.⁴ The more recent waves of immigration to the United States through Ellis and Angel Islands enable Americans to consider those locales as origin sites. The year of 1907 saw the Exposition at Hampton Roads, and it also comprised the busiest year for Ellis Island, when “as many as five thousand migrants came through each day, primarily from Europe.”⁵ The potential for genealogical work through locating the records of ancestors processed at Ellis Island presents a very different idea of American origin

³ Jay B. Hubbell, “The Smith-Pocahontas Story in Literature,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (July 1957): 275.

⁴ James Axtell, “Historical Rivalry” in *1607: Jamestown and the New World*, compiled by Dennis Montgomery (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 170; “Thanksgiving,” *A Dictionary of American History*. Purvis, Thomas L. Blackwell Publishing, 1997. Blackwell Reference Online. 30 March 2008.

<http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9781577180999_chunk_g97815771809922_ss1-72>

⁵ Erica Rand, *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1.

than that at a colonial site like Jamestown.⁶ Over time, the history of memorialization at Jamestown has become connected to an attempt to counter the claims of other sites, particularly those of New England, on the earliest years of America.

I grew up in Virginia and first learned about Jamestown in the obligatory elementary school trip through Virginia history in third grade. A cloth-covered, masking-tape-bound book entitled “Colonial Life,” filled with facts I wrote out in pencil, detailed the contrasts between “colonial life” and “modern life,” ending with a timeline of highlights from the departure of the colonists for the New World in 1606 to the establishment of the College of William and Mary in 1693. By the next year, I felt sufficiently conversant in the site’s most popular legend to pick apart the historical inaccuracies I saw in Disney’s *Pocahontas* with a friend as we departed the theater with my mother. However, over the years Jamestown and its history faded into the background as broader national histories dominated in the courses of study dictated by Standards of Learning requirements.

Jamestown piqued my interest again in 2007, when I first heard about Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Virginia during the state’s anniversary events. It struck me as a singularly compelling event – what other postcolonial nation shapes a celebration around its colonial origins, let alone one that includes the reigning monarch of its former colonial power? And what would the other events of the anniversary tell me about Jamestown, Virginia and the United States and what we learn about all three in the twenty-first century? When I visited Jamestown later that summer on a research-

⁶ The Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation, Inc., “Ellis Island Passenger Search (Ellis Island/Port of New York Records),” <http://www.ellisland.org/search/passSearch.asp> (accessed February 22, 2012).

gathering trip, I was fascinated by the history that the two sites' museums presented, particularly in the emphasis on an idea (and ideal) of a cultural triumvirate in which the English, the native people of Virginia, and the Africans brought to the colony as laborers all contributed to the uniquely American flavor of the colony that resulted, and the independent nation that would grow out of it 175 years later. Finally, upon visiting Historic Jamestowne, I was struck by the physical juxtaposition of all the different artifacts of memorialization at the site. The wooden cross erected in 1957 to memorialize Christian colonists, silhouetted against the Archaearium of 2006, suggested both coexistence and conflict, demonstrating the way that the site's organizers have embraced the seeming objectivity of archaeology in the years following the fort rediscovery in 1994, while remaining physically tied to the clearly subjective past of Anglo-Christian memorialization on the island.⁷ Shifts in Jamestown's narrative are not limited to textual analysis and historiography; those changes are laid out side-by-side on the island's landscape.⁸

As I embarked upon this project in the midst of the anniversary events in 2007, I felt acutely aware of my position as a spectator of the results of not only the work that went into that year, but also of the remnants of prior decades of commemoration. I focused on how I saw Jamestown more broadly understood, and how I saw it acting on me. Reflecting on my history with this material doesn't only show how present the subject of Jamestown has been in my experiences with learning American history -- it highlights my position as one of the many points constructing a

⁷ See photograph in Appendix.

⁸ I visited one or both sites at Jamestown, Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement, on August 21, 2007, November 8, 2008, May 16, 2009, August 7, 2009 and February 18, 2011.

Jamestown-based sense of American origin – processing the material of history books, museums and media culture to establish a sense of how I understand Jamestown and the nation springing forth from it and the evolution of history. That consciousness of my own spectatorship and subjectivity impacted how I understood the scope of my work. How might other visitors process the information made available to them in the museum sites? What might news consumers gain from watching the politics of legislative apologies for slavery play out in newspaper articles? What does a living history museum present for us to experience vicariously? I am interested in where those voices clash and come together in the public sphere.

Anniversaries of Jamestown’s settlement in 1607, particularly those in 1907, 1957 and 2007, have clearly served as dominant points in the building of Jamestown both in the abstract and in concrete physical space. Private, public and governmental actors have seized upon the anniversary dates as opportunities for publicity and active change. These anniversaries have been marked by fundraising drives and pleas for public funds to support preservationist causes. They have also witnessed increasingly public arguments for representation by non-English groups with historical presence at the site, groups previously erased from the popular Jamestown narrative. Perhaps most importantly, the anniversary years have sparked a rhetoric of increased public scrutiny and a sense of the nation, if not the world, focusing its eyes and attentions upon Jamestown. As the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation’s anniversary steering committee stated in their 2000 report to Virginia’s governor and general assembly, “Celebration 2007 will fundamentally alter perceptions and significantly increase the

national recognition of Jamestown and its pivotal place in American history. The observance will provide an occasion for the examination and celebration of 400 years of rich Virginia history and afford an opportunity for millions of Americans and international visitors to, literally and figuratively, come home to Virginia.”⁹ A more concise expression of this idea may be the advertising slogan utilized for 2007 events in print, on television, and online – the direct assertion that, regardless of background, “every American should stand here once.”¹⁰

The 400th anniversary commemoration had to contend not only with 1607, but also with the legacies of intervening years of commemoration of that first encounter. As geographer David Lowenthal describes, it is history as an “ever-changing palimpsest. New creations and recognitions more than make up for what is lost through erosion, demolition, and changing tastes. Care for what we inherit requires active embrace of what we add to it. To conserve the past is never enough; good caretaking involves continual creation. Heritage is ever revitalized. Our legacy is not purely original, for it includes our forebears’ alterations and additions along with their first creations.”¹¹ The historical background of Jamestown anniversaries, particularly those observed in the twentieth century, provide an outline of the actors and narrative voices that have sculpted Jamestown’s reputation as a site of American origin. These

⁹ Virginia General Assembly, “Planning an American Celebration,” *Report of the Celebration 2007 Steering Committee of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia* (Richmond, 2000), 1.

¹⁰ *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication* (New York: Boston Hannah International, 2007), 38; “Jamestown 1607-2007: Every American Should Stand Here Once,” <http://jamestown1607.org> (accessed April 15, 2008).

¹¹ David Lowenthal, “The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions,” in *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, eds. Max Page and Randall Mason (New York: Routledge, 2004), 40.

voices unite to declare that Jamestown is relevant for more than merely its settlement date, that the site and its history have a singular claim on America's birthplace status. The process by which this story is created is not unique, but the players, actions and preserved and memorialized spaces are. A study of the Jamestown 2007 anniversary reveals the perpetually turning machinery by which America is continually redefined.

In this essay, I will look at both the history of Jamestown as it has been remembered as an American birthplace site and, more specifically, at events both officially affiliated with the 2007 anniversary commemoration and reactions to those official events and rhetoric of the anniversary to examine both the mythic understanding of how Jamestown serves as a site of American origin and how the narrative of that origin has been constructed and challenged over time. I argue that the 2007 anniversary displays the ways that Americans draw upon and interpret history to create and re-create an identity that reflects their own experiences and offers a unique lens through which American identity formation can be viewed, challenged and understood. I will begin with a basic outline of Jamestown's colonial history, then discuss the history of semicentennial observances of the 1607 settlement date, beginning in 1807. The year of 1907, distinguished by the Tercentennial Exposition at Hampton Roads, also marks a turning point in Jamestown's position as a site of potential tourism. I study the past commemorations to argue that they necessarily impact the narrative as it exists in the twenty-first century. Jamestown draws visitors by arguing, to some extent, that the colonial past is present. I argue that the legacy of commemoration established in the ensuing years remains similarly

present. The shifts of the twentieth century provided a foundation of both physical alteration and reshaping of the Jamestown mythos, based upon preservation, archaeology, reproduction and memorialization, which dramatically shaped the 2007 anniversary.

My discussion of 2007 begins with a look at the planning of the anniversary, then events and public engagement with Jamestown. I then turn my focus to the areas where I saw the shifts in the narrative of Jamestown play out most prominently in 2007 – museum spaces at Jamestown Settlement and Historic Jamestowne, the inception of major archaeological discoveries on Jamestown Island and debates over inclusion and exclusion of native people and people of African descent from Jamestown’s historical story and origin narrative. I argue that Jamestown’s museum spaces display the threads being woven together to construct the Jamestown-based narrative of American origin and that interrogating those museum texts and materials reveals omissions and erasures that call the apparently inclusive nature of the new narrative into question. I argue that although the relatively new presence of archaeological material lends an air of quantifiable or indisputable fact to the existing material and textual record, its presentation to the visitor still reveals gaps in the overall narrative. I argue that the voices of African American and Native American challengers of the inclusive “three cultures” narrative must be put in dialogue with the anniversary commemoration to understand how identity formation and struggles over who is counted as “American” impact the celebratory nature of the anniversary and how we understand Jamestown past and present. I believe that considering these

factors at play in constructing Jamestown all together demonstrates the complexity of how Americans understand the connections between the past and the present – it is one site as microcosm of a never-ending project of national identity formation.

The argument for looking critically at this kind of historical work is rooted in a concept as functionally intangible as patriotism. Is it an unquestioning love of one's nation? Applying a critical or analytical eye to the nation to make it the best it can possibly be? An expression of quintessential qualities? For each origin site across the continent – Ellis Island to Angel Island, Saint Augustine to Santa Fe, Roanoke, Plymouth, Quebec - a distinct history emerges, and a historical narrative retelling and reframing that history and a chorus of voices across decades and centuries explaining why their site and the people who lived, worked and traveled through there and their descendants and concrete acts and intangible qualities all come together to manifest what we now call America. Jamestown offers a snapshot – an example of how this evolutionary process came together in the early twenty-first century to take stock of America that was and America that is – a singular spot, but hopefully also a template for understanding how actors sculpt sites of remembrance when they also function as representatives of American origin.

Jamestown: A Brief Narrative

Jamestown was established as an English colony on May 13, 1607 when the ships *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery*, carrying over 100 English men and boys, finally made landfall after navigating the Chesapeake Bay.¹² Their trip was

¹² The number usually appears as 104, but even in official publications and pamphlets, this number varies. This discrepancy may be due to the difference in numbers between men leaving England and

funded by the Virginia Company of London, which hoped to employ the colonists to work the land in America for financial gain. When they arrived, the colonists encountered tribes of “Algonquian-speaking Indians” who were part of the “paramount chiefdom” of Powhatan and who over the next decades would serve sometimes as allies and sometimes as attackers of the English colony.¹³ The first recorded shipment of Africans came in 1619, and they became part of the system of indentured servitude that existed for the English, Powhatans and Africans alike until Virginia’s colonial government formalized the system of chattel slavery in 1661.¹⁴

The early years of the settlement were characterized by struggle for the English, as the colonists attempted to support their new home in the unfamiliar environment. England’s ventures into establishing a colonial presence in the New World happened to fall within a span of years characterized by especially harsh winters, which limited the colonists’ ability to grow and sustain their own food supply. Diseases that spread through the colony also dramatically reduced the colonial population.¹⁵ However, by the second decade of the settlement, the English had begun to spread inland from the original settlement on the James River and found

arriving at Jamestown, or to the fact that some men made the trip to Jamestown to establish the colony, but did not settle at the site.

¹³ Helen C. Rountree, *Pocahontas’ People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 3-14.

¹⁴ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984) 36-8.

¹⁵ Susan Schmidt, *Landfall Along the Chesapeake: In the Wake of Captain John Smith* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 25. In the introduction to the book that accompanied the 2007 *Jamestown-Quebec-Santa Fe* exhibit, authors James C. Kelly and Barbara Clark Smith observe that the influx of European colonists resulted in such a decrease in native populations well into the eighteenth century that the colonial projects of England, France and Spain cannot necessarily be understood as a “peopling” of North America. James C. Kelly and Barbara Clark Smith, *Jamestown – Québec – Santa Fe: Three North American Beginnings* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2007), 11.

economic success in farming tobacco.¹⁶ Jamestown served as Virginia's colonial capital for nearly a century, until the colonists vacated the site for Williamsburg following a destructive fire in the 1690s. "By 1716 a visitor to Jamestown found only a ferry, a church, a courthouse, three or four brick houses, and a small rampart with embrasures 'gone to ruin.' Near the quarter-century mark there was no further reference made to the fort which formally was abolished in 1725."¹⁷

Commemorating Jamestown, 1807-2007

Since their inception in 1807, and particularly beginning with the 300th anniversary observed in 1907, the successive fifty-year anniversary observations of the Jamestown settlement have served as flashpoints in construction of a Virginia-based American origin narrative. Each served as an opportunity for Virginians and other celebrants to take stock of the world around them and connect what they saw to the seventeenth-century colony and its inhabitants. The celebrants projected backward, reading contemporary traits or values in the actions of past peoples, that the U.S. of their present times was clearly connected to, rooted and read in the past Jamestown of the seventeenth century. This trope of memory seductively drew in celebrants in every anniversary incarnation – the assertion of direct ties to colonial life in 1607 continually reappeared in anniversary rhetoric. Nineteenth-century celebrations embraced the new nationhood of the United States by determining a

¹⁶ Recent histories of Jamestown and the first century of English settlement include: David A. Price, *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); Robert Appelbaum and John Wood Sweet, eds., *Envisioning an English Empire: Jamestown and the Making of the North Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ David F. Riggs, *Embattled Shrine: Jamestown In the Civil War* (Shippensburg, Penn.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1997), 5.

starting point for that nation, emphasizing and reifying the importance of English roots even as the citizens of that newly independent nation formed an ostensibly separate cultural identity. Attended by 3,500 visitors, the Grand National Jubilee of 1807 “was marked by five days of parades, dances and concerts, beginning at Jamestown with a gathering at the site of the abandoned capitol and ending with a grand ball in Williamsburg.”¹⁸ The 1857 anniversary featured “a two-and-a-half hour speech from former-President John Tyler”¹⁹ and “specially constructed cabins, a 175-foot long refreshment salon, and a dining hall which seated 500 persons. A large fleet provided transportation to Jamestown for the crowd of civilians, and a large military encampment assembled there. Some of the soldiers had to perform guard duty at the original town site when church bricks and fragments of cemetery stones disappeared as souvenirs.”²⁰ As David Lowenthal has described, designating a heritage site initiates a process where the site is “loved to death,” its identification and celebration inviting a destructive tourist presence. “Devotees wear down old floors, abrade ancient stones, erode prehistoric trackways.”²¹ Memorialization and commemoration at Jamestown already represented a fluid, changing process rather than static symbolism. Inviting visitors constituted a sort of preservationist’s Heisenberg principle – their presence alone constituted an alteration of the site. Despite the rising

¹⁸ Catherine E. Dean, *Historic Jamestowne: Commemorating 400 Years, 1607-2007* (Lawrenceburg, IN: The Creative Company, 2006), 23; “America’s 400th Anniversary: ‘E Pluribus Unum,’” *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 27.

