

## Gabriel Archer (ca. 1575–ca. 1609)

### 9<sup>th</sup> Great-Granduncle of E. David Arthur

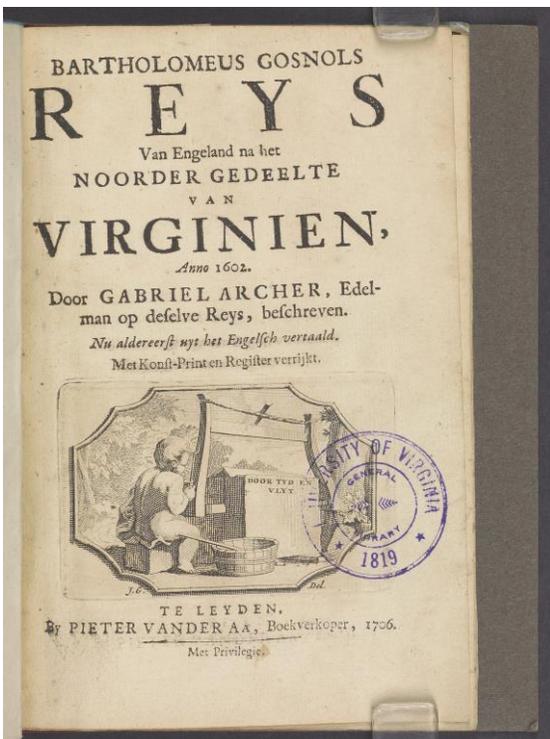
#### SUMMARY

Gabriel Archer chronicled an expedition to New England in 1602 and was among the first settlers of the Virginia colony at Jamestown in 1607. Probably born in Essex County, England, Archer attended Cambridge University. In 1602, he joined Bartholomew Gosnold in exploring Cape Cod, or what was then known as North Virginia, and his account of the trip was published posthumously in 1625. It is the first detailed English account of any part of New England. Five years later Archer was wounded in an attack by Virginia Indians upon first landing on the James River, but soon recovered. He joined Christopher Newport in exploring up the river, writing a narrative of that expedition, too. When John Smith returned from captivity among the Indians, Archer sought his execution but Newport intervened in Smith's favor. Archer returned to England not long after. A second stint in Virginia began in 1609 and included more conflict with Smith, who left the colony in the autumn of 1609. Archer died sometime that winter during the so-called Starving Time.

#### Early Years and New England

Archer was born about 1575 in Mountnessing, Essex County, England. He matriculated as a pensioner of Saint John's College, Cambridge University, about 1591 and entered Gray's Inn on March 15, 1593. Very little else is known about his life in England.

#### The Relation of Captaine Gosnols Voyage to the North Part of Virginia



Bartholomeus Gosnols Reys Van Engeland na het Noorder Gedeelte Van Virginiën, Anno 1602

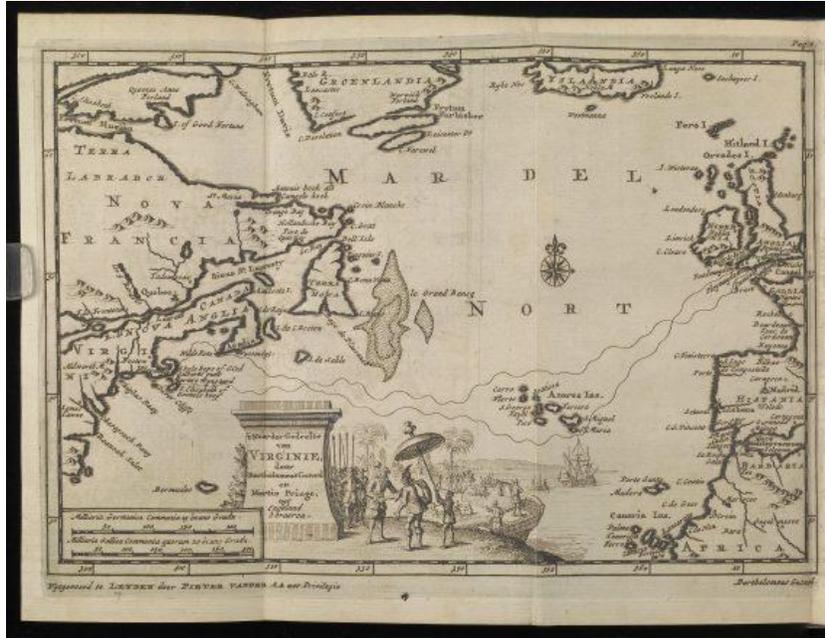
This title page is from a 1706 Dutch edition of Gabriel Archer's "The Relation of Captaine Gosnols Voyage to the North Part of Virginia" (1625), an account of a 1602 expedition to Cape Cod, then known as North Virginia. This was the first detailed English account of any part of New England.

Citation: Bartholomeus Gosnols Reys Van Engeland na het Noorder Gedeelte Van Virginiën, Anno 1602.

Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va. Credit: University of Virginia Special Collections

Original Author: Gabriel Archer

## Map of Bartholomew Gosnold's 1602 Expedition



Credit: University of Virginia Special Collections

Original Author: Pieter Vander Aa, publisher

Created: 1706

Medium: Engraved map

A foldout map from the 1706 Dutch edition of Gabriel Archer's "The Relation of Captaine Gosnols Voyage to the North Part of Virginia" (1625) delineates Bartholomew Gosnold's route during his 1602 expedition to Cape Cod, or what was then known as North Virginia. Gosnold named Cape Cod because of the abundance of cod found in the waters there. He also named Martha's Vineyard, indicated on the map as "Marta's Wyngaard," naming it after his deceased daughter. An engraving beneath the map shows an Englishman, presumably Gosnold, greeting an unidentified native leader.

Citation: Bartholomeus Gosnols Reys Van Engeland na het Noorder Gedeelte Van Virginien, Anno 1602.

1706. Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

Gabriel Archer (ca. 1574–ca. 1610)

## Captain Gosnold Encounters Indians in New England



Credit: University of Virginia Special Collections

Original Author: Pieter Vander Aa, publisher

Created: 1625 original; 1706 edition shown

Medium: Engraving

A foldout engraving from the 1706 Dutch edition of Gabriel Archer's "The Relation of Captaine Gosnols Voyage to the North Part of Virginia" (1625) depicts Bartholomew Gosnold and a small contingent of his men meeting the local Indians on Cape Cod, then

considered a northern part of Virginia. In the foreground, Gosnold presents gifts to the leader of the Indians. Archer wrote of the incident, "Our Captain gave him a straw hat and a pair of knives; the hat awhile he wore, but the knives he beheld with great marveling, being very bright and sharp; this our courtesy made them all in love with us." In the background, the English are building a trading post (which Archer refers to as a "fort") on Cuttyhunk Island.

Citation: Bartholomeus Gosnols Reys Van Engeland na het Noorder Gedeelte Van Virginien, Anno 1602.

1706. Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

Archer's name first appears in association with the New World as a member of Captain Bartholomew Gosnold's 1602 exploring expedition to New England, which at that point was still considered the northern part of Virginia. Archer wrote an important account of the expedition, "The Relation of Captaine Gosnols Voyage to the North Part of Virginia," which was first published by Samuel Purchas in 1625. Archer gave an intricate account of the voyage between its departure on March 26, 1602, and its New England landfall on May 14, and he recorded much detail about the exploration of Cape Cod Bay and the offshore islands, including Martha's Vineyard. Though he joined one expedition into Buzzards Bay, he was primarily engaged in dealing with Wampanoag Indians and supervising the construction of a trading post at Cuttyhunk Island. His narrative contains useful information on the Indians and valuable accounts of fauna and flora gained from a commonsense comparison with English examples. After the expedition's leaders decided to abandon the trading post, Archer left America on June 18, 1602, to return to England. How far his narrative circulated in manuscript is not known, but it is the first detailed English account of any part of New England.

