

*"Their orders for government were put in a box,
not to be opened."*

THE FOUNDING OF JAMESTOWN

May 13, 1607
Virginia Colony

JOHN SMITH

After defeating the Spanish Armada, Britain turned again to America. In this renewed effort, Captain Christopher Newport set out from England with 103 men and boys. But the Jamestown venture encountered difficulties just as earlier expeditions had. More than half the colonists died in the first year.

John Smith, who has become the best-known leader of the Jamestown colony, was already a seasoned explorer by the time he sailed for America. He had traveled through Europe while still a teenager, had fought as a mercenary in Transylvania, been captured by the Turks and made a slave, had escaped and traveled into Russia, and finally had returned to England shortly before the London Company launched the Jamestown effort. Although he viewed world events with great self-interest his accounts of the major events are considered reasonably accurate. And to some extent, survival of the colony depended on Smith's political sense, because he was

able to forge an alliance with Chief Powhatan when Newport went back to England for supplies.

Smith wrote this account in the third person. Remnants of the fort he describes were unearthed in 1996.

Captain Bartholomew Gosnoll, one of the first movers of this plantation, having many years solicited many of his friends, but found small assistants; at last prevailed with some gentlemen, as Captain John Smith, Master Edward-Maria Wingfield, Master Robert Hunt, and many others, who depended a year upon his projects, but nothing could be effected, till by their great charge and industries it came to be apprehended by certain of the nobility, gentry, and merchants, so that his Majesty by his letters patents, gave commission for establishing councils, to direct here; and to govern, and to execute there. To effect this, was spent another year, and by that, three ships were provided, one of 100 tons, another of 40, and a pinnace of 20. The transportation of the company was committed to Captain Christopher Newport, a mariner well practiced for the western parts of America. But their orders for government were put in a box, not to be opened, nor the governors known until they arrived in Virginia.

The first land they made they called Cape Henry; where thirty of them recreating themselves on shore, were assaulted by five savages, who hurt two of the English very dangerously.

That night was the box opened, and the orders read, in which Bartholomew Gosnoll, John Smith, Edward Wingfield, Christopher Newport, John Ratliffe, John Martin, and George Kendall, were named to be the Council, and to choose a President amongst them for a year, who with the Council should govern. Matters of moment were to be examined by a jury, but determined by the major part of the Council, in which the President had two voices.

Until the 13 of May they sought a place to plant in; then the Council was sworn, Master Wingfield was chosen President, and an oration made, why Captain Smith was not admitted of the Council as the rest.

Now fell every man to work, the Council contrive the Fort, the rest cut down trees to make place to pitch their tents; some provide clapboard to relade the ships. some make gardens, some nets, etc. The savages often visited us kindly. The Presidents overweening jealousy would admit no exercise at arms, or fortification but the boughs of trees cast together in the form of a half moon by the extraordinary pains and diligence of Captain Kendall.

Newport, Smith, and twenty others, were sent to discover the head of the river: by divers small habitations they passed, in six days they

arrived at a town called Powhatan, consisting of some twelve houses, pleasantly seated on a hill; before it three fertile isles, about it many of their cornfields, the place is very pleasant, and strong by nature, of this place the Prince is called Powhatan, and his people Powhatans. To this place the river is navigable: but higher within a mile, by reason of the rocks and Isles, there is not passage for a small boat, this they call The Falls. The people in all parts kindly entreated them, till being returned within twenty miles of James town, they gave just cause of jealousy: but had God not blessed the discoverers otherwise than those at the Fort, there had then been an end of that plantation; for at the Fort, where they arrived the next day, they found 17 men hurt, and a boy slain by the savages, and had it not chanced a cross barre shot from the Ships struck down a bough from a tree amongst them, that caused them to retire, our men would have all been slain since they were all at work and their arms were stored away.

