

Cape Henry Memorial Cross

On April 26, 1607 three small ships approached the Chesapeake Bay from the southeast and made their landfall at Cape Henry, the southernmost promontory of that body of water. The Virginia Company expedition had set sail from England in December, 1606. Released from their four month confinement, the colonists, led by the Reverend Robert Hunt, gave thanks to God for their safe voyage. Before them lay the vast American wilderness known as Virginia.

Captain Christopher Newport, the commander of the expedition, went ashore with a party of thirty to explore this new land filled with "faire meddowes," "Fresh-waters," and "goodly tall Trees." Near the end of the day an encounter with Indians left two of the party wounded.

The next day a second party was put ashore to "recreate themselves" and to assemble a small boat (shallop). This "shallop" was launched and used to explore the lower reaches of the Chesapeake Bay.

On April 29, the colonists, possibly using English oak already fashioned for the purpose, "set up a Crosse at Chesapeake Bay, and named that place Cape Henry" for Henry, Prince of Wales, eldest son of King James I. They were then ready to follow their instructions to push deeper into Virginia to seek a site suitable for settlement.

Early on April 30, they moved to a new anchorage at a place named "Cape Comfort" (Old Point Comfort); shortly thereafter they entered the James River. After two weeks of searching along both sides of the river, they established a permanent settlement at Jamestown on May 13, 1607.

This memorial cross, erected in 1935 by the Daughters of the American Colonists, serves as a reminder of that original oak cross planted by a group of Englishmen in search of gold, adventure and natural resources. But more importantly, Cape Henry marks the beginning in a continuing chain of events which saw the shaping of American culture by English institutions and customs.

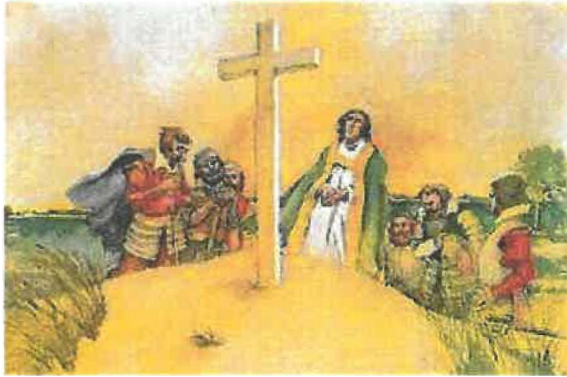
Note
No mention
of the
COVENANT



This sign is not easily found at the cross site.



The Reverend Robert Hunt: The First Chaplain at Jamestown



The Reverend Robert Hunt gives thanks with other English settlers at Cape Henry, Virginia in April 1607.

NPS image

Robert Hunt (c. 1568-1608), clergyman of the Church of England, was Chaplain of the expedition that founded Jamestown, Virginia. The expedition included people from Old Heathfield, East Sussex, England. The Reverend Hunt had become the Vicar of Heathfield, County of Sussex, in 1602, which title he held as Chaplain of the Jamestown Settlement. He had been Vicar of Reculver, County of Kent, England, 1594-1602. He lit the candle for the Anglican Church in Virginia (United States); he first lifted his voice in public thanksgiving and prayer on April 29, 1607, when the settlers planted a cross at Cape Henry, which they named after the Prince of Wales.

Once settled in the fort, the whole company, except those who were on guard, attended regular prayer and services led by the Reverend Hunt. Captain John Smith described worship services that took place in the open air until a chapel could be erected. Captain Smith's religious feelings were conventional but deeply felt. His piety asserted itself in his writings constantly; he saw the hand of God at work in his life, and he believed it had intervened to save the colonies. "He concluded that God, who had thwarted Spanish attempts to settle North America, had reserved that Region for the Protestant English."

Captain John Smith described the Reverend Hunt as "our honest, religious and courageous divine." The Reverend Hunt was a peacemaker, often bringing harmony to a quarreling group of men. The Chronicler wrote: "Many were the mischiefs that daily sprung from their ignorant spirits; but the good doctrines and exhortations of our Preacher Minister Hunt reconciled them and caused Captain Smith to be admitted to the Council June 20th. The next day, June 21, third Sunday after Trinity, under the shadow of an old sail, Robert Hunt celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is impossible to rate too highly the character and work of the aforesaid Robert Hunt, Chaplain of the Colony." Hunt's virtuous character was well-known and respected by his fellow settlers. It was evidenced by his behavior both before and after the accidental fire in the fort in January, 1608. The fire burned the palisades with their arms, bedding apparel, and

many private provisions. "Good master Hunt lost all his library, and all that he had but the clothes on his back, yet none ever did see him repine at his loss...Yet we had daily Common Prayer morning and evening, every Sunday two sermons and every three months the Holy Communion till our Minister died."