### **The Relations of Captain Gosnold's Voyage to the North part of Virginia**

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16038/16038-h/16038-h.htm#archer>

The Relations of Captain Gosnold's Voyage to the North part of Virginia, begun the six and twentieth of March, Anno 42 Elizabethae Reginae, 1602, and delivered by Gabriel Archer, a gentleman in the said voyage.

The said captain did set sail from Falmouth the day and year above written accompanied with thirty-two persons, whereof eight mariners and sailors, twelve purposing upon the discovery to return with the ship for England, the rest remain there for population. The fourteenth of April following, we had sight of Saint Mary's, an island of the Azores.

The three-and-twentieth of the same, being two hundred leagues westward from the said island, in the latitude of 37 degrees, the water in the main ocean appeared yellow,

the space of two leagues north and south, where sounding with thirty fathoms line, we found no ground, and taking up some of the said water in a bucket, it altered not either in color or taste from the sea azure.

The seventh of May following, we first saw many birds in bigness of cliff pigeons, and after divers others as petrels, coots, hagbuts, penguins, mews, gannets, cormorants, gulls, with many else in our English tongue of no name. The eighth of the same the water changed to a yellowish green, where at seventy fathoms we had ground. The ninth, we had two-and-twenty fathoms in fair sandy ground, having upon our lead many glittering stones, somewhat heavy, which might promise some mineral matter in the bottom, we held ourselves by computation, well near the latitude of 43 degrees.

The tenth we sounded in 27, 30, 37, 43 fathoms, and then came to 108. Some thought it to be the sounding of the westernmost end of Saint John's Island; upon this bank we saw skulls of fish in great numbers. The twelfth, we hoisted out hawser of our shallop, and sounding had then eighty fathoms without any current perceived by William Streete the master, one hundred leagues westward from Saint Mary's, till we came to the aforesaid soundings, continually passed fleeting by us seaoare, which seemed to have \ their movable course towards the north-east; a matter to set some subtle invention on work, for comprehending the true cause thereof. The thirteenth, we sounded in seventy fathoms, and observed great beds of weeds, much wood, and divers things else floating by us, when as we had smelling of the shore, such as from the southern Cape and Andalusia, in Spain. The fourteenth, about six in the morning, we descried land that lay north, &c., the northerly part we called the north land, which to another rock upon the same lying twelve leagues west, that we called Savage Rock (because the savages first showed themselves there); five leagues towards the said rock is an out point of woody ground, the trees thereof very high and straight, from the rock east-north-east. From the said rock came towards us a Biscay shallop with sail and oars, having eight persons in it, whom we supposed at first to be Christians distressed. But approaching us nearer, we perceived them to be savages. These coming within call, hailed us, and we answered. Then after signs of peace, and a long speech by one of them made, they came boldly aboard us, being all naked, saving about their shoulders certain loose deer skins, and near their wastes seal skins tied fast like to Irish dimmie trousers. One that seemed to be their commander wore a waistcoat of a black work, a pair of breeches, cloth stockings, shoes, hat and band, one or two more had also a few things made by some Christians; these with a piece of chalk described the coast thereabouts, and could name Placentia of Newfoundland; they spoke divers Christian words, and seemed to understand much more than we, for want of language could comprehend. These people are in color swart, their hair long, uptied with a knot in the part of behind the head. They paint there bodies which are strong and well proportioned. These much desire our longer stay, but finding ourselves short of our purposed place, we set sail westward, leaving them and their coast. About sixteen leagues south-west from thence we perceived in that course two small island, the one lying eastward from Savage Rock, the other to the southward of it; the coast we left was full of goodly woods, fair plains, with

little green round hills above the cliffs appearing unto us, which are indifferently raised, but all rocky, and of shining stones, which might have persuaded us a longer stay there.

The fifteenth day we had again sight of the land, which made ahead, being as we thought an island, by reason of a large sound that appeared westward between it and the main, for coming to the west end thereof, we did perceive a large opening, we called it Shoal Hope. Near this cape we came to fathom anchor in fifteen fathoms, where we took great store of codfish, for which we altered the name, and called it Cape Cod. Here we saw sculls of herring, mackerel, and other small fish, in great abundance. This is a low sandy shoal, but without danger, also we came to anchor again in sixteen fathoms, fair by the land in the latitude of 42 degrees. This cape is well near a mile broad, and lieth north-east by east. The captain went here a shore and found the ground to be full of pease, strawberries, whortleberries, &c., as then unripe, the sand also by the shore somewhat deep, the firewood there by us taken in was of cypress, birch, witch-hazel and beech. A young Indian came here to the captain, armed with his bow and arrows, and had certain plates of copper hanging at his ears; he showed a willingness to help us in our occasions.

The sixteenth, we trended the coast southerly, which was all champaign and full of grass, but the island somewhat woody. Twelve leagues from Cape Cod, we descried a point with some breach, a good distance off, and keeping our luff to double it, we came onto the sudden into shoal water, yet well quitted ourselves thereof. This breach we called Tucker's Terror, upon his expressed fear. The point we named Point Care; having passed it we bore up again with the land, and in the night came with it anchoring in eight fathoms, the ground good.

The seventeenth, appeared many breaches round about us, so as we continued that day without remove.

The eighteenth, being fair we sent forth the boat, to sound over a breach, that in our course lay of another point, by us called Gilbert's Point, who returned us four, five, six, and seven fathoms over. Also, a discovery of divers islands which after proved to be hills and hammocks, distinct within the land. This day there came unto the ship's side divers canoes, the Indians apparelled as aforesaid, with tobacco and pipes steeled with cooper, skins, artificial strings and other trifles to barter; one had hanging about his neck a plate of rich copper, in length a foot, in breadth half a foot for a breastplate, the ears of all the rest had pendants of copper. Also, one of them had his face painted over, and head stuck with feathers in manner of turkey-cock's train. These are more timorous than those of the Savage Rock, yet very thievish.

The nineteenth, we passed over the breach of Gilbert's Point in four or five fathoms, and anchored a league or somewhat more beyond it; between the last two points are two leagues, the interim along shoal water, the latitude here is degrees two third parts.

The twentieth, by the ship's side, we there killed penguins, and saw many skulls of fish. The coast from Gilbert's Point to the supposed isles lieth east and by south. Here also we discovered two inlets which might promise fresh water, inwardly whereof we perceived much smoke, as though some population had there been. This coast is very full of people, for that as we trended the same savages still run along the shore, as men much admiring at us.

The one-and-twentieth, we went coasting from Gilbert's Point to the supposed isles, in ten, nine, eight, seven, and six fathoms, close aboard the shore, and that depth lieth a league off. A little from the supposed isles, appeared unto us an opening, with which we stood, judging it to be the end of that which Captain Gosnold descried from Cape Cod, and as he thought to extend some thirty or more miles in length, and finding there but three fathoms a league off, we omitted to make further discovery of the same, calling it Shoal Hope.

From this opening the main lieth south-west, which coasting along we saw a disinhabited island, which so afterward appeared unto us: we bore with it, and named it Martha's Vineyard; from Shoal Hope it is eight leagues in circuit, the island is five miles, and hath 41 degrees and one quarter of latitude. The place most pleasant; for the two-and-twentieth, we went ashore, and found it full of wood, vines, gooseberry bushes, whortleberries, raspberries, eglantines, &c. Here we had cranes, stearnes, shoulers, geese, and divers other beards which there at that time upon the cliffs being sandy with some rocky stones, did breed and had young. In this place we saw deer: here we rode in eight fathoms near the shore which we took great store of cod,--as before at Cape Cod, but much better.

