

# CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL HISTORIC WATER TRAIL STATEMENT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

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## 1. Introduction and Findings

This report evaluates the national significance of the trail known as the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail, which incorporates those parts of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries that Smith explored primarily on two voyages in 1608. The study area includes parts of four states—Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania—and the District of Columbia.

Two bills introduced in the United States Congress (entitled the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Watertrail Study Act of 2005) authorized the Secretary of the Interior to “carry out a study of the feasibility of designating the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Watertrail as a national historic trail.” Senator Paul S. Sarbanes (Maryland) introduced S.B. 336 on February 9, 2005, and Senators George Allen (Virginia), Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (Delaware), Barbara A. Mikulski (Maryland), and John Warner (Virginia) cosponsored it. The bill was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks on April 28. On May 24, 2005, Representative Jo Ann Davis (Virginia) introduced H.R. 2588 in the House of Representatives, and 19 other Representatives from the four relevant states signed on as cosponsors. The bill, which is identical to Senate Bill 336, was referred to the House Committee on Resources on May 24, and to the Subcommittee on National Parks on May 31. On August 2, 2005, President George W. Bush authorized the National Park Service to study the feasibility of establishing the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail as part of the FY 2006 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

The study will apply the criteria of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*) to determine the feasibility of designation. To qualify for designation as a National Historic Trail, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail must meet three criteria:

- (A) **It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use.** The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally accurately follow the historic route, but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variations offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site. Trail segments no longer possible to travel by trail due to subsequent development as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked onsite as segments which link to the historic trail.

- (B) **It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history**, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included.
- (C) **It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation.** The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.

This report focuses on Criterion B, national significance. Additional documentation will be prepared to evaluate the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail against the other criteria, pending review of this draft Statement of National Significance. Later phases of the study include developing management alternatives and preparing an Environmental Impact Statement as part of the final report. The ultimate objective of the study is to determine how best to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoor areas and historic resources associated with the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The study team, composed of professional staff members of the National Park Service Northeast and National Capital Regions, with assistance from respected scholars and consultants, makes the following findings regarding national significance:

The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail is of national significance for its association with the following themes:

**(1) Ethnic Heritage (Native Americans): Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because they accelerated the processes that destroyed the Powhatan polity and disrupted the Native peoples' lifeways throughout the region.**

**The Water Trail is significant as:**

- a) the route that John Smith followed in his voyages to American Indian towns and territories
- b) a symbol of the independence of the English colonists from Powhatan's control
- c) a symbol of the impact on and eventual collapse of the Powhatan polity and the Native peoples' lifeways in the Chesapeake Bay and beyond

**(2) Exploration and Settlement: Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because of their impact on the exploration and settlement of North America.**

**The Water Trail is significant as:**

- a) the route that John Smith followed in his program of exploration and discovery in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries
- b) a symbol of the spirit of adventure and wonder that were important components of Smith's voyages and English exploration
- c) the route by which Smith gathered information vital to the survival and growth of the English settlements in North America

**(3) Commerce and Trade: Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because of their impact on the commerce and trade of North America.**

**The Water Trail is significant as:**

- a) the route by which John Smith surveyed the Bay and explored for gold, silver, copper, and the Northwest Passage, for the benefit of the commerce and trade of the colony and England
- b) the route by which Smith made contact with American Indian tribes, established trade agreements with them, and increased the chances that the English colony would survive
- c) a symbol of England's trading power, soon to be increased by the production of tobacco for export from the colony
- d) a symbol of the long-term impact on and cultural contact between the Native peoples and European colonists

Subsequent chapters present the study's legislative background, a brief historical narrative of the water trail, a description of the significance themes in greater detail, a discussion of the historic use and development of the Chesapeake Bay, and a summary of the types of resources associated with the water trail. The report concludes with a bibliographical essay.

## 2. Study Legislation, Purpose, and Tasks

### **LEGISLATION**

On August 2, 2005, President George W. Bush authorized the National Park Service to study the feasibility of establishing the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail as part of the FY 2006 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The Act also directed the Secretary to consult with federal, state, regional, and local agencies and representatives of the private sector, including the entities responsible for administering the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (P.L. 105-312) and the Chesapeake Bay Program authorized by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1267).

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to determine whether the designation of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail as a national historic trail is feasible. Designation would serve as a reminder of the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of Jamestown as well as the exploratory voyages of Smith on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries between 1607 and 1609. It would also recognize the American Indian towns and culture of the seventeenth century, call attention to the natural history of the Bay, “complement the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Initiative, and provide new opportunities for education, recreation, and heritage tourism in the Chesapeake Bay region.”