Historians believe that Robert Hunt died in the spring of 1608. His will, probated in July 1608, is the only documented evidence of his death. Scholars suggest that certain conditions imposed upon his bequest to his wife may indicate an unhappy state of affairs in the home, which could have fueled the Reverend Hunt's desire to go to Virginia. However, it seems more likely that his desire to set a good Christian example, rather than his personal problems, motivated him to travel to the new world.

This faithful and courageous priest had nothing to say of himself, leaving no writings and no portrait. All authorities, including Governor Edward Maria Wingfield, First President of the Council at Jamestown, and Captain John Smith, who agreed in nothing else, agreed in praise of this worthy man. They wrote: "Our factions were oft qualified, and our wants and greater extremities so comforted that they seemed easie in comparison of what we endured after his memorable death...."

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<https://www.nps.gov/jame/learn/historyculture/the-reverend-robert-hunt-the-first-chaplain-at-jamestown.htm>

The Reverend Robert Hunt

The Reverend Robert Hunt set sail with the first expedition to Virginia in the winter of 1606 to serve as the first Anglican minister at Jamestown. In conformity with England's religious settlement, the Church of England was the official church of the new colony, and the Reverend Hunt was given the task of overseeing the spiritual needs of settlers and promoting the conversion of Indian peoples of the region. He died between January and April of 1608, probably about the time the church was constructed and was the first person to be interred in the church's chancel. Hunt was buried in a simple shroud with his head to the east, the conventional burial position for clergymen so that they would rise facing their congregation at the time of the Resurrection. Today the Reverend Hunt is honored with a feast day, April 26, on the liturgical calendar of the Episcopal Church (USA).

Who was the Reverend Robert Hunt?

Robert Hunt was born in 1569 in Hampshire, England. After attending Oxford University, he became vicar of Reculver, Kent, in January 1596 and two years later married Elizabeth Edwards. In 1602, the couple moved to Heathfield, Sussex, by which time they had two children, Elizabeth and Thomas. The marriage does not appear to have been a happy one, and Hunt seems to have been unpopular with his parishioners, who noted that he was not a resident of the parish and "*keepeth no hospitality.*" In November 1606, Hunt made his will and left the following month with the first expedition to Virginia.

Captain John Smith, one of the leaders of the colony, described the Reverend Hunt as "*our honest, religious and courageous divine.*" On April 29, 1607, when the settlers made landfall in Virginia at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, Hunt delivered what was likely one of the first Protestant sermons in America, giving thanks for the settlers' safe arrival. After the colonists disembarked at Jamestown a couple of weeks later, Hunt conducted the first service under sailcloth spread between trees.

Hunt survived the summer and fall when disease, food shortages, and Indian attacks rapidly reduced the settlers' numbers. In early January 1608 an accidental fire burned the fort to the ground: "*Good Master Hunt our preacher,*" Captain John Smith recalled, "*lost all his library, and all that he had but the clothes on his back, yet none never heard him repine [complain] at his loss....*" He reportedly gave regular services, sermons, and Holy Communion right up until his death early in 1608. His will, probated in England in July 1608, is the only documented evidence of his death. Edward Maria Wingfield, the colony's first president, described him as "*a man not in any way to be touched with the rebellious humours [tendencies] of a popish spirit, nor blemished with the least suspicion of a factious schismatic.*"

How was the Reverend Robert Hunt buried?

The Reverend Robert Hunt was likely the first person interred in the chancel of the 1608 church and is the northernmost of the four burials. This location, to the left as viewed by the congregation in the pews, is often the position an Anglican cleric would take when conducting a service. The recovery of several Virginia Indian artifacts along with the lack of European

material culture in this grave shaft suggests the burial occurred early in the history of James Fort. The date and position of this grave reinforces the conclusion that this is Hunt, since he died sometime in the spring of 1608 shortly after the church was built.

