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## A Second Eden: The Promotion and Perception of Virginia, 1584-1624

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**A Second Eden**

**The Promotion and Perception of Virginia, 1584-1624**

**Jennifer Lynn Blahnik**

**Celebration, Florida**

**Master of Arts, Ohio University, 2003**

**A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

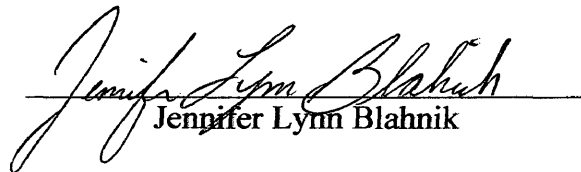
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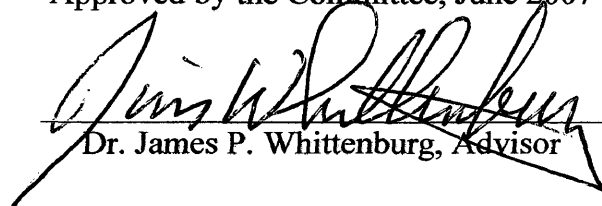
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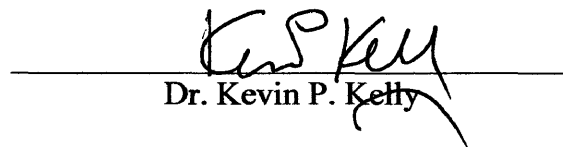
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

  
Jennifer Lynn Blahnik

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## ABSTRACT

Summertime in Tidewater Virginia is brutal. I learned this unpleasant fact during a summer archeology apprenticeship hunched over what was once an eighteenth century dairy. As I labored under the unrelenting sun, I began to wonder why any English man or woman would settle in such a hostile environment. My own discomfort helped me to understand why many of Virginia's early settlers perished within the first year of their arrival. I questioned whether these adventurers had any idea of what life in Virginia might entail and if they had formed unrealistic perceptions of America.

The original colonists of Virginia, I hypothesized, must not have known the full truth about their future home. I focused my research upon the first two attempts to colonize Virginia: Roanoke and Jamestown. These two ventures were initiated by private citizens, not the crown, and it was during these four decades, that Virginia's mortality was at its highest. Primary source materials, such as ballads, personal letters, official documents and reports supported my theory. Promotional materials had a strong influence upon the perception of Virginia. The major promotional/propaganda materials from this time period have survived, and they give testament to their supporters' motivation. Investors founded the Virginia colony and it was in their own interest to keep their venture profitable. In order to succeed, these promoters needed the public to take interest and invest. Their publications depicted Virginia as an Eden full of riches and rewards. The travelers' accounts and personal letters, however, described a very different and deadlier Virginia.

Both the Roanoke colony and the Virginia Company failed in large part because of the disparity between promotion and reality. The colonies' promoters had helped shape public perception of the young colony, but because of or even in spite of their efforts, the English people's perception of Virginia shifted and altered over time. Misguided promotional techniques, the attitudes of the nation and the strength of the colonies' detractors all influenced the people's changing perceptions of England's colonial adventure. Propaganda had persuaded many people, but it was often overshadowed by negative press, rumors, cynicism, and sheer indifference.

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To my mother and father for a lifetime of support and encouragement

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**A SECOND EDEN**  
**The Promotion and Perception of Virginia, 1584-1624**

## INTRODUCTION

In the closing years of the sixteenth century, England was still a weak nation.<sup>1</sup> The glorious Renaissance that had transformed mainland Europe had only begun to take hold of the island and it could hardly compare to juggernauts such as Spain or even Portugal.<sup>2</sup> England was finally coming into its own while other nations thrived. The sixteenth century was the age of the explorer and the era of colonization. For over a century, Spain and Portugal had found tremendous wealth and success in conquering the American frontier. Spain had grown so powerful with West Indies wealth that it began to unleash its might upon the continent, waging wars and amassing territory.<sup>3</sup> Influential men began to realize that colonization was the key to England's potential success.

English adventurers had made a number of expeditions to North America over the past hundred years, but these voyages focused upon more transitory missions such as fishing or searching for the Northwest Passage. Beginning in the 1580s, a number of England's influential citizens such as Sir Walter Raleigh understood that England "would never take its rightful place among the nations of Europe until it also had founded an outpost in America."<sup>4</sup> America had brought Spain to greatness. For nearly a century, Spain had rich holdings in Central and South America, colonies that gave it gleaming

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<sup>1</sup> David B. Quinn, *Set fair for Roanoke: voyages and colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, Publishers, 1984), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Kupperman, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

gold and valuable trade goods. Its navy dominated the seas as its armies dominated the populations of natives living in the distant, exotic continent. Not only did Spain wield incredible power, but that power also resided in a Roman Catholic throne, an affront to the very sensibilities of the true and noble faith of England.<sup>5</sup> A colony in America was England's chance to break out of its medieval shackles and transform itself into a great nation. Prominent men such as Richard Hakluyt, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Thomas Harriot came to the forefront and took it upon themselves to encourage and promote interest in a colonial gamble. Selling a North American settlement to a nation already embattled in the conquest of Ireland would require finesse. Virginia's first promoters, however, had good reason to campaign for an American colony.

Besides national greatness, the promoters of an American venture, such as the dashing Sir Walter Raleigh and the tireless Richard Hakluyt the younger, saw manifold reasons for planting a colony on American shores. England had become overcrowded. The effects of the Black Death had finally evaporated and England's population began to grow beyond a manageable level. The nation, however, did not have enough jobs or enough space to accommodate the reproductive glut. From 1500 to the mid-seventeenth century, England's population exploded by 66% from three million to five million souls.<sup>6</sup> The economy, correspondingly, did not keep such a pace, so as prices went up, wages did not increase to compensate. One-quarter to one-half of the population lived below the poverty line and could not count on a regular meal. Richard Hakluyt the younger, collector and editor of narratives of English voyages and travels, saw an American

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<sup>5</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Morgan., *American Slavery*, 30.

colony as the remedy for the nation's ills.<sup>7</sup> An American outpost could serve as an outlet for English expansion that not only could provide extra space, but also a source of employment. The new colonists would work to produce goods for trade with the mother country.<sup>8</sup>

This source of trade could make England rich. Spain had colonies and its men brought back ships filled with gold and silver. An American colony could provide England with a valuable trading resource, a strategic military base, and land for plantations.<sup>9</sup> Establishing trade with a colony would also free England from trading with other nations, releasing it from dependency upon a foreign nation and potential enemy.

The favorite reason to plant a colony in North America concerned the ability to harass Spanish colonies in the southern regions and indirectly Spain itself. Potential investors were most intrigued by the opportunity of making the American colony a military outpost for attacking Spanish shipping.<sup>10</sup> Spain had for too long satiated itself upon New World delicacies, growing increasingly fatter. Chipping away at Spain's security and siphoning off some of her wealth represented an act of supreme patriotism; by damaging Spain, one served England.<sup>11</sup> England, the paradigm of the true faith, also had a divine duty to attack Catholicism wherever it reared its ugly head. Real defenders of the true faith could not sit idly by as Catholic Spain increased its influence and converted the heathen to its creed. By establishing its own trade colony, England could also evade the hated Spanish Inquisition and as Hakluyt argued, avoid stooping to

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<sup>7</sup> Unless designated as "the elder," the name "Richard Hakluyt" will always refer to the more influential Richard Hakluyt the younger.

<sup>8</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> David B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1990), 105.

<sup>10</sup> Kupperman, 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

“forsweare and renounce their Religion and conscience, and consequently their obedience to her majestie.”<sup>12</sup> North America served as both a patriotic and a holy mission.

The men who foresaw England’s greatness knew why the mission had to be fulfilled. The ardent promoters of Virginia had to sell their case, convincing financial backers, voyagers, potential colonists, and the queen herself that the venture was worthwhile. The promotional literature frequently used the reasoning of these three primary arguments to legitimize their vision. The leaders of American colonization had to realize that very few Englishmen and women knew anything about Virginia and that they had the responsibility to convince the people that Virginia was a profitable opportunity.<sup>13</sup> The promoters’ goal of creating a functioning, profitable colony in America became an uphill battle replete with failures and disappointments. Virginia was a tough sell.

Before the 1580s, Virginia, the colony, was not even a concept. All colonial attention had been lavished upon explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert and his expeditions into Newfoundland and the Canadian region. Gilbert directed his efforts, however, in search of the elusive Northwest Passage to the Indies, not in establishing a colony. In 1578, the queen awarded Gilbert a patent to colonize North America for the all-important purpose of harassing Spanish shipping.<sup>14</sup> Gilbert died in 1583 on one of these missions to colonize Newfoundland for England. Sir Humphrey Gilbert had chosen a poor location, for Newfoundland lay quite a distance away from any Spanish colony and it made

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Hakluyt the younger, *Discourse of Western Planting in New American World*, ed. David B. Quinn (New York: Arno Press and Hector Bye, Inc., 1979), 3: 74.

<sup>13</sup> Quinn, *Explorers*, 154.

<sup>14</sup> Kupperman, 10.

compliance with the queen's decree seemingly impossible. After Gilbert's death at sea, Queen Elizabeth transferred his patent to her new favorite Sir Walter Raleigh, in 1584. The bold courtier, statesman, and soldier had gained fame and ultimately the queen's attention by fighting the Irish at Munster. Unlike his half-brother Gilbert, Raleigh had an intense interest in privateering and knew that a strategic American colony must exist much farther to the south, preferably just north of Spanish Florida.<sup>15</sup> The young nobleman had gained exclusive rights to American colonization and he wasted no time in setting a plan in motion. Raleigh and the supporters of an American colony had a vision to sell. Promotion and propaganda soon began to appear.

Raleigh and his supporters had an enormous task. They knew what they wanted to accomplish, but in order to do so, they needed investors to provide financial support and they required colonists to explore and settle the outpost. The promotional material that the promoters and supporters produced not only drew the attention of investors and inspired some Englishmen and women to attempt colonization, but it also helped to create a mythical Virginia, one very different from the Virginia of reality. The documents and materials produced in Virginia's early years would have a lasting effect upon public perception and eventually a detrimental effect upon colonial settlement as a business. The years of Virginia as a private business venture (Roanoke 1584-1603 and Jamestown 1606-1624) were mired in scandals, failure, and mortality resulting principally from poor, misinformed, or completely inaccurate promotion and propaganda from the ventures' promoters. The Roanoke promoters, of course, had no idea what impact their actions would make. The founders of Jamestown carried on their legacy.

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<sup>15</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 25.

Early Virginia was both defined by and almost destroyed by propaganda. The colony's first promoters had a product to sell and these men pushed their promotional materials upon the English public hoping to attract customers. *A Second Eden* will demonstrate that in their zeal to make their venture a success, the promoters of Roanoke and later Jamestown actually sabotaged their ventures, lost their investors' money, and helped create a dangerous and deadly environment for the unwitting colonists. The promotion and propaganda for Virginia from 1584 to 1624 formed two separate Virginias: the beautiful, rich Virginia that the promotions promised and the dangerous, deadly Virginia that the colonists encountered. These two distinct Virginias also had an effect upon the public's perception of the colony. Years of hardship and financial failure lead many to disbelieve the promoters' optimistic assertions and accept a more dismal view of a forsaken Virginia. The promoters' ignorance of, or refusal to recognize, the colony's true nature contributed to the demise of both the Roanoke experiment and the Virginia Company venture.

## CHAPTER I ROANOKE: PARADISE FOUND

“The earth bringeth forth all things in abundance, as in the first creation, without toile or labour.”<sup>16</sup> – Phillip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe on Virginia, 1584 exploratory mission

The death of his half-brother Sir Humphrey Gilbert had presented Sir Walter Raleigh with a golden opportunity. Gilbert had understood the importance of America as an outlet for England’s growing gentry population and he also believed that its colonization would appeal “above all, to the piratical sea captains,” but his attempts in America never came close to realizing this vision.<sup>17</sup> Raleigh, on the other hand, did not waste any time, and he capitalized immediately upon Virginia’s practical and profitable purpose. Patriotism, religion, and profit necessitated immediate action, and Raleigh did not hesitate in getting things started.

The promotion of Virginia began before Raleigh’s exploration team even returned from their mission. Raleigh had sent Captains Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe to locate a good settlement site, establish peaceful relations with the local tribes, and to bring back their impressions of the land. While they were still abroad, Richard the elder, cousin of the younger Richard Hakluyt, wrote the first promotional tract for this southern region of America.<sup>18</sup> A lawyer and common citizen, Hakluyt the elder believed that

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<sup>16</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Quinn, *Set fair*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> David B. Quinn, *New American World: a documentary history of North America to 1612* (New York: Arno Press and Hector Bye, Inc., 1979), 3: 61.

Quinn proposed that Hakluyt most likely wrote the first *Inducements* in early 1584 and less likely between September 1584 and March 1585.



England needed to explore and claim lands overseas and he encouraged his fellow Englishmen with persuasive documents.<sup>19</sup> His first treatise, *Inducements to the lyking of the voyadge intended to that part of America which lyethe between 34. and 36. degree*, was directed toward the potential settler and financial investor. From only second-hand information and hearsay, the enthusiastic Hakluyt wove an argument to entice the English adventurer. No European colony existed between thirty-four and thirty-six degrees latitude to completely and accurately inform the author of the intricacies of the land.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, most of Hakluyt's work was inaccurate, misinformed, or the product of wild assumption. The beautiful American myth that he created offered an enticing if inaccurate picture of America.

In America, Hakluyt professed, "The Soyle is most excellent and fruitful" and is populated with bounties of fish and game.<sup>21</sup> Hakluyt added that "mynes of dyvars kyndes" existed in this new land, no doubt supposing that because Spain reaped harvests of gold and ore from Central and South American mines, North America would offer similar rewards.<sup>22</sup> Men would still be searching for the promoters' fabled mines into the early years of the Jamestown colony. Hakluyt also assured the reader that the Indians who lived in this future colony would pose no threat to the Englishmen who wished to extract these precious metals. To ease adventurers' fears concerning the possible ferocity and cannibalistic tendencies of the native population, Hakluyt described the Indians of the region as "gentle, of a mylde and tractable disposition, apte to submytte them selves

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<sup>19</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> The areas of present-day Virginia and North Carolina.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Hakluyt the elder, *Inducements to the lyking of the voyadge intended to that part of America which lyethe between 34. and 36. degree* in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 62.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

to good government and ready to embrace the christian faythe.”<sup>23</sup> His characterization of the native population is completely unqualified, for he knew not which tribes the colonists would encounter upon reaching their yet unspecified destination. The European stereotype of the savage offered the explorer the possibility of meeting either a militant cannibal or a friendly well-wisher.<sup>24</sup> Explorers feared the one and hoped for the other. In *Inducements*, Hakluyt asserted that the peaceful, tractable type lived in the expanse of land between thirty-four and thirty-six degrees latitude. To assure good relations in this future expedition, Hakluyt called for “captaines of milde disposition and great judgement.”<sup>25</sup> He also requested a host of men of craft and skill, such as vinyardmen, smiths, lime-makers, bow makers, armor makers, and coopers.<sup>26</sup> Hakluyt created an imaginary colony of peace, beauty, and abounding wealth designed for profit and requiring the services of men who could cultivate the land and extract its valuable resources.

Hakluyt the elder had also misunderstood the relationship between climate and latitude, making his erroneous assumption a fact of the American environment. Many continued to follow Hakluyt’s assumption for years, even after visiting American shores.<sup>27</sup> “The Countreye,” that lay between the thirty-fourth and thirty-sixth degree parallel, Hakluyt affirmed, “conteyneth the Clymates of Barbary, Spayne, Portingale, Fraunce, Germany, Englande, Danske, Norway and Moscovia.... So as by reason of the variable Climates in the saide Countreyes and excellent Soyle,” the English could produce

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<sup>23</sup> Hakluyt, *Inducements I* in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 62.

<sup>24</sup> For European descriptions of the Indians of the Americas see Richard Hakluyt the younger, *Principall navigations*, ed. Richard David (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981) and *Divers voyages*, ed. John Winter Jones, et al. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1850).