Hereupon the President was contented the Fort should be palisaded, the ordnance mounted, his men armed and exercised: for many were the assaults, and ambushes of the savages, and our men by their disorderly straggling were often hurt, when the savages by the nimbleness of their heels well escaped.

“Pocahontas got his head in her arms . . .”

POCAHONTAS SAVES JOHN SMITH

January 1608
Jamestown, Virginia, and Environs

JOHN SMITH

Some historians believe Pocahontas, daughter of Chief Powhatan, did not save John Smith—that Smith instead misinterpreted or misrepresented an initiation ceremony.

By all accounts Pocahontas was extraordinary. Yet Smith abandoned her, leaving for England and allowing her to think that he was dead. She went on to marry John Rolfe, who had become successful as the first European tobacco farmer.

Pocahontas was shocked and hurt to see Smith alive when she traveled with Rolfe to London in 1615. Smith later admitted he deserved her angry tirade. The

realization that she had been duped may have contributed to her deep unhappiness in London. She soon fell ill and died there.

Six or seven weeks those barbarians kept [Smith] prisoner, many strange triumphs and conjurations they made of him, yet he so demeaned himself amongst them, as he not only diverted them from surprising the fort but procured his own liberty, and got himself and his company such estimation amongst them that those savages admired him more than their own Quiyouckosucks.

The manner how they used and delivered him is as follows. . . .

He demanding for their captain, they showed him Opechankanough, king of Pamaunkec, to whom he gave a round ivory double compass dial. Much they marveled at the playing of the fly and needle, which they could see so plainly and yet not touch it because of the glass that covered them. But when he demonstrated by that globe-like jewel the roundness of the earth and skies, the sphere of the sun, moon, and stars, and how the sun did chase the night round about the world continually; the greatness of the land and sea, the diversity of nations, variety of complexions, and how we were to them antipodes, and many other such like matters, they all stood as amazed with admiration. Notwithstanding, within an hour after they tied him to a tree, and as many as could stand about him prepared to shoot him: but the king holding up the compass in his hand, they all laid down their bows and arrows, and in a triumphant manner led him to Orapak, where he was after their manner kindly feasted, and well used.

At last they brought him to Werowocomoco, where was Powhatan, their emperor. Here more than two hundred of those grim courtiers stood wondering at him, as he had been a monster; till Powhatan and his train had put themselves in their greatest braveries. Before a fire upon a seat like a bedstead, he sat covered with a great robe, made of raccoon skins, and all the tails hanging by. On either hand did sit a young wench of sixteen or eighteen years, and along on each side the house, two rows of men and behind them as many women, with all their heads and shoulders painted red, many of their heads bedecked with the white down of birds, but every one with something, and a great chain of white beads about their necks. At his entrance before the king, all the people gave a great shout. The queen of Appamatuck was appointed to bring him water to wash his hands, and another brought him a bunch of feathers, instead of a towel to dry them. Having feasted him after their best barbarous manner they could, a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could laid hands on him, dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being

ready with their clubs to beat out his brains, Pocahontas, the king's dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save him from death: whereat the emperor was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper; for they thought him as well of all occupations as themselves. For the king himself will make his own robes, shoes, bows, arrows, pots; plant, hunt, or do anything so well as the rest.

Two days after, Powhatan having disguised himself in the most fearful manner he could, caused Captain Smith to be brought forth to a great house in the woods, and there upon a mat by the fire to be left alone. Not long after, from behind a mat that divided the house was made the most dolefullest noise he ever heard; then Powhatan, more like a devil than a man, with some two hundred more as black as himself, came unto him and told him now they were friends, and presently he should go to Jamestown, to send him two great guns, and a grindstone, for which he would give him the county of Capahowosick, and for ever esteem him as his son Wantaquoud.

"In these hard and difficult beginnings . . ."

THE PILGRIMS' LANDING AND FIRST WINTER

*November 21, 1620—March 20, 1621
Plymouth, Massachusetts*

WILLIAM BRADFORD

The first European colony in New England was not supposed to be in New England at all.

