

Join Our Crewe

Our volunteers, the heart of the organization, bring and learn skills as educators, storytellers, sailors, riggers, and shipwrights. We invest ourselves in a project paying homage to the history surrounding the original Popham Colony, its relationship with the Wabanaki, and the birth of Maine's 400-year-old shipbuilding heritage. We invite you to share your time, talents, and treasure to serve the mission of Maine's First Ship.



Maine's First Ship is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to maintaining a welcoming environment for volunteers, students, and visitors. MFS is fueled by the generosity of our members and supporters, as well as by our partnerships in the local community.

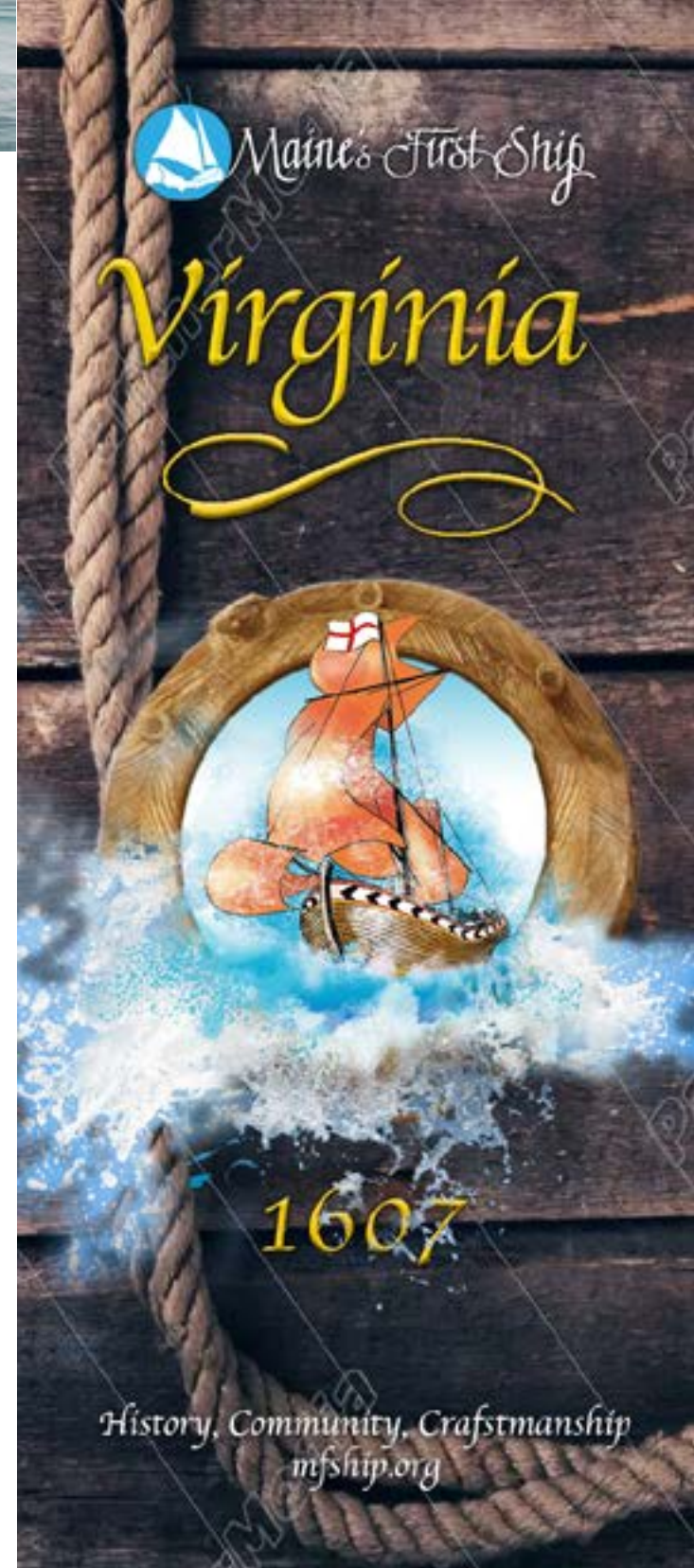


Programs for all ages

Maine's First Ship fosters curiosity. We offer a range of experiences that engage participants in Maine's shipbuilding heritage, Bath's maritime culture, and the region's early history. As a construction project, Virginia offers a glimpse into traditional wooden sailing vessel building and rigging techniques. As a Coast Guard certified vessel (summer 2023), Virginia will sail with visitors and students.



Other community outreach and educational opportunities include our public lecture series, dedicated shipbuilding days, traditional skills workshops, exhibits (in-person and virtual), guided tours, themed social gatherings, and partnerships dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of the historic Bath Freight Shed. Our space is also available for your community building events.



History, Community, Craftsmanship
mfship.org

The First *Virginia*

In late summer of 1607, thirteen years before the

Pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts, a group of English colonists landed at the mouth of the Kennebec River in Maine. Sponsored by Sir John Popham, the hundred or



so men came to create a colony in north *Virginia* and establish the first long-term contact between the English and

the local Wabanaki tribes. Once ashore, the colonists constructed Fort St. George, and within it a storehouse and various other buildings. Equally significant, they also build a small ship,

a “pretty pinnacle of about some 30 tuns, which they called “*Virginia*.” That ship, built by “the chief Shipwright...one Digby of London” was the first ocean-going English-built ship in Maine, perhaps the first in North America.

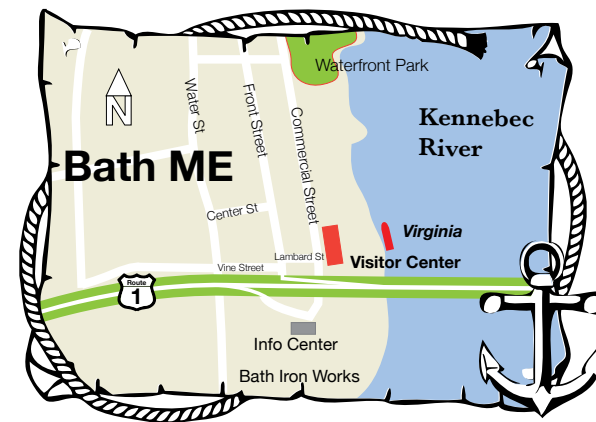


A little more than a year later, after a brutal winter that saw the death of the colony’s leader, George Popham, Fort St. George was abandoned, and the colonists returned to England aboard *Virginia* and the ship *Mary and John*. *Virginia* was subsequently sold to the Jamestown Colony and crossed the Atlantic again to end her days on the shores of the Southern Colony of Virginia.

Sparked by archaeological digs at the Fort St. George site in Phippsburg, Maine’s First Ship has become a place where people gather to explore, work, learn, laugh, and mess about in boats.



Here at the Bath Freight Shed, a variety of people share their time, skills, and knowledge in the pursuit of deepening their understanding of history and honing the skills of various traditional maritime crafts. Every frame, plank, block, and mast of *Virginia* has first been researched and then built and rigged by our volunteers.



Maine’s First Ship
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Visit mfship.org to discover digital exhibits, program offerings, volunteer opportunities, community events, and detailed hours for the Jane Stevens Visitor Center. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.



Jane Stevens Visitor Center & Gift Shop Schedule
Memorial Day weekend - Labor Day weekend Wednesday thru Sunday
Labor Day - Indigenous People’s Day Friday, Saturday, Sunday
Other times by appointment
We are the winter home of the Bath Farmers’ Market.