

JAMESTOWN: 1607, THE FIRST MONTHS Observations by that honorable Gentleman, Master George Percy.

In December 1606 three ships left England with 144 men and boys to establish a Virginia colony, chartered by King James I and funded by investors in the London Company. One of the thirty-eight noblemen in the expedition was George Percy, who twice served as the colony's governor.

If there were any conscience in men, it would make their hearts to bleed to hear the pitiful murmurings and outcries of our sick men without relief, every night and day, for the space of six weeks, some departing out of the World, many times three or four in a night; in the morning, their bodies trailed out of their Cabins like Dogs to be buried....

It pleased God, after a while, to send those people which were our mortal enemies [the Powhatans] to relieve us with victuals, such as Bread, Corn, Fish, and Flesh in great plenty, otherwise we had all perished. Also we were frequented by diverse Kings in the Country [Indian chiefs], bringing us provisions [supplies] to our great comfort.

John Rolfe, Letter on Virginia, 1618

... [A]n industrious man not other ways employed, may well tend four acres of corn, and 1,000 plants of tobacco, and where they say an acre will yield but three or four barreles, we have ordinarily four or five, but of new ground six, seven, and eight, and a barrel of peas and beans, which we esteem as good as two of corn, . . . so that one man may provide corn for five [people], and apparel for two [people] by the profit of his tobacco. . . but we but carpenters to build and make carts and ploughs, and skillful men that know how to use them, and train up our cattle to draw them, . . . yet our want [lack] of experience brings but little to perfection but planting tobacco, and yet of that many are so covetous to have much, they make little good. . .

George Percy describes the "Starving Time" in Jamestown

George Percy was one of the wealthy "gentlemen" among the 144 men who settled Jamestown in 1607. He served as president of the colony during the "starving time" of 1609-1610 when more than 400 colonists died, leaving only sixty survivors. He wrote A True Relation in 1624, partly to justify his leadership during this period.

Now for all of us at James Town, beginning to feel that sharp prick of hunger...a world of miseries began...some to satisfy their hunger have robbed...then having fed upon horses and other beasts as long as they lasted, we began eating vermin as dogs, cats, rats, and mice...and then to eat boots, shoes, or any other leather some could come by...

Some were forced to search the woods and to feed upon serpents and snakes and to dig the earth for wild and unknown roots...hunger has driven men so desperate as to dig up dead corpses out of graves and to eat them...

One of our colony murdered his wife, ripped the child out of her womb and threw it into the river, and chopped her in pieces and salted her for his food....He was punished by torture: hung by the thumbs with weights at his feet a quarter of an hour until he confessed...

Sir William Berkeley Governor of Virginia, A DISCOURSE AND VIEW OF VIRGINIA 1663

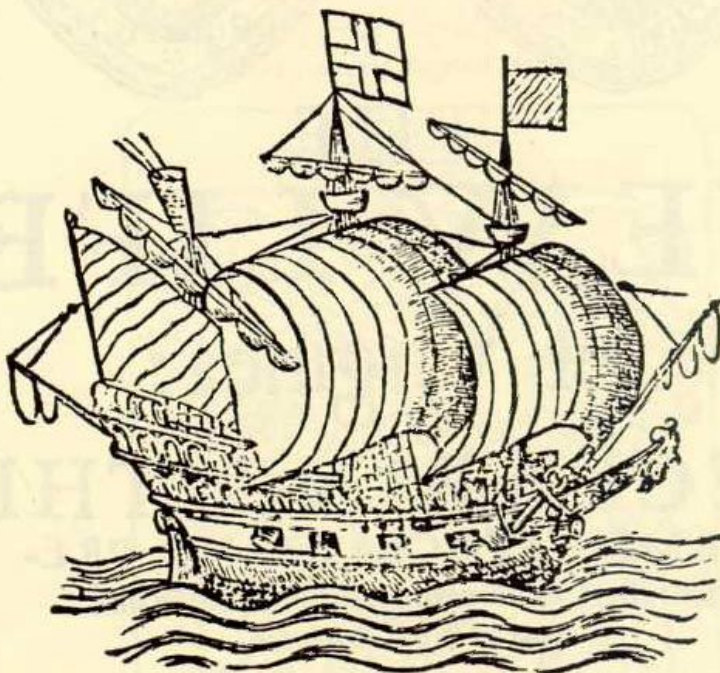
It must be confessed, that Barbados fends a better commodity [sugar] into England than Virginia yet does; but withall it must be acknowledged that one Ship from Virginia brings more Money to the Crown than five Ships of the same burthen [ship's carrying capacity] do from the Barbados... the Foundation of our wealth and industry has been built on this vicious habit of taking Tobacco[that] possess the English Nation...

