

Factoid – Jamestown, VA, Earthworms, and other fun facts

Sorry about the delay in posting. We have been a little busy around the house and I haven't had much time for genealogy. But I thought that this little factoid was interesting and you might find it humorous. I was putting my computers down (I do the video production for our church services) in our church's social hall on Sunday, when I saw a stack of National Geographics in a pile on a table. The top magazine was from May 2007 and had a picture of a native warrior on the front page. The article in the magazine was "Jamestown: The Real Story". I thought "Hey, we have Jamestown ancestors on both sides of our family, so I should read this." I must have had this magazine at one time, but I don't remember reading it. It was fascinating!

First off, once the early Jamestown settlers started farming tobacco on a serious basis, they really started shipping tobacco back to England in large quantities. In fact, they were shipping so much that their ships couldn't carry that much weight. So they removed their ballast from their trips from England to the Colonies, which consisted of rocks, dirt, etc. from England. This dirt contained earthworms and other insects, grubs, etc. from England which began populating the New World. The amazing thing is that until this time, *there were no earthworms in the New World from the Mid-Atlantic States all the way to New England!* When leaves fell each fall, they just piled up in piles and trees and plants had evolved to use those leaves as a fertilizer. But the earthworms changed that completely and new types of forests evolved – which was assisted by the new trees the settlers were planting.

Other things the settlers brought were honey bees and malaria. What we call the honey bee today is a European import. The plants in the New World were pollinated by other types of insects prior to the settlement. Also, while there were mosquitoes in the New World, they didn't carry malaria. The parasites that carry malaria came into the New World in the blood of the European settlers. Once the settlers were bitten by New World mosquitoes, they mosquitoes began to spread malaria throughout the New World. So the settlers wiped out the Native Americans by smallpox and by malaria – bringing both diseases from Europe to a population that had no immunity to them.

By the way, those in our family that descend from Grandma Bessie Jackson are eligible to be members of the Jamestown Society. You have to have an ancestor who is a "Qualifying Ancestor" in your direct lineage. Our Qualifying Ancestor is Henry Applewhite, A205 (see <https://www.jamestowne.org/ancestors-abbot---buckmaster.html>).

Take care, everyone! John