




Parents	
	James Parker

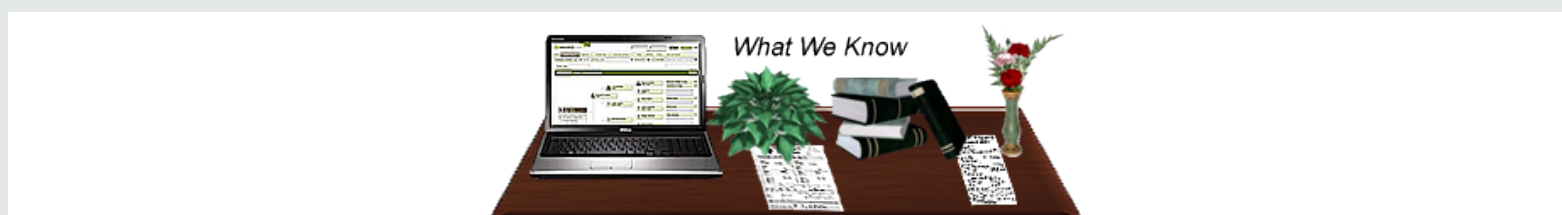
Parents	
	John Dennis
	Katherine Rayle
	England
	England

HUSBAND
<b>1250 John Parker, Sr.</b>
<b>b. 25 Sep 1568</b>
Georgeham, Devon, England
<b>d. About 1651</b>
Georgetown, Lincoln, Massachusetts (now Maine)

WIFE
<b>Katherine Dennis</b>
<b>b. About 1580</b>
England
<b>d. 1601</b>
Bedeford, Devon, England

Relationship Events:	
Marriage	John Parker married Katherine Dennis on August 23, 1600.

CHILDREN:					
	<a href="#">1160 John Parker, Jr.</a>	b. 20 Apr 1601 in Bideford, Devon, England; d. between 1651 and 1661	m.	Mary Crocombe Nov 16, 1622 in Georgham, Devon, England; d. after 1671	James, <a href="#">Thomas</a> , John, Mary and possibly others



John Parker, Sr. our earliest ancestor to arrive in America. His place in written history begins with the voyages on which he accompanied his older brother, William, who was an Elizabethan-era privateer. These so-called Sea Dogs, distinguished for their plunders during the English and Spanish wars in the late sixteenth century, were heroes in their own country, but considered pirates by their Spanish enemies.

In 1587, Captain William Parker and his brother John joined Sir Francis Drake in the raid on Cadiz, Spain. In 1588 William and John participated in the defeat of the Spanish Armada. In the 1590s Captain Parker sailed the West Indies taking several prizes. He also plundered Puerto Cortés in Honduras in 1594 and 1595. After 1596, as owner of his own vessel, he partnered with Sir Anthony Sherley, but this relationship ended when after a time no prizes were taken. Leaving Captain Sherley behind, Captain Parker attacked Campeche in Mexico. Captain Parker was wounded in the attack but survived and succeeded in capturing a frigate carrying silver that was en route to San Juan De Ulua.

John Parker married Katherine Dennis on August 23, 1600. In November, a little over a month later, John sailed from Plymouth with William on the *Prudence* with a crew of 130, as well as several "gentlemen volunteers." On their way to Panama, they sacked the town of St. Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands, captured and held for ransom the Cubagua pearl-boats, and then captured a Portugese slave ship. Arriving in Portobello, they landed in a surprise attack and captured the town in February 1601. Portobello was a very important port being the departure point from which Peruvian treasure left for Spain.

Meanwhile, John Parker, Jr. had been born on April 20, 1601 in Georgeham, Devon, England. His father was at sea with his brother William, and learned upon returning that his wife had died after the christening of their son. Captain William Parker became mayor of Plymouth in December 1601 and kept that position into 1602. He took up merchant



activities in Plymouth in the times the yearning for the sea didn't lure him back.

In 1606, Captain William Parker became a founding member of the Virginia Company. The Virginia Company was a joint stock company chartered by James I on 10 April 1606 with the purpose of establishing settlements on the coast of North America. The two companies, called the "Virginia Company of London" (or the London Company) and the "Virginia Company of Plymouth" (or Plymouth Company) operated with identical charters but with differing territories. An area of overlapping territory was created within which the two companies were not



permitted to establish colonies within one hundred miles of each other. As corporations, the companies were empowered by the Crown to govern themselves, and they ultimately granted the same privilege to their colony. In 1624, the Virginia Company failed; however, its grant of self-government to the colony was not revoked, and, "either from apathy, indecision, or deliberate purpose," the Crown

allowed the system to continue. The principle was thus established that a royal colony should be self-governing, and this formed the genesis of democracy in America.

