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Fact Sheet

Captain Bartholomew Gosnold of Jamestown, Va.

Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, an English lawyer and explorer, was a member of the Virginia Company and an enthusiastic supporter of colonization. In 1605, Gosnold began to assemble a group of men to establish a new colony in Virginia. He gained support of King James I, and the Virginia Company was granted a royal charter. Gosnold was vice admiral of the expedition and captained the *Godspeed*, one of the three ships to make the voyage. He was no stranger to the New World, having made a voyage to New England in 1602 to establish an English Colony. He is credited with naming Martha's Vineyard for his daughter and Cape Cod for the amount of fish that he encountered there.

Gosnold's skeletal remains and the staff he was buried with are on view in the "Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th-Century Chesapeake" exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. A life-size reconstructed model of Gosnold also is on view. Sculpted by forensic artists based on his skeleton, this is the first and most detailed glimpse into what Gosnold looked like.

In 1606, Gosnold, along with John Smith and the English colonists, embarked on a long journey across the Atlantic. In 1607, the ships landed on the banks of the James River in Virginia, and the settlement was named Jamestown. The settlers were an economically diverse collection of gentlemen, craftsmen and laborers. Gosnold and Smith contributed to the design of James Fort, which was constructed within a month of arrival to protect the settlement from persistent attacks by nearby Indians.

Within the settlement, colonists were constantly afflicted by famine and disease. Gosnold died of illness only three months after landing at Jamestown. In 1607, George Percy wrote in his diary that "He was honorably buried, having all the Ordnance in the Fort shot off with many vollies of small shot." As one of the leaders of the colony and a captain, Gosnold received a more elaborate burial than many of the other colonists.

In 2005, archaeologists discovered what is believed to be Gosnold's grave. It was discovered just outside the palisade wall of James Fort.

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