



First Name

Rolfe



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John Rolfe (bef. 1585 - abt. 1622) [ID/Link/](#)

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Captain John **Rolfe** aka **Rolph**

Born **before 6 May 1585** in **Heacham, Norfolk, England**

Son of [father unknown] and [mother unknown]

[sibling(s) unknown]

Husband of **Sarah (Hacker) Rolfe** — married before 1610 in Heacham, Norfolk, England

Husband of **Amonute Matoaka (Powhatan) Rolfe** — married about 5 Apr 1614 (to 21 Mar 1617) in Anglican Church, Jamestown, Colony of Virginia

Husband of **Jane (Pierce) Smith** — married after 1619 (to 1622) in Colony of Virginia

Father of [Bermuda Rolfe](#), [Thomas Rolfe](#) and [Elizabeth \(Rolfe\) Milner](#) [DESCENDANTS](#)

Died **about 10 Mar 1622** after about age 36 in **Jamestown, James City, Colony of Virginia**

Profile managers: [Steven Staley](#) [\[send private message\]](#), [US Southern Colonies Project WikiTree](#) [\[send private message\]](#), and [Wesley Doughman](#) [\[send private message\]](#) [PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS](#)

Rolfe-2 created 30 Nov 2008 | Last modified 2 Oct 2024 | Last [tracked change](#):

2 Oct 2024

11:53: [Jillaine Smith](#) [edited the Biography](#) for John Rolfe (bef.1585-abt.1622). (Extracted key points from last will and testament) [\[Thank Jillaine for this\]](#)

This page has been accessed 34,760 times.



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[John Rol](#)



John Rolfe resided in the Southern Colonies in North America before 1776.

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Biography

John Rolfe was born in Heacham, Norfolk, England. He was baptized on 6 May 1585. ^[*citation needed*]^[1]

NOTE: A 1990 article questions the claim that the John Rolfe baptized May 1585 was the same as the emigrant to Virginia. See the g2g thread attached to this profile for discussion.



John Rolfe was a [Jamestown colonist](#).



John Rolfe is a [Qualifying Ancestor of the Jamestowne Society](#).



John Rolfe is Notable.

John Rolfe came over in the famous "Sea Venture" in 1610 which was blown ashore at the Bermudas^[2]; the passengers survived 10 months there, during which time Rolfe's wife gave birth to a baby girl, christened Bermuda 11 Feb 1610. Both the baby and his wife died shortly thereafter.^[3]^[4]

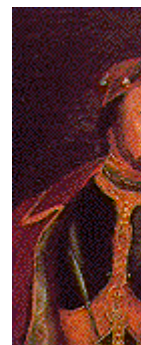
He became a planter and is credited with the first successful cultivation of tobacco as an export crop in the Colony of Virginia and is known as the husband of Pocahontas, daughter of the chief of the Powhatan Confederacy."^[5]^[4]

Rolfe was probably instrumental in importing tobacco seed from Trinidad in 1610 and 1611. He crossed the imported breed with indigenous tobacco to produce a plant well adapted to the local soil and reportedly of pleasant taste. When the English cargo vessel *Elizabeth* sailed from Virginia on June 28, 1613, it presumably carried Rolfe's first crop for export. In April of the following year, John Rolfe married Pocahontas in the Jamestown's Church. ^[4]

Rolfe replaced Ralph Hamor as Secretary in 1614 (thus becoming a member of the Council) and held the post until 1619.^[6]

In 1614 he married Pocahontas, a daughter of the American Indian Chief Powhatan.^[7]

"John Rolfe was a very religious man who agonized for many weeks over the decision to marry Pocahontas after she had been converted to Christianity, "for the good of



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Jamestown

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[John Rolfe](#)



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the plantation, the honor of our country, for the Glory of God, for mine own salvation..." "Pocahontas was baptized christened Rebecca, and later married Rolfe on April 5, 1614."

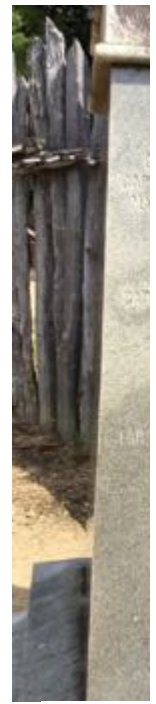
"A general peace and a spirit of good will between the English and the Indians resulted from this marriage.

