



## THE JAMES MUSEUM OF WESTERN & WILDLIFE ART

June 28, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Media Contact: Anthea Penrose 727-567-5283  
[www.thejamesmuseum.org](http://www.thejamesmuseum.org)

### THE JAMES MUSEUM CELEBRATES CEREMONIAL “TOPPING OUT”

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – Earlier today, St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman and James Museum co-founder and Chairman Tom James marked the milestone occasion of the “Topping Out” of the James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art with remarks and the raising of the final steel beam completing the 219 ft. tall steel frame which will anchor the 105 ton stone mesa that frames the entrance to the building along the 100 block of Central Avenue.

In his remarks at the Topping Out, Mayor Rick Kriseman stated, “The James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art will be a remarkable addition to the culture of the Sunshine City and is sure to become a new hub of activity and learning in our already bustling downtown. Thank you to Tom James for his longstanding commitment to the arts and the City of St. Petersburg.”

In response, James noted that St. Petersburg had been his home virtually all his life and when he and Mary decided to build a museum to house the best of their art collection, they wanted it to be in the heart of the city they call home. He noted that at 85,000 square feet it would be even bigger than the Dalí and with the meeting space and other amenities would become a magnet for visitors and residents alike. He thanked the Mayor and the city council and the city staff for working so hard and so cooperatively on making his and Mary’s vision a reality.

Joni James, CEO of the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership, added: “We’ve known for a long time in St. Pete that when you invest in the arts, you invest in our economy. The Downtown Partnership is glad to see these new jobs coming downtown, but also the space for community gatherings that we need for the entire city.”

The James Museum will be the new, permanent home of 400-500 premier works of art selected from the more than 3,000 pieces acquired by Tom and Mary James over their 50 years of collecting. The 84,000 square foot museum will include over 30,000 square feet of gallery space; a double height lobby with water feature; Native American Jewelry collection, 6,000 square feet of rental event space, supporting both large events and break-out sessions; a commercial catering kitchen; a museum store and café; as well as all of the spaces required to support and operate a 21<sup>st</sup> century museum of this scale.

Project design director, Yann Weymouth, said, “The unique, never-before-seen design of the Museum has been directly inspired by Tom and Mary’s extraordinary collection and vision. The architecture and the art both gloriously tell the story of the American West.”

The James Museum’s roots are from Tom and Mary James’ undivided love both for culture and the city of St. Petersburg that has been their home. Tom began collecting while a student and when their travels took them west, they were captivated by the art, landscape, and wildlife of the West. They began to collect what moved them — art of action and attention to place made by contemporary artists. They collected for their pleasure, though with an aim to help living artists live by their art alone. Many of the artists became personal friends. Their collection is further enlivened with many works by Florida and local artists and their intended programming includes regional artist spotlights and guest lectures from renowned western and wildlife artists including members of the Cowboy Artists of

America™. In addition, The James Museum intends a strong educational element in the way of both adult docent education and youth education in the history of the American West and in wildlife. The James Museum will add a unique, significant cultural destination to downtown St Petersburg.

The development of The James Museum building also includes almost 35,000 square feet of leasable space, owned by James R.E., situated on the East and West sides of the project, which will activate both of those corners along Central Avenue. The Sembler Company is leasing the ground floor retail units and Echelon Real Estate Services is leasing the Class A Office space located on the second floor.

St. Pete Design Group (SPDG) is the design architect for the project. SPDG is a joint venture between Harvard Jolly Architecture, Yann Weymouth and Wannemacher Jensen Architects, with Weymouth serving as design director.

**The James Museum project team includes:**

*Founders:* Tom & Mary James

*Collection Curator:* Emily Kapes – 727.567.5896

*Project Director:* Laura Hine - 727.871.9642

*Owners' Representative:* Peter Arendt

*Design Director:* Yann Weymouth - 813.463.3726

*Architect:* St. Pete Design Group – a joint venture between Harvard Jolly Architecture, Yann Weymouth, & Wannemacher Jensen Architects

*Contractor:* The Beck Group,

*Owner's advisors:* Darryl LeClair, Craig Sher, Hank Hine

Photos and renderings on request from [info@thejamesmuseum.org](mailto:info@thejamesmuseum.org)