Representing his brother William's financial interests, John Parker on June 7, 1607 was a mate on one of the two ships, the *Gift of God* captained by George Popham, and the *Mary and John*, that were sent to the colonies by the Plymouth Company. Sailing from Plymouth, 100 to 120 English colonists landed on a windy point a half mile from the mouth of Maine's Kennebec River. Discharged soldiers made up most of the colonists' ranks, but shipwrights, coopers, carpenters, and a smattering of "gentlemen of quality" rounded them out. On August 18, 1607 leader George Popham and second in charge Raleigh Gilbert, son of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the half brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, and the others listened to a sermon and the reading of their royal "pattent," then all quickly set about building a settlement they named Fort St. George. The new colony was named after its



A Jacobean merchant's house, home to the famous Elizabethan privateer, William Parker. Thematic displays of local history include a number of curiosities, a Victorian schoolroom and information about Plymouth in the Blitz.

## HISTORY OF THE MERCHANT'S HOUSE

From Elizabethan privateers to four mini museums in one, the Merchant's House has an interesting history.....

### Merchants and mayors

The first recorded owner of the Merchant's House was William Parker, an Elizabethan privateer and merchant. He was Mayor of Plymouth from 1601 to 1602 and we know that he was certainly living in the house in 1608.

The massive limestone walls that form the south, west and part of the north sides of the building contain clues which suggest that they were built in the early part of the 16th century. However, the architectural details of the main granite door frames and the finely moulded timber partitions and windows are more typical of the early 17th century. It seems likely that Parker modernised an earlier building to create most of what survives today.

### Owners and occupiers

The house has passed through many hands since Elizabeth I's time including the heirs of William Parker (occupied the house from 1617 to 1632):

principal financial backer, Sir John Popham, and his nephew George, who was elected President after their arrival. Documents record that at Fort St. George the colonists built a trenched fortification, a large storehouse, a chapel building, and a house for Raleigh Gilbert. Shipwrights who accompanied the voyage constructed a small vessel called a pinnace, which the colonists named the *Virginia*.

In December 1607, winter was coming and food was scarce. Half the colonists returned to England. The remaining forty-five colonists wintered within newly-erected Fort St. George. That same winter, George Popham died (the only fatality in the Colony). The Colony's new leader, Raleigh Gilbert, learned with the arrival of an early fall resupply ship that his uncle had died, and as heir, the family's estates in England were his. He decided to leave. The colonists, twice bereft of their leader, elected to abandon their attempt, and in October 1608, they left with Gilbert to return to England.

The documents surviving on Popham Colony, although incomplete, outline its story. Factions formed from the start. President George Popham was old, "timorously fearful to