"John Thompson (William John) the eldest son of Rev. William Thompson, born circa 1650, married Elizabeth the widow of John Salway the plantation called "Smith's Fort" on which Thomas Warren, father of Alice Mariott had build "ye fiftyfoot brick house". This property formerly belonged to the Indian King, Powhatan who gave it to John Rolfe when he married Pocahontas, daughter of Powhatan...^[8]

Pocahontas gave birth to a son, Thomas Rolfe, in about 1615 (date unknown).

In 1616, John took Rebecca/Pocahontas and their son, Thomas, to England, where she died the following year. Thomas remained in England to be raised by relatives.

After Pocahontas' death, John returned to Virginia and married Jane Peirce 1619.^[9] They were the parents of a daughter, [Elizabeth](#). John died about 1622. The circumstances of his death are unclear; some believe he was killed in the 1622 Indian massacre. ^[10]



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Jamestown
of Virginia
Popularity:

Last Will & Testament

John Rolfe "beinge sicke in body" wrote a will 10 Mar 1621 in Jamestown; it was proven in London 21 May 1630.^[11]

- refers to his two small children who he leaves to the care of his father-in-law Lieut. William Pyers, giving Pyers permission to use his estate to support them while they are minors
- to son Thomas and his heirs he leaves the parcel of land in the "countrie of Toppahannah" between the two creeks over against James City
- daughter Elizabeth to get the above property if Thomas dies without heirs
- portion of land near Mulberry Island to wife Joan, then after her death to their daughter Elizabeth
- the rest of his estate to be divided into three shares for his wife, son and daughter; if they die without heirs, he leaves his estate to his father-in-law William Pierce
- he made additional bequests to William Pierce; three servants, including Robert Davyes

Research Notes

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Research

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Disputed Parents

A prior version of this profile attached [John Rolfe](#) and [Dorothy Mason](#) as his parents, without citing any source. There doesn't seem to be any evidence that they were his parents and there does seem to be evidence that they weren't. Dorman lists no parents and says: "there is no evidence that John and Dorothy Rolfe had a son Henry, known to be a son of John in Virginia. In the Heacham family there was a contemporary Henry Rolfe, Gent.... but he is not known to have had a brother John." ^[12]

Sources

- ↑ [Jamestowne Society](#): Rolfe, John - A6802; born 1585, died 1622; 1614-22 (Councillor); 1614-19 (Secretary of State); (Resident of Jamestowne). accessed 26 March 2019
- ↑ <https://www.packrat-pro.com/ships/seaventure.htm>
- ↑ [John Rolfe](#) (profile), Jamestown Rediscovery. Accessed 2 Nov 2017.
- ↑ [4.0 4.1 4.2 Pocahontas and her descendants](#)
- ↑ Wikipedia: [John Rolfe](#)
- ↑ Stanard, W.G, and Mary Newton Stanard (1902), *Colonial Virginia Register*, pp. [21](#), 28.
- ↑ Smithsonian Institution. *Do All Indians Live in Tipis?* Smithsonian Books, Washington, D.C. 2018. p75-77.
- ↑ The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities: "Pocahontas"
- ↑ Colonial Surry, Other Early Worthies of Surry, p58-65
- ↑ Taken from the Association for the preservation of Virginia Antiquities web page, www.apva.org/ngex/rolfe.html dated June 20, 1999, then taken from Vezey FTW files Oct 14, 2000
- ↑ "Will of John Rolfe", ed. Carson, in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jan 1950), p. [61](#). From the probate copy (PCC 1630). The will had previously been abstracted by Waters, from the register copy (49 Scroope), in *N.E.H.G.R.*, Vol. 38 no. 1 (Jan 1884), p. [68](#), with notes by Waters. (Note date is 1884, not 1844 as given by Carson)
- ↑ Dorman, John, *Adventurers of Purse and Person*, 4th edition, 2007, Vol. III p. 23

See also:


- Elizabeth Vann Moore and Richard Slatton, "The Descendants of Pocahontas: An Unclosed Case" in *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*, 23 (1985): 3-16.
- <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/mattaponi.php>
- "The Ferrar Papers: At Magdalene College, Cambridge" in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 10, no. 2 (1902): 130-38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4242504>. Also on [archive.org](#).

