A "Biography" of Lynchburg

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City with a Soul

By

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and David M. Holowchak

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-6588-2
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6588-3

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Preface

M. Andrew Holowchak, Ph.D.

A SIGN NEXT TO THE LYNCHBURG MUSEUM BEGINS, "In 1757 John Lynch opened a ferry here". There was soon a church, continues the sign, and then a warehouse, a town, and finally a city. It is an attempt—a fruitless one, of course—to tell the story of Lynchburg in the briefest sort of synopsis, to be fitted to a sign. Yet that fruitless effort, we shall see, has been the motivation for the structure of this book: *A "Biography" of Lynchburg: City with a Soul.*

When I saw the sign, which I initially considered for the cover of this book, it mousetrapped me. The notions of ferry, of church, of warehouse, of town, and of city grabbed my attention, and I considered doing something with those concepts in organizing the book. The idea of dividing the book into five main parts was alluring, but that would take me only so far—in fact, nowhere—if I were to proceed in strict chronological fashion, for Lynchburg became a city in 1852, and the lion's share of the story I was planning to tell would occur thereafter. Hence, the first four parts of the book would tell only a small part of the story I wished to tell and the last part would be swollen with information. I have too much regard for structural symmetry to have proceeded thus.

Yet I had reservations about proceeding in a strictly chronological manner. A large problem in writing a history of a city of substantial size was that in proceeding in a strictly chronological manner, the book in many places, where relevant information is gathered for a particular temporal frame, would read as an omnium gatherum—a loosely conjoined collection of anecdotes. In sum, it will be anything but a smooth read. That is a pressing problem for anyone who wishes to tell the story of any city, for the account of any city, like any human life, does not readily accommodate a narrative form.

Yet I could retain the fivefold segregation into parts—six-fold, if I should begin with a section on pre-colonial and colonial Virginia—and merely cover the history of Lynchburg in more of a thematic and less of a chronological manner. The hoped-for result was that the book would have greater narrative flow.

There would be two gains—the second, only after I had crafted a draft of the book.

First, there was an anticipated gain. A reader would not have to proceed in the usual page-one-to-the-final-page manner. Someone more interested in Lynchburg's infrastructure might begin with Part II, which covers the Kanawha Canal and Hill City's railroads, among other things related to infrastructure.

Second, there was an unanticipated gain. As I began to write the book, I realized that one comes across certain vital personages and events in several places in the book. For instance, one of the largest events that not only displayed the character of Hill City, but also helped develop that character was the Battle of Lynchburg during the Civil War, covered fully in Part V. Yet that battle and key characters in it, like two of Lynchburg's saviors, General Jubal Early and General John McCausland, are mentioned often throughout other chapters and not just in the context of the Civil War. In short, there would be an instructive redundancy.

One of the aims of this undertaking is, as it were, metaphysical. I hope to show readers that Lynchburg is a city with a soul. Not every city can say that. Most cities are ensouled only insofar as they somewhat limply take on the character of those persons who happen to be living in them at a particular time. That is not the case with Lynchburg. Lynchburg from the beginning was the sort of town and is now the sort of city that forbids certain types of persons from living in it. It is a conservative and slow city—its topography certainly comes here into play—and yet it is a city with great engagement in large affairs, much resiliency, and enormous vitality with large dispassion in the right sort of events. And so, its resolve is essentially Stoical. Hence, it is more than the sum of its people-parts.

Lynchburg, has a soul, thus inclusion of "biography" in the title. That is not something imputed to Hill City in a playful or flippant metaphysical manner, but instead a discovery I have made while studying the city and its citizens as one of its more recent citizens. There is a way of doing things in Lynchburg that is fundamentally Stoical—that is, unhurried and measured. Moreover, it is not a city that needs to go in any particular direction—e.g., economically, as a Tobacco City or Shoe City—but one that merely moves along with time and takes things, as it were, as they come. The sole requirement is merely that it should develop its future without forgetting its past.

There are undeniably certain methodological difficulties in a weighty task such as urban "biography". One enormous difficulty is the relative discretionary manner of beginning such a project. Where is and how is one to begin? The possibilities are virtually limitless. Another enormous difficulty

is that no account can be exhaustive. There must be a choice of the material, of the players and the events, in such an undertaking, and those choices too are relatively discretionary. In short, a historian in some sense gives a city an identity in crafting a “biography” of it.

Yet I believe that biographical success here lies in not constructing a biography, but in seeing Hill City as it was and really is. Lynchburg has a genuine pulse and a genuine blood line, and it is a Lynchburgian historian’s job to measure the former and trace out the latter, and the success, or failure, of his undertaking is to be gauged by the extent to which his measuring and tracing are veridical, not invented.

There are two addenda.

First, there are significant chunks of the most significant events, moments, and persons in US history. That is some effort to situate Lynchburg as a city in Virginia, which is a state in the United States. When the Congress formed a country as a coalition of states, the idea was for each state to be relatively self-sufficient. As the country matured, that relative political self-sufficiency has diminished, as the ties between states have become more numerous through strong, even invasive Federal government—at least, from the Southern states’-rights perspective. Lynchburg is a Virginian city, but it is too an American city.