<sup>25</sup> Hakluyt, *Inducements I* in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 67-68.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>27</sup> See Harriot’s *A briefe and true report*.

all the commodities they received from the continent's warmer and more productive nations.<sup>28</sup> He proceeded to list the wondrous goods American soil could produce, such as wine, olive oil, sugar, oranges, and silk of silkworms, which at that time came from Italy, France, Spain, the Mediterranean, and the Caribbean. Unbeknownst to the naïve enthusiast, the future colony could not grow most of these luxurious products. Sugar cane and citrus plants of all types had no chance in Roanoke soil, and unless the colonists brought a supply of silkworms with them, they would have had a difficult time finding this community of silk producers.<sup>29</sup> No one in England really had the facts to check Hakluyt, and so America could remain an uncontested Eden of the modern world sure to delight all those bold enough to make the voyage and to provide an excellent return on one's investment.

The queen had given Raleigh the patent to this wonderland, but Raleigh also realized that he needed more than her blessing for the colony to succeed; he needed her money.<sup>30</sup> When Sir Francis Walsingham, advisor to the queen, had discovered that England had precious little information about America, he chose Richard Hakluyt the younger to learn more about the mysterious place in 1583. Hakluyt was a clergyman, but he had a greater interest in geography and exploration than in preaching. In his youth he studied geography with his older cousin, Hakluyt the elder. Through extensive research and study, Richard Hakluyt the younger became a self-taught expert in geography.<sup>31</sup> Although a commoner, his wealth of knowledge made him the crown's ideal choice. In the pursuit of more information, Hakluyt traveled to Paris to interview French explorers

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<sup>28</sup> Hakluyt, *Inducements I* in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 62.

<sup>29</sup> David B. Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages: 1584-1590* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1955), 1: 336n.

<sup>30</sup> Quinn, *New American World*, 3: 70.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 15.

and to collect French, Spanish, and Portuguese documents that related to American exploration. At Raleigh's request, Hakluyt used the information he found to pen his first major work of propaganda, *Discourse of Western Planting*.<sup>32</sup> These sources, however, concerned mainly French, Spanish, and Portuguese missions and none of them had settled for any length of time in the areas in which Amadas and Barlowe had explored. Nonetheless, Hakluyt took their observations and implemented them in publicizing a much different area. His actions were not a sinister attempt at deception, but rather reveal English naïveté and the deluded image some had of America.

Hakluyt's work, *A particular discourse concerninge the greate necessitie and manifolde comodities that are like to growe to this Realme of England by the Westerne discoveries lately attempted*, established the America question as an act of national obligation. Hakluyt wrote the text for the queen's eyes only during the absence of the reconnaissance explorers Amadas and Barlowe and published it for her after their return.<sup>33</sup> Written with the Roanoke ventures in mind, the discourse outlined twenty-one reasons as to why the queen should support the immediate settlement of North America.<sup>34</sup> Here Hakluyt's ignorance of America became apparent. Proposing that America would be a profitable source of trade, he assured Queen Elizabeth of the fruitfulness of the land. He told her that a French voyager had described the region about the thirtieth degree latitude (northern Florida) as "the fairest, frutefulest, and pleasauntest of all the world," abounding in natural resources.<sup>35</sup> Although Florida may be fair, the English were not going to be settling in Spanish territory. Hakluyt persisted in his assumption that the

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<sup>32</sup> The information most likely inspired the elder's *Inducements* as well.

<sup>33</sup> Quinn, *New American World*, 3: 70.

<sup>34</sup> Kupperman, 32.

<sup>35</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse* in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 76.

nature of one part of America applied to its other regions. He continued to use the description of Florida and claimed that the intended land had “a goodd climate, healthfull, and of goodd temperature, marvelous pleasante, the people good and of a gentle and amiable nature.”<sup>36</sup> These Indians, of course, lived in Florida, so no matter what their disposition they could be no marker of the temperament of other tribes to the north. Hakluyt either assumed that they were representative or he needed evidence of the predominance of friendly locals to better convince the queen. His claims about the area’s climate perpetuated ignorance of American conditions.

From evidence given by a different foreign explorer, Hakluyt explained, “This land is in latitude of 34. degrees with goodd and wholesome ayre, temperate between hote and colde,” reaffirming how “marvelous pleasant” was the American climate.<sup>37</sup>

Although probably an accurate picture of Carolina coastal weather during the season Verrazzano had visited, the Italian explorer’s account also proved misleading. Hakluyt understood that God had graced the land with temperate weather conditions.

Unbeknownst to him, the Virginia-Carolina region experienced “extreme contrasts” in temperature, ranging from scorching hot summers to freezing cold winters.<sup>38</sup> Such a climate differed greatly from England’s stable, cooler temperatures, which were more like the temperate, comfortable conditions Hakluyt reported for America. English colonists discovered this fact the hard way. Decades later, Jamestown colonists died rapidly, unprepared for the Virginia environment.

Richard Hakluyt the elder published one more promotional work in 1585, the last of only three to promote the American venture until 1588. The elder cousin may have

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<sup>36</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse in New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 76-77.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. Thirty-four degrees latitude marks the southernmost tip of North Carolina.

<sup>38</sup> Kupperman, 33.

written *Inducements to the Liking of the Voyage intended towards Virginia in 40. and 42. degrees* with information he received from his younger cousin. The men made similar listings of the type of colonists who would best serve the new colony, suggesting that some information and ideas may have passed between the two.<sup>39</sup> *Inducements II* basically restated many of the arguments for colonization that Hakluyt the elder had made the year before, but this one he wrote with Roanoke in mind.<sup>40</sup> Like his first work, Hakluyt directed his inducements toward potential colonists and financiers. His second account, however, more specifically pinpointed the environment that the colonists could expect. Hakluyt the elder focused his attention mostly upon the fortieth degree parallel and deduced that there the colonists could enjoy “heat as Lisbone in Portugall doth, and in the more Southerly part as the most southerly coast of Spaine,” and once again enticed them with the opportunity of harvesting all the fantastic commodities that the English could desire.<sup>41</sup> Virginia waited to offer the bold and enterprising “most or all the commodities that [they] receive from the best parts of Europe, and [they] shall receive them better cheape.”<sup>42</sup>

If their accounts were accurate, the Hakluyt cousins presented England with a fantastic opportunity. Virginia burst with rich goods, enjoyed a pleasant and fruitful climate, offered the opportunity to harass Spanish shipping, and could serve as a cure for England’s population woes. “What noble man, what gentleman, what merchante, what citizen or countryman,” Hakluyt the younger exclaimed in *Discourse of Western*

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<sup>39</sup> Quinn, *New American World*, 3: 61.

<sup>40</sup> Kupperman, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Rirchard Hakluyt the elder, *Inducements to the Liking of the Voyage intended towards Virginia in 40. and 42. degrees* in *New American World*, ed. David B. Quinn, 3: 66.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

*Planting*, “will not offer of himselfe to contribute and joyne in the action?”<sup>43</sup> Their Virginia did seem attractive, but had the Hakluyts the ability to convince others of their view? Only two short promotional texts existed for the public eye. England would not see another work of promotion until 1588. By then, Raleigh had already sent out four expeditions. In fact, the English government prohibited further production of promotional literature. Tensions between England and Spain were building, so the crown desired to conceal from the foe any plans Englishmen had for the North American coast.<sup>44</sup> England, consequently, possessed very little information on Virginia. The Roanoke experiment did not prove to be as glorious a venture as the Hakluyts had hoped.

Historians still know very little about the first colonists or why they decided to journey to Virginia. Most of the voyagers lived in London or West England<sup>45</sup> and the company consisted of an assorted lot of soldiers, sailors, artisans, poor laborers, gentlemen and other men of good standing.<sup>46</sup> Of the approximately 280 souls who journeyed to Roanoke, only fourteen made more than one trip to the island (the 110 lost colonists obviously never had the option).<sup>47</sup> Two hundred and eighty voyagers for Raleigh’s five missions do not signify mass enthusiasm for American colonization. Why did so few sign up for the adventure?

Richard Hakluyt had observed in 1587 that no one in England really knew much at all about Virginia, even though Raleigh had sent out four expeditions of explorers and colonists. Hakluyt wrote in a dedication to Raleigh that the “particuler commodities [of

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<sup>43</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse in New American World*, ed. Quinn, 3: 104.

<sup>44</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1: 6.

<sup>45</sup> William S. Powell, “Roanoke Colonists and Explorers: An Attempt at Identification,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 34 (1957): 209.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-221.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

Virginia were]...well knowen vnto your selfe and some fewe others.”<sup>48</sup> Poet Edmund

Spencer echoed Hakluyt’s observation in the second volume of *Faerie Queene*, written in 1590, six years after the colonization effort had begun. Spenser mused,

But let that man with better sence advize,  
That of the world least part to us is red;  
And dayly how through hardy enterprise,  
Many great regions are discovered,  
Which to late age were never mentioned.  
Who ever heard of th’ Indian Peru?  
Or who in venturous vessel measured  
The Amazons huge river now found trew?  
Or fruitfulest Virginia who did ever vew?<sup>49</sup>

A nation that knew little to nothing of Virginia would not readily supply the colony’s promoters with settlers. The meager number of colonists and the lack of information give credence to the theory that impressments helped to fill the empty ships. Edmund S. Morgan reasoned that a great number of voyagers were collected this way.<sup>50</sup> Raleigh had royal authority to impress men and commandeer ships. Darby Galvin of Ireland had confessed that “he had been forced to go against his will” on one of Raleigh’s voyages.<sup>51</sup> Impressment was a common practice that England utilized to obtain men for military service, and the Roanoke voyages had a high percentage of military men. The Virginia colony served more than just mercantile purposes, for in many supporters’ eyes it most importantly served as a base from which to conduct privateering. Promoters stocked the colony with military men to assist in this endeavor and also because they could not trust reports of docile Indians.<sup>52</sup> Of the first voyage, Morgan deduced that half

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<sup>48</sup> David B. Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 548.

Dedication written for *A notable historie containing foure voyages made by certayne French captaynes unto Florida*

<sup>49</sup> Robert Ralston Cawley, *Unpathed Waters: Studies in the Influence of the Voyagers on Elizabethan Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 124.

<sup>50</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 33.

<sup>51</sup> Kupperman, 36-37.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 68.



of the 600 men on the five ships were sailors and half were soldiers. One hundred and eight were called colonists, but Morgan suspected that they “may have been expected to serve as soldiers if necessary.”<sup>53</sup> If so many voyagers were soldiers, Raleigh may have employed force to people his colony.

The lost colonists represent the exception to the notion that Raleigh impressed colonists. The group of 110 consisted of men and women, families, couples, two unrelated children, and two pregnant women. These people made the journey not to reap a quick profit, but to establish a colonial settlement named The City of Raleigh. They came to America in family units, knowing each other either through marriage, employment, the military, neighborhoods, and even jail time.<sup>54</sup> David B. Quinn supposed that these settlers had little capital, and perhaps Raleigh’s offer of free land may explain why they chose to venture to America.<sup>55</sup> Although their motives are unknown, the fact remains that 110 Englishmen and women decided to make the journey over to America and it is unlikely that they were impressed. These people, however, were not complete strangers to each other and probably shared information among themselves. This unfortunate collection of colonists likely had some information about the Virginia ventures.

Scraps of news had floated around England during the voyages to Roanoke, but they probably did not add much to the shallow pool of information. When Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe returned from their mission in 1585, they brought with them two

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<sup>53</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 32.

<sup>54</sup> Powell, 222.

<sup>55</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 498.

native Virginians for promotional purposes.<sup>56</sup> Manteo and Wanchese became darlings of the English court. One German visitor observed the two dressed in fine brown taffeta and declared that they looked like “white Moors” making “a most childish and silly figure.”<sup>57</sup> The Indians might have been popular at Elizabeth’s court, but only the royalty and their guests had a chance to witness these living forms of propaganda.

Publications other than promotional pieces did make the presses before 1588. Richard Holinshed published *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, a multi-volume history of England and its neighbors in 1587. Holinshed became the first to publish anything on the particular voyages, though his works mentioned them only twice. Abraham Fleming and an unknown author known only as G. C. penned a brief summary of the dispatch and return of the first explorers, Amadas and Barlowe. They recorded how the men expounded upon “the goodnesse of the soile, and of great commodities that would arise to the realm of England.”<sup>58</sup> They also noted that the men “brought back with them two sauage men of that countrie, with sundrie other things.”<sup>59</sup> Fleming and a different writing partner (Quinn hypothesized that it was Sir Richard Grenville, a Roanoke explorer) later composed a short, slightly inaccurate account of the major events of the 1585 voyage. David B. Quinn attributed the work’s recurring inaccuracies to poor notes from a verbal exchange of information or a hasty reading of a document pertaining to the voyage. Unlike the average Englishman, these authors had connections to the people leading the venture and access to information most would not learn until later.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John L. Humber, *Backgrounds and Preparations for the Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590* (Raleigh: Divisions of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1986), 67.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Alexander, ed., *Discovering the New World* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 60.

<sup>58</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1: 90.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 90n, 174n.

These stories became available to the public in 1587, but most likely affordable only to a few. With a strained economy and so many out of work, the volumes probably did not grace the shelves of the average Englishman, but rather the libraries of the more comfortably situated gentlemen. Inaccessibility, however, does not preclude the possibility that those who could afford information spread it by word of mouth. Whether any news had circulated orally and how far it may have extended is much more difficult to determine.

Richard Hakluyt the younger also published two non-promotional pieces that offered the English reader some information on America. He printed his thoughts on Virginia and colonization in more manageable, single volume works. Hakluyt dedicated *Peter Martyr* to Sir Francis Raleigh in February 1587. In it he praised Raleigh's mission, personifying Virginia as Raleigh's bride.<sup>61</sup> Virginia, he proclaimed, had so much to offer. Such glowing words most likely did not reach a very wide audience, however, since *Peter Martyr* was written in Latin. His more accessible English translation of a French voyager's narrative reassured Raleigh (and any potential investor or colonist) that Virginia would surely pay off soon.<sup>62</sup> He publicly put his faith in Thomas Harriot's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* to save the Virginia colony from oblivion.<sup>63</sup> Everyone would finally "by the reading of this present treatie...vnderstand the fertility and riches of the regions...the great commodities and goodnesse whereof I trust you will suffer to come shortly to light."<sup>64</sup> Hakluyt had hoped that the work would appear in 1587, but he would have to wait another year for the much needed piece of

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<sup>61</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 514.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 548-549.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 552n. Quinn attributes Hakluyt's phrase "this present treatie" to Harriot's yet unpublished report.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 552.

propaganda. Although preceding an English text, Richard Hakluyt's second dedication was no more helpful than the first. Rather than aiding the spread of enticing information, the passage instead hinted at the problems surrounding the Roanoke venture.

Bad press had haunted the promoters and supporters of the Virginia experiment since the return of Ralph Lane's men in 1586. Plagued by problems, poor choices, and mishaps, the 1585-1586 venture did not run smoothly. The reportedly friendly natives turned hostile due to the colonists' poor people skills. Lane's colony left an ugly legacy in Virginia, for the English had kidnapped and ransomed a chief. Chief Permisapan, according to the venture's leader Ralph Lane, had tried to orchestrate a war between the English and the neighboring tribes upon whom they depended for food.<sup>65</sup> The colonists endured a number of starving periods and at one time had to eat their dogs "vpon the pottage of...sassafras leaves" in order to stay alive.<sup>66</sup> Lane continued to destroy any helpful Indian relations when he had a group of Chaonists and Mangoaks killed for opposing him. The neighboring tribes, consequently, became angry, vowed to kill the English, and ceased trading them food.<sup>67</sup> The English continued to kill hostile and friendly Indians, eventually murdering Chief Pemisapan. When Sir Francis Drake's ship arrived shortly after the chief's death, Lane had under his command a group of hungry, angry soldiers and colonists who had successfully alienated and made enemies of all their neighbors. To make a bad situation worse, they had found no gold, mines, or other

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<sup>65</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1: 266.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 277, 282.

treasures.<sup>68</sup> Needless to say, many of Lane's men came back to England with an unfavorable opinion of Virginia.

