

TIME

America At 400

How Jamestown
colony made us
who we are

Captain
John Smith,
rescued
by Pocahontas



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THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE LOST. The *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed* and the *Discovery* had sailed from London on Dec. 20, 1606, carrying 144 passengers and crew, bound for Virginia. Howling winds pinned them to the coast of England for six weeks. After crossing the Atlantic by a southerly route and reprovisioning in the West Indies, they headed north, expecting landfall in the third week of April 1607. Instead they found a tempest. For four days they sounded, seeking offshore shallows in vain. Then, at 4 a.m. on April 26, they saw land. The three ships sailed into Chesapeake Bay and found, in the words of one voyager, “fair meadows and goodly tall trees, with such fresh waters running through the woods, as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof.” They picked an island in a river for a fortified outpost and named it after their king, James.

May is Jamestown’s 400th birthday, and Queen Elizabeth II, James I’s great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter, will be present to celebrate the occasion. But it’s worth remembering that Jamestown was a giant gamble. The trials were severe, the errors numerous, the losses colossal, the gains, eventually, great. Life in Jamestown was a three-way tug-of-war between daily survival, the settlers’ own preconceptions and the need to adapt to a new world. Jamestown did not invent America, but in its will to survive, its quest for democracy, its exploitation of both Indians and slaves, it created the template for so many of the struggles—and achievements—that have made us who we are. It contained in embryo the same contradictions that still resonate in America today—the tension between freedom and authority, between public purpose and private initiative, between our hopes and our fears.

Jamestown spawned four centuries of myths. The wreck of a reinforcement expedition in Bermuda inspired Shakespeare’s magic play, *The Tempest* (1611), complete with Caliban, a savage aboriginal; a passage in one of John Smith’s many promotional

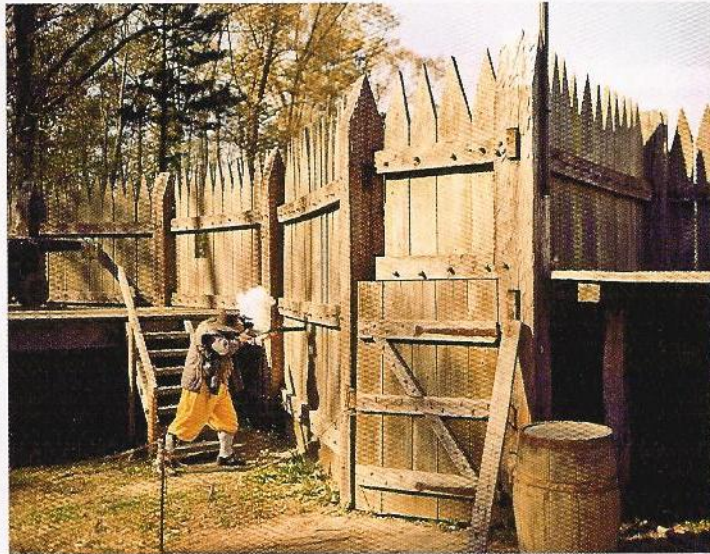
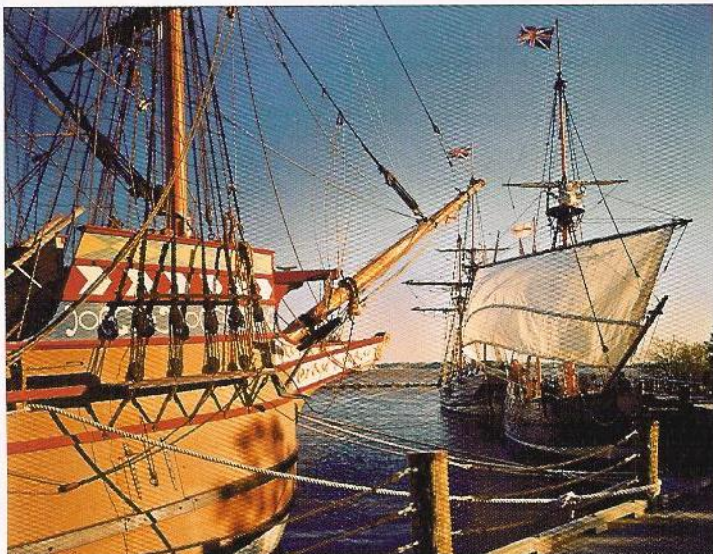


tracts inspired a verse in Peggy Lee’s song *Fever* (1958)—“Captain Smith and Pocahontas had a very mad affair.” In reality, Jamestown was a hardheaded business proposition. The 104 English settlers who stayed when the ships went home—gentlemen, soldiers, privateers, artisans, laborers, boys (no women yet)—were late entrants in the New World sweepstakes. Spain had conquered Mexico by 1521, Peru by 1534. The mines disgorged silver, and by the end of the 16th century, Mexico City and Lima had universities, printing presses and tens of thousands of inhabitants. The Portuguese were harvesting dyewood in Brazil, and the French were trading for furs in Canada. Even the somewhat overlooked Chesapeake had seen European passersby: the Native Americans were not unused to strangers with pale skins and sailing ships.

But anyone’s venture is special to him. And the England of James I and his predecessor, Elizabeth I, suffered from overpopulation and poverty. Pushing people into other lands could solve both problems and even have a side benefit. As the Rev. Richard Hakluyt, England’s premier geographer, put it, “Valiant youths rusting [from] lack of employment” would flourish in America and produce goods and crops that would enrich their homeland. The notion was so prevalent that it inspired a blowhard character in the 1605 play *Eastward Ho!* to declare that all Virginia colonists had chamber pots of “pure gold.”

That would have surprised the Jamestown settlers, who faced an array of challenges, all of them together crushing. It was a project of the London Co., a group of merchants with a royal patent: Imagine that Congress gave Wal-Mart and General Electric permission to colonize Mars. But of necessity, the day-to-day decisions were made in Jamestown, and its leaders were always fighting. Leaders who were incompetent or

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To see an interactive graphic of Jamestown, go to time.com/jamestown



History comes alive Replicas of the three ships that arrived in 1607, the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed* and the *Discovery*, are docked at the Jamestown Settlement. The living-history site also contains a Powhatan village and a fort, right, where a matchlock musket is fired for visitors

unpopular—sometimes the most competent were the least popular—were deposed on the spot. The typical 17th century account of Jamestown argues that everything would have gone well if everyone besides the author had not done wrong. Smith, for instance, described his fellow colonists as “ten times more fit to spoil a commonwealth than ... to begin one.”

Many things did go wrong. The most pressing problem was sustenance. The first year, the settlers drank from the James River, succumbing to typhoid, dysentery and salt poisoning. Once they had dug a well they were able to drink safely, but what would they eat? Gardening and farming were fiendishly difficult. Studies of tree rings show that the Chesapeake was baked by drought during the first seven years of the colony. This meant they were dependent on bartering or seizing supplies from local Indians, whose own stores were depleted. The settlers who died of disease or starvation had to be replaced by new settlers from England, who arrived once or twice a year (their ranks increasingly included women).