Second, I also hope to do justice to the history of Lynchburg’s black culture. Yet many stories of Lynchburg’s rich black community that helped to shape the dynamics and culture of the city throughout the decades have been irretrievably lost. Thus, we often have to rely much on pictures, such as the rich collection left to us by avid photographer James Thomas Smith (1898–1986) and now in possession of Lynchburg Museum. That conceded, many of the black voices heard in this biography will of necessity be current voices, or relatively so.

In this account of Hill City, we have been much benefited and aided much by prior “biographies” of Lynchburg: Margaret Couch Cabell’s *Sketches and Recollections of Lynchburg* (1858), Reverend W. Asbury Christian’s *Lynchburg and Its People* (1900), Rosa Faulkner Yancey’s *Lynchburg and Its Neighbors* (1935), Philip Lightfoot Scruggs’ *The History of Lynchburg Virginia: 1786–1946* (1970), James M. Elson’s *Lynchburg, Virginia: The First Two Hundred Years, 1786–1986* (2004), and Clifton and Dorothy Potter’s *Lynchburg: A City Set on Seven Hills* (2004).

Throughout this prodigious project, I have been ably assisted by my elder brother, David, so much so that the project, which had begun as a solo effort, has now become a joint effort.

Before closing, there are three procedural issues.

First, we tackle throughout morally sensitive issues such as the institution of slavery in Lynchburg and segregation of Blacks and Whites after emancipation and the various Jim Crow problems that were rife with segregation at least till the 1960s. We approach such morally sensitive issues without persistent moral censure, without persistent moral condemnation. The immorality of slavery is obvious today to sober-sided thinkers, steeped in Enlightenment liberalism. It was not all that obvious to persons early in Lynchburg's history, even to many Blacks, as even free Blacks sometimes owned black slaves. Moral condemnation is much too easy and it helps us little to understand why the institution took root and was so widely practiced and accepted in the South. It also presumes a perch today of moral superiority, which is likely presumptuous, gratuitous. Good history, I staunchly maintain, ought not to be normative.

Second, it is impossible to craft so large a biography without mistakes, despite efforts at vetting, and so to speak revetting. We have found numerous inconsistencies concerning, for instance, dates of persons and events in the extant histories or accounts of the city, as fine as all are, and in other material sources. We have done what we can to clean up those inconsistencies, though it is doubtful that our efforts are flawless. It is our hope that our mistakes are few and relatively innocuous.

Finally, there is the question of *modus operandi*. We have chosen for the sake of narrative flow to break with a strict chronological approach. Our approach, as I note above, is thematic and accords with the sign mentioned in the first paragraph.

The first section sets the stage. It concerns precolonial and colonial Virginia. There is also discussion of slavery in early America.

The second section, titled "A Ferry", covers the beginnings of Lynchburg through John Lynch's ferry, the significancy of the James River and the Kanawha Canal, the railroads, and other transportational subjects as they relate to the infrastructure of Lynchburg over the years. We end with discussion of significant buildings, bridges included, as part of that infrastructure.

"A Church" is the next section. In it, we cover religion in Hill City from its Quaker roots to the present. We also cover education in Lynchburg from private tutoring to the emergence of public schools and from quiet refusal to educate Blacks prior to the Civil War to the emergence of public schools for Blacks after the war, and from there, to the end of segregation.

Section four, "A Warehouse", covers the economic history and development of Lynchburg, from a city centered on the tobacco industry to present-day Lynchburg with its investment in its extant businesses. With

the slow demise of the tobacco industry, Lynchburg, because of its excellent transportational system, continued to thrive through a focus on manufacture and diversification.

“A Town” is the fifth section. We do not here restrict ourselves to that period of time from Lynchburg becoming a town to its becoming a city in 1852. Instead, we look at “the town” of Lynchburg through key moments that have come to define it. The foci are on Lynchburg’s participation in the wars of America and on its maturation from, first, a town embracing slavery to, second, a city embracing emancipation but practicing segregation based on inequality, and then to a city that has outgrown its Jim Crow past.

The final section, “A City”, concerns “the pulse and bloodline” of Lynchburg. In it, we examine, *inter alia*, its news and newspapers, its politics and laws, its sciences and arts, its recreation, its venues of entertainment, its sports and commitment to fitness, and its various “memorials”, cemeteries included, as recognition of its past to function as lessons for a prosperous future.

We are grateful to Lynchburg Museum which offers gratis for scholars use of its fine array of pictures that it displays online. All pictures from the museum will be designated “LM”. Pictures designated “A” are from the authors. Other pictures will be labeled according to their source. Pictures with no attribution are from the public domain.

PART I

Early History of Virginia

Chapter 1

Native Americans of the "New World"

TO EXPISCATE FULLY THE HISTORY OF LYNCHBURG, it is necessary first to include discussion of certain preliminaries: British efforts to colonize North America, how colonists were received by Native Americans, the Revolutionary War, and introduction and entrenchment of slavery. Hence, the first section of this book sets the stage for full discussion of Lynchburg's history by situating it as both an American and Southern city.

