

## Handout 1.6 Virginia Peninsula Water History

### Indians of the Virginia Peninsula

Captain John Smith wrote this about the “Indians” he met in Virginia: *“The men bestowe their times in fishing, hunting, wars and such manlike exercises . . . .The women and children to the rest of the worke. They make mats, baskets, pots, morters, pound their corne, make their bread, prepare their victuals, plant their corn, gather their corn, beare al kind of burdens and such like.”*The Powhatans are generally tall and straight, of a comely proportion, and of a colour browne . . . Their haire is generally black, but few have any beards. The men weare halfe their heads shaven, the other halfe long . . . The [Women’s hair] are cut in many fashions agreeable to their years, but ever some part remaineth long. They are very strong, of an able body and full of agilitie, able to endure to lie in the woods under a tree by the fire, in the worst of winter.” –

*Wahunsunacock was the paramount chief, or “Powhatan,” of the chiefdom when the colonists first arrived. His title and the name of the chiefdom were one and the same. By 1607, many of the villages of the Algonquian-speaking people were brought under one rule by Wahunsunacock and formed the Powhatan paramount chiefdom. Wahunsunacock ruled more than 32 subchiefdoms in more than 150 villages of various sizes, which he controlled through inheritance and power. In war, the districts fought for him; in peace, they paid taxes on their produce. The chief, in return, aided them in times of need. Wahunsunacock died in 1618. One of Wahunsunacock’s daughters from one of his many wives, the famous Pocahontas, was kidnapped by the colonists. Pocahontas was the first Indian woman to marry an English colonist when she took John Rolfe for her husband in 1614. Rolfe introduced a mild West Indies strain of tobacco to Jamestown, which soon became the settlers’ main crop. The new settlers brought with them different tools, clothing, lifestyles, and a need for land. During the first decade, encounters between colonists and Indians were often hostile. In 1622, Wahunsunacock’s brother, Opechancanough, launched the first coordinated attack to expel the settlers, leading to a decade of intermittent warfare. The Indians tried a second attack in 1644, but by then they were fewer in number and faced 15,000 colonists. After Opechancanough’s death in 1646, the Powhatan chiefdom basically ceased to exist.*

**Source:** Virginia Department of Historic Resources <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>

**Pre-Clovis People about 17,000 BCE** - While Native Americans believe that they have always been here, the first documented Paleoindian culture was found at an archaeological site near Folsom, New Mexico, in 1927. There, a distinctive spear point was found between the ribs of a type of bison that had been extinct since the end of the

last Ice Age. Five years later near Clovis, New Mexico, a woolly mammoth kill and associated stone tools were uncovered, dating to 11,200 years ago. The hallmark of the Clovis culture is the lance-shaped fluted point. Although Clovis points are found across the continent, an especially large number of them are found in Virginia. However, artifacts found at the Cactus Hill site in southern Virginia indicate that possibly native Virginians may pre-date the Clovis peoples. Scientists are not in agreement as to when people entered the Western Hemisphere. Some findings being discussed among archaeologists are the pre-Clovis dates and tools from the Cactus Hill site. Here a small band of people lived on top of a sandy hill overlooking the **Nottoway River**. One piece of white pine was radiocarbon dated to almost 17,000 years ago. Associated with the pine were stone tools and the raw material from which the tools were made. These findings are challenging prevailing theories regarding human settlement of North America. With an interior route blocked with ice, archaeologists are looking once again to the coast for an alternative path south. Archaeologists now speculate that a culture, using boats, and hunting marine and land mammals, moved along the coast of Beringia, down the coast of Canada, the United States, and Central America into South America. Descendants of the people then migrated into the heartland of North and South America, eventually ending up in the area now known as Virginia.

**Early Archaic 8,000–6,000 B.C.** - The term Archaic, meaning old, signals a series of new adaptations by the early people that occurred between 8000 and 1200 B.C. As the cold, moist climate of the Pleistocene Age changed to a warmer, drier one, the warming winds melted the glaciers to the north and warmed the ocean water. The sea level rose, spreading water across the Coastal Plain of Virginia and creating the Chesapeake Bay. Many of the places where early humans lived were eroded and covered by the rising water. Grassland and open forests of conifers gave way to thick forests of pine, oak, and hickory. In general, the Early Archaic population grew, nurtured by a more inviting environment. Families lived in larger bands and remained mobile, but within a more limited fertile area.

**Middle Archaic 6,000–2,500 B.C.** By the Middle Archaic period, the Indians of Virginia had adjusted well to the Eastern woodland. They became masters of the deciduous forest of oak, hickory, and chestnut. Their knowledge of how best to use the physical setting altered with the changing environment and shifting seasons of the year, and gradually became more sophisticated.