The London Co. expected a return on its outlay, but it was slow in coming. It's not that the settlers weren't capable of working hard. One month after they landed, they realized they needed a log palisade to protect them from Indian arrows. As archaeologist William M. Kelso points out (in *Jamestown: The Buried Truth*), in 19 days and in a June swelter they cut and split more than 600 trees weighing 400 to 800 lbs. each and set them in a triangular trench three

football fields long and 2½ ft. deep. In 2004 New Line Cinema built a replica of the fort for its film *The New World* and did it in about the same amount of time—with power tools.

But forts cannot be exported. The Rev. Hakluyt had imagined that the colonies “would yield unto us all the commodities of Europe, Africa and Asia.” Perhaps the settlers would discover gold. All they found were a few semiprecious stones—garnets, amethysts, quartz crystals. Perhaps they could manufacture glass. One resupply ship brought eight German and Polish craftsmen. Most of them ran off to live with the Indians.

Relations between white and red men were the most variable factor in Jamestown's early history. The western Chesapeake was ruled by Wahunsonacock, chief of the Powhatan. He was an expansionist, no less than the English, having brought 30 local tribes under his sway, an empire of 15,000 people. In December 1607, Smith described his royal state: “He sat covered with a great robe, made of raccoon skins, and all the tails hanging by,” flanked by “two rows of men, and behind them as many women, with all their heads and shoulders painted red.” The settlers hoped to make the chief a tributary to James I; he hoped to make them allies of his. Sometimes they fought; sometimes they traded. Wahunsonacock wanted the copper the settlers offered in exchange for food, and he very much wanted their swords and firearms.

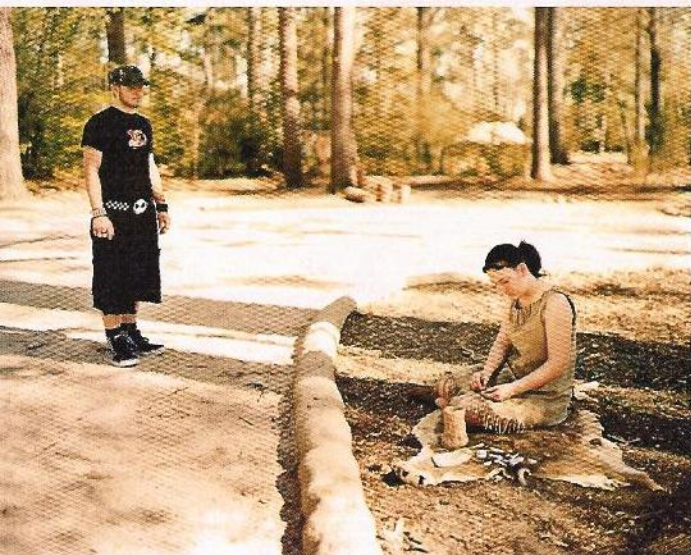
But when the Indians refused to trade for food, the colonists died horribly. The win-

ter of 1609 became the “starving time.” The colonists ate horses, dogs, cats, vermin, even (it was said) corpses. In June 1610 the survivors staggered onto their ships and sailed into the bay, either looking for help or intending to sail home. Help came with the arrival of three ships from England and new settlers. The shattered colony was put under strict martial law. The penalties for running away included shooting, hanging, burning and being broken on the wheel.

Military discipline was a stopgap; serious reform, with long-reaching consequences, was already under way. The London Co. had reorganized itself as the Virginia Co. of London in 1609, and over the next dozen years settlers and backers alike realized the colony could not be run as an overseas mining company or an armed camp. Success would depend on large numbers of people and the steady production of exportable goods. That meant the incentives for living in Jamestown had to be modified.

One prophetic idea was to recruit religious outcasts—Englishmen who longed to put an ocean between them and the established Anglican Church. Some radical Protestants, known as Dissenters, had already fled to Holland. The Virginia Co. lured some Dissenters over and opened negotiations with others. One boatload of Pilgrims, blown north, landed in Plymouth, Mass., in 1620. Religious pluralism in British North America would suffer many backtracks and false starts (Virginia would develop its own Anglican establishment as time passed), but the first step was taken in Jamestown.

Jamestown also was the first place to find



A buried past At the re-created Powhatan village in the Jamestown Settlement, a historical interpreter, sitting, left, sharpens a deer toe bone into a fishhook. The burial ground, right, is at Historic Jamestowne, where an archaeological dig turned up the site of James Fort, long thought to be underwater

Jamestown spawned four centuries of myth, a magical Shakespeare play and a Peggy Lee lyric

a cash cow and an economic system for exploiting it. The Powhatan smoked a crude indigenous species of tobacco. But in 1612, John Rolfe imported seeds of *Nicotiana tabacum*, the Spanish-American weed that was already a craze in England. By 1620 the colony had shipped almost 50,000 lbs. home. Fifty years later, Virginia and Maryland would ship 15 million lbs. Tobacco and foodstuffs were grown on privately owned farms. Beginning in 1618, old settlers were offered 100 acres of land, and newcomers who paid their way were given 50 acres, plus 50 more for every additional person they brought.

Many of those additional people were indentured servants who, in return for their transatlantic passage, bound themselves to labor for seven years. In 1619 the *White Lion*, a privateer, brought a new labor source—"20 and odd negroes" from Angola. Our original sin was not very original—Spain and Portugal had already brought 200,000 African slaves to the Americas—and the colony was slow to exploit the practice. Slaves did not outnumber indentured servants in Virginia until the 1670s. Once acquired, however, the habit of bondage would prove addicting—economic and social nicotine.

But the need to keep these newly successful tobacco growers in line led to

Jamestown's most far-reaching innovation, representative government. In 1618 the Virginia Co. created a general assembly to advise the Governor—including "burgesses," or representatives, elected by property owners—on the theory that "every man will more willingly obey laws to which he has yielded his consent." The general assembly first met for five days in the summer of 1619. It discussed Indian relations, church attendance, gambling, drunkenness and the price of tobacco. It sounds like the Iowa caucuses: war and peace, social issues, bread and butter. From this seed would grow the House of Burgesses, the elective house of Virginia's colonial legislature and the political academy of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. In their rough-and-ready way, the Jamestown settlers had planted the seeds of a dynamic system, democratic capitalism, along with an institution that would pervert it, chattel slavery, and a force that would supply the cure, the goal of liberty.

As the colony flourished, its Powhatan neighbors became alarmed. Trading posts were one thing, permanent farms another. On March 22, 1622, the new leader of the Powhatan, Opechancanough, launched dawn raids on 28 plantations and settlements along the James River, killing 347 colonists, a quarter of the total population. Jamestown itself escaped, warned by an Indian boy who had converted to Christianity. "Besides them they killed," a survivor lamented, "they burst the heart of all the rest." Dispirited and disorganized, hundreds more colonists died the following winter, the second "starving time."