If the English had heard very little about the wonderful commodities of Virginia, they apparently heard the negative reports from the disgruntled group of Lane's men. In his dedication to Raleigh in *Peter Martyr*, Hakluyt reassured Raleigh that if he "preserve only a little longer in [his] constancy," the success of the colony would "cover with disgrace and shame those who have so often dared rashly and impudently to charge her with barrenness."<sup>69</sup> These men, he judged, had not fully discovered what the land had to offer, for if they had, they surely would not have "published ill reports about it."<sup>70</sup> Hakluyt must have viewed the stories that the men related as a serious threat to feel compelled to address the issue in a public format. Hakluyt was also not the only man to become concerned.

Thomas Harriot, a member of the Lane voyage, devoted a considerable amount of space in *A briefe and true report* to a defense of the colony. Before he enumerated the many virtues of Virginia, Harriot proposed to reveal the truth about the colony to "impart so much...of the fruite of our labours, as that you may knowe how iniuriously the enterprise is slaundered." The men, he assured the "Aduenturers, Fauourers, and Welwillers of the enterprise" were men of "badde natures" who exaggerated the hardships they experienced and became upset because they had not found gold or silver

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<sup>68</sup> David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, eds., *Virginia Voyages from Hakluyt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), viii.

<sup>69</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 514.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 515. Quinn doubts that any of the "ill reports" were actually published (515n).

immediately.<sup>71</sup> He also added that these men had unpleasant experiences because Lane justly punished them for their bad behavior.<sup>72</sup>

Even though these men may have been scoundrels according to one of the colony's most ardent promoters, Harriot also recognized that the "bad men" proved to have an effect upon the mission. He lamented that the "divers and variable reports, with some slaunderous and shameful speeches" had unfortunately "not done a little wrong to many that otherwise would haue also fauored & aduentured in the action."<sup>73</sup> In a pleading manner, he attempted to assure those that may still have been interested, that the Virginia venture was not a failure and "may returne you profit and gaine."<sup>74</sup> Although Harriot tried to assert that the "enuious, malicious, and slaunderous reports," were but "trifles that are not worthy of wise men to be thought vpon," his lengthy focus upon the issue contradicted his own assertion.<sup>75</sup> He recognized that the news had harmed the venture and thought enough of the stories to vigorously try to prove them inconsequential. Had they been only the mutterings of a group of malcontents to which no one paid any attention, Harriot and Hakluyt would not have felt compelled to go on the defensive. These stories apparently hit a nerve, having reached a larger audience than the promoters could comfortably tolerate.

As Harriot had confessed, the stories Lane's men told did affect the mission. Enthusiasm waned in response to the problems with the 1585-1586 voyage. The group had brought back nothing but bad news, carrying neither gold nor silver. Sir Francis

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas Harriot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* in *The Roanoke Voyages*, ed. David B. Quinn, 1: 320-323.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 320, 321.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

Walsingham withdrew his support and Raleigh lost some other investors. During this period, the handsome Earl of Essex replaced Raleigh as the queen's favorite. Sir Walter Raleigh also decided to decrease his own support of the cause after the debacle. He had invested £30,000 in the venture and his only returns came from privateering.<sup>76</sup> It seemed that privateering was really the only element of the voyages of which the English took any notice.

Acts of privateering were part of almost every mission to America. The queen had invested some of her own funds in it and gentlemen saw investment in the lucrative raids as a way to get out of financial trouble.<sup>77</sup> More often than not, interest in the privateering aspect of American colonization overshadowed any interest in the plantation of a successful colony. The queen had given Sir Humphrey Gilbert the first patent to colonize America, with raiding Spanish shipping as the primary goal of settlement. Raleigh later chose the Roanoke area for its proximity to Spanish shipping, and his first colonists consisted mostly of soldiers and sailors with skills in privateering, not settlement. The potential for wealth through privateering persuaded most of Raleigh's investors to fund the missions, subsequently making colonization possible.<sup>78</sup> Every voyage had to earn a profit, and because Roanoke proved to be such "an expensive failure," raiding Spanish shipping helped to defray costs.<sup>79</sup> Very few really cared about the little island off the Carolina coast when seizing Spanish treasure was a possibility.

England made much of the prizes brought back to the country. In November 1585, news from London reported the arrival of Grenville's ships "richly laden with

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<sup>76</sup> Kupperman, 106.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>79</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 32.

sugar, ginger, hides, gold, silver and cochineal...worth millions.”<sup>80</sup> One year later, when Philip Wyot commented upon the American voyages in his diary, he mentioned Grenville’s return to England, “bringing a prise with him, laden with sugar, ginger & hyds.”<sup>81</sup> He made no mention of the Lane colony Grenville had hoped to relieve. Raleigh recognized the people’s obsession with spoil and plunder in his work *History of the World* (1614). “We finde it in daily experience,” he mused, “that all discourse of magnanimitie, of Nationall Vertue, of Religion, of Libertie, and whatsoeuer else hath beene want to moue and incourage virtuous men, hath no force at all with the common-souldier, in comparison of spoile and riches.”<sup>82</sup> Sir Francis Drake, England’s premier privateer, received greater attention for his raids than the Roanoke colony ever did.<sup>83</sup> A number of sources recorded Drake’s exciting exploits and even more exciting returns. Drake returned to England in 1586 about the same time as Lane’s expedition. When Drake arrived in England, however, he came “with great ryches and honor which so inflamed the whole countrie with a desire to adventure vnto the seas yn hope of the lyke good successe that a great number...traveled every place at the seas where any proffite might be had.”<sup>84</sup>

The only popular ballad concerning the Virginia venture that has survived (or possibly existed) also focused on the riches one could win in exploration rather than colonization. “In Prais of Sea Faringe Men, In Hope of Good Fortune” speaks of Sir

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<sup>80</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1: 221-2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 494.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>83</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 553n.

<sup>84</sup> John Hooker’s personal records in *Roanoke Voyages*, ed. Quinn, 1: 312-313.



Richard Grenville's 1585 departure for America, intended to relieve and reoutfit Lane's colony.<sup>85</sup>

WHOE siekes the waie to win renowne,  
Or flies with whinges of hie desarte,  
Whoe seikes to wear the lawrea crouen,  
Or hath the mind that would espire,  
Lett him his native soylee eschew,  
Lett him go rainge and seeke a newe....

Too pas the seaes som thinkes a toile,  
Sum thinkes it strange abrod to rome,  
Sum thinkes it a grefe to leave their soylle,  
Their parents, cynfolke, and their whome.  
Thinke soe who list, I like it nott;  
I must abrod to trie my lott....

...To purchas fame I will go rome.

*Finis, Sur Richard Grinfilldes farewell.*<sup>86</sup>

The fixation on piracy helps to explain why few knew anything about the Roanoke colony. No one had cared. One could not become rich by planting there, and its fantastic commodities had yet to dazzle the English isle. John White's struggle to relieve the 1587 voyage illustrates England's ambivalent attitude toward Virginia. Raleigh had initially chosen White to accompany Sir Richard Grenville in the 1585-1586 venture to produce maps and drawings of the land and its inhabitants.<sup>87</sup> John White returned to Roanoke in the next and last expedition in 1587 as the colony's governor, but sailed back to England only shortly after landing in order to collect more supplies. He left behind his daughter and granddaughter, the first English child born in America. White had collected his supplies, but was unable to secure transportation back to the

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<sup>85</sup> James Orchard Halliwell, Esq., ed., "The Early Naval Ballads of England," *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages* (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), 2: 14.

<sup>86</sup> Unknown, "In Prais of Seafaringe Men, In Hope of Good Fortune," *Early English Poetry*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell, Esq., 14-15.

<sup>87</sup> John Shirley, "Thomas Harriot, Trumpeter of Roanoke," Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, National Park Service. 16 June 2002.  
< <http://www.nps.gov/fora/trumpter.htm> > (7 January 2007).

colony. He strove for three years to outfit a group of ships and eventually made a deal with a merchant-investor in privateering to take command of three of his privateering ships. Unfortunately for White and the 110 colonists, war had broken out with Spain in 1588 and Roanoke became the least of England's concerns.<sup>88</sup> Even when White finally found his ships, departure had to wait so that the crew could chase and plunder Spanish ships off the coast of England. The crew later allowed White only a brief visit to search Roanoke before the ships set sail again for the Indies in search of more plunder.<sup>89</sup>

White, of course, never found his colonists, but that did not seem to concern many in England. In 1593, he tried to assemble backers to sponsor a sixth mission to Roanoke in hopes of finding his lost colony, but no one came to his aid.<sup>90</sup> Between 1587 and 1597, when John Gerard wrote *The Herbal: or, General history of plants*, no other search parties had left for Roanoke. Gerard hypothesized in *Herbal* that "the planters were still alive if 'murdering, or pestilence, corrupt air, bloodyfluxes, or some other mortal sickness hath not destroyed them.'"<sup>91</sup> Until 1608, the otherwise preoccupied nation had believed that the "Lost Colony" was still alive. Only when the English made a second attempt at Jamestown did England learn that local tribes had most likely killed the 1587 settlers.<sup>92</sup> Virginia would have to wait another two decades for England to exhibit any real interest in American colonization.

The great works of promotional literature came too late to be of any use to Raleigh's Virginia. The war with Spain had freed the presses for colonial propaganda, but it had also directed England's attention away from the American colony. Thomas

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<sup>88</sup> Kupperman, 125.

<sup>89</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 622.

<sup>90</sup> Quinn and Quinn, *Virginia Voyages*, xviii.

<sup>91</sup> Kupperman, 134.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

Harriot's *A briefe and true report* became available to the public in 1588, a year later than Raleigh had desired. A mathematician, scientist, astronomer, and navigational expert, Harriot was first hired by Sir Walter Raleigh for his manifold expertise in 1580. Thomas Harriot was a part of the Roanoke ventures from the beginning. He had encouraged Raleigh to explore the New World, to follow Sir Humphrey Gilbert's lead. After Raleigh secured the patent, he helped prepare for the first expedition to Roanoke. Unable to visit the colony himself, Sir Walter Raleigh appointed Harriot as his representative and charged him with documenting his observations of the land, its people, and the colony's progress.<sup>93</sup> Harriot's work gave England its first descriptive piece of propaganda from an actual eyewitness. He designed the report for the "general reader," hoping to encourage interest and participation in future voyages.<sup>94</sup> Besides defending the colony against slander, Harriot supplied an extensive, descriptive account of about twenty-five marketable commodities Virginia had to offer. In such fertile soil, one had only to produce twenty-four hours of labor on twenty-five square yards of land to yield a year's worth of corn.<sup>95</sup> One could easily feed oneself only upon what the land produced. The colonist could then enjoy plenty of freedom to make his fortune producing silk, selling wood, or planting sugar cane, oranges and lemons. Virginia, he assured, would certainly please anyone.

Seeing therefore the ayre there is so temperate and holesome, the soyle so fertile, and yielding such commodities as I haue before mentioned, the voyage also thither to and fro being sufficiently experimented, to bee perfourmed thrice a yeere with Ease and at any season thereof: And the dealing of Sir Water Raleigh so liberall in large giuing and graunting lande there...I hope there remaine no cause wherby the action should be misliked.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Shirley, "Thomas Harriot."

< <http://www.nps.gov/fora/trumpter.htm> >

<sup>94</sup> Kupperman, 42.

<sup>95</sup> Harriot, 343.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 385.

Harriot devoted the second part of his text to the Indians of the Roanoke area. Despite the stories of war, betrayal, and intrigue that Lane's men had spread, Harriot reassured the potential adventurer or investor that the Indians "in respect of troubling our inhabiting and planting, are not to be feared."<sup>97</sup> He described their lifestyle, appearance, religion, and customs in great detail. They were not so foreign to English life, he assured readers, for they too lived in ordered towns and one or more of these towns "belongeth to the gouernment of a *Wiroans* or chiefe Lorde"<sup>98</sup> like counties to a king. These people should not be a threat to body or soul for "they may in short time be brought to ciuilitie, and the imbracing of true religion."<sup>99</sup> If conflict ever should arise "betweene vs & them, what their fight is likely to be, we hauing aduantages against them so many manner of waies...it may be easily imagined...the turning vp of their heeles against vs in running away."<sup>100</sup> Although this had not been the case in the past, the English need not know it.

John White, a fellow colonist on the 1585-1586 expedition, portrayed a similar, non-threatening picture of the native Virginian in his works of watercolor. Richard Hakluyt gave German engraver and artist Theodore de Bry White's drawings and convinced him to publish them along with a reprinting of Thomas Harriot's *Report*. Hakluyt urged de Bry to begin his multi-volume series of illustrated narratives with Virginia. He wanted to get the book published as soon as possible to deliver one more piece of needed promotion into English hands.<sup>101</sup> De Bry acknowledged that he had other plans in his dedication of the first volume of *Historia Americae* to Sir Walter

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<sup>97</sup> Harriot, 368.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 370.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>101</sup> Alexander, 64, 9.

Raleigh in 1590. “Being there unto requested by my friends, by reason of the late performance therof, albeyet I have in hand the Historye of Florida which should bee first set foorth,” de Bry admitted to Raleigh and the reader that Virginia appeared first as the result of cajoling.<sup>102</sup> Hakluyt knew the desperate nature of the situation and hoped that the images might stir up some interest in the colony’s otherwise sagging future.

De Bry’s adaptations of White’s drawings perpetuate the myth of the noble savage.<sup>103</sup> The natives appear dignified, peaceful, and reserved. The Indian models stand in non-threatening poses before the viewer, displaying no signs of malice. Every image, whether a portrait or a depiction of daily customs, presents a harmless race of people. The only image that includes any form of weaponry is of the village chief. The *Weroans*, however, does not brandish his bow and arrow menacingly, but holds it calmly, in a dignified manner befitting his station.<sup>104</sup> The Indian customs may have appeared strange to the English viewer, but they were also innocuous. The Indians lived in neat, ordered towns complete with paths, crops planted in tidy rows, and separate lodgings for their king.<sup>105</sup> The English could feel comfortable about settling among these gentle people. If the English should have any lingering reservations, de Bry added White’s five images of “Pictes which in olde tyme did habite one parte of the great Bretainne,” to show “how that the Inhabitants of the greate Bretainne have bin in times past as sauage as those of Virginia.”<sup>106</sup> The Virginia

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<sup>102</sup> Alexander, 9-10.

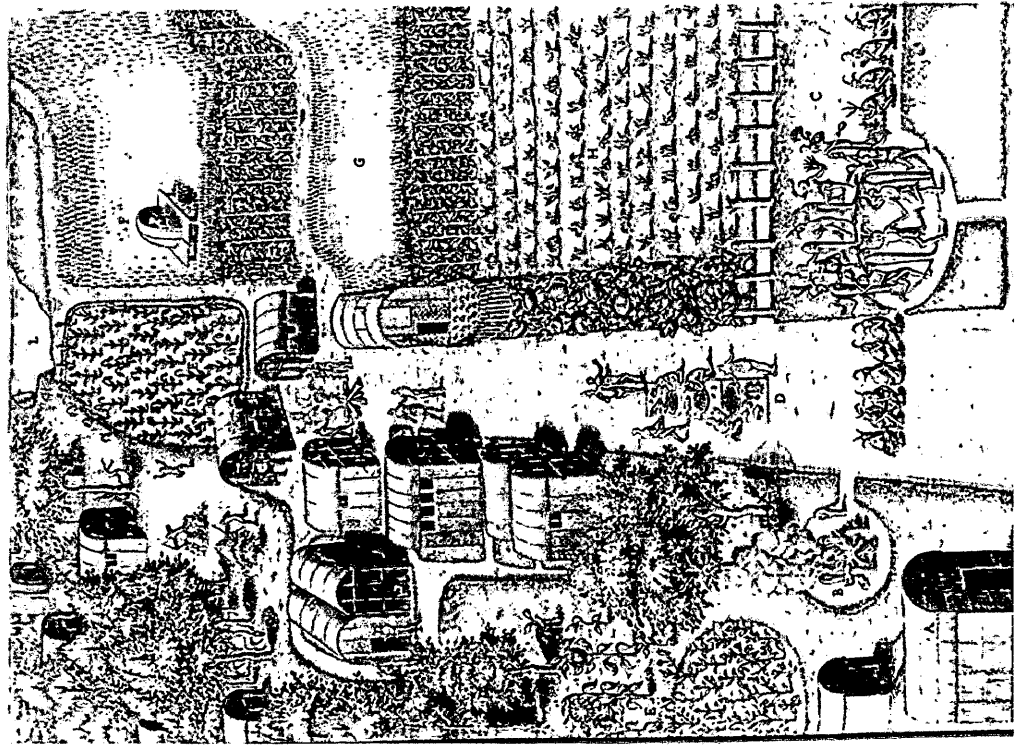
<sup>103</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 37.