Though Virginia now only produces Tobacco for the bulk of her trade, it also has produced Silk, Flax, Hemp, Iron, Rice, Pitch, Tar, which are Commodities more lasting and necessary than Sugar or Indigo of the Carolina and Caribbean colonies can...and as our Numbers increase, so will our Wealth...[and] our industry and trade shall equal theirs [Carolina and Barbados] who are already forced to trade $\frac{1}{2}$ of their Merchandise to provide Victuals [food] for themselves and Servants.

Nova Britannia

In 1609, the Virginia Company was disappointed because they were making no profits from the Jamestown colony. To raise money to support the colony and send more colonists, they started producing pamphlets like this, telling potential colonists of the abundance of land and opportunity in Virginia.

NOVA BRITANNIA.
OFFRING MOST
Excellent fruites by Planting in
VIRGINIA.
Exciting all such as be well affected
to further the same.



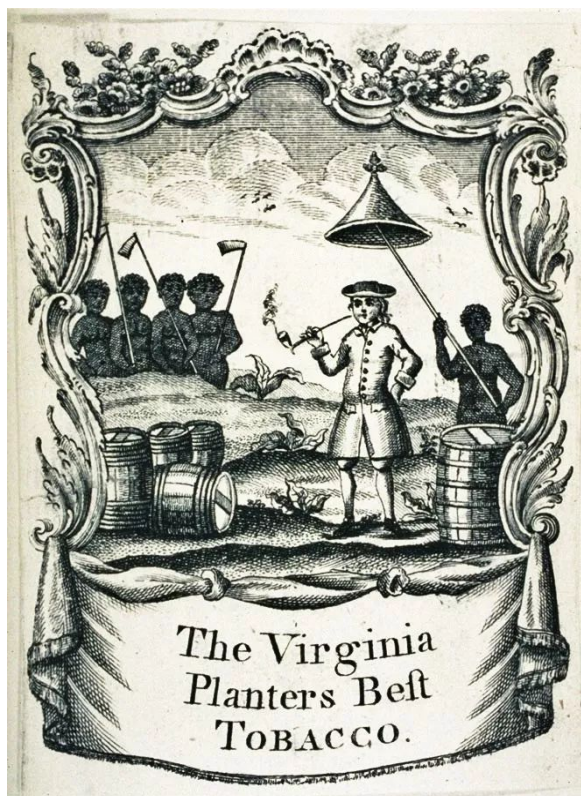
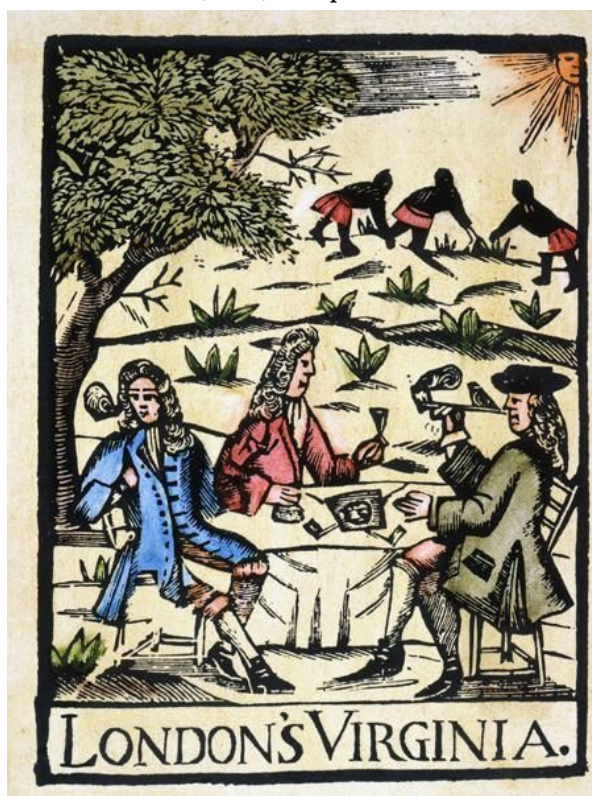
LONDON

