



These glass beads were uncovered during modern excavation of the James Fort at Jamestown. Beads of this type were made in the Venetian Republic in the 1500s and 1600s. The colonists were supplied with trading beads such as these before they departed Europe for North America.

beads, bells, needles, and pins. These objects were interesting to the Powhatans, who graciously accepted them.

Finally, in May, the settlers came across an island in the James River. They found the island a suitable place to build their colony and named it James Island. There were no Indians living on the island. The land could be easily defended against enemy attacks, as it was surrounded by deep water. The depth of the water also allowed the colonists to anchor their ships close to shore. There were, however, two things that would mar the seeming perfection of the spot. Nearby was a swamp that bred mosquitoes. In addition, the colonists did not know that in the summer the fresh water of the James River would turn brackish and undrinkable.

4. Culture Conflict

The English colonists and the Indians continued to trade with one another. In addition to bringing novelties such as beads and bells, the English also brought metal axes and knives, which the Powhatans considered useful and valuable. The Powhatans gave the English furs and much-needed food.

The Powhatans were curious about the newcomers. The Powhatans wondered if the English would make good allies against rival Indian groups or if the English would prove to be foes. Before the colonists settled on James Island in May, the Powhatans had mistaken the English for visitors and not for people who intended to remain on Powhatan land. One of the reasons for this mistaken idea might have been that the English did not bring any women with them when they first arrived. The Powhatans assumed the English were not staying because their families were not with them.

Immediately after their arrival at James Island, the English began to build their colony, which included a fort. On the first night, some Powhatans from the town



The modern artist Sidney King depicted John Smith trading with Native Americans. Jamestown colonists were eager to trade for corn, but corn harvests were not always plentiful in Virginia. The Powhatans were sometimes unable or unwilling to satisfy English demand for this crop.

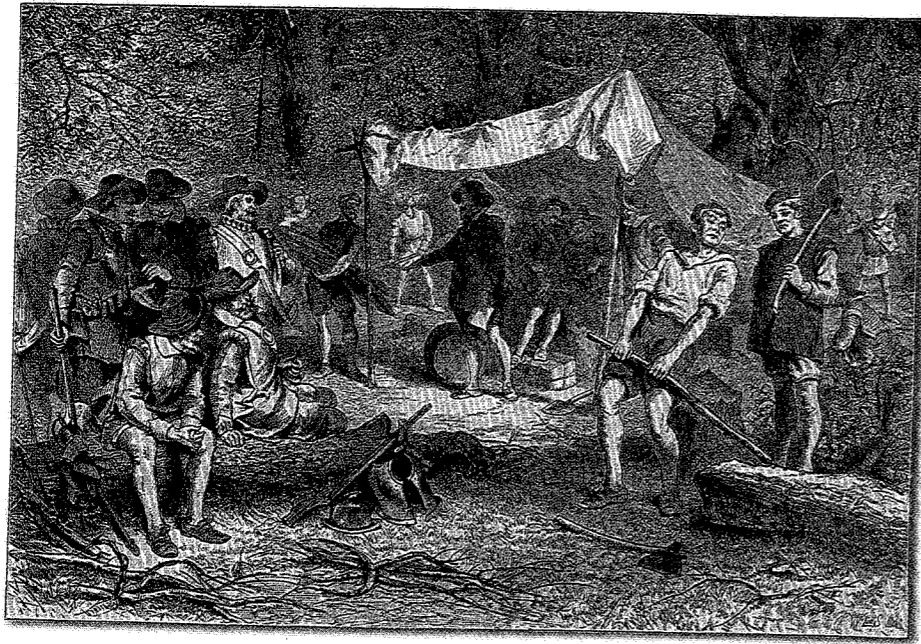
of Paspahugh came paddling around the settlement at around midnight. They had come to investigate the construction of the fort. The fort suggested that the English would remain on the island and that they were concerned about defending themselves. Sir George Percy, one of the colonists, wrote in an essay from about 1606 that some Powhatans came near but then ran away when another colonist noticed them and sounded an alarm.

During this early period of the Jamestown Colony, there were occasions when the English and Powhatan cultures clashed. The Native Americans and the

Europeans often misunderstood one another's actions. For example, a few days after the Indians had first come to investigate the construction of the fort, the weroance of Paspahugh and about one hundred Powhatan men paid a visit to Jamestown. The weroance, whose name was Wowinchopunck, had already met the English. Two weeks before, Wowinchopunck had welcomed some of the colonists into his town as guests. When he visited Jamestown, Wowinchopunck brought a gift of food and a deer. He made gestures that indicated he was willing to give the English more land on which to settle.

The visit seemed to be going well until one of the Powhatans took a hatchet that belonged to a colonist. The Englishman seized his hatchet back and struck the Powhatan. Another Powhatan went to the aid of the man who had been struck. In response to this scuffle, the English took up their weapons. At the sight of the armed colonists, the Indians became angry and left.

The colonists regarded the taking of the hatchet as a theft. In the months to come, the colonists would often accuse the Indians of stealing from them. Gabriel Archer, one of the colonists, described in an essay from around 1607, "The people steal any thing [that] comes neare them, yea are so practized in this art that lookeng in our face they would with their foot betwene their toes convey a chizell, knife . . . or any indifferent light thing."



Many of Jamestown's first settlers came to Virginia hoping to become rich. There were rumors that gold and pearls were plentiful in America. The British poet Michael Drayton's 1606 "Ode to the Virginian Voyage" fueled such dreams by naming Virginia "Earth's only paradise!" This engraving of the Jamestown colonists was published in 1876.

