

Untold Virginia
Episode Two Transcript
“The Caves of Colonial Jamestowne”

Elizabeth: Are you sure we don't need to frame the new environment or anything?

Ruth: No, we definitely shouldn't be making any sound effects right now.

Elizabeth: But you know what I mean? Right? We need to build a soundscape, we need texture.

Ruth: We have it. Outdoors is way different from being in studio. Only thing I'm concerned about is the mic.

Elizabeth: This? Why?

Ruth: I mean, it's just kind of janky.

Elizabeth: Careful! You'll hurt its feelings. And it's on now, by the way, more casual type of show chat.

Ruth: And you're sure you want to hold it because I've been practicing -

Elizabeth: I am. You can listen if you want.

Ruth: No, I hate hearing the sound of my voice. I'm good.

Elizabeth: I have some bad news for you about what a podcast is.

Ruth: I just mean that I trust you to make it sound good. And like, zooms are easy. Keep an eye on the gain and you should be fine. And, you know, you have the mic now and then maybe I have some extra content segments for next episode?

Elizabeth: Hmm, I'm good with that.

Ruth: I found this really cool thing on the Witch of -

Elizabeth: Don't tell me. I want to hear it fresh.

Ruth: Okay, well, how's the rundown looking?

Elizabeth: Well, it's looking like it exists only in my head.

Ruth: Liz.

Elizabeth: I don't want to be locked into anything. Mack Maron doesn't have a rundown.

Ruth: Yes, he does.

Elizabeth: Can we talk about this later, though? I'm forgetting all my questions for Deirdre.

Ruth: This is why you should write things down.

Elizabeth: Maybe we'll try that next time.

Ruth: Well, how do you want to intro this?

Elizabeth: Super quickly, like, just a "welcome" and then I'll drop the theme music in and go back to us outside.

Ruth: Cool.

Elizabeth: Great. I'll count down. Three, two, one.

Elizabeth/Ruth: Welcome to Untold Virginia.

[theme music]

Elizabeth: Welcome back. I'm your host, Elizabeth. In case you missed our last episode, Untold Virginia is a show where we bring you lots of interesting stories about Virginia and America's history.

Ruth: Now, you'll notice that this episode sounds very different from the last. That's because -

Elizabeth: We're outside! Frank Gansevoort, our station manager and guest from last time, set us up with this awesome historic Jamestowne tour with his friend Deirdre. And yes, I did have to convince Ruth that it was a good idea.

Ruth: I didn't think it was a bad idea. I just want us to be cautious.

Elizabeth: Anywho. We talked with Deirdre a little bit on the phone and she's super nice. Fortunately, she agreed to show us and you around.

Ruth: We're on our way to meet Deirdre now.

Elizabeth: She said she'd meet us at a church.

Ruth: 1608 Church or the Jamestowne Church.

Elizabeth: Jamestown one.

Ruth: Oh, okay, good. You might want to shut off the mic for this. It's gonna be a bit.

[button click]

Elizabeth: We are here with Deirdre Reynolds in the middle of historic Jamestowne. Here, say hi.

Deirdre: Hello, everyone. Was that good? Should I do a few different hellos?

Elizabeth: That was perfect.

Dierdre: Okay, because I'd be happy to do more if you'd like. I did a few vocal warmups so I can give you whatever you need for um, good tape?

Ruth: You're doing great. All you need to do is be yourself. Don't even worry about it.

Elizabeth: Exactly. Take a deep breath. Everything is totally fine. You've got this. You don't need to pretend to be somebody you're not. We want to talk to you and highlight you.

Dierdre: Oh, you're so sweet. Okay, I'm just a little nervous. I haven't been on camera in quite some time.

Elizabeth: Well, it's a podcast.

Ruth: You're already doing amazing. Don't worry about it. And Elizabeth is going to edit this afterwards. So if you mess up, no big deal. You know, you stop, start over if you don't like what you said. And if you say something you didn't mean to by accident, just let us know. And we'll cut it out of the final interview.

Dierdre: Amazing. You know, what if I told you my real age?

Elizabeth: Dierdre.

Dierdre: Girls, I could be your aunt or something. It's really embarrassing. I'm sorry. Just before we start, will Frank be listening to this before it goes live?