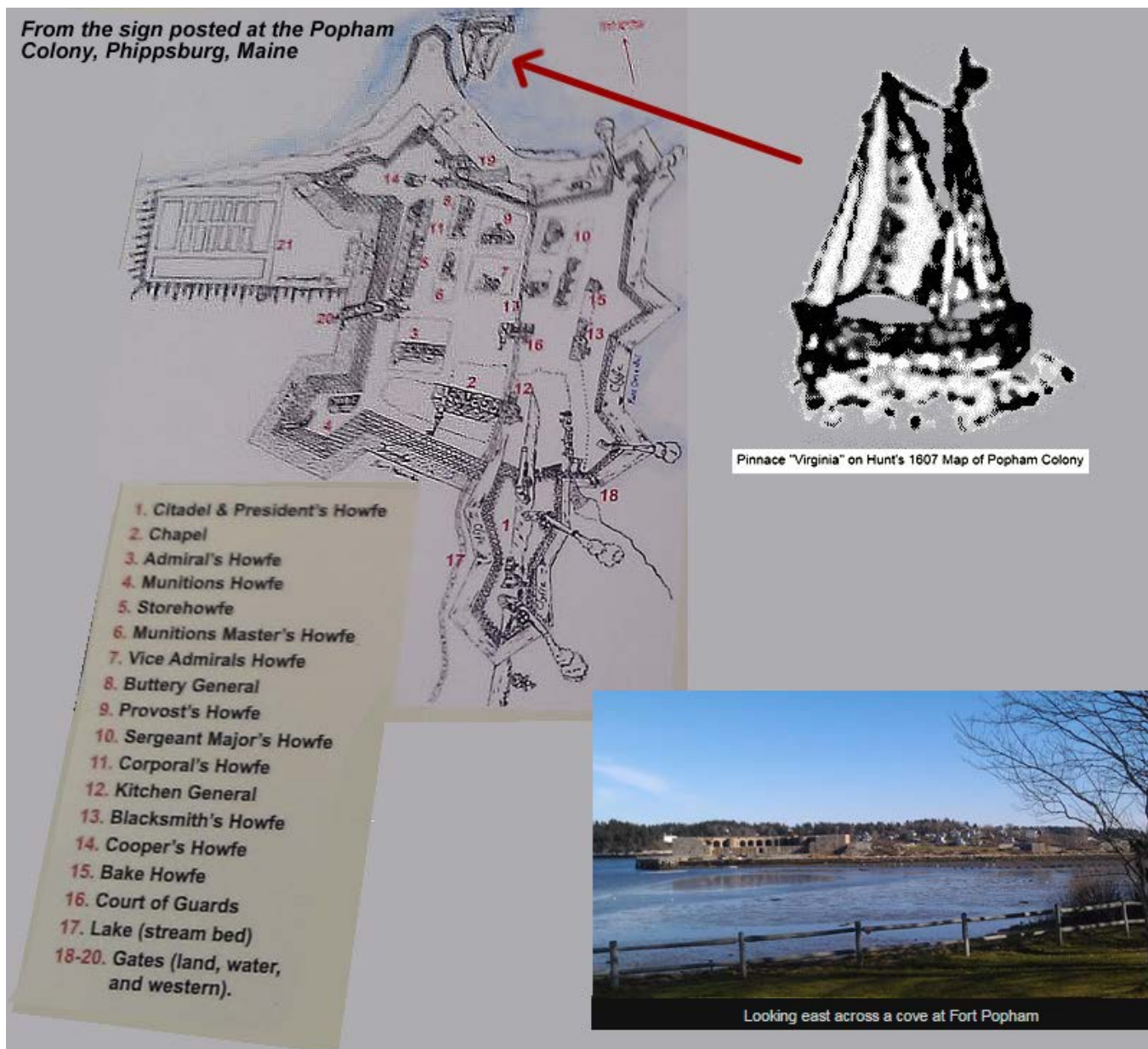


offende" and "of an unwildy body. Second in charge, Raleigh Gilbert (shown *left*) was young, perhaps 24, "desirous of supremacy, and rule, a loose life...prompte to sensuality," and of higher social standing than his superior. Setbacks plagued the Popham Colony. The Maine winter was unusually severe. Fire broke out in the midst of it, damaging buildings and destroying provisions. The Indian trade yielded little return, and relations with the local people, the Abenaki, were strained.

In 1888, a researcher for an American diplomat happened upon a map of Fort St. George in government archives in Madrid. Drawn and signed by Popham colonist John Hunt, it was likely snatched or copied by a Spanish spy soon after it arrived in England in 1608.

The only known detailed plan of an early English colony, the map contains sketches of trenched ramparts, a storehouse, a chapel, and various buildings—in all, more than 15 structures. Though published in 1890, the map provoked little interest for 100 years, until Dr. Jeffrey P. Brain, a Senior Research Associate at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, came upon a mention of the lost colony while vacationing in Maine. Research led him to Hunt's map, which took him to Sabino Head, a windy promontory on the Kennebec. Topographical features seemed to match Fort St. George's modified star-shaped contours. Conducting a test excavation on the area in 1994, Dr. Brain and his team found a posthole after several weeks of digging. Baffled by not finding more postholes, he "fiddled with the map," rotated it 20 degrees and came up with a dead-on match with the landscape. Soon the crew was "turning up one after another" of the three-foot-wide pine mold-filled holes, eventually 19 in all, outlining the 69-by-20 foot storehouse that Hunt had depicted on his blueprint almost 400 years before. This project was completed in 2000.

