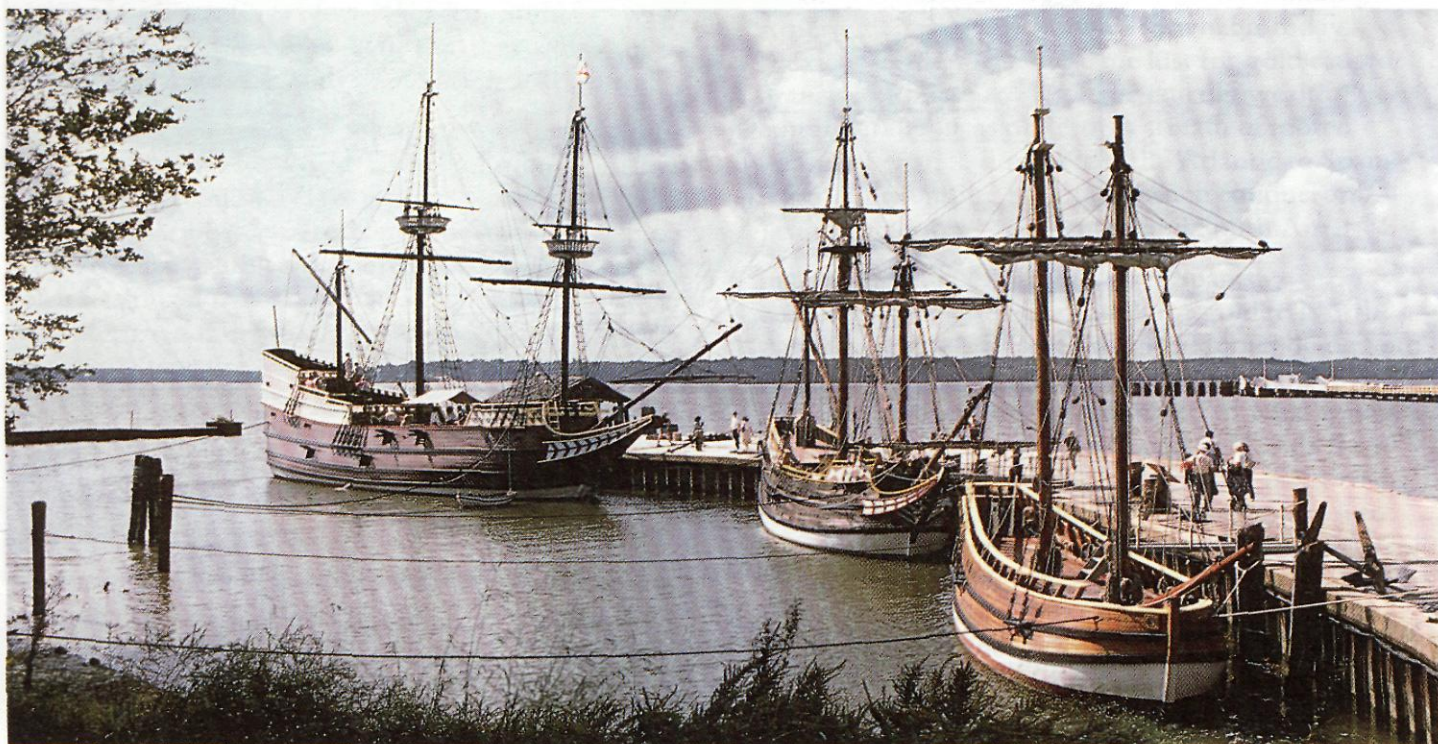


VIRGINIAN BEGINNINGS



Replicas of the ships that carried the first settlers to Jamestown in 1617.

All through the night the storm blew the three small ships northwards. For hours the frightened sailors struggled with wet ropes and snapping canvas sails. At last, as dawn colored the eastern skies, the storm came to an end. Men dropped to the decks, exhausted. Some fell asleep. Excited shouts awoke them. "Land! Land!" The sailors rushed to the sides of the ships. There, at last, was the land for which they had been searching – Virginia. It was the morning of April 26 in the year 1607.

