Fitzgerald

**Jamestown - Background Information**

Jamestown was the first permanent British settlement in North America. It was funded by a joint stock company, a group of investors who each get a share of the company’s profits but also its losses. The company was named The Virginia Company, after Queen Elizabeth I, and the company's first settlement would be name Jamestown, after King James I, the cousin of Queen Elizabeth who became King when she died with no heir. The first group of colonists set sail in three ships, the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, and the Discovery, in December 1606, 16 years after the colony of Roanoke was found to have disappeared.

The colonist's journey started off as badly. The three ships were stranded for weeks off the British coast, and food supplies dwindled. Over the course of the voyage, dozens died. But 104 colonists survived to reach the shores of Virginia. On May 13, 1607, they made landfall on a peninsula along the James River, about 60 miles from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, and began work to establish the colony.

Survival was extremely difficult. In their first winter, more than half the colonists died. More colonists and new supplies were brought from Britain, and a new leader, Captain John Smith. The following winter, disaster once again struck Jamestown, and only 60 of 500 colonists survived. Historians have never determined exactly why so many died.

The colony was able to survive, though. On June 7, 1610, Jamestown’s residents had tried to abandon the colony, but the next day their ships were met by a convoyof ships led by a new governor of Virginia, Thomas West, Lord De La Ware. The new governor ordered the settlers back to the colony. In 1612, John Rolfe, who would later marry Pocahontas, daughter of the chief of the local Powhatan tribes, led the colony in beginning to grow tobacco, finally giving the colony a cash crop from which it could profit. Jamestown was the beginning of what would become the first British colony, Virginia.