<sup>104</sup> Alexander, 66.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 89.

1. Below: De Bry's engraving of "Their sitting at meate." The couple sits peacefully on the blanket, sharing a meal. The woman peers casually at the viewr.
2. Left: De Bry's rendition of "The Towne of Secota." The neatly planted rows of corn and other crops strongly resemble the structured style of English farming.



3. Below: De Bry's engraving of "A weroan or great Lorde of Virginia" posing with his bow and arrow. In the background, other tribe members use their weapons to hunt deer.



4. Left: De Bry's engraving of "The true picture of one Pict." The Pict is much more menacing than the Virginia chief. The Pict stands before the viewer completely naked displaying a full body of tattoos. Instead of hunting tools, he holds battle weaponry and the still bleeding head of a decapitated enemy.



savage might have appeared a great deal more civilized and approachable than England's own ancestors.

In between these two works of propaganda, Hakluyt published *The principall navigations, voiages, and discoveries of the English nation* (1589), making available for the first time the accounts, records and narratives of the Roanoke voyages from 1584 to 1587 along with many other tales of English exploration. The narratives presented a land of "such plenty" that "in all the world the like abundance is not to be founde."<sup>107</sup> Even Ralph Lane, the embattled leader of the disastrous expedition, heaped praise upon Virginia. Lane declared that "if Virginia had but Horses and Kine...I dare assure my selfe being inhabited with English, no realme in Christendome were comparable to it."<sup>108</sup> Though Hakluyt's collection of narratives described an exciting and wondrous land, the work appeared much too late to have any impact on the Roanoke failure.

After the publication of *Principall navigations*, some in England did begin to take notice of the distant part of the world called Virginia. Writer Gabriel Harvey recognized the importance of Hakluyt's work in *Pierces Supererogation* published in 1593. Harvey's excitement, however, was not wholeheartedly objective or representative of others' sentiments. Harvey used the work as an attack on one of his literary rivals Thomas Nashe. A writer, playwright and outspoken critic of his contemporaries, Nashe had made a number of enemies in the literary world.<sup>109</sup> In his work, Harvey declared triumphantly that no one was reading Nashe's pamphlets because of reports like the "politique discovery of Virginia, by the Colony of Sir Walter Raleigh: the report of

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<sup>107</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1: 95.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>109</sup> Anniina Jokinen, "Life of Thomas Nashe," *Luminarium*. 2 Jan 2007.  
<<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/nashebio.htm>> (8 January 2007).



sundry other famous discoveries, and adventures, published by M. Rycharde Hakluyt in one volume, a work of importance.”<sup>110</sup> Although Harvey’s statement was self-serving and vindictive, it still illuminates a trend in England. The people, according to Harvey, were reading Hakluyt’s work.

Virginia had not completely disappeared from English consciousness. Sir John Beaumont used Virginia as one of the magical settings in his mythological poem “The Metamorphosis of Tobacco (1602)” and playwright George Chapman kept the myth of Virginia gold alive in his 1604 work *Eastward Hoe*. In one scene, Captain Segul and his crew drink in a tavern before shipping off for Virginia. The captain dazzled the men with a tale:

I tell thee gold is more plentiful there than copper is with us; and for as much red copper as I can bring, I’ll have thrice the weight in gold....And all the chains with which they chain up their streets are messy gold; and all the prisoners they take are fettered in gold; and for rubies and diamonds, they go forth on holidays and gather ‘em by the sea-shore to hang on their children’s coats and stick in their caps.<sup>111</sup>

The majority of the plays, prose, and poems produced during the Roanoke period, however, dealt more with Asia or South America when speaking of exploration and adventure. Roanoke never became much of a topic of interest. Sir Walter Raleigh lost his patent for America in 1603 when the new king James I charged him with treason. Although his incarceration officially marked the end of the first Virginia experiment, the venture had been finished for years. The lost colony became the last effort to colonize Roanoke. Thomas Harriot’s *A briefe and true report* hit the English market while John White had tried to get his relief mission assembled. The aggressive work of propaganda failed to provoke any interest in a voyage to Roanoke, even to supply those already there.

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<sup>110</sup> Cawley, *Unpathed Waters*, 139.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Ralston Cawley, *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1938), 297.

Raleigh and his supporters had lost the imperial game. All of the useful promotional literature appeared too late, arriving when even England's nominal interest in Virginia slipped into the shadows of a war with Spain.

Roanoke was a peripheral issue, a side note to the more glorious and lucrative business of privateering. Colonists were in short supply and those who came willingly were most often in search of plunder. Those who thought of Virginia, if they thought of it at all, considered the land only for the riches it reportedly held. The promoters of Virginia tried to portray a land overflowing with resources, full of potential as a source of trade and wealth. Often inaccurate and misguided, these fantastic inducements failed to achieve what their authors so earnestly tried to create.

The Roanoke colony was indeed an “expensive failure,” but not, however, a complete and total waste. Hakluyt, Raleigh, Harriot, and the other supporters of a glorious empire planted the seed of an idea in England's consciousness. Roanoke had not decisively killed English plans for North America. Hopes for profits from an American colony lay dormant until awakened by the Virginia Company of London after the war with Spain had ended. Established in 1606, the joint-stock company made plans for another attempt farther north in the Chesapeake region, the location Raleigh had intended for the plantation of The City of Raleigh. For their library, the company purchased a copy of Harriot's *A briefe and true report*.<sup>112</sup> Roanoke may have suffered a short, sickly life, but it gave birth to an idea. Jamestown would prove to be much stronger, and it achieved the attention and support that Roanoke failed to earn.

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<sup>112</sup> Kupperman, 164.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF: THE BEGINNINGS OF JAMESTOWN

Roanoke had failed because of general indifference. The adventurers had the capital, the means, and the Crown's blessing, but they fell short in exciting public interest. Only war and booty created any sensation during Elizabeth's reign. When the smoke of battle had cleared, however, England was finally ready to make a serious effort at colonizing the New World. A second generation of dreamers and schemers came to the forefront with plans for a new Virginia; the successful, prosperous Eden envisioned by its first proponents. This new Virginia, centered at Jamestown Island, succeeded in attaining the colonists and the attention that the Roanoke backers had failed to find, but this endeavor proved disastrous in its own way. Thousands of men and women braved the seas to settle on unfamiliar shores only to discover that the living Virginia did not match the Virginia as advertised by the company. The people of England had finally taken notice of their nation's newest outpost, but to its promoters' dismay, many came to view the professed Eden as an earthly hell. Virginia's champions had lost the public and, very nearly, the colony once again. The reasons and outcome, however, differed this time.

Shortly after Roanoke's demise, the war with Spain ended in 1603 and England exulted in a glorious victory. The war's end had not only swelled national pride and elevated England's position in Europe, but it had also freed capital, shipping, and the people's attention from the all-absorbing conflict. Although the Roanoke venture had

perished, Virginia was born again in 1604 when a new group of men revived conversation and promotional efforts for a Virginia colony. Many of England's more influential officials expressed an interest in this renewed venture. Considered by the Parliament in the spring of 1606, the governing body determined that a joint-stock company should handle the mission. Like Roanoke, private investment would fuel the venture, but instead of falling victim to the whims of a single licensed patentee, Parliament awarded the patent to four suitors and ordered that a London council beholden to the king supervise the company. Virginia was no longer one man's plaything to be used and abused for privateering purposes. The King had expressly forbidden piracy and privateering in the new colony's charter. Colonization took on a new seriousness. Virginia would not serve as the outpost for more important endeavors, but rather became the focus of colonial aspirations.

The second Virginia colony began much as the first had – with great expectations and unrealistic perceptions of what Virginia would provide. In the crown's "Letters Patent to Sir Thomas Gates and Others," issued in April 1606, the crown gave the colonists permission to "digg myne and searche for all manner of Mynes of Goulde Silver and Copper."<sup>113</sup> The company, based in London, would receive one fifth of the wealth of gold and silver and one fifteenth of all copper collected. A history of frustration and loss in Roanoke had made little impression upon the next set of adventurers. The crown expected a return with the "Ships full Laden with Goods and Merchandices."<sup>114</sup>

Poet Michael Drayton echoed these feelings of unchecked optimism in two works published in 1606. Drayton extolled the noble cause of the "braue Heroique Minds" with

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<sup>113</sup> Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1969), 1: 28.

<sup>114</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 48.

blubbering enthusiasm. In his excitement, he urged others to take advantage of such a fantastic opportunity and helped to revive the persistent myth that Virginia was a treasure chest that offered the adventurous great wealth. He created an irresistible image:

And cheerefully at Sea,  
 Successe you still intice,  
 To get the Pearle and Gold,  
 And ours to hold,  
 Virginia,  
 Earth's onely Paradise...

Where Nature hath in store  
 Fowle, Venison, and Fish,  
 And the fruitfull'st Soyle,  
 Without your Toyle,  
 Three Harvests More,  
 All greater than your Wish<sup>115</sup>

Such a wonderland would prove very tempting to the poor, landless, and hungry.

Drayton's words may have helped the myth grow, but they had roots in Virginia's first sources of misinformation, Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. "Thy Voyages attend," expressed Drayton, "Industrious Hackluit, Whose Reading shall inflame, Men to seeke Fame."<sup>116</sup> Michael Drayton had read Hakluyt's works and like a growing number of others that were taking notice of the collection, marveled at the images created by those stories and accounts. Fellow poet Nathaniel Baxter also saw opportunity and wonder in distant Virginia. "VVhat hidden treasure in America lyes," Baxter mused, "The winds discover to great Brittania."<sup>117</sup> Old myths stood uncorrected leading a new

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<sup>115</sup> Michael Drayton, "To the Virginian Voyage," 1606, *Chadwyck-Healey's English Poetry*. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library.  
 <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/epd.html>> (25 August 2004)

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Nathaniel Baxter, "Sir Philip Sydneys Ourania, 1606, *Chadwyck-Healey's English Poetry*. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library.  
 <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/epd.html>> (29 October 2004)

wave of hopeful adventurers to suffer the same consequences as those who struggled in Roanoke.

The first group of colonists left England without fanfare or applause. The company's leaders silently assembled the 104 men and boys, leaking not a word to the public until Captain Christopher Newport returned to England with the first news. Before the adventurers departed, the Company had ordered every man "to Send a perfect relation by Captain Newport of all that is Done...what Comodities you find...to advertise particularly and to Suffer no man to return but by passport from the president [of the colony] and councel nor to write any Letter of any thing that may Discourage others." The ships must also return "full Laden with Goods and Merchandizes."<sup>118</sup> The Company strove to control public perception of Virginia through censorship. Leaders and adventurers had great hopes for the plantation and allowed no room for failure. If the idyllic Eden proved a fantasy, the Company did not want to take the chance of letting the truth come to light. Operating in such an ultra-cautious, fearful manner, laid the groundwork for a public relations nightmare. In their quest for a perfect image, the Company doomed themselves for ultimate failure.

The Susan Constant and the Godspeed returned to England in July, 1607 with timber, sassafras, and three glowing accounts of the newly settled colony at Jamestown Island. The Company now possessed the means by which it could trumpet the virtues of England's latest colony. The leaders quickly published the three official letters, "The Relatyon of the discovery of our River," "The Description of the now discovered River and Country of Virginia," and "A Brief description of the People." Open and truthful in many instances, these accounts do relate both friendly and deadly encounters with the

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<sup>118</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 53-54, 48.

native Powhatan Indians, not hiding the fact that many Englishmen died as a result of their encounters. The letters, however, possess great persuasive and promotional value in their descriptions of the land and its ultimate potential. Whether motivated by enthusiasm or greed, the writers also perpetuate the errors of their predecessors. With expressive passion for the land, these men predicted a glorious future for the colony.

Gabriel Archer, author of two accounts, entitled his letter “The Description of the new discovered River and Country of Virginia; *with the Liklyhood of ensuing ritches, by Englands ayd and industry* [emphasis added].”<sup>119</sup> Archer asserted that the colony at Jamestown lay “between two fertile and fragrant bankes,” the river and sea abounding in “exceeding good fish of divers kindes.” The soil, he professed, “is more fertill then can be wel exprest” and “no knowne continent bringes forth any vendible necessaries which this by planting will not afford.”<sup>120</sup> This unchecked enthusiasm for the colony presented the reader with a false impression of the land, again painting Virginia as a new Eden requiring little effort for a great return. In the new country, English gardens “prosper well, yet we only digged the ground half a [foot] deep and threw in the seeds at randome carelessly and scarce rakt it.”<sup>121</sup> Like Roanoke, Virginia should offer everything an Englishman could desire, providing the nation with “all such thinges, as the North Tropick of the world affordes.”<sup>122</sup>

Not only the official letters, but also some private correspondences expressed a remarkable level of optimism and excitement. Christopher Newport, the man responsible for relaying the first reports, helped to enflame the myth that had plagued Roanoke and

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<sup>119</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 98.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-101.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

would cripple Jamestown. In a short letter to Lord Salisbury, Newport assured the nobleman that “The Contrie is excellent and verie Riche in gold and Copper.”<sup>123</sup> This unsubstantiated claim helped cement a false and damaging notion of what the land had to offer. The ships had returned to England that year, however, carrying only “so much gilded durt.”<sup>124</sup> The hope that began in Roanoke became a destructive obsession in Jamestown. Captain John Smith saw the stability and health of his colony suffer as a result of “our gilded refiners with their golden promises, made all men their slaves in hope of recompence; there was no talkes of hope, no worke, but dig gold, wash gold, refine gold, load gold.”<sup>125</sup> Smith, a life-long adventurer and soldier, served as the colony’s president from 1608 to 1609. His short stay in Virginia was full of frustration over the poor progress of the plantation.

News of “the moste statlye, Riche kingedome in the world”<sup>126</sup> spread amongst the council members and adventurers. Sir Walter Cope best expressed the zeal shared by many in a letter he wrote to Lord Salisbury in August, 1607. “If we maye beleve ether in wordes or Letters,” he wrote, “we are falne vpon a lande, that promises more, then the Lande of promisse: Instead of mylke we Fynde pearle/ & golde Inn steede of honeye.”<sup>127</sup> There were some like Dudley Carleton who placed hope in the colonists’ “commendations of the aire and the soile and the commodities [of Virginia],” but realized that of “siluer and golde haue they none.”<sup>128</sup> Many in England knew or would learn the

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<sup>123</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 76.

<sup>124</sup> Barbour, *Smith*, 219.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>126</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 107.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.



truth about Virginia, but exaggeration and misleading statements left a permanent stain upon the colony's image.

Actual conditions at Jamestown differed starkly from the idyllic images presented in the official reports. Two accounts had noted that the relationship between the English and the native peoples had not always been friendly, but these reports failed to mention the high number of deaths the colony suffered after only one month of plantation. Twenty-one men, about one fifth of the colonists, perished between May 13 and mid June. When Newport departed the colony on June 22, he left behind less than 100 Englishmen "verie bare and scantie of victuals, furthermore in warres and in danger of the Savages."<sup>129</sup> By the time the first supply ship returned to Virginia in January, 1608, only 38 of the original 104 remained alive. Reports printed in England spoke chiefly of opportunity and wealth, never fully revealing that Virginia was more of a death trap than a promised land.

The land that purportedly abounded in rich, fertile soil and sweet, flowing waters proved fatal to the unprepared Englishman. Although teeming with fish, colonist George Percy reported that the James River was "at floud verie salt, at a low tide full slime and filth, which was the destruction of many of our men."<sup>130</sup> Percy's *Observations Gathered out of a Discourse*, written in 1607 and finally published in 1625, reveals some of the darker aspects of fashioning a new life in Tidewater Virginia. The death rate rose sharply in August, the colony losing "many times three or foure in a night; in the mourning, their bodies trailed out of their Cabines like Dogges to be buried."<sup>131</sup> "There were never Englishmen," Percy lamented, "left in a foreigne Countrey in such miserie as wee were in

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<sup>129</sup> Tyler, *Narratives*, 20.

