

Looking Forward, Looking Back

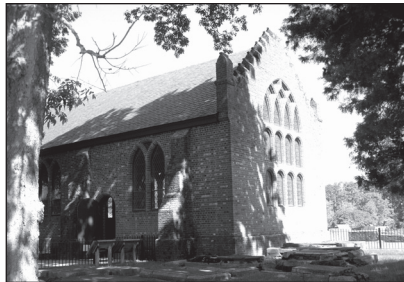
Jamestown and Its Church: A Nation's First Parish

Episcopalians join in preparations for marking 400th anniversary

Second in a four-part series

Organized in 1607 as part of the emerging English colony, the Jamestown Church became the first Protestant congregation to endure in the New World — the parish to which the Episcopal Church traces its origins in the Americas. The 400th anniversary of these beginnings will be marked in spring 2007 with civic and religious observances, the advent of which invites Episcopalians to learn more about the history and heritage of their unique faith tradition.

This parish church helped to form American Episcopalians' commitment to common prayer and Anglican "comprehensive" theology — and a resilience of faith and mission that has been strengthened by the challenges of the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the civil rights achievements of more recent years.



Jamestown's Memorial Church, 2006

The Jamestown Church today has a unique national "congregation" all its own, and among those engaged in local ministry is historical interpreter Anne J. Conkling, a local lay leader and expert docent at sites including nearby Williamsburg's Bruton Parish with origins dating from 1633.

At the Jamestown Church, Conkling does more than lead tours rich with insights about the early colonists and indigenous people, and the sanctuary's historic tower and origins. Indeed, she helps guide hundreds of visitors each year into deeper understanding of their own spiritual heritage. Sometimes these connections are made during prayers that Conkling is asked to lead on the historic site.

The church tower is the only 17th-century structure still standing in Jamestown, and the present Memorial Church building itself is a replica built in 1906 by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. The structure's footprint approximates the earlier churches' original foundations, parts of which are visible through floor panels of glass.

The first Jamestown church burned in 1608, and the second church, built of wood, was where Pocahontas and John Rolfe were married. A third church was the site in 1619 of the first representative legislature meeting in the New World, and the fourth church — featuring the present tower — burned in 1676 during Bacon's Rebellion. A fifth church was built a decade later but

Looking Forward, Looking Back

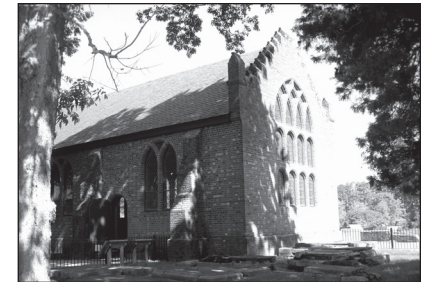
Jamestown and Its Church: A Nation's First Parish

Episcopalians join in preparations for marking 400th anniversary

Second in a four-part series

Organized in 1607 as part of the emerging English colony, the Jamestown Church became the first Protestant congregation to endure in the New World — the parish to which the Episcopal Church traces its origins in the Americas. The 400th anniversary of these beginnings will be marked in spring 2007 with civic and religious observances, the advent of which invites Episcopalians to learn more about the history and heritage of their unique faith tradition.

This parish church helped to form American Episcopalians' commitment to common prayer and Anglican "comprehensive" theology — and a resilience of faith and mission that has been strengthened by the challenges of the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the civil rights achievements of more recent years.



Jamestown's Memorial Church, 2006

The Jamestown Church today has a unique national "congregation" all its own, and among those engaged in local ministry is historical interpreter Anne J. Conkling, a local lay leader and expert docent at sites including nearby Williamsburg's Bruton Parish with origins dating from 1633.

At the Jamestown Church, Conkling does more than lead tours rich with insights about the early colonists and indigenous people, and the sanctuary's historic tower and origins. Indeed, she helps guide hundreds of visitors each year into deeper understanding of their own spiritual heritage. Sometimes these connections are made during prayers that Conkling is asked to lead on the historic site.

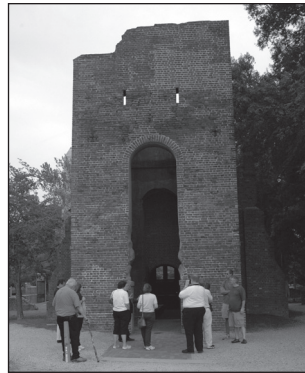
The church tower is the only 17th-century structure still standing in Jamestown, and the present Memorial Church building itself is a replica built in 1906 by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. The structure's footprint approximates the earlier churches' original foundations, parts of which are visible through floor panels of glass.