¹⁹ Dean, *Historic Jamestowne*, 23.

²⁰ Riggs, *Embattled Shrine*, 13.

²¹ Lowenthal, “The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions,” in Page and Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History*, 33.

interest in preservation and archaeology, calling attention to the island could not be accompanied by placing it “under glass.”

After the Civil War, Virginia history and life was irrevocably altered by the move towards national reunification in the wake of violent division and by the tension between regional pride and national identity, in ways that ultimately reshaped remembrance of Jamestown. Preservationist intervention by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (or APVA) in the late nineteenth century placed an emphasis on the physicality of the colony; Jamestown, the women of the APVA seemed to argue, was important not only for the mythological legacy of long-dead settlers and their actions, but also for the tangible physical space they occupied. That is, the island as they saw it still merited preservation as the manifestation of the myth of record, even as the ruins of the colony continued to crumble. Initially formed in 1889 by “tradition-minded Virginians, including many of the state’s most prominent families,” the APVA worked in its early years to acquire “a range of colonial buildings, including Jamestown’s seventeenth-century ruins, Williamsburg’s arsenal, and an Eastern Shore debtors’ prison.”²² The APVA received its 22 ½-acre property on Jamestown in 1893, enabling the society to appoint itself the historical custodian of the former colony. This intervention resulted in multiple strains of action that would dominate Jamestown’s twentieth-century existence – preservation, archaeology, reproduction and memorialization. The APVA claimed to be protecting

²² James M. Lindgren, “‘A Spirit that Fires the Imagination’: Historic Preservation and Cultural Regeneration in Virginia and New England, 1850-1950.” In Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2004). 109-111.

the island from the ravages of time (and, more directly, from the eroding waters of the James River) but its presence on the island was soon marked by physical additions from historical groups.²³ In 1907, a memorial church built onto the standing seventeenth-century church tower, a statue of Virginia Company explorer John Smith and an obelisk marking the colony's anniversary, among other monuments and memorials, added man-made landmarks to the Jamestown Island skyline that still stand there today.²⁴ Though the 1907 Exposition largely took place downriver at Hampton Roads, the island's importance as a physical site tied to Jamestown's historical and mythological legacy was also established during that anniversary year.

Accounts of the early years of the APVA and its intervention on Jamestown Island differ as to the source of the group's preservationist concerns. Some describe their drive as strictly preservationist – that is, to halt the deterioration of the island's physical space. An official group history published in 1984 argues that even as other organizations fulfilled a romantic or nostalgic purpose for APVA members, the APVA's goals were exclusively practical: "While it would be easy to credit [the Lost Cause] for the formation of the APVA, i.e., the reinvention of the 'old South,' that reason hardly fits the character of the Association. There were organizations dedicated to the nostalgic vision of the past, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and later the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Many members of the Association were already members of the other groups, dedicated to a past that could

²³ Mary Newton Stanard, *Jamestown and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities* (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, 1904); Richard T. Couture, *To Preserve and Protect: A History of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1984).

²⁴ Richard T. Couture, *To Preserve and Protect: A History of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1984). 31-39.

be better remembered than that of Jamestown.”²⁵ Other historians define the group’s focus in the late nineteenth century as specifically concerned with a white, Anglo-Saxon heritage, particularly in the wake of the rise in immigration to the United States. As Fitzhugh Brundage argues, “Such invented traditions as the APVA-sponsored annual pilgrimages to Jamestown were intended to instill respect and awe for the state’s dutiful white leaders, who had founded the nation, established representative government, and purportedly provided steadfast public service. The unmistakable lessons of this past were deference to white social betters, reverence for established institutions, and fidelity to tradition.”²⁶ In his history of the Island during the nineteenth century, David Riggs suggests that the placement of the APVA site specifically invoked a sense of Confederate pride in the decades following the conclusion of the war:

It included the seventeenth-century church tower and the most important of the Confederate earthworks, Fort Pocahontas. The fort was regarded as a ‘relic of the “Lost Cause,”’ and the association considered it appropriate that this recent period of history should be represented alongside a symbol of the nation’s birth, for both had great impact upon the state and upon the nation. There was a dilemma in the 1890s as to which flag should fly above the Confederate fort. One of the association’s officers, Mary Jeffrey Galt, suggested flying the American flag, but not over the fort itself. Lucy Parke Chamberlayne Bagby, who chaired the APVA’s Jamestown Committee, felt that the association’s own flag was preferable.²⁷

²⁵ Couture, *To Preserve and Protect*, 16.

²⁶ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 37. Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 70-90. Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations & the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

²⁷ Riggs, *Embattled Shrine*, 109.

The APVA's work with the remains of Fort Pocahontas aligned the Confederate cause with Jamestown and the national past of the United States, thus justifying secession as within the American tradition they venerated. Thus from the first public memorialization, Jamestown was inextricably linked with slavery and Virginia's own history as the capitol state of the Confederacy.

The prevalence of Lost Cause ideology and the emphasis on Jamestown's legacy as all-white reflected Virginia's prominent families' influence on all aspects of public life in the state, and indicates to me that there is no way to separate the Lost Cause definitively from other heritage and preservationist work of the era.

Statements of different speakers and writers around the time of the 1907 anniversary emphasized that the "Anglo-Saxon race" began in America with the settlement of Jamestown. The North Carolina Historical Commission noted this concept of racial pride in its account of focusing on the country's history at the Exposition. "At last the dominant trait of the Anglo-Saxon race is asserting itself and we are becoming more like our relatives oversea [*sic*], who guard sacredly whatever bears on their glorious past."²⁸ The Pennsylvania Day speech of Lieut. Gov. Robert S. Murphy made a similar point. "Exhibitions of the character which we find here mark another era in the upward and onward progress of the race. The genius of a people is

²⁸ Mary Hilliard Hinton, custodian, *The North Carolina Historical Exhibit at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition Norfolk, Virginia April 16-December 1, 1907; A History of the Exhibit, Together with a Complete Catalogue of the Relics, Portraits, and Manuscripts Exhibited*, Publications of the North Carolina Historical Commission. Bulletin No. 2. (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1916), 7.

reflected in their works.”²⁹ Even if, as Couture argued, the APVA members saw their project as distinct, the era’s climate of postwar collective memory revealed a much more complex set of motives.³⁰

This emphasis on Virginia’s explicitly white past particularly originated in work by upper-class women’s groups in the early twentieth century. Virginia’s women’s organizations made sure heritage was racially segregated and quarantined, and thus policed the expression of that history to ensure its racial composition as all-white. Organizations like the Colonial Dames of America, who sponsored the building of the Memorial Church on Jamestown Island, were founded in the late nineteenth century as a response to the new influxes of immigrants from Europe.³¹ In a speech to a branch of the Daughters of the American Revolution, contemporaries of the APVA, in 1907, John Smith Memorial Association chairman Mrs. A.A. Blow appealed to their sense of Anglo-Saxon heritage and history to prompt members to donate to the Smith statue that still stands at Historic Jamestowne. “In recording and preserving the anniversaries of our memorable events and in setting up milestones of our history and honoring in song and story the patriots, statesmen, pioneers, and soldiers who have made it, we have strangely neglected the foundation stone of our existence as an Anglo-Saxon people and forgotten and ignored the one heroic,

²⁹ James H. Lambert, A.M., Executive Officer, Pennsylvania Commission, *Pennsylvania at the Jamestown Exposition; Hampton Roads, VA. 1907*, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Commission, 1908), 81-2.

³⁰ Brundage, *The Southern Past*; Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*.

³¹ Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 10-11.

intrepid, and chivalrous figure who shaped and planted it, Capt. John Smith.”³²

While historians do not dispute Smith’s vital contributions to the survival of the colony in its earliest years, casting John Smith as the single figure responsible for the colony reveals the highly subjective reading of Blow and her contemporaries.³³ To exalt a particular white male representative of the colony’s early years was to insist that Jamestown established “America” as white, English and Protestant. As I will discuss later, this emphasis on Anglo-Saxon colonial roots would be challenged and sometimes actively rebuked in rhetoric of the 400th anniversary in 2007.

The observances of 1907 and 1957 left physical monuments to the legend of Jamestown and its settlers, altering the visual and tangible landscape forever. The Jamestown Exposition of 1907 was a celebration of not only the history of the Jamestown site, but also of the new global reach of the United States military following the Spanish-American War. Situated during a flourishing era of Worlds Fairs and Expositions, the Tercentenary emphasized the role of Jamestown as a southern origin site in an era in which southern “Lost Cause” ideology and new definitions of regional cultural identities prolonged the fallout from the American Civil War. “Supercharged with symbols of patriotism designed to promote sectional reconciliation, [southern fairs between 1885 and 1907] represented attempts to catapult the poverty-ridden South into the forefront of national and international economic growth and were meant to demonstrate to the rest of the country that the

³² “First of Americans: Project to Erect a Monument to Capt. John Smith. Favored by the Daughters; Eloquent Presentation of the Matter at the Recent Congress by Mrs. A.A. Blow, of Virginia, Chairman of the John Smith Memorial Association – Fitting Sentiment for an Inscription,” *The Washington Post*, 26 Apr 1905, 11.

³³ Appelbaum and Sweet, eds., *Envisioning an English Empire*; Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project*.

leaders of the New South were capable of guiding their own section and the nation at large toward further progress.”³⁴ The 1907 Exposition also presented spaces and celebratory dates designated for individual states – each participant state had their own house and exhibition space at Hampton Roads, as well as a day on the schedule of events at the Exposition – presenting an American collective that gave the event an air of post-Civil War reunification with Jamestown’s founding serving as the overriding banner. As Cecilia O’Leary, David Blight and others have shown, 1898 gave reunification a push – Northern and Southern whites united to fight Spain, a darker corrupt empire – frictions were forgotten as whites united in solidarity against a “common foe.”³⁵ As Delaware Day speaker Judge James Penniwell noted during the Exposition, “The Civil War is almost forgotten in the prosperity and happiness of the times. In the recent conflict with Spain soldiers from every part of the land stood shoulder to shoulder in a fight for humanity that knew no section and recognized no class.”³⁶ Jamestown, then, even before the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War, was a site for the newly reunited states, representative of both the past and the present. The Exposition was located around the military station at Hampton Roads in southern Virginia, rather than the site at Jamestown Island, which enabled the celebration to feature the U.S. naval fleet, as well as those of other participating countries.³⁷ Like

³⁴ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, paperback edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 73.

³⁵ O’Leary, *To Die For*; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

³⁶ Hon. James Penniwell, “An Address Delivered at the Jamestown Exposition on Delaware Day, October 9, 1907,” (Wilmington, DE: The Historical Society of Delaware. The Star Printing Co., 1907), 17.

³⁷ Amy Waters Yarsinske, *Jamestown Exposition: American Imperialism on Parade Volume II*, (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia, 1999), 95-112.

other late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century expositions and worlds fairs, the Jamestown Exposition asserted an imperialist dominance partly by exoticizing and displaying non-white people, including members of Virginia's native tribes, linking the new era of U.S. intervention overseas with the imperialist moment of Jamestown's founding.³⁸ In honoring this origin site for the United States, organizers and participants celebrated the ability of the nation to survive both a divisive internal war and an external one, and to then move on to claiming new territories as prizes of war.³⁹

1907 also saw the public reclamation of Jamestown Island as a physical site. Although it had served as a strategic military site during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the island had remained largely uninhabited following the seventeenth century.⁴⁰ This legacy of Jamestown as a military site highlights the historical rift between the island's environmental history and its status as "preserved" tourist attraction and memorial site. No longer farmed nor vital to American defense, by 1907 the island shifted from a social to a mythic space. Downplaying the practical applications of the land within the 400-year span of its inhabitation maximized its mythic status. With the Jamestown narrative focused on the seventeenth century – particularly at Historic Jamestowne and its fort – connections between the past and

³⁸ Amy Waters Yarsinske, *Jamestown Exposition: American Imperialism on Parade Volume I*, (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia, 1999), 112-120; Frederic W. Gleach, "Pocahontas at the Fair: Crafting Identities at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition," *Ethnohistory* 50 (Summer 2003): 419-445.

³⁹ In Virginia, 1907 also saw the restoration and reconsecration of Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, the dedication of the Jefferson Davis Memorial in Richmond, and the centennial of Robert E. Lee's birth.

⁴⁰ Riggs, *Embattled Shrine*, 5-11.

today seem easily made and obscure and marginalize the intermediate years for Jamestown, Virginia and the nation.

Although many states participated in the 1907 Exposition, it did not achieve financial success. “The exposition Norfolk hosted for the 300th anniversary attracted 3 million people, but only 1.4 million paid. The exposition company said it was left owing \$2 million after spending \$3 million on the venture.”⁴¹ Difficulties in planning the Exposition lead to issues that plagued its early months. “Financial problems and bad weather considerably delayed completion of the buildings and landscape,” which resulted in bad press for the Exposition.⁴² In retrospect, the Exposition offered an admirable scope and spectacle, but could be criticized for the limited roles played by racial minorities, which I address in a later section, and the financial mishandling of the anniversary.

Like 1907, 1957 also served as a striking transitional point for Jamestown as both an abstract site of mythology formation and a concrete site with connections to the past and relevance to the present. More understated than the Tercentenary Exposition, the 1957 anniversary provided a clear foundation for the narrative frameworks of Jamestown today. The foundations of current Jamestown were established in 1957. The living history museum today known as Jamestown Settlement, then called Jamestown Festival Park, was established as part of the

⁴¹ Bill Geroux and David Ress, “Jamestown’s tab: \$98 million; 400th anniversary bash has its successes, misses,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 9, 2007 (final edition), A-1.

⁴² Tom Costa and ENS Mark Hayes, eds., *An Illustrated History of the Jamestown Exposition*, (Norfolk, VA: Hampton Roads Naval Museum, 2000), 7; Robert T. Taylor, “The Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65, No. 2. (Apr 1957): 205.

anniversary celebration in 1957, creating a state-run off-island site at Jamestown in addition to Jamestown Island. Visitors to Jamestown were no longer limited to memorials and seventeenth-century ruins; now they were invited to vicariously experience the fort-centered lives of the English colonists. Recreated spaces would serve as new vehicles to frame and relate the narrative of Jamestown settlement. The Colonial Parkway, which links the three sites of the Historic Triangle, opened for the 350th anniversary, facilitating a tourism-based cooperation between Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown that remains today.⁴³ Jamestown Island, and its new sister site at Jamestown Festival Park, were now accessible to the “public” in an unprecedented fashion, and they could be visited and experienced year-round; the trip no longer represented the pilgrim’s journey chronicled of nineteenth-century Jamestown supplicants.