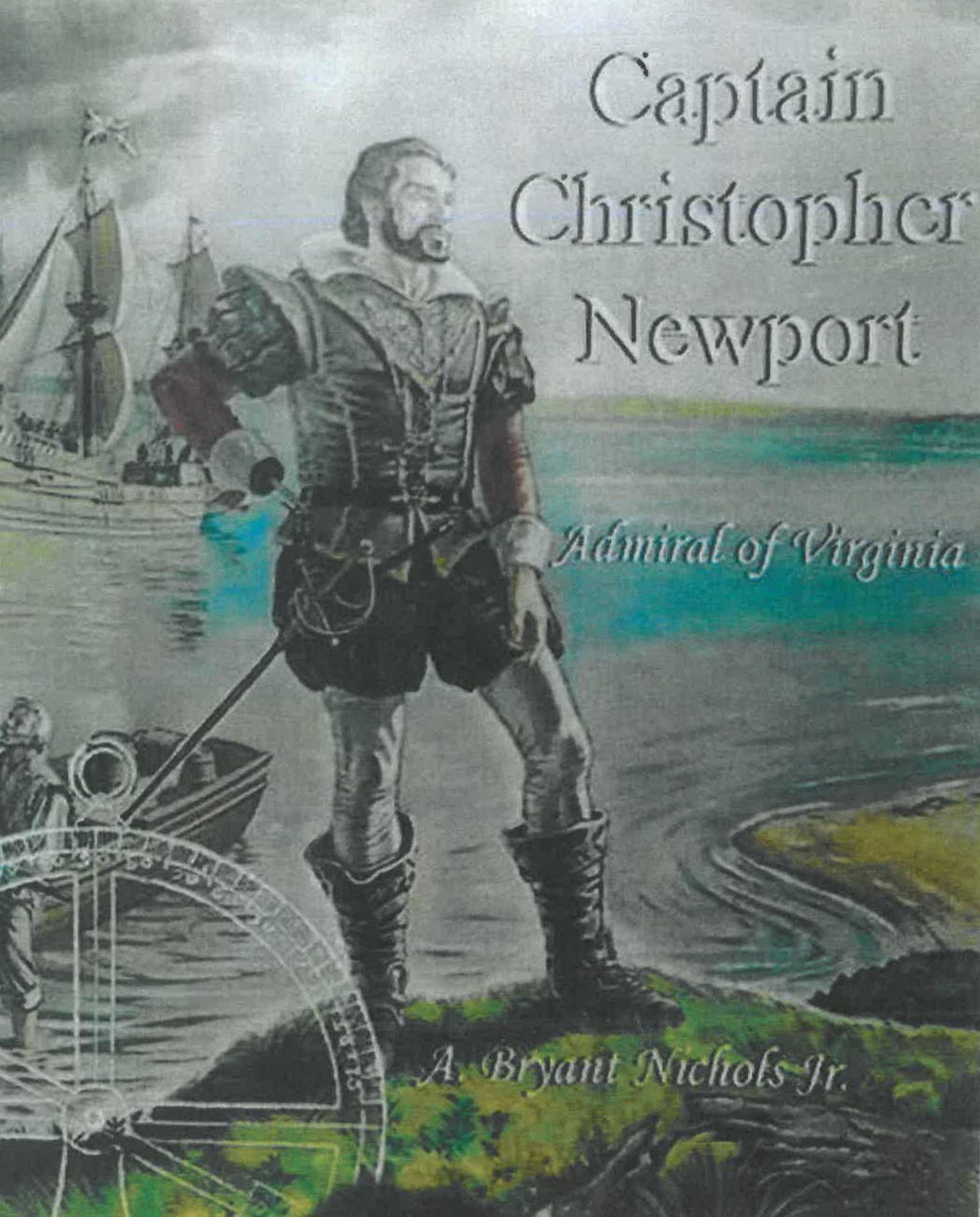
The Reverend Robert Hunt was positioned with his head to the east and had been wrapped in a simple shroud for burial. The grave, unlike the other three later burials in the church's chancel, showed no evidence of having once held a coffin. Shroud burials were a common practice in James Fort's early period, when the rate of death was rapid and strained the survivors' ability to follow typical English customs. The shroud may also signal the burial preferences of a humble Anglican minister.

What evidence suggests this is the Reverend Robert Hunt?

