

Name _____

Date _____

The Jamestown Colony

In 1606, King James I granted a charter to colonize Virginia. This charter was granted to a company called the Virginia Company of London. The primary motivation for colonization was the promise of gold. Secondary motivations included finding a sea passage through the New World to Asia and the Indies, establishing colonies to demonstrate English power and influence, and spreading Christianity to the native people.

The Virginia Company set sail on May 24, 1607. They had three ships that landed near the Chesapeake Bay area on the banks of the James River. This is where they founded Jamestown, which was the first permanent English colony in the New World.

The settlers had a difficult time when they founded Jamestown. The land was hot, humid, and mosquito-infested. The people that settled Jamestown were primarily aristocrats, so they did not know how to farm, fish, or hunt. They actually spent most of their time searching for gold that did not exist. Many died from disease, malnutrition, and starvation.

The local Indians helped the colonists with food during their first hard winters and taught them how to farm and live off the land.

The directors of the Virginia Company of London did not lead effectively and the settlers continued to struggle.

One colonist, John Smith, came to Jamestown after a career as a soldier and was able to provide the leadership that the settlers needed. The Virginia Company was impressed with Smith's military experience. They appointed him a member of the resident council to manage the colony in America. John Smith became famous for his statement that "he that will not work shall not eat." This rule was effective and helped to motivate the colonists.

Smith bargained with the Indians so that he could explore and map the Chesapeake area. In 1607, Smith was kidnapped by the Powhatan Native Americans. According to legend, he was rescued from death by an appeal from Pocahontas, who was the daughter of the Indian Chief. This act of mercy preserved the wavering peace, and Pocahontas became an ambassador between the Indians and the settlers.

Despite the Indian's help and Smith's leadership, the colony was failing. The winter of 1609-1610 was especially difficult. It was called the "starving time," and most of the settlers died of hunger and pestilence. After this harsh winter, there were only roughly 60 settlers remaining out of the 400 that had originally come to Virginia. When spring arrived, the remaining colonists decided return to England. As they travelled down the James River, they were met by a new governor named Lord De La Warr. He took them back to Jamestown.

The hardships continued for the colonists and the cultural clashes with the Indians increased. De La Warr's troops raided Indian villages. In 1614, a peace agreement ended the First Anglo-Powhatan War. Like many agreements of the time in Europe, this one was sealed with a marriage. A settler named John Rolfe married Pocahontas. In 1616, Pocahontas and Rolfe went to England. In 1617, Pocahontas died while they were still on their trip. She was buried in Gravesend, England.

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The Jamestown Colony (Cont'd)

The treaty with the Indians is not what saved the settlers. What saved them was John Rolfe's realization that tobacco could be sold profitably in England. This was a critical turning point for Jamestown. As the profits from the cultivation of tobacco increased, the colonists no longer cared about looking for gold. The settlers now wanted to acquire large plots of land so they could grow more tobacco. By 1616, tobacco had finally put the colony on firm economic ground.

By 1619, there were enough people to merit a form of self-government called the House of Burgesses. This allowed the settlers to choose people that would advise the governor. This began a new pattern of representative self-government in America.

The settlers continued to push inland to find more land for growing their tobacco. This created conflict with the Indians. Their earlier peace agreement lasted only eight years. In 1622, the Indians attacked Jamestown. John Rolfe was killed during the attack. In fact, 347 settlers died from the attack. The London Company then began killing the Indians, which caused the Second Anglo-Powhatan War in 1644. The Indians were defeated, and a new peace treaty banished the Chesapeake Indians from Virginia.

In 1624, King James appointed a commission to investigate the London Company and their management of Jamestown. The committee recommended the court dissolve the company, so the King revoked the charter, making Virginia a royal colony directly under his control.

From a financial standpoint, the London Company was a disaster- the shareholders lost everything they invested. Even though there were major financial losses, once King James took over, Virginia was firmly established and was beginning to prosper in the New World.

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The Jamestown Colony Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. The primary motivation for the colonization of Jamestown was:
 - a. to find a warmer climate
 - b. to seek peace
 - c. the promise of gold
 - d. to experience other cultures
2. This crop helped to save Jamestown because it could be sold in England:
 - a. cotton
 - b. tobacco
 - c. corn
 - d. wheat
3. The first permanent English colony in the New World was:
 - a. Jamestown
 - b. Roanoke
 - c. Plymouth Rock
 - d. Florida

Fill In:

4. In 1606, _____ granted a charter to colonize Virginia.
5. In 1607, John Smith was kidnapped by the _____ Native Americans.
6. A settler named _____ married Pocahontas.
7. _____ became famous for his statement that “he that will not work shall not eat.”
8. By 1619, there were enough people to merit a form of self-government called the _____.

True or False:

- _____ 8. The settlers had an easy time when they founded Jamestown.
- _____ 9. The charter to colonize Virginia was granted to Pocahontas.
- _____ 10. The winter of 1609-1610 was especially difficult and was called the “starving time.”

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The Jamestown Colony Answers

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