### **TASKS**

Historical research (historical narrative, bibliography, and resource inventory)  
Draft determination of significance report

### 3. Historical Narrative

#### Foreword

The truth about the first years of the Jamestown colony is difficult to establish. Almost every aspect of this era is a subject of debate among historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists, as well as a frequent source of confusion among members of the public. Much of the problem lies in the fact that all of the contemporary letters and books were written by one party to the story—the English—who came to America bearing a culture almost as unfathomable to the Native peoples as their cultures were to the newcomers. Each side had expectations, suspicions, and fears about the other, which, when combined with cultural differences, power inequalities and the language barrier, produced conflicts that sometimes resulted in bloodshed. The colonists also suffered the consequences of internal conflicts, social divisions, and personal feuds. Historians therefore encounter books and letters written in antique English, whose authors, busily grinding their own axes, present parts of one side of the story and see the American Indian side as through a glass, darkly. The historian's challenge is thus made doubly difficult: to understand, interpret, and write clearly for the public about the worldviews and cultures of two societies that are vastly different from most people's experiences today. Historians must also persuade the public—the audience members who will eventually travel the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail—that almost everything they thought they knew about the period is wrong, or at least in need of serious reconsideration. The power of myth is difficult to overcome.

Telling the story of this early period in our nation's history, then, requires asking and debating the most basic questions of analysis and interpretation. The questions change and the debates intensify as forgotten documents are rediscovered, records thought familiar are read again, and marvelous artifacts are brought from under the ground up into the light. This study begins with the Native peoples who lived around the Chesapeake Bay, not only because they were there when the English arrived, but also because it appears that during much of the period under discussion the Powhatan dominated the English, not the other way around. The English survived at first at the sufferance and with the continual assistance of the Native peoples, not because the newcomers were paragons of outstanding leadership, exemplary teamwork, effective social skills, judicious planning, and imaginative adaptability. This study also focuses primarily on the Virginia Indians because it was with them that the English had the most frequent interactions and about whom more is known through contemporary writings combined with recent archaeological investigations.

The three principal figures in the story are Powhatan, Opechancanough, and Captain John Smith. Powhatan was the charismatic leader of the people in whose land the English settled in 1607. Opechancanough, a skillful planner and war leader, engineered a devastating attack on the colonists in 1622. Both men dealt during the first years of the colony with John Smith, the soldier of fortune whose forceful personality attracted either devotion or hatred from his contemporaries. Much of the narrative that follows focuses on the Powhatan domain or polity because it was there that the English had their first and longest-lasting contacts with the Native peoples, and because much was written about

those contacts during John Smith's sojourn in America. The interactions between the English and the Powhatan had many similarities with future interactions between the newcomers and the Native peoples throughout eastern North America. Assumptions of white cultural (and racial) superiority, the unauthorized occupation of Native peoples' lands, the exploitation of natural resources to the detriment of the Native inhabitants, the practice of all-out warfare—these assumptions and actions by the English in Virginia resonated for years to come and many miles away.

John Smith remains a fascinating character today, because of the volumes of writings he left behind and the strong feelings for and against him evident in the writings of others. Historians still debate his veracity—we know he sometimes lied, because he told us so himself—but he was also frequently truthful. From his explorations of the Chesapeake Bay came a map so accurate that it remained useful for most of the seventeenth century, and his books influenced the history of the settlement and commerce of North America. Both Smith and his journeys through the Bay are of national significance to the story of our country.

#### The Chesapeake Bay Region and Its People in 1607

The large body of relatively shallow water today called Chesapeake Bay was—about four centuries ago—the center of the world for the people who lived along its shores and tributaries. Large rivers and small streams flowed into the Bay from the east and the west, serving the inhabitants as liquid highways. The Bay itself teemed with aquatic life that also enriched the rivers and streams: sturgeon, striped bass, menhaden, white perch, eels, crabs, oysters, mussels, and clams were all found in great abundance. For thousands of years, the Native peoples used the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries for transportation, migration, communication, and trade. Fish and shellfish not only provided food for the people, but shells served as valuable trade goods, especially those that could be worked into scarce “blue” beads.

A deep forest covered most of the land around the Bay. Some of it was ancient, with massive trees, scant undergrowth, and occasional meadows. Oaks, hickories, and chestnuts abounded, as well as pines, and deer, squirrels, rabbits, opossums, raccoons, bears, foxes, wolves, bobcats, and beavers were among the common mammals of the Chesapeake woods, fields, and watercourses.