For the Powhatan Indians, however, taking something from the English was not considered a wrongful act. In Powhatan culture, it was only wrong to steal from other Powhatans. Stealing from outsiders was allowed.

In addition, the English perceived fair trade as bartering one object for another, in an exchange that both parties had agreed upon. The Indians, however, did not have this concept. The Powhatans' conception of trade was an exchange of gifts between parties. One side would offer gifts without expecting anything in return

at the time the gifts were given. The Powhatan would, however, expect to be given gifts in return at a later date. Therefore, whenever the Powhatans entertained the English with lavish feasts and gifts of food, and the English did not return their generosity at a later time in equally generous ways, the Indians felt they had a right to take what they wanted from the English. The Powhatan who took the hatchet was probably taking what he felt was a fair gift because the English had been well feasted in his town two weeks earlier.

The concept of authority was another source of misunderstanding between the English and the Powhatans. The Powhatan weroances commanded great respect and loyalty from the people they ruled, so the English assumed that the weroances had complete control over their people. This was not always the case. Therefore, when a weroance made peace with the English and some of his people continued to show hostility, the English assumed that the chief was treacherous or dishonest. In reality, the chiefs, including Chief Powhatan, did not always have the power to make their people obey them.

Language was a barrier between the English and the Powhatans as well. During their initial encounters, the English and the Powhatans communicated mostly through gestures. Captain John Smith, a leader of the Jamestown Colony, dealt frequently with the Indians, so it was necessary for him to learn some of the

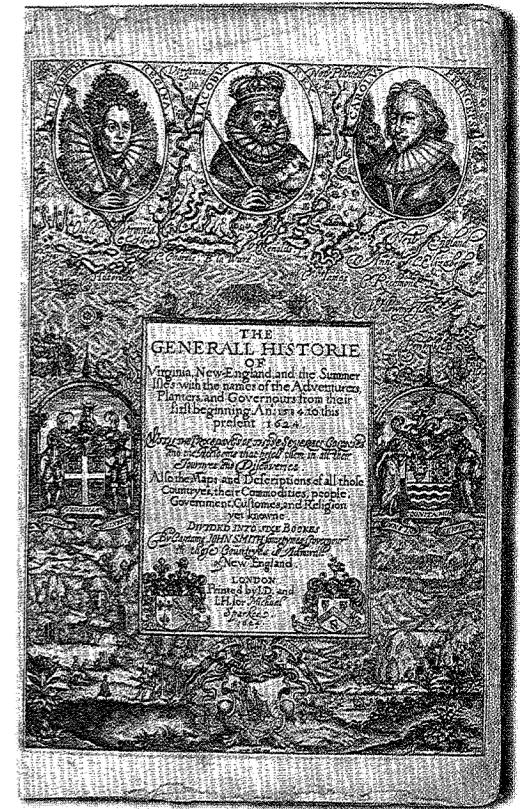
Listed here are some of the Powhatan words that John Smith included in his 1612 book, *A Map of Virginia*. The English words are spelled the way John Smith recorded them in his book.

Nemarough	A man
Crenepo	A woman
Marowanchesso	A boy
Yehawkans	Houses
Mockasins	Shooes
Tussan	Beds
Pokatawer	Fire
Attawp	A bowe
Attonce	Arrowes
Tomahacks	Axes
Pamesacks	Knives
Suckahanna	Water
Noughmass	Fish
Netoppew	Friends
Marrapough	Enimies

Algonquian languages.

Pocahontas helped John Smith to learn her language. During their meetings, which probably took place at Jamestown, Pocahontas taught Smith Native American words such as *tomahacks*, an Algonquian word for axes, and *pawcussacks*, a word for guns. The instruction was not one-sided, however. Pocahontas began to learn English vocabulary from Smith. As Smith's knowledge progressed, he translated useful sentences to further his trade with the Powhatans. Smith wrote in his book *Generall Historie* that he translated the following sentence into Algonquian, "Bid Pokahuntas bring hither two little Baskets, and I will give her white Beads to make her a chaine."

In his book *A Map of Virginia*, written in 1612, Smith included a list of Powhatan words, numbers, and phrases. The colonist William Strachey also compiled a



The title page from Captain John Smith's 1624 *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*. The "Summer Isles" refers to the islands of Bermuda.

book, *A Dictionarie of the Indian Language*. In the fall of 1609, Smith sent a boy named Henry Spelman to live with the Powhatans. Spelman was probably about twelve years old at the time and he learned Algonquian during his stay with the Powhatans. This knowledge allowed Spelman to become the colony's best interpreter.

In time the cultural differences between the Powhatans and the English would cause bitterness. The English did not think they were doing anything wrong, and the Indians found the English increasingly rude and offensive.

5. The Struggle to Survive in Jamestown

In June 1607, Captain Christopher Newport, who had commanded the three ships that had brought the colonists to Virginia, returned to England with two of the ships. He left the colonists with enough supplies to last until September and promised to return from England with more. At around the same time, Powhatan sent word to the newcomers by way of a messenger. The messenger told the colonists that Powhatan wanted to have a peaceful relationship with them and that Powhatan had told his people to allow the settlers to grow their own crops without being disturbed. In addition, the Indians brought the colonists gifts of food throughout the summer. Pocahontas, in the company of other Indians, came to Jamestown with baskets of corn. She told Smith which Indian groups in the region might be open to trading with the English.

The colonists, however, did not conserve their store of supplies and soon ran out of food. They did not have the skills to produce their own food, nor did they intend to learn how to produce their own food. The Virginia