The first Jamestown church burned in 1608, and the second church, built of wood, was where Pocahontas and John Rolfe were married. A third church was the site in 1619 of the first representative legislature meeting in the New World, and the fourth church — featuring the present tower — burned in 1676 during Bacon's Rebellion. A fifth church was built a decade later but

Episcopal Life THIS WEEK

abandoned in the 1750s before falling to ruins. The tower stood as a quiet monument throughout the 19th century before the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) acquired the site in the 1890s and commenced significant restoration and archeological work (source: www.apva.org).

Although weekly liturgical services were long ago assumed by neighboring Episcopal parishes, the Jamestown Church remains a significant center of spirituality, as Conkling observes as she interacts with the many visitors to the site. “Much,” she said recently, “is exchanged in the questions and answers.”



Visitors study church tower.

The Anglican rites at Jamestown should not be construed as the first in the New World. In the 1580s, services – including the baptism of Virginia Dare – were held at the Lost Colony, Roanoke Island, along what now forms North Carolina’s Outer Banks. A chaplain also accompanied English explorer Martin Frobisher on his expedition to Newfoundland, and prayers were offered when Sir Francis Drake made landfall in 1579 near San Francisco Bay.

Emanating from a 1584 expedition organized by Sir Walter Raleigh, the Roanoke Colony – then part of Virginia – was the first English settlement in the New World. (While St. John’s, Newfoundland, was claimed for England in 1583, immediate settlement did not follow.) The region then known as Virginia was so named in honor of Elizabeth I, the so-called “Virgin Queen,” who had granted Raleigh his original charter for the area’s colonization, and also united Protestant and Catholic traditions within the Church of England. While the Plymouth Colony later came to reflect many Puritan ideals of the Reformation, the Virginia colonies were firmly rooted in spirit of the late Renaissance and Elizabeth’s reign of 1558-1603.

Next in this series: The Colonial Period . . . Virginia and its Dioceses.

Sources, and for more information, visit:

- The National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov>
- The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, <http://www.thediocese.net>
- The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, <http://www.diosova.org>
- The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, <http://www.apva.org/jr.html>
- The Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov>
- And for more on Jamestown, where “the nation’s first representative government, free enterprise system and culturally diverse society began”. . . <http://www.jamestown2007.org>

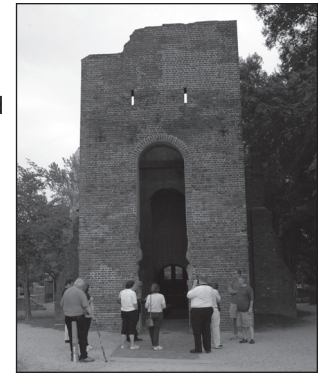
Produced by Episcopal Life/Episcopal News Service.

Ongoing coverage of the Episcopal Church is available at www.episcopalchurch.org/ens.

Episcopal Life THIS WEEK

abandoned in the 1750s before falling to ruins. The tower stood as a quiet monument throughout the 19th century before the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) acquired the site in the 1890s and commenced significant restoration and archeological work (source: www.apva.org).

Although weekly liturgical services were long ago assumed by neighboring Episcopal parishes, the Jamestown Church remains a significant center of spirituality, as Conkling observes as she interacts with the many visitors to the site. “Much,” she said recently, “is exchanged in the questions and answers.”



Visitors study church tower.

The Anglican rites at Jamestown should not be construed as the first in the New World. In the 1580s, services – including the baptism of Virginia Dare – were held at the Lost Colony, Roanoke Island, along what now forms North Carolina’s Outer Banks. A chaplain also accompanied English explorer Martin Frobisher on his expedition to Newfoundland, and prayers were offered when Sir Francis Drake made landfall in 1579 near San Francisco Bay.

Emanating from a 1584 expedition organized by Sir Walter Raleigh, the Roanoke Colony – then part of Virginia – was the first English settlement in the New World. (While St. John’s, Newfoundland, was claimed for England in 1583, immediate settlement did not follow.) The region then known as Virginia was so named in honor of Elizabeth I, the so-called “Virgin Queen,” who had granted Raleigh his original charter for the area’s colonization, and also united Protestant and Catholic traditions within the Church of England. While the Plymouth Colony later came to reflect many Puritan ideals of the Reformation, the Virginia colonies were firmly rooted in spirit of the late Renaissance and Elizabeth’s reign of 1558-1603.

Next in this series: The Colonial Period . . . Virginia and its Dioceses.

Sources, and for more information, visit:

- The National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov>
- The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, <http://www.thediocese.net>
- The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, <http://www.diosova.org>
- The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, <http://www.apva.org/jr.html>
- The Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov>
- And for more on Jamestown, where “the nation’s first representative government, free enterprise system and culturally diverse society began”. . . <http://www.jamestown2007.org>

Produced by Episcopal Life/Episcopal News Service.

Ongoing coverage of the Episcopal Church is available at www.episcopalchurch.org/ens.