<sup>130</sup> George Percy, *Observations Gathered out of a Discourse*, ed. Tyler, 21-22.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

this new discovered Virginia.” The men died en masse that summer, “destroyed with cruell diseases as Swellings, Flixes, Burning Fevers, and by warres, and some departed suddenly, but for the most part they died of mere famine.”<sup>132</sup>

These “most feeble wretches” perished in such numbers more likely as a result of their living environment than their lack of food.<sup>133</sup> The English explorers had selected Jamestown Island for its defensibility, deep mooring, and because it was uninhabited. From Roanoke, the English had realized that a deep river meant that supply ships could anchor closer to shore and that a defensible location could prove invaluable in the event of a Spanish attack. The fact that no native peoples lived on Jamestown Island made the location appear ideal. None of the local tribes lived anywhere near Jamestown and for good reason. Located forty miles from the Chesapeake Bay, Jamestown Island lay in the brackish zone of the river where the fresh water from the falls and the salt water from the sea mixed. Backflow from the Bay was worst in the summer, often forming a saline plug that slowed or stopped the flow of fresh, clear water from the falls.<sup>134</sup> Mortality rates, as witnessed by Percy in 1607, and repeated many years thereafter, usually peaked in the summer months. Percy reported that their “drinke [was] cold water taken out of the River” and recognized its salty and slimy nature as the ruin of many of his men.<sup>135</sup>

Salt poisoning, called “the swellings” by seventeenth century Englishmen, represented only a part of the problem. Percy described the river at low tide as “full of slime and filth.” The stagnant waters of low tide and summer draught became a breeding

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<sup>132</sup> Percy, 21.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>134</sup> Carville V. Earle, “Environment, Disease, and Mortality in Early Virginia,” *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 104.

<sup>135</sup> Earle, 102.

ground for disease spreading microorganisms and bacteria.<sup>136</sup> Poor sanitary conditions, tight quarters, and shallow wells enabled the spread of devastating illnesses such as dysentery (bloody flux) and typhoid (burning fevers).<sup>137</sup> A lack of nutritious food and drink created a weakened population highly susceptible to the illnesses. Later citizens of the colony would recognize the deleterious effects of the settlement's location, but not enough people connected illness with environment. Hundreds would die from the reoccurring epidemics, a majority of these mortalities occurring in this brackish region.<sup>138</sup> The English may have found a more defensible and accessible settlement at Jamestown, but the incapacitating illnesses that routinely weakened the population effectively made the land's advantages a moot point.

Colonial life did not improve with time. After one year, the colony functioned much as it had during its first summer months. Hunger and want reigned and profits remained elusive. In a letter to the Treasurer and Council of Virginia, written in the fall of 1608, Captain John Smith tried to explain why the company should not expect many returns in the next shipment home. Timber, he explained, would be wanting for the colonists were "many of ignorant miserable soules, that are scarce able to get where with to liue, and defend ourselues against the inconstant Salvages: finding but here and there a tree fit for the purpose, and all things els the Russians haue."<sup>139</sup> Although highly critical of the men whom he must govern, Smith's lamentations do give one a sense of living conditions in early Jamestown. The men may not have been as lazy and worthless as Smith proclaimed, but they were certainly unprepared and ill-equipped for life along the

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<sup>136</sup> Earle, 98-99.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 113-116.

<sup>139</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 243.

James River. These “weake and vnskilfull bodies” could not “satisfie this desire of present profit” for they could “scarce ever recover [them]selues from one Supply to another.”<sup>140</sup> The provisions that arrived by supply ship could not adequately feed over 200 men, most of whom had no ability to hunt or fish. The council in Virginia “so set vpon faction, and idle conceits” only made the bad situation worse.<sup>141</sup> Ex-president Edward Maria Wingfield claimed that beatings, hangings, and other forms of swift punishment occurred on a regular basis. “Wear this whipping, lawing, beating, and hanging in Virginia knowne in England,” Wingfield complained, “I feare it would drieue many well affected myndes from this honorable action of Virginia.”<sup>142</sup>

The Company soon became aware of the colony’s poor condition. When Newport returned to England in 1608 “with news of famine, death, unfriendly Indians, and boisterous disruption within the colony,” historian Philip Barbour hypothesized that “the disillusionment in London must have been extreme.”<sup>143</sup> The Company ordered Newport to either find evidence of gold, the Northwest Passage, or discover the lost colony and return to England with a cargo worth £2,000. If Newport failed, the Company would withdraw its support from the venture.<sup>144</sup> The Virginia Company of London never acted upon this threat, but its rash and desperate nature suggests that many had lost faith in the venture when confronted with the truth. John Smith knew the dangers of exaggeration and propaganda. In his letter to the London Council, Smith worried that “some cause you to beleue much more than is true [about Virginia].”<sup>145</sup> He understood

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<sup>140</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 245.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 241.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 225.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, 209.

<sup>144</sup> John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire* (N. Israel, Amsterdam: Thieme-Nijmegen: 1965), 196-197.

<sup>145</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 242.

that inflated claims could lead to disillusionment and disappointment in the infant settlement. A paradise that existed only in words on paper could not live long. Soon the public would begin to see through the veil and learn that Virginia was not a second Eden but a strange and hostile land.

With bad news arriving by supply ships, the Company needed something good, something hopeful, if they were to repair their weakened reputation. Council members seized the opportunity in a letter sent from the frustrated Captain John Smith. Smith's private correspondence, "A True Relation of Occurrences and Accidents in Virginia," did not mask the harsher realities of life in the colony, but its overall hopeful and positive tone made it an attractive propaganda tool. Company leaders rushed the letter to the presses in August, 1608, only six weeks after it had arrived. "True Relation" was the first and only history of their new colony and the adventurers needed such a document to push the positive. With a propaganda-rich introduction penned by publisher John Healy and the text stripped of any potentially damaging material, the work would hopefully quell the spread of harmful rumors and entice the adventurous to try their luck in Virginia.<sup>146</sup>

Smith admitted to suffering and death in Virginia due to Indian attacks, starvation, and sickness, but these torments were punishment from the Almighty. God had willed such pain because of the general riotousness, disorder, and "idleness" in the colony.<sup>147</sup> Virginia itself had provided "Acres of most excellent fertill ground, so sweete, so pleasant, so beautiful, and so strong a prospect, for an inuincible strong Citty, with so many commodities, that I know as yet I haue not seene."<sup>148</sup> True, Indians had attacked and killed his scouts, but when Smith was taken as a hostage by the great chief's men, the

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<sup>146</sup> Barbour, *Smith*, 5.

<sup>147</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 173-174.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

captain described “how kindly they vsed me.”<sup>149</sup> Not only had the native people capacity for kindness, but the English adventurer boasted a close relationship with the most powerful leader of the Powhatan empire. Despite its dangers, Smith’s Virginia was a land of wonder and adventure, a place steeped in mystery and untold resources.

The letter displayed hope and passion for the new colony and with a little tweaking it also served as a forceful piece of promotion. Besides crafting the persuasive foreword, publisher John Healy closed the pitch by writing his own conclusion to Smith’s private letter. The tone and message of both the foreword and conclusion are so strikingly similar that Healy most likely forged the final paragraph.<sup>150</sup> Smith’s letter had revealed some of the most desperate and painful situations the colonists had to endure. Only through skillful editing could a colony rife with misery become an ideal investment. In order to soften the blow of Smith’s potentially damaging remarks Healy (as Smith) assured the reader that “for our people, the worst being already past, the former hauing indured the heate of the day, where by those that shall succede, may at ease labour for their profit, in the most sweete, coole, and temperate shade.”<sup>151</sup> The future adventurer could rest easy knowing that “Smith” confirmed, “wee now remaining being in good health, all our men wel contented, free from mutinies, in loue one with another, & as we hope in a continuall peace with the Indians.”<sup>152</sup> Healy stressed an argument that would be repeated like a mantra until the demise of the company: The worst is now over and the road ahead shall be peaceful, productive, and lucrative. Whether the company’s efforts

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<sup>149</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 182.

<sup>150</sup> Barbour, *Smith*, 108.

<sup>151</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 167.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

made an impact upon the population or not, adventurers and investors would soon delight in a mass enthusiasm for the colonial effort.

Although 144 of the 244 colonists that had settled in Virginia had perished by October 1608, the English people seemed unaffected by such startling statistics. Pessimism and credulity had fled in the wake of a growing wave of religious enthusiasm that spread across England in 1609. Inspired mostly by religious zeal and Puritan evangelistic efforts, the excitement of 1609 helped enlist the support of 650 individuals and 56 companies for the new charter and launched nine ships for Virginia.<sup>153</sup> Spanish spy Pedro de Zuñiga expressed his concern about the sensation to King Phillip III of Spain, observing that company officials “have collected in 20 days an amount of money for this voyage...there is no fellow or woman who does not go offering [something] for this enterprise.” Zuñiga also warned that the colony’s supporters “have seen to it that the ministers, in their sermons, stress the importance of filling the world with their religion, and of everyone exerting themselves to give what they have to so great an undertaking.”<sup>154</sup> A religious fervor had erupted and the stirring of the faithful had a profound impact.

Virginia, the Reverend Daniel Price proclaimed, “is like to be the most worthy voyage that ever was effected, by any Christian in descrying any country of the World, both for the peace of the entry, for the plenty of the country, and for the climate,” providing, “whatsoever commodity England wanteth.”<sup>155</sup> Although enticing, the material rewards paled in comparison to the spiritual rewards. Virginia’s greatest wealth was not

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<sup>153</sup> Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1969), 2: 249.

<sup>154</sup> Barbour, *Jamestown*, 2: 259.

<sup>155</sup> Edward D. Neill, *Virginia vetusta, during the reign of James the First* (Albany: Munsell’s sons, 1885), 46.

gold, but souls. Preachers touted the venture as “a voyage wherein every Christian ought to set his helping hand” for the Indians cried out, “come and help us.”<sup>156</sup> The colony would both glorify God and honor England. Christians had an obligation to spread the true faith and shirking that great responsibility was a grievous sin. “If there be any that have opposed any action intended to the glory of God, and saving of souls,” Reverend Price admonished, “...let him know that he is a persecutor and an adversary of Christ.”<sup>157</sup>

This new religiosity reverberated from the pulpits and appeared in the promotional works the Company produced that year. Whether capitalizing upon the wave of religious energy or truly inspired by its message, Virginia’s promoters began to claim religion as the key motivation in colonizing the New World. Drafted by investor Robert Johnson, *Nova Britannia*, outlined the three reasons why one should join the Virginia venture. Spreading the true faith was at the top of the list.<sup>158</sup> England and the crown would surely prosper because of the venture, but Johnson urged the adventurers that profit “not be chiefe in you thoughts.” Though good, honest Christians should make the journey out of faith and duty to God, Johnson had declared, however, that “the place will make them rich.”<sup>159</sup> Colonization in the service of the eternal might also satisfy the desires of the temporal. Johnson stressed the spiritual, but discretely promoted earthly rewards.

Purportedly the observations of a Virginia adventurer, the account portrayed Virginia as a land of wondrous bounty, sweet air, temperate climate, and inhabited by a

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<sup>156</sup> Neill, 47.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>158</sup> Parker, 198.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 199.



people “generally very loving and gentle.”<sup>160</sup> English settlement of Powhatan land would both advance their civilization and save the heathen souls from hell.<sup>161</sup> All that the English required in return for their generous acts of piety was “a quiet residence to us and ours.”<sup>162</sup> This “quiet residence” could prove quite substantial. For the man that labored seven years for the company, Johnson declared that he would receive 500 acres of land, a tantalizing offer for a nation plagued by homelessness and land shortages.<sup>163</sup>

Through pious rhetoric, *Nova Britannia* aimed to inspire those moved by the spirit. Although the author fortified his writing with enticing and idealistic imagery, Johnson’s work inadvertently reminded the reader of the lingering issues that dogged the Company even during its golden year. In trying to substantiate England’s right to settle another people’s land, Johnson revealed that many in England had reservations about colonization. A number of Virginia’s critics saw injustice in the adventurers’ acts and publicly decried settling Powhatan land. In their fervor to save souls, ministers grew passionate about the enemies of colonization. Religious men such as Gray and his ministerial counterparts slung damning reproaches at these “unconverted and unsanctified” men, whose stubborn opposition made them akin with evil doers such as papists and drunkards.<sup>164</sup> Despite all the excitement of 1609, many skeptics remained, distrusting the purpose and status of the mission, and listened closely to the rumors that indicated not all was well in Virginia.

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<sup>160</sup> Robert Johnson, *Nova Britannia*, Virtual Jamestown, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia (1999, 2000), 10-11.

<<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/jamestown-browse?id=J1051>> (24 October 2004)

<sup>161</sup> Johnson, 12.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 24-25.

<sup>164</sup> Parker, 203, 199.

Virginia's popularity both peaked and collapsed in 1609. The bubble burst late that year when England learned of the loss of the Sea Venture. A violent hurricane had torn apart the nine ship fleet carrying 500 passengers for the new colony. Most of the ships escaped the ordeal damaged, but operational. The fleet's flagship, however, shipwrecked upon the Bermuda shoreline stranding 150 colonists including the colony's chief men, Captain Christopher Newport, George Somers, John Rolfe, and the new governor Thomas Gates, Lord Delaware. Such a calamity became the new talk of England, instantly silencing the optimistic and idealistic buzz that had recently absorbed the nation.

Strangely enough, the temporary disappearance of one ship, not the tales of death, disease, and war, turned public opinion against Virginia. Shock and dismay ended the frenzied idealistic chatter, and in the dismal quiet, rumors and stories found a captive audience. After this wreck, almost all evidence of public speeches and sermons disappeared. A few rousing sermons and letters surfaced in the following years, but nothing to match the level of excitement and the volume of support in 1609. The shipwreck had effectively ended the Company's short golden era and placing doubt in the once ecstatic country. This growing credulity launched Virginia's supporters into an unending struggle to prove their project's worth. The Virginia Company of London never recovered from the shipwreck. Until its dissolution in 1624, the Company invested most of its energies into squelching negative opinions and harmful rumors through propaganda. Trust and public enthusiasm had disappeared with the great ship. As the Company increased its promotional output, the Virginia of the colonists and the Virginia sold to England grew even farther apart.

The loss of the ship had dealt Virginia a terrible blow. With a damaged Company and colony image, the Virginia Company again turned to the presses in hopes of redemption. *A True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie in Virginia* soon became public.<sup>165</sup> In order to draft a compelling explanation, Company members once more utilized another's first hand account. The declaration borrowed heavily from William Strachey's *A True Reportory of the wrack*, but omitted any damaging material. The original source never made it to print during the Company's existence. Strachey's tale of life as a Virginia adventurer had detailed the terrors of the hurricane and described the Jamestown settlement in unflattering terms. Upon finally landing in Virginia, Strachey discovered "all things so contrary to our expectations, so full of misery and misgovernment."<sup>166</sup> The English colonists had just endured one of the deadliest seasons of the Virginia experiment, the "starving time," and only 60 of approximately 500 men had survived the winter of 1609/1610. Strachey determined that "no story can remember unto us more woes and anguishes than these people thus governed here have both suffered and pulled upon their own heads."<sup>167</sup> Although Strachey believed factions and idleness caused a majority of the suffering, his account was still too damning for publication. The land could be fruitful, Strachey noted, but the men "are not [but] an hundred or two of deboist hands, drop'd forth by year after year, with penury and leisure, ill provided for before they come and worse to be governed when they are here, men of such distempered bodies and infected minds."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Edward Wright Haille, *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony* (Champlain, Virginia: Round House, 1998), 357.

<sup>166</sup> Haille, 419.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 420.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 422.