“The country is large and great...The natives are usually very loving and gentle people. They are helpful to us and show great kindness. This land provides for everything we need to live.”

John Rolfe, the man who actually married Pocahontas, arrived in Jamestown in 1611 with a new crop to plant-tobacco. Tobacco was growing very popular in Europe, and Rolfe proved that it could grow well in the Virginia soil.

Tobacco Production in Virginia

- 1618: 20,000 pounds of tobacco
- 1622: 60,000 pounds of tobacco
- 1627: 500,000 pounds of tobacco
- 1629: 1,500,000 pounds of tobacco



Above: Tobacco Labels; Below: Cultivating tobacco



Indentured servants were people who agreed to work for someone who paid for them to travel to America. They were usually poor, and indentured servitude offered a way to make it to the colonies, where they might one day be able to own land and start a new life. They agreed to work for 4-10 years and would then receive "freedom dues": land, tools and clothing.

Below: An advertisement for indentured servants

*Just ARRIVED, at LEEDS Town,
the Ship JUSTITIA, with about one
Hundred healthy*

S E R V A N T S,

Men, Women, and Boys, among which are many Tradesmen, *viz.* Blacksmiths, Shoemakers, Tailors, House Carpenters and Joiners, a Cooper, a Bricklayer and Plasterer, a Painter, a Watchmaker and Glazier, several Silversmiths, Weavers, a Jeweller, and many others.

The Sale will commence on *Tuesday* the 2d of *April*, at *Leeds Town*, on *Rappahannock* River. A reasonable Credit will be allowed, giving Bond, with approved Security, to

