

Instructions from the London Company to the First Settlers

Excerpt from "Instructions Given by way of Advice by us whom it hath pleased the King's Maj[es]tie to appoint of the Councel for the intended Voyage to Virginia to be observed by those Captains and Company which are sent at this present to plant there," November 1606

As We Doubt not but you will have especial Care to Observe the Ordinances [i.e., the charter] set Down by the Kings Ma[jes]tie and Delivered unto you under the privy Seal So for your better Directions upon your first Landing we have thought Good to recommend unto your Care these Instructions and articles following. When it Shall please God to Send you on the Coast of Virginia you shall Do your best Endeavour to find out a Safe port in the Entrance of Some navigable River, making Choise of Such a One as runneth furthest into the Land, and if you happen to Discover Divers portable Rivers and amongst them any one that hath two main branches if the Difference be not Great make Choise of that which bendeth most towards the Northwest for that way shall You soonest find the Other Sea[.] When you have made Choise of the River on which you mean to Settle be not hasty in Landing Your Victual and munitions but first Let Cap^t Newport Discover how far that River may be found navigable that you may make Election of the Strongest most Fertile and wholesome place for if You make many Removes besides the Loss of time You Shall greatly Spoil your Victuals and Your Cask[s] and with Great pain transport it in Small boats. But if you Choose your place so far up as A Bark of fifty tuns will fleet then you may Lay all Your provisions a Shore with Ease and the better Receive the trade of all the Countries about you in the Land and Such A place you may perchance find a hundred Miles from the Rivers mouth and the farther up the better for if you sit Down near the Entrance Except it be in Some Island that is Strong by nature An Enemy that may approach you on Even Ground, may Easily pull You Out and if he be Driven to Seek You a hundred miles within the Land in boats, you shall from both Sides of your River where it is Narrowest So beat them with Your muskets as they shall never be Able to prevail Against You. And to the end That You be not Surprised as the French were in Florida by Melindus and the Spaniard in the same place by the French you shall Do Well to make this Double provision first Erect a Little Sconce at the Mouth of the River that may Lodge Some ten men With Whom you Shall Leave a Light boat that when any fleet shall be in Sight they may Come with Speed to Give You Warning. Secondly you must in no Case Suffer any of the natural people of the Country to inhabit between You and the Sea Coast for you Cannot Carry Your Selves so towards them but they will Grow Discontented with Your habitation and be ready to Guide and assist any Nation that Shall Come to invade You and if You neglect this You neglect Your Safety. When You have Discovered as far up the River as you mean to plant Your Selves, and Landed your victuals and munitions to the End that Every man may know his Charge you Shall Do well to Divide your Six Score men into three parts whereof one party of them you may appoint to fortifie and build of which your first work must be your Storehouse for Victual 30 Others you may employ in preparing your Ground and Sowing your Corn and Roots the Other ten of these forty you must Leave as Centinel at the havens mouth The Other forty you may employ for two Months in Discovery of the River above you and

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on the Country about you which Charge Captain Newport and Captain Gosnold may undertake[.] of these forty Discoverers when they Do Espie any high Lands or hills Capt. Gosnold may take 20 of the Company to Cross Over the Lands and Carrying half a Dozen pickaxes to try if they Can find any mineral. The Other twenty may Go on by River and pitch up boughs upon the Banks Side by which the Other boats Shall follow them by the Same turnings You may also take with them a Wherry Such as is used here in the Thames by Which you may Send back to the President for supply of munition or any Other want that you may [be?] not Driven to Return for Every Small Defect. . . .