A few weeks later, on May 20, the sailors tied their ships to trees on the banks of a broad and deep river. They named the river the James, in honor of James I, king of England, the country from which they had set sail five long months before. Just over a hundred men went ashore. On the swampy banks they began cutting down bushes and trees and building rough shelters for themselves. By the end of the year two out of every three of them were dead. But their little group of huts became the first lasting English settlement in America. They named it Jamestown.

The early years of the Jamestown settlement were hard ones. This was partly the fault of the settlers themselves. The site they had chosen was low-lying and malarial. And although their English homeland was many miles away across a dangerous ocean, they failed to grow enough food to feed themselves. They were too busy dreaming of gold.

The settlers had been sent to Jamestown by a group of rich London investors. These investors had formed the Virginia Company. The Company's purpose was to set up colonies along the Atlantic coast of North America, between 34° and 38° north latitude. It was a joint stock company – that is, the investors paid the costs of its expeditions and in return were given the right to divide up any profits it made. The Jamestown settlers were employees of the Virginia Company. The Company's directors hoped that the settlers would find pearls, silver, or some other valuable product in Virginia and so bring them a quick profit on their investment. Most of all, they hoped that the colonists would find gold, as the Spanish conquistadores had done in Mexico.

The colonists eagerly obeyed the Company's orders to search for gold. By doing so they hoped to become rich themselves. There was "no talk, no hope nor work, but dig gold, wash gold, load gold", wrote one of their leaders, Captain John Smith.

And then the colonists began to die—in ones, in twos, finally in dozens. Some died in Amerindian attacks, some of diseases, some of starvation. By April 1608, out of a total of 197 Englishmen who had landed in Virginia only fifty-three were still alive. "Our men were destroyed by cruel diseases," wrote a colonist who survived, "swellings, fluxes, burning fevers and by wars. But most died of famine. There were never Englishmen left in a foreign country in such misery as we were in Virginia."

Jamestown reached its lowest point in the winter of 1609–1610. Of the 500 colonists living in the settlement in October 1609, only sixty were still alive in March 1610. This was "the starving time." Stories reached England about settlers who were so desperate for food that they dug up and ate the body of an Amerindian they had killed during an attack.

Yet new settlers continued to arrive. The Virginia Company gathered homeless children from the streets of London and sent them out to the colony. Then it sent a hundred convicts from London's prisons. Such emigrants were often unwilling to go. The Spanish ambassador in London told of three condemned criminals who were given the choice of being hanged or sent to Virginia. Two agreed to go, but the third chose to hang.

Some Virginia emigrants sailed willingly, however. For many English people these early years of the seventeenth century were a time of hunger and suffering. Incomes were low, but the prices of food and clothing climbed higher every year. Many people were without work. And if the crops failed, they starved. Some English people decided that it was worth risking the possibility of hardships in Virginia to escape from the certainty of them at home. For Virginia had one great attraction that England lacked: plentiful land. This seemed more important than the reports of disease, starvation and cannibalism there. In England, as in Europe generally, the land was owned by the rich. In Virginia a poor man could hope for a farm of his own to feed his family.

The captain and the princess

Captain John Smith was the most able of the original Jamestown settlers. An energetic 27-year-old soldier and explorer, he had already had a life full of action when he landed there in 1607. It was he who organized the first Jamestown colonists and forced them to work. If he had not done that, the infant settlement would probably have collapsed.

When food supplies ran out Smith set off into the forests to buy corn from the Amerindians. On one of these expeditions he was taken prisoner. According to a story that he told later (which not everyone believed), the Amerindians were going to beat his brains out when Pocahontas, the twelve-year-old daughter of the chief, Powhatan, saved his life by shielding his body with her own. Pocahontas went on to play an important part in Virginia's survival, bringing food to the starving settlers. "She, next under God," wrote Smith, "was the instrument to preserve this colony from death, famine and utter confusion."