The three-and-twentieth we weighed, and towards night came to anchor at the north-west part of the island, where the next morning offered unto us fast running thirteen savages apparelled as aforesaid, and armed with bows and arrows without any fear. They brought tobacco, deer-skins, and some sodden fish. These offered themselves unto us in great familiarity, who seemed to be well-conditioned. They came more rich in copper than any before. This island is sound, and hath no danger about it.

The four-and-twentieth, we set sail and doubled the Cape of another island next unto it, which we called Dover Cliff, and then came into a fair sound, where we rode all night; the next morning we sent of one boat to discover another cape, that lay between us and the main, from which were a ledge of rocks a mile into the sea, but all above water, and without danger; we went about them, and came to anchor in eight fathoms, a quarter of a mile from the shore, in one of the stateliest sounds that ever I was in. this called we Gosnold's Hope; the north bank whereof is the main, which stretcheth east and west. This island Captain Gosnold called Elizabeth's isle, where we determined our abode: the distance between every of these island is, viz. From Martha's Vineyard to Dover Cliff, half a league over the sound, thence to Elizabeth's isle, one league distant. From

Elizabeth's island unto the main is four leagues. On the north side, near adjoining unto the island Elizabeth, is an islet in compass half a mile, full of cedars, by me called Hill's Hap, to the northward of which, in the mouth of an opening on the main, appeareth another the like, that I called Hap's Hill, for that I hope much hap may be expected from it.

The five-and-twentieth, it was that we came from Gosnold's Hope. The six-and-twentieth, we trimmed and fitted up our shallop. The seven-and-twentieth, there came unto us an Indian and two women, the one we supposed to be his wife, the other his daughter, both clean and straight-bodied, with countenance sweet and pleasant. To these the Indian gave heedful attendance for that they shewed them in much familiarity with our men, although they would not admit of any immodest touch.

The eight-and-twentieth we entered counsel about our abode and plantation, which was concluded to be in the west part of Elizabeth's island. The north-east thereof running from out of our ken. The south and north standeth in an equal parallel. This island in the westernside admitteth some in creeks, or sandy coves, co girded, as the water in some places of each side meeteth, to which the Indians from the main do oftentimes resort \ for fishing of crabs. There is eight fathoms very near the shore, and the latitude here is 41 degrees 11 minutes, the breadth from sound to sound in the western part is not passing a mile at most, altogether unpeopled and disinhabited. It is overgrown with wood and rubbish, viz. Oaks, ashes, beech, walnut, witch-hazle, sassafras, and cedars, with divers others of unknown names. The rubbish is wild pease, young sassafras, cherry-trees, vines, eglantines, gooseberry bushes, hawthorn, honeysuckles, with other of like quality. The herbs and roots are strawberries, raspberries, ground-nuts, alexander, surrin, tansy, &c. without count. Touching the fertility of the soil by our own experience made, we found it to be excellent for sowing some English pulse; it sprouted out in one fortnight almost half a foot. In this island is a stage or pond of fresh water, in circuit two miles, on the one side not distant from the sea thirty yards, in the centre whereof is a rocky islet, containing near an acre of ground full of wood, on which we began our fort and place of abode, disposing itself so fit for the same. These Indians call gold wassador, which argueth there is thereof in the country.

The nine-and-twentieth, we labored in getting of sassafras, rubbishing our little fort or islet, new keeling our shallop, and making a punt or flat-bottom boat to pass to and fro our fort over the fresh water, the powder of sassafras, in twelve hours cured one of our company that had taken a great surfeit, by eating the bellies of dog fish, a very delicious meat.

The thirtieth, Captain Gosnold, with divers of his company, went upon pleasure in the shallop towards Hill's Hap to view it and the sandy cove, and returning brought with him a canoe that four Indians had there left, being fled away for fear of our English, which we brought into England.

The one-and-thirtieth, Captain Gosnold, desirous to see the main because of the distance, he set sail over; where coming to anchor, went ashore with certain of his company, and immediately there presented unto him men, women, and children, who, with all courteous kindness entertained him, giving him certain skins of wild beasts, which may be rich furs, tobacco, turtles, hemp, artificial strings colored, chains, and such like things as at the instant they had about them. These are a fair-conditioned people. On all the sea-coast along we found mussel shells that in color did represent mother-of-pearl, but not having means to dredge, could not apprehend further knowledge thereof. This main is the goodliest continent that ever we saw, promising more by far than we any did expect for it is replenished with fair fields, and in them fragrant flowers, also meadows, and hedged in with stately groves, being furnished also with pleasant brooks, and beautiful with two main rivers that (as we judge) may haply become good harbors, and conduct us to the hopes men so greedily do thirst after. In the mouth of one of these inlets or rivers, lieth that little isle before mentioned, called Hap's Hill, from which unto the westernmost end of the main, appearing where the other inlet is, I account some five leagues, and the coast between bendeth like a bow, and lieth east and by north. Beyond these two inlets we might perceive the main to bear up south-west, and more southerly. Thus with this taste of discovery, we now contented ourselves, and the same day made return unto our fort, time not permitting more sparing delay.

The first of June, we employed ourselves in getting sassafras, and the building of our fort. The second, third, and fourth, we wrought hard to make ready our house for the provision to be had ashore to sustain us till our ship's return. This day from the main came to our ship's side a canoe, with their lord or chief commander, for that they made little stay only pointing to the sun, as in sign that the next day he would come and visit us, which he did accordingly.

The fifth, we continued our labor, when there came unto us ashore from the main fifty savages, stout and lusty men with their bows and arrows; amongst them there seemed to be one of authority, because the rest made an inclining respect unto him. The ship was at their coming a league off, and Captain Gosnold aboard, and so likewise Captain Gilbert, who almost never went ashore, the company with me only eight persons. These Indians in hasty manner came towards us, so as we thought fit to make a stand at an angle between the sea and fresh water; I moved myself towards him seven or eight steps, and clapped my hands first on the sides of mine head, then on my breast, and after presented my musket with a threatening countenance, thereby to signify unto them, either a choice of peace or war, whereupon he using me with mine own signs of peace, I stepped forth and embraced him; his company then all sat down in manner like greyhounds upon their heels, with whom my company fell a bettering. By this time Captain Gosnold was come with twelve men more from aboard, and to show the savage seignior that he was our captain, we received him in a guard, which he passing through, saluted the seignior with ceremonies of our salutations whereat he nothing moved or altered himself. Our Captain gave him a straw hat and a pair of knives; the hat awhile

he wore, but the knives he beheld with great marveling, being very bright and sharp; this our courtesy made them all in love with us.

The sixth, being rainy, we spent idly aboard. The seventh, the seignior came again with all his troop as before, and continued with us the most part of the day, we going to dinner about noon, they sat with us and did eat of our bacaleure and mustard, drank of our beer, but the mustard nipping them in their noses they could not endure: it was a sport to behold their faces made being bitten therewith. In time of dinner the savages had stole a target, wherewith acquainting the seignior, with fear and great trembling they restored it again, thinking perhaps we would have been revenged for it, but seeing our familiarity to continue, they fell afresh to roasting of crabs, red herrings, which were exceeding great, ground nuts &c. as before. Our dinner ended, the seignior first took leave and departed, next all the rest saving four that stayed and went into the wood to help us dig sassafras, whom we desired to go aboard us, which they refused and so departed.

