



*Edward Maria Wingfield:
The Forgotten Leader of Jamestowne*

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Background in England

- Born in 1550, Wingfield was a soldier in England's ongoing battles against Ireland, and also fought as a commander for the Dutch Republic in the war with Spain. He was an experienced soldier
- Wingfield was briefly a member of Parliament

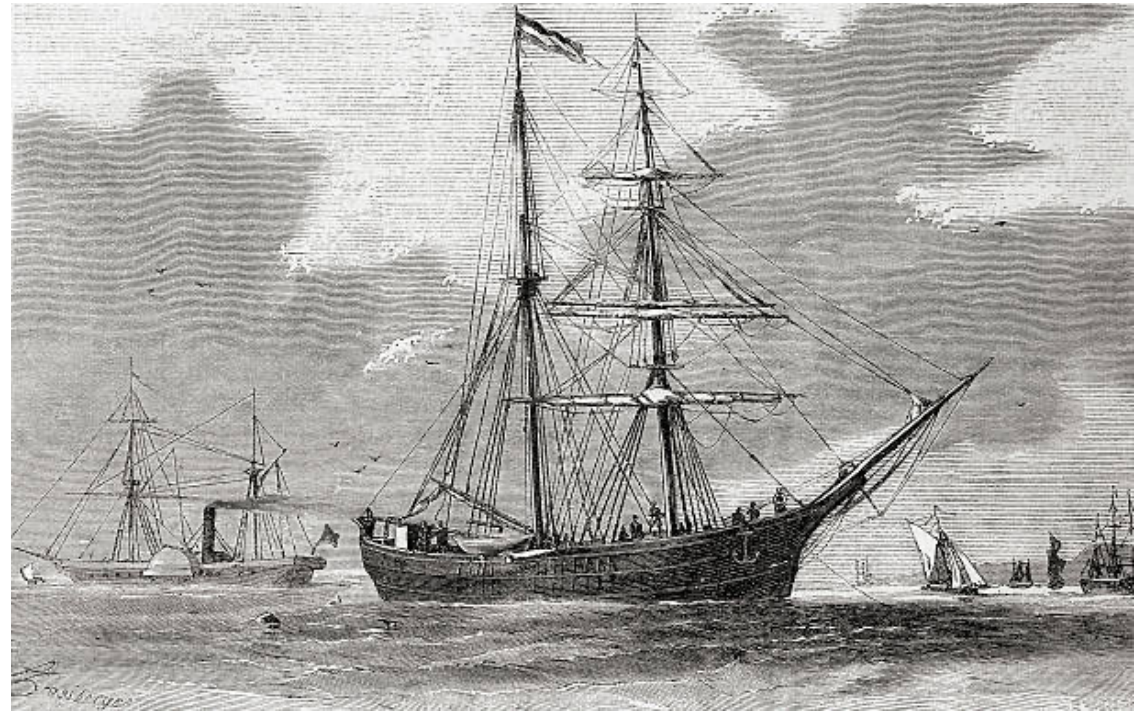


Wingfield's Role With the Virginia Company

- Wingfield was one of the early organizers of The Virginia Company, and one of its biggest financial backers. He and his cousin recruited almost half of the voyagers to Virginia
- Wingfield was one of eight original incorporators of The Virginia Company, and named in the First Virginia Charter of 1606, along with Thomas Gates, George Somers, Richard Hakluyt, and others
- Unlike Plymouth Colony – also run under the auspices of the Virginia Company-- the Virginia Colony was almost entirely commerce-driven, and the initial colonists were mostly “gentlemen.”

1607: The Troubled Voyage to Jamestowne

- Almost 3 months at sea
- Wingfield and Capt. Smith are at each others' throats; Wingfield denounces Smith
- Capt. Newport saves Smith from being executed, but imprisons him for the rest of the voyage



Arrival in Virginia; Governing Council Named

- April 26: The ships arrive in Virginia [Cape Henry]. The sealed box is opened, Wingfield is named to the Council, along with Capt. Smith
- May 13: the ships arrive in Jamestowne; Wingfield is elected President of the Council– ***the first democratic election in the New World***
- Wingfield refuses to swear Smith in as a member of the Council
- The Fort is constructed in a month's time; 500+ 30-foot trees were felled, but not before the first attacks.....

