The First Virginia Charter, 10 April 1606

James, by the grace of God [King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith], etc. Whereas our loving and weldisposed subjects, Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers, Knightes; Richard Hackluit, Clarke, Prebendarie of Westminster; and Edwarda Maria Winghefeilde, Thomas Hannam and Raleigh Gilberde, Esquiers; William Parker and George Popham, Gentlemen; and divers others of our loving subjects, have been humble suitors unto us that wee woulde vouchsafe unto them our licence to make habitation, plantacion and to deduce a colonie of sondrie of our people into that parte of America commonly called Virginia, and other parts and territories in America either appertaining unto us or which are not nowe actuallie possessed by anie Christian prince or people, scituate, lying and being all along the sea coastes between fower and thirtie and one and fortie degrees of the same latitude and in the maine lande betweene the same fower and thirtie and five and fourtie degrees, and the ilandes thereunto adjacente or within one hundred miles of the coaste thereof;

And to that ende, and for the more speedy accomplisment of theire saide intende plantacion and habitation there, are desirous to devide themselves into two severall colonies and companies, the one consisting of certaine Knightes, gentlemen, marchanntes and other adventurers of our citty of London, and elsewhere, which are and from time to time shalbe joined unto them which doe desire to begin their plantacions and habitacion in some fitt and conveniente place between fower and thirtie and one and fourtie degrees of the said latitude all alongest the coaste of Virginia and coastes of America aforesaid and the other consisting of sondrie Knightes, gentlemen, merchantes, and other adventurers of our citties of Bristoll and Exeter, and of our towne of Plymouthe, and of other places which doe joine themselves unto that colonie which doe desire to beginn their plantacions and habitacion in some fitt and conveniente place betweene eighte and thirtie degrees and five and fourtie degrees of the saide latitude all along the saide coaste of Virginia and America as that coaste lieth;

Wee, greatly commending and graciously accepting of theire desires to the furtherance of soe noble a worke which may, by the providence of Almightye God, hereafter tender to the glorie of His Divine Majestie in propagating of Christian religion to suche people as yet live in darkenesse and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worshippe of God and may in tymie bring the infidels and salvages living in those parts to humane civilitie and to a setled and quiet govermente, doe by theise our lettres patents graciously accepte of and agree to theire humble and well intende desires;

And doe, therefore, for us, our heires and successors, grannte and agree that the saide Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sumers, Richard Hackluit and Edwarda Maria Winghefeilde, adventurers of and for our citty of London, and all suche others as are or shalbe joined unto them of that Colonie, shalbe called the Firste Colonie, and they shall and may beginne theire saide firste plantacion and seate of theire firste aboade and habitation at anie place upon the saide coaste of Virginia or America where they shall thincke fitt and conveniente betweene the saide fower and thirtie and one and fourtie degrees of the saide latitude; and that they shall
have all the landes, woods, soile, groundes, havens, ports, rivers, mines, mineralls, marshes, waters, fishinges, commodities and hereditamentes whatsoever, from the said first seate of their firste plantacion and habitacion by the space of fiftie miles of Englishe statute measure all alongest the saide coaste of Virginia and America towards the weste and southe weste as the coaste lieth, with all the islandes within one hundred miles directlie over againste the same sea coaste; and alsoe all the landes, soile, groundes havens, ports, rivers, mines, mineralls, woods, marrishes [marshes], waters, fishinges, commodities and hereditamentes whatsoever, from the saide place of their firste plantacion and habitacion for the space of fiftie like Englishe miles, all alongest the saide coaste of Virginia and America towards the easte and notheaste [or toward the north] as the coaste lieth, together with all the islandes within one hundred miles directlie over againste the same sea coaste; and alsoe all the landes, woodes, soile, groundes, havens, portes, rivers, mines, mineralls, marrishes, waters, fishinges, commodities and hereditamentes whatsoever, from the same fiftie miles everie waie on the sea coaste directly into the maine lande by the space of one hundred like Englishe miles; and shall and may inhabit and remaine there; and shall and may alsoe builde and fortifie within anie the same for theire better safegarde and defence, according to theire best discretions and the direction of the Counsell of that Colonie; and that noe other of our subjectes shalbe permitted or suffered to plante or inhabit behinde or on the backside of them towards the maine lande, without the expresse licence or consente of the Counsell of that Colonie thereunto in writing firste had or obtained.