The eighth we divided the victuals, namely, the ship's store for England, and that of the planters, which by Captain Gilbert's allowance could be but six weeks for six months, whereby there fell out a controversy, the rather, for that some seemed secretly to understand of a purpose Captain Gilbert had not to return with supply of the issue, those goods should make by him to be carried home. Besides, there wanted not ambitious conceits in the minds of some wrangling and ill-disposed persons who overthrew the stay there at that time, which upon consultation thereof had, about five days after was fully resolved all for England again. There came in this interim aboard unto us, that stayed all night, an Indian, whom we used kindly, and the next day sent ashore; he showed himself the most sober of all the rest, we held him sent as a spy. In the morning, he filched away our pothooks, thinking he had not done any ill therein; being ashore we bid him strike fire, which with an emerald atone (such as the glaziers use to cut glass) he did. I take it to be the very same that in Latin is called smiris, for striking therewith upon touch-wood that of purpose he had, by means of a mineral stone used therein, sparkles proceeded and forthwith kindled with making of flame.

The ninth, we continued working on our storehouse, for as yet remained in us a desired resolution of making stay. The tenth, Captain Gosnold fell down with the ship to the little islet of cedars, called Hill's Hap, to take in cedar wood, leaving me and nine more in the fort, only with three meals meat, upon promise to return the next day.

The eleventh, he came not, neither sent, whereupon I commanded four of my company to seek out for crabs, lobsters, turtles, &c. for sustaining us until the ships returned, which was gone clean out of sight, and had the wind chopped up at south-west, with much difficulty would she have been able in short time to have made return. These four purveyors, whom I counselled to keep together for their better safety, divided themselves, two going one way and two another, in search as aforesaid. One of these petty companies was assaulted by four Indians, who with arrows did shoot and hurt one of the two in his side, the other, a lusty and nimble fellow, leaped on and cut their bow

strings, whereupon they fled. Being late in the evening, they were driven to lie all night in the woods, not knowing the way home through the thick rubbish, as also the weather somewhat stormy. The want of these sorrowed us much, as not able to conjecture anything of them unless very evil.

The twelfth, those two came unto us again, whereat our joy was increased, yet the want of our Captain, that promised to return, as aforesaid, struck us in a dumpish terror, for that he performed not the same in the space of almost three days. In the mean we sustained ourselves with alexander and sorrel pottage, ground-nuts, and tobacco, which gave nature a reasonable content. We heard at last, our Captain to 'lewre' unto us, which made such music as sweeter never came unto poor men.

The thirteenth, began some of our company that before vowed to stay, to make revolt: whereupon the planters diminishing, all was given over. The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth, we spent in getting sassafras and fire-wood of cedar, leaving house and a little fort, by ten men in nineteen days sufficient made to harbor twenty persons at least with their necessary provisions.

The seventeenth, we set sail, doubling the rocks of Elizabeth's island, and passing by Dover Cliff, came to anchor at Martha's Vineyard, being five leagues distant from our fort, where we went ashore, and had young cranes, herneshowes, and geese, which now were grown to pretty bigness.

The eighteenth, we set sail and bore for England, cutting off our shallop, that was well able to land five and twenty men or more, a boat very necessary for the like occasions. The winds do range most commonly upon this coast in the summer time, westerly. In our homeward course we observed the foresaid floating weeds to continue till we came within two hundred leagues of Europe. The three-and-twentieth of July we came to anchor before Exmouth.

---

### **First Trip to Virginia**

Late in 1606, in close association with Gosnold, Archer enrolled in the expedition of the Virginia Company of London to establish a colony in what was then known as South Virginia. Safely entering Chesapeake Bay in the spring of 1607, Captain Archer, as he is referred to in the records, suffered an injury to both hands during an Indian attack on the night of April 26. On the journey up the James River he selected a settlement site, thereafter named Archers Hope, which Captain Christopher Newport rejected in favor of the deeper water a few miles away at Jamestown Island. Archer accompanied Newport in his exploration of the James River as far as the fall line at what became the city of Richmond. Archer's primary function was to maintain a journal of the expedition's progress. An unsigned document in the Public Record Office in London contains his narrative of events between May 21 and June 21. A parallel document in a different handwriting, also unsigned but plausibly attributed to Archer on stylistic grounds, gives a

useful but superficial account of the topography and Indians encountered in the initial exploration. Both manuscripts have always remained in official custody and were probably sent to Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, the most prominent official supporter of the Virginia venture. Archer's reports are among the most informative eyewitness accounts of the first weeks of the Jamestown colony.

Archer's subsequent activities in Virginia are difficult to document thoroughly. He survived the sickness that killed more than half the colonists during the summer and autumn of 1607, and he was nominated recorder of the colony, effectively a magistrate. As such he participated with several councillors in the political trial at which the president, Edward Maria Wingfield, was convicted of a string of minor offenses and deprived of his office on September 10. Wingfield was confined to the pinnace, the small ship *Discovery*, where he continued to inveigh against Archer throughout the following months.

### **Ould Virginia**

Captain John Smith, having been captured by the Pamunkey Indians and handed over to Powhatan, the paramount chief of Tsenacomoco, was returned to Jamestown on January 2, 1608. According to Wingfield, Archer then charged Smith with responsibility for the death of two of his men, who had been killed by the Indians. On the strength of a text in Leviticus, Archer sought the death penalty. Smith was on the verge of being hanged when Newport appeared in the river with supplies and reinforcements from England. Smith's version of events merely stated that Archer and his friends had attempted to exclude him from the Council.

Newport eventually dealt with the squabbling handful of survivors by leaving for home on April 10, 1608, with Wingfield and Archer on board, much to Smith's relief.

### **Gabriel Archers account of the exploration of the James River to its fall line.**

While in England in the summer of 1608, Archer probably supplied the Virginia Company with copies of his reports. Although he made some unrealistic recommendations for crops that could be profitably cultivated in Virginia, including pineapples, sugar, and olives, he did think that tobacco had export potential.

1. Extract from 21 May 1607 from a journal of one of the settlers, likely Gabriel Archer, who is starting out on a journey of discovery with Captain Newport.



A relation of the discovery of our River, from James Forte into the Maine: made by Capt. James Newport: and sincerely written and observed by a gent: of the Colonie.

May-21.

1607 On Friday the 21st of May, Capt. Newport (having fitted our Gallie w<sup>th</sup> provision and all necessaries belonging to a discovery) took 5. gentlemen. 4. Maryners. and 14. Souldiers, w<sup>th</sup> whom he concluded w<sup>th</sup> a private resolution not to returne, but either to finde the head of the River, the Saute mentioned by your Speeches, the Sea againe; the Mountaynes Ascalatsi, or some issue.

The names of the Discoverers = Capt. James Newport.

George Derry.	} {	Francis Nelson	} Maryners.
Capt. Gabriell Archer.		John Doleson.	
Capt. John Smyth.		Robert Tyndall	
M <sup>r</sup> John Brooks.		Marye Flyte	
M <sup>r</sup> Sp. Wotton.			

- 1 Jonas Dole
- 2 Robert Martegan.
- 3 John Snowdork.
- 4 Olyver Browne.
- 5 Beniamyn White.
- 6 Sp. Senoway.
- 7 Sp. Turnbryde.
- 8 Sp. Godward.
- 9 Robert Fartson.
- 10 Charles Clarke.
- 11 Stephen.
- 12 Thomas Skymor.
- 13 Jeremy Deale.
- 14 Danyell.

## Transcript

A relatyon of the Discovery of our River, from James Forte into the Maine: made by Capt. Christopher Newport: and sincerely written and observed by a gent of ye colony.