"At his head sat a woman, at his feet another, on each side"
Native "Virginians"

Before Virginia became a colony in 1607 with the establishment of Jamestown, the area was inhabited by some 50,000 Native Americans of several sorts who called Virginia home for some 12,000 years. The tribes that the first settlers met were Powhatans—there were some 15,000 of them—who spoke a language now called Eastern Algonquian.

The Powhatans, matrilinear, were under the leadership of their chief, Wahunsenacawh or Wahunsonacock (1545–1618), who had inherited six tribes in the sixteenth century through his mother. The names of the original tribes were Powhatan, Arrohateck, Appamattuck, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and Chiskiack. By 1607, there were 30 tribes, each with its own chief (*weroance*). *Weroances* secured their leadership by accumulated wealth through the process of tribute, which included amassing skins, pearls, copper, shells, and corn. Many persons through a tribe would in turn receive favors from their *weroance*, thereby a tribute would secure a sort of political stability through strengthened economic ties.

The lands occupied by the Powhatans included the Tidewater region, from the Potomac River to the James River, and parts of the eastern shore. This area was called Tsenacommacah and measured roughly 8,000 square miles.

Powhatan natives lived in small elevated villages near rivers, which were used for both food and transportation. The elevation of their villages was needed to keep away from the periodic freshets of the rivers and also as a defensive posture in the event of war with another tribe.

Powhatans secured food through farming and hunting. They farmed their villages during the summer months and hunted animals in ambient forests, especially during the winter. The crops they produced were corn, squash, pumpkins, beans and tobacco. They also ate fish, oysters, and tuckahoe, an edible plant in the marshy areas, as well as nuts, grains, vegetables, mushrooms, roots, blueberries, strawberries, plums, and raspberries. Men provided game such as deer and smaller game like squirrel, opossum, rabbit, wild turkey, and duck.

Sometimes the villages in which they lived were palisaded, and varied in the number of houses called *yehakins.* Yehakins (Fig. 1-1, A), constructed by the women, were made of saplings bent together, conjoined at the top, and covered with mats. The yehakin of the paramount chief was larger than the others. Powhatan women did most of the work around the yehakin as they cooked, gathered firewood, collected water, reared children, made clothes, farmed, tanned hides, processed animal meat, made baskets, platters, spoons, cords, and gathered edible plants. Women also functioned as barbers for the men. Men were responsible for hunting, fishing, making canoes, and clearing areas for gardens. They also repaired fishing weirs and hunting gear.

The Powhatan natives used bows and arrows, spears, clubs, tomahawks, and knives for weapons. For transportation, since they lived by rivers, they used birch bark or hollowed-out tree trunks as canoes. For clothing, men wore deerskin breechcloth that was passed between the legs and attached to a belt. Leggings and moccasins were worn when hunting in the forest. Women wore a deerskin apron but also wore leggings and moccasins when in the fields or when gathering food in the forest. Fur cloaks were worn in the winter months. Clothes were generally decorated with painted designs, and had fringes and beads attached. The chiefs had cloaks made of bird feathers.

These cloaks were tied on the left side and reached below the knees. Both men and women had tattoos on their bodies and painted their faces with red paint and nut oil.

At an early age, boys and girls were trained in their many responsibilities. Between the ages of 10 to 15, Powhatan boys learned all they needed to know and were then pronounced men and were initiated in a process called *huskanaw*, which involved a ritual death and rebirth.

Fig. 1-1

Young natives were taught obedience and to have respect for their elders. Education for children was indoctrination for their future social roles, and they were taught respect and self-control. By puberty, youths were roughly treated as adults, and young girls were readied for marriage.

Marriage for Powhatans was chiefly for child-bearing purposes. To secure that end, parents played a significant role in the process, though marriages were not arranged. A young man would have to show the parents of the prospective bride that he could protect and provide for his future wife. Thus, he would "woo" her parents through abundancy of gifts of food. A girl would have to show the prospect of bearing healthy children. There would then begin a process of negotiation.

Once there was an agreement between the parents of the young man and of the girl, a "bride-wealth" or marriage-payment was given to the parents of the bride as recompense for their loss of domestic labor. The bride-wealth was, in effect, a formal statement of the woman's value.

As soon as the groom-to-be got together a house and the necessary household items (Fig. 1-2, A), the bride was brought to the new house. There the wedding ceremony took place as a string of beads measured by the man's arm length was broken over the couple's hands, joined together by the bride's father or guardian. The marriage was now complete.

Moreover, a couple could arrange for a marriage by contract, where couples would agree to renew their marriage each year. At the end of each year, the contract could be renewed, renegotiated, or terminated. If terminated, the man and woman were free to marry others.


Fig. 1-2

Tribal chiefs, especially Chief Powhatan, were to have as many wives as they could afford. The number of wives was a symbol of wealth. William Strachey, of Virginia Company of London, reported that Chief Powhatan had over 100 wives. Each too paid a bride-wealth, but there were no negotiations, as marriage to a chief was construed as a signal honor and great status for the bride and her parents. Once a wife had a child by a chief, she was sent back to her own village and was formally considered divorced. She had done her duty. The child would remain with her, until the child was old enough to live with the chief's other children.