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The first ship built in North America by English colonists, the *Virginia*, was built in 1607-1608 at Popham Colony's Fort St George. As few as 70 of the original 120 colonists built the sturdy pinnace *Virginia*, beginning Maine's long tradition of quality shipbuilding. During her lifetime, *Virginia* crossed the Atlantic at least twice, including the trip back to serve the Jamestown colony. [A replica of \*Virginia\* is currently underway.](#)



Maritime artist Ken Hendrickson's image of *Virginia* leaving the Kennebec River



In the spring of 1616, English Colonizer Sir Ferdinando Gorges in a colonization scheme for a part of Maine, employed Richard Vines to take charge, and he and his staff accompanied a fishing vessel on its annual summer fishing voyage to Maine. It's possible that John Parker was a member of that company. (The Gorges family and Dr. Vines were associated with another of our ancestors, [Richard Bonython](#).)

In 1616, Capt. John Webber, with mate and brother-in-law, John Parker, established a trading post with the Indians. He must have discovered Rosohegan early in his travels and found it fair, for the Plymouth Colony was trading with her no later than 1625.

In England, John's brother, Captain William Parker, was made a Vice Admiral and left in the spring of 1618 on an expedition to the East Indies. He died on the voyage to Bantam on Sep 24, 1618. John inherited the 250-acre Gorges fort site in Phippsburg following William's death, but chose to reside on a small island on the eastern side of the river in what is now known as Sagadoc Bay. If John Parker was employed as a seaman by Gorges then he would have been making these voyages on a Gorges vessel. And since he and his son would be spending the rest of their lives managing fishing stations, he would be in good position to learn the business on these fishing voyages to Monhegan. In fact, it's quite possible that he was at this time, in 1619, in charge of Gorges' fishing station on that island. No records have been found of Parker's activities from 1608 when the Popham Colony failed to the appearance of John Parker, Jr. and his family at Winter harbor (Biddeford) in 1636 and John Parker first purchasing Sagosett island in 1648, but it is obvious they were present and involved during this period. (In the early 1800's, Mark Hill wrote that between 1625 -1628, "John Parker, a fisherman from Boston or its vicinity frequent fishing from Kennevec to Monhegan and in the winter of the latter year lived on the southerly point of Erascohegan Island, now Parker's Island.)

## Fort Mary, Biddeford Pool

In the current issue of DownEast Magazine (Volume 51, Issue 4 (Nov., 2004;Pg 76) shows the picture below and a nice narrative on the Biddeford campus of the University of New England.



### Early Landholders

According to tradition Vines and his associates landed originally upon Fletcher Neck, where there were fishing stages. That locality, then known as "Winter Harbor," is now recognizable as the favorite summer resort of Biddeford Pool. On an ancient British map of the "Province of Mayne" dated 1655, six dwellings were depicted upon the western bank of Saco River, one of which may have been intended to represent that constructed to shelter the employed of John Parker, the Biddeford fishmonger. In early days his peninsula was styled "Parker's Neck." About the northerly quadrant of Biddeford Pool were located the pioneer homes of Robert Booth, Ralph Tristram, Richard Hitchcock and Thomas Williams. The dwelling of the latter was mentioned in 1636. The land between that of Williams and Saco River was acquired in 1647 by Richard Cummings, who conveyed it to Walter Merry. The next habitation on the river was occupied by Henry Boade, before 1636, but it was transferred to James Gibbons and Thomas Mills by Vines in 1642. Boade had removed to Wells. Like that of Boade the rest of the lots upriver were eighty rods in width and extended for 200 rods westward. The next four house lots were assigned, in the order named, to Robert Sankey, Joseph Bowles, Samuel Andrews and William Scadlock. The last two settlers resided upon their lots in 1637. Sankey died before 1642 and his title was acquired successively by John Wright and John Bouden. Bowles conveyed his estate to Roger Hill and withdrew to Wells. Andrews died in 1637 and his widow, who had married Arthur Mackworth, of Casco, sold her interest to Peter Hill, father of Roger ; the premises were subsequently occupied by John Helson and William Dicer." *From "Pioneers on Maine Rivers": with lists to 1651. Spencer, Wilbur Daniel. Portland, Me. Printed by Lakeside Print. Co.. 1992.*

Between 1645 and 1651, John Parker, Jr. moved his family from Winter Harbor (Biddeford) to Sagadahoc. John Parker acquired a deed for "Sagosett alias Chegoney" from "Robin Hood," Chief Mowhatawormit. Colonists had difficulty with his tribal name, and called him Chief Robert Hood or Robin Hood (Whood), or Robinhood.

In October 1651, John Jr. made out a will. It appears that both he and his father died between then and 1654.