The attack was a brilliant tactical stroke, but it sealed the fate of the attackers. The survivors responded with all-out war. In July 1624, some 800 Indian warriors risked a two-day battle with 60 armored and well-armed colonists and lost. Twenty years later, Opechancanough, nearly a century old, was captured and shot in the back in a Jamestown jail. This too set a pattern: of conflict and expulsion, which lasted until the last Indians were beaten and settled on reservations in the late 19th century.

Back home, the Virginia Co. sputtered in wrath at the imprudence of the colonists in allowing themselves to be killed. A royal commission found the colony to be "weak and miserable," and the company's charter was revoked in 1624. From then on, its Governors would be appointed by the King.

Jamestown left a record of spite, want and death, to say nothing of the long-range problems, from racism to lung cancer, of which the colonists were unaware. Yet they survived. Key aspects of the Jamestown template—chiefly the lures of religious liberty, private ownership and a measure of self-rule—guaranteed that British North America would be populous enough to withstand challenges from France and Holland and, finally, the power grabs of the mother country.

The settlers came with ideas they had to junk. Some of their brightest hopes were false. They worked hard and got other people to do their work for them. They were foolish, fierce and surprisingly stubborn. When one thing failed, they tried another. We are their descendants. ■

Where It All Began.

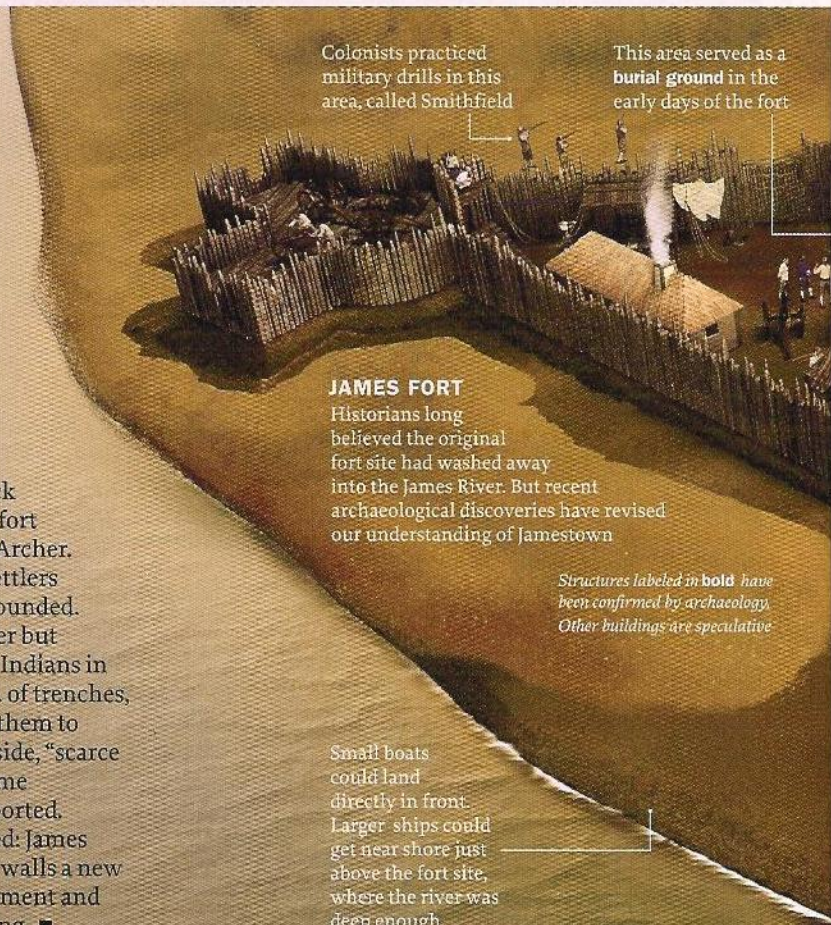
Inside the fort, the best and worst of America grew

BY LON TWEETEN
AND JACKSON DYKMAN

THEY HAD BEEN ON LAND BARELY TWO WEEKS, LIVING IN tents behind a crescent fence of brush, when the attack started. About 200 Indians “came up allmost into the fort [and] shott through the tentes,” wrote settler Gabriel Archer. With the help of a ship’s cannon, the outnumbered settlers won the hourlong battle, but two died and 11 were wounded.

After 19 days of furious labor the colonists were safer but utterly exhausted. Under frequent arrow attack from Indians in the surrounding grass, they had dug more than 900 ft. of trenches, cut down and hauled hundreds of trees and upended them to form a triangular enclosure of about an acre. Once inside, “scarce 10 among us could either go or well stand, such extreme weakness and sickness oppressed us,” John Smith reported.

Built, burned, rebuilt, expanded, abandoned, revived: James Fort never stayed the same for very long. Inside those walls a new world was born, one with both representative government and slavery. Outside, a prosperous Indian empire was dying. ■



Colonists practiced military drills in this area, called Smithfield

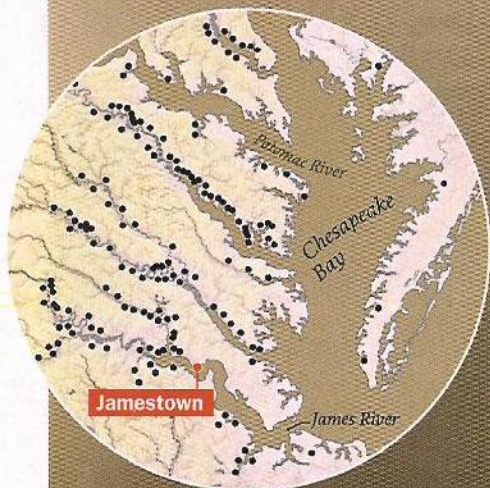
This area served as a burial ground in the early days of the fort

JAMES FORT

Historians long believed the original fort site had washed away into the James River. But recent archaeological discoveries have revised our understanding of Jamestown

Structures labeled in **bold** have been confirmed by archaeology. Other buildings are speculative

Small boats could land directly in front. Larger ships could get near shore just above the fort site, where the river was deep enough



BEFORE JAMESTOWN: THE POWHATAN EMPIRE

The land was Tsenacommacah. The supreme chief was Wahunsonacock, who ruled over more than 15,000 people in about 30 tribes of the Tidewater area of Virginia. The chief, called Powhatan by the English, probably was about 60 when the English arrived. His daughter Pocahontas was about 11.