Thursday the xxith of May, Capt[ain] Newport (having fitted our shallup with provision and all necessaryes belonging to a discovery) tooke 5 . gentleme[n]. 4 Maryners . and 14 Sal[ours], with whome he [proc]eded with a [per]fect resolutyon not to returne, but either to find ye head of this Ryver, the Laake mentyoned by others heretofore, the Sea againe, the Mountaynes Apalatsi, or some issue

The names of the Dyscoverers are thes : Capt[ain] Christopher Newport

George Percye esq.	Francys Nellson	
Capt[ain] Gabriell Archer	John Collson.	
Capt[ain] Ihon Smyth	Robert Tyndall	Mariners
M[aster] Ihon Brookes	Marrhew Fytch	
M[aster] Thomas Wotton		

Jonas Poole.

Robert Markham.

John Crookdeck.

Olyver Browne.

Beniamyn White.

Rych[ard] Genoway

Tho[mas] Turnbrydg

Tho[mas] Godword

Robert Jackson

Charles Clarke

Stephen

Thomas Slymer

Jeremy Deale

Danyell

## Simplified transcript

A relation of the discovery of our river, from James Fort into the Maine: made by Capt. Christopher Newport and sincerely written and observed by a gentleman of the colony.

On Thursday the 20th of May, Captain Newport (having fitted our shallop [small ship] with provisions [supplies] and all necessary supplies for an expedition, took with him 5 gentlemen, 4 mariners, and 14 sailors and proceeded with the aim to find the head of this river, the lake previously mentioned by others, the sea [coastline], the Apalatsi [Appalachian] Mountains...

The names of the discoverers are these: Captain Christopher Newport

George Percye esq.	Francys Nellson	
Capt[ain] Gabriell Archer	John Collson.	
Capt[ain] Ihon Smyth	Robert Tyndall	Mariners
M[aster] Ihon Brookes	Marrhew Fytch	
M[aster] Thomas Wotton		

Jonas Poole.

Robert Markham.

John Crookdeck.

Olyver Browne.

Beniamyn White.

Rych[ard] Genoway

Tho[mas] Turnbrydg

Tho[mas] Godword

Robert Jackson

Charles Clarke

Stephen

Thomas Slymer

Jeremy Deale

Danyell

2. This is an extract from 23 May 1607 from the journal seen in Source 1.

23.  
49  
Satterday we passed a few short reaches; and .5. mile of  
poore cottages we went a shore. Heer we found our kinde  
Comrades

Comrades againe, who had gyven notice all along as they came of us:  
by which we were entertayned with much Courtesye in every place.  
We found here a Wiroans (for so they call their kynges) who satt  
vpon a matt of Reedes, with his people about him: He casued one to  
be layd for Captaine Newport, gave vs a Deare roasted; which accor-  
ding to their Custome they seethed againe: His people gaue vs  
mullberyes, sodd wheate and beanes, and he caused his weomen to  
make Cakes for vs. He gaue our Captaine his Crowne which was of  
Deares hayre dyed redl. Certifying him of our intentyon vp the  
Ryver, he was willing to send guydes with vs. This we found to be a  
kyng

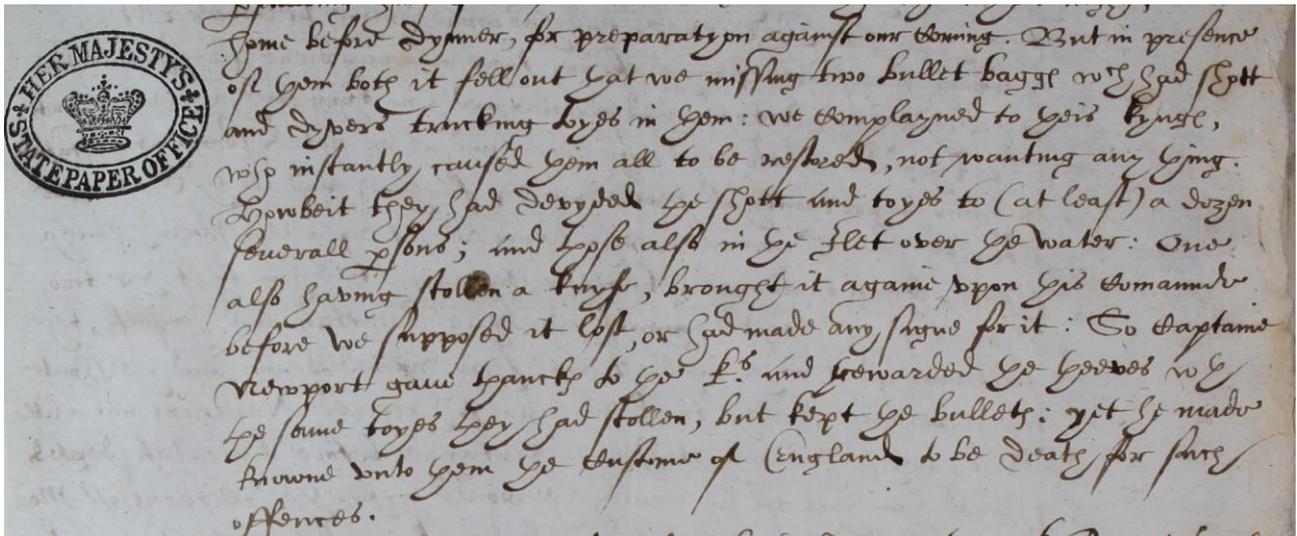
### Transcript

Satterday we passed a few short reaches; and .5. mile of Poore Cottages we went a shore. Heer we found our kinde Comrades againe, who had gyven notice all along as they came of us: by which we were entertayned with much Courtesye in every place. We found here a Wiroans (for so they call their kynges) who satt vpon a matt of Reedes, with his people about him: He casued one to be layd for Captain Newport, gave vs a Deare roasted; which according to their Custome they seethed againe: His people gaue vs mullberyes, sodd wheate and beanes, and he caused his weomen to make Cakes for vs. He gaue our Captaine his Crowne which was of Deares hayre dyed redl. Certifying him of our intentyon vp the Ryver, he was willing to send guydes with vs.

## Simplified transcript

On Saturday we passed a few short stretches of river, and 5 miles from 'Poor Cottage' we went ashore. Here we found our kind friends again, who had given us notice while they came toward us, and who entertained us with much courtesy [respect] in every place. We found here a Wiroans (which is what they call their kings) who sat upon a mat of reeds with his people around him. He arranged for [a mat] to be laid for Captain Newport and gave us a roasted deer, which according to their custom they seethed [boiled] again. His people gave us mulberries, wheat and beans, and he had his women make cakes for us. He gave our Captain his crown, which was made out of deer hair dyed red. When we told him we were going up the river, he was willing to send guides with us.

3. This extract from 24 May 1607 from Archer's journal describes how the English were missing two bullet-bags and their contents.