And wee doe likewise for us, our heires and successors, by theise presentes grannte and agree that the saide Thomas Hannam and Raleigh Gilberde, William Parker and George Popham, and all others of the towne of Plymouthe in the countie of Devon, or elsewhere, which are or shalbe joined unto them of that Colonie, shalbe called the Seconde Colonie; and that they shall and may beginne their saide firste plantacion and seate of their firste aboade and habitation at anie place upon the saide coaste of Virginia and America, where they shall thinckke fitt and conveniente, betweene eithe and thritie degrees of the saide latitude and five and fortie degrees of the same latitude; and that they shall have all the landes, soile, groundes, havens, ports, rivers, mines, mineralls, woods, marrishes, waters, fishinges, commodities and hereditamentes whatsoever, from the firste seate of their firste plantacion and habitacion by the fiftie like Englishe miles, as is aforesaide, al alongeste the saide coaste of Virginia and America towards the weste and southwest, or towards the southe, as the coaste lieth, and all the islandes within one hundred miles directlie over againste the saide sea coaste; and alsoe all the landes, soile, groundes, havens, portes, rivers, mines, mineralls, woods, marrishes, waters, fishinges, commodities and hereditamentes whatsoever, from the saide place of their firste plantacion and habitacion for the space of fiftie like miles all alongest the saide coaste of Virginia and America towards the easte and northeaste or towards the northe, as the coaste lieth, and all the islandes alsoe within one hundred miles directly over againste the same sea coaste; and alsoe all the landes, soile, groundes, havens, ports, rivers, woodes, mines, mineralls, marrishes, waters, fishings, commodities and hereditamentes whatsoever, from the same fiftie miles everie waie on the sea coaste, directlie into the maine lande by the space of one hundred like Englishe miles; and shall and may inhabit and remaine there; and shall and may alsoe builde and fortifie within anie the same for theire better safergare according to
theire beste discrecions and the direction of the Counsell of that Colonie; and that none of our subjectes shalbe permitted or suffered to plante or inhabit behinde or on the backe of them towards the maine lande without the expresse licence or consente of the Counsell of that Colonie, in writing thereunto, firste had and obtained.

Provided alwaies, and our will and pleasure herein is, that the plantacion and habitation of suche of the said Colonies as shall laste plante themselves, as aforesaide, shall not be made within one hundred like Englishe miles of the other of them that firste beganne to make therei plantation, as aforesaide.

And wee doe alsoe ordaine, establishe and agree for [us], our heires and successors, that eache of the said Colonies shall have a Counsell which shall governe and order all matters and causes which shall arise, growe, or happen to or within the same severall Colonies, according to such lawes, ordinannces and instructions as shalbe in that behalfe, given and signed with our hande or signe manuell and passe under the Privie Seale of our realme of Engelande; eache of which Counsells shall consist of thirteene parsons and to be ordained, made and removed from time to time according as shalbe directed and comprised in the same instructions; and shall have a severall seale for all matters that shall passe or concerne the same severall Counsells, eache of which seales shall have the Kings armes engraven on the one side there of and his pourtraiture on the other; and that the seale for the Counsell of the said Colonie shall have engraven rounde about on the one side these wordes: Sigillum Regis Magne Britanie, Francie [et] Hibernie; on the other side this inscription rounde about: Pro Consilio Prime Colonie Virginie. And the seale for the Counsell of the said Colonie shall alsoe have engraven rounde about the one side thereof the aforesaide wordes: Sigillum Regis Magne Britanie, Francie [et] Hibernie; and on the other side: Pro Consilio Secunde Colonie Virginie.

And alsoe ther shalbe a Counsell established here in Engelande which shall in like manner consist of thirteen parsons to be, for that purpose, appointed by us, our heires and successors, which shalbe called our Counsell of Virginia; and shall from time to time have the superior managing and direction onelie of and for all matters that shall or may concerne the govermente, as well of the said severall Colonies as of and for anie other parte or place within the aforesaide precinctes of fower and thirtie and five and fortie degrees abovementioned; which Counsell shal in like manner have a seale for matters concerning the Counsell [or Colonies] with the like armes and purtraiture as aforesaide, with this inscription engraven rounde about the one side: Sigillum Regis Magne Britanie, Francie [et] Hibernie; and rounde about the other side: Pro Consilio Suo Virginie.

And more over wee doe grannte and agree for us, our heires and successors, that the said severall Counsells of and for the said severall Colonies shall and lawfully may by vertue hereof, from time to time, without interuption of us, our heires or successors, give and take order to digg, mine and searche for all manner of mines of goulde, silver and copper, as well within anie parte of therei said severall Colonies as of the said maine landes on the backside of the same Colonies; and to have and enjoy the goulde, silver and copper to be gotten there of to the use and behoofe of the same Colonies and the plantacions thereof; yeilding therefore yerelie to us,
our heires and successors, the fifte parte onelie of all the same goulde and silver and the fifteenth parte of all the same copper soe to be gotten or had, as is aforesaid, and without anie other manner of profitt or accompte to be given or yeilded to us, our heires or successors, for or in respecste of the same.