**Late Archaic 2,500–1,200 B.C.** By the Late Archaic Period, the people in Virginia totaled perhaps in the tens of thousands. Their growing numbers caused them to intensify their hunting and gathering practices. Concentrations of bands settled along the rich floodplain, which some researchers describe as the “supermarket of the prehistoric world.” Archaeologists have uncovered at riverside sites large hearths of fire-cracked rock, proof that the Late Archaic people prepared large amounts of food there. In the Coastal Plain, the people started to harvest large numbers of saltwater oysters, a custom that would continue to the historic period. Especially in the early spring, before plants came up, oysters were a rich food source. The discarded shells formed thick middens or refuse heaps that archaeologists find to be a rich source of household debris.

**Early Woodland 1,200–500 B.C.** The Woodland period refers to the more sedentary cultures that lived in the extensive woodlands of what is now the eastern United States.

A major innovation occurred about 1200 B.C. when the people began making fired clay cooking and storage vessels. Archaeologists believe this technology was introduced to Virginia from the people along the coast of present-day Georgia and South Carolina. There, the earliest pottery in North America may have been made as early as 2500 B.C. The shape and size of the first pottery in Virginia was patterned after that of soapstone vessels. Clay pots quickly proved to be more versatile and practical than soapstone.

**Middle Woodland 500 B.C.–A.D. 900** Populations grew in Virginia so that diverse tribes now lived in scattered, settled hamlets along major rivers that wound through the mountain valleys and down through the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain. One example of the great diversity can be found in the Stone Mound Burial culture in the northern Shenandoah Valley. This culture, dating from 400 B.C. to A.D. 200, placed hundreds of low stone mounds in clusters on ancient bluff-like river terraces overlooking the floodplain. Only a few people were buried with great ceremony in each mound.

**Late Woodland A.D. 900–1600** People throughout eastern North America lived in thousands of large villages. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people resided in each village, organized around a complex economic, social, and political structure. The people increased their reliance on intensive gardening for most of their food. Although the developments were not as elaborate in Virginia, Late Woodland people developed strong identities as each adapted to its local setting.

**Indians A.D. 1600–1800** The coastal groups in Virginia first encountered European explorers in the 1520s. During this early period, the natives likely traded with the Europeans to give them fresh water, fruit, and meat. The first English colonists arrived in North America in 1584 at Roanoke Island, in what is now North Carolina. The next year, a group of these settlers explored southeastern Virginia. The Roanoke colony found it difficult to survive and ran out of food and supplies. In 1590, when the colony's leader, John White, returned from England, he found the settlement deserted. What happened to the "lost colony" remains a mystery to this day. The first English colony in North America that managed to survive began at Jamestown in 1607. Although this settlement also ran out of supplies and nearly perished, it grew as increasing numbers of colonists arrived.

For a good overview of the Virginia Peninsula's First People watch - [Virginia's First People: Full Show](#) - <https://youtu.be/FOAV-4GeWFw> Please pay attention to what Dr. Rountree says about the importance of water to our First People's use of water resources.

This video clip was taken from a video made by Helen C. Rountree, Ph.D. Professor Emerita of Anthropology Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia and Dr. Michael Barber, State Archeologist. Dr. Helen Rountree's training and publications are in "ethno history," a combination of cultural anthropology and history she began working with the Native Americans of eastern Virginia, historical and modern, in 1969. She is the only scholar, whether anthropologist or historian, who has been active in the specialty that long. She studied published and unpublished records containing Indian history in Virginia from 1607 onward. That included speed-reading the often-unindexed county record books. She spent substantial

periods since then hunting for more records and studying other subjects, like ethnic identity, that are relevant to learning about Indian tribes. Shoehorned into all that work were face-to-face visits and occasional spells of living among the modern Virginia people.

She is speaking here of the Weyanock people. At the beginning of the 17th century, when the tribe had early contact with English colonists, the Weyanock traded with Wahunsenacawh (Some historians considered them to be a part of the Powhatan Confederacy.[4] Their population was 500 in 1608. After attacks by the Iroquois Confederacy at the end of the 17th century, they migrated out. They signed the Treaty of Middle Plantation with the Virginia Colony in 1677. Remnants of the Weyanock and the Nansemond joined the Nottoway in the early 18th century. By 1727, they lived along the Nottoway River. At the end of the 18th century, the Weyanock merged completely into the Nottoway, with the surnames Wynoake and Wineoak occasionally appearing on public documents.

For a detailed discussion of America's first people watch the following video from the following Youtube sites NOVA <https://youtu.be/1GPS3kRj2-A> , N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources <https://youtu.be/B4alOJpBUY0>

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**Source: Wikipedia**

**Spanish exploration**<sup>[edit]</sup> Early in the 16th century, Spanish explorers were the first Europeans to see the Chesapeake Bay, which they called *Bahía de Madre de Dios* or *Bahía de Santa Maria*.<sup>[1]</sup> They were searching for the Northwest Passage to India and the Orient.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> They named the land now known as Virginia, as *Ajacán*.

The Spanish succeeded in founding a colonial settlement in the New World in 1565 at St. Augustine, Florida. It was the first founded by Europeans in what is now the United States. They established small Spanish outposts along the eastern coast into present-day Georgia and the Carolinas. The northernmost post was *Santa Elena* (today Port Royal, South Carolina). From there Juan Pardo was commissioned to lead expeditions into the interior, founding Fort San Juan in 1567–1568 at the regional Mississippian culture chiefdom of Joara. Located in present-day western North Carolina, this was the first European settlement in the interior of North America.