The people who occupied the coastal plain in approximately the southern half of the Bay in present-day Virginia called their territory Tsenacomoco. Its boundaries extended, in modern parlance, roughly from somewhat below the south side of the mouth of the James River north to the south bank of the Potomac River, and from the Eastern Shore of Virginia west to approximately the fall line of the rivers, where the coastal plain meets the central piedmont's rolling terrain. The people of Tsenacomoco lived in towns, large and small, located along the principal waterways and their tributaries. Town sites offered advantages in arable land, fishing, hunting, and communication. A “typical” large town sprawled—by European standards—over many acres through fields and woods. Often, an entire town could not be seen all at once. It usually contained garden plots, dwellings, storehouses, and ceremonial and religious structures. The buildings were constructed of

poles overlaid with bark or woven mats. Towns might be occupied or virtually deserted at various times of the year, depending on the demands of gardening, hunting, and fishing. The towns also “migrated” slowly along the rivers as the people reconstructed dwellings closer to fresh arable land. Sometimes the people packed up their towns and moved them to new locations. They also occupied temporary towns or camps during hunts. They periodically set parts of the woods afire to remove undergrowth and keep the forest open.

Tsenacomoco’s people—whom the English called the Powhatan—were Algonquian speakers residing in the southernmost range of linguistically related people who occupied the East Coast from coastal North Carolina into New England and who lived in similar towns. A small town named Powhatan, encircled by a palisade, stood at the lower end of the falls of the James River. It was the Native town of the principal leader also named Powhatan (another of his names was Wahunsenacawh). Born perhaps about 1547, Powhatan had inherited a domain or polity encompassing a number of tribal districts and a large territory that he further enlarged by diplomacy as well as conquest. The tribal districts within the polity were led by werowances or chiefs answerable to Powhatan, the paramount chief. The Powhatan polity was most secure in the middle, near the town at the center of power called Werowocomoco. Less-committed tribes and allies lived along the fringes, and beyond them lived other tribes and other polities.

The principal Powhatan districts along the James River from the Chesapeake Bay upstream were the Chesapeake, Nansemond, Kecoughtan, Warraskoyack, Quiyoughcohannock, Paspahugh, Weyanock, Appomattoc, Arrohattoc, and Powhatan. The Chickahominy, located on the river named for them, successfully resisted becoming part of the Powhatan polity but remained allies. They also were governed by a council rather than a werowance. Up the Pamunkey (York) River were the Kiskiack, Werowocomoco, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and Youghtanund. The Piankatank were on the river of the same name. On the Rappahannock River were the Opiscopank, Cuttatawomen, Moraughtachund, Rappahannock, Pissaseck, Nantaughtacund, and Upper Cuttatawomen. The allied Wicocomoco (Wighcocomoco), Chicacoan (Sekakawon), Onawmanient, and Patawomeck occupied the Potomac River. On the Eastern Shore, the Accomac and the Accohannock were part of the polity.

Outside the polity, the greatest threat to Powhatan came from the west, from the Monacan on the upper James River. The Mannahoac, who occupied the upper reaches of the Rappahannock River, also raided the western border. Both groups were Siouan speakers. Farther north, at the head of the Chesapeake Bay, were the Susquehannock. And in the very far north, principally in present-day Ohio near the Great Lakes, lived the Massawomeck, who periodically raided as far south as the Shenandoah Valley and upper Tidewater Virginia and were much feared. An array of other tribes and polities occupied present-day northern Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania in the vicinity of the Chesapeake. Major polities included the Piscataway on the north shore of the Potomac River and the Nanticoke across the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.

In the Powhatan world (and throughout the Chesapeake), men were warriors and hunters, while women were gardeners and gatherers. The English described the men, who ran and walked extensively through the woods in pursuit of enemies or game, as tall and lean and possessed of handsome physiques. The women were shorter, and were strong because of the hours they spent tending crops, pounding corn into meal, gathering nuts, and performing other domestic chores. When the men undertook extended hunts, the women went ahead of them to construct hunting camps. The Powhatan domestic economy depended on the labor of both sexes.

### The Power of Powhatan

Although Powhatan was an imposing and powerful leader, his power was not absolute. It was personal and religious or shamanic, as well as what the English regarded as political or executive. To a certain extent he ruled by consensus, advised by a council of sub-leaders and religious authorities (“priests”), but he also seemed to dominate the council and could act independently of it. Powhatan was the principal “official” leader, especially when it came to dealing with other nations, but others such as his brother (or possibly his cousin) Opechancanough were principal war leaders at the time the English arrived.

Powhatan possessed extensive powers of punishment over his people, but he also bore responsibility for their welfare. Some of his power stemmed from the trust of the people: when times were good, when food was abundant, when the Powhatan people competed successfully with those outside the polity, then his personal and shamanic leadership was unquestionably “right” for the people. But in 1607, Tsenacomoco was deep in a drought that would last until 1612 and eventually affect not only crops such as corn and beans but also the wild produce and animals that depended on them. Difficult times lay ahead for the people, even without the arrival of hungry Englishmen.

In return for his protection and mutual aid, and as an acknowledgement of his leadership, Powhatan received from subordinate tribes what the English called “tribute,” mostly foodstuffs such as corn and beans, which were placed in storehouses from which they could be drawn for feasts, for trade, for sacred rituals, and for feeding people in times of need. Even in times of relative abundance, seasonal shortages occurred, especially in the spring before wild and domestic crops had ripened. Food was never taken for granted.

