

**Remarks by German Ambassador Klaus Scharioth at the
Unveiling of the Commemorative Plaque Celebrating the
Arrival of German Glassblowers in Colonial Jamestown in 1608
Jamestown, Virginia, April 19, 2008**

Madam Mayor Zeidler, Secretary Smith, Superintendent Smith, Members of German-American Societies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today we have the special honor to pay tribute to the first Germans who 400 years ago found a new home in America and laid the foundation for the German-American friendship which has flourished to this day.

In 1607, the first German, Johannes Fleischer, arrived in this land with the first group of English settlers after a long and arduous journey by sea. The botanist and physician Johannes Fleischer was a native of Breslau, and an unusually educated man who held doctor degrees in both medicine and philosophy which in those days included the natural sciences. His aim was to study what for him were exotic flora and fauna and to search for new medicines.

In early October 1608, shortly after Fleischer's untimely death due to the extremely difficult living conditions, two German glassmakers, whose names still today are unknown, arrived at Jamestown. Immediately after their arrival, the two Germans began to test the properties of the sand along the James River. And they were very successful in their efforts! Only two months after their arrival, they were sending their first glass samples, which were initially produced using melting pots, to England.

Then, in 1609, together with other pioneers from Britain the two German glassmakers built a glasshouse with four furnaces and thus erected the first "industrial operation" in the British part of America, at this site where we stand today. What was notable about this was that the German glassmakers had to construct the furnaces themselves and thus introduced far more knowledge into the settlement development than pure glass-making.

Along with the glassmakers, three wainscot sawyers came to Jamestown. Historians today assume that the three men, Samuel, Adam, and Franz, originally came from the Black Forest region. By building wood houses, these three men contributed significantly to improving the quality of life at Jamestown and thus to its preservation and expansion.

Here, on the banks of the James River, we find ourselves at an important historical site – for the German settlers, together with the British colonists, laid the groundwork for the people who followed them – people who, with hope and optimism, sought and were able to build a new life in America. They found opportunity; they brought highly skilled craftsmanship, boundless energy and a strong work ethic.

The remains of the glasshouse before which we stand today are ultimately a symbol

of strength, courage, and confidence, because, like the entire colony, it was built under the most difficult of circumstances. Based on what we know today, only 38 of the 104 original settlers survived the first nine months. The long journey by sea, insufficient food supplies, mosquitoes, disease, the lack of clean drinking water, disputes with the indigenous Indians, and starvation caused by the long hot summer and lack of supply ships took a heavy toll on the settlers. But they persevered.

In remembrance of the important contribution that the first, brave German settlers made to the development of America, we would now like to unveil this commemorative plaque.