

First Jamestown, Buried Truth and Global Legacies



Bill Kelso

Association for the Preservation of Virginia
Antiquities, The National Park Service,
Richmond, VA

This presentation describes how the lost James Fort at the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, the first English, permanent colony, was found after four hundred years. Dr. Kelso also reveals new historical insights about what life and death were like in that settlement for its early adventurers. The presentation also considers the national and global implications of recapturing the original Jamestown landscape, especially as it relates to the development of democracy and the space age.





For more than 30 years before Dr. Kelso became director of archaeology for the APVA *Jamestown Rediscovery* archaeological project, he had decided on a career in American, historical archaeology and Early American history. Thanks to his training in liberal arts and history at Baldwin Wallace and training in archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, he eventually became director of archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg's Carter's Grove, Jefferson's Monticello, and Poplar Forest. Dr. Kelso was also commissioner of archaeology for the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

Because he had a theory that the first permanent English settlement of 1607 was not lost to river erosion as conventional wisdom would have it, in 1993, he left Monticello and persuaded the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) to hire him to find James Fort, on Jamestown Island, Virginia.

Coincidentally, the APVA was embarking on its second century of service and wanted to make a significant contribution to the 400th anniversary in 2007 of the founding of Jamestown. The excavation began in 1994, and by 1996, with a small staff of archaeologists, Dr. Kelso had enough evidence to announce that this crew had discovered the remains of James Fort, dispelling that long-held belief that the fort was lost to the James River. Since then, they have found the outline of James Fort including the remains of portions of the palisade walls and two bulwarks, as well as several buildings, pits and wells. Over one million objects reflective of life at James Fort have been unearthed so far. In early May 2007, this contribution to American history by Dr. Kelso, AVPA, and the team working on the excavation became a reality witnessed by Queen Elizabeth, President George W Bush, the Governor of Virginia and thousands of visitors.

Dr. Kelso has lectured throughout the U.S. and Europe and has authored or contributed to numerous books and articles on archaeology including *Jamestown: The Buried Truth*; *Jamestown Rediscovery I-VIII*; *Kingsmill Plantations: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia*; and *Archaeology of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello: Artifacts of Everyday Life in the Plantation Community*.