Wahunsenacawh, Chief Powhatan, was born about 1545. He did not rule absolutely, though he was an astute, strict, and energetic ruler, who was sometimes noted for cruelty. In the Algonquian language of his people, his title as emperor was *Mamanatowick.* He was the wealthiest and most powerful of all the chiefs. Captain John Smith described thus the Powhatan Chief:

> Their Emperor proudly [lay] upon a bedstead a foot high upon ten or twelve mats, richly hung with many chains of great pearls about his neck, and covered with a great covering of *Rahaughcums* [raccoon skins]. At his head sat a woman, at his feet another, on each side, sitting upon a mat upon the ground, were ranged his chief men on each side [of] the fire, ten in a rank, and behind them as many young women, each a

> great chain of white beads over their shoulders, their heads painted in red, and [he] with such a grave a majestical countenance as drove me into admiration to see such state in a naked savage.

Chief Powhatan did not decide matters of his people without the advice of his council. When the chief and his council decided on a course of war, their decision required the approval of Chief Powhatan's priests (*kwiocosuk*). Those priests had a significant status, as they were thought to communicate with the transmundane spirits and could divine their wishes. Thus, their advice was crucial.

"CROATOAN"
The Age of Exploration

What historians call the Age of Exploration lasted from the fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. It was a time when European nations ventured out and into the world to discover lands previously unknown to them. This exploration was the beginning of what we now call globalization. European countries became colonial powers and adopted mercantilism as a national policy. Mercantilism focused on accumulating monetary reserves by gains through trade, especially through exporting finished goods. Mercantilism also included high tariffs on imported finished goods to protect domestic manufacture and ensure a positive balance of trade.

European exploration led to an increase in global trade and the establishment of European empires. It introduced new plants, animals, peoples, cultures, foods, and spices to Europe. Exploration also led to heightened understanding of hitherto unknown lands and to mapping of the world, which was theretofore impossible.

Explorers sought to monopolize the resources of the newly discovered lands. They brought missionaries to Christianize and soften the indigenes. When they met with resistance, Europeans used force: They warred with and enslaved the natives. Europeans also brought diseases to indigenes that decimated their populations.

Global exploration started with the Portuguese discoveries of the Madeira and Azores archipelagoes in the early 1400s. Infante Dom Henrique of Portugal, Duke of Viseu, better known as Prince Henry the Navigator, was a Portuguese prince, the third son of the Portuguese king, John I. Henry is noted for the sponsorship of the first expeditions to find a water route to Asia. His voyages of discovery led to the mapping of the west coast of Africa, and the Madeira Islands. Henry's sponsored voyages added greatly

to Europe’s geographical knowledge. Thus, he is considered the father of the Age of Discovery and has come to be called “Henry the Navigator,” though he never went on any of the voyages.

The Portuguese were the most prominent of the early explorers. In the early 1400s, they began to explore the coast of Africa, and reached the Indian Ocean by 1488. In 1498, Vasco de Gama, under the Portuguese flag, reached India. Other Portuguese explorers reached the Spice Islands in 1512, and made it to China in 1513. Ferdinand Magellan from 1519 to 1522 circumnavigated the globe to find a route to the East through the Americas. Magellan died in the Philippines in 1521 at the hands of Mactan warriors (Fig. 1-3) and the voyage was finished by Juan Sebastian Elcano. Such global exploration was unprecedented and may be likened today to exploration of space, with the exception that maritime exploration opened North America, South America, the West Indies, Africa, India, Indonesia, and Australia to European commercial interests.


Fig. 1.3

Spain-backed Italian explorer Christopher Columbus had numerous trans-Atlantic voyages from 1492 to 1502. In 1492, under the sponsorship of the monarchs of Castile and Aragon, he sailed to the Americas in a story that is well-known to most Americans.

The Portuguese and the Spanish dominated early exploration and even divided up the new lands under the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 to eliminate conflict over the ownership of the newly discovered lands.

By the late 1400s and into the 1500s, England and France began to explore the new lands, thereby posing a challenge to the Treaty of Tordesillas. France and England explored North America and South America. England, following the route of the Portuguese around Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, also sailed into the Pacific Ocean and eventually found Australia (1606), New Zealand (1642), and Hawaii (1778). The Russians even got into the act. They conquered Siberia and colonized Alaska in the 1730s.

What spurred these countries to such extensive exploration?

The reasons were preponderantly economic. Spending exorbitant amounts of money merely for the sake of adventure was a bootless project and never would have had state sanction. Sponsors of such voyages were expecting a return that exceeded their investment.

The roots of global exploration were in the eighth century. From the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, Venice and other maritime states (Genoa, Amalfi, and Pisa) dominated maritime trade. Italians flocked to the Mid-East, and they created bases, ports, trade centers, and commercial centers known as colonies. These states, called the Maritime States, consequently, became very wealthy. Using gold coinage, they developed foreign-exchange rates. The Crusaders in the Mid-East noticed the burgeoning wealth of the Maritime States and wished to share that wealth. Thus, they appropriated Italian ships and sailors for their benefit.