In 1609 Smith was badly injured in a gunpowder explosion and was sent back to England. Five years later, in 1614, Pocahontas married the tobacco planter John Rolfe. In 1616 she travelled to England with him and was presented at court to King James I. It was there that the portrait you see here was painted. Pocahontas died of smallpox in 1617 while waiting to board a ship to carry her back to Virginia with her newborn son. When the son grew up he returned to Virginia. Many Virginians today claim to be descended from him and so from Pocahontas.

A portrait of Pocahontas, painted during her visit to London.



Brides for sale

Very few women settled in early Virginia, so in 1619 the Virginia Company shipped over a group of ninety young women as wives for its settlers. To obtain a bride the would-be husbands had to pay the Company "120 pounds weight of best tobacco leaf." The price must have seemed reasonable, for within a very short time all the young women were married.

For a number of years after 1611, military governors ran Virginia like a prison camp. They enforced strict rules to make sure that work was done. But it was not discipline that saved Virginia. It was a plant that grew like a weed there: tobacco. Earlier visitors to America, like Sir Walter Raleigh, had brought the first dried leaves of tobacco to England. Its popularity had been growing ever-since, for smoking, for taking as snuff, even for brewing into a drink. In Virginia a young settler named John Rolfe discovered how to dry, or "cure," the leaves in a new way, to make them milder. In 1613 Rolfe shipped the first load of Virginia tobacco to England. London merchants paid high prices because of its high quality.

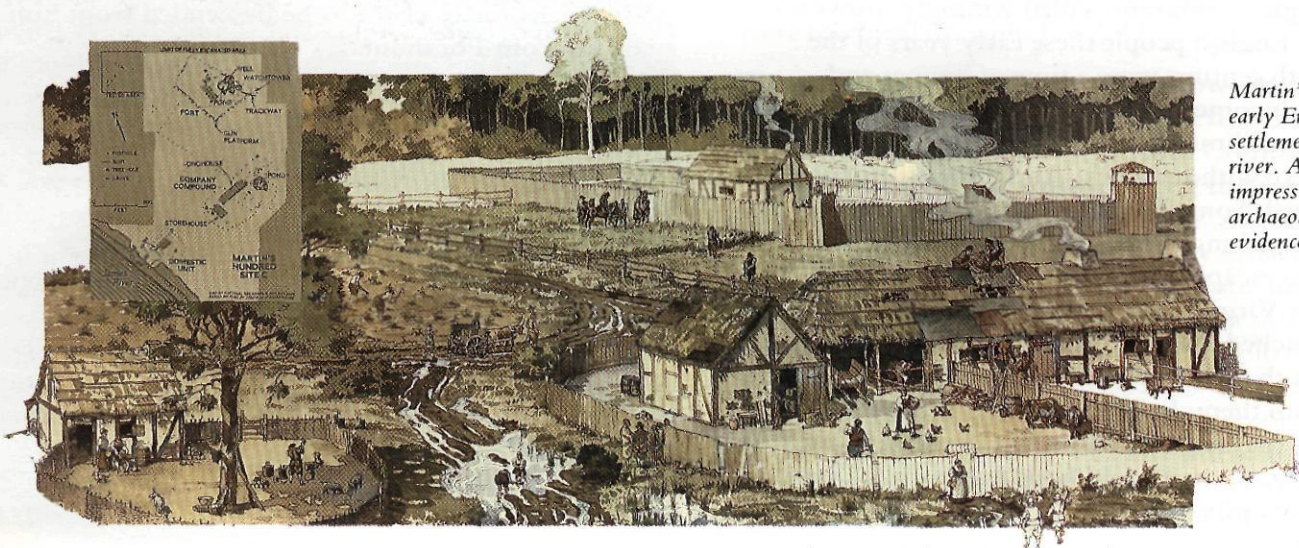
Soon most of the Virginia settlers were busy growing tobacco. They cleared new land along the rivers and ploughed up the streets of Jamestown itself to plant more. They even used it as money. The price of a good horse in Virginia, for example, was sixteen pounds of top quality tobacco. The possibility of becoming rich by growing tobacco brought wealthy



