

## THE SETTLEMENT OF JAMESTOWN (1607 -2007)

The year 2007 marks the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown VA, by English colonists. Under Captain **Christopher Newport's** command the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed* and *Discovery* (see Figure 1) left docks near London Dec. 20, 1606, and arrived in Virginia, April 26, 1607. Captain Newport's expedition, which included Captain **John Smith** (see Figure 2), was charged with establishing a colony in the New World. England had failed in previous attempts to build lasting settlements in the Americas, most notably on Roanoke Isle, now in North Carolina.

On May 13, 1607, they selected a settlement site more than 30 miles up the James River from the Chesapeake Bay. A marshy peninsula that became an island at high tide, connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, the site seemed easily defensible. On May 14, they went ashore, cleared the ground, and set up tents. Later, they built better structures: "*The fifteenth day of June,*" wrote George Percy, "*we had built and finished our Fort which was triangle wise, having three Bulwarkes at every corner like a half Moon, and four or five pieces of artillerie mounted in them.*" They also planted their first grain crop and replaced their tents with small houses.

In the early days of the settlement, the weather was fair, the countryside lovely and the hunting excellent. However as the seasons changed, conditions deteriorated. Disease, famine, polluted river water and skirmishes with the Indians took a terrible toll. By January 1608, fewer than 40 were left - down from 100 - to meet "the first supply" of new settlers. The new arrivals would, in turn, face hardships of their own, yet they persisted. Through the efforts of leaders like **Captain Smith** and **John Rolfe**, and with the timely help from some of the local Indians — like **Pocahontas** (see Figure 2) daughter of the chief of the Powhatan empire — Jamestown endured.

The town grew beyond the fort, and more settlements were established in the region. Jamestown became the first capital of Virginia, and on July 30, 1619, the first legislative assembly in English-speaking America was convened there. Over the years, the fort at Jamestown was lost to history. In 1994, archaeologists with the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities set out to find it. By the end of 1996, they had uncovered enough evidence, to prove they had located the remains of the fort. The excavation work on the site still continues, unearthing artifacts that may tell us more about the lives of the people who founded and maintained the first permanent English settlement of the Americas.

(Figure 1) JAMESTOWN SETTLEMENT-3 REPLICA SHIPS. Issue: May 5, 2007.

For: 400 th Anniver. Founding. Cancel:FD Jamestown VA. (Figure 2) JOHN SMITH

Issue: Apr. 26, 1907. For: Jamestown Exposition. Cancel: May 20, 190..., Boston.

