

Jamestown Rediscovery

HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE

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Jamestown Dedicates the Reconstructed Palisade

JAMESTOWN, Va. (May 23, 2023) –

When Jamestown archaeologists began the search for James Fort in 1994, one of the first pieces of evidence that the fort site still existed on land, instead of lost to the James River, was the stains left behind by the logs of the palisade walls. Over nine years, archaeology revealed the full footprint of the original 1607 triangular fort and the team was able to map the exact size, shape, and position of each post that made up the palisade. Based on this evidence, an interpretive palisade was built in 2004. However, at almost twenty years old, it was due for improvement.

Last year, Jamestown contracted with experienced, Williamsburg-based traditional carpentry shop Black Creek Workshop to completely replace the 2004 palisade. Carefully built directly atop the original fort trenches, the modern palisade allows visitors to envision the scale of the first English fort at Jamestown. Both historical and archaeological records tell us the exact size and shape of the fort: 420 feet on the river side and 300 feet on the landward sides, with a 50-foot bulwark at each corner, roughly an acre in size.

Using new black locust logs sourced from Wisconsin and, coincidentally, Jamestown, New York, the new palisade will stand for decades to come. Black locust is highly durable and weathers the elements and resists insect damage far better than other types of wood. Black Creek carpenters Ben Bristow and Jesse Robertson processed each log using techniques similar to those the colonists would have used over 400 years ago. Ben and Jesse removed bark at the bottom of the logs, split them, and then created units of logs connected by a cross-rail. The log unit is installed using pegs and earthen trenches, just as they were built in 1607. Visitors often heard the sounds of Jesse splitting and hammering logs over the course of the year, much longer than the three weeks it took the colonists in 1607.

“For most of history, people believed the fort had eroded away,” said Jim Horn, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation President. “Having the interpretive palisade in the exact location of the original fort helps visitors understand what was under the soil the entire time and the significance of the more than 4 million artifacts found since the fort was discovered.” The new palisade was completed in March 2023 and dedicated by Jamestown’s staff, the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation Board of Trustees, and Black Creek Workshop on March 31. Construction of the palisade was generously funded through the Dr. William M. and Ellen B. Kelso Fund for Archaeology with major support from Williamsburg residents and Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation Trustees Elaine and Don Bogus.

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Images of the palisade dedication [can be found here](#). All photos courtesy of Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation.

About Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation

The Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation preserves and shares the original site of James Fort and Jamestown, established in 1607. The Foundation is dedicated to uncovering, preserving, and sharing Jamestown's diverse history, and highlighting its major contribution to the foundations of modern American society. Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit. JRF jointly administers Historic Jamestowne alongside the National Park Service. Admission includes the James Fort site, New Town, and the Voorhees Archaearium Archaeological Museum, as well as walking tours, living history, and public programs. For more information about visiting Jamestown, please visit www.historicjamestowne.org or call (757) 856-1250.