And that they shall or lawfullie may establishe and caurse to be made a coine, to passe currant there betwene the people of those severall Colonies for the more ease of traffiqwe and bargaining betweene and amongst them and the natives there, of such mettall and in such manner and forme as the same severall Counsells there shall limitt and appointe. And wee doe likewise for us, our heires and successors, by theise presents give full power and auctoritie to the said Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sumers, Richarde Hackluite, Edwarde Maria Wingheilde, Thomas Hannam, Raleighe Gilberde, William Parker and George Popham, and to everie of them, and to the saide severall Companies, plantacions and Colonies, that they and everie of them shall and may at all and everie time and times hereafter have, take and leade in the saide voyage, and for and towards the saide severall plantacions and Colonies, and to travell thitherwarde and to abide and inhabite there in everie of the saide Colonies and plantacions, such and somanie of our subjectes as shall willinglie accompanie them, or anie of them, in the saide voyages and plantacions, with sufficiente shipping and furniture of armour, weapon, ordonnance, powder, victall, and all other things necessarie for the saide plantacions and for theire use and defence there: provided alwaies that none of the said parsons be such as hereafter shalbe speciallie restrained by us, our heires or successors.

Moreover, wee doe by theise presents, for us, our heires and successors, give and grannte licence unto the said Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sumers, Richarde Hackluite, Edwarde Maria Wingheilde, Thomas Hannam, Raleighe Gilberde, William Parker and George Popham, and to everie of the said Colinies, that they and everie of them shall and may, from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter, for theire severall defences, incounter or expulse, repell and resist, aswell by sea as by lande, by all waies and meanes whatsoever, all and everie suche parson and parsons as without especiell licence of the said severall Colonies and plantacions shall attempte to inhabit within the saide severall precincts and limitts of the saide severall Colonies and plantacions, or anie of them, or that shall enterprise or attempt at anie time hereafter the hurte, detrimente or annoyance of the saide severall Colonies or plantacions.

Giving and grannting by theise presents unto the saide Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Somers, Richarde Hackluite, and Edwarde Maria Wingheilde, and theire associates of the said Firste Colonie, and unto the said Thomas Hannam, Raleighe Gilberde, William Parker and George Popham, and theire associates of the saide Second Colonie, and to everie of them from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter, power and auctoritie to take and surprize by all waies and meanes whatsoever all and everie parson and parsons with their shippes, vessels, goods and other furniture, which shalbe founde traffiqueing into anie harbor or harbors, creeke, creekes or place within the limitts or precincts of the saide severall Colonies and plantacions, not being of the same Colonie, untill such time as they, being of anie realmes or dominions under our obedience, shall paie or agree to paie to the handes of the Tresorer of the Colonie, within whose limitts and precincts theie shall soe traffique, twoe and a halfe upon anie hundred
of anie thing soe by them traffiqued, boughte or soule; and being stranggers and not subjects under our obeysannce, untill they shall paie five upon everie hundred of suche wares and commoditie as theie shall traffique, buy or sell within the precincts of the saide severall Colonies wherein theie shall soe traffique, buy or sell, as aforesaide; which sommes of money or benefit, as aforesaide, for and during the space of one and twentie yeres nexte ensuing the date hereof shalbe whollie impioied to the use, benefit and behoofe of the saide severall plantacions where such traffique shalbe made; and after the saide one and twentie yeres ended the same shalbe taken to the use of us, our heires and successors by such officer and minister as by us, our heires and successors shalbe thereunto assigned or appointed.

And wee doe further, by theise presentes, for us, our heires and successors, give and grannte unto the saide Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sumers, Richarde Hackluit, and Edwarde Maria Wingheilde, and to theire associates of the saide Firste Colonie and plantacion, and to the saide Thomas Hannam, Ralieghes Gilberde, William Parker and George Popham, and theire associates of the saide Seconde Colonie and plantacion, that theie and everie of them by their deputys, ministers and factors may transport the goods, chattells, armor, munition and furniture, needfull to be used by them for theire saide apparrell, defence or otherwise in respecte of the saide plantacions, out of our realmes of Englande and Irelande and all other our dominions from time to time, for and during the time of seaven yeres nexte ensuing the date hereof for the better releife of the said severall Colonies and plantacions, without anie custome, subsidie or other dutie unto us, our heires or successors to be yeilded or paide for the same.

Alsoe wee doe, for us, our heires and successors, declare by theise presentes that all and everie the Parsons being our subjects which shall dwell and inhabit within everie or anie of the saide severall Colonies and plantacions and everie of theire children which shall happen to be borne within the limitts and precincts of the said severall Colonies and plantacions shall have and enjoy all liberties, franchises and immunities within anie of our other dominions to all intents and purposes as if they had been abiding and borne within this our realme of Englande or anie other of our saide dominions.