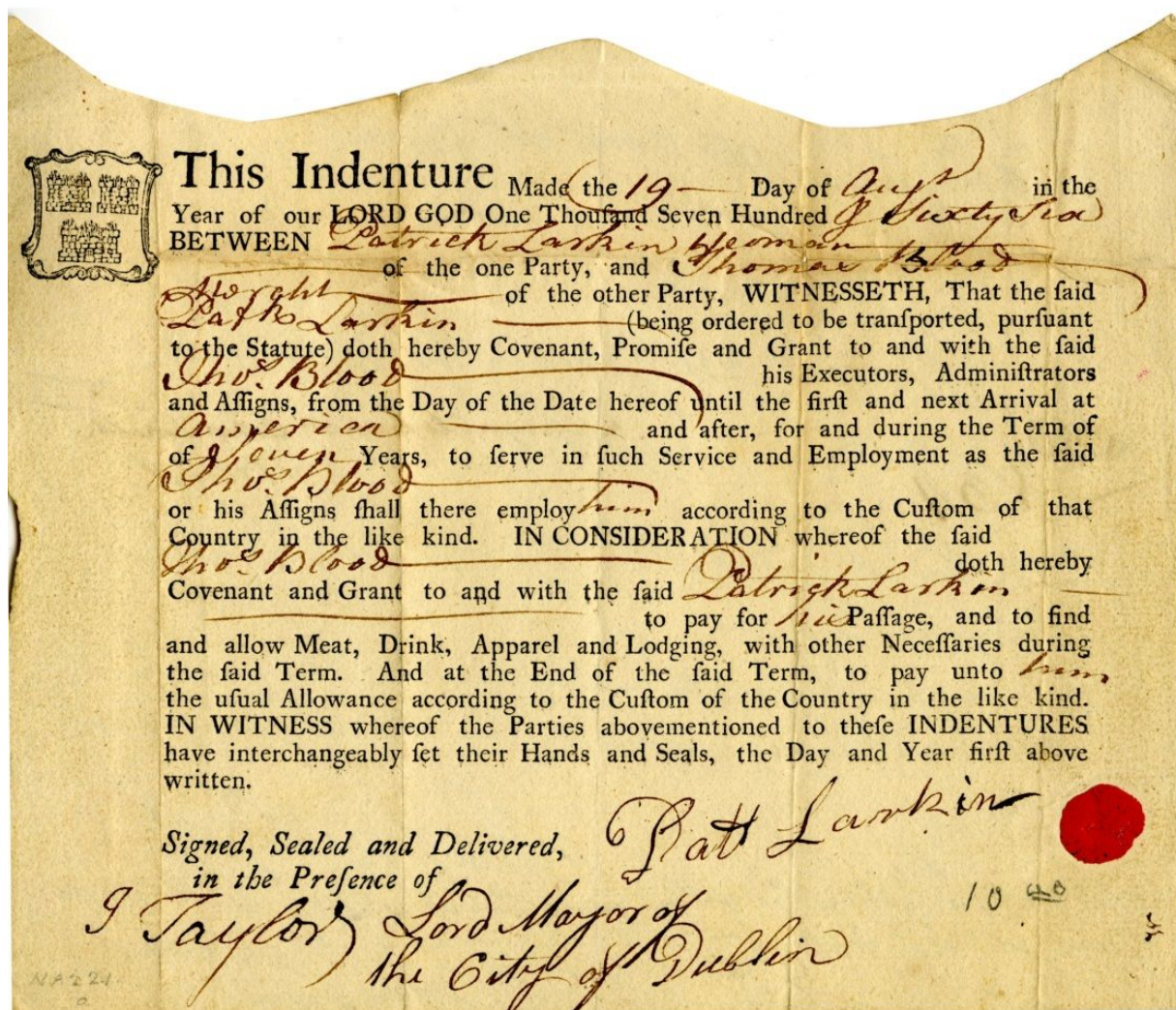
THOMAS HODGE.

* * * I have an assorted Cargo of GOODS from *London*, suitable for the *Season* (about two Thousand Pounds Sterling worth) which I will lump off, on reasonable Terms, at a Credit with good Security.

Indentured Servant Contract & Letter on the State of the colony

John Pory was a Secretary of Virginia and wrote this report on the conditions in Virginia for the English government.

"We are to enjoy two crops [corn and wheat] in one year from the same field...All our riches for the present do consist in Tobacco....Our principal wealth (I should have said) consisteth in servants: But they are required to be furnished with arms, apparel and bedding and for their transportation...But if they survive, they prove very hardy, and sound able men.