*A true declaration* had a different explanation for the same events. The work addressed what the Company believed were the three major concerns voiced by Virginia's opponents: the dangerous sea passage, barrenness of the land, and an unhealthy climate. These false impressions, the Virginia Council admitted, "doe astonish our men with feare."<sup>169</sup> The Council assured the reader that the voyage must not be feared. The hurricane that began all the commotion had not hurt anyone and God had watched over and provided for the shipwrecked colonists. The Almighty had in fact showed his favoritism for the venture in sparing every man's life and allowing them safe passage from Bermuda to Virginia.<sup>170</sup> As for the health of the colony, "the Climate is wholesome and temperate, agreeing with the constitution of our men."<sup>171</sup> Human error and accidents, not any qualities of the new land, had caused all the sufferings. Men had not fallen ill because of poor water, but because of their own idleness. Hard work and productivity would quickly solve any problems.<sup>172</sup>

The Virginia Council then addressed the negative rumors that condemned the Virginia venture. The rumors, the Council revealed, were created by traitors. These traitorous ex-colonists had taken goods earned in trade and escaped the colony on a ship. When the scoundrels failed to join up with pirates, they returned to England. To explain their return, the men agreed to profess Virginia's land poor, speak of terrible famine, and create stories of starvation and desperation.<sup>173</sup> These "clamorous & tragicall

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<sup>169</sup> The Virginia Company of London, *A true declaration of the estate of the Colonie in Virginia*, Virtual Jamestown, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia (1999, 2000), 9. <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/jamestown-browse?id=J1059>> (19 October 2004)

<sup>170</sup> Parker, 204.

<sup>171</sup> Virginia Company, 12.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 12-14.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

narrations”<sup>174</sup> had consequently diminished investment and postponed the departure of the next supply ship.<sup>175</sup> The company tried to pin all negative rumors upon a small group of “traitors” bent upon the colony’s failure. All bad news was therefore just part of this conspiracy and not to be trusted. It is not clear who these supposed villains were, but it is more than likely that they were former colonists who had simply returned to England and related tales of their disappointing experiences. The Virginia Council had created a truly fantastical story in an effort to save face.

The declaration had recognized that the Virginia colony had experienced difficulties in its past, but it promised that those days had ended. The colony would now thrive for it possessed a strong new government that inspired “every man...to out-strip each other in diligence.”<sup>176</sup> The people lived in warm, secure dwellings protected by capable armed forces within the walls of sturdy forts. Thomas Gates had assured that Virginia did indeed possess all of the commodities that men had professed it offered. Godly, reformed men now populated this fertile and healthful Virginia. *A True Declaration* questioned the soundness of abandoning so worthy a mission “because one storme at sea hath deferred our joyes and comforts.” As John Healey had promised in 1608, the Company assured everyone that the worst was over. Those living in Virginia knew otherwise.

Repairing Virginia’s image after the 1609 wreck proved an uphill battle that the Company never won. General opinion in England turned negative as Virginia came to represent a place of suffering and unrest, a home suitable only for criminals, debtors, and the desperate. The Virginia Company continued to turn out propaganda with a recurring

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<sup>174</sup> Virginia Company, 3.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 20.

theme and argument, confuting rumors and reassuring quality in the process. Evidence suggests that Company members may have even created a number of the anonymous pro-Virginia ballads and rumors that circulated between 1610 and 1624 to try to reverse public opinion.<sup>177</sup> Many Englishmen and women had wavered up until this point in regards to Virginia. Curiosity, doubt, hatred, and excitement had moved the country during the colony's formative years. The wreck, however, was the turning point, increasing the doubt and cementing disapproval.

Despite the growing opposition to Virginia, the Virginia Company was able to persuade about 5,000 people to venture across the ocean between the colony's creation in 1606 and the Company's demise in 1624. Approximately 3,500 of those souls made the journey between 1619 and 1624, packing themselves into overcrowded, undersupplied, and unsanitary ships. A good percentage of these colonists were in fact the poor and criminal, but many of these new adventurers included ordinary citizens such as single women and younger sons of gentry. Whether hoping to better their condition, strike it rich, or start their lives anew, thousands saw Virginia as a land of promise. Although it eventually lost the colonial gamble, the Virginia Company had succeeded in convincing a few thousand people that Virginia offered opportunity. The promotional materials that became public during the Company's final fourteen years spoke little of pain and want. These official and unofficial sources reported only the positive elements and often

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<sup>177</sup> "News from Virginia" (1610), for example, was written by a member of the Virginia Company. This ballad lauded the virtues of the colony, indicating that "There is indeed no want at all" for in Virginia "each man shall have his share." Opponents of the second treasurer Sir Edwin Sandys (1618-1624), accused the company leader of creating false rumors and printing inaccurate works and ballads proclaiming the "happy state of the Plantation" when he knew that the colony was suffering.

C. H. Firth, *An American Garland: being a Collection of Ballads Relating to America 1563-1759* (Oxford: B.H. Bladewell, 1915), 14-15.

Wesley Frank Craven, *Dissolution of the Virginia Company* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 274.

obscured or created new truths and offered empty promises. Those that had believed the promotion or were too desperate to care came to learn that their land of salvation was not what the Company had promised, but by then, it was of course, too late. Virginia continued to survive despite its tarnished image.

CHAPTER III  
A TERRIBLE MESS: THE VIRGINIA COMPANY FAILS

Lady Frugal: How! Virginia!  
                  High Heaven forbid! Remember, sir, I beseech you  
                  What creatures are shipped thither  
Anne:           Condemn'd wretches.  
                  Forfeited to the law  
Mary:          Strumpets and bawds  
                  For the abomination of their life  
                  Spew'd out of their own Country<sup>1</sup>

Although performed in 1632, eight years after the Company's dissolution, Phillip Massinger's satirical play *City Madam* exemplifies the attitude many artists and playwrights had toward Virginia after 1609. In this dramatic scene, Lady Frugal and her daughters react in disgust and horror to the brother-in-law's threat to send them all to Virginia. Virginia appeared in a number of works of popular culture following the devastating shipwreck, but often as a lowly, contemptible dumping ground for England's refuse. Popular culture from 1609-1624, particularly that of the theater, took notice of the young colony, but treated her with little respect. Through jokes, taunts, and derisive comments, the arts helped feed the notion that Virginia was fit only for the worst in English society. Leading Virginia Company adventurer Robert Johnson admitted to the damage caused by perception in his 1612 publication *The New Life of Virginea*. "There is no common speech or publicke name of anything this day," he lamented, "Which is

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Ralston Cawley, *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1938), 308.



more vildly depraved, traduced and derided...then the name of Virginea.”<sup>179</sup> As a popular object of ridicule, everyone could share in a good laugh at Virginia.

Even though public opinion toward Virginia had soured, the Virginia Company managed to recruit its greatest number of settlers in its final years. Between 1619 and 1622, the new company treasurer, Sir Edwin Sandys, successfully amassed more than 3,500 settlers in four years. Sandys had successfully doubled the number of colonists that settled in Virginia between 1607 and 1619 in one-fourth the time.<sup>180</sup> Emigration levels were at an all time high even though public opinion was at its lowest. Somehow, the colony had been able to rise above the gossip and chatter to entice, enlist, and transport the largest volume of colonists to brave the seas in company history. The playwrights may have made England chuckle at the sad little colony, but they had not reached everyone. Thousands chose not to believe the “licentious vaine of Stage Poets,”<sup>181</sup> but rather listened to a different story. Criminals, the desperate and the poor did compose a percentage of the Virginia population, but they were a small percentage. From Company and common sources, many Englishmen and women saw Virginia as a gamble worth taking. These adventurers had a few good reasons to believe that Virginia was a land of promise and a “stinking weed” may have been the most cogent.

Tobacco was both early Virginia’s greatest success story and also a major factor in its downfall. As far as publicity was concerned, however, it helped establish the case that Virginia could make a man a success. Although tobacco was native to Virginia, settler John Rolfe had introduced a higher quality type of tobacco in 1610/1611. Unlike

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<sup>179</sup> Robert Johnson, *The New Life of Virginea*, Virtual Jamestown, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia (1999, 2000), 4.

<<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/jamestown-browse?id=J1052>> (20 October 2004)

<sup>180</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 98.

<sup>181</sup> Johnson, *New Life*, 4.

the unpalatable native plant, Rolfe's Carribbean seeds actually produced a marketable product. Shortly after Rolfe produced a quality Virginia tobacco, the colonists delighted in their first money-maker. Tobacco became the illusive gold mine that so many had struggled to find. For the first time since its foundation, a number of colonists were turning a profit, enjoying the wealth that the Company had long promised. Tobacco might not have been as glorious as gold, but it put food on the table, silk apparel on the successful and restored hope to the discouraged.

The first tobacco shipment arrived in English ports in 1617. Initially used for medicinal purposes, tobacco's popularity and price increased when Englishmen discovered its recreational value. Selling at three shillings per pound, the foreign plant earned its cultivators a healthy return.<sup>182</sup> Tobacco fever soon spread throughout the colony and the colonists gave all their time and effort over to its planting and cultivation.<sup>183</sup> Virginians had at last found something that made a profit and lost all interest in anything other than growing tobacco, curing tobacco, shipping tobacco, and selling tobacco. Tobacco production had become a consuming obsession, a colony-wide epidemic. Governor George Yeardly recognized its importance in the government's 1621 petition to the king. Tobacco, Yeardly asserted, was "the onely Comodity which wee haue had hitherto meanes to rayse towards the appareling of or Bodyes and other needful supplemente."<sup>184</sup> Corn and other staple crops took a back seat to tobacco production. The colonists had caught a whiff of success and the scent drove them mad. A witness to

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<sup>182</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 90.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

<sup>184</sup> Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of The Virginia Company of London* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 3: 425.

colonial proceedings in 1623 reported that in the plantations, “nothings is done in anie one of them but all is vanished into smoke (that is to say into Tobaccoe.)”<sup>185</sup>

The tobacco obsession intensified and persisted because the growing popularity in England had made some colonists wealthy. Wealth, after all, was one of the three principle reasons for colonizing the New World. The Virginia Company had long reported that Virginia soil could produce great wealth and after ten years of colonization, the claim finally became a reality. The number of success stories helps explain the erupting frenzy. After an excellent growing season in 1619, colonist John Pory reportedly earned £200 sterling by his labor alone. A fellow colonist working with six indentured servants amassed £1,000 sterling that season.<sup>186</sup> Such profits soared above the average yearly income of most Englishmen. A typical English laborer, for example, could expect to earn less than £20 a year for his toil.<sup>187</sup> Although Pory admitted that these two figures did not represent the norm, he believed that such impressive returns were “yet possible to be done by others.”<sup>188</sup> Even if the average planter could not clear as much as Pory had, many new Virginians were making far more money than they ever could have in England. Historian Edmund S. Morgan hypothesized that if a man “could stay alive and somehow get control of a few servants and keep them alive, he could make more in a year than he was likely to make in several in England.”<sup>189</sup>

Evidence of financial success became apparent both in Virginia and in England. John Pory’s 1619 letter home revealed that because of tobacco profits a common

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<sup>185</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 109.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>187</sup> Figure computed from information presented in Morgan, *American Slavery American Freedom*, pages 94 and 107.

<sup>188</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 110.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

cowkeeper was able to adorn himself with “freshe flaming silke” every Sunday. The wife of a once despised Englishman paraded around the settlement sporting a fine beaver hat trimmed with a pearl hatband.<sup>190</sup> Men and women of the lower classes began to earn profits well above their station and now had the wherewithal to emulate their “betters.” Unsettled Company leaders reacted to this new society turned on its head. In 1621, they delivered a mandate prohibiting colonists from dressing above their social station. Their concern for the social order reveals that more than a few colonists had found success with the new crop. News of tobacco wealth had apparently made it across the ocean and its extent proved great enough to cause discomfort. The tobacco boom touched members of all classes and social levels, throwing the class system off balance and further inflaming the tobacco hunger.

Letters detailing success and wealth had made it clear to many in England that Virginia was not a total failure, but that it in fact exhibited some of those mythical claims to greatness its supporters had promoted. Visitors to England from the colony made tobacco’s success a more convincing reality. When Governor George Yeardly arrived in Virginia in 1610, his sword was the only wealth he could claim. Seven years later in 1617, Yeardly returned to London after his first term as governor and lavishly spent “very near three thousand pounds.”<sup>191</sup> While there, the king made him a knight and in his newly acquired wealth and status, Londoner John Chamberlain noted that “he flaunts yt up and downe the streets in extraordinarie braverie, with fowrteen or fifteen fayre liveries after him.”<sup>192</sup> Abraham Piersey likewise arrived in Jamestown “a verie poore man” in

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<sup>190</sup> Tyler, 285.

<sup>191</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 122.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 122.

1616, but upon his death in 1628, he “left the best Estate that was ever yett knowen in Virginia.”<sup>193</sup>

The tobacco boom, however, lasted for only a few years. In 1619, John Pory had observed, “All of our riches for the present doe consiste in Tobacco.”<sup>194</sup> By putting all their investment into one product, Virginians had set themselves up for failure. The success that lead to obsession became a poison that weakened an already unstable colony. In the first years of production, tobacco had earned a good return in the English market. By 1623, however, prices for the best quality tobacco had fallen below 1 ½ shillings per pound. Barter value in the colony plummeted to less than one shilling. Tobacco prices fluctuated for a while, rising again to three shillings in 1625 before crashing in 1629 at a penny per pound.<sup>195</sup> These prices only applied to good quality tobacco. Poor quality shipments earned less or even nothing. In 1621, the Virginia Company admonished its colonists for shipping over poor tobacco and expecting a good price in return. From then on, the Company demanded, they would accept only shipments of good quality.<sup>196</sup>

Although seen as a godsend by many discouraged colonists, Company leaders did not share their excitement over tobacco and became troubled with the colonists’ obsession. The tobacco frenzy, leaders believed, was detrimental to the settlement’s health and longevity. In the Company’s 1619 letter to Governor George Yeardly, the Council for Virginia strongly supported the governor’s promise to fix the errors of the previous government, mainly “the excessive applying of Tobacco, and neglect to plant

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<sup>193</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 120.

<sup>194</sup> Kingsbury, 221.

<sup>195</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 108.

<sup>196</sup> Kingsbury, 504.

Corne.”<sup>197</sup> Yearly, of course, had become rich because of the crop. The fixation did not decrease.

The Virginia Company made further efforts to curtail the tobacco excess. The London authority imposed a tobacco cap of 100 pounds per person, which the colonists ignored.<sup>198</sup> Virginians received a set of instructions from the Company in 1621 detailing what the leaders expected from their colonists – the men must grow corn. Want of adequate food necessitated the 100 pound tobacco cap. Restricting the amount of tobacco a man could grow would hopefully redirect his remaining efforts and land to the production of corn for personal sustenance and supplementation of the colony store. The colonists must also focus on producing more desirable commodities like silk, wine, soap, and pitch. To ensure that the colony functioned like a healthy society, the council also ordered that artisans keep to their trade “And not to suffer them to forsake ther former occupacons for planting Tobacco or such vseless comodyties.”<sup>199</sup> The Virginia Company repeatedly sent seeds, silkworms, and supplies for the cultivation of other commodities, but to no avail. Even royal disapproval did not end the tobacco obsession. Tobacco’s most ardent opponent, King James I, placed a ban on its importation in 1620. Instead of adhering to royal mandate, Governor Yearly and Council sent a petition to the Company to be presented to the king entreating him to end the ban.<sup>200</sup> It seemed nothing could deter the colonists from the possibility of wealth, not even their own self-destruction.

For colonists who had turned a nice profit from tobacco, the new-found wealth was often fleeting. Merchant magazines, company-licensed traders, siphoned a majority

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<sup>197</sup> Kingsbury, 147.

<sup>198</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 109.

<sup>199</sup> Kingsbury, 474.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 424.

of the colonists' profits for high priced goods. These floating markets provided products of comfort and escape to a community of isolated men. Alcohol became the magazines' most marketable commodity. Governor Yearly lamented the "rates which unconscionable merchants and maryners doe impose upon our necessities...especially of rotten Wynes which destroy our bodies and empty our purses."<sup>201</sup> Financial success had not brought everyone happiness. The alcohol that flowed freely from trader to colonist helped ease the pain and loneliness many felt in their strange new home, but it also emptied their pockets. Some spent their money well, others drank it away.