Elizabeth: I don't think so.

Ruth: He said he didn't need to review it before we post it, so.

Dierdre: Um, okay.

Ruth: But if you want, we could -

Dierdre: Oh, that would be very wonderful. Frank can be very particular. So I'd love to confirm that he has everything from this that he needs.

Ruth: Absolutely. We'll ask him before we do anything.

Elizabeth: Yeah, sure. Oh, shoot, Ruth. I don't know if I'm doing - look at this line here. Sorry, sorry.

[crosstalk]

Dierdre: Sally sells seashells by the seashore.

Ruth: We're ready whenever you are!

Dierdre: Oh, i'm sorry. Alright. I'm ready. And how close should I be to the microphone?

Elizabeth: I'll bring it to you after we've asked you a question. Sound good?

Dierdre: Fabulous. Okay, I'm sorry. Before we start, I just have to tell you. I know Frank set this up, but girls, I'm so excited. Oh, I love podcasts.

Ruth: What do you listen to?

Dierdre: Oh, well, I've always loved Howard Stern. And I listened to Ryan Seacrest Top 40 every Sunday.

Elizabeth: Those aren't pod -

Ruth: Those are amazing.

Elizabeth: So, Deirdre, can you tell us a little bit about where we are?

Dierdre. We are. We are in historic Jamestowne. Specifically, we are in New Town. This loop is the traditional walking tour path for most visitors. But we're not most visitors. We just passed the 1608 Church. But come on. Girls, come on!

Elizabeth: Deirdre, can you talk a little bit about the work that you do with historical society and how that intermingles with the work that you do with Jamestowne?

Dierdre: Sure. Well, Frank, he actually helped me get the job here at historic Jamestowne, specifically working in the settlement itself. Frank actually got me involved in the society and it's really just sort of shaped my day to day life. Ideally, I'd be performing every day. But you know, you gotta make a couple of pennies so you can eat, you know, I'm not really one for busking. So. I'm sorry, I, I've lost your question again.

Ruth: We can just move on from that. What are some of your favorite parts of the historical society?

Dierdre: Oh, my favorite parts? I love, you know, we really try to create this love of the beginning of Jamestowne. You know, does that make sense? Like, with this society, in conjunction with all these historic places and buildings and lands, the history is alive. And it's really just ancestral veneration that we really try to achieve through the society's aid. The historical society itself, I like to think of it as sort of the silent backbone of the entire community, truly. Without the historic Jamestowne, we would lose a lot of our community involvement. You know, that family, that culture, the ties that you bring in together, and without the society's funding, we wouldn't have historic Jamestowne. We wouldn't have discoveries, we wouldn't have found new pieces of history that really connect us back to the root of it all. You know what I mean?

Elizabeth: Yeah, like what?

Dierdre: So, alright. I hope you have strong stomachs. Okay. The historical society helped fund an dig that, are you ready for this? We found evidence of cannibalism in the 1600s. Isn't that wild?

Elizabeth: Yes. Tell me more.

Dierdre; They named these pieces of bone, of human bone. A partial skull and I believe a tibia, they named her Jane. So we're just gonna call her Jane. We like to give a name. We like to honor those souls.

Elizabeth: Yeah and that's sort of like the Jane Doe thing. Right? Like John Doe, Jane Doe, like unknown person. But like, sort of giving them still a name? Was that the thought behind it?

Dierdre: Well, I just thought that Jane was a pretty name. But yes.

Elizabeth: I know. Of course.

Dierdre: It could be. Jane, Jane Doe. Well, we estimate that Jane was about 14 years old and she was a victim of cannibalism. Now, don't think that this is something that mayhaps the community surrounding, maybe the native peoples had, had been cannibalizing, but it was more means of survival. Our very own ancestors had to resort to cannibalism to survive. But you know, to resort to sort of the starvation and, and to tie this back to the historical society. Without that historical society's funding, we would be starving ourselves. We would be cannibalizing our own history.

Elizabeth. So, uh, wow. Wow. Great stuff.

Dierdre: And, and really just to, to sort of bring this all back to your original question, which I believe was the historical society's influence and impact on the community that we are in right now. It's just, truly without this historical - I'm sorry, I get really, really passionate about this. This is something that I've worked very, very, very hard for, to help survive, but this is just about survival. Do you know what I mean? Ruth, do you know what I mean?

