



Pictured:
"Sir Thomas Dale" at Henricus Historical Park's bluff overlooking The James River

For the past two years, Chesterfield Living Magazine has featured Countdown to Jamestown/Chesterfield, 2007. With the help of Dennis Farmer, Amanda Daniels, and others who are vitally interested in preserving the county's rich heritage, we have told the stories of the most important events in Chesterfield's past four hundred years. With this issue, coinciding with the anniversary of the English settlement at Jamestown, we present the number one story. Although Sir Christopher Newport made a landing here in Chesterfield County in May of 1607, several days prior to establishing a settlement at Jamestown, the number one story, as far as having a lasting impact on Chesterfield County, took place four years later, in 1611. That, of course, was the founding of Henricus.



1 1611 HENRICUS-THE CITIE OF HENRY

BY DENNIS P. FARMER

Few places in the world are fortunate enough to have a defined moment when pre-recorded history meets recorded history, but Chesterfield County is just such a place. Virginia's Indians had, for thousands of years, lived, worked, played and died in what today we know as Chesterfield, but without the written word, their rich oral documentation has almost completely vanished. George Percy wrote those first recorded words from "Poor Cottage" in the "countrie of the Apamatica" near modern Rivers Bend, on May 8, 1607, within today's Chesterfield. He, along with Christopher Newport, Gabriel Archer and others were on an exploring expe-

dition along the James River to its falls, about at Manchester. Within this "discourse," as it is commonly known today, we have the first written record of Chesterfield.

Soon afterward, a second expedition of these same men returned to Chesterfield, with Captain John Smith added. It may well have been then that iron ore was discovered at the mouth of Falling Creek, as ore samples were sent to England to be examined for future exploitation as the Falling Creek Ironworks of 1619-22. A peninsula made up from a large loop of the James River was surveyed as a possible settlement location for expansion. That location is today known as Farrar's Island. Ef-

forts were also made during 1610-11 to establish a fort at the falls of the James River (modern Manchester and Richmond) and failed. A second effort to "My Lord's Island" built a sawmill, whose planks were used at Jamestown and even shipped to London. Lack of food and attacks by the Powhatans made this post a great hazard to garrison.

Sometime about March of 1611, the Virginia Company of London planned to establish "Henricus," and Sir Thomas Dale undertook the effort, later that year, with between 300 and 350 men and boys, something very close

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- # 7** 1864-BERMUDA HUNDRED CAMPAIGN (*JAN/FEB 06*)
- # 6** 1815-BELLONA FOUNDRY, CAST IN WAR (*MAY/JUN 06*)
- # 5** 1782-NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION IN CHESTERFIELD (*SEPT/OCT 06*)
- # 4** 1775-1781-BRITISH INVASION (*NOV/DEC 06*)
- # 3** 1730s-MID-LOTHIAN MINES (*JAN/FEB 07*)
- # 2** 1622-FALLING CREEK IRON WORKS (*MAR/APR 07*)

Henricus Continued

to half of all the English settlers in Virginia. With Dale, a small group with the heavy baggage came via the river, while the main body marched overland from Jamestown.

On May 1, 1612, “the New Life of Virginia” by Robert Johnson was published, describing the new city. “The colony is removed up the river fourscore miles further beyond James town to a place of higher ground, strong and defensible by nature – a good air, wholesome and clear (unlike the marish seat at James town) with fresh and plenty of water springs, much fair and open grounds freed from woods, and wood enough at hand.” Johnson also describes the first hospital in the new World, Mount Malado. “Here they were building also an hospital with fourscore lodgings (and beds already sent to furnish them) for the sick and lame, with keepers to attend them for their comfort and recovery.” He also describes “competent and decent house (the first storey all of bricks) that every man may have his lodging and dwelling place apart by himself,” alas this “New Life” was clearly a marketing piece, designed to recruit new settlers, more than to describe Henricus. The reality was much less comfortable, and conditions were very harsh, indeed.

Sir Thomas Dale was a harsh military commander and taskmaster. He drove his men and boys to complete walls, defenses, church, Mount Malado, storehouses and common dwellings within 160 days. Included within this effort were four fortified dwellings, Charity Fort, Elizabeth Fort, Fort Patience and the hospital site, Mount Malado, as well as a “faire framed house” for the Rev. Alexander Whitaker, called “Rock Hall.”