The 1957 anniversary year was also striking for its state visit by young British monarch Queen Elizabeth II. The already lengthy postcolonial history of the United States had seemingly cycled around to embrace and celebrate the nation’s colonial origins. Through the first half of the twentieth century, the United States emerged as the world’s imperial power in its own right, and the Cold War and modern anti-colonial movements of the 1950s placed importance on Virginia as the origin of the modern guardians of democracy. The focus on the United States’ connection to the waning British colonial empire emphasized that new prominence and strength. As Princeton historian Thomas J. Wertenbaker expressed before the American Philosophical Society in the 350th anniversary year, “[Virginia] was the torchbearer of

⁴³ Virginia Department of Highways, *Traffic and the Jamestown Festival* (Richmond, 1955).

the English-speaking world. The little group who settled on the banks of the James were followed by millions, who carried the English flag, the English tongue, English law, English civilization to the remote corners of the globe.”⁴⁴ A 1957 tower erected at the Festival Park celebrates Jamestown as not only an American origin site, but as a first step in Britain’s spread overseas and eventual imperial dominance. As the tower’s marker reads: “1607 At Jamestown Began: The Expansion Overseas of the English Speaking Peoples; The Commonwealth of Virginia; The United States of America; The British Commonwealth of Nations; 1957.” This tower, which is situated along the path from the main museum building to the living history features of the museum, concisely expresses the image of Jamestown as not only a national origin site, but as a global one as well.

But this imperial celebration faced internal contradictions. The actions taken by the state of Virginia in the mid-to-late 1950s undercut the narrative of freedom’s triumph. One of the five cases comprising the suit in *Brown v. Board of Education* originated in Virginia, and by 1957 the state, lead by the Harry Byrd Democratic machine, was actively engaged in a campaign to resist the federal government’s mandate for desegregation.⁴⁵ Massive resistance echoed at Jamestown, as Fitzhugh Brundage recounts:

State officials, who were embroiled in a campaign of ‘massive resistance’ against the integration of public schools, went out of their way to exclude African Americans from the ceremonies. When

⁴⁴ Thomas J. Wertenbaker, “Jamestown 1607-1957,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 101 (August 16, 1957): 369-374.

⁴⁵ Waldo E. Martin, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998); Numan V. Bradley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950’s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

Governor Thomas B. Stanley's staff mistakenly included six blacks among six hundred dignitaries invited to attend the opening ceremonies, their invitations were quickly withdrawn because the event was a 'social occasion' where 'race mixing' would be inappropriate. And although the legislature had appropriated \$750 in 1942 for a memorial to the 'African Negroes' purchased at Jamestown in 1619, no official recognition took place. As one black observer complained, 'The only evidence of race at the current Jamestown Festival are very prominent signs indicating segregated rest rooms.' Unable to enforce segregation on the portion of the Jamestown site administered by the National Park Service, Virginia authorities located the festival's reception center on state land, where Jim Crow arrangements prevailed. State officials were noticeably absent when a small ceremony, independently organized by a group of blacks, commemorated the arrival of Africans at Jamestown. These competing Jamestown ceremonies underscored whites' continuing resolve, more than three years after the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, to exclude any meaningful recognition of black history from southern museums.⁴⁶

Thus this legacy of state-enforced inequity was built into these celebrations of Jamestown as an American origin site. As I will show in my later discussion of the "three cultures" narrative of Jamestown's colonial history, white supremacist belief undercut the freedom narratives and 2007 would strive to overcome these stark disjunctures with past times.

The Historic Triangle

In 1957, Jamestown was also being situated on a timeline that lead from colonial origin to revolutionary action – in the time between the 300th and 350th anniversaries private and government agencies reclaimed Williamsburg as a site with colonial importance, even as the National Park Service took possession of significant acreage on Jamestown Island. That island had once proved a daunting destination for visitors: "The skills and courage of a pathfinder...were needed to navigate the

⁴⁶ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 291-2.

meandering, sometimes impassable, roads that led to the site of the Jamestown settlement in Virginia. Only a thousand tourists accomplished this feat in 1919.”⁴⁷ The sites of the Historic Triangle, Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown, were originally united as parts of the Colonial National Monument in the 1930s, when the national government purchased land on Jamestown Island and Williamsburg was remodeled into the historical tourist attraction of Colonial Williamsburg.⁴⁸ The creation of the Colonial National Historical Park resulted in the various sites being connected by the new Colonial National Historical Parkway and becoming packaged as a historical tourist experience.

After the cosmetic and content alterations made at Jamestown for the 350th anniversary, the Historic Triangle in 1957 had become a common tourist destination for foreign officials visiting the United States; they only had to travel a few hours outside of Washington, D.C. to explore the three sites. A visitor would begin on Jamestown Island and see “a bit of the wilderness that had overtaken Jamestown Island and might be taken through the new Visitors Center, with its historic displays and dioramas. Next the visitor would stop at the Jamestown Festival Park. The most striking display there was the accurately reconstructed original village of Jamestown, a stockaded community of mud and thatched huts showing the primitive living conditions.” They would then move on to Williamsburg “to see the progress of 150 years” and possibly to Yorktown.⁴⁹ The Festival Park of 1957 and the physical island would provide the foundation upon which the 2007 anniversary would be built, with

⁴⁷ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 196.

⁴⁸ Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, 30-1.

⁴⁹ Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, 117.

the tourist framework of the Historic Triangle formed between Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown providing an infrastructure.

2007

Throughout the planning stages of the 2007 anniversary, officials of the Virginia state government and the groups involved in arranging the anniversary presented a public image of hopes and goals for the commemoration. In 1997, then-Governor George Allen introduced the anniversary's logo at Jamestown Settlement. Allen's statements at the ceremony enforced the idea of reclamation of Jamestown's legacy, and the attached potential for tourism. "Through this quadricentennial, Jamestown and all of Virginia will again capture the imagination of the rest of the country and the world....We want people everywhere to come home to Virginia....By the time they get to the Pilgrims in the year 2020, everyone will be properly educated that, gosh darn, those folks in Jamestown in Virginia have been going on for 13 years before the Pilgrims hit that rock in Plymouth."⁵⁰ In 1999, then-Virginia Attorney General Mark L. Earley made a similar point in a commencement speech at Christopher Newport University. "Through a Jamestown anniversary celebration that state officials hope will be an international event, [Earley] said, people will be reminded that 'Jamestown in Virginia was the great entry point of the triumph of self-rule that is still holding out the hope of freedom to students and leaders across the

⁵⁰ Andrew Petkofsky, "Jamestown's 400th; 10-Year Countdown; Allen: Everyone 'Come Home' to Va," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 10, 1997 (city edition), B-4.

world.”⁵¹ The anniversary was embraced as an opportunity to capitalize on increased tourism for Jamestown and nearby places in Virginia.

Former chairman of the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce Bill Axselle predicted in 2003 that “many recommendations [for capitalizing on the anniversary] will have an enduring impact on the face and fabric of our region and contribute toward improving [Richmond’s] appeal to visitors and the quality of life for our own citizens.”⁵² The settlements that grew from Jamestown, now cities and tourist attractions in their own right, were relying on that site to provide them with visitors and profits. In the same year, the Jamestown 2007 promotion manager argued that that scope stretched even beyond Richmond and the Historic Triangle. “Get ready, Virginia. While 2007 may be several years away, your Commonwealth needs you now. Our two-year, statewide observance will feature a cast of millions, and we want you to join us on the world stage. Virginia’s rich history is calling to all of us, so please remember – this time it’s not a telemarketer,” stated Ross O. Richardson, drawing on his experiences of phoning disinterested Virginians to talk them into participating in the anniversary plans.⁵³ Looking ahead to 2007, plans nearly a decade in the making were set in motion to create the historical, physical and philosophical elements of Jamestown that tourists see today, including replica ships, museum exhibits and the archaeology-focused Archaearium.

⁵¹ Andrew Petkofsky, “Jamestown to Turn Focus on Virginia Principles May Be Reborn, Earley Says,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 16, 1999, C2.

⁵² Bill Axselle, “400th Anniversary Can Transform Region,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 1, 2003 (city edition), A-9.

⁵³ Ross Richardson, “Jamestown Celebration Connects All Virginians,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 21, 2003 (city edition), E-3.

The state of Virginia made the commemoration part of its commercial imagery. From 2002 until the end of 2007, the standard-issue license plate for Virginia drivers featured the three-sail logo of the 400th anniversary celebration and the legend “Jamestown; America’s 400th Anniversary,” essentially spreading the anniversary state-wide.⁵⁴ “Sixty-six cents of [the \$29.50 annual] fee [for a standard plate went] to support state participation in the Jamestown anniversary celebration.”⁵⁵ Nationally, for the state’s entry in the 50 States Quarters project begun by the United States Mint in 1999, Virginia features a design of the three ships that came to Jamestown in 1607 with the legend, “Jamestown 1607-2007 Quadricentennial.” The anniversary-noting design was chosen by then-Governor Jim Gilmore in 1999, over designs featuring other Virginia historical sites, like George Washington’s home Mount Vernon.⁵⁶ The coin, issued in the year 2000, is another example of the depth of advance planning for the 400th anniversary. Gilmore noted the promotion of Jamestown on the national level when the coin was officially issued. “He said the Jamestown story embodies the American qualities of courage and adventure and risk-taking and will provide national publicity about the events being planned for 2007 at Jamestown to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the original settlement.” Upon

⁵⁴ Commonwealth of Virginia Dept. of Motor Vehicles, Special Plates: Plate Information. Passenger Standard Issue, <http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/exec/vehicle/splates/info.asp?idnm=PAJT>. This address will no longer display the license plate described, since the standard design changed at the end of 2007.

⁵⁵ Peter Bacqué, “New license plate tag joins Jamestown party; Usual blue-and-white plate gives way to one for 400th anniversary,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 5, 2006 (final edition), B-10.

⁵⁶ Michael Hardy, “Gilmore Picks Winning Theme; Majority Favors Jamestown Design for U.S. Quarter,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1999 (city edition), B-4; The United States Mint 50 State Quarters @ Programs, “Virginia Quarter,” http://usmint.gov/mint_programs/50sq_program/states/index.cfm?state=VA. Accessed April 15, 2008.

its release, the coin was incorporated into the tourist experience at Jamestown Island, where “Virginia quarters [were] awarded to the first 1,607 visitors.”⁵⁷

Tourism at Jamestown is marketed as part of the “Historic Triangle,” a triad composed of Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown. Williamsburg, the Virginia capitol to which colonists moved following a destructive fire in Jamestown at the end of the seventeenth century, has become a popular historical tourist site as a representation of colonial life in Virginia. The town’s reconstruction to again resemble its colonial heyday, guided by John D. Rockefeller, is considered a landmark in the history of twentieth-century historic preservation.⁵⁸ The mission of Colonial Williamsburg, as the site is officially known, is described on its website as follows: “Here we interpret the origins of the idea of America, conceived decades before the American Revolution. The Colonial Williamsburg story, ‘Becoming Americans,’ tells how diverse peoples, having different and sometimes conflicting ambitions, evolved into a society that valued liberty and equality. Americans cherish these values as a birthright, even when their promise remains unfulfilled.”⁵⁹ The Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center also served as the “Regional Welcome Center” for the 400th anniversary, where buses transport visitors to and from Jamestown and Yorktown. The 225th anniversary of the surrender of British General Cornwallis at Yorktown was observed in October of 2006, and was considered to be part of the

⁵⁷ Andrew Petkofsky, “New Coin Gets Stamp of Approval; Ceremony Fetes Virginia Quarter,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 17, 2000 (city edition), B-1.

⁵⁸ Lindgren, “‘A Spirit That Fires the Imagination’” in Page and Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History*, 121-122.

⁵⁹ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., “That the Future May Learn From the Past,” <http://www.history.org/foundation/mission.cfm>. Accessed 15 April 2008.

Jamestown commemoration.⁶⁰ The union of these three sites under one banner complicates the way that tourism at Jamestown is marketed and experienced.

As an origin story, Jamestown became inextricably linked to the Revolution in the public mind. Just as the history of the Jamestown settlement meant very little to colonial Americans until they had formed an independent nation, so now the settlement cannot be experienced independent of the future break from colonial power. Official tourist packages for the 400th anniversary housed visitors in Williamsburg hotels and offered deals that took visitors to two of the three or all three sites, utilizing the bus system initiated in 2004. This packaging united the colonial experience of Jamestown with the revolutionary histories of the other sites. Although Jamestown had been abandoned for nearly a century when the colonists declared their independence, the joint marketing of these three sites situated Jamestown on a timeline that ends with the American Revolution. In this reading, the settlement thus inevitably provided the groundwork for this fight as the place of American origin. The cohesion evident among the three sites by 2007 was the result of decades of the Historic Triangle standing as a representative of the roots of the United States of America for Americans and foreigners alike.⁶¹ This multitude of identities –

⁶⁰ Joan Tupponce, “225th Anniversary: Victory at Yorktown,” *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 80-3.

⁶¹ A 2010 article from the *Washington Post* highlighted Williamsburg’s status as a tourist destination for members of the relatively new Tea Party movement, emphasizing their enthusiasm for the site as a place where the connections they see between their contemporary political point of view and the Revolution-era political climate can be borne out in their experience. Amy Gardner, “‘Tea Party’ activists drawn to Williamsburg and its portrayal of Founding Fathers,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 2010, A01. Jill Lepore examines a similar phenomenon, focused on Boston and the Revolution in her 2010 book. Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

simultaneously the seed of British empire and American independence - would remain in play as the 400th anniversary was planned and executed.

The complications and contradictions of these narratives underscored the anniversary. To craft an accessible tourist narrative, officials working at the National Park Service and the APVA planned dramatic changes at Jamestown Island in the decade preceding the anniversary. “The draft plan calls for demolition of the current visitor center....The discovery center....would provide interpretive introduction to the island, fireproof storage for the thousands of artifacts excavated over the years by archaeologists and a campus-like linkage to the 1607 James Fort site that is now being studied and the New Towne site near the current visitor center.”⁶² In 2000, the APVA built replica stockade walls that approximated the original fort “to help visitors understand what archaeologists have found and visualize how the fort first appeared 400 years ago.”⁶³ Redesigned highways in the area made it easier for visitors to access both the island and Jamestown Settlement and helped to resolve tourism-based conflict between the two sites.⁶⁴ That legacy of conflict also prompted a name change from “Jamestown Island” to “Historic Jamestowne.” “Jamestown Island...suffered in attendance because tourists often visit[ed] the nearby Jamestown Settlement living history museum...without realizing they [hadn’t] seen the actual

⁶² Andrew Petkofsky, “Historic Island Revamp New Attractions Planned for Jamestown Anniversary,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 16, 1999, B1.

⁶³ Andrew Petkofsky, “Stockade Walls Go Up at Fort Site; Goal is Visitors’ Feel for Early Days,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 9, 2000 (city edition), B-3.

⁶⁴ Peter Bacque, “Deal Made on Jamestown Roadway; Va., National Park Service Compromise,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 16, 2001 (city edition), B-2.

site.”⁶⁵ The sites were joined together, along with the tourist locations at Williamsburg and Yorktown, through a bus service begun in 2004. “Tourism officials are looking at the shuttle system not only as a convenience for visitors, but also – with the help of taped narratives that will play along the routes – as a way of making it clear there are two distinct destinations to visit in the Jamestown area.”⁶⁶ This unified colonial history experience for tourists in the Historic Triangle increased the connection between Jamestown and the sites that represented later points in colonial history.

