

Subject: Our first Hometown, "Kecoughtan" Anecdote #12

Dear Cousins,

As most of you know, Thomas Bouldinge the immigrant landed at Jamestown in 1610 and within a matter of weeks moved south to Kecoughtan and began to farm his land for the benefit of the colony and the London Company. I thought it would be interesting if you knew more about this place which was his "first hometown" in America.

Elizabeth City, as it was later named, began on the site of an Indian village on the west side of Hampton Creek and was known first by its Indian name of Kecoughtan for a decade after settlement. The English first saw this spot on May 1, 1607 when the three ships (Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discover) moved over from Cape Henry. The friendly Indians welcomed the shore party and took them to their village of some 18 houses of twigs and bark and twenty fighting men where there was food, a friendly smoke, and entertainment.

After this visit the settlers moved on up the James River and it was fall before the English were here again. John Smith then traded successfully with them for corn. Smith was here again in the summer of 1608 and in the following winter always being well received and refreshed before leaving. There is clear evidence that the first post established by the Colonists for trade with the Indians was here where Indians and whites lived together in some number. When, however, Humphry Blunt out of Fort Algernourne, that is Old Point Comfort, was killed by Indians at Nansemound, Sir Thomas Gates used the opportunity to punish the Indians by driving the Kecoughtans away from their cornfields and fishing grounds. It was in the summer of 1610 that he "posseseinge himselfe of the Towne and the fertill ground there unto adjacentt haveinge well ordered all things he lefte his lieftenantt Earley to comawnd his company and returned to James Towne."

In October, 1609, after Smith's departure for England, President George Percy had sent Captain John Ratcliffe down to the mouth of the river to erect a fort due to "the plenty of the place for fisheinge" and "for the comodious discovery of any shippeinge which sholde come uppon the co(a)ste." He chose Point Comfort, so named in 1607, and designated it "Algernowns Foarte" after Lord De La Warr's "name and Howse."

Those at Point Comfort in the winter of 1609-1610 apparently fared much better than those at Jamestown. When Percy visited here he found them, he reports, "in good case and well lykeinge haveinge concealed their plenty from us above att James Towne beinge so well stored thatt the crabb fishes where with they fede their hoggs wold have bene a greate relefe unto us and saved many of our lykes."

It was on the Kecoughtan site that an English settlement (Hampton) began to evolve. For two or three years it was little more than a military