

A Jamestown Timeline



Christopher Columbus never reached the shores of the North American Continent, but European explorers learned three things from him: there was someplace to go, there was a way to get there, and most importantly, there was a way to get back. Thus began the European exploration of what they referred to as the “New World”.

The following timeline details important events in the establishment of the first permanent English settlement in America – Jamestown, Virginia.

PRELIMINARY EVENTS

- 1570s** Spanish Jesuits set up an Indian mission on the York River in Virginia. They were killed by the Indians, and the mission was abandoned.
- Wahunsonacock (Chief Powhatan) inherited a chiefdom of six tribes on the upper James and middle York Rivers. By 1607, he had conquered about 25 other tribes.
- 1585-1590** Three separate voyages sent English settlers to Roanoke, Virginia (now North Carolina). On the last voyage, John White could not locate the “lost” settlers.
- 1602** Captain Bartholomew Gosnold explored New England, naming some areas near and including Martha’s Vineyard.
- 1603** Queen Elizabeth I died; James VI of Scotland became James I of England.

EARLY SETTLEMENT YEARS

- 1606, April** James I of England granted a charter to the Virginia Company to establish colonies in Virginia. The charter named two branches of the Company, the Virginia Company of London and the Virginia Company of Plymouth.
- 1606, December 20** Three ships – *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery* – left London with 105 men and boys to establish a colony in Virginia between 34 and 41 degrees latitude.
- 1607, April 26** The three ships sighted the land of Virginia, landed at Cape Henry (present day Virginia Beach) and were attacked by Indians. Back on board, Captain Christopher Newport opened the box containing the names of the seven-man council – Captain Christopher Newport, Edward Maria Wingfield, Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, Captain John Ratcliffe, Captain John Martin, Captain George Kendall, and John Smith. Wingfield was elected president of the council.
- A few days later they moved into the James River and stopped at Kecoughtan (present day Hampton) where the Indians welcomed them.
- 1607, May 1-14** Exploring parties sailed up the James River in search of a suitable place to settle, following the instructions given to them by Company officials in London.
- 1607, May 13-14** On May 13 the colonists chose Jamestown Island as the site for settlement, because it met the London Company’s instructions and it had a deep river channel nearby. On May 14 they stepped ashore and began fortifying the area against Spaniards and Indians.
- 1607, May** About a week after establishing Jamestown, Captain Newport led a group of 23 men, including John Smith, George Percy, and Gabriel Archer on an exploration up the James River. They discovered rocks and shoals in the area of present-day Richmond. They met Powhatan Indians who were eager to trade and enjoyed their hospitality. They learned of the existence of Chief Powhatan.

1607, May 26	The colonists set about building a more substantial fortification after experiencing an Indian attack. This second fort has been described as triangular with a bulwark at each corner containing four or five pieces of ordinance.
1607, June 21	Reverend Robert Hunt held the first Anglican communion in Jamestown under a sail used for protection.
1607, June 22	Captain Christopher Newport returned to England on the Susan Constant, loaded with wood and other natural resources for sale in English markets.
1607, September	Charges were brought against Edward Maria Wingfield, president of the Jamestown council. He was deposed and replaced by John Ratcliffe.
1607, Fall	Over half the colonists died, most from disease and starvation, a few from wounds caused by Indians. Colonists arrived at the Kennebec River in Maine and built St. George's Fort, as representatives of the Virginia Company of Plymouth, under the leadership of Sir George Popham. The colony lasted less than a year, abandoned in April 1608 after a harsh winter.
1607, December	Captain John Smith, on an exploring and trading expedition, was captured by a Powhatan hunting party and eventually taken before Chief Powhatan, who by this time had become chief of about 32 Tidewater Virginia tribes. During this encounter, Smith thought Powhatan threatened his life, and Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas, saved his life. Many historians today believe that Smith was part of test of superiority.
1608, January 2	John Smith was released by Powhatan and returned to Jamestown. Captain Christopher Newport arrived with the first Jamestown re-supply including provisions and more men. They found 38 settlers remaining at Jamestown.
1608, February	Fire broke out in James Fort, causing much destruction. By spring, repairs had begun. Smith took Newport to Werowocomoco on the York River to meet Powhatan. Chief Powhatan pronounced the English to be his people. Thirteen-year old Thomas Savage was presented to Powhatan, and in return, Powhatan gave the English his servant, Namontack. The English traded copper and tools for corn.
1608, April 10	Newport sailed to England with Gabriel Archer, Edward Maria Wingfield and Namontack.
1608, June	John Smith left Jamestown to explore the Chesapeake Bay, meeting Indian groups along the way and mapping the bay and its tributary rivers.
1608, September 10	John Smith was elected to be president of the Virginia Council. He established a set of rules, one of which required men to work if they wanted to eat.
1608, September/October	Christopher Newport arrived in Virginia with the second re-supply of goods and settlers, including the first two women, Mistress Forrest and her maid, Ann Burras.
1608, Fall	Ann Burras and John Laydon, laborer, were married. This was the first English marriage at Jamestown.
1608	John Smith's <i>True Relation</i> , a description of events in Virginia through 1608, was printed in London.
1609 February- May	Progress occurred in Jamestown - 40 acres were cleared, a well was dug, the church re-roofed, 20 cabins built, a blockhouse built at the isthmus, and a new fort erected across the river from Jamestown. Leadership adopted a more aggressive policy towards the Powhatan people.