Historic Jamestowne Today

The 2007 anniversary events largely took place at the two sites of Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement. Alterations to exhibits at Jamestown Settlement’s museum and the construction of the archaeology-focused Archaearium at Historic Jamestowne demonstrate that the historical narrative at Jamestown was reconfigured to emphasize an ideal of progress in presenting a “new” story ostensibly both more inclusive of non-white participants and more rooted in the factual work of the archaeologist than the intangible elements embraced by myth-makers of the past. At Historic Jamestowne, the attraction located on Jamestown Island (jointly owned and operated by the National Park Service and the group now known as APVA Preservation Virginia), a main building where visitors obtain passes for the site features an exhibit detailing the history of the settlement site and a theater offering a

⁶⁵ Andrew Petkofsky, “Jamestown Island Face-Lift Planned; 400th Anniversary Goal for Completion,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 31, 2002 (one star edition), B-1.

⁶⁶ Andrew Petkofsky, “Shuttle Through History Offered/ Bus Service Will Link Sites in Williamsburg, Yorktown, Jamestown,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 26, 2004 (one star edition), B-1.

short film about Jamestown's past. The main exhibit at the visitors center is organized by themes of "The Search for Understanding," "Development and Decline," and "Struggle and Experiment." Consistent throughout these themes is an overarching emphasis on the presence and contributions of "three continents": Europe, Africa and indigenous North America.⁶⁷

Visitors at Historic Jamestowne follow a path from the main building to an open area of monuments and archaeological excavations. While almost no original buildings remain from the seventeenth century, contemporary excavations have revealed foundations, cellars, wells and graves, both within the original fort and in an area called "New Towne," which was settled beginning in the 1620s.⁶⁸ The principal archaeological attractions are the remnants of the original James Fort, which were discovered in 1994. Prominent structures at Historic Jamestowne include a stone obelisk built in 1907, statues of Capt. John Smith and Pocahontas, a wooden cross memorial built in 1957, and the Archaearium, a building opened in 2006 that presents the excavated remains of the original settlement at Jamestown.

The memorials reveal the aspects of Jamestown that commemoration organizers and participants wanted to celebrate about the site. A 103-foot-tall granite obelisk erected at the site in 1907 acknowledges in engravings written by "William G.

⁶⁷ The main building also contains a gift shop, and guided tours of Historic Jamestowne begin there. Plans to overhaul the visitors center in the years leading up to the 2007 anniversary were sped up when it was damaged during Hurricane Isabel in 2003, a storm which also flooded and damaged artifacts stored at Jamestown Island. The National Park Service faced new scrutiny when the flood damage provoked the ire of historians who argued that the Park Service needed special facilities to adequately protect Jamestown's collection of artifacts. Andrew Petkofsky, "Visitor Center to Close; Storm Damaged Jamestown Site," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 4, 2003 (city edition), B-4. and "Historians Rap Park Service; Failure to Protect Artifacts Assailed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 10, 2003 (city edition), B-1.

⁶⁸ Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project*, 323.

Stanard, secretary of the Virginia Historical Society” the original settlement date of May 13, 1607, the Virginia Company that funded the settlement, and the 300th anniversary commemoration.⁶⁹ Though the inscriptions are relatively innocuous, the obelisk acts as a dramatic statement of memorialization. Built at a time when the original settlement was believed to be washed away into the river, the tall structure appears to attempt to defy the crumbling influence of time that buried the other buildings on the island. The obelisk still towers above most other structures at Historic Jamestowne, even with those new buildings constructed in the intervening years, which have made the location a place to visit and actively engage with the past.

Another commemorative project of 1907 was the memorial church built by the Colonial Dames of America onto a pre-existing church tower that remained from the late seventeenth century. Accounts of the time celebrated the lone church tower as a representative of Jamestown’s lost past, emphasizing a narrative of preservation and rescue from neglect for groups now intervening on the island. Writing on the history of the site at Jamestown Island in 1902 for the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, Edward Hagaman Hall called it “a solitary and impressive church tower [that] bespeaks the inspiration that sustained it through its sufferings,” an unwitting memorial to a colony that had lain dormant for nearly two centuries.⁷⁰ In a 1936 guide to Virginia’s “Colonial Shrines,” J. Luther Kibler described the tower as “the silent sentinel over a tragic past and a mute but impressive and imploring

⁶⁹ J. Luther Kibler, *Colonial Virginia Shrines: A Complete Guide Book to Jamestown Williamsburg and Yorktown* (Richmond, VA: Garrett & Massie Publishers, 1936), 14.

⁷⁰ Edward Hagaman Hall, *Jamestown 1607-1907; A Sketch of the History and Present Condition of the Site of the First Permanent English Settlement in America* (The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society: New York, 1902), 6.

witness to man's forgetfulness, indifference and neglect."⁷¹ Building the church onto the tower took that revered history of stalwart resistance against the damage of time and enabled the project of memorialization to continue. The walls of the church are covered with plaques placed throughout the early-to-mid twentieth century that honor people from Jamestown's history, ranging from Pocahontas and Captain John Smith to the original council of governors that formed the early colonial government in Jamestown.⁷² Additional plaques and monuments situated around the site at Historic Jamestowne honor the 750th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta in England, the Christian settlers who died in the early years of the colony, and the roots of the American system of law, which can be seen in the early colonial government of Jamestown.

Outside of the Memorial Church stand statues of Jamestown's two historical celebrities, the English Captain John Smith and the Powhatan "princess" Pocahontas. The two have long been the central figures of the Jamestown legends that exist in the popular imagination, with a story (whose veracity has been questioned over time) that Pocahontas saved Smith from death at the hands of her tribesmen.⁷³ A 1957 piece on the literary tradition of their pairing noted that, like anniversary celebrations at Jamestown, they were rarely acknowledged in popular memory prior to the American Revolution. They were rediscovered and re-cast when the new nation needed stories

⁷¹ Kibler, *Colonial Virginia Shrines*, 13.

⁷² On my most recent visit to Historic Jamestowne in February 2011, a tour guide informally assured me that the site's stewards no longer permit the kind of freedom of plaque placement that was once allowed in the Memorial Church.

⁷³ Recent histories of Jamestown, such as those I listed in footnote #12, specifically mention that some scholars in recent years analyzing Smith's account of his "saving" have suggested that Pocahontas' action was a choreographed part of a tribal ritual welcoming Smith. That is, that it may indeed have actually occurred, but not with any of the spontaneity generally attributed to the action.

of origin. “Political orators, historians, and men of letters began to find in Captain John Smith heroic traits which seemed to them characteristically American: indomitable courage, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and faith in the future of the new land....Pocahontas, whose name in history and legend is now inseparable from Smith’s, was both the guardian angel of the infant colony and the ancestress of distinguished families.”⁷⁴ Today, the legacy of the pair, and their rumored romance, has received more national and international exposure through at least two fictionalized feature films, Disney’s 1995 *Pocahontas*, and 2005’s *The New World*, filmed a few miles down the James River from the island, using resources from Jamestown Settlement.⁷⁵ This legacy of romanticization has continued to inform the way that Smith and Pocahontas are represented and understood within the context of their memorialization in the tourist sites at Jamestown.

The Pocahontas Memorial Association, “a society composed of lineal descendants of the Indian princess, the second wife of John Rolfe,” erected the bronze statue of Pocahontas at Jamestown Island in 1922.⁷⁶ Clad in generic “Indian” dress, with a feather rising from behind her head, the figure represents the complexities inherent in depicting Pocahontas.⁷⁷ The only portrait made of her during her lifetime,

⁷⁴ Hubbell, “The Smith-Pocahontas Story in Literature,” 275.

⁷⁵ *Pocahontas*. VHS, dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg (1995; *Walt Disney Home Entertainment*, 1996); *The New World*. DVD, dir. Terence Malick (2005; Los Angeles: *New Line Home Entertainment*, 2006); *Making the New World*. DVD, dir. Austin Lynch (2006; Los Angeles: *New Line Home Entertainment*, 2006). The Disney film seems to represent Jamestown’s most visible tie to a corporate entity, particularly through Pocahontas’ inclusion in Disney’s lucrative Princess brand. Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011) 13-15.

⁷⁶ Kibler, *Colonial Virginia Shrines*, 15.

⁷⁷ In yet another twenty-first century point of contrast, native actors and extras who participated in the making of *The New World* emphasized their desire to represent the Powhatans with specificity. Since

done after she was baptized as a Christian and married to Rolfe, features her in fancy English dress. Any other image of Pocahontas, particularly those of her at the time of her alleged rescue of Smith, is therefore necessarily speculative. Pocahontas is one of the few explicitly identified, unique figures who represents a non-white presence at work in Jamestown's history. That her image varies so greatly in different depictions reveals the diverse agendas at work as different artists and groups frame her story and claim her as representative. Each work offers a Pocahontas that serves a specific representation (as anniversary celebrants do with Jamestown). The statue at Historic Jamestowne stands upright, with hands outstretched, a position that enables an interactive experience as visitors walk through the site. Tourists take pictures with their children holding the hands of "Pocahontas," a ritual that has rendered the statue's hands a shiny bronze that contrasts sharply with the aged appearance of the remainder of its body. Miniatures of both the Pocahontas and John Smith statues are available in the Historic Jamestowne gift store, commodifying the historical figures and making the Jamestown experience portable and available for purchase.

Jamestown Settlement Today

The front walkway of Jamestown Settlement, the off-island museum formerly known as Jamestown Festival Park, is lined with the flags of the fifty states, and each flagpole features a plaque that details the state's origins, emphasizing the nation as an aggregation of states and thus insisting that Jamestown is a national park with a

the pool drew from members of tribes around the country, in some cases these actors had to abandon aspects of their own tribal identity – most notably, cutting or shaving long hair – to more accurately depict the Powhatan culture. *Making The New World*.

national story.⁷⁸ The main museum building holds new (as of 2006) static exhibits that detail the history of the Jamestown colony through the decades of the seventeenth century. These exhibits, which comprise “30,000 square feet...[and are] double the size of the museum’s former gallery,” both physically and thematically expanded the offerings of Jamestown Settlement.⁷⁹ “When the state museum opened its first exhibit in 1957 as part of Jamestown’s 350th-anniversary commemoration, most people viewed the settlement’s significance mainly ‘as an expression of America’s Anglo-Saxon roots,’ [senior curator Thomas E.] Davidson said.”⁸⁰ But by 2007, these new exhibits included life-sized diorama-type scenes of life in England, Western Africa and pre-European Virginia, interactive maps showing trade routes and colonial sites of the seventeenth century and a segment that compares artistic and stereotypical images of Pocahontas with her anglicized portrait taken from life.

These changes in the museum at Jamestown Settlement in a narrative to place more focus on the non-White groups who participated in the early years of Jamestown were noted in news reports. As Davidson was quoted by the Associated Press, “It’s representing something of a change of direction in that we’ve adopted – a model, really, for the structure...that emphasizes the idea of cultural interaction as the engine that drives Colonial history in Virginia.”⁸¹ Sections with titles like “Early

⁷⁸ Similar collections of state flags are a design feature of other buildings of national import – the National Museum of American History, Union Station and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. – and national flags are arrayed outside the United Nations building in New York City.

⁷⁹ Andrew Petkofsky, “A new approach to Va. History; Jamestown gallery, film show that blacks, Indians had key role,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 21, 2006 (final edition), B-1.

⁸⁰ Andrew Petkofsky, “Putting the Jamestown story in a broader context; Museum will tell more about the contributions of Africans, Indians,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 17, 2006 (final edition), A-1.

⁸¹ Sonja Barisic, “New galleries, film explore Jamestown’s beginnings and culture,” *Associated Press*, October 19, 2006.

Clashes with the Powhatans” and “From Africa to Virginia” similarly emphasized the three contributing cultures of Europe, Africa and North America like those in the exhibit at Historic Jamestowne. Davidson’s description of these cultural interactions as “known but not told” concedes the fact that stories have been ignored or not been told to their full depth in the official historical presentations of Jamestown Settlement. Museum text emphasizes increased authenticity in the representations of all three groups, drawing upon “nature, archaeology, words, things [and] pictures,” as an impetus for changing the museum exhibits to reflect increased knowledge regarding life in the seventeenth century. However, acknowledging the complex history of inter-cultural interaction, subjugation and conflict frequently conflicts with the picture of harmonious cultural diversity promoted by anniversary advertisements and publications. These relatively recent alterations to Jamestown Settlement beg the question of whether “every American” would have been equally welcome a decade or more prior to the 2007 anniversary.

Three major features recreate life in the Jamestown colony for visitors to Jamestown Settlement. A small “village” where costumed museum workers lead visitors in activities that approximate seventeenth-century life among the tribes that lived near the Jamestown colony demonstrates native life and practices. Further down the path are “representative vessels” that serve as surrogates of the *Godspeed*, *Discovery* and *Susan Constant*, the three ships that brought the original colonists to Jamestown in 1607. Not quite replicas, these ships have been on display at Jamestown Settlement since its inception, with the current *Godspeed* and *Discovery*

ships built for the 2007 commemoration. All of the ships are based generally on seventeenth-century vessels, since blueprints for the original Jamestown ships do not exist. Visitors can board the ships, and informational displays situated around the wooden dock detail their dimensions and specifications, in addition to the ocean route taken by the original colonists.⁸²

The third major feature of Jamestown Settlement's living history museum is a replica of James Fort and early colonial living structures. Like the exhibits in the indoor museum at Jamestown Settlement, the fort has changed over time to reflect increased historical knowledge about the original settlement, particularly that which has come from the excavated fort on Jamestown Island.⁸³ The fort acts almost as a funhouse-mirror image of the excavated fort remains at Historic Jamestowne, each presenting a distinctly different experience of how the Jamestown colonists lived, but based upon a strikingly similar visual template – the triangular structure of James Fort. The standing structures that have been created for tourists to enter and explore operate in contrasting tandem with the long-buried wells and foundations of the original settlement, which results in an implicit competition of authenticity between the two sites. Each presents a twenty-first century image of seventeenth-century life in America's first English colony, with different tourist experiences of “how they really lived.”

The 2007 Anniversary

⁸² Jerry Harkavy, “Historical ships reborn; Reproductions of 2 vessels being built for Jamestown event,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 18, 2006 (final edition), B-4.

⁸³ Andrew Petkofsky, “Fort Project Builds on the Past; Museum Structure Being Constructed with 400-Year-Old Techniques,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 17, 2001 (one star edition), B-1.

A different assertion of the dominant version of origins emerged in the 2006 program that took the *Godspeed*, a replica of one of the ships that came from England in 1607, sailing up the East Coast. “More than 456,000 people came to see [the *Godspeed*] at ports including New York, Philadelphia and Boston,” and the trip served to animate a story of travel that would otherwise remain anchored in the past.⁸⁴ Photographs of the ship in action on the water are featured on the cover of the official commemorative publication of the anniversary and in postcards that visitors can purchase in Jamestown gift shops. A picture of the ship in the official commemorative publication for the anniversary shows a photograph that features the *Godspeed* in the foreground and the Statue of Liberty behind it.⁸⁵ By venturing into the realm of other stories of American arrival, immigration and settlement, the Jamestown event superimposes the Jamestown story over all others, particularly with underdocumented populations of Africans and Native Americans. This origin site, as it would seem, is the only one that matters.

