

NewsRelease

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NASA TO FLY HISTORIC JAMESTOWN ARTIFACT, MEMENTOS ON SPACE SHUTTLE

HAMPTON, Va. – NASA, intently focused on leading the next phase of American exploration, is preparing to honor those who led one of the first phases 400 years ago.

NASA will fly a nearly 400-year-old artifact unearthed at the site of the first permanent English settlement in the Americas into space aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis scheduled for launch in March. Upon completion of the flight, the artifact – a lead cargo tag reading “Yames Towne” – will have logged more than four million miles over four centuries traveling from England to Jamestown, then to and back from the International Space Station.

Two sets of Jamestown commemorative coins, recently issued by the U.S. Mint, will also fly aboard Atlantis.

Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine presented the artifact and coins to NASA Langley Research Center Director Lesa Roe at AeroSpace Day in Richmond this morning.

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“This exploratory shuttle flight connects our adventurous past with the innovation and continued intellectual curiosity that guides our future as we commemorate America’s 400th,” Governor Kaine said. “We embrace that future by contemplating Jamestown’s pivotal role as the place where our nation’s defining characteristics – democracy, free enterprise, cultural diversity and the spirit of exploration -- took root.”

The tag, found at the bottom of a well during an archeological dig at the site of James Fort on Jamestown Island, is most likely a discarded shipping tag from a crate or a trunk arriving from England around 1611. It indicates the strengthening of trade patterns during the colony’s early days.

“NASA is proud to be entrusted with this piece of exploration history and to participate in the commemoration of America’s 400th Anniversary, highlighting the next phase of America’s exploration vision. Remembering the spirit of adventure that led to the establishment of Jamestown is appropriate as this country works toward establishing a permanent outpost on another planetary body,” said Roe.

William M. Kelso, APVA Preservation Virginia’s director of archaeology at Historic Jamestowne, leads the Jamestown Rediscovery Project that has unearthed more than a million artifacts at the site of the first permanent English settlement in America. “This artifact clearly marks Jamestown as a destination – our nation’s first ‘address.’ It demonstrates the development of trade patterns crucial to the survival of the colony,” Kelso said.

The commemorative coins, a \$5 gold piece and a silver dollar, were authorized by Congress and contain visual references to Jamestown’s legacies. When returned from space, NASA will present one set to Governor Kaine for display at Jamestown Settlement, a 17th century living history museum. The second set will go to the Smithsonian Institution.

Also following the flight, NASA will return the shipping tag to Historic Jamestowne for display in its Archaearium, a new archaeological museum showcasing items unearthed over the past 13 years during excavations that include the long lost remains of James Fort. For centuries the fort, first built in 1607, was believed to have eroded into the James River.

America’s vision to return to the Moon and then venture to Mars and beyond continues the legacy of exploration and discovery initiated 400 years ago by our country’s earliest explorers. To learn more about NASA’s long-term exploration goals, visit
<http://www.nasa.gov>

For more information about the commemoration of Jamestown’s 400th anniversary visit
<http://www.america400thanniversary.com>

For more information about Historic Jamestowne visit
<http://historicjamestowne.org>

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