- Microsoft Encarta 98, "Rolfe, John", (1998), "Electronic."
- Robert Gale LaMaster, LaMaster/LeMaster Home Page, (1998, <http://www.infocom.com/~lamaster/>), "Electronic." (Site has moved 26 Apr 2021)
- Pocahontas Descendants web page, <http://www.rootscomputing.com/howto/pocahn/pocahn.htm> (accessed via Internet Archive Wayback Machine 26 Apr 2021)
- "Ancestors and Descendants of John Rolfe", in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Jan 1913), [p. 105](#), No. 2 (Apr 1913), [p. 208](#).
- Stanard, W.G: "Virginia Land Patents", in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 1 #4 (Apr 1894), [p. 445](#).
- Robertson, Wyndham: *Pocahontas and her Descendants*, [p. 23](#).
- Jennings, John Melville: "A Biographical Sketch", [p. 11](#), prefaced to Taylor's edition of John Rolfe's *True Relation*, see next.
- Rolfe, John: *A True Relation of the State of Virginia in 1616*, [original version](#), ed. Henry C. Taylor, Yale Univ. Press (1951). Another version, in *Southern Literary Messenger*, Vol. 5 no 6 (Jun 1839), p. [401](#), reproduced in *Virginia Historical Register*, Vol. 1 no. 3 (Jul 1848), p. [101](#).
- "Letter of John Rolfe to Sir Thomas Dale", in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Apr 1914), [p. 150](#). Originally published in Ralph Hamor's *True Discourse* (1615)
- Ralph Hamor's *True Discourse* (1615), reprint ed. Harwell (1957), p. [11](#). Hamor's own report of the wedding (gives the date as "about 5th April"). Also letter of Dale, p. 51, and letter of Whitaker, p. 59, reporting the marriage. Also Rolfe's letter to Dale, p. [61](#).
- Petition of Henry Rolfe to the Virginia Company, as recorded in the Court Book, in Kingsbury, S.M, *Records of the Virginia Company of London*, Vol. 2 (1906), p. [105](#) (7th Oct 1622).
- Randolph, Richard (as "R.R"), "Varina", in *Virginia Historical Register*, Vol. 1, no. 4 (Oct 1848), p. [161](#). (Randolph is described by Stanard (1913) as the "once well-known Virginia antiquary".)
- Randolph, Richard (as "R.R"), "Henrico County", in *Southern Literary Messenger*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (Jul 1857), p. [68](#).
- Hotten, John Camden (1874), *Original Lists*, p. [270](#), land at Tappahanna; p. 271, land at Mulberry Island.
- Stith, William: *History of Virginia* (1747), [p. 129](#) (marriage, but gives the wrong date), [p. 146](#) (descendants).

- Robertson, Wyndham: "The Marriage of Pocahontas", in *Southern Literary Messenger*, Vol. 31, no. 2 (Aug 1860), p, [81](#). Explains and corrects the mistaken date of 1613 given by Stith and many other early writers. Also in *Virginia Historical Reporter*, Vol. 1 (1860), p. [65](#).
- McCartney, Martha W. (2007). *Virginia Immigrants and Adventurers*, p. [606](#).
- [Encyclopedia Virginia](#).

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Comments: 34 [\[hide\]](#)

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POST NEW COMMENT



[David Selman](#)

[Rolfe-2730](#) and Rolfe-2 appear to represent the same person because: Exact duplicates. Same name same spouse.

[posted](#) Dec 21, 2023 by [David Selman](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank David](#) | [2 thank-yous received](#)



[J. West](#)

As also noted in 2019, the sticker just before the Research Notes that says "John Rolfe is a descendant" changed or removed. John was not her descendant. Also, shouldn't the text that is next to the sticker changed, be moved to the top of the bio ?

[posted](#) May 26, 2023 by [J. West](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank J.](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)

**[Scott McClain](#)**

Thank you J, I just removed that sticker. It can be applied on his descendants, but as you point out it is Pocahontas's spouse.

[posted](#) May 26, 2023 by [Scott McClain](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Scott](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)

**[Maggie N.](#)**

[Rolfe-2619](#) and Rolfe-2 are not ready to be merged because: Duplication created of Pocahontas profile

[posted](#) Mar 15, 2023 by [Maggie N.](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Maggie](#)

**[Wendy Browne](#)**

is he not the son of Rolfe-3? just wondering. thank you

[posted](#) Feb 24, 2023 by [Wendy Browne](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Wendy](#)

**[Liz \(Noland\) Shifflett](#)**

see the "[Disputed Parents](#)" section of the profile.