THE ENGLISH IN AMERICA: A PRECARIOUS FOOTHOLD

Three ships landed on May 14, 1607, depositing 104 men and boys hoping for riches. Most of them found only death. Despite sporadic influxes of supplies and settlers, the colony was constantly on the brink of collapse



SETTLEMENTS IN 1607

- Indian
- English



While exploring, John Smith is captured by Indians and held for six weeks. He meets Pocahontas during a Powhatan ritual

Part of a supply fleet is shipwrecked in Bermuda, the rest arrives in Jamestown with most provisions spoiled. The colony suffers the “starving time”

Survivors from Bermuda arrive. Governor decides to abandon Jamestown. The colonists set sail, only to encounter a new supply fleet. They return and rebuild

Pocahontas is captured and taken to Jamestown as a hostage. John Rolfe succeeds in growing West Indian tobacco

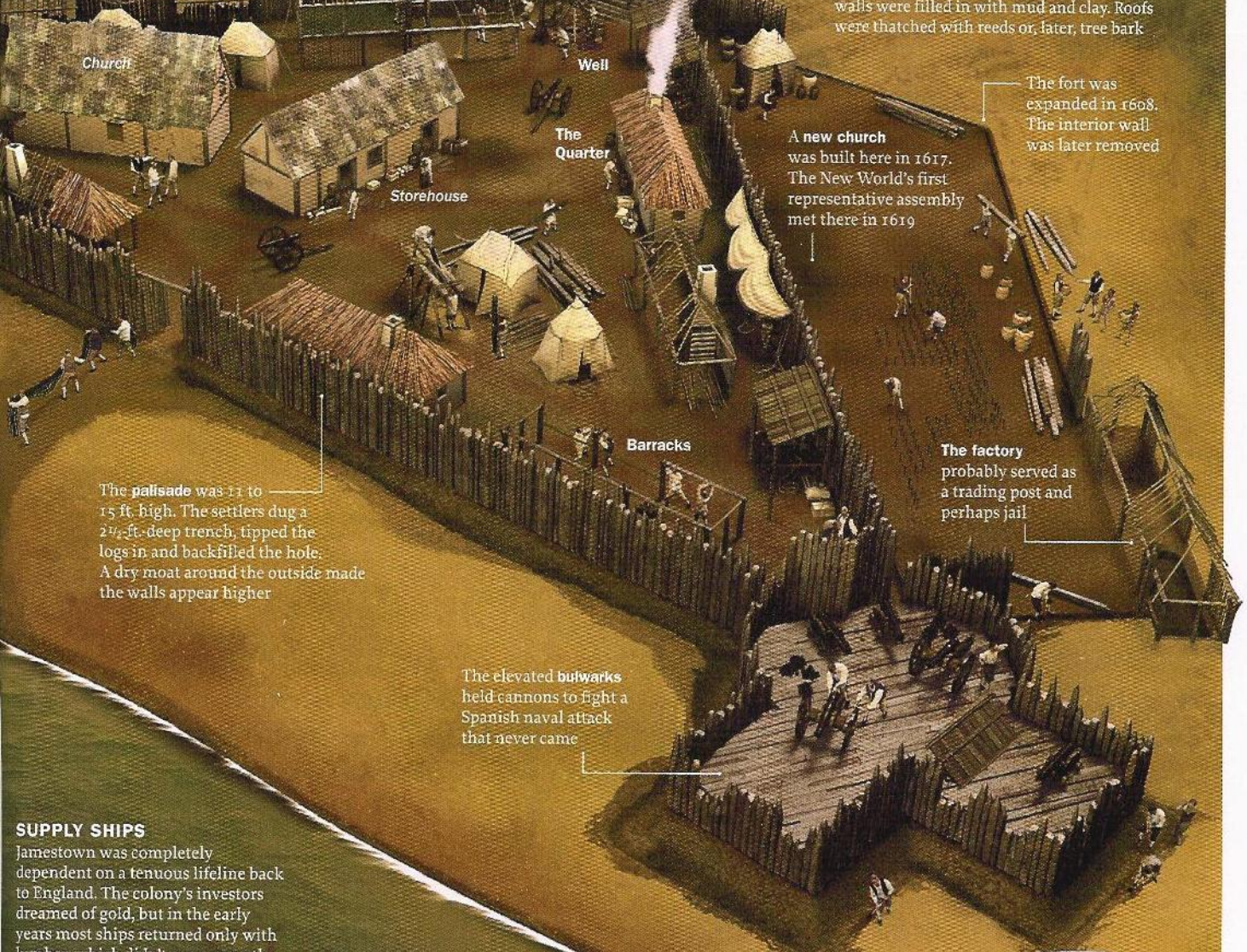
Rolfe and Pocahontas are married. His tobacco becomes the cash crop that finally pays off

Sources: James Horn, vice president of research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; William Kelso, director of Archaeology, Historic Jamestowne; J. Frederick Fausz, “An ‘Abundance of Blood Shed on Both Sides’: England’s First Indian War, 1609-1614” in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (1990); maps courtesy Jamestown Settlement history museum; Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities; National Park Service; *Writings with Other Narratives* by Captain John Smith (2007; Library of America)

Crude lean-tos provided shelter while houses were being built

ARCHITECTURE

Recent evidence indicates that the fort's early structures were built using an English technique known as **mud and stud**. Cross-beams rested on upright forked logs, and walls were filled in with mud and clay. Roofs were thatched with reeds or, later, tree bark



Church

Well

The Quarter

Storehouse

A new church was built here in 1617. The New World's first representative assembly met there in 1619

The fort was expanded in 1608. The interior wall was later removed

Barracks

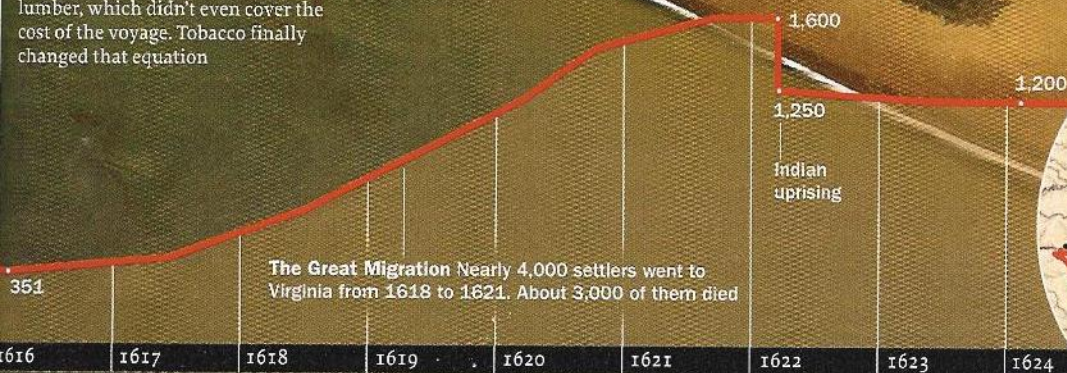
The factory probably served as a trading post and perhaps jail

The **palisade** was 11 to 15 ft. high. The settlers dug a 2 1/2-ft.-deep trench, tipped the logs in and backfilled the hole. A dry moat around the outside made the walls appear higher