### The English Newcomers

A group of strangers from across the Atlantic Ocean to the east entered this world in 1607. They came from England, a country ruled by a king whose power was tempered by Parliament. These newcomers represented a private stock company, the Virginia Company of London, whose objective was to establish a colony in the Chesapeake Bay region and exploit the resources there for the benefit of the investors.

On April 26 (by the calendar then in use, ten days behind our calendar, as are all dates in this report), 1607, three ships sailed into Chesapeake Bay. Named *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery*, the vessels carried 144 English men and boys including ships’ crews. A landing party came ashore at Point Comfort, rejoiced at touching land after four

unpleasant months aboard ship, and reconnoitered the nearby terrain. As the party returned near nightfall, Native inhabitants attacked and wounded two Englishmen. The others opened fire with muskets and the attackers vanished. This was the first contact between the newcomers and the people of Tsenacomoco.

It was not, however, the first experience that the Powhatan had had with Europeans. Indeed, the history of those encounters was lengthy and often bloody. Perhaps as early as 1524, Spaniards may have visited the Chesapeake Bay. Soon thereafter, European explorations of the Eastern Seaboard became more frequent. About 1561, the Spaniards came and sailed away with a young Virginia Indian named Paquinquino, whom they baptized and renamed Don Luis. After a decade of life among the Spanish, Don Luis returned to America and helped establish a Jesuit mission on the York River in September 1570. Quickly, however, Don Luis returned to his people and became Paquinquino once more. In February 1571, he helped them wipe out the mission except for one young survivor who was left alive to report what had happened. A Spanish force arrived the next year and retaliated against the people for the loss of the missionaries. In 1584–1585, Englishmen established a settlement at Roanoke Island, in present-day North Carolina, and the next winter explored the Chesapeake Bay. They abandoned Roanoke Island in 1586–1587, then returned later in 1587 to create another settlement there—the so-called “Lost Colony”—and conflicts with the local people followed. The Spanish came back to explore the Bay in 1588, English mariners followed suit about 1603, and there were doubtless other, unrecorded explorations.

What drove these nations—as well as the Portuguese and the Dutch—to explore and settle the land west of Europe? In part it was a quest for a quicker and easier route to the riches of the Orient than was available overland from west to east, in part it was a desire to dominate the seas and protect their own trade routes and raid those of other nations, and in part it was a wish to increase national power on the world stage. This last was especially true of the English, and writers such as Richard Hakluyt and others pressed the adventurous among them to advance England’s march toward empire and spread the Protestant Christian Gospel to the American Indians. There was also the desire to deny territory in the New World to other nations. Personal ambition and the hope of glory and wealth inspired many individual adventurers.

England’s late entrance into the colonization race got off to a poor start. Some other nations, such as Spain and France, focused initially on exploration and the establishment of trading posts. England concentrated on using private investment to create colonies, but the first attempts in Newfoundland and Maine as well as on Roanoke Island ended badly. The English consistently underestimated the ability of the Native peoples to control their own country.

#### Powhatan and English Worldviews

The worldviews of the Powhatan and the English could scarcely have been more dissimilar. The Powhatan people saw the land, the flora and fauna as an organic whole inhabited by human and non-human beings. This worldview has sometimes been

oversimplified into the principle that the Native peoples were “one with nature,” a concept that only skims the surface of their reality.

The English worldview held that human beings were a special creation separate from nature, which existed to be conquered and put into man’s service. The spiritual realm was someplace else entirely, like nature distinct from the everyday life of human beings. The English polity was organized into a rigid hierarchy—the “great chain of being”—and had introduced itself into the “New World” to occupy, subdue, and exploit it. Authority flowed from God to the king to the nobles and to Parliament. Any break in the chain, any disorder in the body politic, led to chaos, treason, and civil madness, as the history and tragedy plays of William Shakespeare amply demonstrated. The superiority and essential rightness of English religious, social, and political life to all others was simply assumed. The Indians of America were considered human, but perhaps not as fully human as the English.

Collisions and misunderstandings between the newcomers and the Powhatan peoples were inevitable. This was particularly true because the English generally regarded the Native people as ignorant and savage devil-worshippers living in a “state of nature”—childlike, untrustworthy, and dangerous. The English admitted that the Natives had souls that might be saved through conversion to Christianity, as well as information about the country that might be useful and goods that were worth trading for or taking by force. In English eyes, however, they lacked sacred traditions worthy of respect, a social or political culture worth understanding, and an approach to living on the land worth adopting. That the country belonged to the Powhatan peoples and the English were uninvited “invaders” scarcely occurred to the newcomers. Some of the Englishmen who regularly interacted with the Native peoples, however, developed a greater understanding of them than the stakeholders who remained in England.