Ruth: I do.

Dierdre: Okay, because this this historical society and historic Jamestowne really just reflects overall sort of the impact that history itself has. It shows that we are all surviving and doing the best that we can like it was survival cannibalism. Not just cannibalism for the sake of cannibalism. Do you know what I mean? You have to survive by any means necessary. And that's what the society helps us do. It helps us survive by any means necessary. By learning and growth and discovery.

Elizabeth: Uh, wow.

Ruth: I don't mean to hold us up right here, but I just couldn't help but look at this beautiful bronze statue right here of John Smith. I do remember that the statue was erected in 1909, I believe, but could you explain a little bit more about his relationship to Jamestowne?

Dierdre: Absolutely. I'm really impressed, Ruth. That's really incredible. Are you trying to take my job? I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. So John Smith, actually. Okay, let's start - let's start from the top. Captain Christopher Newport arrives from England on three different ships, I believe. He had brought in the Susan Constant, The Discovery, and my favorite, The Godspeed. They came into established James City, which is now Jamestowne and at that same time, we meet our hero, John Smith. He was a captain and as our captain, Christopher Newport had taken all of his finding - the minerals, the food,

the grains - and brought them back over to England. We left John Smith in charge to sort of move upstream. So as he went up the river, he was captured by the brother of Chief Powhatan who actually kept him prisoner.

Ruth: So, I know we've been talking a lot about John Smith and he's super fascinating, but a lot of people don't know the woman behind all of this: Pocahontas. Um, her statue used to be here as well. I know you had to move it, but it's all, it's all still here somewhere.

Dierdre: Absolutely. It was just moved slightly West. She's actually got this beautiful statue near the water and she's sort of a beacon for when the ferries would come in. You would see Pocahontas and Pocahontas would welcome the people onto the land. Pocahontas actually intervened to save John Smith's life, much like the story that we all know. But she doesn't marry him. I know that's crazy, right? No love songs, no ballads. She didn't marry him. She married someone else, actually. John Rolfe, who imprisoned her. Weird, right?

Ruth: Yes -

Elizabeth: So Deirdre, you talk about John Rolfe imprisoning Pocahontas. Who was this John Rolfe guy? Like, what's his history?

Dierdre: So Rolf helps sort of the settling of the community and Pocahontas was not imprisoned in a 'Beauty and the Beast' kind of way by Rolf. It was more a general, she was imprisoned by the English settlers. And in order to sort of bargain for peace, she agreed to marry John Rolfe and she took the name Rebecca, when she got married and it means 'mother of two peoples.' She was sort of this hope. This, this thread, this throughline of living peacefully.

Ruth: And bringing it back to our shores, where we are right now. I also couldn't help but notice we are by the 1608 Church.

Dierdre: It's really - we've worked very hard to try and recreate as much as we can historically. It's actually where Pocahontas and John Rolfe got married in 160 - 1614, I believe.

Elizabeth: Sorry, I just noticed there's some trails that go beyond some tape. Are those blocked off for any reason? What's behind them?

Dierdre: Oh, well, those are just a few exhibits that aren't really ready for public viewing yet. There is some unstable remains of housing structures. We want to preserve the natural flora. There's the cave that we -

Elizabeth: Cave?

Dierdre: Yes, we don't allow visitors there yet. It's a once in a lifetime viewing though, honestly. Someday we'll open up to an external historian. Oh, it'll be quite the scoop.

Ruth: Cool.

Dierdre: Those structures are incredibly delicate. And the cave is something that only serious historians would be able to appreciate.

Elizabeth: We're serious historians.

Dierdre: I don't know, girls.

Ruth: Seriously, It's fine. Don't worry about it.

Elizabeth: Well, what if we just pop in really quick and then run right back out?

Ruth; That's okay. I mean, you know, we don't want you to break the rules for us.

Elizabeth: Dierdre, can I just level with you? I just want to let you know that this episode is turning out really, really well. And all of the information that you've given us about Pocahontas and John Smith and the church and all of that stuff is really juicy, but we just need one thing that's going to pull the audience in.