Technological advancements also helped fuel this increase in trade and exploration. The invention of the magnetic compass by the Chinese in the eleventh century made its way to Europe by the late twelfth or early thirteenth century and was a boon to navigation. Another advance was new designs for ships. The Caravel was developed by the Portuguese with triangular lateen sails and more than one mast. These ships, with two or three masts and a shallow keel, were agile and speedy, and could carry from 50 to 160 tons of cargo—thereby making them the best sailing ships of their kind. Moreover, the Arabic inventions of the astrolabe and the quadrant aided celestial navigation.

Before those breakthroughs, European navigators sailed close to the land and relied on recognition of coastal landmarks as well as following

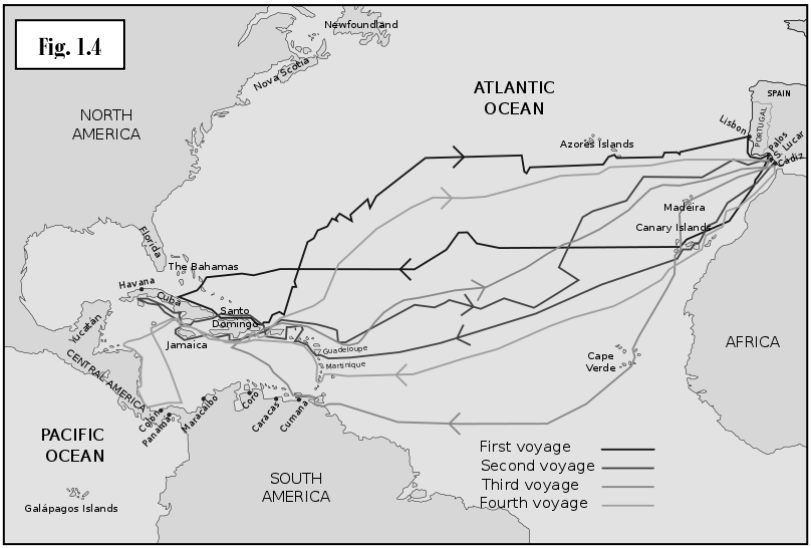
the paths of sun and the stars. Thus, navigation relied heavily on maps, which were poorly developed, and navigation could readily be thwarted by inclement weather—e.g., fog, cloudiness, or storms. With the Age of Exploration, however, cartography became more of a science.

The voyages of Columbus are crucial to American history. The Spanish monarchy, consisting of the unified crowns of Castile and Aragon after the reconquest of Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, was now committed to finding new trade routes. In 1492, they commissioned Columbus to find a new trade route to the riches of the East, by bypassing Portugal's monopoly of West African trade routes. Columbus would travel west to find the East. That plan was based on knowledge of the circularity of the globe, known from Greek antiquity.

On August 3, 1492, Columbus left on three ships, *Santa Maria*, a large carrack (ocean-going carvel), and two other smaller carvels, *Nina* and *Pinta*. Columbus sighted land on October 12 on an island he called San Salvador (the Bahamas). He founded the settlement of La Navidad (Haiti). Columbus did not find the riches or the trade route that he wanted, but further exploration of the continent by those who followed him did enrich the Spanish crown. Spain eventually established a vast empire in the New World and would reign over it for almost 300 years.

A total of 1.86 million Spaniards came over to what are today North America and South America from 1492 to 1832. The New World settlers brought with them viruses to which the indigenes had never been exposed. Hence, they quickly suffered from diseases that decimated their numbers. As much as 80 percent of the indigenes were affected in the first 150 years after Columbus' discovery. Columbus would make four voyages to the New World from 1492 through 1503 (Fig. 1.4).

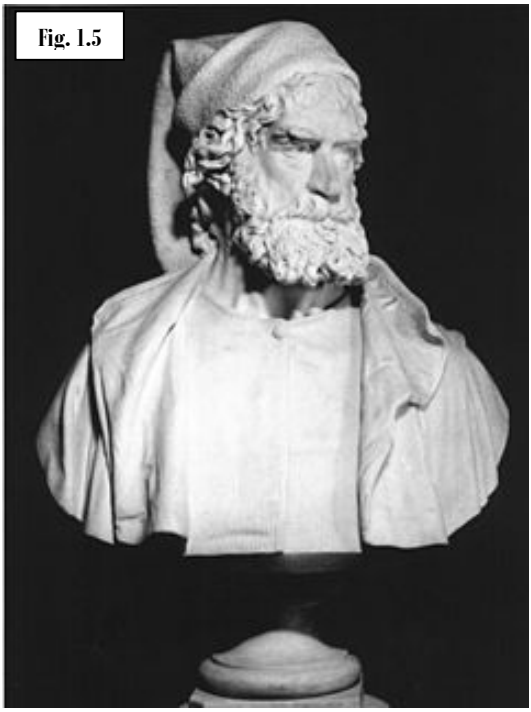
Columbus and other explorers are today often reviled by historians for their part in misappropriation of the lands of natives, in bringing diseases to them, in warring with them, and in reducing many to slavery. Yet from the European perspective of the time, he was a paladin who showed courage and great navigational skill in sailing in uncharted waters in an effort to find a new trade-route to the East. His great good fortune was that the Americas got in the way of that route. And so, though he was not the first European to set foot in America, his discovery changed the history of the world and opened the Americas to exploration and settlement by many nations. Columbus opened up the new world at a time when Europe was ready to explore and colonize. As historian Martin Dugard states concisely, "Columbus' claim to fame isn't that he got there first, it's that he stayed."