On Nov 22 1652, one of the John Parker's took the oath of allegiance to Massachusetts government.

Note: For a long time historians believed John Parker came over to New England as mate on the Mayflower. This misinformation was based on a deposition found in the Massachusetts Superior Court files. It was sworn to by John Phillips 3rd of Charlestown on Nov. 20, 1750 stating that John Parker, his father's uncle "was mate of the first ship that came from England with Plymouth people. "That historian concluded that "Plymouth People" were the Pilgrims and the first ship was the Mayflower, but it was actually referring to the town of Plymouth in England and the Plymouth Company ships in 1607.

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Special gratitude to Mark Miner for his excellent research on our mutual Parker ancestors. [Miner's Descent](#) is worth a visit.

## More Information:

### Elizabethan Privateering

English Privateering During the Spanish War,  
1585–1603

DATE PUBLISHED: April 2011

AUTHOR: [Kenneth R. Andrews](#)

#### *The Professionals*

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The career of William Parker of Plymouth provides a good example of that combination of skill and daring so characteristic of the professional owner-captains. He was already a captain in 1587, serving with Drake in the Cadiz expedition. He next appears in the *Richard* of Plymouth, belonging to the merchant Richard Hutchins, which Parker commanded in 1590 and 1591, bringing home several prizes. The next two years saw him in the West Indies, again in the *Richard*, but it was in 1594 that he made his first big *coup* (in the same ship) with the capture of Puerto de Caballos in Honduras, a feat he repeated in 1595. The following year he served in the second Cadiz expedition, this time as captain of the queen's *Rainbow*, but in November he departed once more for the Caribbean, now equipped with his own ship, the *Prudence* of Plymouth, and a bark called the *Adventure*, sailing 'at his own charges'. After a rather fruitless consortship with Sir Anthony Sherley, Parker went on alone into the Bay of Mexico and, in an exploit worthy of one of Drake's disciples, captured the town of Campeche. Then, as the captain himself tells us: 'The multitude of the Spaniards which fled upon my first assault by ten of the clocke in the morning assembling together renewed their strength, and set furiously upon me and my small company. In which assault I lost some sixe of my men, and my selfe was shot under the left brest with a bullet, which bullet lieth still in the chine of my backe. Being thus put unto our shifts wee devised on the sudden a newe stratagem; for having divers of the townesmen prisoners, we tied them arme in arme together, and placed them in stead of a baricado to defend us from the fury of the enemies shot. And so with ensigne displayed, taking with us our sixe dead men, wee retired with more safetie to the haven, where we tooke a frigate which rode ready fraught with the kings tribute in silver and other good commodities, which were presently to bee transported to S. Juan de Ullua, and brought the same and our Periago or Canoa to my ship, which lay in two fadome water sixe leagues from the towne, being not able to come any neerer for the sholds upon that coast.'<sup>1</sup> Later the bark *Adventure*, with her captain and thirteen men, was taken by two frigates of war manned out from Campeche; the English had taken rich booty, but they had paid heavily for it.

... H.C.A. vol. 10, p. 17-23; H.C.A. vol. 10, p. 32-34; London

45; *R.L.S.A.* 13/27, 10 FEB. 1587/8; *R.L.S.A.* 13/101, 30 JAN. 1593/4; *Laughon, Defeat*, 11, 329.

<sup>1</sup> *Principal Navigations*, x, 277-80.

Parker's greatest success, however, came in 1601 with his sensational raid on Porto Belo at the very heart of the Spanish Empire, the details of which are related in a later chapter. By 1602 Parker owned not only the *Prudence*, but the *Penelope* and the *Perce*, both of which were at sea taking prizes that year under other captains. Parker himself evidently intended another West Indies raid in 1602, but was detained on government service. It would appear, however, that he made another voyage to Honduras and Campeche at or after the end of the war, committing acts which the Spaniards denounced as piracy, though in 1605 he was cleared of all the charges against him. In this case his status and connections probably helped, for Parker was evidently of the minor gentry and by now an eminent person in Plymouth. He seems, moreover, to have had a close connection with Raleigh, who referred to him in 1596 as 'sometime my servant', and who obtained from him a valuable Spanish rutter of the West Indies. In 1606 he was one of the founding members of the Virginia Company, which indicates his arrival in the English as well as the North American 'establishment'. Nevertheless the salt was in his veins and in 1617 he accepted an appointment as vice-admiral of an East Indies expedition, in which voyage he died at Bantam in 1618.<sup>1</sup>

Parker epitomises all that was best in the minor Elizabethan sea-gentry.