Jamestown’s role as a member of the Historic Triangle and its association with Colonial Williamsburg has served to emphasize the importance of the state of Virginia in the 400th anniversary. An in-state advertising campaign, begun in 2005, centered around Virginia’s highways, appealing directly to the citizens of the state. “We have the challenge of making 1607 significant in people’s everyday lives, said [Virginia Tourism Corp.] head Alisa Bailey. The strategy is to incorporate messages

⁸⁴ “456,000-plus saw new *Godspeed*’s tour,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 2, 2006 (final edition), B-2.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Cogar, “All Aboard the *Godspeed*!” *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 89.

that will move today's audience: survival, free enterprise, democracy and race relations."⁸⁶ That campaign's central theme was one of challenge and survival, asking its audience of Virginia consumers and motorists "Could you have survived?" Since the sites at Jamestown are government-run, the alterations made at each location were at least partly supported by taxpayer-driven funding. "Virginia taxpayers and car owners spent about \$98 million on the dozen Jamestown 2007 events and improvements at the state's Jamestown Settlement park, including reproductions of the Godspeed and Discovery ships."⁸⁷

The anniversary weekend, one of the keynote events of the 400th anniversary commemoration, was observed during the second week of May 2007.⁸⁸ The prevalent themes of "representative government, free enterprise and cultural diversity" were repeated and reinforced by the rhetoric of the anniversary weekend.⁸⁹ The landing of the original settlers was reenacted at Jamestown Settlement with their replica ships, while APVA chief archaeologist William Kelso presented the James Fort dig at Historic Jamestowne to visitors. "People in baseball hats and blue jeans, khaki shorts and flip-flops mingled with people in breeches, tunics, petticoats, boots and grand hats flowing with ostrich plumes. It was stripped-down contemporary style, such as it

⁸⁶ Associated Press, "Jamestown Ads to Dot Highways; Event Marketers See Survivor-Type Theme as Generating Interest," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 2, 2005 (city edition), B-5.

⁸⁷ Geroux and Ress, "Jamestown's tab," A-1.

⁸⁸ "Join the excitement!" *America's 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 76-8. Other publicized events of the 400th anniversary included Jamestown Live!, a live, history-based webcast for "students and educators" hosted on November 9, 2006, participation in the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. in June and July of 2007, and events marking "Indian Heritage," the "African-American Imprint on America" and "The Foundations and Future of Democracy."

⁸⁹ "America's Anniversary Weekend," *America's 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 94.

is, juxtaposed with elaborate period costumes worn by a multitude of historical interpreters, who explained the settlement's history and demonstrated 400-year-old trades and crafts."⁹⁰ On the anniversary date of May 13, President George W. Bush gave a speech and conducted a 400-piece orchestra convened for the anniversary in "Stars and Stripes Forever."⁹¹ The emphasis placed on new exhibits and buildings, such as the "World of 1607" exhibit at Jamestown Settlement and the Archaearium at Historic Jamestowne highlights the conscious effort to not only attract tourist attention, but also to change the way that Jamestown has been profiled and understood.

Financially, the anniversary had pluses and minuses – the event attracted tourism, and visitor numbers increased at both Jamestown Settlement and Historic Jamestowne.⁹² Ultimately, "Anniversary Weekend events at Jamestown drew 63,000 people, 47,000 of whom bought tickets."⁹³ Figures reported at the end of 2007 showed that "the vast majority of attendees came from within a few hours of Jamestown," which would seem to indicate that the desired geographical reach of the anniversary was not achieved.⁹⁴ Whatever the point of origin of attendees, the attendance profits were deemed sufficient to help the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation "surpass...its \$24 million fundraising goal that was set in 2005 to help

⁹⁰ Frederick Kunkle and Steve Vogel, "Thunderous Salute to Legacy of Jamestown," *Washington Post*, May 13, 2007, C1.

⁹¹ Frederick Kunkle and Steve Vogel, "President Bush Caps Celebration of Success in Face of Adversity," *Washington Post*, May 14, 2007, B5.

⁹² Bill Geroux and David Ress, "Jamestown's tab: \$98 million; 400th anniversary bash has its successes, misses," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 9, 2007 (final edition), A-1.

⁹³ "Jamestown three-day event drew 63,000," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 27, 2007 (final edition), B-4.

⁹⁴ Geroux and Ross, "Jamestown's tab," A-1.

finance the museum build-up necessary for the Jamestown 2007 commemoration.”⁹⁵ However, commentators stressed that these increases are only significant in the long term if the sites made enough of an impression on visitors to promote tourism in the future.⁹⁶ Co-chairman of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation and chairman of the Jamestown 2007 Management Committee Thomas K. Norment, Jr. argued that the state needs to utilize the moment of popularity to capitalize and work to attract sustained tourist interest: “The only way to jeopardize the legacy of 2007 is to not capitalize on the positive attention and earned media we received over the past 18 months. By failing to appropriately fund tourism promotion, we will have missed a unique opportunity.”⁹⁷

In a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, executive director of Jamestown 2007 Jeanne Zeidler claimed that Jamestown’s accomplishments could be best seen in the increased national knowledge of the site. “The result is that Jamestown has assumed its rightful place in American history and in popular culture for the first time in centuries. This commemoration will pay dividends to the commonwealth for many years to come. Its success should be measured in the new understanding that people now have of Jamestown and our history.”⁹⁸ Such success may only exist intangibly: recent figures note that attendance at Jamestown and

⁹⁵ Chris Flores, “Jamestown 2007 a fundraising success: With the commemoration in the past and the \$24 million goal surpassed, the fruits of the efforts remain,” *Daily Press*, May 16, 2008.

⁹⁶ Geroux and Ress, “Jamestown’s tab,” A-1.

⁹⁷ Thomas K. Norment, Jr., “Commonwealth Can Build on the Success of Jamestown,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 24, 2007 (final edition), A-11.

⁹⁸ Jeanne Zeidler, “Jamestown Celebration Drew Nation’s Attention,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 22, 2007 (final edition), A-18.

Yorktown's state-run sites have declined year-to-year since the anniversary.⁹⁹ The coming years will demonstrate whether other sites observing major anniversaries can permeate the public consciousness to greater profit.

The Function of Archaeology

The sites at Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement offer different means of memorialization and representation of the past, show in both older monuments, which represent the subjective opinions of the builders and funders at the time of their dedications, and archaeological excavations, which document how people lived at the time when Jamestown was settled. The ongoing excavation on Jamestown Island, which branches off of the rediscovery of the original James Fort in the mid-1990s, is featured in the Archaearium, which opened in time for the anniversary date in 2006. The 7,500 square foot Archaearium cost \$4.9 million and it offers “a much broader and clearer picture of Jamestown life than was previously provided by written accounts.”¹⁰⁰ It rises over the foundation of an original statehouse and features a transparent floor to display that foundation. The exhibits in the building contain excavated materials ranging from the contents of a well to human remains. These materials, and the accompanying museum texts, detail the ways in which scientists can discover and discern facts about the ways that original Jamestown settlers lived and died, using methods that are based on more than the written record, and introduce visitors to that scientific process. For example, the

⁹⁹ “Paid attendance at Jamestown, Yorktown attractions fall for 3rd straight year,” *Associated Press*, January 15, 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Petkofsky, “New museum will open at Historic Jamestowne; It will display artifacts found at fort site that was discovered in 1996,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 12, 2006 (final edition), B-4.

process of analyzing a human skeleton for clues that would lead to identity confirmation based upon the historical record of Jamestown settlers is broken down for visitors step-by-step. An exhibit of human remains, which was one of the first created to introduce interactivity to the tourist experience at Historic Jamestowne, also uses the questions behind the skeleton of one man to invoke, with a wink, a mystery of late-twentieth-century popular culture – with a play on the two-letter designation given to remains recovered at Jamestown, the exhibit asks “Who Shot JR?”¹⁰¹ The displays utilize three-dimensional cross-sections of reproduced structures, like a well or a “mud and stud” house, to depict both how the displayed objects became buried over time and how they were uncovered in the twentieth century.

Both the National Park Service and the APVA undertook archaeological digs on their land on Jamestown Island during the 1990s, leading up to the 2007 anniversary. The APVA’s Jamestown Rediscovery Project, which ultimately uncovered the original fort long thought lost in the river, sought “to gain insight into the lifestyles of rich, poor, and non-English among the first colonists and the nature and growth of world trade reflected by the buried artifacts of the settlement.”¹⁰² The Park Service’s Jamestown Archeological Assessment built upon archaeological work that began following the Park Service taking possession of Jamestown Island land in

¹⁰¹ Andrew Petkofsky, “Interactive Exhibit Asks Who Shot J.R.; Jamestown Island to Get New Name, New Attractions,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 6, 2002 (city edition), B-1. Beverly A. Straube, *The Archaearium: Rediscovering Jamestown, 1607-1699* (Jamestown, VA: APVA Preservation Virginia, 2007), 30-31.

¹⁰² William M. Kelso, *APVA Jamestown Rediscovery I: Search for 1607 James Fort* (Jamestown: Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, 1995), 11-12.

the 1930s. The Archeological Assessment took a broader view than the Rediscovery Project, looking back to “American Indians’ use of the island extending back in time for more than 10,000 years” and forward from the colonial period to study “evidence of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cabins for tourists, roads and docks built to accommodate their arrival, and monuments erected to celebrate past events [which] are important pieces in the on-going story of how Americans created experiences that made their past meaningful.”¹⁰³ Both the Rediscovery Project and the Archeological Assessment emphasized the function of archaeology in enhancing a twenty-first-century understanding of life in the Jamestown colony.

As lead Jamestown archaeologist William Kelso notes, “Archaeology does more than unearth the remnants of dead people and their broken things: as we have seen, it also seeks to picture living people using intact things.”¹⁰⁴ Although the work in the Archaearium rests upon a premise of scientific objectivity, the focus on the fort privileges and reinscribes the mythology of white origins, a story from which Africans are largely absent. Since the archaeological record cannot definitively affirm the presence of Africans, it reinforces their absence from the written record. The resultant emphasis on Jamestown’s Anglo-Saxon heritage, now bolstered by science, supports a myth of origins that exclusively concerns whiteness. The centrality of the fort as the dig site shifts the burden to visitors to determine how far to extrapolate their understanding of seventeenth-century life in Jamestown or

¹⁰³ *Jamestown Archeological Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office (National Park Service), 2001), 4; ii-iii.

¹⁰⁴ William M. Kelso, *Jamestown: The Buried Truth*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 138.

Virginia. Instead of compensating for gaps in the historical record, the current Jamestown settlement emphasis only widens them.

The broader marketing of Jamestown as a tourist site asks that visitors embrace Jamestown as representative of the United States in its earliest, purest form. This message becomes problematic when viewed as part of the Archaearium's "objective" history. For example, a display of excavated pipes is used to depict the role of tobacco in fort life. This display acknowledges the importance of the crop but focuses on the ends rather than the means of tobacco production. Without further context the visitor learns nothing of the agricultural labor that would offer opportunities for freedom and self-sufficiency for early enslaved Africans and indentured white laborers. They had often utilized opportunities for independent labor, personal subsistence farming, and manufacturing and selling items to enhance their incomes and eventually purchase their freedom. In later years, of course, tobacco firmly established racialized slavery in Virginia.¹⁰⁵ I don't suggest that the chosen scope of the exhibit is invalid, but rather indicate that we approach these exhibits with a critical eye and a sense of clarity about what visitors do and don't see directly represented there.

Museums and Jamestown

"The World of 1607" placed the settlement year within a global context, featuring a rotating group of objects from museums and collections worldwide. Beginning in April 2007, each rotation remained for three months. "Jamestown

¹⁰⁵ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 32-33.

wasn't an isolated little English village, stuck on the corner of a new continent,' said curator Tom Davidson....'Jamestown was something new. Jamestown was part of a great deal of change that was going to really shape the modern world.'"¹⁰⁶ The first "cycle" included among its featured objects as Japanese armor given as a diplomatic gift to King James I of England and a band of wampum beads from the Powhatan tribe, and featured organizing themes like "The Marketplace" and "The Rise of Great Britain."¹⁰⁷ Cycle II displayed objects under headings including "The Century of Genius" and "Rights and Nationhood: The Beginnings."¹⁰⁸ The Cycle II objects included books, maps, globes and paintings, many of which depicted the effects of cultural interactions, such as a Chinese painting of the Madonna and child. The third cycle displayed evidence of scientific development and inter-continental cultural encounters and exchanges in the early years of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁹ "The final phase... explore[d] sub-Saharan African kingdoms, the Ottomans as a world power, Russia from 1607-1613, the beginnings of globalization, scientific achievement in Europe and the Islamic world, and the relationship of church and state."¹¹⁰ The global span of Jamestown's relevance contrasts with the Archaearium's local focus. The global origins of Jamestown reinforce the concept of Jamestown as a starting

¹⁰⁶ Katherine Calos, "In 1607, a global village; Jamestown portrayed as 'little corner' that would shape a world," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 24, 2007 (final edition), B-2.

¹⁰⁷ "The World of 1607 Cycle I: April-July 2007," Jamestown Settlement pamphlet. When I visited Jamestown Settlement in late August 2007, "The World of 1607" was in the midst of Cycle II. I was able to obtain the pamphlets for Cycles I and II while at the site. I am indebted to the workers at the Jamestown Settlement Help Desk who were kind enough to retrieve the pamphlet for Cycle I, which had already completed its run at the museum and who mailed the Cycle III pamphlet to me later in the year. The completion of Cycle IV on April 9, 2008 was one of the final events of the official 400th anniversary commemoration.

¹⁰⁸ "The World of 1607 Cycle II: July-October 2007," Jamestown Settlement pamphlet.

¹⁰⁹ "The World of 1607 Cycle III: October 2007-January 2008," Jamestown Settlement pamphlet.

¹¹⁰ "World of 1607," <http://www.historyisfun.org/World-of-1607.htm>, accessed April 15, 2008.

point not only for the United States of America, but also of the British Commonwealth, a global entity that would ultimately span a vast geographic reach.

Exhibits outside of Jamestown that featured the site as part of their narrative served to highlight the omissions and weaknesses of the framing structures employed at Jamestown museums. The “Written in Bone” exhibit, which featured findings from archaeological digs undertaken by Dr. Douglas Owsley, utilized bones found in the Rediscovery Project that were previously housed in the Archaearium.¹¹¹ “Written in Bone” situated the Rediscovery Project and its findings within a broader context of archaeological work in Virginia and Maryland. This shift in context highlights the limitations of the Archaearium’s fort-based scope. One might easily question how representative the Jamestown site is of early America and colonial experience when it is compared with other sites whose artifacts have contributed to our scientific and historical understanding of early English colonial life. The inclusion of excavated plantations from later years also addresses one of the Archaearium’s most dominant absences by discussing slave life and the artifacts the institution left behind. The emphasis on the early years of the fort and the colony erases the African presence in the Archaearium even as the narrative heralds the impact of African contributions. The problem isn’t necessarily the absence of Africans, if archaeologists can’t specifically identify and connect objects and artifacts with African experience, but that the curators for the museums at Jamestown then argue for a triple structure of

¹¹¹ I visited this exhibit at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. on June 16, 2009.