Powhatan himself probably considered the Englishmen nuisances who might nonetheless prove helpful in countering hostile tribes and supplying useful trade goods, assuming that they survived or remained in his territory long enough to serve his purposes. The Native peoples had seen other Europeans come and go, and Powhatan must have been puzzled as well as angered when this group began digging in without his permission on a swampy, unhealthy piece of land on the north side of the James River. Soon thereafter, they began to die like flies. When two of the English ships departed in June 1607, 104 men and boys remained in the colony; by the end of the winter, only 38 were left alive. Disease had killed most of them, and the survivors lived primarily because Powhatan fed them.

During that winter, Powhatan also had the opportunity to learn what the English were up to when a captured newcomer was brought before him at Werowocomoco. This prisoner, almost alone among the Englishmen, seemed to make an effort to comprehend the Powhatan view of the world. His name was John Smith.

#### Captain John Smith and the Virginia Company

John Smith was born at Willoughby, Lincolnshire, about a hundred and fifty miles north of London in eastern England, and was baptized on January 9, 1580. The son of a

yeoman farmer, Smith spent his childhood just a few miles from the sea, which may have helped inspire his desire for adventure. He received a basic education in area schools, and then his father apprenticed him to a merchant in King's Lynn, a port town about thirty miles southeast of Willoughby. After Smith's father died in 1596, however, the sixteen-year-old youth abandoned his apprenticeship and began soldiering in the Netherlands. Thus began a military career that took him to France, Scotland, Italy, Greece, the Balkans, Austria, Poland, and Germany, among other places. He learned horsemanship during a brief interlude at home, then participated in a war between the Hungarians and the Turks. Smith was captured by the latter and sent to Constantinople and the Caucasus. He escaped, traveled through North Africa, and returned home in 1605. His military prowess earned him the rank of captain and the title of gentleman; his experiences sharpened his ambition and thirst for further adventure.

Smith soon joined a new enterprise. Bartholomew Gosnold and others secured a charter on April 10, 1606, that established two companies to explore and colonize the coast of North America. One, based in Plymouth, had present-day New England as its objective; the other, in London, looked to the Chesapeake Bay area. The "Counsell of Virginia," composed of investors in both companies, oversaw the activities of the two groups. Some of the investors and their supporters had earlier been involved in the Carolina colonization effort. Smith joined the investors in the company bound for the Chesapeake, and on December 20, 1606, the three ships of the expedition set sail. With them went a box, not to be opened until the vessels arrived in Virginia, containing a list of the men who would govern the group there.

Between about a third and a half of this group were considered gentlemen, and the gentry included former soldiers and privateers. The rest of the party were seamen, laborers, and boys, except for a dozen craftsmen and artisans, including a tailor, a surgeon, a blacksmith, a mason, two bricklayers, four carpenters, and two barbers. Most of the "first Planters" hoped to find wealth and return home to England in a year or two. They were not interested in settling in Virginia permanently, or in farming, as they expected to be supplied with food and other necessities during their sojourn and then leave.

The voyage to America began badly and got worse, especially for Smith. First, contrary and stormy weather just off the English coast delayed the little fleet for six weeks and many on board became seasick. Next, close quarters, illness, and boredom inflamed the landsmen, who became fractious. Finally, on February 13, 1607, Smith was arrested for "mutiny" and confined. The undertaking seemed to be falling apart although it had scarcely begun.

Smith had run afoul of several of the company's principal leaders, most of whom were his social "betters" as well as his elders. Christopher Newport, an experienced seafarer who was about forty-one, commanded the fleet for the duration of the voyage. Edward Maria Wingfield, a soldier from a noble family who became the colony's first president, was about fifty-six. Bartholomew Gosnold, a founder of the company, was thirty-four and captained one of the ships. Newport and Wingfield especially disliked Smith, considering him an upstart and a social climber. Smith probably irritated them beyond

endurance by questioning their decisions and offering unsolicited advice, as well as by merely being young, ambitious, and contentious. Gosnold eventually intervened and got Smith out from under arrest when the ships arrived in Virginia.

After the first landing and fight with the local inhabitants on April 26, Newport opened the box and read the list of councilmen: Newport, Wingfield, Gosnold, John Ratcliffe, Captain John Martin, Captain George Kendall, and—last—Captain John Smith. Probably at the instigation of Newport and Wingfield, the council refused to allow Smith to take his seat. On April 29, the company held a ceremony including a cross raising at the landing site, which Newport named Cape Henry, and took formal possession of the country for King James and the Protestant faith. The newcomers then set off to explore the James River and find a location for their settlement.

