

# *Jamestown Rediscovery*

HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE

Contact: Kelly Beckley  
757-856-1259  
[kbeckley@preservationvirginia.org](mailto:kbeckley@preservationvirginia.org)

## **National Campaign Launched to Protect Jamestown's Iconic Church Tower**



*(Historic Jamestowne's iconic brick Church Tower illuminated at night)*

JAMESTOWN, Va. (May 5, 2021)-

Jamestown's iconic brick Church Tower, the only above-ground, 17th-century structure remaining from when Jamestown was the capital of Virginia, has served as a marker for our nation's founding since the 19th century. In 1893, the newly-formed APVA purchased the 22 1/2 acres of Jamestown Island on which the tower sits. Although the APVA conducted archaeology in and around the site over the next decade, discovering portions of the 1617 church foundations and later 1639 brick church, their primary mission was to preserve the historic tower for generations to come.

By the time the APVA acquired the property, the tower had already fallen into ruin. Probably stolen by looters, the doors were long gone, the roof had collapsed, and much of the brick and mortar had disintegrated. The APVA attempted to halt any further deterioration by pargeting the top and interior with Portland cement. However, they chose not to rebuild the tower, including the roof, as it would have appeared in the 17th-century.

For the past century, Preservation Virginia and Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation have continued to maintain and preserve the tower. Now, after more than 100 years, it is again in need of more significant restoration. Additionally, recent excavations within the tower revealed an almost fully-intact, brick foundation of Jamestown's 1617 church's west wall. It is inside the 1617 church where the nation's first General Assembly took place. Without a roof to the tower, this extraordinary and irreplaceable discovery is exposed to nature's elements and at risk of being lost forever. It was clear that installing a roof in addition to making other repairs to the tower was not only necessary now, but urgent.

Jamestown staff plan to preserve the form and quality of the iconic ruin while ensuring it is protected from future damage and is stable for Jamestown's hundreds of thousands of visitors. Staff have enlisted renowned architects David Stemann and Edwin Pease to develop a comprehensive design to preserve the historic structure and protect the archaeological features inside.



*(Exterior and interior drawings of the tower roof design, courtesy of David Stemann of Stemann | Pease Architecture)*

The roof element's design approach will be distinctly modern, made of steel and glass, but will be placed entirely below the remaining "parapet" to not be visible from the outside. It is of utmost importance that the new structure does not strain the historic masonry, and will therefore utilize existing joist pockets and mechanical connections. Materials, sizes, and configuration will be tuned to optimize performance, imposing the lightest load on the centuries-old brick. Other concerns, such as ventilation and drainage, have also been addressed in the design and the tower will get a new sliding-glass door entry.

At the core of Jamestown Rediscovery's mission is preservation *and* education. In addition to preserving the 17th-century tower, it is important that the team's extraordinary archaeological discoveries continue to be shared. The discovery of the 1617 church's west wall within the tower must be protected while remaining visible to the public. Replicating previous exhibit designs inside the Memorial Church and the Archaearium Museum, both of which are built atop discoveries of other 17th-century finds, a glass floor portal will enclose the brick foundations while allowing visitors to view the feature and safely walk across it. Interpretive elements at the tower will include graphic panels and computer media explaining the importance of this site.

The total needed to complete the Jamestown Church Tower Project is \$375,000. To date, \$224,000 has been raised from donors across the country. The Cabell Foundation, Richmond, Virginia, has committed a 1:1 matching grant up to \$100,000.

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*Historic Jamestowne preserves the original site of the first permanent English settlement in America and is jointly administered by the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation and the National Park Service. Entrance tickets are available at the Visitor Center from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and the grounds remain open until dusk. General admission is \$25.00 per adult (which includes both Historic Jamestowne and Yorktown Battlefield for seven consecutive days). Children 15 & under are free. National Park Passes and Preservation Virginia Memberships are accepted; however a \$10 per person fee may apply. Entrance tickets and passes include admission to the archaeological site, the Memorial Church, the Voorhees Archaearium Archaeological Museum, as well as scheduled daily walking tours and public programs. For opening hours of the Dale House Café and information about special events, please visit [www.historicjamestowne.org](http://www.historicjamestowne.org) or call (757) 856-1250.*