1609, Spring	Due to a shortage of food resources, John Smith scattered the settlers to get oysters and other foods.
1609, May	The Second Charter was granted by James I to the Virginia Company, giving power to a governor rather than to a council in Virginia and allowing the Company to sell shares of stock. The first appointed governor was Lord de la Warr, but he did not arrive in Virginia until 1610.
1609, August	A fleet with more than 300 new settlers arrived in Virginia. These men, women and children arrived tired and hungry. Their flagship, Sea Venture, carrying acting governor Sir Thomas Gates and other newly appointed colonial leaders, had shipwrecked in Bermuda.
1609, September	John Smith was injured in a gunpowder explosion, and returned to England in October, never to return to the Chesapeake area of Virginia. George Percy became interim president until new leadership arrived.
<u>GATES/DALE YEARS</u>	
1610, Winter	This winter is often called the “starving time,” when the population of Virginia shrank from about 300 to 90 (60 left at Jamestown). The Powhatan Indians placed the settlement under siege at this time. The siege warfare lasted about four years.
1610, May	Acting governor Sir Thomas Gates and the other survivors of the Sea Venture arrived at Jamestown from Bermuda. He found the fort in ruins and the remaining 60 colonists there “famished at the point of death.” Thirty others at Point Comfort fared much better. Gates established martial law to maintain order.
1610, June	Due to lack of supplies, Gates decided to abandon the settlement at Jamestown and return to England. While sailing down the James River he heard that Lord de la Warr was arriving with new settlers and supplies from England. Everyone returned to Jamestown where Lord de la Warr soon assumed control as the appointed Governor of Virginia. Gates left for England.
1610, Summer	De la Warr set about rebuilding the colony. He expanded the strict code of laws established by Gates. These became known as “Lawes Divine, Morall, and Martiall.” He rebuilt the triangular palisade, with a marketplace, storehouse and chapel occupying the interior.
1610, August	English soldiers, at the command of Lord de la Warr, raided the Chickahominy and Paspahugh villages, killing the wife of the Paspahugh chief and her children.
1610-1611	John Rolfe, who arrived with the group from Bermuda, began experimenting with tobacco seeds he somehow acquired from the West Indies. He tried to find a tobacco more pleasing to English tastes than the bitter native tobacco that the Powhatans grew.
1611, March	De la Warr became ill and returned to England with Dr. Lawrence Bohun, who experimented with New World plants and herbs. George Percy was left in charge in Virginia.
1611, May	Sir Thomas Dale arrived in Virginia to assume leadership as deputy governor. With him were 300 new settlers and soldiers, as well as provisions, supplies, livestock and seeds to grow garden crops. He strengthened the rule of martial law.
1611, August	Thomas Gates returned to Virginia and assumed control from Dale. Dale then went with workmen to build a new settlement at Henrico, near the fall line (present day Richmond), marking the beginning of expansion away from Jamestown. A settlement at Kecoughtan (later Elizabeth City/Hampton) also was established as settlers sought healthier places to live.

1612 The Virginia Company received a Third Charter from James I, granting more land to the Company, including the Bermuda Islands. This charter allowed the Company to run lotteries to raise money.