Ruth: I think it sounds great -

Elizabeth: And I think this is it, Ruth, I really do. If we could just get in there, Deirdre. I mean, your episode could be the top listened to and we wouldn't take any photos or anything. We'd just go and listen and then run right back out.

Dierdre: You know. Okay, um, I'm so sorry. I have to use the restroom. And it's pretty far back at the ranger station. So it might take me probably 15 minutes to go and come back. But, you know, my hips admittedly aren't what they used to be and the trails were a little slick. So it's probably closer to 20 minutes. That'll take me to get back here. So will you wait for me here? For 20 minutes?

Elizabeth: Absolutely.

Dierdre: Great. I'll be back. Like I said, the trails are slick. Be very careful.

[Dierdre leaves]

Elizabeth: We have 20 minutes. Let's go.

Dierdre: She said no, you heard her.

Elizabeth: There is no way she actually has to go to the bathroom the second I mentioned wanting to go to the cave. And Ruth, the ranger station. It's like five minutes away from here. Don't you see what she's giving us?

Ruth: That is absolutely ridiculous. I have no - do you hear what you're saying?

Elizabeth: Come on. Let's go! Cave, cave, cave, cave...

Ruth: It is blocked off for a reason. I don't want to get kicked out of here for something stupid. I like this place.

Elizabeth: Don't be boring.

Ruth: I am not boring.

Elizabeth: It'll just take a few minutes. We'll walk by the houses, we'll see the cave, and run right back out. It'll be super, super easy. Please.

[Ruth sighs]

Ruth: Five minutes.

Elizabeth: Yes, come on.

[footsteps]

Ruth: Why are you running?

Elizabeth: You said five minutes!

Ruth: This audio's going to be terrible.

Elizabeth: Don't break the caution tape!

Ruth: Stop shouting! You'll garner attention.

Elizabeth: Sh! Sh, sh, shh.

[footsteps]

Elizabeth: Woah. Hey, listeners. So, Deirdre had to step away for a bit. So instead of hearing her narrate where we are, I'm going to give it a try. What I'm looking at now is an exclusive section of Jamestowne. A series of skeleton structures? So for some context, in Salem, Massachusetts, most of the structures were houses constructed in a Puritan style. Think steep gables, casement windows, porches. But this. This isn't like that at all. This is wood? Maybe petrified wood? It looks like. But it's bent. Super bent. Like you could make a lean-to out of it.

Ruth: Can you wait for me, please?

Elizabeth: Cool tree right?

Ruth: Is it a tree?

Elizabeth: It's kind of like a tree-building hybrid.

Ruth: So, a house?

Elizabeth: But there's nothing around it.

Ruth: Can we head back now? I can see the cave from here. I don't, I don't want to go in the cave.

Elizabeth: But the audio will be so good.

Ruth: It's just gonna get echo-y. You'll hear yourself say something like five times after you say it.

Elizabeth: That will be great. Great, great, great...

Ruth: No, it's not great because it's not safe.

Elizabeth: I can do this myself if you don't want to. You don't have to be here.

Ruth: It's a two person show.

Elizabeth: It doesn't have to be.

Ruth: Well, just no running, please.

[footsteps]

Elizabeth: I shouldn't have worn my Chelsea boots.

Ruth: You knew this wasn't paved, though.

Elizabeth: These ones go with my London Fog coat.

Ruth: Well, yeah. That is really nice.

Elizabeth: Thank you. I almost lost it at the dry cleaner.

Ruth: At Ernie's?

Elizabeth: Is that the one with the old guy?

Ruth: Yeah, he's so nice.

Elizabeth: Yeah, and he nearly ruined my jacket.

Ruth: You know you can do your dry cleaning at home. It takes an afternoon but it's not hard.

Elizabeth: Huh. Guess I never tried that.

[footsteps]

Elizabeth: Alright. Ruth and I are approaching the caves. Based on how close we are to the water and the direction we're walking in, I'd say that -

Ruth: We're near the Pitch and Tar Swamp.

Elizabeth: If not in it.

Ruth: I think Island Drive is that way.

Elizabeth: Brilliant. We can hitchhike on out of here later. Ready?

Ruth: Sure.

