

## Tracing **PASTS**

# Re-enacting family history can help in your search

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I've often written about how valuable it can be for genealogists to visit historic areas, especially those where you can learn about the daily life of your ancestors. This week, I'm having a chance to do that myself. My family and I are spending the week in the Historic Triangle: Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown, Va. And while I have not definitively traced a family member to the area, it has been phenomenal to experience daily life in a time period when I know people related to me were living.

We spent a day at Jamestown Settlement and Historic Jamestowne. Since this area is such a popular tourist destination, I know many of you have also visited here. Having the opportunity to hear musket fire and climb aboard replicas of the three ships that brought the original colonists to the site certainly helped my understanding of daily life here. But the history shared by the actors also offered insights for genealogists. While aboard the ship *Susan Constant*, we were told there are no records of which man sailed to Jamestown on which ship. We know the names of most of the colonists, but no passenger lists exist specific to each ship.

There was more practical information at Historic Jamestowne. This location, the place of the actual original settlement, is a beautiful, peaceful place. Actual archaeological

excavations are happening here, and lucky visitors can watch the work. If you are descended from an early settler, you can visit [www.historicjamestowne.org/biographies](http://www.historicjamestowne.org/biographies) and do some research: "The Jamestown Biographies Project is the result of years of research into the records of settlers who arrived in Virginia during the first 18 years of the colony's existence (1607-1624). Conducting research both in the United States and abroad, APVA Preservation Virginia has sought to shed some light on the lives of the first wave of pioneering colonists who were so crucial to the existence of the United States.

Using a variety of sources that include census, church and tax records from Virginia and Europe, the Project has pieced together information about colonists that includes when they arrived, where they came from, where they settled, what their occupation was and who their parents and children were. The record can be very scant for some settlers and very rich for others. For some settlers, the Project might only have their name and when they arrived, for others we have several paragraphs of information and might know everything from what ship they arrived in to how many acres of land they owned in Virginia.

There is a charge of \$4.95 per settler to access the information they have. Once you have done so, you have permanent access to the record and will be notified when new information is added. Since this is an ongoing project, the fee is a good investment!

I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to visit here. If you love American history, this is a great place to be!