A label from Wills tobacco. Wills was one of the most famous English tobacco companies.

men to Virginia. They obtained large stretches of land and brought workers from England to clear trees and plant tobacco. Soon the houses and barns of their estates, or "plantations," could be seen through the trees along the banks of the James river.

Most of the workers on these early plantations were "indentured servants" from England. They promised to work for an employer for an agreed number of years – about seven was average – in exchange for food and clothes. At the end they became free to work for themselves. Luckier ones were given a small piece of land to start a farm of their own – if they were still alive. Life in Virginia



Martin's Hundred, an early English settlement on the James river. A modern artist's impression, based on archaeological evidence.

continued to be hard. "I have eaten more in a day at home than I have here for a week," wrote a young man named Richard Frethorne in a letter to his parents back in England.

The same was true for many in Virginia. Nor was hunger the only problem. Diseases like malaria and wars against the Amerindians continued to kill hundreds of settlers. Between 1619 and 1621 about 3,560 people left England to settle in Virginia. Before those years were over, 3,000 of them were dead.

But the survivors stayed. In 1619 there was an important change in the way they were governed.

Virginia's affairs had been controlled so far by governors sent over by the Virginia Company. Now the Company allowed a body called the House of Burgesses to be set up. The burgesses were elected representatives from the various small settlements along Virginia's rivers. They met to advise the governor on the laws the colony needed. Though few realized it at the time, the Virginia House of Burgesses was the start of an important tradition in American life—that people should have a say in decisions about matters that concern them.

The House of Burgesses met for the first time in August 1619. In that same month Virginia saw another important beginning. A small Dutch warship anchored at Jamestown. On board were twenty captured black Africans. The ship's captain sold them to the settlers as indentured servants.

The blacks were set to work in the tobacco fields with white indentured servants from England. But there was a very serious difference between their position and that of the whites working beside them. White servants were indentured for a fixed number of years. Their masters might treat them badly, but they knew that one day they would be free. Black servants had no such hope. Their indenture was for life. In fact they were slaves—although it was years before their masters openly admitted the fact.

The Virginia Company never made a profit. By 1624 it had run out of money. The English government put an end to the Company and made itself responsible for the Virginia colonists. There were still very few of them. Fierce Amerindian attacks in 1622 had destroyed several settlements and killed over 350 colonists. Out of nearly 10,000 settlers sent out since 1607, a 1624 census showed only 1,275 survivors..

But their hardships had toughened the survivors. Building a new homeland in the steamy river valleys of Virginia had proved harder and taken longer than anyone had expected. But this first society of English people overseas had put down living roots into the American soil. Other struggles lay ahead, but by 1624 one thing was clear—Virginia would survive.

The lost colony

The Jamestown settlers were not the first English people to visit Virginia. Twenty years earlier the adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh had sent ships to find land in the New World where English people might settle. He named the land they visited Virginia, in honor of Elizabeth, England's unmarried Queen.

In July 1585, 108 English settlers landed on Roanoke Island, off the coast of what is now the state of North Carolina. They built houses and a fort, planted crops and searched—without success—for gold. But they ran out of food and made enemies of the local Amerindian inhabitants. In less than a year they gave up and sailed back to England.

In 1587 Raleigh tried again. His ships landed 118 settlers on Roanoke, including fourteen family groups. The colonists were led by an artist and mapmaker named John White, who had been a member of the 1585 expedition. Among them were White's daughter and her husband. On August 18th the couple became the parents of Virginia Dare, the first English child to be born in America.