[posted](#) Feb 25, 2023 by [Liz \(Noland\) Shifflett](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Liz](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)

[Samantha \(Jarvis\) Robinson](#)

Not sure if this is helpful.

Mercer, Julia E. Bermuda Settlers of the 17th Century: Genealogical Notes from Bermuda. Baltimore 1992. pp 166

'Rolfe: By will of JOHN ROLFE, made in Virginia in 1631, it appears that he must have been on the "Sea Venture" when that vessel was wrecked at Bermuda, 1609. While there his wife had a son who died there. A young son of a Minister RICHARD BUCK who was also on the "Sea Venture"'

If this helps to point in some directions for more research.

[posted](#) Jan 01, 2023 by [Samantha \(Jarvis\) Robinson](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Samantha](#) | [2 thank-yous received](#)



[Liz \(Noland\) Shifflett](#)

text that was once included in the ship category names that wife Sarah, but I'm not sure what t adopted the space page when I found it orphaned).

- https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Category:Sea_Venture%2C_sailed_June_18%2C_1609
- https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Space:Sea_Venture%2C_sailed_June_18%2C_1609

[posted](#) Jan 01, 2023 by [Liz \(Noland\) Shifflett](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Liz](#) | [2 thank-yous received](#)



[Ingrid Buxton](#)

If he was a tobacco farmer nowhere do I see it stated that he also owned slaves which is essential for quick search turned up a link <https://aaregistry.org/story/john-rolfe-businessman-and-slave-owner->

"Rolfe's plantation used African slave labor mainly to cultivate tobacco. Here is his first-hand account last of August [1619] came in a dutch man of warre that sold us twenty Negars [this was the first into Virginia]: " I think we need to be upfront and honest about what our ancestors did both laudatory and d1lexza0zk46za.cloudfront.net/history/am-docs/rolfe-slaves.pdf <https://www.nps.gov/jame/learn/history-at-jamestown.htm>

[posted](#) Aug 18, 2022 by [Ingrid Buxton](#)

[edited](#) Aug 18, 2022 by [Ingrid Buxton](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Ingrid](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)



[Kathie \(Parks\) Forbes](#)

Should the parents currently attached to John Rolfe be detached? There doesn't seem to be any evidence of parents and there does seem to be evidence that they weren't. Dorman lists no parents and says: "and Dorothy Rolfe had a son Henry, known to be a son of John in Virginia. In the Heacham family the Rolfe, Gent.... but he is not known to have had a brother John." Dorman, John, *Adventurers of Purse* Vol. III p. 23

The G2G post from 3-4 years ago seemed to conclude that they should be detached, but it never had

[posted](#) Apr 10, 2022 by [Kathie \(Parks\) Forbes](#)

[edited](#) Apr 10, 2022 by [Kathie \(Parks\) Forbes](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Kathie](#)



[Scott McClain](#)

Excellent question. It does appear that they should be detached and the disputed claim about t Note. If anyone objects to this change, please speak up.

[posted](#) Apr 10, 2022 by [Scott McClain](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Scott](#)



[Scott McClain](#)

Hearing no objection, I have removed the disputed parents & added a Research Note.

[posted](#) Apr 20, 2022 by [Scott McClain](#)

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[Stephen Strauss](#)

John Rolfe did have a brother named Henry; in William Stith's book "The History of the First Dis Virginia, page 146. he mentions "young Rolfe" (aka Thomas Rolfe) being his "Uncle Henry".

[posted](#) Jul 13, 2022 by [Stephen Strauss](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Stephen](#)



[Paula \(Hawkins\) Reinke](#)

This profile needs a Notables sticker.

[posted](#) Apr 25, 2020 by [Paula \(Hawkins\) Reinke](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Paula](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)

[\[Living Horace\]](#)

"[John Rolfe Image 1](#)" is [John Smith](#)

[posted](#) Feb 28, 2020 by [\[Living Horace\]](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Anonymous](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)

**Liz (Noland) Shifflett**

thanks RJ - I detached that image (a correctly named copy of the image is already attached to [S](#)

[posted](#) Apr 25, 2020 by [Liz \(Noland\) Shifflett](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Liz](#)

**Jillaine Smith**

LaQuita, you're creating duplicates. Remember that WikiTree is a one profile per person web site. Pl need to merge the duplicates.