Alcohol and luxury goods like silks and fine fashions were in high demand, but colonists also gave a large percentage of their income over to magazines and sailors for basic necessity items such as food and tools. With all of their time devoted to growing tobacco, the colonists did not produce enough food to sustain themselves. Abhorring the notion of giving over tobacco land for food cultivation, many colonists often resorted to dealing with traders or bartering with local Indian tribes. Food was never cheap and after the 1622 massacre, prices skyrocketed. The few colonists who were able to acquire corn from local tribes sold "itt abroad att their owne prices."<sup>202</sup> In the winter of 1622-23, Indian corn sold for 10-15 shillings a bushel. By spring, corn fetched 20-30 shillings a bushel. The massacre, however, was not the beginning of hard times. Enterprising colonists had monopolized the necessity market for years, buying up large quantities of basic need items from traders and selling them at inflated rates.<sup>203</sup> Many colonists may have made some money off the tobacco trade, but the extreme cost of survival brought

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<sup>201</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 113.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 113-114.

many back to poverty. Tobacco had in fact made some wealthy, but for a majority, it was only a tease, a quick taste of success before the funds disappeared.

Officially, the Virginia Company hated tobacco, but the crop was its greatest and most flamboyant success. Stories of a colony grown wealthy because of a plant may have enticed some of the 3,500 adventurers to gamble their future for the prospect of riches. Tobacco, however, was not the only positive buzz to circulate about the colony in its later years. Tobacco had made quite a scene, but the Company still remained Virginia's greatest producer and pusher of promotional material. The Virginia Company continued to publish works that trumped up the colony's virtues while denying or hiding its weaknesses, churning out the same promotional message used since the 1580s. By 1618, however, Company leaders grew wiser and began to realize that enchanting descriptions and beautiful words were not enough to get bodies onto their ships. Following a complete Company reorganization in 1618, the Virginia Company of London came to the conclusion that incentives would boost interest and immigration.<sup>204</sup> The Company believed that the colony needed a hook, a tantalizing reason to get people to risk it all for Virginia. Free land probably turned the most heads.

Financial gain represented only one of the three principle reasons for colonizing North America. The earlier Elizabethan adventurers had viewed the vast Virginia landscape not only as an opportunity but as an answer to some of England's greatest problems. Overpopulation and a strict class system had allowed property ownership to only a small percentage of the population. Most Englishmen did not and could not own land. Virginia had begun its life as a communal settlement, but communistic living proved more deleterious than supportive. Land ownership gradually became a part of

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<sup>204</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 93.



Virginia society. As early as 1609, the Company allowed ownership of small garden spaces. In 1614, Governor Dale started issuing small plots of private land to indentured servants who had served their term.<sup>205</sup> Thereafter, private land ownership became more widespread.

As one of their first acts after reorganization, the Company decided to award land grants to current Virginia colonists and equally impressive offers to prospective colonists. “Old Planters,” men who had settled Virginia before the spring of 1616, received 100 acres of private land. Company shareholders received an additional 100 acres per share. Investors had the opportunity to found their own “particular hundreds” with 100 acres per share and an additional 50 acres for every tenant they sponsored to work their land. Even men of the lowest levels of society would benefit, for indentured servants could look forward to acquiring 100 acres of their own land upon completion of their servitude. Although the older colonists enjoyed bigger pieces of the pie, newer arrivals received generous allotments. The settlers that arrived after 1616 assumed 50 acres of land as their head right. Though half the reward bestowed upon the Old Planters, 50 acres was more than most Englishmen could ever hope for at home. The Virginia Company leaders advertised this generosity across England and made their countrymen the same offer. If a man could pay his or another’s passage to Virginia, 50 acres of Virginia soil became his.<sup>206</sup> For a population swelling with renters, tenants, and the homeless, the Virginia Company offered an opportunity too good to ignore.

Paying for one’s voyage provided the fastest and easiest way toward property ownership, but it was not the only way. The Virginia Company recognized that in

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<sup>205</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 82.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

England's current economic environment, not many people could afford sea passage.

The Company, therefore, offered the option of tenancy as a tempting alternative.

Previously, those who could not support themselves became indentured servants either to the Company or to individual masters. These laborers had to devote all of their work to their master, receiving only food and shelter in return. Tenants, on the other hand, only had to give up half of their yearly harvest to the Company. The rest, they could keep for themselves. The sharecropper worked for seven years under this system to pay off the debt of his passage. Upon completion, he like everyone else could claim 50 acres of his own private land. The offer must have appeared quite desirable, for Treasurer Edwin Sandys secured hundreds of colonists through the tenancy agreement.<sup>207</sup> John Rolfe understood the power of private land ownership. He wrote to Sandys in 1620 declaring that personal property had given the men "greate incouragement, and the greatest hope to make the Colony florrish that ever yet happened to them."<sup>208</sup>

Hundreds of men and women began to pour into the Virginia colony. They were starting their lives anew, far from home, family, and all the people and organizations that they had turned to for support. Those who came to Virginia had to form a new life from little or nothing. To ease the anxiety some might see in such a harsh beginning, the Virginia Company promised another appealing incentive: food and shelter. Most new Virginians could only bring a few personal possessions with them on the overcrowded ships. Starting life anew with only a few personal items and articles of clothing might appear too daunting to the prospective colonist. Future Virginians, however, could rest assured knowing that they would be cared for upon arrival. When a new colonist arrived,

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<sup>207</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 94.

<sup>208</sup> Kingsbury, 245.

the Company advertised, he or she could expect shelter in a guest house and free food for up to one year. Not only could one expect free land, but also community support and free room and board.

Most of Virginia's incoming colonists would benefit from such an offer as a large percentage of the new arrivals were tenants. Unlike indentured servants, these men and women could not always depend upon the support and protection of a master.<sup>209</sup> In the Company's *A Declaration of the state of the colony and affairs in Virginia*, published in 1620, the Virginia Company declared that all men "landed there at the charge of the Company" would be "furnished with prouisions of victual for one whole yeare...as also of Cattle. And with apparel, weapons, tooles, and implements."<sup>210</sup> The current colonists had the responsibility of building the guest homes as well as giving over a portion of their corn harvest to the common supply intended for new colonists. The Company assured a warm welcome and listed the food, tools, seeds, and other supplies it would send to supplement the colony's reserve.<sup>211</sup> As early as 1615, the Company had promised an easy start. In Ralph Hamor's popular promotion *A True Discourse of the present estate of Virginia*, the former secretary of the colony boasted that new colonists "shall happily arrive there shall find a handsome house of some four rooms or more, if he have a family, to repose himself in *rent free*, and twelve English acres of ground adjoining." This welcome package also included the year's supply of corn, tools, and livestock – "How happily he may live."<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 94.

<sup>210</sup> Peter Force, ed., *Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principaly to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, From the Discovery of the Country to the Year 1776* (1844; reprint, New York: Peter Smith, 1947), 15.

<sup>211</sup> Force, 14.

<sup>212</sup> Haille, 816.

The poorest man could expect free housing, food, tools, livestock, and the prospect of owning his own land. If these offers did not dizzy a man with delight, Virginia, the Company affirmed, was quickly growing into a more ordered, civil, and truly English society. Now one could live in a land as noble and civilized as England, but with all the advantages impossible at home. Martial law, once necessary to bring order to the chaotic colony, ended with the Company's reorganization. The 1620 Declaration made clear that "the Colony beginneth now to haue the face and fashion of an orderly state."<sup>213</sup> Promotional pamphlets distributed between 1619 and 1620 advertised that supporters had donated money for the foundation of schools and churches with a particular interest in establishing Christian schools for Indian children.<sup>214</sup> As of 1619, Virginia could boast a representative government composed of two elected delegates from every settlement.<sup>215</sup> The sex ratio of men to women remained the chief unnatural aspect of colonial society, and the Virginia Company announced it was making efforts to improve this aspect of life as well. A major effort began in 1620 with the shipment of "willing maids" for Virginia. Looking for young, pretty women known "for their good bringinge up" these volunteers would become brides for the lonely men of the colony.<sup>216</sup> Women began to sign up and a number of shiploads set sail for the foreign shore carrying single women as their cargo.<sup>217</sup> The colony may have once been "a thing seeming strange and doubtful in the eye of the world," but with all of the Company and colony's efforts, one had to finally respect what a promised land it had become.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Force, 5.

<sup>214</sup> Parker, 212 and Force, 12.

<sup>215</sup> Tyler, 247.

<sup>216</sup> David R. Ransome, "Wives for Virginia, 1621," *William and Mary Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1991), 10.

<sup>217</sup> Kingsbury, 493.

<sup>218</sup> Parker, 212 from The Virginia Company's *A briefe declaration of the present state of things in Virginia* (1616).

As had happened with tobacco, the reality once more fell far short of the promise. The tobacco frenzy had a number of success stories to keep the vision alive. The Company's promise of free land, housing, food, and supplies, more often than not, turned out to be an empty promise. The lack of food and shelter became the greatest hardship for many of the new colonists hoping for a better life. The existing settlers had the responsibility of building the guest homes and supplying the free provisions. They did not fulfill this promise. New colonists instead found insufficient housing and little food. The Virginia Council's records for November 1619 reported that when large numbers of colonists arrived during the winter months, the colony had not provided enough ready housing. Many of the sea weary travelers instead took to the woods for shelter, living there without cover.<sup>219</sup> When colonist Peter Arondelle arrived in Virginia in 1621, he found no home ready for him. Each man, he observed, had only a pint and a half of meal for the day's sustenance. He penned an angry complaint to Sir Edwin Sandys and Company council member Nicholas Ferrar, the two men who had promised him food, shelter, and cattle.<sup>220</sup>

Great numbers were arriving only to discover that they had no place to live. The consequences proved devastating. Captain Nuce came to Virginia in 1621 to give a report of the colony's condition to the Company. In May 1621, he wrote to Sandys, "How many people sent hither of late yeers haue been lost, I cannot Conceauue vnless it be through water and want, partly of good foode, but chiefly of good Lodginge."<sup>221</sup> The colonists, he observed, "lived very barely for the most part: having no other foode but bread and water and such manner of meate as they make of the Mayze: which I would to

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<sup>219</sup> Kingsbury, 226.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 534

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 456.

God I could say they had in any reasonable plenty.”<sup>222</sup> The Company grew distressed upon hearing of these reports from Virginia and repeatedly ordered the Virginia Council to provide for the new arrivals. “We haue to our great grieve receiued aduertisement of the mortality,” Company officials wrote in 1620, “which this last yeere hath there wrought vpon the People, to the consumption of diuers hundreds, and almost the vtter destruction of some particular Plantations.”<sup>223</sup> They demanded that each settlement build its own guest houses and once again to give up growing tobacco. A year passed and nothing improved. More letters arrived in Virginia in 1621 urging the colonial council to construct more guest houses. The Company declared that they “canot but apprehend wth great grieve the sufferings of these multitudes at their first landing.”<sup>224</sup>

These very multitudes contributed to the housing problem. The small, struggling colony was not prepared to absorb the numbers of people coming over from England. In 1617, the Company had stated that in order for the colony to flourish, Virginia needed “more hands to gather and returne those commodities which bring profit to the Adventurers, and encouragement to others.”<sup>225</sup> The colony had in fact lacked necessary numbers to help build a more normal, functioning society, but now it had too many. Governor George Yeardly sent a plaintive letter to Sir Edwin Sandys in June 1620 begging him not to hastily ship more people “before you have acquainted me and have trewly bin enformed by me of the state of the Plantation.”<sup>226</sup> The governor explained that the colony could not handle the unexpected influx.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 103.

<sup>223</sup> Kingsbury, 275.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 493.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 298.

Numbers were not the only problem. Colonists wrote home protesting that too many people were arriving at the deadliest time of the year. Not only could they not care for them, but the new arrivals started out at a disadvantage. John Pory advised the treasurer to send people either in the fall or winter “having found ye springe and somer both fatall and vnprofitable.”<sup>228</sup> Governor Yearly expressed his dismal opinion of summer arrivals; he expected a large percentage to die.<sup>229</sup> Pory and Yearly accurately observed the fatal affects of a Virginia summer upon an unprepared Englishman, but the death rate, though heaviest in the summer months, remained high throughout the year. The years between 1619 and 1622 proved the deadliest. In this short time period, 3,500 men and women came to Jamestown, joining the approximately 700 living throughout the settlement. Over four years, 3,000 colonists perished. Only 347 of those had fallen victim to the 1622 Massacre.<sup>230</sup> The rest died of disease, want, violence, or “melancholy.”

Writing home to a friend in 1620, colonist George Thorpe hoped to allay any fears he knew his friend might have. Thorpe reassured his friend that he and others enjoyed great health and a good life in Virginia. The colony in general, he admitted, was losing many of its inhabitants. Death, in Thorpe’s opinion, visited many Virginia homes not because of warfare or sickness, but because many had given up on life. “More doe die here of the disease of their minde,” Thorpe concluded, “then of their body by hauinge this countrey’s victuals ouer-praised vnto them in England & by not knowinge

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<sup>228</sup> Kingsbury, 301.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>230</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown,” *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 1 (1979), 24, 34.

they shall drinke water here.”<sup>231</sup> The settlers had expected more; had hoped for better. What they found plunged many into despair, a despair from which some did not recover. Historian Karen Ordahl Kupperman believes that many colonists accused of laziness or idleness might actually have been suffering from this melancholy.<sup>232</sup> Faced with a disappointing present and an uncertain future, dejected colonists gave themselves over to hopelessness.<sup>233</sup> Men and women may have simply allowed themselves to be swallowed up by depression and apathy. George Sandys described what he witnessed in the spring of 1623 to his brother Sir Edwin Sandys. Virginia’s new arrivals were “so dejected with their scarce provisions, and finding nothing to answer their expectation, that most gave themselves over and died of melancholy.” Sandys attributed this extreme reaction to the “vain glory and presumption” in England.<sup>234</sup> Virginia became a prison to those struggling to survive. Living in want and seeing little hope for a brighter future, many chose to give up rather than continue the fight.

The harsh and brutal nature of colonial life brought about the demise of hundreds of men and women. Virginia, however, only represented the end of a punishing journey. Serving as the final blow, the colony tested an already weakened population. The voyage at sea had already started many men and women down the fateful path. Ship captains, looking to increase their profits, crowded as many people into their ships as possible, often taking passengers in place of provisions.<sup>235</sup> Thousands of adventurers, therefore, traveled in overcrowded, undersupplied, dirty ships and “landed half starved.”<sup>236</sup> Weak,

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<sup>231</sup> Kingsbury, 417.

<sup>232</sup> Kupperman, “Apathy,” 24.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>234</sup> Craven, 219.

<sup>235</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 101 and Craven, 272.

<sup>236</sup> Craven, 273.



sickly passengers stumbled off the ships and into death traps. The quantity of men not supplies made the greater profit and so more and more ships during this period arrived heavily laden with passengers and low in provisions.

Letters written to Treasurer Sandys and the Virginia Company reveal the extent of the colony's want. The men lacked adequate food and shelter as well as many of the other supplies that the Company had promised such as tools, seeds, and other necessities. Samuel Argall, governor of the colony in 1618, drafted an angry letter to the London council requesting they send more supplies. "You have wholly discouraged them," he protested. "They are forced to tend old ground for want of tools."<sup>237</sup> Colonist William Weldon informed Sir Edwin Sandys that the ship that brought him to Virginia in the spring of 1620 lacked the ample supplies that the Company had promised.<sup>238</sup> The crowded ships had made little room for necessary supplies, but even when supplies arrived, they were often in very poor condition. Seeds shipped over to encourage self sufficiency were often ruined and unable to produce.<sup>239</sup> Governor Thomas Dale had complained in 1613 of the unsuitability of the Company's provisions. He charged that the Company had not delivered enough food, the seeds had dried up, and the livestock were of inferior quality. The shipment had lacked any useful provisions. He witnessed this reoccurring mistreatment for the two years he had lived in Virginia.<sup>240</sup> The men and women lived in constant distress. Dale informed Lord Salisbury in 1611, "whereas now such is the universal disposition throughout our whole little colony, as by reason of some

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<sup>237</sup> Kingsbury, 79.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 455.

<sup>240</sup> Haille, 780.

present want of our English provisions, as every man almost laments himself of being here and murmurs at his present state.”<sup>241</sup>

The dream seemed to be made of nothing more than fine words and empty promises. The fantastic stories revealed themselves as nothing more than fairy tales. Free Virginia land had remained the only sure thing, the only guarantee and for some colonists, this dream did come true. For a large percentage, however, the right to land came at a cost. Tenants and servants often suffered greatly before they earned their freedom and their piece of land. Many that toiled under the Virginia sun did not even make it to freedom. Both tenants and indentured servants relinquished control of their lives over to a master for a period of years. Beholden either to the Company or a planter, these people worked another’s land and followed orders throughout their servitude.

