

Chronology

1550s–1607/08: Powhatan inherits the leadership of a small group of Indian tribes and builds it into an empire of some 30 tribes that covers most of what is now eastern Virginia.

1588–1604: Protestant England and Catholic Spain battle each other during 16 years of war on both sides of the Atlantic.

1590: An English colony established on Roanoke Island (present-day North Carolina) five years earlier is found abandoned, its settlers missing.

1607: Three ships sent by the Virginia Company of London bring the first settlers from England to Jamestown. To the north, settlers trying to establish an English colony at Popham, Maine, quit and go home.

1609–1610: So many Jamestown settlers die during the “starving time” winter that the colony is almost abandoned. Only the arrival of a new leader—Lord de la Warr—with supplies and new settlers convinces the survivors to remain

1611: Newly arrived settler John Rolfe introduces a milder and soon to be immensely popular type of tobacco to Virginia. Henrico and Elizabeth City—the first settlements beyond Jamestown—are established.

Stone projectile points or arrowheads, like the kind made by Virginia Indians are still plowed up in the state's farm fields and found scattered in the woods.

1613: Colonists kidnap Pocahontas, one of Powhatan's daughters, in an unsuccessful attempt to trade her for English men held prisoner by the Indians.

1614: Rolfe marries Pocahontas, beginning a peace between Indians and English. The truce will last through Pocahontas's sudden death in 1617 from an unidentified sickness.

1616: The Virginia Company states that it will grant 50 acres of land to anyone who pays for his own or another's passage.

1618: More than 50,000 pounds of tobacco are shipped back to England. Plantations are being founded up and down the James River. Powhatan dies.

1619: The House of Burgesses, or General Assembly, begins meeting, marking the start of representative government in the Western Hemisphere. The Virginia Company launches a program that will send 147 high-ranking women to Virginia to become the wives of gentlemen.

1622: A surprise attack by Powhatan Indians under the command of Opechancanough kills 347 Europeans in outlying settlements—at least a quarter of the colony's population.

1624: King James I revokes the bankrupt Virginia Company's charter and takes direct control of Jamestown and other Virginia settlements.

1644: The last big Powhatan attack kills 400 to 500 Europeans living on plantations outside Jamestown. Opechancanough is captured, then shot by the soldier guarding him.

1661: Slavery is recognized by law.

1676: Angered by Indian attacks and the colonial government's restrictions on westward expansion, settlers in Virginia's backcountry take up arms against the Powhatan and their own leaders. The Indians suffer huge losses and sign a treaty the next year, promising peace in return for reservations. The rebellion is eventually put down, but not before Jamestown is partially burned.

