

## SEA VENTURE FEARED LOST IN STORM

The fleet that sailed from England in June of this year to bring the third supply of provisions and settlers to Jamestown has returned with distressing news. Eight days from making the coast of Virginia the fleet was hit with a terrible storm that blew the ships off course. In mid-August six of the nine ships reached Jamestown, but the flagship *Sea Venture* was not one of them. When the fleet made ready to sail back to England in early October, *Sea Venture* had still not arrived. It is feared that she went down in the storm. It is a terrible tragedy for she carried on board the new Lt. Governor and most of the provisions for the new settlers for the next year.

It is not unusual for ships in a fleet to be separated during a voyage and one ship to arrive later than the others. On the first re-supply voyage to Virginia Newport's ship and the companion ship *Phoenix* became separated. Newport arrived at Jamestown in early January 1608, but *Phoenix* did not arrive until April. Storms had forced the ship's master to winter in the West Indies. While there is still hope that eventually *Sea Venture* will appear, the London Company is busy preparing a relief fleet and Lord de la Ware is expected to be part of the expedition. Questions are already being raised about the decision to put most of the provisions in one ship. Did no one consider the consequences if that ship were lost?

According to the ships' masters and mariners who have just returned from Virginia, the new settlers have arrived in a very weakened state. Disease has swept through the tween decks of some of the ships affecting many of the settlers. The tween deck is the area just beneath the main deck and the hold of the ship and is where passengers are housed. The space is generally cramped and crowded with people and their possessions. The diet aboard ship is monotonous—consisting of ship's biscuit, which is extremely hard, dried beans, oatmeal with perhaps some bacon and salted fish washed down with ale—and there is a lack of fresh air and little opportunity for the passengers to exercise. Indeed it is not uncommon for some passengers to die on these long voyages. The new settlers also suffered from the effects of the storm. It is no wonder they arrived weak and sick.

Upon their arrival at Jamestown, they found conditions were not what they should be. Rats had eaten most of the grain stored in the fort and the president John Smith reported that he had not enough food on hand to feed his own people let alone the new arrivals. He has sent some of his men away from the fort to live off the land. Let us hope that all turns out well.