Historical records show that the Reverend Robert Hunt was 39 when he died. Forensic evidence from the remains in this grave indicates he was a male of between 35 and 40. The growth plates in the skeleton are closed and tooth wear suggests the person was in second half of their 30s. The bones of the skeleton are thinner than those found in the other three graves, all of which suggest that this person was older at the time of this death than the three others buried in the chancel.

The orientation of the skeleton with the head to the east and the simple shroud burial also strongly suggest that the individual was a clergyman; Hunt was the only minister at James Fort in the early period. The Protestant church has a long tradition of burying the laity with their heads to the west so that they would face Jerusalem and the rising sun at the time of the Resurrection. However clergy were typically interred the opposite way in order to rise facing the church congregation. The three other leaders interred in the church's chancel were buried in coffins, but this individual was only in a shroud, perhaps suggesting a desire to remain humble even in death.

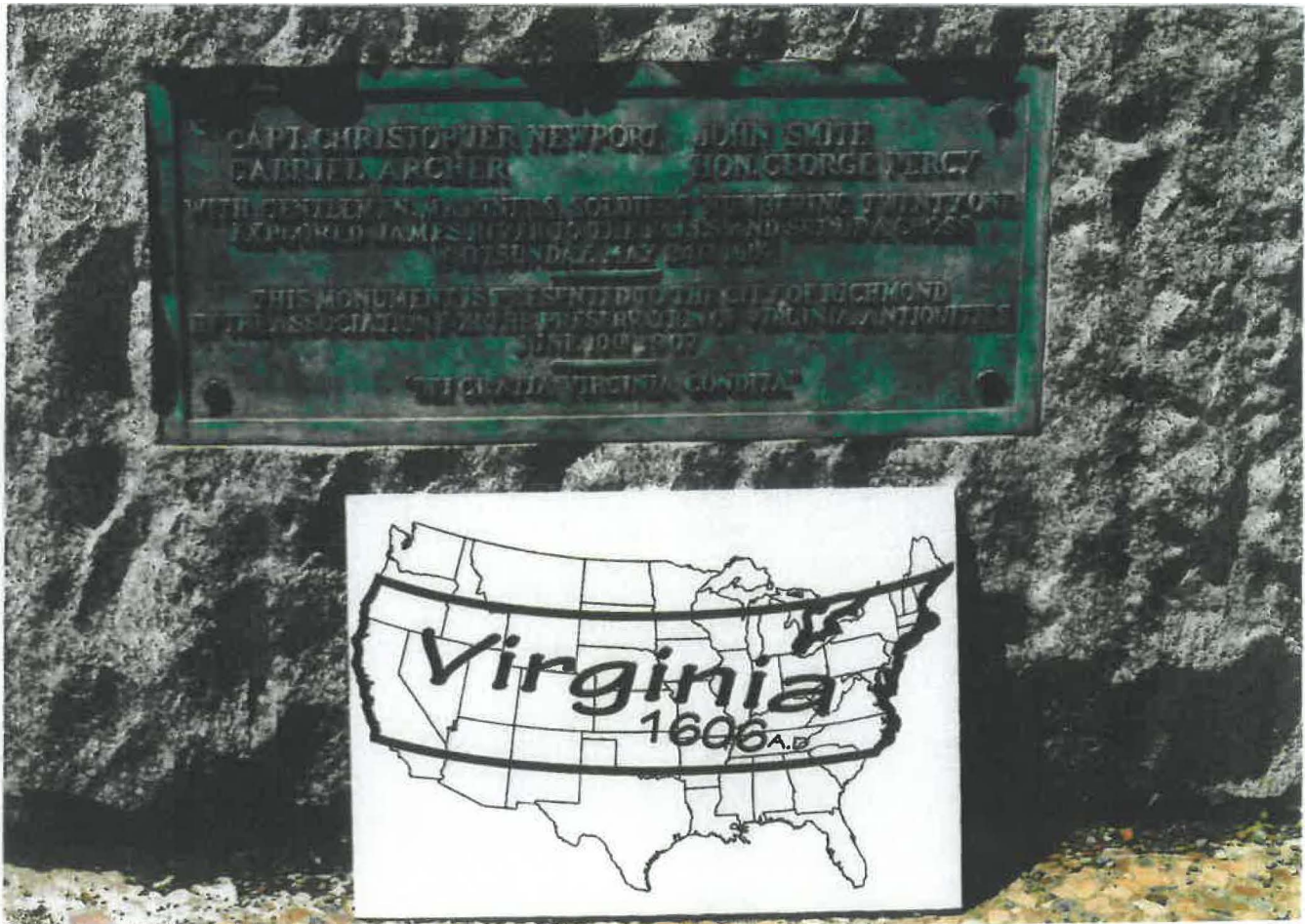
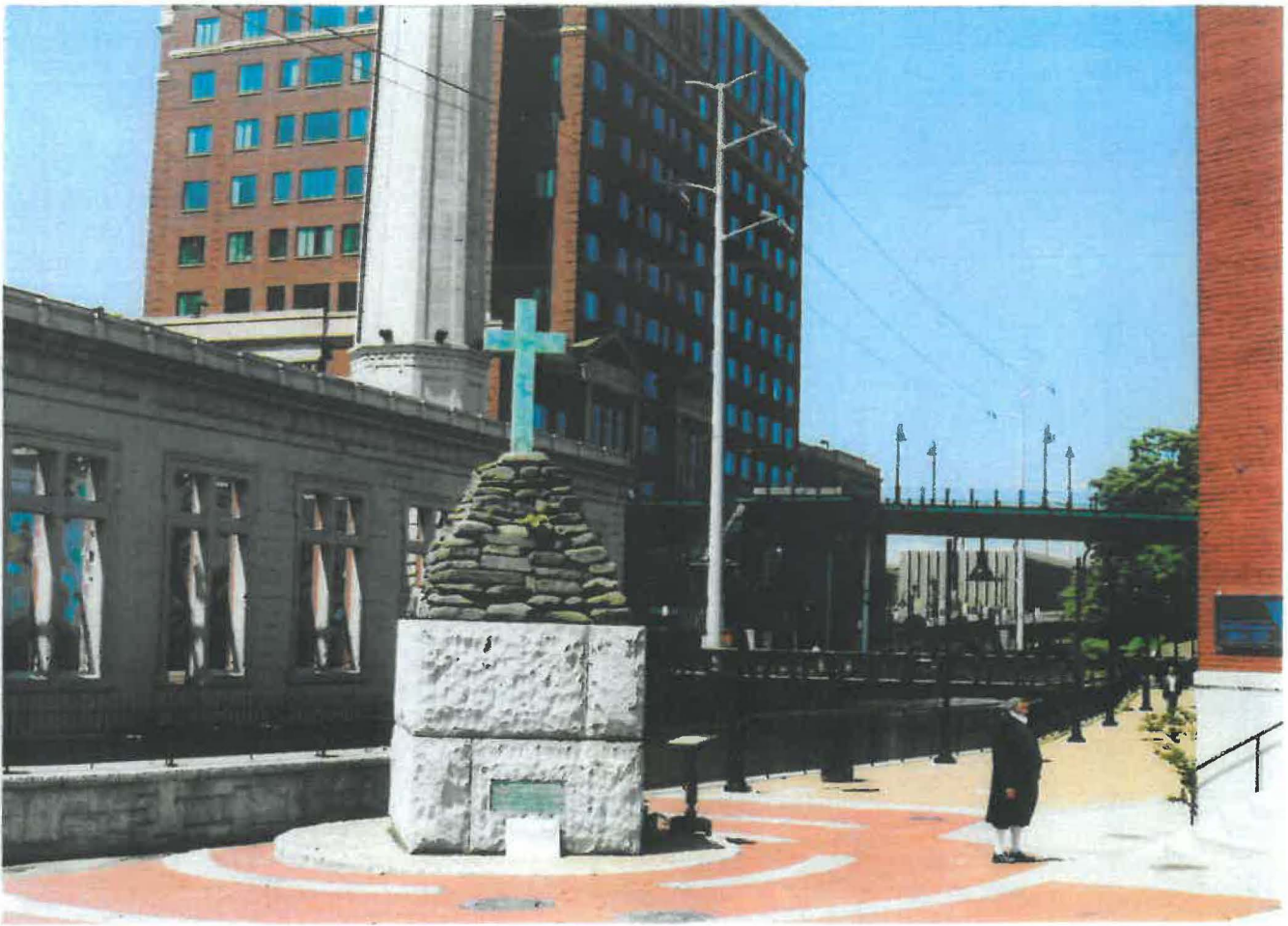
<https://historicjamestowne.org/archaeology/chancel-burials/founders/robert-hunt/>

The illustration depicts Captain Christopher Newport standing on a grassy shore, looking out over a harbor. He is dressed in 17th-century military attire, including a ruff collar, a dark tunic with lacing, and breeches. In the background, several large sailing ships with multiple masts are visible in the water. The overall style is a detailed, somewhat muted-toned painting.

