

## Be a Part of History

With plans to launch *Virginia* in 2022, the organization is moving from construction to operation. Loyal volunteer shipbuilders will have maintenance tasks and once again lead students in smaller building projects. We will need those with sailing skills as crew for this floating classroom when she travels the Kennebec. Educational programming will continue and evolve as the organization shifts focus from construction.



Calling all volunteers! Maine's First Ship is always looking to engage people interested in learning our relevant history and willing to share it with summer visitors and school groups in the off-season. Many behind-the-scenes volunteer opportunities are also available. Please visit [mfship.org](http://mfship.org) for more details or call the office to discuss your interests.

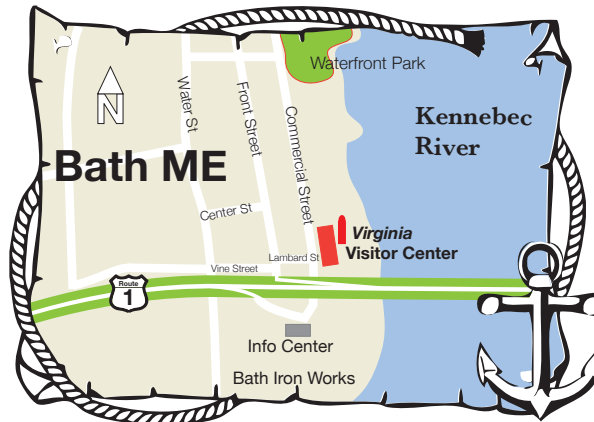


## We Need Your Help

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



Since 1997, Maine's First Ship programs have enhanced the education of more than 10,000 school children. Your membership support will help continue these programs and create a floating classroom for future generations to explore and experience Maine's maritime history.



27 Commercial St., Bath, ME

To join, donate or volunteer contact us at:

Maine's First Ship

P.O. Box 231 - Bath, ME 04530

E-mail: [mfs@mfship.org](mailto:mfs@mfship.org) 207-443-4242

Visit us and donate online at [mfship.org](http://mfship.org)



# Virginia

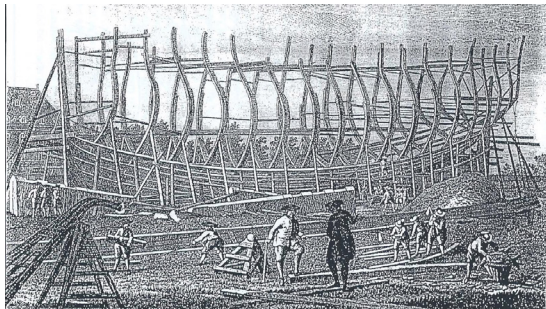


Preserving and Enhancing  
Maine History

[mfship.org](http://mfship.org)

## Our Mission

Maine's First Ship is dedicated to building and operating a reconstruction of *Virginia*, the first English ship built in North America. Our mission is to promote an understanding and appreciation of Maine's early shipbuilding heritage, the Popham Colony and its relationship with the Wabanaki, and to preserve the Bath Freight Shed as a home for *Virginia* and community activities.



### The First *Virginia*

In 1607, thirteen years before the Pilgrims, a group of English colonists landed at the mouth of the Kennebec River and established the Popham Colony. Documents from the settlement identify the place as Fort St George. Records also state that among the 120 male colonists there was "one Digby of London," a shipbuilder who was assigned the construction of a vessel suitable for coastal exploration and trade.



Over the course of a brutal winter, Digby and others constructed a small ship they named *Virginia*. She was completed in the spring. In October 1608, the colonists abandoned the colony and sailed to England aboard *Virginia* and the resupply ship *Mary and John*. History shows the sturdy *Virginia* crossed the Atlantic again in 1609, and successfully reached Popham's sister colony to the south, Jamestown.

No original plans exist for *Virginia*, although it was likely a pinnacle-style vessel with a shallow draft, bluff bow, and square transom. Historical record says *Virginia* was "some 30 tonne" or approximately 50 feet long.

## Our Shipyard and the Jane Stevens Visitor Center

Visitors are welcome at the shipyard to view the exciting progress on the reconstruction of *Virginia*. Located on the banks of the Kennebec River behind the historic Bath Freight Shed, shipwrights and volunteers work year-round when the flag of Saint George is flying.



Sparked by an archaeological dig at the Popham Colony site, the planning team for Maine's First Ship researched 17th century vessel construction in order to create an authentic and durable vessel. When complete, *Virginia* will be fully Coast Guard inspected and certified to carry up to 35 passengers. She'll be driven by her six sails, with auxiliary power when the wind isn't blowing.



The **Jane Stevens Visitor Center** exhibit provides an overview of the colony, the history of the original *Virginia*, and artifacts to introduce visitors to life at the mouth of the Kennebec River in the 17th century.

### Jane Stevens Visitor Center & Gift Shop Hours

May thru Labor Day Wednesday thru Sunday 10am - 2pm  
Non-Summer Hours Wednesday and Sunday 10am - 2pm  
Other times by appointment 207-443-4242  
Check the [mfship.org](http://mfship.org) or Facebook for updates

## Educational Programs

Maine's First Ship offers a range of educational activities that are focused on historic ship design, construction, and operation. Designed to promote interest in Maine's shipbuilding heritage and history, our programs engage participants of all ages.

### Summer at the Freight Shed

Suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic, this series of weekly offerings has included visits to the Fort St George site, musical events, themed dinners, and hands-on

activities like model boat building and knot tying. Watch for the return of these activities in 2022.



### Women's Shipbuilding Day

This popular annual event invites women of all abilities to participate in *Virginia*'s construction, learning new skills in a fun, collaborative environment. Women's Shipbuilding Day is usually held in early November



### Lecture Series

Presentations and conversations on 17th century maritime, colonial, and Wabanaki history; historic shipbuilding; and environmental history of the Kennebec. Live Zoom presentations are planned for the summer of 2021, with speakers and a limited audience in the Bath Freight Shed. Registration is required to reserve seating or receive the Zoom link. Check the website for topics and dates.