

Captain John Smith led the colony of Jamestown and kept its settlers from starving. The colony was located near the Indian Confederation that was led by Chief Powhatan. Chief Powhatan is shown in the upper right corner of the map.

Success at Jamestown

On May 24, 1607, three English ships sailed into the deep bay now called the Chesapeake. The ships and the 105 men and boys aboard had been sent to North America by the English business people who formed the Virginia Company of London. The company planned to build a trading post and colony in North America to make a profit. A **profit** is the money left over after everything has been paid for. Despite the company's plans, however, most of the colonists came looking for gold.

The three ships sailed up a river that the men named the James, to honor King James I of England. They landed on a peninsula and decided to start a settlement there. However, the place they built Jamestown, as they called the settlement, turned out to be a poor choice. The men dug wells, but the water was bad. The land was wet and full of disease-carrying mosquitoes. The way the colonists behaved toward the Indians who lived nearby—taking Indian lands and destroying their crops—also put them in danger of attack.

By the end of the first year, about half of the colonists had died. One colonist later



Captain John Smith maintained peace with the nearby Algonquian Indians.

wrote, "Our men were destroyed with cruel diseases, . . . burning fevers, and by wars." They had come to the Americas to get rich. No one had bothered to plant or gather food for the winter. Many colonists starved.

Life in the colony changed when Captain John Smith became its leader. He probably saved Jamestown from becoming another lost colony. Smith's first act was to make one unbreakable rule: Anyone who did not work did not eat. Soon the colonists were planting gardens, building shelters, and putting up fences to protect the settlement from attack.

More than 30 tribes of Eastern Woodlands Indians lived in Virginia during this time. Most were members of a confederation led by Chief Powhatan (pow•uh•TAN). One day Captain Smith was captured by the Indians. A legend says that the chief's daughter, Pocahontas (poh•kuh•HAHN•tuhs), saved his life. Because of this act Captain Smith

made peace with Chief Powhatan. Whether or not this story is true, it is known that fighting continued between the settlers and the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands.

Despite Jamestown's many troubles, the colony survived and, in time, did well. Five years after the first colonists had sailed up the James River, they found the "gold" they would make the colony rich. It was tobacco. Selling tobacco was the beginning of a profitable business for the Virginia colonists.

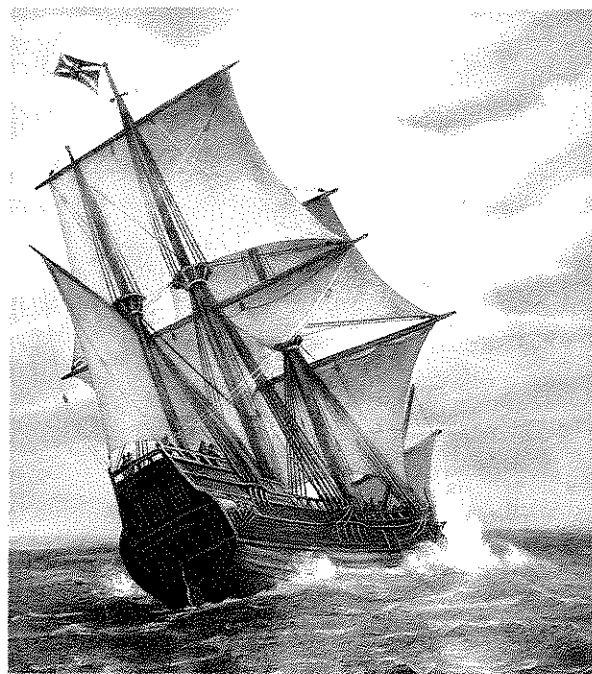
REVIEW Why did colonists go to Jamestown?

The Founding of Plymouth Colony

On a cold day late in 1620, a ship called the *Mayflower* set sail from England for the Americas. The 101 colonists on board had agreed to work for the Virginia Company. The company's owners would pay for the voyage. In return, the settlers would send them furs, fish, and lumber.