Captain
Christopher
Newport

Admiral of Virginia

A. Bryant Nichols Jr.



Richmond City Council
Richmond Virginia



Proclamation honoring the historic 1607 Cross erected by
Captain Christopher Newport at the James River Fall Line



Whereas at the dawn of American Civilization, Four hundred and nine years ago, 24th May 1607 a.d, Whitsunday (*Pentecost*), a Protestant cross, inscribed "*Jacobus Rex*" (King James), was erected at the James River Fall Line (today's Richmond Virginia), by a "*mariner well practiced*", the English Sea Captain Christopher Newport; &

Whereas 29th April 1607, soon after reaching "*that part of America commonly called Virginia*", the voyagers had gone ashore among the sand dunes at the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay, (Cape Henry), erected there a cross, then explored on up the James River until stopped by "*great craggy stones that stand in the midst of the river*"; &

Whereas the English government was concerned, despite their 1604 peace treaty with Roman Catholic Spain's King Philip, that he might yet send warships to root out the new Virginia settlers, "*hanging them*", thus Newport, whose right arm had been "*strooke off*" in a naval battle, sought upriver, a defensible location for a "*principal seat*"; &

Whereas Newport at the Fall Line was culmination of a venture that began 1 year, 1 month, and 2 weeks earlier in England with the historic 1606 First Virginia Charter, its purpose being "*...propagating of Christian religion to...bring ...human civility and a settled and quiet government...*" including visible symbols, to inhabitants in those parts; &

Whereas the Powhatan peoples, dwelling in the area below the Fall Line, had amicable interactions with Newport, warning him of other people westward who were not so friendly, as his men scouted the area, noting high ground, fertile fields, and how, above the impediment of the rapids, the river again becomes navigable for cargo boats; &

Whereas in 1616, Newport, who had crossed the Atlantic a dozen times, made his final voyage from Virginia, with notable passengers aboard, i.e. Sir Thomas Dale, and Mr. & Mrs. John and Pocahontas Rolfe with their son Thomas aboard, which, along with the plays "*Eastward Ho*" and Shakespeare's "*The Tempest*", fanned a "*Virginia Fever*"; &

Whereas in 1765, Patrick Henry, at the Second Virginia Convention, being held on Church Hill overlooking the Fall Line, at the beginning of his political career gave his stirring "*Virginia Tax Stamp Resolves*" speech at St. Johns Church, citing the 1609 Second Virginia Charter's guarantee that settlers had the right to set their own taxes; &

Whereas in 1784, Geo. Washington spoke to the Virginia General Assembly to encourage the building of a system of public canals and locks, including one at Richmond Fall Line, to better enable commercial traffic from Tidewater Virginia to/from the Ohio River Valley, which system was in operation during the several antebellum decades; &

Whereas in 1907, a bronze replica of Newport's cross, mounted on a base of stones from the James River (19' tall, 88,000-lbs) was placed on Gambles Hill Park overlooking the upper end of the Kanawha Canal ; & 1983, moved to Shockoe Slip; & 2000 was set at the 12th St. entrance to the new 1 ½ -mile Richmond Riverfront Canal Walkway; &

Whereas in 1994-1995, the Virginia General Assembly and Governor enacted the "Virginia Historical Documents Act", which amended the Code of Virginia to require all Virginia Public Schools to "*Teach and test on the Three Virginia Charters (1606, 1609, 1612)*", also calling attention of all students to citizenship responsibilities thereby; &

Whereas the 2006 Virginia General Assembly, celebrating the 400th Anniversary of American Civilization, formally proclaimed the 1606 First Virginia Charter as "*Birth Certificate of American Civilization*", which had authorized the first three settlements, i.e. 1607 Jamestown Settlement, 1611 Citie of Henricus, and 1620 Plimouth Settlement; &

Whereas the Richmond City Council commends Henricus Colledge (1619)[®] for promoting attention to the above...

Now, therefore, the Richmond City Council hereby proclaims 24th May 2016 to be celebrated throughout all City offices and properties as "*Captain Christopher Newport's Cross at the James River Fall Line Celebration Day*".