



THE FIRST ENSLAVED AFRICAN LANDING

OFFICIAL LANDING DATE

The one official document that confirms the first Africans landed at Point Comfort is a journal entry by John Rolfe, who was the widower of Pocahontas and also the Secretary of the Virginia Company. His job was to keep a daily journal and report back to England what was taking place in the colony. In August 1619 John Rolfe was at Point Comfort supervising the planting of the fall crop. In January 1620 he wrote a letter back to England which states. "About the latter end of August, a Dutch man of Warr of the burden of 160 tons arrived at Point Comfort, the Commander's name was Capt. Jope. He brought not anything but 20 and odd Negroes [sic.]"

Many mathematicians will say the 20th is not the latter part of August. So when did they arrive? The National Endowment for Humanities was instrumental in creating a database of slave voyage records incorporating 40 years of archival research from 35,000 slave crossings through the middle passage. "Voyages: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database" has allowed those records to be combined and collated so that the public can follow for the first time the routes of slave ships that transported 12.5 million Africans across the Atlantic from the 16th through the 19th century.

That database has revealed that the White Lion, bringing the first enslaved Africans to Point Comfort arrived on August 25, 1619. This aligns their arrival with John Rolfe's statement, the latter part of August. Further analysis was conducted on the research by Spanish researchers, Engel Sluiter and Enriqueta Vila Vilar, and the Archivo General de Indias archives. Based on a comprehensive study of the information, Project 1619 Inc., now for the first time ever, confirms that the actual date the first Africans arrived at Point Comfort is August 25, 1619.

The privateers, White Lion and the Treasurer, each captured Africans from the San Juan Bautista and headed to Virginia – the closest English port. The White Lion arrived at Point Comfort on August 25th.

Among its cargo were 20 and odd Negroes. They were called Negroes because the Portuguese people referred to all people with dark skin as Negroes. Two of the original Africans who arrived on the White Lion in 1619 were Antoney and Isabella. In January 1625, according to the Virginia census, those two Africans, Isabella, Antonio and their son William were living in present day Hampton in Capt. William Tucker's home; who was the commander at Point Comfort, (today's Fort Monroe). Their son William was the first documented African child born in English North America. He was baptized on January 4, 1624, but no one knows for sure when he was born.