1612-1616 The Gates/Dale administration established Virginia as a going concern. Emphasis during this period was away from Jamestown as settlement spread. Relations with the Powhatan Indians were tenuous through 1614.

1613, April On a trading expedition to the Potomac River, Captain Samuel Argall kidnapped Pocahontas and brought her to Jamestown, hoping her father, Powhatan, would return stolen English settlers, tools and weapons. When her father did not fully comply, Pocahontas was sent to Henrico under the care of the Reverend Alexander Whitaker.

1613 The fourth Virginia Company “city” was established at Bermuda Hundred (later Charles City), following Jamestown, Henrico, and Kecoughtan.

1614 By 1614, John Rolfe had sent his first shipment of tobacco to England

Pocahontas was baptized and given the Christian name Rebecca. In April, she married John Rolfe, probably at Jamestown. Peaceful relations were established temporarily between the Powhatan Indians and the English.

Thomas Dale instituted the first semi-private grants of land to individuals in three-acre parcels; other land still was held communally.

John Smith traveled briefly to New England, hoping to profit from investments there. He then returned to England, tried several other voyages, but was unsuccessful.

1616, June Dale took Pocahontas and John Rolfe, with their infant son, Thomas, to England to promote investment in Virginia. Pocahontas was entertained at the court of King James I and Queen Anne. George Yeardley was in charge of Virginia.

GROWTH AND STABILITY

1616-1617 The rise of “particular plantations” or “hundreds” began. A year earlier, the Virginia Company, having no profits to pay its investors for their joint stock investments, began to grant land to private stockholding groups for settlement in Virginia. Anyone who owned a share of Company stock received 50 acres (would later be 100); anyone who came before 1616 was entitled to 50 acres (would later be 100); anyone who came after 1616 and paid his/her own way was also entitled to 50 acres (would later be 100).

1617 Pocahontas died at Gravesend, England. Rolfe left his son with an uncle in England and returned to Virginia.

Captain Samuel Argall replaced George Yeardley as deputy governor. Lord de la Warr was still governor until his death in 1618.

By this year, the fort was falling into ruins and was used primarily as a place of storage.

1618 Chief Powhatan died. Although his brother Opitchapam was officially the chief, his younger powerful half-brother Opechancanough took charge.

Lord de la Warr died.

A NEW GOVERNMENT

1619, April George Yeardley arrived to take his post as newly appointed governor of Virginia, with the mandate to implement new instructions which attempted to reorganize the Virginia Company’s activities in the colony, establish a plan of settlement and

land reform, build a college at Henrico, and organize a legislative assembly. These instructions are often called “The Great Charter.”

1619, July 30	The General Assembly of the colony of Virginia, the first representative assembly in English America, met in the church at Jamestown until August 4, 1619. The assembly adopted the Virginia Company’s instructions and passed some new laws.
1619, August	The first recorded Africans arrived in Virginia. A privateering ship, White Lion, arrived at Cape Comfort (Point Comfort) carrying 20 or more Angolans. Treasurer arrived shortly thereafter with more Africans. They were sold to Governor George Yeardley and the cape merchant, who probably gave them the status of servants.
1620	Approximately 90 women arrived in Virginia to supplement those already in the colony, and to serve as wives for the planters. About 50 more arrived in 1621.
1620, December	The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth to establish a colony in “Northern Virginia.”
1621, November	Sir Francis Wyatt succeeded Sir George Yeardley when Yeardley’s three-year term expired.
1621	The settlers, hoping to produce silk, planted mulberry trees to feed silkworms. They had little success.

WAR AND THE DEMISE OF THE VIRGINIA COMPANY

1622, March 22	Opechancanough led the Powhatan Indians in an uprising, killing about one-third of the 1200 colonists in Virginia. Jamestown was warned and was not attacked, but survivors flocked to its fortification. Many outlying settlements were abandoned, and much sickness followed the uprising.
1622-1632	A period of intermittent warfare between English and Indians.
1623	The King’s Privy Council set up a commission to investigate the Virginia Company and conditions in Virginia.
1624	John Smith published his <i>Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles</i> . Virginia became a royal colony. The Virginia Company was forced to yield its control to royal authority. King James I retained Governor Wyatt as the first royal governor.
1625, January	A muster or census ordered by the Crown was taken, showing a total population of 1232 settlers and including numbers of weapons, livestock, grain, etc.