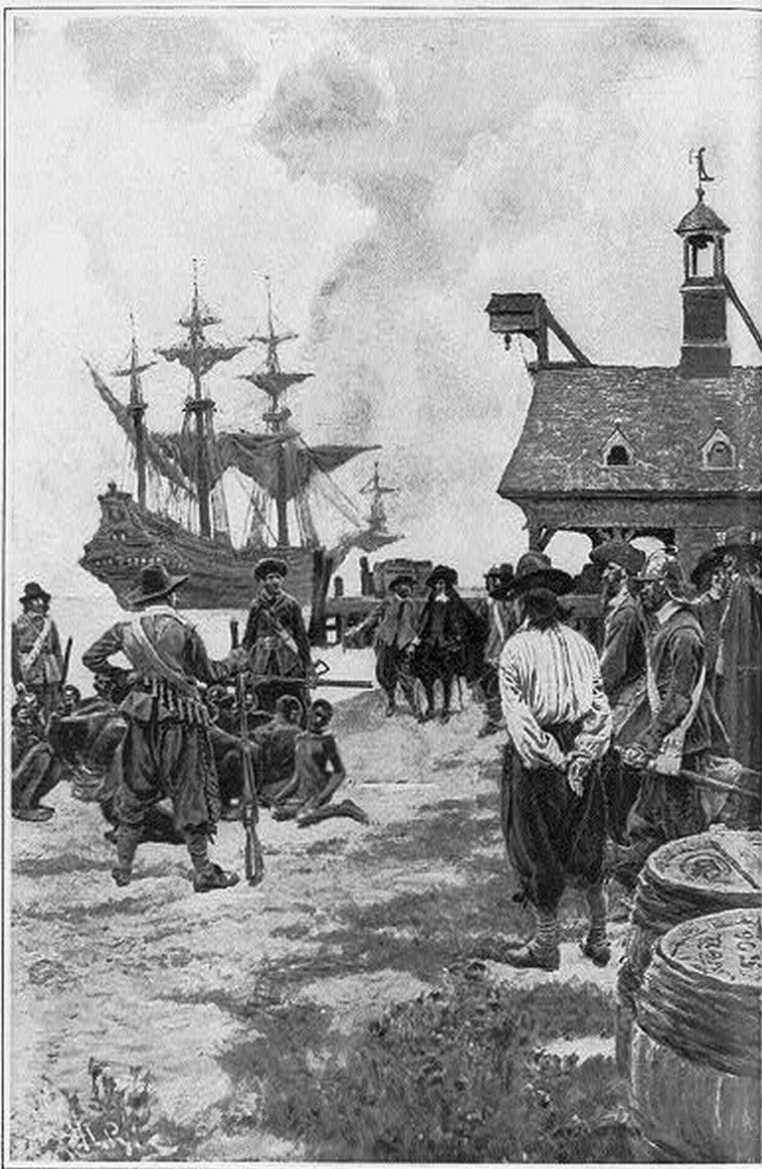
"Our Plantation Is Very Weak": The Experiences of an Indentured Servant in Virginia, 1623

Poor English adults were recruited as servants to provide much needed labor. These young men and women signed indentures, or contracts, for four to seven year terms of work in exchange for their passage to North America. Richard Frethorne came to Jamestown colony in 1623 as an indentured servant.

We must work hard both early and late for a mess of watery gruel (cereal or oatmeal) and a mouthful of bread and beef...which is most pitiful...And I have nothing to comfort me, nor is there nothing to be gotten here but sickness and death...I have nothing at all--no, not a shirt to my back but two rags (2), nor clothes but one poor suit, nor but one pair of shoes, but one pair of stockings, but one cap...I have not a penny, nor a penny worth

Virginia 1619: The Arrival of a Dutch Ship...

In August 1619, John Rolfe reported that "20 and odd Negroes" arrived on the Dutch ship at Jamestown colony. It is still unknown whether they arrived as servants or slaves, but Rolfe noted that the Governo[r] and Cape Merchant bought them for victuals (food)." They were the first Africans in British North America. Until the late 1600s, Africans in Virginia could be free persons, indentured servants, or slaves.



LANDING NEGROES AT JAMESTOWN
FROM DUTCH MAN-OF-WAR, 1619

Robert Horne, Promises to Settlers of Carolina, 1666

In 1663, Charles II granted a charter for religious freedom and limited self government for the Carolina colony. Robert Horne then created a pamphlet to attract settlers.

The chief of the Privileges are as follows.

1. No man is to be molested or called in question for matters of Religious Concern; but every one to be obedient to the Civil Government, worshipping God after their own way..
2. There is freedom from Custom [taxes], for all Wine, Silk, Raisins, Currance, Oyl, Olives, and Almonds, that shall be raised in the Province [colony]...
3. Every Freeman and Freewoman that transport themselves and Servants shall have...100 Acres of Land for him and his Heirs for ever, and 50 Acres for every Servant he or she brings...
4. Every Man-Servant at the end of their contract, is to have 100 Acres of Land to him and his heirs for ever...and the Women-Servants 50 Acres of Land...
5. They are to elect a Governor and Council...who has no power to Tax, or make any Law, without the Consent of the Colonial Assembly.
6. They are to choose annually...a General Assembly [with] the sole power of Making Laws, and Laying Taxes for the common good when need shall require.