The elevated **bulwarks** held cannons to fight a Spanish naval attack that never came

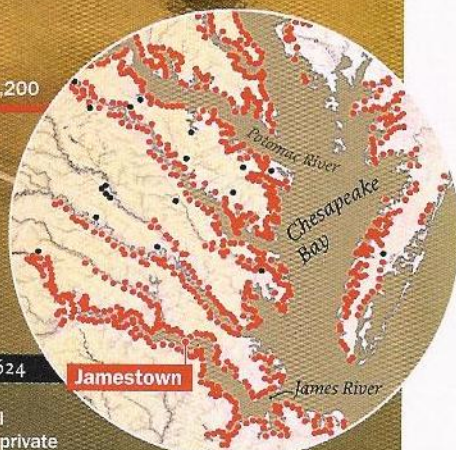
SUPPLY SHIPS

Jamestown was completely dependent on a tenuous lifeline back to England. The colony's investors dreamed of gold, but in the early years most ships returned only with lumber, which didn't even cover the cost of the voyage. Tobacco finally changed that equation



The Great Migration Nearly 4,000 settlers went to Virginia from 1618 to 1621. About 3,000 of them died

Indian uprising



SETTLEMENTS IN 1675

○ Indian ● English

Rolfe takes a census of the colony before sailing for England with Pocahontas. He counts 205 officers and laborers, 81 farmers and 65 women and children

A privateer arrives carrying Angolans captured from a Spanish ship in the Caribbean Sea. Some "20 and odd negroes" are sold, becoming the first slaves in English America

Chief Opechancanough, now leader of the Powhatan tribes, unleashes a coordinated attack on settlements along the James River. About one-quarter of the colonists are killed

King James I revokes the private charter of the Virginia Co. Jamestown becomes a royal colony

The Root of the Problem.

Jamestown gave birth to a contradiction—a democracy that was committed to slavery

BY ORLANDO PATTERSON

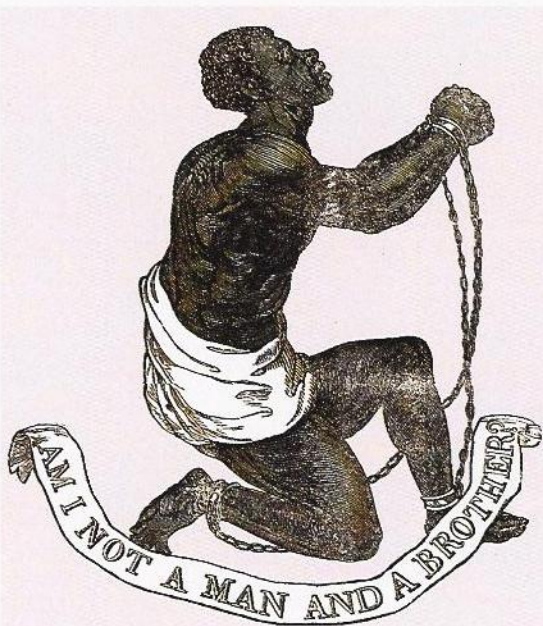
LESS THAN A DOZEN YEARS AFTER THE founding of Jamestown, about 20 Africans from what is now Angola were sold to settlers of the fledgling colony. They found themselves in a raw, chaotic frontier society in which the English settlers were still trying to figure out the best way to survive and turn a profit.

In this unsettled, formative phase, the Africans worked side by side with white indentured servants whose physical hardships and treatment were largely similar to their own. Too much has been made of the fact that manumission, the formal emancipation from slavery, was open to the most resourceful of them, that a few of the manumitted prospered and that blacks and laboring whites interacted on intimate terms. This was typical of nearly all new multiethnic settlements in the Americas. The colony's elite remained committed to indentured white servitude as the backbone of the labor force until at least the middle of the 17th century because indentures were cheaper than African slaves. And since the elite viewed their indentured servants as lazy "salvages"—the very scum of English society not above cannibalism during periods of need and the women little better than prostitutes—it is hardly surprising that no one was especially bothered by the occasional mixed unions.

By the 1660s, the labor equation changed: increased supplies made it cheaper to buy African slaves than white indentures, and the former were also considered less rebellious. The turn toward black slavery did not reduce the inflow of white immigrants, as happened in the sugar islands. Instead, a large white population developed of small and even midsize farmers who relied on their own or nonslave white labor. As the black population grew and increasingly became the labor force of elite whites, both attitudes

and laws changed. By 1662 the children of all slave women were declared slaves in perpetuity. Five years later, Christianity ceased to be an obstacle to enslavement, and by 1669 a master could legitimately kill his slave while inflicting punishment. At the same time, the distinction between slave status and indentured servitude was more sharply defined.

But there were two peculiar features of Jamestown's, and more broadly Virginia's, transition to a fully functioning slave society



Excluded An 1837 woodcut of a shackled slave. The Virginia elite, fearing rebellion, promoted racism to divide the laboring classes

ty that were to have fateful consequences for black Americans. One was the presumption, by the end of the 17th century, that a black person was a slave. The second was the hostility toward manumission and freed blacks generally, leading to laws requiring freed persons to leave the colony. In all the other slave societies of the hemisphere, including those of the French and British, manumission was not uncommon and resulted in the growth of significant freed nonwhite populations, some of them quite prosperous. Why did Virginia move away from this pattern, especially after its early

similarity to other emerging slave regimes?

One reason was the distinctive demographic pattern that began to take shape by the last quarter of the 17th century. Virginia and the other Southern states were the only large-scale slave regimes in which white settlers, committed to the creation of a new social order, remained in the majority and thus had no incentive to create alliances with free blacks or mixed populations. The second reason is offered by Yale historian Edmund Morgan in his celebrated study of Virginia: the elite, fearful of an insurrectionary union of white servants and slaves, actively promoted racism and a racially exclusive popular democracy as a way of dividing and ruling black and white workers. By glorifying whiteness and restricting the electorate to whites, a bond of racial solidarity emerged between all classes of whites predicated on the permanent exclusion of blacks.

So emerged one of the great contradictions in the growth of American democracy. The region with the most vibrant democracy, and the largest electorate, was deeply committed to large-scale slavery and the strong conviction that there was no inconsistency between liberty and slavery. For black Americans the consequences were tragic and lasting. Jamestown's creation instilled in the

It became cheaper to buy African slaves than white indentured servants

broader culture the belief that African Americans, even though they were among the earliest arrivals, did not belong to the body politic and were to be permanently excluded from all basic rights of citizenship.