Henricus, built as it was, as a defensive community, required a great amount of labor, and in turn, like Jamestown and the rest of the colony, was poorly supplied with food, clothing and tools, and at first lacked any farming efforts. This caused hardship and death among its settlers approaching 50 percent per year, which caused dissent and distress within the “Citie.” The “Laws Divine, Moral, and Martial” printed in official form on June 22, 1611, made Virginia, in effect, a military colony, with very hard punishments. Dale, at Henricus, enforced these laws, so much so that they have been called, “Dale’s Code.”

The threat of the Kingdom of Spain and its New World colonies was very real. Don Diego de Molina, a captive at Jamestown, sent a secret letter directed to the Spanish ambassador in London. In this letter he describes “the settlement of Bermuda (Henricus), where it is said they have strong fortifications, because the conformation of the land is such that a few can defend themselves against a large number” Released sometime later, Molina, with six ships, was sent to destroy Virginia, but he was foiled when his crews mutinied.

While the Spanish never came, a great impact began at Henricus, and again, Sir Thomas Dale was the establisher. Private ownership of land in America began here in Chesterfield. Ralph Hamor in his True Discourse published in 1615, which was dated June 18, 1614, lists how Dale planned to remove the fear of starvation from the colony. Hamor again notes another first, the developing of tobacco in Virginia that was suitable for European markets and provided the economic base of colonial Virginia. “I may not forget the gentle-



Henricus Historical Park, today

man worthe of much commendations, which first tooke the pains to make triall thereof, his name Mr. John Rolfe, Anno Domini 1612, partly for the love he hath a long time borne unto it, and partly to raise commodity to the adventurers" Tobacco would soon become and has remained Virginia's top cash crop, often disrupting food crops and other projects in the colony.

Pocahontas, the favorite daughter of Powhatan would come to Henricus. Kidnapped by the English in 1613, she was sent in April of that year to Jamestown, and soon after moved here near Sir Thomas Dale. She was placed under the care of Whitaker and educated by him in matters of religion and social life of the English. In July, John Rolfe was introduced to her, and after her conversion, requested to marry "Lady Rebecca." On April 5, 1614, they were married. In an effort to obtain more support for the colony and repair his own reputation, Sir Thomas Dale returned to England in the spring of 1616, with the Rolfe family, John, Rebecca and their son, Thomas, about a dozen Powhatan Indians and as much impressive goods as Virginia could provide.

The Virginia princess was very well received in London, as both Dale and the Virginia Company had hoped. She was presented to English society, the Lord Mayor of London as well as the Bishop of London. She sat for a painting by Simon van de Passe in 1616 and was presented informally to King James and Queen Anna while attending a play at Whitehall Place on Jan. 6, 1617. After seven months, John Rolfe needed to return to Virginia. Pocahontas was suffering poor health, likely due to 17th-century London's foul air, a very common complaint of travelers to that great city. Embarked aboard ship in March, it became apparent that she was fatally ill and they landed at nearby Gravesend, England. She died soon afterward,

recorded as March 21, 1617. Myth, movies and interpretations have flourished regarding her over the centuries, but her own reported last words still hold true today: "All must die. 'Tis enough that the child liveth."

Settlement continued near the Citie of Henricus, but was more dispersed. By 1622, it was noted that at Falling Creek was Capt. John Berkley's plantation and the site of the first ironworks in America, also Thomas Sheffield's plantation some three miles south of Falling Creek, and John and Alice Proctor's plantation along Proctors Creek. Also, there was Henrico I(s)land (Henricus), the "Colledge People two miles from Henrico Citie" (the Collage Lands), Abraham Pierce's plantation, and five miles from the Colledge People, Bermuda Nether Hundreds and its dependants. Regretfully, most of what is known today comes from the list of the dead after the Massacre of 1622. During that terrible Good Friday morning, March 22, 1622, 66 people were killed in what is now Chesterfield.

After the horrible events of March 22, the Citie sharply declined and was reported, "quitted" by 1624, with only the church and a house remaining. The total population noted in 1625 was but 57, however, from these very determined people, what we know today at Chesterfield, would grow. Thomas Osborne, William Farrar, Thomas Baugh, Joseph Royall, Cicely Jordon would all place their efforts and families into the area and following the harsh, disciplined and forceful example of Sir Thomas Dale, "established" themselves, though at a terrible cost, as Virginia Indians were forever displaced within the county. By 1700 survey, only nine Indians were listed, and by 1749, when Chesterfield County became its own political body, no Native Americans remained here. ♦