The Maryland Act of Toleration, 1649

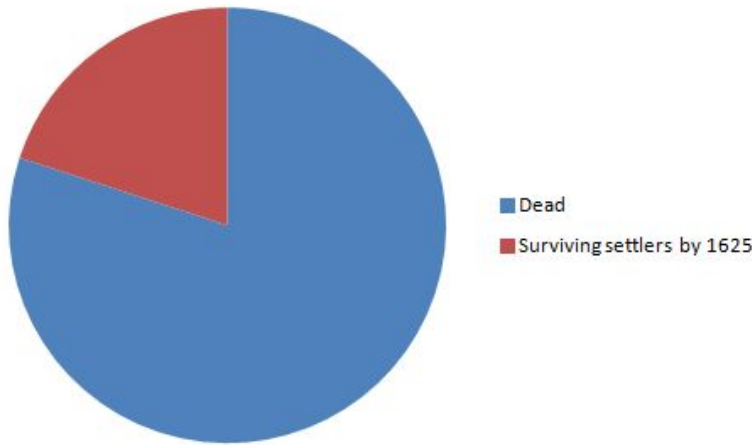
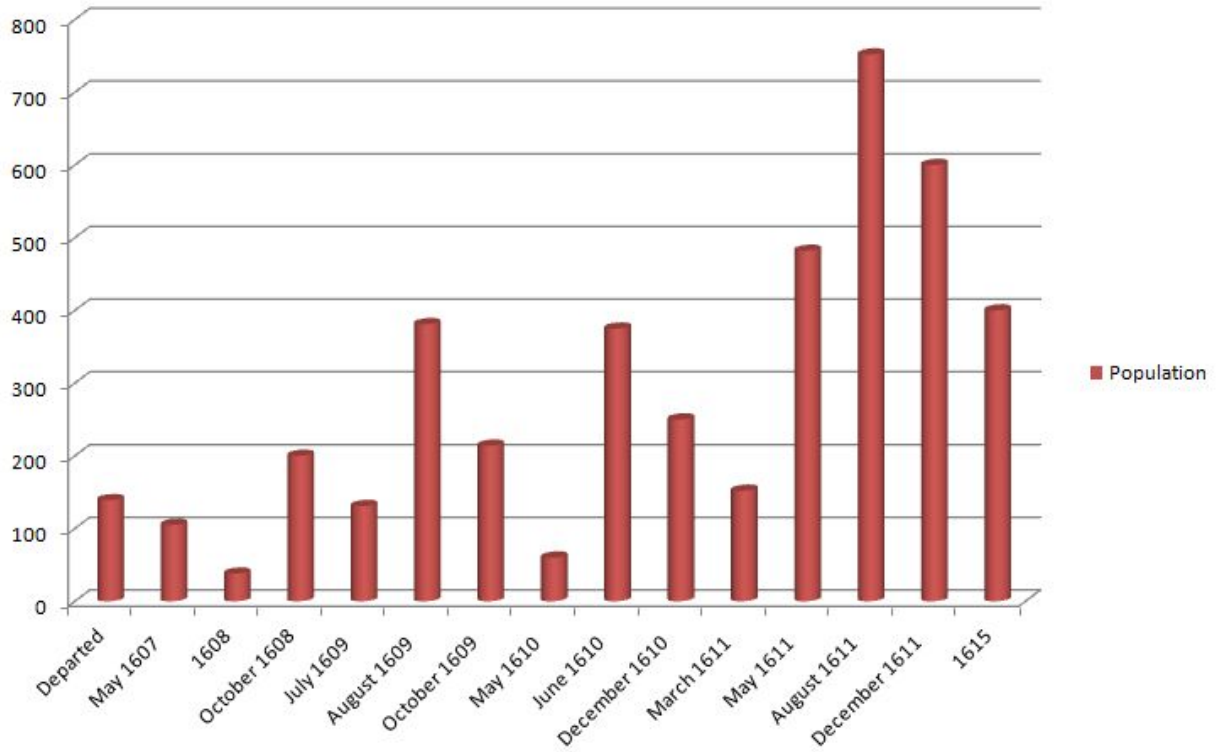
And whereas the inforcing of the conscience in matters of Religion hate frequently fallen out to be of dangerous Consequence in those commonwealth's where it hath been practised, and for the more quiet and peaceable government of the Province, and the better to preserve mutual Love and amity amongst the inhabitants thereof. Be it Therefore enacted that noe person or (persons) whatsoever within this Province, or the Islands, Ports, Harbors, Creekes, or havens thereunto belonging professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth bee any ways troubled, Molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof within this Province.