The great achievement of the civil rights revolution was the dismantling of what the inheritors of Jamestown had instituted. Today a black woman fills one of the most powerful political offices after the presidency, and a black man holds serious promise of becoming the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party. Whatever the persisting problems of black Americans—many of which, like a fragile family life and the lack of inheritance, also originated in slavery—it is now incontestable that they belong to America as America belongs to them. In this, America stands far above all other multiethnic Western nations. Nonetheless, it cannot, and should never, be forgotten that the racial tragedy that began in Jamestown took more than 350 years to overcome. ■

Patterson is a sociology professor at Harvard University and author of Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study



John Smith was a bigmouthed know-it-all but the only settler who could impose order

Captain John Smith.

He was a bully, a braggart and a rebel with a big chip on his shoulder. They would never have made it without him

BY BOB DEANS

ON THE WAY TO AMERICA, aboard one of three ships that would land at Jamestown, one passenger seemed to grate on the rest like a splintered oar. He was a stocky, sawed-off stub of a man; a seasoned war fighter with a valiant past he seldom tired of highlighting; an unconscionable braggart of modest means who resented the blue bloods among the group; a bigmouthed know-it-

all with a sanctimonious air and little or no regard for decorum. His name was John Smith.

In time he would save the expedition from extinction. First, though, he would be imprisoned by his fellow adventurers, sentenced twice to hang, and spared from ritual Algonquian execution by an enchanting woodlands princess whose memory would haunt him the rest of his life.

Tough, romantic and arrogant, Smith was the original American rebel, which is much of the reason he looms so large in both the making of American mythology and the making of American history. No one can quite agree on what to make of him. “Unblushingly Machiavellian,” wrote his biographer, Philip Barbour. In the best of light, Smith was the impolitic outlaw with more grit than tact, the archetypal don’t-tread-on-me misfit without whom the fragile experiment at Jamestown would have collapsed within months. What historians can agree on is that he was a victim of his time: the pivotal English figure in the first sustained Anglo-American culture clash, the accidental envoy who would cross the Atlantic but never bridge the broader divide between the two very different civilizations on opposite shores.

Self-taught in swordsmanship, hand-to-hand combat and making bombs from clay pots, gunpowder and tar, Smith fought as a young mercenary in wars across France, the Netherlands and southeast Europe to the edge of the Ottoman Empire. Captured and sold into slavery, he wound up at a remote Black Sea military outpost, where a Turkish officer shaved Smith’s head and riveted an iron ring around his neck. “A dog could hardly have lived to endure” the routine beatings and starvation rations that followed, Smith wrote in his colorful and epic autobiography.

As Smith tells it, he was tending a grain field alone one day, when his master stopped by unescorted to dish out his customary abuse. Smith crushed his skull with

a bat, stole his clothes, stuffed the corpse in a haystack and made off atop the dead Turk’s horse, finding his way back to Europe along the ancient Silk Road.

Smith was not, in other words, a man much given to self-doubt by the time he headed for America. At 27, he was ready to put the lessons of hard experience to good use and had little respect for authority he deemed inept or unearned. His open contempt for those he called “our ignorant transporters” landed Smith in the brig, or some such warren of restraint, where he spent one of the most historic voyages in history as the first inmate of record in English America.

Arriving at the Caribbean island of Nevis, ship’s carpenters built a gallows to hang Smith for insubordination. He was spared by the group’s commander, Captain Christopher Newport, a career privateer who had lost an arm pirating booty on the Spanish Main and reckoned the colonists would need every fighting man they had once they got to Virginia. Sure enough, two weeks after they settled at Jamestown, 200 Indians attacked. Cannon fire dispersed the war party, but the skirmish served notice that the settlers were not welcome on the rich riverside tracts Native Americans first roamed some 13,000 years before the birth of Christ.

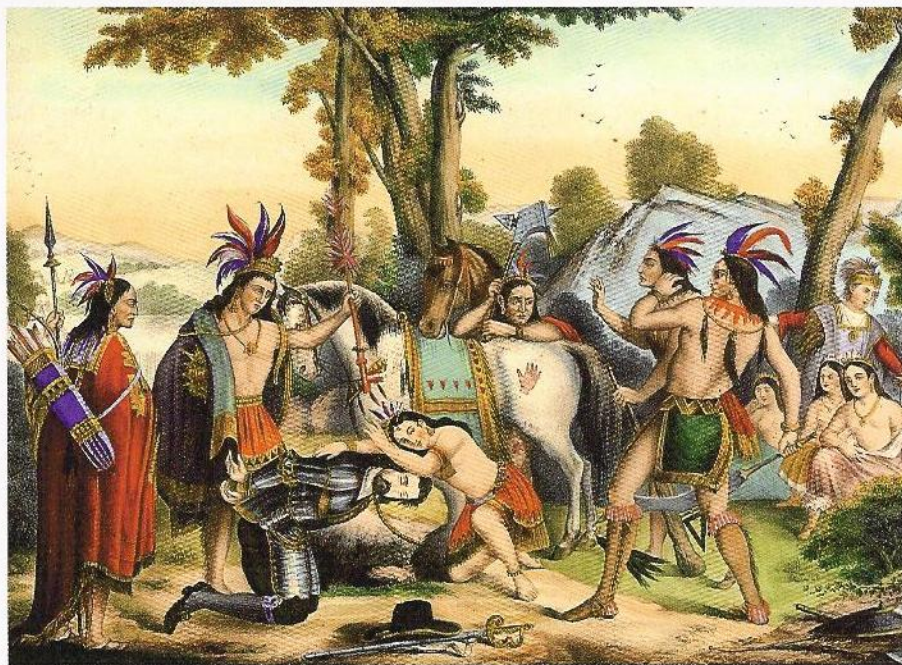
Smith earned a reputation both for bringing home the groceries and brooking no nonsense from settlers who wouldn’t pull their weight or who put self-interest above the colony’s needs. He made an enemy or two along the way. As the military man who understood the terrain and was the least likely to be missed if he didn’t return, Smith was put in charge of seeking local tribes willing to swap corn, fish and game for English copper and glass beads. When one hard-pressed tribe balked at the corn-for-copper trade, Smith ordered his men to rake the village with shot and put the odd lodge to the torch. Terrified natives opened their granary to the armed trespassers, know-

ing that meant some of their own people would likely starve come winter. Returning from one such mission of foraging and gunboat diplomacy, Smith found disgruntled settlers trying to commandeer a ship back to London. He opened cannon and musket fire on the would-be deserters, who quickly reassessed and came ashore.

The great contest of Smith's life, though, was not waged against Turkish tyrants or English rivals. Smith met his match in a smoke-filled lodge of bark and skins, when he was captured and made to stand trial before the most powerful man in Virginia, an aging Algonquian chief the English knew as Powhatan. He wore a raccoon cloak, long strings of pearls and was attended by women, warriors, shamans and priests, Smith wrote, recalling that Powhatan projected "such a grave and majestic countenance as drew me into admiration to see such state in a naked savage."

Smith believed he had made an impression as well, cunningly leading his captors to believe he possessed magical powers by showing off his compass—How does the needle move inside the rock?—and, of course, firing off gunpowder, which the natives took from him and vowed to plant the following spring so they too might reap a harvest of powdered fury.

