

World tobacco expansion 'phenomenal'

In 1612 the Jamestown colonists shipped their first tobacco to England, thus opening up the Old World market to American planters.

But the Jamestown Colony was not first in the trade, for Spaniards were growing the crop commercially in the West Indies as early as 1521, less than 40 years after Columbus discovered America.

Historians say that the rapid expansion of tobacco production around the world was nothing short of "phenomenal." By 1560 it was being grown in Europe as an ornamental plant and for medicinal qualities. Then it spread to Cuba and South America.

By 1605, two years before Jamestown was founded, mariners and traders had introduced it into China, Japan, South Africa and many other countries. On his first voyage to the New World, Columbus found the natives using tobacco in the same ways it is used today - smoking, chewing and snuff. Also the In-

dians were using many of today's production methods, taping and suckering the plants, as well as employing fire-curing, air-curing and sun-curing.

After the Jamestown success tobacco soon became established as the leading product of the American colonies and their

principal medium of exchange in essential commerce with England.

A historical sketch in a USDA publication notes that "Tobacco was such a factor in the colony's economy that John Rolfe grew it in the streets of Jamestown."

Specified quantities of it were

required to secure the passage of wives, and provide salaries for the clergy. Without tobacco the Virginia colony would not have survived.

As settlers opened up new territories, tobacco culture spread over an expanding America. To

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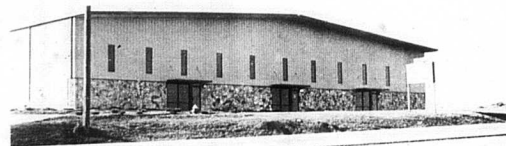
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