Moreover our gracious will and pleasure is, and wee doe by theise presents, for us, our heires and successors, declare and sett forthe, that if anie parson or parsons which shalbe of anie of the saide Colonies and plantacions or anie other, which shall traffique to the saide Colonies and plantacions or anie of them, shall at anie time or times hereafter transporte anie wares, marchandize or commodities out of [any] our dominions with a pretence and purpose to lande, sell or otherwise dispose the same within anie the limitts and precincts of anie of the saide Colonies and plantacions, and yet nevertheless being at the sea or after he hath landed the same within anie of the said Colonies and plantacions, shall carry the same into any other forraine countrie with a purpose there to sell or dispose of the same without the licence of us, our heires or successors in that behalfe first had or obtained, that then all the goods and chattels of the saide parson or parsons soe offending and transporting, together with the said shippe or vessell wherein suche transportacion was made, shall be forfeited to us, our heires and successors.
Provided always, and our will and pleasure is and wee doe hereby declare to all Christian kings, princes and estates, that if anie parson or parsons which shall hereafter be of anie of the said severall Colonies and plantacions, or anie other, by his, theire, or anie of theire licence or appointment, shall at anie time or times hereafter robb or spoile by sea or by lande or doe anie acte of unjust and unlawful hostilitie to anie the subjects of us, our heires or successors, or anie of the subjects of anie king, prince, ruler, governor or state being then in league or amitie with us, our heires or successors, and that upon suche injurie or upon juste complauntie of such prince, ruler, governor or state or their subjects, wee, our heires or successors, shall make open proclamation within anie the ports of our realme of Englannde, commodious for that purpose, that the saide parson or parsons having committed anie such robberie or spoile shall, within the terme to be limitted by suche proclamations, make full restitucion or satisfaction of all suche injuries done, soe as the saide princes or others soe complained may houlde themselves fully satisfied and contented; and that if the saide parson or parsons having committed such robberie or spoile shall not make or cause to be made satisfaction accordingly with[in] such time soe to be limitted, that then it shalbe lawfull to us, our heires and successors to put the saide parson or parsons having committed such robberie or spoile and theire procurers, abbetors or comfortors out of our allegeannce and protection; and that it shalbe lawfull and free for all princes and others to pursue with hostilitie the saide offenders and everie of them and theire and everie of theire procurors, aiders, abbetors and comforters in that behalfe.

And finallie wee doe, for us, our heires and successors, grannte and agree, to and with the saide Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sumers, Richarde Hackluit and Edwarde Maria Winghfeilde, and all other of the saide Firste Colonie, that wee, our heires or successors, upon petition in that behalfe to be made, shall, by lettres patents under the Greate [Seale] of Englande, give and grannte unto such parsons, theire heires and assignees, as the Counsell of that Colonie or the most part of them shall for that purpose nomminate and assigne, all the landes, tenementes and hereditaments which shalbe within the precincts limitted for that Colonie, as is aforesaid, to be houdlen of us, our heires and successors as of our manner of Eastgreenwiche in the countie of Kente, in free and common socage onelie and not in capite.

And doe, in like manner, grannte and agree, for us, our heires and successors, to and with the saide Thomas Hannam, Raleighe Gilberd, William Parker and George Popham, and all others of the saide Seconde Colonie, that wee, our heires [and] successors, upon petition in that behalfe to be made, shall, by lettres patentes under the Great Seale of Englande, give and grannte unto such parsons, theire heires and assignees, as the Counsell of that Colonie or the most parte of them shall for that purpose nomminate and assigne, all the landes, tenementes and hereditaments which shalbe within the precinctes limitted for that Colonie as is afore said, to be houlden of us, our heires and successors as of our manner of Eastgreenwich in the countie of Kente, in free and common socage onelie and not in capite.

All which landes, tenementes and hereditaments soe to be passed by the saide severall lettres patents, shalbe, by sufficient assurances from the same patentees, soe distributed and devided amongst the undertakers for the plantacion of the said severall Colonies, and such as shall make theire plantacion in either of the said severall Colonies, in such manner and forme and for
such estates as shall [be] ordered and sett [downe] by the Counsell of the same Colonie, or the most part of them, respectively, within which the same lands, tenements and hereditaments shall ly or be. Althoughe expresse mencion [of the true yearly value or certainty of the premises, or any of them, or of any other gifts or grants, by us or any our progenitors or predecessors, to the aforesaid Sir Thomas Gates, Knt. Sir George Somers, Knt. Richard Hackluit, Edward-Maria Wingfield, Thomas Hanham, Ralegh Gilbert, William Parker, and George Popham, or any of them, heretofore made, in these presents, is not made; or any statute, act, ordnance, or provision, proclamation, or restraint, to the contrary hereof had, made, ordained, or any other thing, cause, or matter whatsoever, in any wise notwithstanding.] In witnesse wherof [we have caused these our letters to be made patents;] witnesse our selfe at Westminster the xth day of Aprill [1606, in the fourth year of our reign of England, France, and Ireland, and of Scotland the nine and thirtieth.]