As Columbus' discovery made news all across Europe, in 1495, John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto, Fig. 1.5), an Italian seafarer, made his way to England with his family. Cabot, a Venetian citizen, traveled the Mideast trade routes before getting into financial trouble. He first moved to Valencia, Seville, and Lisbon in some effort to make ends meet as a civil engineer. In Lisbon and Seville, he apparently sought financial support for an exploration across the Atlantic. It was in England, though, that he was ultimately successful. He, like others, wished to find a westerly route to China.

Cabot received a royal patent in 1496 and all expeditions were to leave from Bristol. The patent stated that any commerce, resulting from his discoveries, must go through Bristol, thereby creating a monopoly for the city.

Cabot made three voyages. Little is known of the first. On the second voyage, he made landfall probably at Newfoundland or Cape Breton Island. Finding evidence of human habitation, he landed only once during the voyage. He raised the Papal and Venetian banners, while he claimed the lands for King Henry VII of England. North America was now claimed by the English and was open to trade and colonization. Of the third voyage, little is known, so it is the subject of much speculation by historians. It is not known if he died on the voyage or made it back to England.



Other English explorers, venturing to North America, were Sir Francis Drake, who explored California and traded with the Spanish and was the first Englishman to sail around the world in 1577; Henry Hudson, who too sought the Northwest passage to China, but ended up discovering Hudson Bay and explored the Arctic; and Sir Walter Raleigh, who organized three expeditions to the New World and established the first English colony on Roanoke Island (today, North Carolina) in 1585.

The colony on Roanoke Island deserves further discussion, because it presents us with a puzzle that has heretofore not been solved. Founded in 1585 and governed by Ralph Lane, the colony at first failed and Raleigh arranged for a second attempt (1587), led by John White. White brought with him some 100 persons. He then returned to England for more people and supplies, but was delayed on account of the Anglo-Spanish War. When he finally did return in 1590, the colony was wholly abandoned and CROATOAN was carved into a post of the palisade erected by the settlers (Fig. 1.6) and the letters CRO on a tree.

Were the settlers assimilated into a native tribe? Were they butchered? There currently is insufficient archeological evidence to decide firmly the issue.

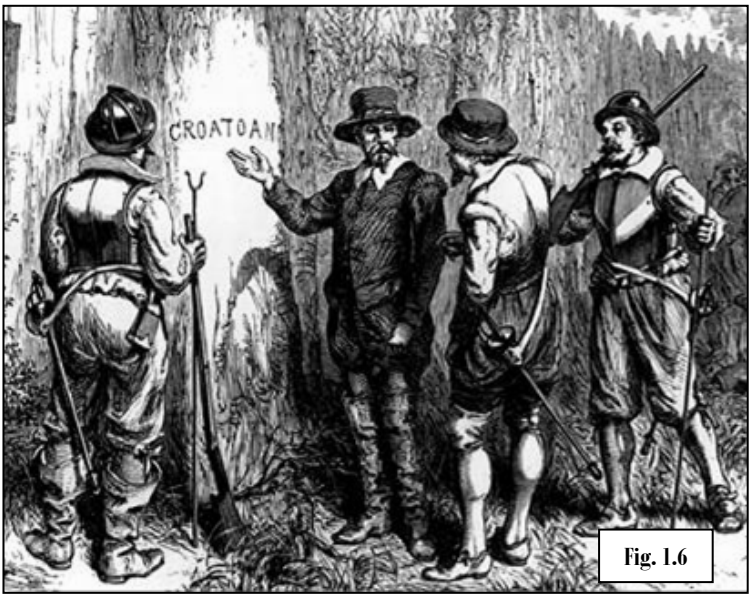


Fig. 1.6

Chapter 2

The English Settlement of Virginia

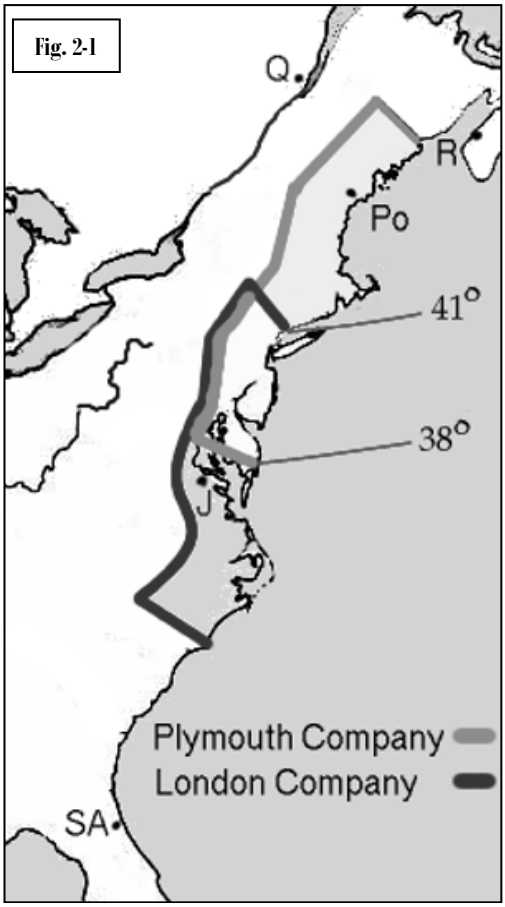
LONDON COMPANY, LATER VIRGINIA COMPANY, WAS FOUNDED on April 10, 1606. Its business was to fund and colonize a stretch of land on North America's eastern coast between 34 and 41 degrees of north latitude. Another company, the Plymouth Company, was to fund and colonize North American land between 38 and 45 degrees north latitude (Fig. 2-1). Concerning the overlapping area of 38 to 41 degrees, it was agreed that any settlement of one company could not be within 100 miles of a settlement of the other company.

