

## JAMESTOWN vs. PLYMOUTH

Traveling aboard the Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discovery, 104 men landed in Virginia in 1607 at a place they named Jamestown. This was the first permanent English settlement in the New World.

Thirteen years later, 102 settlers aboard the Mayflower landed in Massachusetts at a place they named Plymouth. With these two colonies, English settlement in North America was born.

### LOCATION OF THE SETTLEMENTS

Jamestown offered anchorage and a good defensive position. Warm climate and fertile soil allowed large plantations to prosper.

Plymouth provided good anchorage and an excellent harbor. Cold climate and thin, rocky soil limited farm size. New Englanders turned to lumbering, shipbuilding, fishing and trade.

### REASONS FOR THE COLONIES

Economic motives prompted colonization in Virginia. The Virginia Company of London, organized in 1606, sponsored the Virginia Colony. Organizers of the company wanted to expand English trade and obtain a wider market for English manufactured goods. They naturally hoped for financial profit from their investment in shares of company stock.

Freedom from religious persecution motivated the Pilgrims to leave England and settle in Holland, where there was more religious freedom. However, after a number of years the Pilgrims felt that their children were being corrupted by the liberal Dutch lifestyle and were losing their English heritage. News of the English Colony in Virginia motivated them to leave Holland and settle in the New World.

### EARLY SETBACKS

Inexperience, unwillingness to work, and the lack of wilderness survival skills led to bickering, disagreements, and inaction at Jamestown. Poor Indian relations, disease, and the initial absence of the family unit compounded the problems.

Cooperation and hard work were part of the Pilgrim's lifestyle. Nevertheless, they too were plagued with hunger, disease, and environmental hazards.

### RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

The settlers at Jamestown were members of the Anglican faith, the official Church of England.

The Pilgrims were dissenters from the Church of England and established the Puritan or Congregational Church.

### GOVERNMENT

In 1619, the first representative legislative assembly in the New World met at the Jamestown church. It

was here that our American heritage of representative government was born. Since New England was outside the jurisdiction of Virginia's government, the Pilgrims established a self-governing agreement of their own, the "Mayflower Compact."

## NATIVE AMERICANS

The Virginia colonists settled in the territory of a strong Indian empire or chiefdom. English relations with the Powhatan Indians were unstable from the beginning. Vast differences in culture, philosophies, and the English desire for dominance were obstacles too great to overcome. After the Indian uprising in 1622, the colonists gave up attempts to christianize and live peacefully with the Powhatans.

Prior to the Pilgrims' arrival, an epidemic wiped out the majority of the New England Indians. Several survivors befriended and assisted the colonists. Good relations ended in 1636 when the Massachusetts Bay Puritans declared war on the Pequot Tribe and Plymouth was dragged into the conflict.

## LEGENDS

Who married Pocahontas? Some erroneously believe John Smith did. In actuality, she married John Rolfe, an Englishman who started the tobacco industry in Virginia. The John Smith connection stems from Smith's later writings relating an incidence of Pocahontas saving his life.

According to Longfellow's epic, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, John Alden proposed to Priscilla Mullins on behalf of Standish and she replied, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" Priscilla did in fact marry John Alden at Plymouth. The records do not mention Standish ever courting Priscilla.

## THANKSGIVING

On December 4, 1619 settlers stepped ashore at Berkeley Hundred along the James River and, in accordance with the proprietor's instruction that "the day of our ship's arrival ... shall be yearly and perpetually kept as a day of thanksgiving," celebrated the first official Thanksgiving Day.

In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims held a celebration to give thanks to God for his bounty and blessings. This occasion was the origin of the traditional Thanksgiving as we know it today.

## CONCLUSION

The growth and development of these two English colonies, though geographically separated, contributed much to our present American heritage of law, religion, government, custom and language. As Governor Bradford of Plymouth stated,

"Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing, and gives being to all things that are; and as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shown unto many, yea, in some sort, to our whole Nation."

The charter of the Virginia Company stated,

"Lastly and chiefly the way to prosper and achieve good success is to make yourselves all of one mind for the good of your country and your own, and to serve and fear God the giver of all goodness, for every plantation which our father hath not planted shall be rooted out."