Laws Divine, Moral and Martial, etc. compiled by William Strachey

In 1610 a man named Lord de la Warr became governor and decided the colony needed a strict set of laws if it was going to make money for the Virginia Company and avoid conflict with Native Americans. Some of the laws are listed below.

- Every man and woman shall attend church services twice a day on each work day...Non attendance will result in losing his or her day's rations (food) for the first offense, being whipped for the second offense
- Every man and woman shall attend church service on Sunday morning and afternoon...For the third offense, he or she shall suffer death.
- No man, unless appointed by a lawful authority, shall barter or trade with the Indians, upon pain of death.
- No man shall take away anything by force from any Indian coming to trade or in any other situation, on pain of death.
- No man shall take, lose, or willfully break a spade, shovel, hatchet, axe, or other tool, upon pain of whipping.
- Everyone shall work each day or lose meals for one month
- No man or woman shall run away from the colony to the Indians, upon pain of death.
- Anyone who robs a garden, public or private, or a vineyard, or who steals ears of corn shall be punished with death.

Population of Jamestown



2-3 Checklist for Virginia-Bound Colonists (1624)

John Smith

When John Smith sat down to write his *Generall Historie* in 1624, he had already led Virginians through their "starving times" and the Indian massacre of 1622 (see text pp. 49–50). He also had helped the Virginians overcome their reluctance to work. But it was from London that he kept a keen eye on the colonization of the North Atlantic coastline, including the settlement of New England. Although there is no evidence that John Smith met John Winthrop, the leader of the Puritan exodus to Massachusetts, Winthrop probably was familiar with Smith's *Generall Historie*.

Source: Captain John Smith, *The Generall Historie* (1624), edited by Edward Arber and reprinted in his *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith* (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1910), book 4.

A particular of such necessaries as either private families, or single persons, shall have cause to provide to go to Virginia, whereby greater numbers may in part conceive the better how to provide for themselves.

Apparel

A Monmouth cap.	1s.	10d.
3 falling bands [collars].	1s.	3d.
3 shirts.	7s.	6d.
1 waistcoat.	2s.	2d.
1 suit of canvas.	7s.	6d.
1 suit of frieze [coarse wool].	10s.	
1 suit of cloth.	15s.	
3 pair of Irish stockings.	4s.	
4 pair of shoes.	8s.	8d.
1 pair of garters.		10d.

1 dozen of points [for lacing clothes].		3d.
1 pair of canvas sheets.	8s.	
7 ells of canvas to make a bed and bolster, to be filled in Virginia, serving for two men.	8s.	
5 ells of coarse canvas to make a bed at sea for two men.	5s.	
1 coarse rug at sea for two men.	6s.	

*Victual for a whole year for a man,
and so after the rate for more.*

8 bushels of meal. 2£.

2 bushels of peas.	6s.	
2 bushels of oatmeal.	9s.	
1 gallon of aqua vitae.	2s.	6d.
1 gallon of oil.	3s.	6d.
2 gallons of vinegar.	2s.	
	3£.	3s.

*Arms for a man; but if half
your men be armed it is well,
so all have swords and pieces.*

1 armor complete, light.	17s.	
1 long piece five feet and a half, near musket bore.	1£.	2s.
1 sword.	5s.	
1 belt.	1s.	
1 bandolier.	1s.	6d.
20 pound[s] of powder.	18s.	
60 pound[s] of shot or lead, pistol and goose shot.	5s.	
	3£.	9s. 6d.