Dictionary of National  
Biography, Volume 43

edited by Sir Leslie Stephen

**PARKER, WILLIAM** (*d.* 1618), sea captain, was probably the William Parker who was master of the *Mary Rose* victualler in the fleet against the armada of 1598. In November 1596 he sailed from Plymouth, in command of the ship *Prudence* of 120 tons, in company with the *Adventure* of 25 tons, commanded by Richard Henn, and, coming to Jamaica in March 1597, joined Sir Anthony Shirley [q. v.] in an attempt to surprise Truxillo, and, finding that impossible, took and sacked Puerto de Cavallos, but 'made no booty there which answered their expectations.' After other unsuccessful attempts they separated, and Parker, going towards Campeachy, landed thirty-six men in a canoe, and surprised the town on the morning of Easter day. At first the Spaniards fled; but, recovering from their panic, they returned in overwhelming numbers and drove out the English, killing six and wounding others, Parker himself among them. The English, however, carried off their dead, and with colours flying marched down to their canoe, placing the prisoners, among whom were the alcade and others of the chief men of the place, in their rear, 'as a barrier, to receive the Spaniards' shot, if they had thought fit to continue firing.' In the harbour they captured a ship with 5,000*l.* in silver on board 'and other good commodities,' which they carried off. Afterwards the Spaniards, having fitted out two frigates, captured the *Adventure*, and hanged Henn and the thirteen men who formed his crew; but Parker, in the *Prudence*, got off safely, and arrived in Plymouth in the beginning of July.

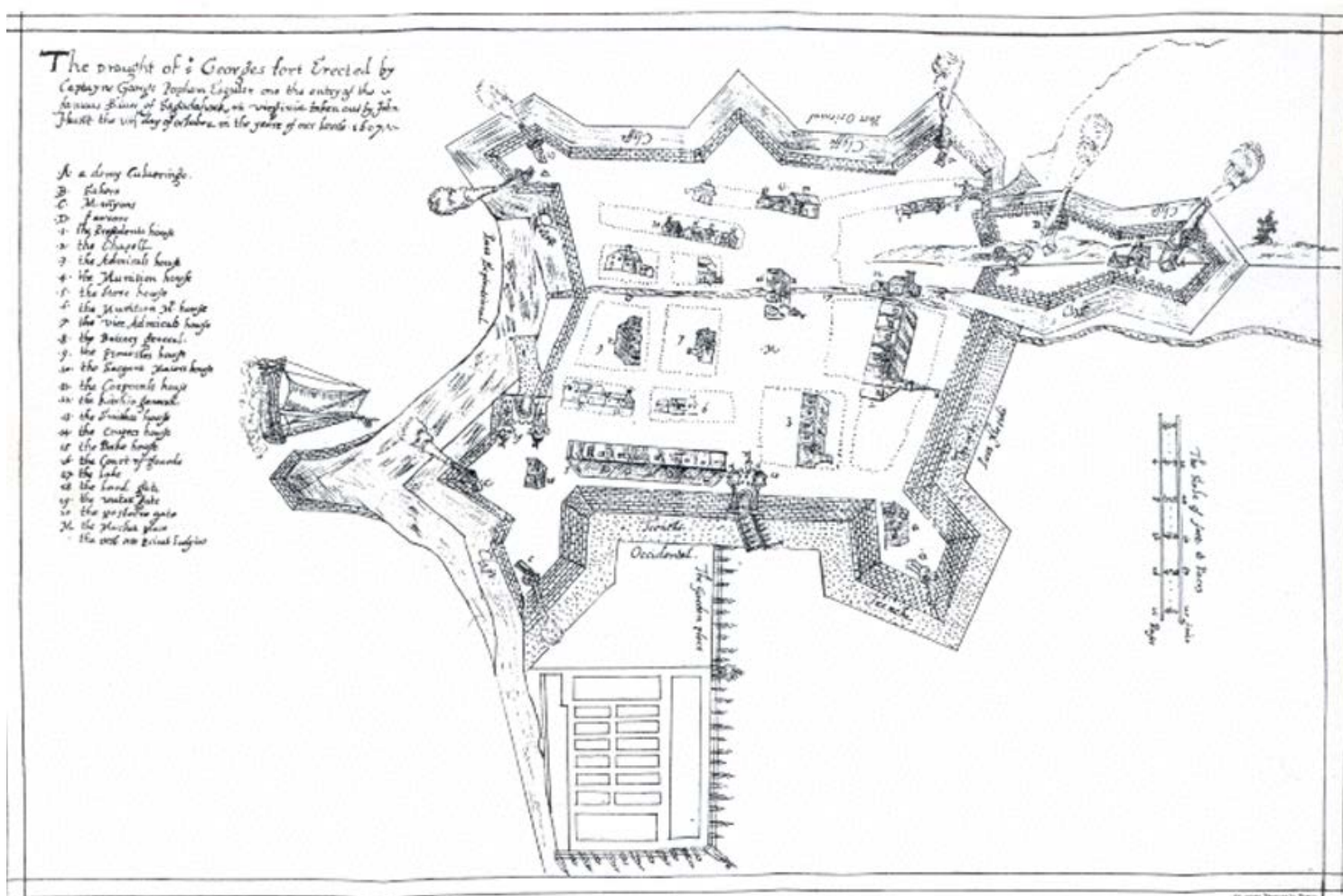
Three years later, in November 1600, he sailed again in the *Prudence*, having on board, besides several gentlemen volunteers, a crew of 130 men, and with him the *Pearl* of 60 tons and 60 men. Sacking and burning the town of St. Vincent, in the Cape Verd Islands, on the way, they proceeded to the West Indies, and after capturing and ransoming a Portuguese ship, with a cargo of nearly 400 negroes, went to the island of Cabezas, near the mainland. Leaving the ships, they went in boats with 150 men to the Bastimentos, and thence, by night, on 7 Feb. 1601, into the harbour of Porto Bello; there they landed, and after a stubborn fight, in which they lost many men, they made themselves masters of the town. Unfortunately the treasury was nearly empty, 120,000 ducats having been sent to Cartagena only a week before. Ten thousand ducats was all that remained; but 'the spoil of the town, in money, plate, and merchandise, was not inconsiderable.' With this and two frigates, which they found in the harbour and carried off, they retired to their ships, 'releasing the prisoners, among