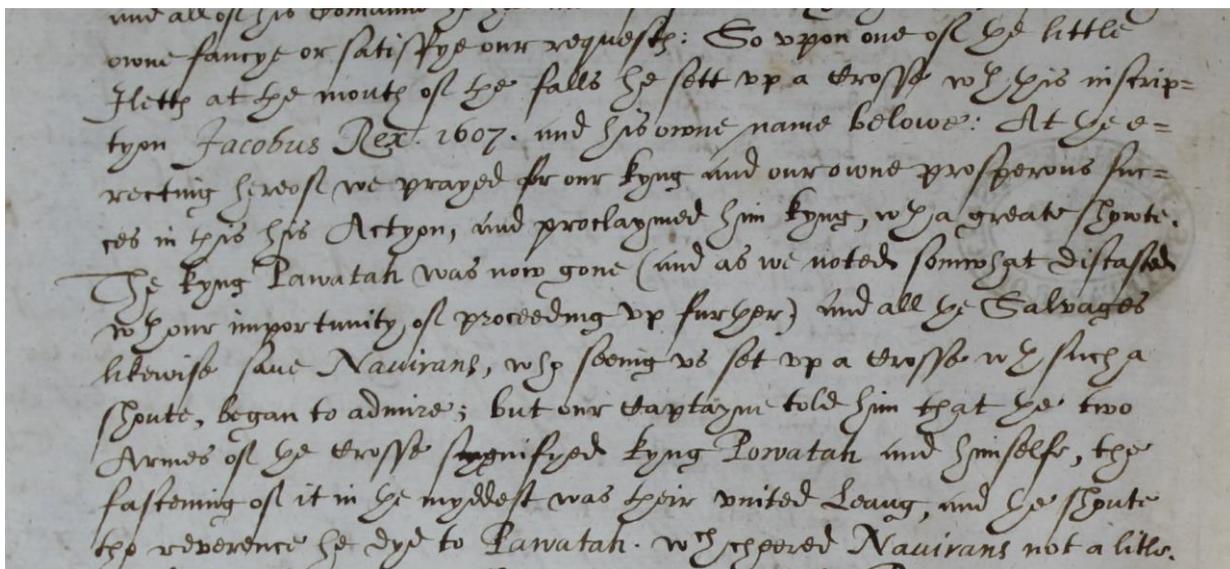
## Transcript

But in presence of them both it fell out that we missing two bullet-bagges which had shott and Dyvers trucking toyes in them: we Complayned to theis kynges, who instantly caused them all to be restored, not wanting any thing. Howbeit they had Devyded the shott and toyes to (at least) a dozen seuerall persons; and those also in the llet over the water: One also having stollen a knyfe, brought it againe vpon this Comaunde before we supposed it lost, or had made any signe for it: so Captaine Newport gaue thanckes to the Kinges and rewarded the theeves with the same toyes they had stollen, but kept the bulletes: yet he made knowne vnto them the Custome of England to be Death for such offences.

## Simplified transcript

But in presence of them both it turned out that we were missing two bullet-bags which had shot [bullets] and various trucking toys [goods to be used for trading with the Native Americans] inside them. We complained to their kings, who instantly caused them all to be returned, not wanting anything. However they had divided the shot and toys between at least a dozen people, as well as those in the inlet over the water. One also, having stolen a knife, brought it back to [the king's] command before we had thought it to be lost.. Captain Newport gave thanks to the kings and rewarded the thieves with the same toys they had stolen, but kept the bullets: however, he made it clear that they understood that the custom of England was death for such offences.

4. This extract from 24 May 1607 (Whitsunday) from Archer's journal describes how the colonists erected a cross in the name of King James, then misled their Native American guide about its meaning.



## Transcript

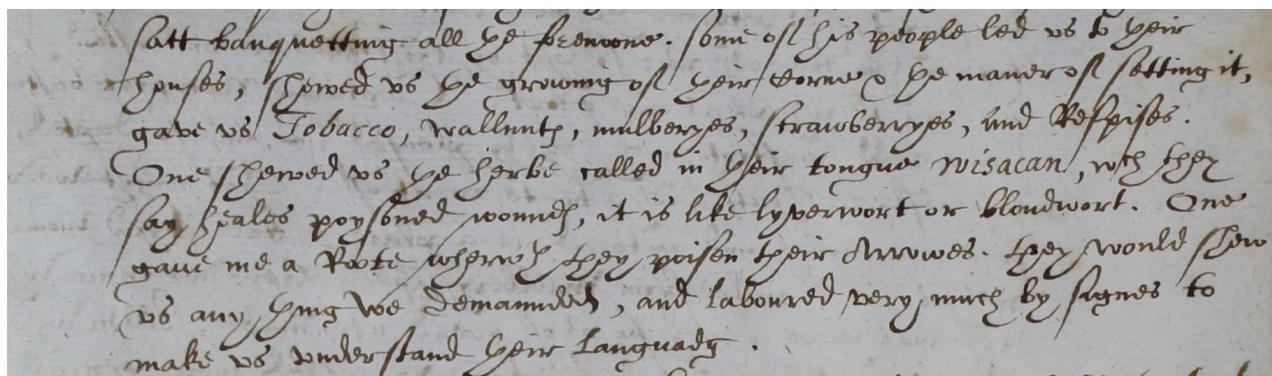
'So upon one of the little iletts at the mouth of the falls he [Captain Newport] sett up a crosse with this inscription Jacobus Rex. 1607. and his owne name below: At the erecting thereof we prayed for our king and our owne prosperous succes in this his action, and proclaimed him king, with a greate showte. The king Pawatah [Powhatan]

was now gone (and as we noted somewhat distasted with our importunity of proceeding up further) and all the savages likewise save Naurans, who seeing us set up a crosse with such a shoute, began to admire; but our captayne told him that the two arms of the cross signified kyng Pawatah and himselfe, the fastening in the middle was their united league, and the shout and the reverence he did to Pawatah, which cheered Naurans not a litle.'

#### Simplified transcript

'So on one of the small islands at the mouth of the falls, he [Captain Newport] set up a cross with the inscription 'Jacobus Rex. 1607' and his own name below. Once it had been erected, we prayed for our king and our own prosperous success in this [venture done in his name], and proclaimed him king, with a great shout. The king Pawatah [Powhatan] was now gone (and, as we noted, somewhat displeased with our insistence on proceeding up further), as were all the savages, except for Naurans, who seeing us set up a cross with such a shout, began to admire [pay attention]. But our captain told him that the two arms of the cross signified king Powhatan and himself, the fastening in the middle represented their alliance, and the shout and the reverence was done for Powhatan, which cheered Naurans quite a bit.'

5. This extract from 25 May 1607 from Archer's journal describes the Native American inhabitants showing the settlers how they lived.



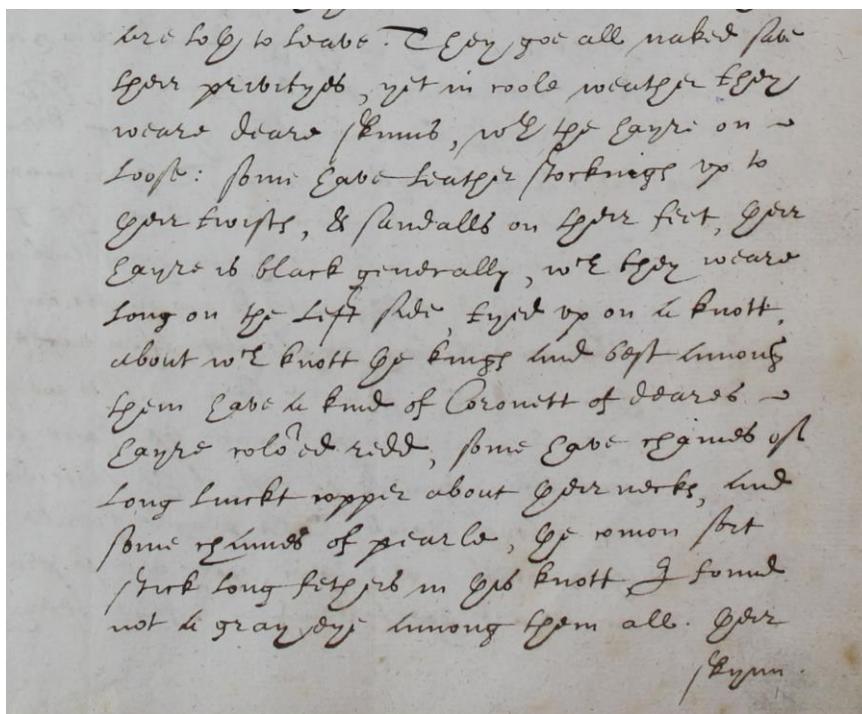
#### Transcript

Some of his people led vs to their houses, showed vs the growing of their Corne & the maner of setting it, gave us Tobacco, Wallnutes, mullberyes, strawberryes, and Respises. One shewed vs the herbe called in their tongue wisacan, which they say heales poysoned woundes, it is like lyverwort of bloudwort. One gaue me a Roote wherewith they poisen their Arrowes. they would shew vs any thing we Demanded, and laboured very much by signes to make vs understand their Languagd.