*Tools for a family of six persons,
and so after the rate for more.*

5 broad hoes at 2s. apiece.	10s.	
5 narrow hoes at 16d. apiece.	6s.	8d.
2 broad axes at 3s. 8d. apiece.	7s.	4d.
5 felling axes at 18d. apiece.	7s.	6d.
2 steel handsaws at 16d. apiece.	2s.	8d.
2 two-handsaws at 5s. apiece.	10s.	
1 whipsaw, set and filed; with box, file and wrest [screw key].	10s.	
2 hammers [at] 12d. apiece.	2s.	
3 shovels at 18d. apiece.	4s.	6d.
2 spades at 18d. apiece.	3s.	
2 augers at 6d. apiece.	1s.	
6 chisels at 6d. apiece.	3s.	
2 percors stocked [at] 4d. apiece.		8d.

3 gimlets at 2d. apiece.		6d.
2 hatchets at 21d. apiece.	3s.	6d.
2 froes to cleave pale [make staves or shingles] [at] 18d. each.		3s.
2 hand bills [at] 20d apiece.		3s. 4d.
1 grindstone.		4s.
nails of all sorts to the value of	2£.	
2 pickaxes.		3s.
	6£.	2s. 8d.

*Household implements for a
family and six persons, and so
for more or less after the rate.*

1 iron pot.	7s.	
1 kettle.	6s.	
1 large frying pan.	2s.	6d.
1 gridiron.	1s.	6d.
2 skillets.	5s.	
1 spit.	2s.	
platters, dishes, spoons of wood.	4s.	
	1£.	8s.

For sugar, spice, and fruit, and at sea for six men. 12s. 6d.

So the full charge after this rate for each person, will amount to about the sum of 12£. 10s. 10d.

The passage of each man is 6£.

The fraught of these provisions for a man, will be about half a ton, which is 1£. 10s.

So the whole charge will amount to about 20£.

Now if the number be great; [not only] nets, hooks, and lines, but cheese, bacon, kine and goats must be added.

And this is the usual proportion the Virginia Company doe[s] bestow upon their tenants they send.

Robert Beverley, Jr. The History and Present State of Virginia

Robert Beverly, a Virginia planter, wrote this report on the Virginia colony in 1705.

“the best poor Man’s Country in the World”

The People are generally of the Church of England, which is the Religion established by Law in the colony...Christians of all Nations have equal freedom...

Slaves are the Negroes and their Posterity [children]...They are call’d Slaves in respect of the time of their Servitude, because it is for Life. Servants are those which serve only for a few years, according to the time of their Indenture [servant contract].

The work of their Servants and Slaves is no other than what every common Freeman does...And I can assure you, with a great deal of Truth, that generally their Slaves are not worked near so hard, nor so many Hours in a Day, as the Laborers in England.

They live in so happy a Climate and have so fertile a Soil that nobody is poor enough to beg, or want [lack] Food

There are large tracts of Land, Houses, and other things granted to Free-Schools for the Education of Children in many parts of the Country...

The Natural Temperature of the Inhabited part of the Country [colony] is hot and moist, tho’ this Moisture I take to be occasion’d [caused] by the abundance of low Grounds, Marshes, Creeks, and Rivers

Rev. J. M. Bolzius, Georgia, 1750 German Lutheran; author of Q&A guide for potential immigrants

Poor people from Europe who cannot pay their passage to the ships’ captains are sold for 3 or 4 years, and must serve. In Carolina some are treated hardly better than Negroes. In our colony they are treated better. However, they rarely do well, but become lazy and run away if they can. They consider it unjust to serve [even] so few years for their passage money. Boys under 14 years must serve up to the 21st year of their age, and girls up to the 18th year. After that the boys receive 50 acres free.

A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes, Richard Ligon, 1657

There are not less than 50,000 souls, besides Negroes, and some of them, who began with small fortunes, now have very great and vast estates. [The masters] are men of great abilities and parts, otherwise they could not go through with such great works as they undertake, the managing of one of their Plantations. . . . This I say to stop those men’s mouths that lie here at home [England] and expect great profit in their adventures and never consider through what difficulty, industry, and pains it is...If one loves the pleasures of Europe, (or particularly of England...let him never come here, for there are things he shall be sure to miss...