

Jamestown Rediscovery

HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE

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A 17th-Century Virginia Christmas: “At Christmas be Mery” Program

JAMESTOWN, Va. (November 18, 2022) –

Jamestown Rediscovery is delighted to once again present “*At Christmas be Mery*,” *A Special Evening at Historic Jamestowne* this holiday season. Visitors are invited to step back in time to 1621 to join Sir Francis Wyatt, the colony’s newly arrived Governor, for an early Virginia Christmas celebration with costumed interpreters, madrigal singers, a bonfire, and caroling. The program will be offered on Saturday, December 10, at 5:30pm and 7:30pm. Tickets are \$25.00 each and must be purchased in advance.

A unique opportunity to see Jamestown Island aglow with firelight, “*At Christmas be Mery*” explores the origins of traditions we now commonly associate with Christmas and the holiday season, including hanging evergreens, caroling, and observing the winter solstice. The Captain of the Guard will escort guests along a cresset-lit path to the site of the 1617/18 Church (Memorial Church) where they will meet Governor Sir Francis Wyatt and other leading Virginia dignitaries. As a special addition to this year’s program, the Old Dominion University Madrigal Singers, directed by Dr. Bianca Hall, will perform songs that would have been familiar to the early Jamestown colonists. After the program in the Church, visitors will herald in the season by throwing sprigs of holly into the nearby bonfire and making their wishes for the year ahead.

“*At Christmas be Mery*” is taken from a poem in *Fiue [Five] Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie* by English poet Thomas Tusser and published in 1580. The full line is “At Christmas be mery, and thanke god of all: and feast thy pore neighbors, the great with the small, yea al the yere long, have an eie [eye] to the poore: and god shall sende luck, to kepe open thy doore.” The poem refers to the gift-giving practices of the holiday season, which we are, of course, familiar with today. We invite guests to join in on this celebration of our community and the season with carols, stories, and a little mischief by the bonfire.

“For the first 20 years of the colony, life in Jamestown was extraordinarily difficult, but records suggest that colonists continued celebrating Christmas like they had back home in England or other parts of Europe,” said Willie Balderson, Director of Living History & Historic Trades. “The confluence of different cultures and religions coming together in Europe created unique holiday traditions many people practice today, and I hope guests will come away with a renewed zeal to take part in activities that are literally hundreds of years old.”

Tickets are limited and will sell out! Purchase tickets at historicjamestowne.org/visit/calendar/at-christmas-be-mery. This program is held rain or shine.

Available photos, with captions and crediting information, can be found [here](#).

Formatting note: whenever possible, please use quotes and the contemporary spelling of “Mery” when referring to the program.

About Historic Jamestowne/Jamestown Rediscovery

Historic Jamestowne (HJ) preserves the original site of the first permanent English settlement in America and is jointly administered by Jamestown Rediscovery and the National Park Service. Entrance tickets are available at the HJ 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 or call (757) 856-1250.