**English settlement**<sup>[edit]</sup> The first permanent English settlement in North America was established in 1607 at Jamestown. The first continuously occupied settlement was at Kecoughtan in Elizabeth City County what is now the City of Hampton. Nearby, Fort Monroe, the country's oldest military base still in use is located at Old

Point Comfort. Old Point Comfort is also the site of the first landing of Africans in America, in 1619.<sup>[2]</sup> After declaring independence from Great Britain, Virginia's first state capital was Williamsburg. Also, the decisive battle of the American Revolution, the siege of Yorktown in 1781, took place on the Virginia Peninsula. The Battle of Hampton Roads, as depicted by Currier and Ives

**American Civil War**<sup>[edit]</sup> During the American Civil War (1861–1865), the Union Army invaded the Virginia Peninsula as part of the Peninsula Campaign in 1862 to capture Richmond, beginning from Fort Monroe at the entrance to Hampton Roads, which had remained in Union control after Virginia seceded in 1861. At the outset of the Peninsula Campaign, the Battle of Hampton Roads between the first ironclad warships took place near the mouth of the James River off the eastern tip of Warwick County. The 1862 Siege of Yorktown took place along the York River. Finally, after a lengthy standoff, the largest Union Army of the war under General George B. McClellan chased the retreating Confederates through the Williamsburg Line and westward literally to the "Gates of Richmond", where the swampy upper reaches of the Chickahominy River created a natural barrier behind which the defenders successfully held the Confederate capital, essentially prolonging the war for three more devastating years.

**History (Spanish exploration – Present Day** – Source Wikipedia Note: The Wikipedia article has not been fully documented but gives a good general history. For more detail use highlighted links.

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## **Post-war[edit]**

As the region and Virginia rebuilt during Reconstruction, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway (C&O) under the leadership of Collis P. Huntington was completed from Richmond to the Ohio River by 1871. Long a dream of Virginians, and later

sponsored by both Virginia and West Virginia, the new railroad opened paths to ship products west, as well as offering an economically viable method of shipping the rich bituminous coal of the region to fuel the Industrial Revolution. However, the tidal portion of the James River, while navigable from Hampton Roads to the Fall Line at Richmond, couldn't accommodate the deep drafts of collier ships.

The Peninsula had been long without a railroad, which had been newly developing technology beginning in the 1830s. In 1881, the Peninsula Extension of the C&O was built from Richmond through Williamsburg to Newport News Point. There, Collis Huntington, his associates, and his Old Dominion Land Company developed his vision for the area. Within only 15 years, a rural farm community in Warwick County turned into the new independent city of Newport News, Virginia by 1896 as new coal piers brought ships to what would become the world's largest shipyard, Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. Hotels, houses, schools and businesses sprung up there, and at many points along the new rail line in Warwick, York and James City counties. Oyster Point became a shipping place for the watermen and the new town of Lee Hall, Virginia emerged, and became an important point due to its proximity to Yorktown and later to the new military base which became the U.S. Army's Fort Eustis. In Elizabeth City County, tracks were extended from Newport News to reach Old Point Comfort, where resort hotels and Buckroe Beach were developed. There, a new town was incorporated. Phoebus was named after one of its early leading citizens, Harrison Phoebus.

## **20th century**

In James City County, Toano became a major shipping point for the area's truck farming and an entire new development planned by a C&O land agent to attract farmers of Scandinavian descent from the colder regions of the American Midwest emerged at Norge shortly after the start of the 20th century. Later in the first half of the 20th century, especially during the two world wars, massive military facilities were established on large reservations which today contain Langley Air Force Base, Fort Eustis, Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, and Camp Peary. To make way, all of Mulberry Island and entire communities including Lackey, Halstead's Point, Penniman, Bigler's Mill, and Magruder disappeared in the process. However, many of the displaced Virginians chose to relocate to Grove in James City County and other areas close by on the Peninsula.

After the capital of Virginia moved to Richmond in 1780 for greater security during the American Revolutionary War, Williamsburg became much less busy. By the early 20th century, it was described as a "sleepy little hamlet", known best for the College of William and Mary and Eastern State Hospital, which was the

successor to the country's first mental hospital, as well as its fading memories and deteriorating colonial sites. All that changed dramatically beginning in 1926. The restoration and recreation of Colonial Williamsburg, one of the largest historic restorations ever undertaken, was championed by the Reverend Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin and the patriarch of the Rockefeller family, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., along with the active participation of his wife, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, who wanted to celebrate the patriots and the early history of the United States. The restoration of the colonial capital, construction of the Colonial Parkway by the U.S. National Park Service, several major enhancements at Jamestown and Yorktown, and development of several theme parks such as Busch Gardens Williamsburg beginning in the 1970s, all combined to help make the Historic Triangle area of Colonial Virginia become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States by the end of the 20th century.<sup>[3]</sup>