English servitude was regulated by law and contract. Servants signed a contract for one year and could expect protection from cruelty from the English court.<sup>242</sup> Virginia servants did not enjoy the same rights in the colony. In England, some believed that Virginia masters did “abuse their servants there with intolerable oppression and hard usage.”<sup>243</sup> In many cases, these rumors were correct. Virginia masters did not have to treat their servants kindly for they did not have to consider rehire. A servant or tenant provided contracted labor for a set number of years. If a laborer should weaken or die, scores of new indentured servants and tenants were constantly arriving.<sup>244</sup> Unlike in England, Virginia servants could not look for protection from the government. The Virginia Council made no efforts to curtail masters’ abusive or violent behavior and even

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<sup>241</sup> Haille, 557.

<sup>242</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 126-127.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 126.

supported masters that had beaten their servants.<sup>245</sup> The indentured laborer had no protection under the law and became an object, a mere thing one could buy and sell “like a damnd slave.”<sup>246</sup> The selling of laborers, John Rolfe lamented, “was held in *England* a thing most intolerable.”<sup>247</sup> Yet in Virginia it became customary. The period of servitude could also change. Any number of infractions, whether major or minor, could prolong one’s indenture.<sup>248</sup>

Not even everyone that came to Virginia a free man or woman remained free. Settlers who had paid their passage and therefore earned the right to land and independence sometimes found themselves in service to another. If new colonists discovered that they could not afford the cost of starting a new life or if a bad harvest had ruined them, turning to a master might be the only solution – servitude or starvation. In the later years, many colonists came to Virginia unprepared and undersupplied. Planters took advantage of this situation. Virginia colonists had noticed and complained to the Company that “divers old Planters and others did allure and beguile divers younge persons and others (ignorant and unskillful in such matters) to serve them upon intolerable and unchristianlike conditions upon promises of such rewardes and recompence, as they were no ways able to performe nor ever meant.”<sup>249</sup> Eager adventurers had planned to start a great new life in a new world, but instead fell into the hands of a master, losing what little they once had in England: their freedom.

Virginia’s colonists were unprepared. They were not fully equipped for survival in their strange new home and for a myriad of reasons. These new arrivals had no idea

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<sup>245</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 127.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 117.

what awaited them in Virginia due in part to misinformation but also because of a general ignorance. Ship captains intensified the impending hardship by stocking fewer supplies and more people on their vessels. The Company, in many cases, either did not understand or did not want to understand the true nature of the colony and so failed to adequately care for the young settlement. The existing colonists disobeyed orders to provide shelter and sustenance for their fellow adventurers and by focusing all their energies upon tobacco, often could not even provide for themselves. All of these factors combined to produce disaster. Company observer Captain Nuce summed up his observation of the colony stating, “Since I cannot write pleasinge thinges, I haue forborne to direct my [letters] to ye Companie.”<sup>250</sup> “We were all ignorant,” Captain Smith had once said, but some had an idea of what was happening to Virginia.<sup>251</sup> A number of the Company’s leaders had been receiving these letters and reports for years, namely the two treasurers Thomas Smith and Edwin Sandys. In 1620, an English court charged Sir Edwin Sandys with censoring colonial information.<sup>252</sup> After the 1622 Massacre the Company began to crumble and Sandys’ opponents came out of the woodwork. They publicly accused him of withholding any negative information from the public. Company member Nathaniel Rich charged that Sandys produced “double and contradictory” accounts, one for public promotion and hid the real documents within the Company. Rich suggested that the treasurer had “allured” many to Virginia under “false pretenses.”<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Kingsbury, 457.

<sup>251</sup> Barbour, *Smith*, 24.

<sup>252</sup> Craven, 214.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

The truth they discovered too late. The Company's failures became more apparent and finally they became public. Sheer numbers could not save the Virginia Company. Financial loss, scandal, and poor management had mortally wounded the struggling organization. The Company could not hide its failings any longer. The foundation of its operation was crumbling and the Company's failures and colonial mismanagement were becoming more apparent. When the crown finally stepped in, the façade came crashing down. By 1624, it was all over. America, the business venture, had ended and the legacy of the royal American colony had just begun.

## CONCLUSION

“heart-breakinge to see the ill successe of your affayres, want of all things necessary for life, my debts in supplyinge youre scant prouisions, the Companyes not perfromeinge there contractes of approatchinge pouerty, I shou[ld] esteeme as nothinge, if our incessant toyle of best indeauors could but pserve your good opinions: but since all wee can doe can purchase vs but vndeseued infamy.”<sup>1</sup> - George Sandys to Nicholas Ferrar, 1623

On March 22, 1622, a group of Powhatan Indians lead by their new leader Opechancanough, entered several English settlements and killed 347 men, women and children. The massacre had horrified the English people and rattled the Virginia Company of London. This tremendous blow, however, did not cause the downfall of the faltering Company. Though the Company had lost 347 of its settlers in a single morning, this figure paled in comparison to the thousands that died because of neglect, misinformation, or ignorance. The massacre of 1622 helped to inflame the company’s opponents and accelerated their attack, but the seeds of destruction had been planted years before the Company’s worst public relations disaster. The Virginia Company of London had begun to show signs of its mortality a year before the massacre.

The summer before the massacre, the Virginia Company went bankrupt.<sup>2</sup> The tobacco frenzy had distracted the colonists from discovering or cultivating any other cash crops and the tobacco they had sent to England was of poor quality. The Company had to

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of The Virginia Company of London* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 4: 25.

<sup>2</sup> Craven, 189.

sell many of its shipments at a loss.<sup>256</sup> Unfortunately, even this bad tobacco was often better than the alternative. Colonist John Pory reported that “most of their ships continually...returne home empty.”<sup>257</sup> The Virginia Company could not count upon revenue from the colonies and in 1621 it lost another valuable source of income. The government had cancelled the Company’s right to hold the lotteries that had provided it with a large percentage of its funding.<sup>258</sup> Company leaders pleaded with their colonists through urgent letters to produce some marketable goods. “The Companies stock beinge vtterly exhausted,” wrote Company council members to the governor and council of Virginia, they had “no means of supplie but from private purses.”<sup>259</sup>

The Company could also no longer afford to send immigrants to Virginia at Company expense. Of the 1,000 colonists that sailed to Virginia after the summer of 1621, only 100 traveled on Company charge.<sup>260</sup> Following the massacre in October 1622, another letter to the Virginia council revealed how badly the Company was suffering. A frank correspondence revealed, “The multitude of Adventures, and the manner of bringing in many to all good vnderstanding demonstrates, that things are at the bottome.”<sup>261</sup> The colony, already in dire straights after the massacre, had no support from home, what little that had been. The Company dismally informed their colony, “We have no hope of raising any valuable Magazine....we cannot wish you to rely upon anything but yourselves.”<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Craven, 181,189.

<sup>257</sup> Kingsbury, 3: 254.

<sup>258</sup> Craven, 183.

<sup>259</sup> Kingsbury, 3: 531

<sup>260</sup> Craven, 190.

<sup>261</sup> Kingsbury, 3: 688.

<sup>262</sup> Craven, 205.

Although they were bankrupt in 1621, the joint stock group continued to run the colony unchecked until the winter of 1622-1623. King James had been aware of the strife and infighting amongst Company factions, but not until Captain Nathaniel Butler produced his scathing eye-witness report did any type of inquisition get started.<sup>263</sup> Butler had been governor of the Bermuda colony from 1619 to 1622. On his way home to England, he spent the winter of 1622-1623 in Virginia. He made a record of his observations entitled, *The Unmasked face of our Colony in Virginia as it was in the Winter of the yeare 1622*, and presented a copy to the king. Butler's document described a dismal place. The plantations, he observed, sat in salt marshes "full of infectious Boggs." New arrivals could not find shelter in a guest house, "many of them by want hereof are not onely seen dyinge under hedges and in the woods but beinge dead ly some of them many days Unregarded and Unburied."<sup>264</sup> The houses that still existed "are generally the worst that ever I sawe," and furthermore, these dwellings were scattered so far apart, they were easy prey for local Indian tribes.<sup>265</sup> No fortified ordinances existed except four dilapidated forts which would allow invaders by ship to quickly and easily take over the English settlement.<sup>266</sup>

Butler found no order in the English settlement. The captain noted that many plantations had been abandoned (most as a result of the fear inspired by the massacre), corn and grain sold for exorbitant prices, and no one was either practicing or enforcing English law.<sup>267</sup> The fraction of settlers living in the forsaken settlement Butler saw in a

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<sup>263</sup> Craven, 265.

<sup>264</sup> Tyler, 413.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 412-415.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 417-418.



“sickly and desperate estate.”<sup>268</sup> Butler warned the king that if he did not address the mismanagement of the Virginia Company soon, Virginia may “shortly get the name of a Slaughterhouse, and soe justly become odious to our selves and contemptible to all the worlde.”<sup>269</sup>

The Company became alarmed after hearing about Butler’s accusations and petitions to the king and tried to put a better face on a bad situation. Company leaders began to cross petition the king and published a response to Butler’s testimonial. Again, the Virginia Company professed that everything was and would be fine in Virginia. The wheels of justice, however, had already begun to turn.

In April 1623, an anti-Sandys faction of the Virginia Company petitioned the king to launch an investigation into the true nature of Virginia colony and Company. The Privy Council answered and called for a Commission of Inquiry to look into the company’s affairs. What began as a fierce rivalry between the supporters of the Smith treasury and the supporters of the Sandys treasury soon put the fate of the entire joint-stock company in jeopardy.

The Commission of Inquiry conducted a thorough investigation into the Company and examined official Company documents and its financial status as well as planters’ letters from Virginia and the reports of seamen and former colonists.<sup>270</sup> Sir Edwin Sandys’ opponents also took this opportunity to come foreword and accuse the treasurer and his faction of spreading many of the false rumors that proclaimed Virginia’s good health. The rival faction had collected more than two dozen letters to prove that the

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<sup>268</sup> Tyler, 418.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>270</sup> Craven, 295.

treasurer had falsified the colony's condition.<sup>271</sup> Sandys and his camp, they proclaimed, were responsible for "the spreading of false rumors and publication of letters, books, and ballads describing the happy estate of the Plantation, which was most unreasonably put in practice this last Lent, when the Colony was in most extreme misery."<sup>272</sup>

Through inquiry and investigation, the Commission learned that approximately half of the population of Virginia had perished during Sandys' leadership. The fact that the Company had filled their ships mostly with men and stocked few supplies illuminated the gravity of the situation.<sup>273</sup> The Company was bankrupt, factions within were tearing each other apart, the colony in Virginia was hungry and miserable, and mismanagement was a major component in the colony's extremely high mortality rate. Presented with all this evidence, the Commission formed their opinion on July 31, 1623. Due to "the apparent abuses and miscarriage in the Plantation and Government" the Virginia Company's patent was annulled.<sup>274</sup> The crown finally put the entire Company on trial the next spring. On May 24, 1624, the King's Bench decreed that the Company's leaders had not proven their right to manage the colony. The king then dissolved the Company and assumed all rights and privileges of government. Virginia became a royal colony.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Craven, 274.

<sup>272</sup> Neill, 146.

<sup>273</sup> Craven, 300-303.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 310-311.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

## AFTERWARD

### VIRGINIA: “THAT HOPEFUL AND HAPPIE SOILE”<sup>1</sup>

The story of Virginia, of course, had a happy ending. The colony continued to struggle for a number of years under royal control, but eventually, Virginia reached a point of equilibrium. The death rate dropped by fifty percent and colonists lived healthier lives in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century. After the massacre and the colonists' equally brutal reprisals ended, the settlers again felt comfortable enough to spread out past the brackish region into old settlement areas and beyond.<sup>2</sup> Despite its rocky past, colonists continued to come to Virginia, more cautiously and slowly at first, but as the colony grew more stable and healthy, more people began to look at Virginia as a land of opportunity. By the eighteenth century, Virginia had become the largest and wealthiest of England's mainland colonies and this was due in large part to the ultimate success of the once disastrous stinking weed: tobacco.<sup>3</sup>

Virginia, the royal English colony, eventually became a winner, but Virginia the charter settlement, was twice the failure. Greed was the cause of both endeavors' demise. The greed of the investors and the greed of many of the settlers poisoned the Roanoke and the Jamestown adventures. Understandably, a business (in both cases, joint-stock companies), should strive to make a profit. The desire to earn healthy returns upon one's investment is positive and should serve as a motivator, an impetus to work harder and do

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<sup>1</sup> Kingsbury, 4: 164. from a departing colonist's letter to his mother, May 4, 1623

<sup>2</sup> Earle, 121-122.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery*, 198.

better. In the cases of Roanoke and Jamestown, however, greed clouded judgments and drove many to do and say anything to attain their reward. As a result, both companies masked the truth, spread unverified propaganda, and sacrificed the good of the colonists for a chance at wealth. The most destructive error committed by both companies was the production of misinformed or deliberately misleading propaganda. Ignorance and misunderstanding due to the failure to understand the nature of their New World both resulted from and contributed to the output of inaccurate promotional material. This was their second deadly sin.

The colonists were not merely victims, but shouldered a large part of the blame. Often, settlers ignored the good advice of their leaders both in England and in Virginia in their single-minded quest for gold and other riches. They too sacrificed the good of the colony to their own avarice. Each settlement of new Virginians did their part in crippling the mission. Roanoke's settlers, sailors, and leaders yearned more for Spanish booty than a real settlement. Jamestown's planters gave their all to gold and tobacco without regard for their own basic needs or the needs of those to join them. The consequences of their actions were great. The Roanoke venture lost 110 men and women off the coast of North Carolina, never to be seen again. The Virginia Company lost thousands of people to Indian attacks, disease, want, and even melancholy. Many of Virginia's first settlers became "so dejected with their scarce provisions, and finding nothing to answer their expectation, that most gave themselves over and died of melancholy."<sup>279</sup>

Naturally, the crown also had a financial interest in Virginia, but profit did not lead the English government to rule the American colony. King James had given the Virginia Company of London a chance to develop a strong, profitable trading settlement,

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<sup>279</sup> Craven, 219 from George Sandys letter to brother Sir Edwin Sandys March 1623.

but it had failed. The Company dissolved, but hundreds of English men, women and children remained. The crown had a duty to minister to its subjects and recover the ailing settlement. The crown's sense of responsibility brought order to a volatile society. The change in leadership also brought about other improvements. The English government had much deeper pockets than the joint-stock company and was better able to provide for its subjects. Stability gradually replaced the frenzy and chaos of the earlier years. In time, wounds healed and English Virginia grew healthy and wealthy on its own.

In proclaiming English Virginia a winner, one must acknowledge that other societies suffered great losses because of the colony's success. For the Virginia colony to thrive, the native Powhatan tribes had to lose their homeland. Colonial expansion pushed the once powerful empire further west and frequent battles and skirmishes decreased its population. Virginia finally flourished and grew wealthy from the sale of tobacco. This ultimate success, however, was built upon the backs of African-born and African Caribbean slaves. What developed gradually from indentured servitude and the need for inexpensive labor became the massive traffic in and bondage of men, women and children. Virginia was the first mainland English colony to have slaves and was also an ardent supporter of slavery until the end of American Civil War in 1865. Colonial Virginia had triumphed in part because other societies lost.

The joint-stock companies had failed, but really, only in the short term. Their quest in creating a profitable American venture did not come to fruition, but they were indirectly victorious in establishing a solid English American settlement. Roanoke lasted for only a few short years, but it inspired the Virginia Company of London to try their luck at Jamestown. The Virginia Company venture greatly improved upon the Roanoke

attempt by actually making a serious attempt at a permanent settlement. Though they botched this venture, it did not die with the Company. The young colony may have had a very rough and sorry start, but after years of heartache and struggle, it survived and then thrived. These earliest adventurers got something started. With time and a little more care, Virginia had the chance to blossom and prove to England that it could be a land of opportunity, another Garden of Eden.

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## VITA

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