For the next two weeks, the colonists “discovered” up and down the river, past the mouth of the Chickahominy River to the Appomattox River. Along the way, they encountered several Powhatan tribes, most of whom were friendly and hospitable, feasting and entertaining the newcomers. The Englishmen were impressed by the towns they visited, as well as by the cornfields they saw. They considered a point of land called Archer’s Hope for their settlement, but when they could not anchor near the shore they selected instead the peninsula they called Jamestown Island. There, the water near the shore was deep enough that the ships could be tied to trees on the bank. On May 13, the Englishmen arrived, and the next day they began to establish their settlement. The place they had selected lay on the eastern edge of Paspahegh territory.

A week later, Newport decided that sufficient progress had been made that he could follow the Virginia Council’s instructions and explore upriver in hopes of finding a way to the western sea, which was believed to lie just beyond a great lake or mountain. For the next few days, he led a party of twenty-three men, including Smith, up the James River to the falls just above the town of Powhatan. Again, the group was greeted by seemingly friendly inhabitants eager to trade. Newport erected another cross there to claim the area for England but told the Native people that it signified the unending friendship between the English and the Powhatan. Disappointed that the falls impeded further navigation, Newport led the explorers back to Jamestown, where he learned that some Powhatan warriors had attacked the settlement and killed two Englishmen. He ordered a proper fort constructed, and soon a triangular, stockaded structure was erected with two bastions facing up- and downstream to guard against attacks by the Spanish and a third facing inland to confront the Powhatan. The English installed a cannon in each bastion.

Newport departed for England on June 22, taking *Susan Constant* and *Godspeed* and leaving Wingfield in charge. Soon thereafter, conditions at Jamestown deteriorated and the men began to die of various diseases brought on by bad water and sanitation, most likely salt poisoning, typhoid, and dysentery. Gosnold, perhaps the most experienced and respected leader in the colony, was among the dead. On September 10, Ratcliffe, Smith, and Martin deposed Wingfield and then tried him on various charges including atheism. Wingfield returned to England the next year and protested vehemently, but the Virginia

Company hushed up the matter to avoid frightening away investors. Ratcliffe became president but the colonists fared no better until Smith (by his account) began trading with the Native people for food, sometimes at the point of a gun. Throughout the fall, he and several companions went from one town to another in search of corn, frequently escorted by Native guides.

In November and early in December, Smith made several forays for corn on the Chickahominy River. One day, he and two other Englishmen, accompanied by two Powhatan Indians, rowed upstream to find the river's source. About twenty miles above the Chickahominy town of Appocant, the party separated, and Smith continued with one Native guide while the other explorers remained together. Suddenly, about two hundred men surrounded Smith, captured him after a struggle, and brought him before Opechancanough (Smith's companions had been killed). After impressing his captors with his compass, Smith was then marched from one town to another and displayed to the people before being presented to Powhatan at Werowocomoco. There, according to Smith's famous account published in 1624, he was about to be executed when the ten-year-old Pocahontas—Powhatan's favorite daughter—intervened to save him and he was thereafter "adopted" as one of the people.

This episode has generated a vast amount of debate among historians, both in regard to the story of Smith's captivity as well as the meaning or meanings of what happened to him. There are numerous discrepancies between Smith's first account, written in 1608, and his retelling in 1624, as well as additional material and details in the later version. According to the 1608 account, Smith was captured, marched here and there, threatened with death, presented to Powhatan, feasted, and escorted back to Jamestown a few days later, after lengthy conversations with the Native leader. The 1624 version adds other death threats and Pocahontas's rescue of Smith as well as various details, and also extends the period of captivity by about a month.

Assuming that Smith described what occurred as accurately as he could (Pocahontas aside), he clearly did not understand the implications of the marching to and fro, the repeated near-death experiences, and the ceremony before Powhatan—all seemed to him to be the impromptu actions of people who were unsure of what to do with him. Smith wrote that he was suspected of being a foreign captain who had killed some Powhatan people a few years earlier, and he was displayed to see if anyone could identify him as the killer, who supposedly was taller than Smith. He also thought that the ceremony before Powhatan was a "divination" ritual whereby the leader hoped to learn his intentions regarding the English settlement. Clearly, there was more to all of this than Smith thought, but what?

Several historians believe that the actions of Opechancanough and Powhatan were in fact purposeful, that the chiefs had been given reports on Smith's activities for some time and believed he was a "war chief" similar in authority to Opechancanough. Everything that Smith endured after his capture was an elaborate ritual designed to bring him and the other colonists under the authority of Powhatan. Smith was ritually "killed" and "resurrected" to symbolize his change of station, to make him and the other Englishmen a

part of the Powhatan polity. Through the ritual, the newcomers became a tributary part of the polity, another “tribe” within the overall organization led by Powhatan. This relationship obligated Powhatan to sustain the English, just as he did the other tribes within his domain, but it also obligated the English to recognize Powhatan’s authority, obtain his permission before undertaking certain actions, assist him in conflicts with tribes outside the polity, and give him the respect due someone in his position. This interpretation of the Smith captivity has the virtue of making intelligible much of what followed in the sad history of English-Powhatan interactions.