In August White returned to England for supplies. Three years passed before he was able to return. When his ships reached Roanoke in August 1590, he found the settlement deserted. There was no sign of what had happened to its people except a word carved on a tree—"Croaton," the home of a friendly Indian chief, fifty miles to the south. Some believe that the Roanoke settlers were carried off by Spanish soldiers from Florida. Others think that they may have decided to go to live with friendly Indians on the mainland. They were never seen, or heard of, again.

PURITAN NEW ENGLAND

“Pilgrims” are people who make a journey for religious reasons. But for Americans the word has a special meaning. To them it means a small group of English men and women who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in the year 1620. The group’s members came to be called the Pilgrims because they went to America to find religious freedom. Sometimes Americans call them the Pilgrim Fathers. This is because they see them as the most important of the founders of the future United States of America.

The Europe that the Pilgrims left behind them was torn by religious quarrels. For more than a thousand years Roman Catholic Christianity had been the religion of most of its people. By the sixteenth century, however, some Europeans had begun to doubt the teachings of the Catholic Church. They were also growing angry at the wealth and worldly pride of its leaders.

Early in the century a German monk named Martin Luther quarreled with these leaders. He claimed that individual human beings did not need the Pope or the priests of the Catholic Church to enable them to speak to God. A few years later a French lawyer named John Calvin put forward similar ideas. Calvin claimed that each individual was directly and personally responsible to God. Because they protested against the teachings and customs of the Catholic Church, religious reformers like Luther and Calvin were called “Protestants.” Their ideas spread quickly through northern Europe.

Few people believed in religious toleration at this time. In most countries people were expected to have the same religion as their ruler. This was the case in England. In the 1530s the English king, Henry VIII, formed a national church with himself as its head. In the later years of the sixteenth century many English people believed that this Church of England was still too much like the Catholic Church. They disliked the power of its bishops. They disliked its elaborate ceremonies and the rich decorations of its churches. They also questioned many of its teachings. Such people wanted the Church of England to become

more plain and simple, or “pure.” Because of this they were called Puritans. The ideas of John Calvin appealed particularly strongly to them.

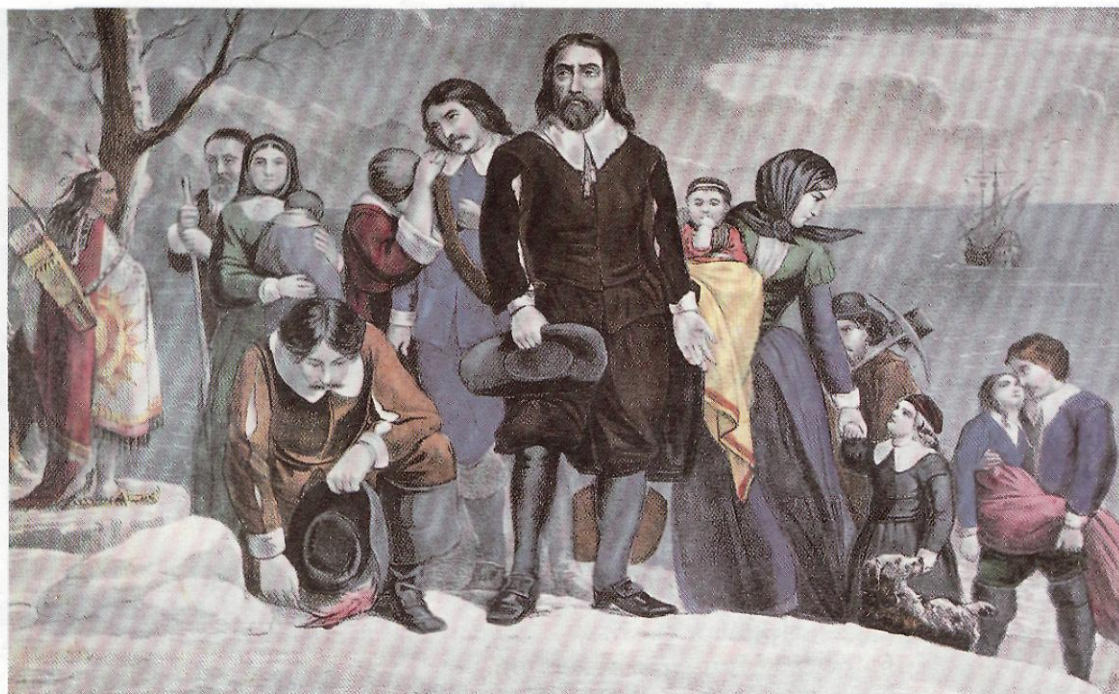
When James I became King of England in 1603 he warned the Puritans that he would drive them from the land if they did not accept his ideas on religion. His bishops began fining the Puritans and putting them in prison. To escape this persecution, a small group of them left England and went to Holland. Holland was the only country in Europe whose government allowed religious freedom at this time.