Smith's charms, though, quickly wore thin. After making a show of his wealth by feasting Smith with Chesapeake oysters, boiled turkey and baked cornbread, Powhatan got to the point: What the heck was Smith doing on the big man's turf, and how fast would he get out? Why, Smith baldly lied, he and his mates had merely been chased upriver by the wicked Spanish and would soon be gone. Powhatan, who knew better, signaled for a band of sinewy warriors to press Smith's head upon an altar of stone and prepare to beat out his brains with clubs. But Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas intervened (*see following story*), and the chief embraced Smith as one of his own, giving him the honorary tribal name of Nantaquoud. He even offered Smith some nearby land. Smith instead returned to Jamestown, where his adversaries charged him with negligence in the death of two of his men killed by Indians. Smith was sentenced, again, to be hanged. Hours before he was to swing, Newport



With Pocahontas At 11, she may have saved him as part of a rite of initiation or out of genuine concern

arrived up the James River with fresh settlers and supplies, intervening once more to spare Smith from the noose.

Outlasting his detractors more than winning them over, Smith was elected president of the fledgling colony in September 1608. Chief executive, military commander and political leader of British America, Smith, at 28, had found a place at last where a man might thrive on bravado and wit. No title, no patron, no ruff-throated pretensions of nobility were required in Smith's Virginia, just an iron will to prevail—and a hornful of powder and shot.

Suddenly it wasn't only the Indians who had to deal with Smith, but also the Virginia Co. investors who funded Jamestown and were impertinent enough to expect a return. Forget it, Smith wrote his London underwriters. There was no sense digging for gold where nature had left none, he scoffed, nor would the rock-strewn James River ever guide their wind-driven square-riggers on some long-dreamed-of shortcut to China. Disenchanted investors, he concluded, were free to join him in Jamestown, where their odds of surviving were about 1 in 4.

The sealing wax on that epistle was still hardening when Smith assembled his fellow colonists for a reading of the proverbial riot act. "The greater part must be more industrious or starve," Smith decreed. "He that will not work, shall not eat." Not too surprisingly, productivity soared. Anglo-American relations played to a draw. Strains were briefly managed, tensions largely contained. What followed, though, was a long and tortuous series of missed opportuni-

ties, conflict and outright betrayal that set Smith and Powhatan on a collision course. When the old chief got word that Smith had sacked yet another village and made off with half its provisions on the eve of a harsh winter, he summoned the white man to his lodge and offered to trade in peace.

Smith rejected it, falling back instead on insults and threats. "For your riches we have no use," Smith shrugged. And if Powhatan meant to challenge the colonists' superior firepower, bring it on, Smith taunted, for "in such wars consist our chiefest pleasure."

There ended the promise of friendship for Chief Powhatan and Captain John Smith, a tragic precursor to the bloodshed between Native Americans and Europeans that was to repeat itself for centuries to come. But for all his flaws and hidebound ways, Smith avoided all-out war with the natives during his tenure, believing, for the most part, that conflict could be managed with the right mix of bully and bluff.

Smith was the only one, too, in Jamestown's first fragile years, with the ability to impose order and direction upon the bold but uneven and quarrelsome crowd that journeyed in leaking wooden boats to the far side of the world to claw out an English beachhead. "His mixture of great white father and avenging god superbly achieved what he wanted—a food supply," wrote Barbour. With the colony's survival hanging in the balance, "other questions were academic." ■

A national correspondent for Cox Newspapers, Deans is author of The River Where America Began: A Journey Along the James

Lucky guy. Smith was set to hang twice and was saved both times by the same man

Mad About You. So what if they weren't lovers? Pocahontas and John Smith were fascinated with each other, and it saved the colony

BY BOB DEANS



The captive princess Three illustrations of Pocahontas, but only the center one was done from life

IT WAS THE FIRST GREAT AMERICAN LOVE story. Or was it?

Neither John Smith nor Pocahontas ever claimed to be an item. There's not a shred of evidence to affirm they were. But the real story of their relationship is more interesting than what the rich canon of American romance literature, or even Hollywood, has made of it. Pocahontas and Smith shared a deep friendship based, at a minimum, on mutual fascination, admiration and respect. Their relationship almost certainly saved Jamestown, opening the way to British empire in America.

And their intimacy—platonic or otherwise—has mirrored for the ages the perilous courtship between the Native Americans and the early European colonists, a forced marriage of competing cultures and conflicting interests that, like so many other impassioned yet ultimately tragic affairs, began with great promise only to end in heartbreak.

Princess Matoaka—she was also called Amonute—was born around 1596. Daughter of Chief Powhatan, she had to be a bit of a spitfire to get Dad's attention. Powhatan had a hundred "wives" or, more accurately, women who bore him children. This child was special. He nicknamed her Pocahontas, or little capricious one, a tribute to her playful nature. She was also striking. She "much exceedeth any of the rest of his [Powhatan's] people," wrote Smith, "not only for feature, countenance and proportion... but for wit and spirit, the only Nonpareil of his country."

Those lines comprise the most fawning reference to a female in the voluminous collection of Smith's lifetime of writings. He had good reason to find her extraordinary.

For one thing, she saved him from execution by her father. Some historians doubt that—Smith is the only historical source for the tale—but the story has never been credibly disputed. What is less well known is that she saved the Englishman a second time, risking her life to sneak through a darkened forest alone to warn Smith of imminent ambush, and that she continued to find ways to help the Jamestown settlers. When a winter fire ravaged their colony in 1608, Pocahontas paid a series of calls, accompanied by braves bearing beaver meat, venison and other delicacies. And it was Pocahontas who was sent to Jamestown one year to negotiate the release of half a dozen Indian prisoners.

After 2½ years in Virginia, Smith returned to England, and the settlers told Pocahontas he was dead. About 14 at the time, her reaction speaks for itself: she banished all thought of the settlers, staying clear of Jamestown for the next four years. The English, though, weren't finished with her. In the spring of 1613, when Pocahontas was nearing 18, she was kidnapped by a colonist-sailor. Her father paid most of the ransom—a gaggle of English prisoners, guns and a boatload of corn—but the white men kept the girl just upriver from Jamestown. There the planter John Rolfe, a prosperous widower, soon found himself

battling an attraction he deemed alternately sinful and sublime. In what must be the most peculiar betrothal request in American history, Rolfe wrote to Virginia Governor Thomas Dale, first apologizing for being in love with the daughter of the native chief, then begging for permission to marry her. Theirs was the first recorded marriage of an Englishman and a Native American woman, and it ushered in a period of relative peace.

Two years later, the Anglo-American couple and their young son Thomas visited London on a public relations scheme hatched by the Virginia Co. Its heavily indebted investors hoped the exotic New World princess would help them drum up desperately needed capital to keep their flagging American venture afloat.