[posted](#) on Rolfe-2025 (merged) Feb 25, 2020 by [Jillaine Smith](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Jillaine](#)

**Kathie (Parks) Forbes**

[Rolfe-2005](#) and Rolfe-2 appear to represent the same person because: Clearly meant to be the same

[posted](#) Feb 03, 2020 by [Kathie \(Parks\) Forbes](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Kathie](#)

**Liz (Noland) Shifflett**

That's a really good point. He was her husband, not her descendant. Problem is, that's the project b primary interest in watching over this profile... which is named "Descendants of Pocahontas".

[posted](#) Mar 22, 2019 by [Liz \(Noland\) Shifflett](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Liz](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)

[Living Trogstad]

Why does the sticker state John Rolfe is a descendant of Pocahontas? Wasn't he married to her?

[posted](#) Jan 17, 2019 by [\[Living Trogstad\]](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Anonymous](#)

**CameoNicole Blewett**

John rolfe worked for miliary and a warrior of battle and ships and He had one asian Spouse and Po Pocahontas he had a secret spouse that was Asian durning the China war I believe. I thin John Rolfe and meet a Asian lady in China or something ... or Asia South.

[posted](#) Aug 09, 2018 by [CameoNicole Blewett](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank CameoNicole](#)



[Jeanie \(Thornton\) Roberts](#)

[Rolfe-1576](#) and Rolfe-2 appear to represent the same person because: the profile already exists, me

[posted](#) Sep 21, 2017 by [Jeanie \(Thornton\) Roberts](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Jeanie](#)



[Cynthia \(Billups\) B](#)

What is the evidence for the "middle name" Thomas? (keeping in mind that middle names were not among royalty). Thanks!

[posted](#) Apr 13, 2017 by [Cynthia \(Billups\) B](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Cynthia](#)



[Robin Lee](#)

As the profile manager of Rolfe-403, does not agree that the two daughters listed are duplicates, I le here to decide.

[posted](#) Jan 18, 2017 by [Robin Lee](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Robin](#)

[Edwin Priest](#)

Caught this reference while researching.

"The children, a boy and a girl, received the names Bermudas and Bermuda, and Bermuda was the afterwards became the husband of Pocahontas."

Cooke, J. E. (1884). Virginia: A history of the people. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. [\[1\]](#) p.45

[posted](#) Jun 16, 2015 by [Edwin Priest](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Edwin](#)

[Betty \(Delisle\) Tierney](#)

Rolfe-751 and Rolfe-1 appear to be the same person. Maybe they should be merged.

[posted](#) Sep 01, 2014 by [Betty \(Delisle\) Tierney](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Betty](#) | [1 thank-you received](#)



[Hrh Prince Robert Justice](#)

Name: John Rolfe

Gender: Male Spouse Name: Pocahontas Marriage Year: 1614 Marriage State: Ja Number Pages: 1

[posted](#) May 24, 2014 by [Hrh Prince Robert Justice](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Hrh Prince Robert](#)



[Hrh Prince Robert Justice](#)

Meanwhile, in Bermuda, one of the passengers of the Sea Venture, John Rolfe, built two ships from the Sea Venture. and the stranded passengers finally reached Jamestown 24 May 1610, including William Casement by ghostly, gaunt figures, the 60 survivors of the winter's "Starving Time", 90% of the colony had no food, no crops, no tools, no housing. Those left alive in Jamestown gathered a few belongings and headed downriver, abandoning Jamestown. They were only ten miles from Jamestown when they met the new governor of Virginia, Lord Delaware, was on his way with ships of supplies and

[posted](#) May 24, 2014 by [Hrh Prince Robert Justice](#)

[reply](#) [flag](#) [move to G2G](#) [thank Hrh Prince Robert](#)

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Matches and Merges

Individuals should have one WikiTree profile that is [shared by all family members](#). If you [find matches for John Rolfe](#) [\[more info\]](#) [\[more merging tools\]](#) [for John Rolfe](#)

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Rejected

None.

None.

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20