The people of Holland welcomed the little group of exiles. But the Puritans never felt at home there. After much thought and much prayer they decided to move again. Some of them—the Pilgrims—decided to go to America.

First they returned briefly to England. Here they persuaded the Virginia Company to allow them to settle in the northern part of its American lands. On September 16, 1620, the Pilgrims left the English

The Mayflower Compact

When the Pilgrims arrived off the coast of America they faced many dangers and difficulties. They did not want to put themselves in further danger by quarreling with one another. Before landing at Plymouth, therefore, they wrote out an agreement. In this document they agreed to work together for the good of all. The agreement was signed by all forty-one men on board the *Mayflower*. It became known as the Mayflower Compact. In the Compact the Plymouth settlers agreed to set up a government—a “civil body politic”—to make “just and equal laws” for their new settlement. All of them, Pilgrims and Strangers alike, promised that they would obey these laws. In the difficult years which followed, the Mayflower Compact served the colonists well. It is remembered today as one of the first important documents in the history of democratic government in America.



The Pilgrim Fathers landing in America.

port of Plymouth and headed for America. They were accompanied by a number of other emigrants they called "Strangers."

The Pilgrims' ship was an old trading vessel, the *Mayflower*. For years the *Mayflower* had carried wine across the narrow seas between France and England. Now it faced a much more dangerous voyage. For sixty-five days the *Mayflower* battled through the rolling waves of the north Atlantic Ocean. At last, on November 9, 1620, it reached Cape Cod, a sandy hook of land in what is now the state of Massachusetts.

Cape Cod is far to the north of the land granted to the Pilgrims by the Virginia Company. But the Pilgrims did not have enough food and water, and many were sick. They decided to land at the best place they could find. On December 21, 1620, they rowed ashore and set up camp at a place they named Plymouth.

"The season it was winter," wrote one of their leaders, "and those who know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent with cruel and fierce storms." The Pilgrims' chances of surviving were not high. The frozen ground and the deep snow made it difficult for them to build houses. They had very little food. Before spring came, half of the little group of a hundred settlers were dead.

But the Pilgrims were determined to succeed. The fifty survivors built better houses. They learned how to fish and hunt. Friendly Amerindians gave them seed corn and showed them how to plant it. It was not the end of their hardships, but when a ship arrived in Plymouth in 1622 and offered to take passengers back to England, not one of the Pilgrims accepted.

Other English Puritans followed the Pilgrims to America. Ten years later a much larger group of almost a thousand colonists settled nearby in what became the Boston area. These people left England to escape the rule of a new king, Charles I. Charles was even less tolerant than his father James had been of people who disagreed with his policies in religion and government.

The Boston settlement prospered from the start. Its population grew quickly as more and more Puritans left England to escape persecution. Many years later, in 1691, it combined with the Plymouth colony under the name of Massachusetts.