No one followed her visit with greater interest, it seemed, than the still influential but greatly diminished John Smith. He wrote a letter to King James' wife, Queen Anne, urging her to receive Pocahontas in a manner befitting her status as Algonquian royalty. Uncomfortable months passed before Smith summoned the courage to call on Pocahontas. What followed was a heated, if not altogether tender, scene. Pocahontas turned her back on Smith, refusing for more than two hours to speak.

When at last she did, she gave him a piece of her mind, telling Smith he had betrayed her people and upbraiding him for staying gone for so many years and never sending a word. Weeks later, drifting down the Thames aboard a ship bound for Jamestown, Pocahontas fell ill. She died in Gravesend in March 1617. Smith lived another 14 years, unwell to his dying day. Both were buried in England, separately, and a world away from the one true love they indisputably shared, a place the English called America. ■

Pocahontas
Her name was a tribute to her precocious nature





Eureka! Experts thought the original fort was now underwater. A maverick archaeologist proved them wrong

BY MICHAEL D. LEMONICK AND ANDREA DORFMAN



Tools of the trade
A brass German-made thimble was found in the fort's bulwark trench

WHEN ARCHAEOLOGISTS first started digging in Jamestown in the 1930s, they turned up more than half a million artifacts—but not a trace of the original fort. In fact, nobody expected to find it. Based on a handful of written eyewitness accounts and two maps, the James Fort was widely believed to have been built at the west end of Jamestown Island, close to the deepwater channel where the colonists presumably moored their ships. The river had washed away some 25 acres of that part of the island long ago, however, and most archaeologists figured the site of the fort had ended up on the river bottom.

William Kelso disagreed. Unlike his col-

leagues, Kelso, a specialist in colonial American archaeology who began working for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1993, was convinced that the fort lay instead somewhere close to the brick church tower built in 1690, the only surviving structure from the colony's first century. So on April 4, 1994, he put his shovel in the ground, and less than an hour later turned up fragments of early 17th century ceramics. Over the next few months, Kelso and a team of volunteers uncovered a series of circular stains in the soil—the marks of logs that had once stood upright but had long since rotted away.

Although it took him another 10 years of slow, patient work, Kelso eventually managed to map out the triangle shape of the fort along with the foundations of at least five buildings, several wells and a burial ground. His team has also dug up more than a million artifacts, about twice the number found over the previous half-century, including arms and armor, pottery, clay pipes, clothing and shoes, iron tools, jewelry, animal bones, trade beads, sheets of copper and hundreds of stone points. Individually, these objects seem trivial. Taken together, however, they're yielding an extraordinary picture of who the colonists were and how they lived—something contemporaneous written accounts couldn't come close to doing.

Perhaps the most unexpected discovery is evidence that Indians, whom the settlers assumed would be uniformly hostile, actually lived in the fort for some period of time. Trash pits, for example, yielded fragments of an Indian reed mat as well as shell beads favored by the Indians and the type of stone tool that they would have used to drill them. The Indian artifacts were found mixed in with English ones in an undisturbed layer of soil and in greater concentrations than have ever been found in Virginia Indian villages. That, and the fact that the Indians bothered to carry tools like the stone drills into the fort, has led archaeologists to think the Indians spent significant amounts of time there. "It must have been a very close relationship," says Kelso. "No one really talks about that."

Additional evidence of the Indians' presence in the fort comes from one of the buildings Kelso's team excavated. Known as "the quarter," it was at least 30 ft. long by 18 ft. wide and appears to have been built using a mud-and-stud technique that was popular in Lincolnshire, England, during the early 17th century. In one corner of its cellar the archaeologists found a butchered turtle shell and pig bones, as well as an Indian cooking pot with traces of turtle bone inside. Nearby were a Venetian trade bead, a sheathed dag-



Colonial hygiene This ornate silver ear picker served double duty: it kept teeth and nails clean too



Barter The Indians provided food in exchange for items like this English sixpence

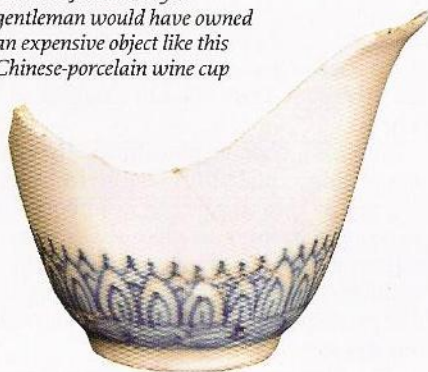


Household items The dig has yielded thousands of ceramics, like this intact English Border Ware drinking jug



Native presence Indians made these stone arrow points, found at the site, at least 400 years ago

Status symbol Only a gentleman would have owned an expensive object like this Chinese-porcelain wine cup



ger and a musketeer's kit bag. As a result, Kelso surmises that an Indian woman may have cooked for the inhabitants.

Kelso's team has also uncovered a modest cemetery within the fort. The plot, which dates to the colony's earliest years, holds at least 23 individuals: 19 single burials and two double burials (most likely people who died on the same day). One of the single graves contained the remains of a boy with a stone arrowhead in his leg, a broken collarbone and a jawbone that had been partially excised due to an abscess. The position of the bones, the lack of coffin nails and the abundance of straight pins scattered in the graves opened so far indicate that some of the bodies were interred in simple shrouds without coffins.

Another burial ground outside the walls of the fort, dating from 1610 to 1630, holds some 80 individuals. From them, forensic anthropologists at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington determined that the average male inhabitant died at age 25, with women living slightly longer. (At the time, Kelso notes, life expectancy for lower-class residents of London was about 20 years; for the upper class, it was about 40.) To the scientists' surprise, hardly any of the graves contained infants.

But perhaps the most significant discovery was a lone grave with the remains of a ceremonial staff inside. Kelso believes it is the resting place of Bartholomew Gosnold, captain of the *Godspeed*, who died on Aug. 22, 1607, after a "three-week illness." DNA tests on the skeleton have been inconclusive.

The colonists were ill-prepared for life in Virginia and, at least initially, had no crops to harvest. So Kelso was not surprised to dig up the goods they offered the Indians in exchange for food. Among them: Venetian glass beads (blue ones were preferred), sheet copper (a commodity prized by the Powhatan, who wore pendants and other ornaments fashioned from the reddish metal), European coins (useless in Virginia) and metal tools (the Indians had ones made only from stone, wood, bone and shell). By the 1660s, when the English had established a number of settlements in the area, the Indians were even issued silver or copper badges that allowed them safe passage while conducting business with the foreigners.

A comprehensive selection of artifacts from Kelso's digs is on display in a \$4.9 million facility known as the Archaearium that opened at Historic Jamestowne last May. His team is now excavating beneath the Civil War-era earthen fort that rises in the middle of James Fort in search of the colony's earliest church—just in time for Jamestown's 400th-birthday celebration. ■

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