Investors, called the Society of Adventurers, included Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers as well as a body of stockholders that would finance the expeditions. The company included a body of elected officers and conducted their business through those officers or special committees. That is how successful British colonization of North America began. Prior to the formation of the two companies, colonial ventures were the forays of individuals.

"The Native Americans killed as fast without…"

The Powhatan Empire

Late in 1606, English colonists set sail in another attempt to establish a colony in the New World. Three ships—*Susan Constant, Discovery*, and *Godspeed*—were chartered under the command of Captain Christopher Newport. The voyage itself was a long one: four months, with stops at the Canary Islands and Puerto Rico before heading north. On April 26, 1607, they made landfall at a place they named Cape Henry and set up temporary housing. Needing a more secure location, they began to explore the area. Finding a riverine outlet to the Chesapeake Bay, they named it James River, after England's King James. Captain Edward Maria Wingfield was elected president of the governing council and made the selection of a piece of land on a peninsula 40 miles inland—Jamestown—on May 14.



When settlers arrived, they opened up-till-then sealed instructions concerning what they were to do. The instructions concerned finding the best location ("on a river that has a safe entrance harbor", is "navigable farthest inland", and is "one hundred miles from the sea"), defense of the settlement (e.g., "any death or sickness should be hidden, lest the Indians discover the settlers are mortal men"), how best to plant on the new land, economics (having large groups of men scour the territory for precious metals), and governance, which included censorship of letters and strictures to prevent settlers from escaping.

What would soon be called Jamestown seemed to be a good defensible location, as it was navigable by sea, and best of all, uninhabited. Yet it

was uninhabited, because the red-clay soil was unsuited for farming and there was no drinkable water, so the natives had no use for it.

Jamestown Island, despite being a good defensible position with a deep-water anchorage, was swampy and bug-infested. Its marshy water was undrinkable. Food was sparse, as there was little game and the settlers arrived too late in the year to plant. Moreover, they arrived at a time of severe drought. Thus, as many as 60 percent of the 104 persons who arrived by ship perished by September. It was a parlous experience for those who survived. Also, the fort that they built, Fort James, was in Powhatan territory. Everything boded ill for the settlers (Fig. 2-2). At first, Chief Powhatan tolerated the settlers, even celebrated their appearance, for he looked at them as potential allies against his enemies—the tribes of Monacans, Mannahoacs, and Massawomecks to the north and west. That amicable attitude would soon change, as it became clear that the English settlements and expeditions on the James River began to encroach not only on their land, but also on their way of life.

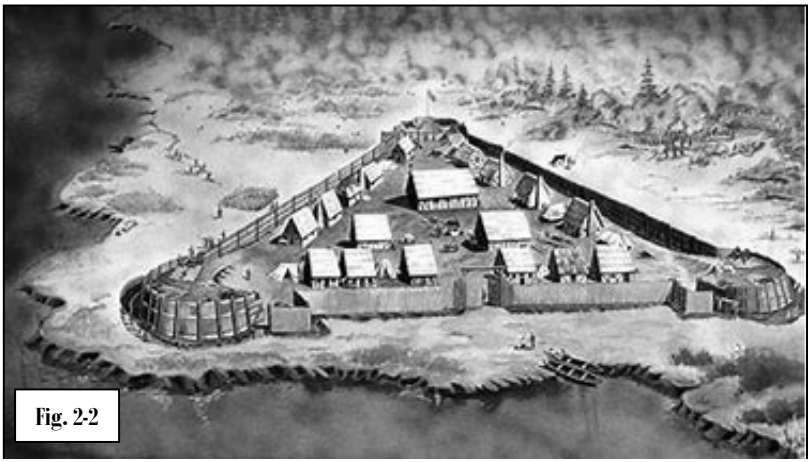


Fig. 2-2

Problems started almost as soon as the English left their ships.

Many of the registered passengers were listed as “gentleman”, and unaccustomed to manual labor, refused to do it. Others were listed as “laborer”, and it is difficult to know just who those laborers were. Were some convicts, rogues, and ne’er-do-wells, reluctant to work? Much of the lure of the Virginian land was the prospect of gold or other rare minerals, as investors expected a handsome return on the money they had invested. Many preferred exploration for precious metals or gems to farming or looking for food.