The ideas of the Massachusetts Puritans had a lasting influence on American society. One of their first leaders, John Winthrop, said that they should build an ideal community for the rest of mankind to learn from. "We shall be like a city on a hill," said

Winthrop. "The eyes of all people are upon us." To this day many Americans continue to see their country in this way, as a model for other nations to copy.

The Puritans of Massachusetts believed that governments had a duty to make people obey God's will. They passed laws to force people to attend church and laws to punish drunks and adulterers. Even men who let their hair grow long could be in trouble.

Roger Williams, a Puritan minister in a settlement called Salem, believed that it was wrong to run the affairs of Massachusetts in this way. He objected particularly to the fact that the same men controlled both the church and the government. Williams believed that church and state should be separate and that neither should interfere with the other.

Williams' repeated criticisms made the Massachusetts leaders angry. In 1535 they sent men to arrest him. But Williams escaped and went south, where he was joined by other discontented people from Massachusetts. On the shores of Narragansett Bay Williams and his followers set up a new colony called Rhode Island. Rhode Island promised its citizens complete religious freedom and separation of church and state. To this day these ideas are still very important to Americans.

The leaders of Massachusetts could not forgive the people of Rhode Island for thinking so differently from themselves. They called the breakaway colony "the land of the opposite-minded."



Plymouth Puritans going to church.



William Penn signing a treaty with the Amerindians.

By the end of the seventeenth century a string of English colonies stretched along the east coast of North America. More or less in the middle was Pennsylvania. This was founded in 1681 by William Penn. Under a charter from the English king, Charles II, Penn was the proprietor, or owner, of Pennsylvania.

Penn belonged to a religious group, the Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers. Quakers refused to swear oaths or to take part in wars. These customs had helped to make them very unpopular with English governments. When Penn promised his fellow Quakers that in Pennsylvania they would be free to follow their own ways, many of them emigrated there.

Penn's promise of religious freedom, together with his reputation for dealing fairly with people, brought settlers from other European countries to Pennsylvania. From Ireland came settlers who made new farms in the western forests of the colony. Many Germans came also. Most were members of small religious groups who had left Germany to escape persecution. They were known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. This was because English people at this time called most north Europeans "Dutch."

New York had previously been called New Amsterdam. It had first been settled in 1626. In 1664 the English captured it from the Dutch and re-named it New York. A few years later, in 1670, the English founded the new colonies of North and South Carolina. The last English colony to be founded in North America was Georgia, settled in 1733.

Thanksgiving

Every year on the fourth Thursday in November Americans celebrate a holiday called Thanksgiving. The first people to celebrate this day were the Pilgrims. In November, 1621, they sat down to eat together and to give thanks to God for enabling them to survive the hardships of their first year in America.

The first Thanksgiving.



The Pilgrims were joined at their feast by local Amerindians. The Wampanoag and Pequamid people of the nearby forests had shared corn with the Pilgrims and shown them the best places to catch fish. Later the Amerindians had given seed corn to the English settlers and shown them how to plant crops that would grow well in the American soil. Without them there would have been no Thanksgiving.

Minuit buys Manhattan

In the 1620s settlers from Holland founded a colony they called New Netherlands along the banks of the Hudson River. At the mouth of the Hudson lies Manhattan Island, the present site of New York City. An Amerindian people called the Shinnecock used the island for hunting and fishing, although they did not live on it.

In 1626 Peter Minuit, the first Dutch governor of the New Netherlands, “bought” Manhattan from the Shinnecock. He paid them about twenty-four dollars’ worth of cloth, beads and other trade

goods. Like all Amerindians, the Shinnecock believed that land belonged to all men. They thought that what they were selling to the Dutch was the right to share Manhattan with themselves. But the Dutch, like other Europeans, believed that buying land made it theirs alone.

These different beliefs about land ownership were to be a major cause of conflict between Europeans and Amerindians for many years to come. And the bargain price that Peter Minuit paid for Manhattan Island became part of American folklore.