“contributions” from the affiliated cultures. Is the integration of Africans into the dominant Jamestown narrative in recent years just a cursory lip service?

Similarly, another exhibition that featured this broader context was “Jamestown, Quebec and Santa Fe,” which traveled in observation of the successive settlement date anniversaries of each colony.¹¹² The exhibit highlighted both the Anglo-centric narrative of Jamestown and its limitations in geographic and temporal scope. The “Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe” exhibit’s thematic organization presented subjects like “New Economies” or “Expanding Empires” while addressing the history of all three colonial powers. This structuring enables a clearer understanding of what might have been unique about Jamestown’s English presence, as well as its similarity to Spanish or French activities. The exhibit’s framing structure rejected any false or overemphasized exceptionalism on the part of any one colony, but rather utilized a comparative model to give equal attention to each, for example, tracking each colony’s history of interaction with native populations from cooperation to conversion to conflict or different regions’ agricultural practices. The exhibits at Jamestown frequently decline to explore at length the relationship between the site and its colonial companions on the continent. The ultimate success of the English as America’s colonial overlords tend to subsume those narratives associated with other present-day nation-states. The “Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe” exhibit also makes clear the expansion from Jamestown to the larger Virginia colony, as with the French and Louisiana and the Spanish and Mexico. Rather than serve as end points in narratives of an ultimate “first” settlement, the three capitals continually focus the

¹¹² I visited this exhibit at the S. Dillon Ripley Center in Washington, D.C. on August 12, 2009.

visitor's attention on the context of exploration and of multiple origins. The sites serve clearly as starting points to larger colonial ventures rather than solely representative of a more significant and wide-reaching colony, a distinction that is not always clearly made in Jamestown's museums. This exhibit makes Jamestown appear as a jumping-off point rather than a fully representative site, which may detract from claims of historical primacy but is ultimately clearer in addressing what makes the site significant.¹¹³

Another exhibit that highlighted omissions and weaknesses of Jamestown Settlement's permanent exhibits was a 2009 exhibit observing the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Bermuda, also undertaken by the Virginia Company.¹¹⁴ The Bermuda exhibit presented the site as a sort of companion to Jamestown in the early years of English colonial spread. It offered a context of English colonialism and Jamestown as one site in what would gradually grow to be many English outposts, one that is frequently lost in the Jamestown-centered narrative.¹¹⁵ Though frequently Anglocentric, these museums focus that Anglocentrism on either the ruling powers located in England or on the colony that would come to be part of the United States. If Jamestown was imperially significant for the British, then its companion colonies settled between 1607 and 1783 should be more present in Jamestown's museums. If not, then Jamestown is less significant than argued. A striking aspect of the Bermuda exhibit came as it drew into the present day in Jamestown and Bermuda. Display

¹¹³ Kelly and Smith, *Jamestown, Québec, Santa Fe*.

¹¹⁴ I visited this exhibit at Jamestown Settlement on August 7, 2009.

¹¹⁵ The collected scholarship in Appelbaum and Sweet's *Envisioning an English Empire* presents a view of Jamestown as part of a broader seventeenth-century Atlantic world similar to those in the Jamestown, Quebec and Santa Fe and Bermuda exhibits.

cases within the exhibit featured material objects and photographs from the 400th anniversary that preceded it by only two years, including a doll that was available for purchase at the Jamestown Settlement gift shop. There is perhaps no clearer sign of the continuing fluidity of the Jamestown narrative – 2007 is already memorialized, enshrined in history. If my presence in Jamestown in 2007 made me more aware of my subjectivity as a spectator and consumer of the anniversary, then it was even more striking to find myself in the display space that housed “The World of 1607” only two years earlier, looking at objects behind the glass that came from that relatively recent experience, already marked as part of the site’s history.

The museum structure at Jamestown, especially in the indoor exhibits at Jamestown Settlement and the Archaearium, involves an interplay of materials and text. Indoor displays rely heavily on text to tell, rather than show, the history of Jamestown and its long-dead inhabitants. In contrast, outdoor features at both Historic Jamestowne, with its various monuments and memorials, and Jamestown Settlement, with its living history replicas, invite visitors to experience through interaction, either self-guided or via official tour. The textual experience of indoor exhibits is both self-directed yet rigidly structured; visitors pick and choose what to read, at whatever level of focus or critical thinking, but the information available is controlled by the museum. Framed in the context of a museum like the Archaearium, text takes on a sense of authority connected to, and partially derived from, the material. With archaeology presented as the objective counterpoint to mythology and subjective history, text supplements materials as a sort of authenticator. As Kelso

states of the Jamestown dig, “documentary accounts have given us some idea of the changing town designs and the types of houses and public buildings within and about the fort. Archaeological remains bring the design and structures of Jamestown into clearer focus.”¹¹⁶ For example, the Archaearium contains a segment that features human skeletal remains from graves excavated at the Jamestown Island site. The bones tell visitors that people lived and died there. Text around the bones detail the process of excavation and identification, as well as offering archaeological opinions regarding items buried with the bones or bone conditions indicating life-ending injuries. Using scientific and historical clues to attach names or a kind of replicated corporeality to long-buried skeletons authenticates the material. Pairing bones with names or events in the historical or mythological record authenticates the text. The paired aspects of museum exhibits work in tandem to give the visitor a sense of connection to the past as well as an air of accuracy in describing and depicting that past. The importance of text, therefore, can either support or undermine a specific interpretation of the past. The lack of English speaking or writing among seventeenth-century Africans and Native Americans in and around Jamestown ensures their material representation diminishes adversely in museum depictions today. “More documents might help, but after a century of historical research, the odds of finding new evidence of Jamestown’s fort in the library or the attic are small. The archaeologist’s recourse is to seek out more substantial evidence in the form of physical remains.”¹¹⁷ As then-Governor Tim Kaine concisely observed of the utility

¹¹⁶ Kelso, *The Buried Truth*, 76.

¹¹⁷ Kelso, *The Buried Truth*, 46.

of the material at a preview of the Archaearium in 2006, “We really come to understand people from the stuff of details.”¹¹⁸ The reliance on highly specific archaeological evidence erases Africans and Native Americans.

Comparatively, the outdoor exhibits at Jamestown Settlement tend to ignore the African presence in Jamestown by emphasizing the experiential. Visitors are invited to interact with a recreation of the past by walking through replica structures designed to evoke seventeenth-century English and Native American life. Settlement workers describe and demonstrate work that evokes daily processes of that life. For a tactile experience of fort life, tourists can try on replica armor within the confines of the fort. Visitors as well can also avoid people who would have lived there were they properly situated in time; visitors can choose to interact with the museum employees acting out crafts and trades, or they can wander unguided through the whole installation. There is no replication of a specifically African experience of life in the early years of the fort. The ship that originally brought the first group of Africans to Jamestown in 1619 is not reproduced and docked alongside the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery*.¹¹⁹ Focus on fort life distances visitors from a sense of agricultural life and labor in the wider Virginia colony, which again erases much of the African experience. Africans and their descendants have been granted space at Jamestown Settlement, but their material representation frequently falls short of that

¹¹⁸ Victor Reklaitis, “Brand new – brand name: The governor and others get a sneak peek at Historic Jamestowne’s new museum of 17th-century artifacts,” *Daily Press*, May 12, 2006.

¹¹⁹ Similar actions are not unheard of – the state of Connecticut maintains a replica ship representative of the *Amistad*, a ship that famously conveyed enslaved Africans.
http://www.amistadamerica.org/component/option.com_frontpage/Itemid,1/ (accessed May 3, 2010).

granted to the English and Native Americans. Their labor remains invisible and under-valued.

On the eve of 2007, University of Richmond history professor Dan Roberts speculated on the potential inherent in the festivities of the coming year. “In 2007 we have a chance to celebrate the contributions not just of Virginia, but of all American communities – black, white, native, Puritan, Hispanic, commercial, political. We can do that by reminding the nation of the heroic story of where it all began. Let’s make sure that next year’s party, for all the good reasons, is one no one forgets.”¹²⁰ The presence of native people and Africans is no less real in these narratives that have exalted the English in their seventeenth-century exploits than it is in those that emphasize their role as oppressed people. Regardless of any prominence granted to these groups by those who communicate the history, Africans and Natives were always there. “To celebrate the heroism of Native Americans resisting the destruction of their cultures flies in the face of an entrenched frontier mythology that celebrate the perseverance of white settlers in driving these cultures to extinction. To mark the sites of African American resistance to slavery and racism is to call attention to glaring failures of the democratic institutions and egalitarian values in which the nation takes great pride.”¹²¹ That tension of emphasis versus erasure in shaping Jamestown’s “cultural triumvirate” serves to highlight the complex layering and selective vision that constructs origin narratives.

¹²⁰ Dan Roberts, “America’s Founding; Jamestown Anniversary Could Revive Virginia’s Standing,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 31, 2006 (final edition), E-3.

¹²¹ Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, revised edition, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 322.

Africans and Jamestown

The English did not introduce African labor to the “New World” – the Spanish brought Africans to America well before the English settled at Jamestown.¹²² However, the date of 1619 persists as a landmark for African-Americans.¹²³ In his seminal 1903 work *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois invoked the slave ship approaching Jamestown and its “square tower” as the origin point of strains of thought and deeply felt emotions about race in the United States. “So here we stand among thoughts of human unity, even through conquest and slavery; the inferiority of black men, even if forced by fraud; a shriek in the night for the freedom of men who themselves are not yet sure of their right to demand it. This is the tangle of thought and afterthought wherein we are called to solve the problem of training men for life.”¹²⁴ As I discussed previously, both the 300th and 350th anniversaries took place during times of serious racial conflict and oppression regarding African-Americans in Virginia and nationally. In the early years of the twentieth century, African-American theorists like DuBois and Booker T. Washington vocally expressed their opinions of how the descendants of African slaves could succeed in the era of Jim Crow segregation. At the Jamestown Exposition, black Americans presented their own exhibitions with the support of federal funds.¹²⁵ They highlighted the achievements

¹²² John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹²³ For example, while watching election night coverage on the night of November 4, 2008 on MSNBC, I heard a commentator explicitly mention the 1619 date as the beginning point of a timeline concluding with Barack Obama’s election.

¹²⁴ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Norton Critical edition, Reprinted with criticism and notes, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) 62-3.

¹²⁵ Yarsinske, *Jamestown Exposition, Volume II*, 29-36.

of black Americans and emphasized the importance of education for continued progress.¹²⁶ Additionally, Booker T. Washington gave a speech as part of the Exposition, where he “enunciated his belief that American blacks should take advantage of every opportunity presented them, especially in the relatively open field of education.”¹²⁷ Writing in 2007 on the history of black America dating back to Jamestown, however, historian Tim Hashaw stated that the black legacy of Jamestown was largely ignored when the 300th anniversary was observed. “In 1907, some historians challenged established traditions surrounding Pocahontas, the Pilgrims, and Thanksgiving that were engraved in the nation’s sentiment after the American Civil War, but no one reexamined the story of the Africans who came before the Pilgrims and before that first legendary Thanksgiving feast.”¹²⁸ The stories of the original settlers and the native people that they encountered could be edited and simplified to detail a history of cooperation, but the complex history of slavery was less malleable and marketable for the Exposition celebration.

Beyond the physical sites, the Anglo-centric triumphal narrative of the past that had been prevalent at Jamestown was challenged by other 2007 actions. The Virginia legislature issued a formal acknowledgement of regret for “the slavery of Africans and the exploitation of Native Americans,” adding a symbolic postscript to

¹²⁶ Ruth M. Winton, “Negro Participation in Southern Expositions, 1881-1915,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 16 (Winter 1947): 41-3.

¹²⁷ Costa and Hayes, eds., *An Illustrated History of the Jamestown Exposition*, 14.

¹²⁸ Tim Hashaw, *The Birth of Black America: The First African Americans and the Pursuit of Freedom at Jamestown* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), xvii.

the legislative record that had once established racially defined chattel slavery.¹²⁹

The language of the resolution was carefully worded to avoid admitting legal culpability for any historical harm done to Native Americans, African slaves and their descendants. “Sen. Henry L. Marsh III (D – Richmond)...a sponsor of the [Virginia] resolution, said there was spirited discussion about word choice. At one point, the word ‘atonement’ was in a draft copy of the legislation. It was removed because, he said, one of the definitions for atonement is reparations, and the sponsors and GOP leaders did not want a debate about reparations.” The largely symbolic gesture was described in the news media as being a part of the 400th anniversary celebration.¹³⁰ The resolution thus acknowledges that the governments of the past may have served the needs of a select group of citizens, and pledges its loyalty to today’s definition of government by and for the “people.” Like other steps taken to acknowledge some of the complex racial history of Virginia within the anniversary, the resolution offers superficially optimistic hope for harmony in the future. Spelman College professor William Jelani Cobb later observed, after other states had followed Virginia with similar legislative statements of regret, “What would be more significant than a public pronouncement would be a willingness to grapple with the actual implications of slavery. There are fortunes that were made with the unpaid labor of generations of Black people in this country. Any true apology would have to address the question of how to make redress. Any real apology would have to confront the implications of

¹²⁹ Virginia General Assembly, HJ 728 Discrimination & injustice; General Assembly to acknowledge & express regret for State’s role in, 2007 Session, <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?071+sum+HJ728S> (accessed December 8, 2007).

¹³⁰ Ovetta Wiggins, “‘Regret’ Over Md. Role in Slavery; State Senate Resolution Follows Similar Action in Virginia,” *Washington Post*, March 17, 2007, B1.

slavery in our everyday lived realities in 2007.”¹³¹ By neglecting to propose solutions to the stated problems, the state offered apologies in name, rather than in action.

In February 2007, the annual State of the Black Union was held in conjunction with the Jamestown anniversary. According to the website of television personality Tavis Smiley, who organized and hosted the event, “the symposium was created to educate, enlighten and empower America by bringing people together and engaging them in thoughtful dialogue, leading the way to constructive action.”¹³² The 2007 event featured panels of Black public figures including Princeton professor Cornel West and the Rev. Al Sharpton speaking on contemporary issues and the anniversary. Though the first ship of Africans did not arrive until 1619, the commemoration of 1607 offered an opportunity for visibility in presenting the concerns of Black Americans. Like others who sought to contextualize Jamestown’s status as a birthplace over the preceding century, Smiley invoked the idea of placing a spotlight on Jamestown above another site. “A lot of immigrants came through Ellis Island, but a lot of slaves, a lot of our ancestors, came through Jamestown. So it really is a tale of two Americas, a tale of two entry points – Ellis Island and Jamestown. The Ellis Island story has been told and told and told. The Jamestown story has not been told. And I would suspect that 400 years later is a good time to start telling that story.”¹³³ Events like the State of the Black Union represented African-Americans utilizing the opportunity for involvement in the anniversary to gain publicity and call

¹³¹ Natalie Y. Moore, “Why All the Slave Apologies Now?” *The Crisis* 114, Issue 4 (July 1, 2007).

¹³² “State of the Black Union,” <http://www.tavistalks.com/events/signatureevents/stateoftheblackunion> (accessed April 15, 2008).