And what of the Pocahontas story, the dramatic rescue? Here again, there is not universal agreement among historians, although the consensus seems to be that it never happened, and that Pocahontas probably would not have been present at such a ritual. Most modern scholars agree that Smith added the rescue tale to his 1624 *Generall Historie* because she had been briefly famous in England not long before, and invoking her memory and her glamour might boost interest in his book.

Regardless of the truth or accuracy of Smith’s accounts of his captivity, once it ended and he had been escorted back to Jamestown on January 2, 1608, Powhatan people soon began to appear there regularly bearing food. Smith found the colony in a state of near-chaos. The company had been reduced to fewer than forty because of disease and starvation, Ratcliffe charged Smith with responsibility for the deaths of his companions when he was captured, and the leaders of the colony were making preparations to abandon Jamestown. That evening, however, Christopher Newport returned from England with more than a hundred men and ample supplies, and in the general celebration that followed the leadership dropped the charges against Smith.

The “first supply,” as it is known, brought more artisans to Virginia, including goldsmiths and refiners as well as a gunsmith and a blacksmith. The search for precious minerals was about to begin in earnest, as soon as the new men were settled. They unloaded most of the supplies; then, disaster struck when the whole place burned, including the supplies. Mere survival replaced mining as Newport’s first objective, and Smith, because of his new association with Powhatan, became the key to survival.

Smith soon arranged a meeting between Newport and Powhatan at Werowocomoco, and there Powhatan reiterated the arrangement between himself and the English. Smith, since he wrote about the meeting later, probably understood the implications; it is unclear whether Newport did, but he had no intention of being subservient to anyone else. Each side exchanged youths to learn the other’s language and customs, and, perhaps, to serve as spies. Trading took place, and by being overly generous, Newport temporarily wrecked the rate of exchange (so many beads for so much corn) that Smith had established. The meeting ended amicably and from Newport’s viewpoint was a complete success. A food supply was guaranteed, and his men were now free to search for gold. They soon discovered a “mine” upriver on the Pamunkey and packed barrels with supposedly gold-laden earth. Newport sailed for England on April 10, to be disappointed when the “ore” was analyzed there and deemed worthless.

For Powhatan, however, the meeting was less than successful because the English deceived him. Smith, during his captivity, had lied to Powhatan about why the English were in Virginia in the first place, claiming that they had merely come to escape the Spanish. In fact, of course, the English intended to colonize the country and take up residence wherever they pleased as soon as they could identify good sites for mines and trading posts. They were not about to take direction from Powhatan, ask his permission before exploring and settling, or otherwise kowtow to him.

Smith explored the Nansemond River after Newport departed, and then returned to Jamestown to help work on the new buildings and cornfields. Smith had been urging the settlers to plant their own crops rather than to rely on supplies from England or corn from the Powhatan, but with limited success. He also tried to organize them to work on various construction projects, such as repairing the fort, again with little success.

The ship *Phoenix* (it had been in Newport's fleet but was blown off course by a storm), commanded by Captain Francis Nelson, soon arrived with more colonists and provisions. Ratcliffe wanted to employ Nelson and his vessel in the search for precious metals, but Nelson refused and planned instead to sail for England. Smith, meanwhile, had decided to lead his own expedition using a barge or shallop with a few other men. This enterprise also would keep him away from Ratcliffe (the two men despised each other).

On June 2, 1608, Smith, his crew, and his vessel accompanied Nelson and *Phoenix* to present-day Cape Charles. Nelson sailed for England, while Smith directed the shallop into the Chesapeake Bay on his first voyage of exploration. Before they parted, Smith gave Nelson a sketch map of part of the Bay and its river system, as well as a letter to a friend, published later that year as *A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia since the first planting of that Collony*. A copy of part of Smith's map soon arrived in Spain, sent from London in a diplomatic dispatch in September 1608 by the Spanish ambassador, Don Pedro de Zuñiga. The dispatch and map constituted one of Zuñiga's several attempts to interest King Philip III in eliminating the Virginia colony. The map would have made it relatively easy to do so, for the triangular James fort was clearly noted on the north side of the carefully drawn James River. Only a few months after Smith drew his first map, then, it had become an element in an international intrigue that threatened the English settlement's existence.

#### Smith's First Chesapeake Bay Voyage

In exploring the Chesapeake Bay, Smith was following Company instructions to seek valuable minerals, identify fish and wildlife, study the forests for useful timber, locate good ports, and learn about the Native people's towns and numbers of warriors. Although Smith later wrote extensively about both of his Chesapeake Bay voyages, there are gaps in the narrative that must be filled with calculations and assumptions based on our understanding of tides and wind directions, the places that Smith did or did not record on his map, and the customary sailing procedures of the early seventeenth century. Smith based some of what appears on his great map, for instance, on information from the Native people rather than his own observation. Many of the place-names he assigned are still in use.