Fighting Breaks Out With the Powhatans



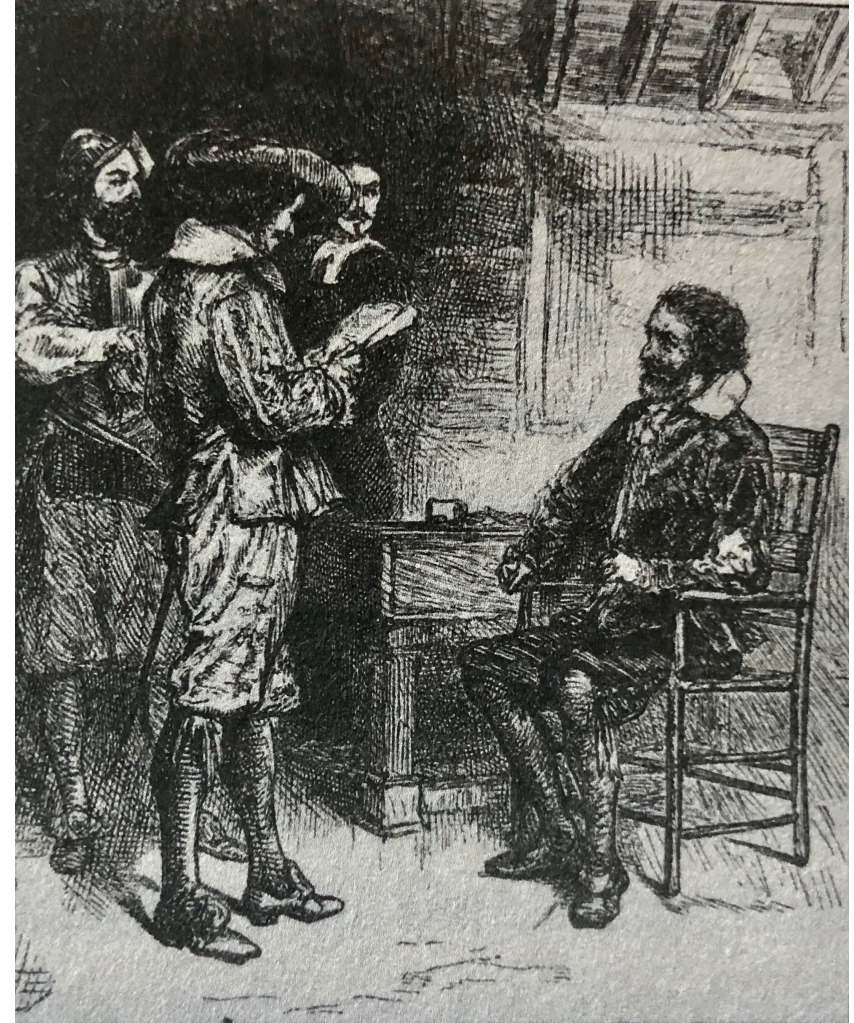
- May 13: the Fort is not built yet
- Several hundred Indians attack the colonists, who are vastly outnumbered; 12 colonists are killed or wounded, including Wingfield
- Colonists are unhappy with Wingfield, and call for Capt. Smith to step in
- Recriminations by the commoners with the “gentlemen soldiers”

The Indian Battle Triggers Major Defensive Measures; New Problems Emerge

- “Garrison mentality”
- Wingfield requires “passports” for anyone to leave the Fort; a number of colonists who had left the fort had been killed
- Wingfield imposes strict rationing ; the colony became dependent on trading food with the neighboring tribes; Wingfield is suspected of hoarding food himself
- July-August: desertions are rife [some leave to live with the Indians]
- August: deaths from starvation, drought and disease begin
- The dead are buried inside the Fort to avoid Indians discovering the number of deaths

Wingfield Is Deposed

- Sept 10: Wingfield is unceremoniously replaced as President by Capt. John Ratliffe
- Ratliffe immediately brings charges; Wingfield is arrested, and is found guilty after a bogus “trial”, in which he mounted a vigorous defense
- Wingfield is imprisoned onboard one of the ships



Sept 1607- Jan 1608: Chaos and Confusion

- Nine months after arrival, only 40 colonists are still alive
- Mid-Sept: Indians “save” the colony, deliver needed food and materials
- December: Capt. Smith is captured, allegedly almost killed, but then he’s made a chief, given land, and given an Indian name, “Nantaquod”
- Smith returns to Jamestowne, and is promptly arrested by Ratliffe and imprisoned;
- Jan 2: Capt. Newport returns with “First Supply,” and releases Smith and Wingfield from custody

The Denouement

- April 10, 1608: Capt. Newport departs for England, with Wingfield on board. Winfield's tenure in the Colony lasts just 11 months
- Sept 10: Capt. Smith becomes President of the Council
- The Second Supply arrives in September with 70 new colonists (including two brave women), greatly helping Capt. Smith
- Back in London, Wingfield works vigilantly to clear his name and reputation; he is named in the Second Virginia Charter in 1609, and remains active in the Company until 1620.
- He dies in 1631 at age 81.

A Few Key Readings

- Wingfield's "Discourse of Virginia" (1608)
- John Smith's "Generall Historie" (1624)
- Philip Barbour, "The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609" (1969)
- Jocelyn R. Wingfield's "Virginia's True Founder: Edward Maria Wingfield and His Times 1550-1631" (2007)
- Wesley Frank Craven, "The Virginia Company of London, 1606-1624" (2009)