¹³³ Victor Reklaitis, “Audio: A Q&A with Tavis Smiley: Broadcaster sounds off on upcoming State of the Black Union,” *Daily Press*, February 6, 2007.

attention to the ways in which their history was and was not served by alterations at Jamestown sites. At a Hampton event, “Tom Joyner, the conference co-host, told the audience he had been ‘ready to be angry’ as he took a tour about the Jamestown settlement nearby and thought of slave ships. What he experienced instead, he said, was not anger but something akin to his feelings about mainstream media coverage of blacks: a story certainly not told from a black perspective.”¹³⁴ The State of the Black Union’s proximity to the Jamestown anniversary represented an unprecedented degree of access for non-white participants. “The four-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Jamestown – the first English colony in America – offers a new generation the opportunity to ask questions never raised by previous generations. One century ago, most Americans considered the Jamestown adventure of the first African Americans to be a historical footnote – if they considered it at all.”¹³⁵ This level of participation coming from outside of Jamestown represents some of the different types of players who factored into the origin narrative centered around the 2007 anniversary.

A 2007 anniversary advertisement featured modern people wearing t-shirts that displayed the names of English, Native American and African people from Jamestown’s beginnings, with a “Thank You” preceding each name.¹³⁶ The named figures of African descent in the ad are Angelo, John Punch, Anthony and Mary Johnson and Tony Longo, comprising fewer than a quarter of the shirts shown in the

¹³⁴ Felicia R. Lee, “Building a Conversation, One Radio Show at a Time,” *New York Times*, February 13, 2007 (late edition – final).

¹³⁵ Hashaw, *The Birth of Black America*, xvii.

¹³⁶ *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 38; “Jamestown 1607-2007: Every American Should Stand Here Once,” <http://jamestown1607.org>.

print ad. Angelo is remembered as “among the few whose names were recorded” of the first ship of Africans, whose “status [of servitude following her arrival] is uncertain.”¹³⁷ Punch was a Black indentured servant who ran from his service with two fellow white indentures in 1640. Upon retrieval, Punch was “ordered to serve...for the rest of his life” while his companions “were sentenced to four more years of servitude,” an early example of legal enforcement of a racial hierarchy.¹³⁸ The Johnsons and Longo were initially enslaved when they first arrived in Virginia, but eventually became free landowners and farmers in their own right in the early-to-mid seventeenth century. In his history of Africans in early America, Ira Berlin cites Anthony Johnson as emblematic of Africans as Atlantic creoles in the seventeenth-century colony. “Like other men of substance, Johnson and his sons farmed independently, held slaves, and left their heirs sizable estates. As established members of their community, they enjoyed rights in common with other free men, and they frequently employed the law to protect themselves and advance their interests.”¹³⁹ Similarly, journalist Tim Hashaw cited Longo as an example of similarities between Black and White landowners in the 2007 history *The Birth of Black America*. “The Longo family story...challenges the stereotype of early Africans in colonial America. Blacks in fact swaggered with the same rashly confident step of white America, for the spirit of the era did not indwell only a certain color. The earliest black Virginians rebelled, dreamed big, filed lawsuits and fought

¹³⁷ <http://jamestown1607.org>

¹³⁸ <http://jamestown1607.org>

¹³⁹ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 30.

exploitation.”¹⁴⁰ This handful of early Virginians of African descent demonstrates the multifaceted nature of early Black life in the colony. This understanding of Black life is one that is rarely expressed through material representation at Jamestown sites, one that essentially requires the initiative for outside research on the part of the visitor (or prospective visitor, since the ad invited “Every American” to attend the anniversary events) and one that spans beyond the geographical reach of Jamestown’s boundaries. This level of inclusion of Africans in the history of Jamestown in Virginia seems to ultimately offer more questions than answers regarding their physical and historical presence at the site from the 1600s to today.

Jamestown continues to encounter stumbling blocks while attempting to navigate the complexities involved in acknowledging and contextualizing slavery. The potential for error or offense in the quest for accuracy and sensitivity in a depiction of slavery, and indeed slavery’s own violent and troubling history could ultimately make Jamestown less attractive for tourists, as places like Plymouth have a different history of race and servitude to depict.¹⁴¹ As Park Service historian Dwight Pitcaithley noted of this dilemma in preservation in 2003, “The past forty years have been characterized by the preservation of newly recognized historic places that reflect that diversity and by reinterpretation of existing places to present historic voices that had been ignored or suppressed under strict adherence to the dominant narrative. Not surprisingly, the expansion of the American story prompted clashes and conflicts in

¹⁴⁰ Hashaw, *The Birth of Black America*, 187.

¹⁴¹ Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, 143.

how that past should be presented.”¹⁴² While Massachusetts colonists did have slaves, the powerful link of slavery and cash crops like Virginia’s tobacco is one that Southern sites must confront. Controversies surrounding a staged slave auction in Colonial Williamsburg in 1994 highlighted the difficulties inherent in attempting to portray the slave experience in a living history museum.¹⁴³ “Academic historians were generally in favor of the auction recreation, but they urged that great care be taken so that it not become entertainment,” while groups like the Virginia NAACP expressed their concerns that Colonial Williamsburg’s living history framework could not support a serious conversation about slavery’s dark history. “In the end, most seemed satisfied that Williamsburg’s presentation was indeed educational.”¹⁴⁴ During the week in which I visited Jamestown in 2007, the Colonial Williamsburg schedule of events included such living history discussions as “God Is My Rock” with “Gowan Pamphlet, a slave known locally as a popular preacher,” who “offer[ed] his perspective on slavery, religion, and freedom,” and “When Freedom Isn’t Free,” in which “an enslaved African American confronts one who is free.”¹⁴⁵ Functioning within a living history framework, Jamestown Settlement focuses on the colonists and the Powhatans, leaving the lived experience of African slavery to the static dioramas and the imaginations of its visitors.

¹⁴² Dwight T. Pitcaithley, foreword in *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape* by Paul A. Schackel (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), xii.

¹⁴³ Erin Krutko, “Colonial Williamsburg’s Slave Auction Re-Enactment: Controversy, African American History and Public Memory” (master’s thesis, College of William and Mary), 2003; Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, 163-5

¹⁴⁴ James Oliver Horton, “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, eds. James O. and Lois E. Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 51.

¹⁴⁵ Colonial Williamsburg, *This Week: August 20-26 2007* (Williamsburg, 2007), Colonial Williamsburg pamphlet.

Native Virginians and Jamestown

Virginia's surviving native tribes attempted to use the spotlight of 2007 to assist their application for official federal recognition, an ongoing struggle rooted in Virginia's history of racial discrimination. Native Americans have also had to fight to be acknowledged not only as part of Jamestown's history, but also as people whose tribes are still very much intact as the former colony enters a fifth century of existence. In the 1907 Exposition, Virginia's Native Americans found themselves objectified and exoticized as part of the imperialist view being promoted. "The Powhatans played an important part in the origin stories of both the United States and Virginia and were thus allowed to participate in the exposition. But they had their own agenda: to demonstrate to Virginians and to the nation their continued existence as Native people."¹⁴⁶ The famous historical figure of Pocahontas was honored, but as a stereotyped figure of femininity and "savagery" converted to Christianity. In his discussion of the role of the Powhatans in the 1907 Exposition, Frederic W. Gleach argued that the tribe had not been permitted to represent the same multi-dimensionality as their English contemporaries. "With the partial exception of Pocahontas (who is an individual, at least), the Powhatans are largely reduced to historical stereotypes of generic Indians, nearly mythical characters from the past, rather than real historical people who played a part in the founding of what was to become the United States – let alone real living people in twentieth-century Virginia."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Gleach, "Pocahontas at the Fair," 421.

¹⁴⁷ Gleach, "Pocahontas at the Fair," 432.

The legal boundaries placed on Virginian Indians, dating back to the early years of their interactions with the English colonists, played a significant role in shaping the manner of their participation in the 400th anniversary. Census classifications of Native Americans as “colored” in the twentieth century became a stumbling block in gaining federal recognition by proving a continuous tribal presence in the state.¹⁴⁸ Negative connotations associated with Black ancestry played a role in continuing the systems of oppression that began in seventeenth-century Virginia. Black blood carried a social stigma for White and Native Virginians alike. The legacy of Pocahontas even played a role in legal definition of race in Virginia. Virginia’s Racial Integrity Law, passed in 1924, defined “whiteness” to include one-sixteenth or less American Indian blood, but no other racial group. “That exception was made for a peculiarly Virginian reason: there were still prominent whites in the state who trace their ancestry back to Pocahontas, who was not Caucasian.”¹⁴⁹ “Indians who wanted to be accepted as ‘Indian’ – as descendants of their own ancestors – now had scrupulously to avoid associations, much less marriages, with Afro-American people; they had to assert publicly that they had no African ancestry whatever; and they had to cultivate sympathetic whites who would say the same thing, for many whites discounted non-white testimony.”¹⁵⁰ The law was repealed in later decades of the twentieth century, but the continuity-disrupting impact of government-determined racial designations placed significant roadblocks in the path

¹⁴⁸ Brigid Schlute, “As Year’s End Nears, Disappointment,” *Washington Post*, November 23, 2007, B5.

¹⁴⁹ Rountree, *Pocahontas’ People*, 220-1.

¹⁵⁰ Rountree, *Pocahontas’ People*, 275.

to federal tribal recognition to Virginia's indigenous people. Mythological and practical service to the colonists could not ultimately confer "whiteness." Several of Virginia's tribes received recognition from the state in the 1980s, but the process for receiving federal recognition is more involved.¹⁵¹ By the time that the 2007 anniversary began, "[s]ix of Virginia's eight Indian tribes [had] been working since 2000 to receive federal recognition, which would make them eligible for financial assistance for housing, health care and education through various federal programs."¹⁵²

Virginia's native tribes participated in the events of the 400th anniversary, and exhibits, events and literature acknowledge the continuing presence of the tribes in Virginia as well as past oppression by English settlers and their descendants.¹⁵³ Dating back at least a decade, Virginia's tribes had an unprecedented amount of power in determining the course of events leading up to and including the 2007 anniversary. In 2000, members of Virginia's tribes were credited with getting the quadricentennial's tentative name of "Celebration 2007" stricken from the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation's official record by arguing that the act of European settlement was not an event meriting celebration for all Virginians.¹⁵⁴ Through the years preceding the 400th anniversary, the question of whether or not the tribes would participate in the commemoration remained unsettled as they fought for

¹⁵¹ Rountree, *Pocahontas' People*, 253.

¹⁵² Tammie Smith, "Indians Seek Role in 400th / But Federal Recognition Still Clouds Participation in Jamestown Events, Though Some are Hopeful of Outcome," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 11, 2004 (city edition), B-1.

¹⁵³ Joan Tupponce, "A tribal experience," *America's 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 108-9.

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Petkofsky, "'Celebration' Officially Eliminated; Jamestown May Need to Find a New Name," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 17, 2000 (city edition), B-1.

inclusion and governmental recognition. Leaders of Virginia's tribes repeatedly utilized public events and appearances to emphatically express the belief that involvement in the anniversary would be difficult to support if they were not federally recognized, while Jamestown officials sought their approval in plans for the anniversary alterations.¹⁵⁵ In discussing the contributions that local Native Americans made to the filming of *The New World*, released in 2005, Chickahominy Chief Stephen Adkins stated, "I have high hopes that this movie will be representative of a way of life that my forbearers knew and enjoyed. I hope it will... telegraph to the world the kind of injustices that my people faced. I think it's time that the people who greeted the Anglo settlers be afforded federal recognition."¹⁵⁶ Though the concerns of Virginia's tribes were acknowledged and publicized, they still faced problems in achieving recognition at the federal level.

Even with the added publicity attached to the quadricentennial, Native Virginians continued to see their rights disregarded. The U.S. House passed the bill, but by the end of 2007, it was clear that federal recognition would not accompany the commemoration at Jamestown, in spite of the cooperation and participation of Virginia's tribes. Neither the symbolic importance of the anniversary nor the tribes' work on the anniversary resulted in substantive assistance with navigating the difficult process of applying for tribal sovereignty. "Many Virginia Indians now say that what they feel most strongly is conflicted. They are still without federal

¹⁵⁵ Smith, "Indians Seek Role in 400th," B-1; Andrew Petkofsky, "To Indians, conference is a chance to improve future; Va. Tribes hope three-day event will highlight past adversity, present plight," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 24, 2006 (final edition), B-4.

¹⁵⁶ *Making The New World*

recognition. But people as far away as Russia and India now know the story of Jamestown from the Indians' point of view and of their survival all these centuries later, finally dispelling the notion that they'd all been 'routed and dispersed' by 1700."¹⁵⁷ As of 2011, the state of Virginia has officially recognized eleven tribes, while Virginia's senators reintroduced a bill to again attempt to gain federal recognition for six tribes.¹⁵⁸ The oppressed peoples of Jamestown history may be recognized as contributors to a new sense of cultural diversity, but it is still unclear whether their descendants will be so recognized or honored. With these challenges expressed publicly alongside the official anniversary fanfare, Jamestown's narrative of American origin grew to include all of these voices and the tension that they embody.

Jamestown As Primary Origin Narrative

In recent decades, American Studies scholars have questioned how history and memory have shaped American identity formation. I believe that the role of origin narratives in today's definitions of what "America" is and who is or is not "American" is an area that merits further exploration. Early American history can often seem divorced from those areas of American Studies that are more clearly grounded in the present. The continuing conversation about the naming of American Studies and how its boundaries are understood or policed, as well as non-academic

¹⁵⁷ Brigid Schlute, "U.S. House Approves Recognition of Va. Tribes," *Washington Post*, May 9, 2007, B01; Brigid Schlute, "As Year's End Nears, Disappointment," *Washington Post*, November 23, 2007, B1.

¹⁵⁸ "VCI – Virginia Tribes," <http://indians.vipnet.org/tribes.cfm>, accessed April 19, 2011; "Senators Webb, Warner Reintroduce Bill to Recognize Six Virginia Indian Tribes," <http://www.webb.senate.gov/newsroom/pressreleases/02-18-2011-01.cfm>, accessed April 19, 2011.

debates regarding how American citizenship is defined and policed, needs to have some grounding in a connection to American origin. The origin narratives connected to different locations, regions, and peoples result in different present-day “Americas.” These varied histories include the Spanish of St. Augustine and Santa Fe, whose sixteenth-century settlement has been subsumed to some degree by the Anglocentric narratives of Jamestown and Plymouth, and the Europeans of Ellis Island, whose descendants comprise what is described today as a “nation of immigrants,” whose narrative excludes a history of English settlement and African slavery.

According to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, the stated goals of the Jamestown 400th anniversary celebration were “to increase tourism, expand economic development and renew educational awareness of Virginia’s significant impact as the birthplace of our modern American society.”¹⁵⁹ The foundation itself works “to educate and promote understanding and awareness of Virginia’s role in the creation of the United States of America.”¹⁶⁰ One of the means of showcasing the Jamestown site and its history is placing it in contrast with the history of Plymouth in Massachusetts. Other locations with claims to American origin have challenged Jamestown over the years. In 1934, the “Lost Colony” of Roanoke had its 350th anniversary, which was observed by the creation of a new memorial at the site. At the time, the action indicated that “North Carolina is not willing to release to Virginia and Massachusetts rights to the ‘first English settlement’ – honors which accepted

¹⁵⁹ “Commemoration Goals,” <http://americas400thanniversary.com/about-commemorationgoals.cf>, accessed April 15, 2008. These goals, from an “America’s 400th Anniversary” website, are those of Jamestown 2007, a subagency of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.