whom were the governor and several persons of quality, without any ransom, satisfied with the honour of having taken, with a handful of men, one of the finest towns the king of Spain had in the West Indies.' They arrived at Plymouth in May. The date of this expedition is given by Purchas, whom all later writers have followed, as 1601-2; but it is quite certain that in the latter part of 1601 and through 1602 Parker was at Plymouth, and the correct date, it may be safely assumed, was a year earlier.

In August and September 1601 he was at Plymouth, busy sending out vessels to watch the Spanish fleet of 120 ships said to be collected at Lisbon, part of the time being at sea himself, cruising between Scilly and Ushant. In December 1601 he was mayor of Plymouth, examining prisoners and suspected persons, and 163*l.* 17*s.* 9*d.* was awarded him for the expense of a bark and caravel sent to watch for the Spanish fleet.

After the peace with Spain he probably settled down as a merchant at Plymouth and took no further part in public life, except as one of the adventurers in the Virginia Company. He may probably be identified with the William Parker who was 'a suitor' in November 1617 'for the chief command' of a voyage to the East Indies. The rival competitors were Sir Thomas Dale [q. v.] and Sir Richard Hawkins [q. v.] Dale was appointed chief commander, and Parker his vice-admiral. He was then, according to Dale, unfit for his work, being old and corpulent. The fleet sailed in the spring of 1618, and on 26 June arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, whence Parker wrote requesting that 100*l.* might be paid to his wife, which was ordered to be done. He died on the voyage to Bantam on 24 Sept. 1618. He left a son John, in the service of the company, apparently an agent.

[Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, iii. 602; Purchas his *Pilgrimes*, iv. 1243; Lediard's *Naval Hist.* pp. 351, 380; *Calendars of State Papers, Dom. and East Indies*; Brown's *Genesis of the United States*, p. 961.] J. K. L.



The most important document to survive from the Popham Colony is this picture-plan of Fort St. George that was drawn on site by one of the colonists. It is unique since it is the only detailed drawing that exists for an initial English settlement anywhere in the Americas. Fortified with a ditch and rampart, the enclosure contains a storehouse, chapel, guardhouse, and other public buildings, as well as residences for the colonists. The fort is defended by nine guns that range in size from demi-culverin to falcon. The boat built by the colonists, the pinnace Virginia, floats offshore although it could not have been completed by the date of the map.