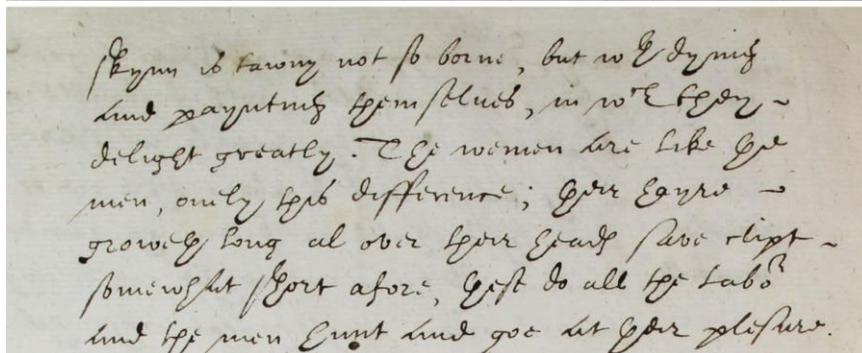
## Simplified transcript

Some of his people led us to their houses, showed us the growing of their corn & the manner of setting [planting] it, gave us tobacco, walnuts, mulberries, strawberries, and raspberries. One showed us the herb called in their language wisacan, which they say heals poisoned wounds, like liverwort or bloodwort. One gave me a root with which they poison their arrows. They would show us anything we demanded, and made a strong effort to use signs to make us understand their language.

6. This extract from May-June 1607 describes how the Native Americans appeared to the writer. It appears in a text titled 'The description of the new discovered river and country of Virginia; with the liklyhood of ensuing ritches, by England's ayd and industry.



are to be to beate. The day we all naked shew  
their privities, yet in roole we are they  
we are deare friends, w<sup>ch</sup> they carry on  
loof: some have water forknings up to  
their wrists, & sandals on their feet, their  
eyes is black generally, w<sup>ch</sup> they wear  
long on the left side, theyd up on a knott,  
about w<sup>ch</sup> knott they bring and best among  
them have a kind of Coronett of deares  
theye robe of redd, some have regiments of  
long lincott rupper about their necks, and  
some regiments of pearls, theye somon bet  
their long fingers in their knott I found  
not a gray dyi among them all. their  
Rymer.



Rymer is having not so borne, but w<sup>ch</sup> theye  
and saynting them selves, in w<sup>ch</sup> theye  
delight greatly. The women are like the  
men, only theye differance; their eyes  
growing long al over their face save slight  
somewhit short afore, theye do all the labo<sup>r</sup>  
and the men count and goe at their pleasure.

## Transcript

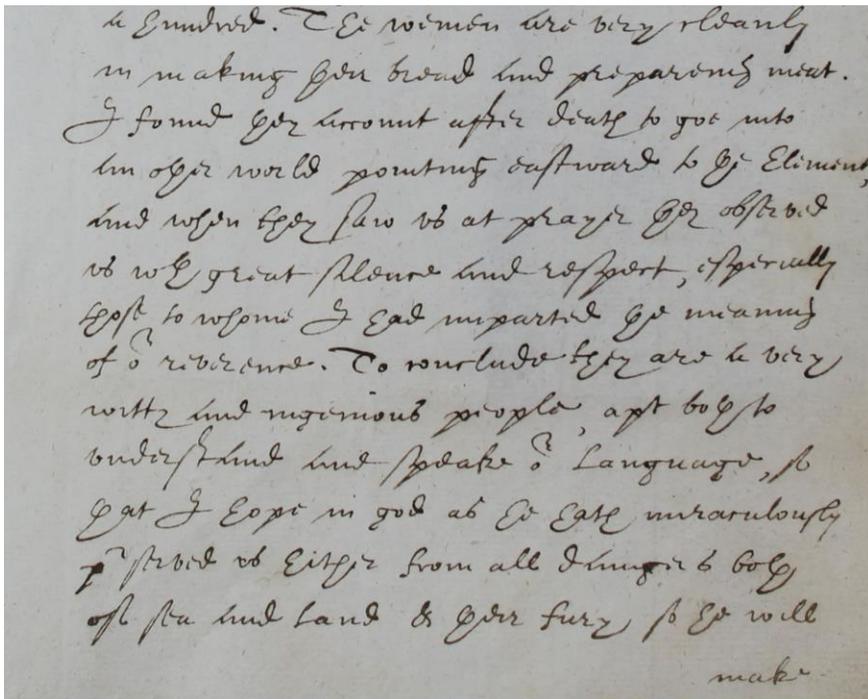
They goe all naked save their privities, yet in coole weather they weare deare skinns, with the hayre on loose: some have leather stockinges vp to their twistes, & sandalls on their feet, their hayre is black generally, which they weare long on the left side, tyed vp on a knott, about which knott the kinges and best among them have a kind of Coronett of deares hayre coloured redd, some have chaines of long linckt copper about their neckesm and some chaines of pearle, the common sort stick long fethers in this knott, I found not a grey eye among them all. theirskynn is tawny not so borne, but with dying and paynting them selues, in which they – delight greatly. The wemen are like the men, onely this difference; their hayre – groweth long al over their heads save clipt – somewhat short afore, these do all the labour and the men hunt and goe at their plesure.

## Simplified transcript

They go completely naked except for their privates [genitals], but in cool weather they wear deer skins with their hair loose: some have leather stockings up to their twistes [cloth covering their pelvis], & sandals on their feet. Their hair is black generally, which they wear long on the left side, tied up in a knot. Around the knot the kings and best among them have a kind of coronet [crown] of deer hair coloured red, some have chains of long linked copper around their necks and some chains of pearl. The common sort [most of them] stick long feathers in this knot [of hair]. I found none of them had grey eyes. Their skin is tawny [yellowish-brown] not by birth, but through dyeing and painting themselves, which delights them greatly. The women are like the men, with only this difference: their hair grows long all over their heads but is clipped somewhat short in the front. These [the women] do all the labour and the men hunt and go at their pleasure.

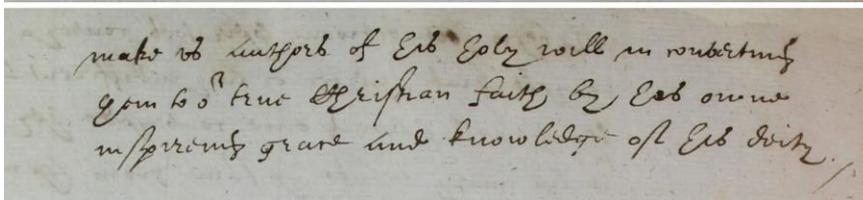
7. This extract from May-June 1607 describes how its author viewed the role of religion in the relationship with the Native Americans. It appears in a text titled 'The description

of the new discovered river and country of Virginia; with the liklyhood of ensuing ritches, by England's ayd and industry. / A brief description of the people.'



