

Jamestown Rediscovery

HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE

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The Jamestowne Society Donates \$150,000 to Preserve Jamestown's 17th-Century Church Tower



(From left) Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation's Director of Archaeology David Givens and Director of Development Denise Kellogg were presented with a \$150,000 donation by Jamestowne Society Executive Director Bonnie Hofmeyer and Jamestown Society Lieutenant Governor Nancy Hill. Photo courtesy of Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation.

JAMESTOWN, Va. (March 10, 2023) –

In the spring of 2021, the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation launched a national campaign to protect the iconic church tower at historic Jamestown. The brick tower is the only remaining above-ground example of 17th-century architecture at Jamestown from when it served as Virginia's colonial capital. For centuries, it has stood as a symbol of America's beginnings and a reminder of the importance of historic preservation. Recognizing the significance of the tower to American history, members of the Jamestowne Society pledged to raise \$150,000 to go towards the completion of this project. This past December, the Jamestowne Society reached this goal and in January, members of the Jamestowne Society and Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation staff came together to celebrate this achievement.

Presenting the generous contribution to Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation's Director of Archaeology David Givens and Director of Development Denise Kellogg, Jamestown Society's

Executive Director Bonnie Hofmeyer said, “The historic church tower is the reason Jamestown was saved more than 100 years ago. It represents the very beginning of the American story, and Jamestowne Society members want to help save it so that future generations can stand in the place where history happened.”

The church tower dates to the late 17th century, approximately 1680. Between 1617 and 1699, three major periods of church construction, repair, and remodeling occurred at Jamestown, with each later iteration built upon the same consecrated ground. When the statehouse at Jamestown burned in 1698, the capital of the colony was relocated to nearby Williamsburg and subsequently, most of Jamestown’s residents followed. The church was deconsecrated and abandoned sometime in the 1750s and slowly fell into ruin. By 1893, the church tower was a freestanding monument open to the elements. The church’s walls and tower roof had collapsed, the doors had been removed, and much of the brick and mortar was disintegrating. Early conservators used the prevailing preservation techniques of the day to halt further deterioration of the bricks, but they chose not to rebuild the tower or its roof.

More recently, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation initiated conservation work on the tower that identified critical areas that must be addressed. The lower-fired, interior bricks, which were never meant to be exposed to the elements, are more subject to damage from regular moisture and freeze/thaw cycles. Additionally, excavations within the tower in 2019 revealed an almost fully-intact brick foundation of the west wall of the 1617 church, in which the nation’s first General Assembly met in the summer of 1619. By the end of the 2019 excavations, it became clear that the historic interior brickwork and important archaeological discoveries found beneath the tower’s floor would remain subject to continuing and serious deterioration from exposure to the elements if no action is taken.

In order to preserve the tower for generations to come, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation has developed a comprehensive plan that addresses current and future threats to the 17th-century church tower while respecting the building’s historic fabric and form. Calling on the expertise of skilled professionals in historic preservation, architecture, and construction, the interior roof project will begin in the months ahead and will be completed in 2023. “We are delighted to partner again with The Jamestowne Society, who have supported archaeology and preservation of the original fort since the inception of the Rediscovery Project almost thirty years ago,” said Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation President & CO James Horn. “Their members, descendants of early settlers of Jamestown, have been instrumental in preserving this space, where all Americans can explore the exact place where our nation’s history began.”

Jamestowne Society’s leadership gift is joined by major funding from the Randolph D. Rouse Foundation, the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, the Roller Bottimore Foundation, and the Robert G. Cabell III & Maude Morgan Cabell Foundation. Updates on the project will be posted on the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation website at [historicjamestowne.org](https://www.historicjamestowne.org).

About the Jamestowne Society

Members of the Jamestowne Society are descended from early settlers who lived or held colonial government positions in Jamestowne, Virginia prior to 1700, or who invested in its establishment. The Jamestowne Society was organized for educational, historical, and patriotic purposes. The Society has a range of activities, from visiting early American sites, providing an annual graduate fellowship for research on Colonial Virginia prior to 1700, funding the restoration of records, and supporting preservation of Colonial sites.

More information about the Jamestowne Society and genealogy information can be found at Jamestowne.org.

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.