Disease was also a pressing problem and the supplies were insufficient. The site for Jamestown might have been defensible, but land was swampy and mosquitoes were a constant botheration and harbingers of diseases. Furthermore, swamps, used for drinking water, were often also uses as latrines. Again, travelers took with them only so much food, because it was hoped that food could be both grown and found. Growing proved troublesome due to drought and game was scarce due to drought.

Within two weeks of their arrival, there was fighting between the natives and the English, even though the settlers hoped for peaceful and friendly relations with the indigenes, because they needed peace to survive in a frighteningly new land. As a result of English encroachment, the indigenes attacked the fort from May 27 to July 14, 1607.

Moreover, on a hunting and trading mission in December 1607, Captain John Smith (Fig. 2-3)—explorer, author, cartographer, soldier, governor, and the most outstanding figure of the settlement—was captured by Opechancanough, the younger brother of Chief Powhatan, whose real name was Wahunsenacawh, and taken to Werowocomoco, the capital of the Powhatan Empire. A tough, confrontational figure, Smith's leadership,

callidity, organizational skills, and talents for trading and alliances with the Native Powhatans are generally recognized by historians as responsible for saving the early settlement in trying times. Yet his relationships with other members of Jamestown's governing council were often strained—especially with the wellborn.

Smith's capture greatly disconcerted the settlement, but it had an unanticipated happy result. He became the first settler to meet Chief Powhatan.

It is commonly believed that Smith was to be executed by the chief. Smith stated that he was saved from death by the intercession of Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas. Smith wrote in his recollections: "At the minute of my execution, she [Pocahontas] hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine; and not only that, but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown". Historians are skeptical of that account, as Smith never mentioned Pocahontas and her intercession with her father in his accounts of his capture in his books, dating 1608 and 1612.That account he inserted in his 1624 memoirs once Pocahontas became famous. It is thus likely a cock-and-bull story.

We do know that Smith's capture ended in amicable relations between him and Chief Powhatan—at least, for a while. He stayed for several weeks with the Powhatans.

During the temporary peace, the colonizers began to settle lands away from Jamestown and that encroachment once again aggravated the Powhatans. When the British settled other lands, Powhatans were bumped from those lands.

There was another albatross, which threatened settlers. Many of the colonists were townspeople or gentlefolk who were neither accustomed to hard work nor experienced in agriculture, so Smith had much teaching to do. When encouragement failed, Smith relied on force. "He who works not, eats not". Without Smith training and driving hard all colonists in work and farming, the colony would not have survived. Yet by forcing the "gentlemen" to work, Smith made several enemies.

Since most of the original settlers had died by September 1607, ships with 100 more settlers and desperately needed supplies arrived on January 2, 1608. On those resupply ships, there were German and Polish craftsmen. They helped to establish early types of manufacturing centers, so that glassware and clapboard products could be eventually sent back to English investors. When the second group of resupply ships came in October 1608, only 38 settlers remained. Starvation and Powhatan attacks had taken their toll. The German settlers of the second resupply ship had defected to the Indians, and with them, they took weapons and equipment. They figured

that their chances of survival were better with the natives, who knew the land, rather than in the colony. It was rumored that the Germans might even join the Spanish who were lurking around Jamestown but were driven off by the arrival of a large English ship.

After the second resupply ship, John Smith, desperate, tried to improve contact and expand trade with the natives. That, he knew, was the surest mode of survival. Yet the Powhatans, knowing the terrible condition of the settlement, refused to negotiate. They wanted to rid themselves of the interlopers. Yet Smith, unrelenting, succeeded, if only temporarily, in establishing improved trade relations.

There were also problems across the Atlantic Ocean. British investors had put out much money in the expeditions and had seen scant return on their investment. The investors were expecting gold, like the Spanish had found in South America, products to sell to recoup their resupply expenses, and most importantly a passage to the East. The colonists had provided "clapboard, wainscot, pitch, tarre, glasse, frankincense, and sope ashes" as export products, but the proceeds from the sales of these items scarcely covered their expenses. Thus, the investors sent out a list of demands which included gold, money for reimbursement, assurance of the discovery of an Eastern passage, and curiously, a member of the lost colony of Roanoke. John Smith, then president of the council, sent back his own demands: a certain number of practical workers and craftsmen who could make the colony work.

In 1609, Captain Christopher Newport, who commanded the vessels that brought the colonists to Virginia, tried to flatter Chief Powhatan by having the colonists present him with a royal crown and other gifts such as a pitcher, feather mattress, bed frame, and clothes. Wahunsenacawh would, it was hoped, be seduced by the gifts and become a royal prince in the service of his Britannic majesty—a vassal of King James I. The "coronation" went badly, as they asked Chief Powhatan to kneel to receive the crown. That he refused to do. As a leader of the Powhatan Empire, Wahunsenacawh followed two rules: "He who keeps his head higher than others ranks higher" and "He who puts other people in a vulnerable position, without altering his own stance, ranks higher". To conclude the coronation, several Englishmen leaned on Powhatan's shoulders to get him down low enough to place the crown on his head, as he was a tall man. Wahunsenacawh was crowned and received the gifts, and he paid lip service to vassalage of the British king.

Late in 1609, John Smith sailed back to England for medical treatment as a result of burns sustained after an explosion, which might have been caused by enemies of him among the settlers. With the departure of