VIRGINIA: A ROYAL COLONY

1625	King James I died and was succeeded by his son, Charles I.
1628	The first General Assembly authorized by Charles I. These early assemblies gave most attention to Indians, defense, religion, tobacco, and taxes.
1630	A plan of government was adopted in Connecticut (charter granted 1662).
1630s	A large influx of primarily male indentured servants flooded into Virginia to work tobacco fields. They formed the majority of the population. Severe factionalism developed regarding John Harvey as governor.
1632-1644	A period of official peace between the English and the Powhatan Indians was marred by hostile incidents, mainly by the English.

1634	<p>Virginia was divided into eight shires, which later became counties, and the colonial office of sheriff was created.</p> <p>Lord Baltimore established the colony of Maryland, which attracted numerous Catholics. Maryland's production of tobacco drove prices and profit down for the colonies.</p>
1639	Jamestown grew. The first brick church was started.
1641	Sir William Berkeley was appointed governor of Virginia and arrive in the colony the following year.
1644	<p>With English plantations spreading throughout Tidewater Virginia the Powhatan Indians were pushed west toward the fall line or into marginal areas like swamps. Opechancanough led another uprising of the Powhatan Indians, killing about 500 colonists. War with the Indians continued for nearly two years.</p> <p>Rhode Island was chartered by Roger Williams.</p>
1646	Opechancanough was captured and killed at Jamestown. A treaty of peace was made with the Indians, thus ending the Anglo-Powhatan war. Most of Tidewater Virginia was opened up to the English. Several small reservations were set aside by the English authorities for the various Powhatan tribes. Necotowance was the new Powhatan leader.
1649-1660	Civil war erupted in England, with the beheading of King Charles I and the victory of Oliver Cromwell, who instituted parliamentary control. Virginia remained loyal to the Crown and royalist forces but was forced to submit to the Commonwealth government in England in 1652. Governor Berkeley, a strong supporter of the King, withdrew to Green Spring, his home near Jamestown, and Richard Bennett became governor.
1660	With the restoration of the monarchy, William Berkeley again became governor.
1662	<p>A law passed by the General Assembly required Indians to wear silver or copper badges, inscribed with their tribe's name when they entered certain areas occupied by the English.</p> <p>The General Assembly passed legislation stating that children born in Virginia shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother.</p>
1667	The General Assembly passed a law that the conferring of baptism does not alter the condition of a slave.
1669	The General Assembly passed a law that if a slave resisting his master is killed by the severity of the correction, his death shall not be considered a felony. It was reasoned that the slave owner would not intentionally destroy his own property.
1660s	Over-production of tobacco caused prices to fall. Attempts were made throughout the decade to limit tobacco production in an effort to raise prices. Because Maryland refused to cooperate, competition kept the prices down, driving out all but the larger planters.
~	North Carolina was established as a proprietary province.
1660s-1670s	Dutch ships destroyed Virginia tobacco ships in the colony during the Anglo-Dutch War.
1670	The General Assembly passed a law that no free Indians or negroes could purchase Christian servants.

1676	Jamestown was burned during Bacon's Rebellion, in which the aggressive Nathaniel Bacon led an insurrection against established government for its weak Indian policy.
1677, May 29	A treaty was made at Middle Plantation with the Indians who had been under attack. The Indians ceded their lands and were confined to small reservations for which an annual tribute was paid to the colony. The Indians acknowledged they were subjects of the King of England.
1679	Jamestown was restored as the seat of government after Bacon's Rebellion.
1680	Pennsylvania was established as a proprietary colony by William Penn. Delaware also began as a proprietary colony.
1682	Planters held tobacco plant cutting riots, in an attempt to force tobacco prices back up.
1691	A new law outlawed marriages between the English and Indians. Indian lands continued to be taken away due to English expansion.

THE MOVE TO MIDDLE PLANTATION

1693	The Reverend James Blair obtained a charter for the College of William and Mary at Middle Plantation.
1698, October	Fire burned the statehouse at Jamestown.
1699, April	The General Assembly met at Middle Plantation (Williamsburg) and decided to make it the new capital. Jamestown retained a seat in the Assembly for at least seventy-five years.

Historical background materials made possible by Archibald Andrews Marks.



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