The *Mayflower* left Plymouth, England, on September 1620 with 102 passengers who had received a grant to settle in Virginia. Most, but not all, were members of the Separatists, a dissident Protestant sect that had been persecuted in England and had settled briefly in Holland.

Poor navigation, or perhaps a desire to avoid the rule of the British authorities that controlled the Virginia Colony, brought them to the coast of Massachusetts. They dropped anchor near what is now Provincetown on November 21, then explored Cape Cod before formally landing and founding Plymouth Colony on December 21.

Because the *Mayflower* passengers were outside the jurisdiction of the London Company, they decided to establish their own government. The men on the ship drafted the *Mayflower Compact*—an early American Constitution—to create a "civil body politic" binding the settlers together and to the rule of law.

The arrival of an English-speaking Native American to save the settlement would seem a far-fetched plot twist in a novel. How did it happen? Though some of the early details are sketchy, Squanto, also known as Tisquantum, may have been taken to England by a British sea captain as early as 1605, and returned to North America a few years later by Captain John Smith. Around 1615 he was captured along with a few dozen other natives by slavers associated with Smith, and taken to Spain to be sold. He escaped and made his way to England, then returned to North America in 1619 as a pilot for an English ship. Because plague—perhaps smallpox—had killed the members of his Pawtuxet tribe, he went to live with the Wampanoags of Cape Cod. With no family ties to the "Wampanoags, Squanto devoted much of his time to aiding the European settlers.

Bradford became governor of the colony in the spring of 1621 and was reelected to that post thirty times in the following thirty-five years. This account comes from his *History of Plymouth Plantation*.

The Plymouth Colony became part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1691.

Being thus arrived at Cap-Cod, and necessity calling them to look out a place for habitation, (as well as the masters and mariners importunity), they having brought a large ship with them out of England, stowed in quarters in the ship, they now got her out, and set their carpenters to work to trim her up, but being much bruised and shattered in the ship with foul weather, they saw she would be long in mending. Whereupon a few of them tendered themselves, to go by land and discover those nearest places, while the ship was in mending. . . . It was conceived there might be some danger in the attempt, yet seeing them resolute they were permitted to go, being 16 of them well armed under the conduct of Captain Standish. . . . After some hours sailing, it began to snow and rain, and about the middle of the afternoon, the wind increased, and the sea became very rough; and they broke their rudder, and it was as much as two men could do to steer her with a couple of oars. But their pilot bade them be of good cheer for he saw the harbor, but the storm increasing, and night drawing on, they bore what sail they could to get in, while they could see; but herewith they broke their mast in three pieces and their sail fell overboard, in a very high sea. . . .

But a lusty seaman which steered, bade those which rowed if they were men, about with her, or else they were all cast away; which they did with speed, so he bid them be of good cheer, and row justly for there was a fair sound before them, and he doubted not, but they should find one place or other, where they might ride in safety. And though it was very dark, and rained sore; yet in the end they got under the lee of a small island and remained there all that night in safety. . . .

But though this had been a day and night of much trouble, and danger unto them; yet God gave them a morning of comfort and refreshing (as usually he does to his children) for the next day was a fair sunshining day, and they found themselves to be on an island secure from the Indians; where they might dry their stuff, fix their pieces, and rest themselves, and gave God thanks for his mercies, in their manifold deliverances. And this being the last day of the week, they prepared there to keep the Sabbath; on Monday they sounded the harbor, and found it fit for shipping; and marched into the land, and found many cornfields, and little running brooks, a place (as they supposed) fit for situation, at least it was the best they could find, and the season, and their present necessity made them glad to accept of it. So they returned to their ship again with this news to the rest of their people, which did much comfort their hearts. . . .

Afterwards [they] took better view of the place, and resolved where to pitch their dwelling; and the 25th day began to erect the first house, for common use to receive them, and their goods. . . .