[footsteps; they enter the cave]

Elizabeth: Do you have a flashlight?

Ruth: I have my phone.

[phone SFX]

Elizabeth: Virginia caves have been used throughout several political conflicts. Whenever war impeded foreign imports, Americans would turn to bring Virginia caves to mine the materials they needed for gunpowder.

Ruth: Do you need to narrate that much?

Elizabeth: Yes. How else are people supposed to get context? It's like a cornerstone of podcasting.

Ruth: It's just a lot.

Elizabeth: You'll get used to it.

Ruth: Caves were big for the War of 1812, too.

Elizabeth: Caves have always been important. It's kind of beautiful in here.

Ruth: Liz, look. I don't recognize these.

Elizabeth: We're looking at some strange markings. I don't recognize them either. Are they Mattaponi?

Ruth: We could probably figure it out if we knew what the material is, but the flashlight doesn't. Also we're not archaeologists. And anyways, most of those artworks have already been lost with all the times caves got mined. This might not even be legit.

Elizabeth: Yeah, but it's here.

Ruth: I mean, yeah. It's more of a question of why they're here.

Elizabeth: How far back do these go?

Ruth: We should head back.

Elizabeth: There's a fork. Pick one.

Ruth: I'm serious. Liz. I don't like this.

Elizabeth: Which path do you want?

Ruth: Neither

Elizabeth: Ruth. This will be the last thing, I promise. I'd like to do the left one if that's okay. I think there's more markings that way.

Ruth: Can I just wait here?

Elizabeth: That's a terrible story to get on tape.

[Ruth takes out her phone]

Elizabeth: What are you doing?

[Elizabeth's phone rings. She answers.]

Elizabeth: I can't believe you get service down here.

Ruth: Honestly, same. I'm going in. I'll tell you what I see. And then I'm walking out and remember I drove.

Elizabeth: You wouldn't leave me behind.

Ruth: You sure about that?

[Elizabeth gasps]

Ruth: What? What happened?

Elizabeth: Yeah, it's just. My shoes.

Ruth: I told you.

Elizabeth: I know. I know. What do you see?

Ruth: Not much, honestly. There's not any more markings down here. You?

Elizabeth: Yeah, I have less here too. Oh, wait, no. Woah, there's a bunch more. These ones are near the floor. It looks like it's one big mural. Like, a lot of people around a big tree and then a lot of people in a cave. And then a lot of people in a scribble. I don't know. There's writing up here too.

Ruth: What language is it?

Elizabeth: I don't know. It looks ancient. Babylonian, maybe?

Ruth: Babylonian?

Elizabeth: Well, I don't know. It's not a language I've seen before.

Ruth: Can you -- picture --

Elizabeth: You're cutting out. Ruth? Ruth? But I'll take a photo.

[camera shutter SFX]

Elizabeth: Got it. I think I'm good in here. Ruth. What do you see?

Ruth: What -- is it -- you?

[static]

Elizabeth: Ruth?

[Ruth screams]

Elizabeth: Ruth! Ruth!

[footsteps]

Elizabeth: Oh my God. What happened? Are you okay?

Ruth: I'm fine, I just fell.

Elizabeth: But here, let me help you up.

Ruth: I got it.

Elizabeth: No, take my hands.

Ruth: I said I got it.

Elizabeth: What happened to your hands?

Ruth: I fell and now I'm bleeding.

Elizabeth: Dierdre can probably help. Let's go find her.

Ruth: I don't want help. I just want to go home.

Elizabeth: I can light us out. You have your phone?

Ruth: It's in my pocket.

Elizabeth: Okay, great.

Ruth: I told you this was a bad idea.

Elizabeth: I know. I'm sorry.

[button click]

Elizabeth: Alright. We did it. Honestly, I wasn't sure we were gonna make it out of there. I was joking. So, Ruth, just so we have it in the moment. What happened in the cave back there?

Ruth: Are you serious?

Elizabeth: Just so we have it for the listener's sake.

Ruth: I fell and now I want to go home.

Elizabeth: Right, but like, how did you fall? Ruth, if we don't get it on mic then what was the point? Alright, listeners. Looks like we're going to have to tune in next episode to hear more about what happened. This is Elizabeth, signing off for Untold Virginia. See you soon.