Among the colonists on board was a group of families going to the Americas for

In 1620 the *Mayflower* landed on the coast of Massachusetts.



A Tale of Two Colonies

Read these two descriptions of the founding of the first two permanent British settlements in North America.

Jamestown

Most of the Jamestown colonists were gentlemen and gentlemen's servants. English gentlemen and their servants never performed manual labor. They were no more prepared to do so in America than in their native land. The gentlemen came to Virginia expecting to find lots of gold and silver. They planned to spend their time gathering these precious metals, or perhaps overseeing as their servants did the gathering. When they found they had to work hard, they began quarreling among themselves.

Nongentlemen settlers were hired workers. They were working for the colonizing company, not for themselves. They had no incentive to work hard, so they didn't. The Jamestown leaders—appointed by the colonizing company—weren't very skilled, so they couldn't stop the conflict or get people to work harder.

The Jamestown colonists chose the site of their settlement because it was on the river. They thought they could defend it easily against Indian attack. In fact, the land was swampy, and the drinking water wasn't good. In this climate, many settlers died of malaria and dysentery. Their relations with the Native Americans weren't smooth. In fact, attacks were always a possibility.

During the summer, the colonists didn't catch and salt extra fish to eat over the winter. They didn't get enough crops grown and harvested, either. During the winter of 1608–1609, the Jamestown settlers suffered through the "Starving Time." Many died. One man even killed his wife, salted her body to preserve it, and began eating her! (He was caught at it and executed.) Finally, John Smith took control of the colony. He bought corn from the Native Americans. He got the colonists to be orderly and practical.



Plymouth

The Plymouth settlers came to America so they could practice their religion in the way they wanted. They were not gentry. They knew they were coming to a near-wilderness without riches like gold or silver. They came to work hard to create a new, holy society that would follow God's word in all things. Before landing in America, the male settlers signed an agreement. They promised to live by a set of rules they themselves would draw up. And they did. They also chose their own leaders.

The Pilgrims landed in December, so they couldn't grow food until the following summer. Many died that winter of starvation. But their site had plenty of fresh air and water. They made sure their relations with nearby Native Americans were friendly. One man in particular, Squanto, showed them how to grow corn. The Pilgrims had plenty of food on hand when their second winter began.

(continued)



"The Starving Time"

... Now we all found the losse of Captaine Smith, yea his greatest maligners could now curse his losse: as for corne, provision and contribution from the Salvages, we had nothing but mortall wounds, with clubs and arrowes; as for our Hogs, Hens, Goats, Sheepe, Horse, or what lived, our commanders, officers & Salvages daisy consumed them, some small proportions sometimes we tasted, till all was devoured; then swords, armes, pieces, or any thing, wee traded with the Salvages, whose cruell fingers were so oft imbrewed in our blouds, that what by their crueltie, our Governours indiscretion, and the losse of our ships, of five hundred within six moneths after Captaine Smiths departure, there remained not past sixtie men, women and children, most miserable and poore creatures; and those were preserved for the most part, by roots, herbes, acornes, walnuts, berries, now and then a little fish: they that had startch in these extremities, made no small use of it; yea, even the very skinnes of our horses.

Nay, so great was our famine, that a Salvage we slew, and buried, the poorer sort tooke him up againe and eat him, and so did divers one another boyled and stewed with roots and herbes: And one amongst the rest did kill his wife, powdered her, and had eaten part of her before it was knowne, for which hee was executed, as hee well deserved; now whether shee was better roasted, boyled or carbonado'd*, I know not, but of such a dish as powdered wife I never heard of. This was that time, which still to this day we called the starving time; it were too vile to say, and scarce to be beleaved, what we endured. . .

*"carbonado'd" = barbequed

~ A Jamestown colonist's account from *Generall Historie of Virginia* by John Smith, 1624