In these hard and difficult beginnings they found some discontents and murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches and carriages in other; but they were soon quelled, and overcome, by the wisdom, patience, and just and equal carriage of things, by the Governor and the better part which clave faithfully together in the main. But that which was most sad, and lamentable, was, that in two or three months the half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvy and other diseases, which this long voyage and their inaccommodate condition had brought upon them; so as there died some times two or threc of a day, in the foresaid time; that of one hundred and odd persons scarce fifty remained: and of these in the time of most distress there was but six or seven sound persons; who to their great commendations, be it spoken, spared no pains, night nor day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health, fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed their meat, made their beads, washed their loathsome clothes, clothed and unclothed them. In a word did all the homely, and necessary offices for them, which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear named and all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing herein their true love unto their friends and brethren. A rare example and worthy to be remembered, two of these seven were Mr. William Brewster, their Reverend Elder, and Miles Standish, their Captain and military commander, (unto whom myself, and many others were much beholden in our low, and sick condition). . . . And what I have said of these, I may say of many others who died in this general visitation and others yet living; that while they had health . . . or any strength continuing they were not wanting to any that had need of them; And I [doubt] not but their recompense is with the Lord. . . .

All this while the Indians came skulking about them, and would sometimes show themselves aloof, but when any approached near them, they would run away; and once they stole away their tools when they had been at work and were gone to diner. But about the 16th of March a certain Indian came boldly amongst them, and spoke to them in broken English which they could well understand, but marveled at it; at length they understood by discourse with him, that he was not of these parts, but belonged to the eastern parts where some English ships came to fish, with whom he was acquainted, and could name sundry of them by their names, amongst whom he had got his language. He became profitable to them in acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country in the east parts where he lived . . . of the people here, of their names, number and strength, of their situation and distance from this place, and who

was chief amongst them. His name was Samasett; he told them also of another Indian whose name was Squanto, a native of this place, who had been in England and could speak better English then himself. Being after some time of entertainment, and gifts dismissed, a while after he came again, and five more with him, and they brought again all the tools that were stolen away before, and made way for the coming of their great Sachem, called Massasoyt. Who about four or five days after came with the chief of his friends, and other attendance with the aforesaid Squanto. With whom after friendly entertainment, and some gifts given him, they made a peace with him (which has now continued this 24 years) in these terms:

1. That neither he nor any of his, should injure or do hurt, to any of their people.

2. That if any of his, did any hurt to any of theirs; he should send the offender, that they might punish him.

3. That if any thing were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his.

4. If any did unjustly war against him, they would aide him; if any did war against them, he should aide them.

5. He should send to his neighbors confederates to certify them of this [treaty], that they might not wrong them [the Pilgrims], but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.

6. That when [Massasoyt's] men came to [the Pilgrims,] they should leave their bows and arrows behind them. . . .

They [the Pilgrims] began now to gather in the small harvest they had; and to fit up their houses and dwellings, against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength; and had all things in good plenty, for as some were thus employed in affairs abroad; others were exercised in fishing, about cod, and bass, other fish of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion; all the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first, (but afterward decreased by degrees), and besides water fowl, there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison etc. Besides they had about a peck a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion, which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not fained, but true reports.

"Now is the dreadful hour come . . ."

**KING PHILIP'S WAR:
MARY ROWLANDSON IS CAPTURED**

February 10, 1675
Lancaster, Massachusetts

MARY ROWLANDSON

*The many book-length accounts of kidnapping and captivity such as Rowlandson's thrilled readers in Britain and became a staple of early American literature. As historian John Demos remarked in *The Unredeemed Captive*, "at some deeper (mostly unacknowledged) level" Europeans were fascinated with the possibility that "instead of their civilizing the wilderness (and its savage inhabitants), the wilderness might change, might uncivilize them. . . . that some captives will come to prefer Indian ways."*

