

Exploring the Facts: Jamestown

By Rebekah Lewis

Write Style I, Lesson 3

Jamestown

When the topic of our nation's beginning comes up, most people immediately think of pilgrims. What they miss, however, is the small settlement in Virginia that happened *before* the pilgrims. The pilgrims came after, and because of, this tiny colony. The settlement, Jamestown, was made up simply of gold seekers and land settlers. Although its start was quite rough and its settlers unprepared, little Jamestown was the colony that started it all.

In April of 1607, three ships sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and landed in Virginia. The ships held men sent from England in search of good land and gold. Unfortunately, the men brought no women and no workers. They were all gentlemen who refused to work but were greedy for gold. To make matters worse, the land they chose to build their settlement on was terribly marshy and had no good drinking water. Because of the swamps, mosquitoes flourished and infected everything with malaria. To top things off, the temperatures fluctuated considerably. In the summer, extreme heat dominated, while the winter countered with bitter cold. Because the men would not work to grow food, and because disease dominated, most of the settlers died before December of 1607. However, some were left, and those few were determined to stay.

Those few settlers might not have made it if it hadn't been for one man: John Smith. John Smith was twenty-eight when he became the third president of Jamestown. His no-nonsense attitude and a firm hand slowly lifted Jamestown back on its feet. Smith had been through many adventures in foreign lands before he sailed to the New World, so this experience was not new. He was able to use his previous experiences to help the settlers at Jamestown. First, he made everyone work for his own food. His motto was, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (Making Thirteen Colonies--Joy Hakim; p. 30). He also took pains to first protect against

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Indians, and then to befriend them. Because he befriended them, the Indians taught the settlers how to plant corn, how to fish, and how to hunt.

Finally, there seemed hope for Jamestown. Within a couple of years, more settlers arrived from England, bringing the first women. As a result, families were formed. John Smith had to return to England because of a severe injury, but his work remained. The settlers planted crops, built homes, and formed societies. They knew the importance of teamwork, and showed it by flourishing together. After a rough winter more settlers continued to sail across the Atlantic, adding to the bulging colony. Soon, people moved into the surrounding areas to make room for more. There were still trials to work through, but now the settlement in the New World actually seemed permanent. Life in the New World had begun.

Through all the trouble and danger, Jamestown emerged to be the beginning of a great nation. Jamestown went through many troubles and almost did not make it. Most people thought the colony would not make it, but the settlers pulled through. Without the assurance of a working colony, the pilgrims most likely would not have considered coming to America. Their children would not have fought the Revolutionary War, and we would not be here today.