¹⁶⁰ “Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Mission Statement,” <http://jamestown-yorktown.state.va.us/about.htm>, accessed April 15, 2008.

American history has awarded in the order named and pegged to Jamestown, 1607, and Plymouth, 1620,” noting the continued relevance of North Carolina history through the legacy of the Wright brothers’ first flight.¹⁶¹ A 2007 article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* described the way that St. Augustine, Florida’s mayor used the Jamestown anniversary as a source of ideas for “his town’s 450th anniversary celebration in 2015, and the 500th anniversary of Ponce de Leon’s landing in 2013.”¹⁶² Although these sites have the objective facts of time on their side, and they are considered by some to be “candidates for the ‘founding colony’ prize,” unfortunately, none “ever wins enough primary votes to get on the ballot.” In a 2007 piece on the conflict between Jamestown and Plymouth, historian James Axtell remarked in particular on the demonization of the Spanish that led to their exclusion from the national discourse of American origin. “When Great Britain and later the new United States were able to reduce Spain to impotence in eastern North America, nationalistic historians on the winning side, as is their wont, effectively wrote the losers out of the story, except as a moral foil.”¹⁶³ Given the degree to which other places have essentially faded into the background, the story of Plymouth has presented the most tenacious challenge to Jamestown’s claim to the “America’s birthplace” throne.

¹⁶¹ H.I. Brock, “North Carolina Builds Shrine to First Colony; The 350th Anniversary of the Discovery of Roanoke Island Recalls the ‘First English Settlement,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1934, XX18.

¹⁶² Daniel Neman, “St. Augustine to Jamestown: good wishes and wry smiles,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 29, 2007 (final edition), J-1.

¹⁶³ James Axtell, “Historical Rivalry,” in Dennis Montgomery, compiler, *1607: Jamestown and the New World*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 162.

This conflict has been noted in Jamestown-related writings dating back at least to the 1907 anniversary. In a historical guidebook published in 1907, author J.E. Davis contrasted Jamestown and Plymouth in noting the perceived erosion of Jamestown Island by the James River. “No Plymouth Rock this to withstand forever the action of the waves!”¹⁶⁴ Davis argued for the use of imagination in the memory of Jamestown – the burial over time of the foundations of the original colony left few tangible reminders of the site. In 1957, *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editor (and vocal evangelist for Virginia’s national reputation) Virginius Dabney wrote on the Jamestown versus Plymouth debate in the pages of the *New York Times*. “The facts are that, in New England, Plymouth was less important than Massachusetts Bay and that the two together were no more important than Virginia.”¹⁶⁵ In 2007, historian Karen Ordahl Kupperman made essentially the same point as Dabney, observing that Jamestown is viewed as “the creation story from hell” and that the Puritans “are the forebears we prefer to acknowledge” before arguing that “the good origins versus bad origins dichotomy is a false one based on a whole series of faulty premises.”¹⁶⁶ Officials and planners of the Jamestown commemoration clearly seek to reclaim a mantle of the “birthplace of America” from Plymouth and the Pilgrims. Organizers acknowledge fundamental differences in the histories of Jamestown and Plymouth, and argue based on those differences that one site is more or less deserving of recognition as the origin of what is today the United States of America.

¹⁶⁴ J. E. Davis, *Jamestown and Her Neighbors on Virginia’s Historic Peninsula* (Richmond, VA: Garrett & Massie, Inc. Publishers, 1928), 16.

¹⁶⁵ Virginius Dabney, “Query About the Pilgrim Fathers,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1957, 79.

¹⁶⁶ Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project*, 1-2.

The “free enterprise” background of the Jamestown settlers conflicts with the popular story of the Pilgrims’ escape from religious persecution in England. “From the Revolution to late in the nineteenth century, New England was the arbiter, standard, and primary source of American culture. Its poets, novelists, orators, historians and textbook writers saw to it that Plymouth became and remained America’s ‘first’ and best-known colony.”¹⁶⁷ A *New York Times* article from Thanksgiving week in 2007 concerning the Plymouth reaction to the Jamestown anniversary and its claim to the “America’s birthplace” title highlighted the degree to which Plymouth officials view their site’s history as more family-friendly than that of Jamestown. “Plymouth is the settlement that has spoken to the hearts and souls of Americans over centuries,” stated Pilgrim Hall Museum director Peggy Baker, in a remark that would seem to situate Jamestown, in opposition, as heartless.¹⁶⁸ The rhetoric and literature that has advocated for Jamestown’s superiority or at least equality in stature to Plymouth do not argue that the two sites contribute identical qualities to what is America today. However, they do contend that quest for financial gain does not separate them from Americans today. The theme of “free enterprise” in statements from anniversary-connected public officials emphasizes the roots of democracy and capitalism in the United States. Both settlements faced difficulties in gaining their footing, but resulted in successful colonies. The storied dichotomy of

¹⁶⁷ Axtell, “Historical Rivalry,” 170.

¹⁶⁸ Abby Goodnough, “If Not First in Time, First in the Country’s Heart,” *New York Times*, November 22, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/22/us/22plymouth.html?_r=1&oref=slogin, accessed December 8, 2007.

grasping, mercenary Virginians and pious Puritans continues to be challenged as Jamestown strives for national recognition as a birthplace.

The forceful invocation of Jamestown, and, more broadly, Virginia as an American origin site reoccurs as Jamestown has been reshaped over time. Sometimes that identity formation is developed through contrast with another location. The desire for dominance in American origin mythology is palpable throughout the rhetoric of each anniversary within the current tourist era, particularly in comparisons between Jamestown and Plymouth.

On the occasion of the Jamestown Exposition, a DAR leader reminded the nation that ‘if the rosary of patriotism should be counted,’ the South’s role in the building of the republic could not be underestimated: ‘First in settlement, first, with Massachusetts beside her, in resistance to tyranny through the fiery eloquence of Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee; first through Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence; first through James Madison, in framing the Constitution.’¹⁶⁹

A simple reiteration of this point can be seen in Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell’s statement following his proclamation of Confederate History Month in April 2010:

“America’s history has been written in Virginia.”¹⁷⁰

A study of the history presented at Jamestown and the significance assigned to that history, particularly in the way that actors in the creation of Jamestown’s origin narrative engaged with and challenged the past, not only probes the role played by origin narratives in current understandings of the United States and definitions of “America,” but also opens up study of other sites like Plymouth, Santa Fe and Ellis

¹⁶⁹ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 36.

¹⁷⁰ “Statement of Governor Bob McDonnell,”

<http://www.governor.virginia.gov/news/viewRelease.cfm?id=111> (accessed January 11, 2011).

Island and the ways that their “official” and unofficial histories impact these definitions as they change over time. The 2007 anniversary at Jamestown demonstrates an attempt to merge the dominant strains of origin narrative creation – that of the “official” and those of othered people. This type of narrative is formed by what we know, what we think we know, what we speculate, what we correct from the record as it has existed previously, and what facts, legends, and stories we decide we can or cannot take at face value.

Jamestown 2007 and What it Means

For many years, the only point of view of English colonialism in America permitted as part of the “official” origin narrative was that of the English – their triumph in achieving permanent colonial settlement was emphasized, with native conflict and African slavery dramatically underplayed. In her 2007 speech to the Virginia legislature, Queen Elizabeth stated, “When I visited fifty years ago...we celebrated the 350th anniversary largely from the perspective of those settlers, in terms of the exploration of new worlds, the spread of values and of the English language, and the sacrifice of those early pioneers. These remain great attributes, and we still appreciate their impact today. But fifty years on, we are now in a position to reflect more candidly on the Jamestown legacy.”¹⁷¹ Her point was echoed by then-Virginia governor Tim Kaine at a news conference. “We didn’t tell everybody’s story; we didn’t include everyone; we didn’t honor all the accomplishments. We didn’t acknowledge that the progress came at a cost and there was huge pain along

¹⁷¹ “Queen Elizabeth II Addresses Virginia Legislature,” CQ Transcripts Wire, May 3, 2007.

the way. This time, we have a chance to really get it right.”¹⁷² These acknowledgements of erasure give shape to the holes in previous accounts of Jamestown’s history and historical legacy. They state that these subsumed histories were no less origin narratives – the beginnings of these groups’ interactions with the colonial English shaped their descendants’ subsequent interactions and defined their status in what would become the United States of America.

The 2007 anniversary was marketed as a celebration of America and Americans. The Jamestown celebration was billed in anniversary advertisements and publications as an acknowledgement of the long roots of qualities that are today considered quintessentially “American.” In the official commemorative publication of the anniversary, Honorary Chair Sandra Day O’Connor stated that the anniversary recognizes “the unifying legacies of democracy, free enterprise and cultural diversity that first took root at Jamestown, Virginia, in the spring of 1607.”¹⁷³ These were some of the promotional keywords of the celebration, highlighting concepts that appeared throughout speeches and literature concerning the year’s events. This characterization of the event summarizes two key presumptions of the anniversary commemoration – that there are specific qualities that can be identified and utilized to define what it means to be “American,” and that those same qualities tie the nation, its people and its history inextricably to Jamestown, Virginia.

¹⁷² Ian Urbina, “Back in U.S., Queen Celebrates Ex-Colony,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/04us/04queen.html> (accessed December 8, 2007).

¹⁷³ Sandra Day O’Connor, “Welcome,” *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 17.

Ultimately, the Jamestown 400th anniversary's impact on the national level cannot be expressed through a distinct number or figure. It exists in the intangibility of the nation's collective memory. Tourism, and the revenue that tourism brings, is part of the desire to claim ownership of the starting point for an idea of one "true" America, certainly, but lying beneath the objective, financial goals is an implicit desire for possession of a significant space in America's collective memory. The impact is ultimately intangible, like the many-authored, amorphous narrative the anniversary communicates.

The narrative incorporates and shares a close relationship with myth, but it is not exclusively defined by myth. Prosaic musings on Jamestown from historical travel guides of the early twentieth century emphasize the role of the mythic in an idea of Jamestown. Edward Hagan Hall noted in 1902, "we may say of Jamestown *the city*, 'Jamestown was.' But *historic* Jamestown *is*, and lives mightily to-day in the hearts of the American people, in the institutions of their government, in the civilization of a hemisphere." Hall goes on to describe Jamestown Island as "a sacred place, the islet that was consecrated by the sacrifices and sufferings of a generation of heroes, and that entombs the bones and sacred memorials of the pathfinders of Anglo-Saxon America."¹⁷⁴ Or, as a 1907 guide by William H. Lee observes, "The Far East has its Mecca, Palestine its Jerusalem, France its Lourdes and Italy its Loretto, but America's only shrines are her altars of patriotism – the first and the most potent being Jamestown; Jamestown, the sire of Virginia, and Virginia the

¹⁷⁴ Hall, *Jamestown 1607-1907*, 30; Randall Mason, "Historic Preservation, Public Memory, and the Making of Modern New York City," in *Giving Preservation a History*, Page and Mason, eds. 135.

mother of this great Republic.”¹⁷⁵ While the promotional materials of 2007 may not have used such dramatic language in their invitations to potential tourists, the image of Jamestown’s status among sites with claims to American origin was similarly expressed. As then-Vice President Dick Cheney stated in a 2007 speech specifically contrasting Jamestown with Plymouth, “The history of our country did not begin on Cape Cod in 1620....Indeed, so much of what defines our country – its language, legal traditions and institutions – have roots in the community that rose in this corner of Virginia.”¹⁷⁶

Origin narratives can be understood as involving a sort of interplay or push-and-pull between evolution and stasis. For any site considered a location where American origin can be placed, the narrative of that origin depends upon the collective tellers and their subjectivity. If there is, in fact, such a thing as pure historical fact, the facts do not change; for example, few, if any, historians dispute the presence of a young indigenous woman known as Pocahontas (among other names) at the Jamestown settlement in its early years. However, the meaning of Pocahontas’ presence at Jamestown has been widely debated and taken as indicative of different aspects of the English-native relationship in the centuries since their initial interactions. These contrasts and conflicts highlight the role of legitimization through “official” recognition in entrenching some narratives while negating, denying or erasing others.

¹⁷⁵ Lee, Laird & Lee’s *Guide to Historic Virginia and the Jamestown Centennial*, 47.

¹⁷⁶ *America’s 400th Anniversary Official Commemorative Publication*, 30.

Each successive commemoration builds on the past, sometimes masking the historical record to do so. If the experience of walking through the recreated fort or onto a ship is living history, then perhaps walking around the island, with its statues and memorials alongside the continuing excavation of the original fort site, felt like living historiography to me as I experienced different representations and interpretations of Jamestown's history at different points along the path. The changes that have occurred over the past century show a site without static meaning in Virginia, the United States of America or the wider world. As Americans' perception of themselves and their history shift over time, so does the reading of the founding of the Jamestown settlement. The evolution of Jamestown and the way that its history and public memory have changed over time result in a framing not only of America's past, but of its present and future as well, creating a unique American origin narrative. The progression of time has resulted in an increased focus on fact and that which can be proven through the historical record. At Jamestown, this move away from the past's emphasis on nationalistic and Anglo-centric mythology in the years leading up to 2007 was two-pronged; one strand of narrative readjustment focused on unprecedented inclusion of the concurrent histories of African and native peoples, while another emphasized the archaeological record as a means of introducing an element of scientific fact into the Jamestown story. By no means did this negate the pre-existing additions to the site's narratives; they become compounded and layered over time. The past can never quite be distant when it is central to a site's sense of historical significance.

When I first began thinking about this project, I imagined that it would serve as a fairly straightforward account of the 2007 anniversary. What I found was wide-reaching and complex – sometimes composed of deeply entwined threads of history and myth, sometimes a tenuously interlocked Venn diagram of the interactions between the members of different cultural groups, sometimes a layering of present atop past atop past, memorials and museums serving in place of the tree rings of dendrochronologists and object-rich dirt layers of archaeologists.¹⁷⁷ How does one characterize this kind of story, with so many actors and voices at play, each demanding listeners, all refusing to fit together like so many puzzle pieces?

There is no need to tell the story of how something came to be until it exists, but by the time that the United States came into being the Jamestown story had already percolated for nearly 200 years, the seventeenth-century actors long dead and their lives open to interpretation. Where historians track through text the ways that their subject has been contextualized over time, Jamestown's memorial timeline sculpts the island's landscape and tourist spaces. Jamestown's history comprised material and text, history and myth, museum and memorial, working in concert and in conflict, joining the emotional appeal of winning hearts with the educational appeal of winning minds and the financial appeal of winning wallets. The story of Jamestown's 400th anniversary, and the story told by Jamestown's 400th anniversary, shows the collective as interpellator, calling an image of the nation into being, building and shaping and debating Jamestown's America over first decades and now

¹⁷⁷ Lindgren, "A Spirit that Fires the Imagination" in Page and Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History*, 127.

centuries.

Appendix 1:



Exterior of Archaearium at right. Photograph taken at Historic Jamestowne by author, August 21, 2007.

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