Rowlandson was taken captive during King Philip's War (1675–1676), one of the most devastating conflicts between the European settlers and the Native Americans. The war was named for Metacom, chief of the Wampanoags, who was called Philip by the Europeans. Although Metacom's father, Massasoit, had been a friend of the Puritans, Metacom was tired of accommodating the expansionist settlers. He forged an alliance with tribes such as the Naragansett, and together they completely destroyed a dozen New England cities and killed hundreds of settlers. Half the towns in New England suffered some damage. One of every sixteen European men of military age was killed. The Native Americans suffered as badly or worse during the war and ultimately lost the struggle to limit the inland drive of the settlers. The war officially ended when Metacom was killed in August 1676, but back-and-forth raids continued.

Rowlandson, wife of Lancaster's minister, was ransomed after eleven weeks of being marched around New England.

On the 10th of February, 1675, came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster. Their first coming was about sunrising.

Hearing the noise of some guns, we looked out; several houses were burning, and the smoke ascending to heaven. There were five persons taken in one house; the father and the mother and a suckling child they knocked on the head; the other two they took and carried away alive. There were two others, who, being out of their garrison upon some occa-

sion, were set upon; one was knocked on the head, the other escaped. Another there was who, running along, was shot and wounded, and fell down; he begged of them his life, promising them money (as they told me), but they would not hearken to him, but knocked him in the head, and stripped him naked, and split open his bowels. Another seeing many of the Indians about his barn ventured and went out, but was quickly shot down. There were three others belonging to the same garrison who were killed; the Indians, getting up upon the roof of the barn, had advantage to shoot down upon them over their fortification. Thus these murderous wretches went on burning and destroying before them.

At length they came and beset our own house, and quickly it was the dolefullest day that ever mine eyes saw. The house stood upon the edge of a hill; some of the Indians got behind the hill, others into the barn, and others behind anything that could shelter them; from all which places they shot against the house, so that the bullets seemed to fly like hail, and quickly they wounded one man among us, then another, and then a third. About two hours (according to my observation in that amazing time) they had been about the house before they prevailed to fire it; they fired it once, and one ventured out and quenched it, but they quickly fired it again, and that took. Now is the dreadful hour come that I have often heard of, but now mine eyes see it. Some in our house were fighting for their lives, others wallowing in their blood, the house on fire over our heads, and the bloody heathen ready to knock us on the head if we stirred out. Now might we hear mothers and children crying out for themselves and one another, "Lord, what shall we do?" Then I took my children (and one of my sisters hers) to go forth and leave the house, but, as soon as we came to the door and appeared, the Indians shot so thick that the bullets rattled against the house as if one had taken a handful of stones and threw them, so that we were forced to give back. We had six stout dogs belonging to our garrison, but none of them would stir, though another time if any Indian had come to the door, they were ready to fly upon him and tear him down. The Lord hereby would make us the more to acknowledge His hand, and to see that our help is always in Him. But out we must go, the fire increasing, and coming along behind us roaring, and the Indians gaping before us with their guns, spears, and hatchets to devour us.

No sooner were we out of the house but my brother-in-law (being before wounded in defending the house, in or near the throat) fell down dead, whereat the Indians scornfully shouted and hallooed, and were presently upon him, stripping off his clothes. The bullets flying thick, one went through my side, and the same (as would seem) through the bowels

and hand of my dear child in my arms. One of my elder sister's children (named William) had then his leg broke, which the Indians perceiving they knocked him on the head. Thus were we butchered by those merciless heathen, standing amazed, with the blood running down to our heels. My eldest sister being yet in the house, and seeing those woeful sights, the infidels hauling mothers one way and children another, and some wallowing in their blood; and her elder son telling her that her son William was dead, and myself was wounded, she said, "And, Lord, let me die with them"; which was no sooner said, but she was struck with a bullet, and fell down dead over the threshold. I hope she is reaping the fruit of her good labors, being faithful to the service of God in her place.

I had often before this said, that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than taken alive, but when it came to the trial, my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous bears, than that moment to end my days.