

HOG ISLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
(Jamestown Island-Hog Island-Captain John Smith Chesapeake
National Historic Trail District)
(James River District)
Hog Island Road/State Route 650
Surry
Surry County
Virginia

HALS VA-73
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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Location: Hog Island Road/Route 650, Surry, Surry County, Virginia

37.179146, -76.681471 (Center of Hog Island Wildlife Management Area,
ArcGIS, GSC WGS 1984)

Significance: Hog Island, a secondary settlement to Jamestown across the James River, was so named in 1608 when colonists found it an easy place to keep their hogs. The island served a dual function as it was also selected to support a fort. Documents suggest that the island was inhabited by European settlers since at least the early to mid-seventeenth century; however, no aboveground remains are visible from this period. The island, however, is an historically important site of early settlement in Virginia, including, according to recent research, the home of John Rolfe and Pocahontas from 1614 to 1617. Rolfe had been granted land on the island from the Virginia Company during this time and it is thought that he had learned the method of curing tobacco here from Pocahontas (Lewes and Bell 2015). If so, Hog Island would have been one of the earliest locations of European efforts in tobacco production, and the beginnings of an extremely profitable venture throughout Virginia and the south. As such, Hog Island is important for its significance as an early European settlement after the initial settlement at Jamestown, and the site of early and continued agricultural practices (hogs and tobacco).

Description: Hog Island views Jamestown across the James River to the northwest, Chippokes Plantation to the southwest, Kingsmill Plantation directly across the river, and Fort Crafford to the southeast. The Hog Island Wildlife Management Area itself encompasses approximately 3,908 acres of land comprising three separate tracts: the Hog Island Tract, the northern-most section of the peninsula; the Carlisle Tract, the section to the south; and the Stewart Tract, the section to the east of the Carlisle Tract at Lawnes Point. The Hog Island tract is the area which is considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Currently the entirety of Hog Island is a relatively level landform just above sea level and is comprised of open flat land, marsh areas, and pine forests. Smaller trees dot the landscape as well. Small shrubs and tall grasses line the waterfront along the James River. A series of gravel roads winding through the marsh areas provides access to most of this section of the management area. Several large waterfowl impoundments were constructed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and have altered the landmass to some degree. As the property is accessed through Surry Power Station, entry to the

wildlife management area is restricted and a permit is required. A majority of the buildings, which serve the wildlife management area property, are modern and include a c. 1970 residence, maintenance vehicle sheds, utility sheds, carpports, office, and concrete block pump house. A single late nineteenth century building, a c. 1880 brick smokehouse, is the oldest extant building on the Hog Island tract and is located at the island's northern tip. The building has been damaged by floods and lack of maintenance and is partially collapsed.

History: Hog Island was first used by the English settlers in 1608 to keep their hogs and support a fort. Documents state that a "blockhouse" was constructed on the island to "give us notice of any shipping" and was constructed from "clapboard and wainscot, and cut down trees" (Bohannon 1927:14). The manner in which communications were relayed to the fort remains a mystery as Hog Island can only be seen from Jamestown Island's extreme east end. The hogs on the island thrived and the colony's original stock of three pigs had grown to 60 by the end of 1608 (Hume 1994:232).

Few references to Hog Island survive from the years of 1609-1619, as the colonists were more concerned with Jamestown proper and newly settled Bermuda Hundred. Recent research suggests that John Rolfe and Pocahontas resided on the island between 1614 and 1617 (Lewes and Bell 2015). John Rolfe received a land grant on Hog Island. Other early known patents on the island were granted to Captain Ralph Hamer and John Bailey and appear to predate 1619. Another early reference comes in the form of an accusation that the Warraskoyacks slaughtered the hogs here during the starving time (Hume 1994:290). In 1619, Deputy Governor Captain Samuel Argall declared Hog Island to be within the limits of Jamestown and he granted the settlers the right to plant there. References in 1620 refer to Hog Island and Hog Island "Maine" implying that settlement was not restricted to the island proper, but extended south into the adjacent peninsula. The earliest known road in Surry County connected residents of Hog Island "Maine" to a river landing and a store in the 1630s (Kelly 1979:203).

Conflict arose during the 1620s as the island's population increased. One such conflict involved Captain Hamer and Robert Evers. In May of 1624, Captain Hamer filed suit against Robert Evers. Hamer claimed he had a patent to settle a plantation on Hog Island, but it had been burnt in 1622. Meanwhile Evers, who was the guardian of orphan Mary Bailey, countered with the declaration that Mary's father, John who died prior to 1619, had left her the land on Hog Island. Apparently both parties had their claims affirmed as Hamer received 250 acres and Mary Bailey 490.

Hamer, according to the 1625 muster lists, had seven servants residing on Hog Island and may have resided here as well (Hume 1994:392). Bailey's land, however, was leased to Governor Yearley in the years 1624-1627, but was

returned to her several years later. In the 1630s she married Randall Holt. As a result of this marriage the entirety of the island came into possession of the Holt family and was retained by their descendants into the nineteenth century. It therefore appears that in the 1620s or early 1630s that Hamer sold his parcel on Hog Island. Randall Holt had arrived in the new world in 1620 on the *George*, a ship owned by William Evans, and patented land in Surry County. The Bailey-Holt plantation on Hog Island, one of the oldest settlements in America, remained in this family for over two-hundred years. Mary and Randall Holt appear to have died by 1643. Randall Holt II patented 1,022 acres on Hog Island in 1650. When Holt II died in 1679, his widow, Elizabeth Seward Holt, had the property resurveyed at 1,450 acres. This acreage remained into the nineteenth century.

From 1624 until 1632 Hog Island was variously represented in the General Assembly at Jamestown by Ensign John Utye, Gentlemen; John Chew, Merchant; and Richard Tree, carpenter. The 1625 muster shows that Governor Yeardley had quartered 15 men at Hog Island; five houses were mentioned and three of these 15 men were listed as “dwellers” (Kornwolf 1976:65). Nothing remains, however, of the original Holt plantation on Hog Island. The 1863 Civil War map of the county shows no family there, although the Confederacy operated a signal station on the island during the Civil War with a Lieutenant Woodley in command (Bohannon 1927:15).

According to the Library of Virginia collections, “Homewood,” depicted on a number of maps dating to the early to mid-twentieth century, was a one-story frame bungalow built in the late nineteenth century, perhaps when the island was owned by a Mr. Barney. All that remains of Homewood is the small two-room brick smokehouse (VDHR #090-0052) (Kornwolf 1976:68). The island was purchased by Allen Gray in about 1895. Gray owned the parcel until 1933 when the Newport News Yacht Club purchased land there. Since World War II, Hog Island has been set aside by the Commonwealth of Virginia as a wildlife refuge.

Sources: Bohannon, A.W. *Old Surry: Thumbnail Sketches of Places of Historic Interest in Surry County, Virginia*. Surry, VA: Surry County Historical Society, 1927.

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View Looking Northwest towards River from Hog Island (Andrew Kohr, 7/20/2016)



View Looking West towards Hog Island from James River (Wes Stewart, 7/15/2015).



c. 1880 Smokehouse on Hog Island (Andrew Kohr, 7/20/2016).



Hog Island Wildlife Management Area (Donald Sadler, 2014).



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Hog Island Wildlife Management Area (Emily Curme, 10/7/14).



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