A handwritten manuscript snippet in cursive script. The text describes the habits and religious practices of the people of Virginia, mentioning their cleanliness in food preparation, their beliefs about the afterlife, and their respectful behavior towards the narrator. The text is written on aged, slightly stained paper.

the women are very cleanly  
in making their bread and preparing meat.  
I found they account after death to goe into  
an other world pointing eastward to the Element,  
and when they saw vs at prayer they observed  
vs with great silence and respect, especially  
those to whome I had imparted the meaning  
of our reverence. To conclude they are a very  
witty and ingenious people, apt both to  
vnderstand and speake our language, so  
that I hope in god as he hath miraculously  
preserved vs hither from all dangers both  
of sea and land & their fury so he will  
make



A second handwritten manuscript snippet, continuing the previous text. It describes the narrator's hope that the people will be converted to Christianity through the narrator's influence and the power of God.

make vs authors of his holy will in converting  
them to our true Christian faith by his owne  
inspiring grace and knowledge of his deity.

The women are very cleanly in making their bread and preparing meat. I found they account after death to goe into an other world pointing eastward to the Element, and when they saw vs at prayer they observed vs with great silence and respect, especially those to whome I had imparted the meaning of our reverence. To conclude they are a very witty and ingenious people, apt both to vnderstand and speake our language, so that I hope in god as he hath miraculously preserved vs hither from all dangers both of sea and land & their fury so he will make vs authors of his holy will in converting them to our true Christian faith by his owne inspiring grace and knowledge of his deity.

## Simplified transcript

The women are very skilled in making their bread and preparing meat. I found that they claim that after death one goes into another world pointing eastward to the element. When they saw us at prayer they observed us with great silence and respect, especially to those who I had told the meaning of our reverence [worship]. To conclude, they are a very witty and ingenious people, capable both of understanding and speaking our language, so that I hope in god, as he has miraculously preserved us so far from all dangers both of sea and land & their fury, so he will make us authors of his holy will in converting them to our true Christian faith by his own inspiring grace and knowledge of his deity [divinity].

---

During Archer's 1608–1609 English sojourn he apparently came to terms with Wingfield. Some of the evidence of Archer's intrigues must also have come to light, but his defects were overlooked because of his experience and his skill as a reporter. When a great national effort was mounted to put the Virginia colony on a sounder footing with a relief fleet of nine vessels, Captain Archer was placed in command of the *Blessing*. His ship survived the storm that scattered the flotilla, reaching Jamestown on August 11, 1609. Archer found Captain John Smith installed as president until his one-year term expired on September 10. Because the documents conveying authority to Sir Thomas Gates had gone astray during the stormy Atlantic crossing, Smith refused to surrender his presidency to the newcomers and endeavored to distribute the 300 to 400 arrivals at new settlements up and down the river. Using a legalistic ruse that Archer probably devised, the newly arrived councillors announced that they would formally take over when Smith's term ended. After Smith was injured in an explosion, he finally agreed to leave with one of the departing vessels.

Archer's last surviving letter, dated August 31, 1609, and sent to a friend via one of the ships returning to England, included a brief but lucid account of his recent voyage as well as an attack on Smith for not showing "due respect to many worthy Gentlemen that came in our ships." Archer reported on the beginnings of the new administration, admitting that Smith would "have it blazoned a mutenie." One final record of this antagonism is a series of trivial charges against Smith by Archer that were later forwarded to England.

Archer died in Virginia on an unrecorded date during the Starving Time in the winter of 1609–1610. In 2015 archaeologists identified him as one of four bodies that had been buried near the altar in Jamestown's 1608 church.

## Major Works

The Relation of Captaine Gosnols Voyage to the North Part of Virginia (1625)

## TIMELINE

ca. 1574

Gabriel Archer is born in Mountnessing, Essex County, England.

ca. 1591

Gabriel Archer matriculates at Saint John's College, Cambridge University.

March 15, 1593

Gabriel Archer begins studies at Gray's Inn.

March 26, 1602

An English colonizing expedition, led by Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, departs Falmouth on the ship Concord. Twenty colonists and a dozen crewmembers are aboard.

May 14, 1602

The English ship Concord, commanded by Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, anchors off a peninsula that Gosnold names Cape Cod. He later names Martha's Vineyard for his late daughter, before establishing a small colony on Cuttyhunk Island.

June 18, 1602

The English ship Concord, commanded by Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, sails to England after its exploration of the New England coast.

Late 1606

Gabriel Archer enrolls in the expedition of the Virginia Company of London to establish a colony in what is known as South Virginia.

April 26, 1607

Jamestown colonists first drop anchor in the Chesapeake Bay, and after a brief skirmish with local Indians, begin to explore the James River.

May 13, 1607

The Jamestown colonists select a marshy peninsula fifty miles up the James River on which to establish their settlement.

May 26, 1607

While Christopher Newport and a party of colonists explore the James River, an alliance of five Algonquian-speaking Indian groups—the Quiyoughcohannocks, the Weyanocks, the Appamattucks, the Paspaheghs, and the Chiskiacks—attacks Jamestown, wounding ten and killing two.

May 28, 1607

After an Indian attack, the settlers at Jamestown begin building a fort.

June 10, 1607

Finally released from arrest, John Smith takes his seat as a member of the Council.

June 15, 1607

English colonists complete construction of James Fort at Jamestown.

June 22, 1607

Christopher Newport departs from Jamestown for England, carrying a letter to the Virginia Company of London that exaggerates the Virginia colony's commercial possibilities.

September 10, 1607

Council members John Ratcliffe, John Smith, and John Martin oust Edward Maria Wingfield as president, replacing him with Ratcliffe. By the end of the month, half of Jamestown's 104 men and boys are dead, mostly from sickness.

January 2, 1608

John Smith returns to Jamestown after being held captive by Powhatan. Only thirty-eight colonists survive, Smith's seat on the Council is occupied by Gabriel Archer, and the Council accuses Smith of killing his companions. Smith is sentenced to hang, but the charge is dropped when Christopher Newport arrives with the first supplies from England.

April 10, 1608

Aboard the John and Francis, Christopher Newport leaves Jamestown for England. Among those with him are Gabriel Archer, Edward Maria Wingfield, and the Indian Namontack.

Summer 1608

While in England, Gabriel Archer probably supplies the Virginia Company with copies of his reports of the colony at Jamestown.

August 11, 1609

Four ships reach Jamestown from England: Unity, Lion, Blessing, and Falcon. Two others are en route; two more were wrecked in a storm; and one, Sea Venture, was cast up on the Bermuda islands' shoals.

August 31, 1609

In his last surviving letter, Gabriel Archer describes his most recent voyage to Virginia and attacks the leadership of John Smith.

October 1609

John Smith leaves Virginia. The Jamestown colony's new leadership is less competent, and the Starving Time follows that winter.

November 1609

Powhatan Indians lay siege to Jamestown, denying colonists access to outside food sources. The Starving Time begins, and by spring 160 colonists, or about 75 percent of Jamestown's population, will be dead from hunger and disease. This action begins the First Anglo-Powhatan War (1609—1614).

Winter 1609—1610

Gabriel Archer dies on an unrecorded date during the Starving Time at Jamestown.

1625

Gabriel Archer's account of Bartholomew Gosnold's New England expedition of 1602 is published by Samuel Purchas.

CITE THIS ENTRY    APA Citation:

Quinn, David & Dictionary of Virginia Biography. Gabriel Archer (ca. 1574—ca. 1610). (2021, December 22).

In Encyclopedia Virginia. <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/archer-gabriel-ca-1574-ca-1610>.

---

More about Gabriel Archer

<http://www.edavidarthur.net/GabrielArcher/GabrielArcher1575.htm>

George Archer, Jr. – Nephew of Gabriel Archer and Son-in-law of Col. Abraham Wood

<http://www.edavidarthur.net/AbrahamWood/AbrahamWood.htm>