Smith selected fourteen companions for his first voyage, probably for their skills. Six of them—James Bourne, William Cantrill, Richard Featherstone, Thomas Momford, Ralph Morton, and Michael Sicklemore—were gentlemen familiar with firearms. Walter Russell was a physician. Robert Small was a carpenter who could make any necessary repairs to the shallop. John Powell, a tailor, could sew sails as well as clothes. James Read was a blacksmith. Jonas Profit, a fisherman, was also a sailor, and Richard Keale, a fish merchant, could identify edible fish. James Watkins and Anas Todkill were soldiers. Smith also engaged the services of Native people as guides and translators when necessary throughout the voyage.

On June 3, Smith and his party explored Fisherman's Island just off the tip of Cape Charles and Monkhorn Island on the Atlantic shore. Returning to the Bay, they saw Native men fishing with bone-headed spears. They directed Smith north along the western side of the Eastern Shore to Accomack Town, near Elliots Creek, where the Englishmen got a friendly reception. Smith conversed with the chief there, who told him that canoes could harbor easily for a considerable distance up the peninsula. The Englishmen probably spent the night at Accomack.

The next day, they explored the shore to the north, entering Cherrystone Inlet and either Nassawadox or Occohannock Creek. The sight of an island in the distance (either Watts or Tangier) caused Smith to bypass other creeks, some of which had towns a short distance inland. That afternoon, as the group sailed for the island, a violent thunderstorm struck, causing Smith to turn toward the mainland and anchor perhaps in Chesconnessex Creek, near present-day Onley.

Smith spent the morning of June 5 exploring Watts and Tangier Islands, which he named the Russells Isles in honor of the doctor. Then he turned back east and entered Beasley Bay, sailed or rowed around the marsh to the north, and took the boat into the mouth of the Pocomoke River, which he called the Wicocomoco (Wighcocomoco) after the Native people whose town he soon encountered. At first the English got a hostile reception but soon made peace. The Wicocomoco were outside the Powhatan polity and spoke a different Algonquian dialect, so communication was difficult. One or more of them guided Smith upstream (either in a canoe or overland) as far as the site of present-day Pocomoke City, Maryland. The party then returned to the town, where the men feasted and rested for the night. The Englishmen were disappointed with the quality of the fresh water.

On June 6, Smith explored Tangier Sound. He sailed north along the shore and noted Marumscoc, East, and Ape Hole Creeks, then rowed through Cedar Straits, observing Clump and Great Fox Islands and finally entering the sound. He next visited the Annemessex and Manokin Rivers and Deal Island. When he reached Bloodsworth Island, another storm tore away the mast and sail, and the crew had to bail to keep from being swamped.

For the next day and a half, Smith explored Bloodsworth Island, which he named Limbo, while Powell the tailor repaired the sail. On the afternoon of June 8, the company got underway again, returning to the Eastern Shore and sailing up the Wicomoco River to Monie Bay. Encountering salt marshes, Smith sailed north into the Kuskarawaok (Nanticoke) River, where the inhabitants shot arrows at the boat from the shore. Anxious to find fresh water, Smith anchored the vessel out of range in midstream for the night, near Ragged Point.

Smith maneuvered the shallop close to the shore the next morning, where the Native people waited unarmed, bearing baskets of goods for trade. Suspecting an ambush, Smith had ordered a volley fired at the crowd and then backed off when he saw armed men hiding in the marsh on the point. Late in the day, he again approached the shore and fired into the marsh but saw no one. Observing smoke across the river, Smith sailed there to find some abandoned houses. He left a few trade goods, then went back down the river and into Fishing Bay, past Elliott Island and the Transquaking River, before returning to the Nanticoke River and anchoring near the abandoned houses.

On June 10, four Nanticoke men in a canoe approached the shallop from downstream. They had been away fishing and were unaware of the clash the previous day. Smith was friendly and generous, and they paddled away to tell their people. Soon, twenty Nanticoke appeared, then some hundreds came to trade furs and other goods, and the Englishmen went ashore, probably between present-day Bivalve and Tyaskin. Smith noted the high quality of the furs, which the Nanticoke obtained by trade with other tribes, using large quantities of shell beads that they made.

It is uncertain just how far up the Nanticoke River Smith and his men explored, given the frenzy of trading, the need to take on fresh water, the hospitality he received, and the distance to the paramount chief's town of Cuskarawaok near present-day Vienna. Smith may instead have relied on information supplied by the local inhabitants (Powhatan and others sometimes drew maps for him in the earth) rather than passing into present-day Delaware himself. The Nanticoke told Smith that the Eastern Shore was only a peninsula separating the Chesapeake Bay from the Atlantic Ocean, and they also spoke of "a great nation called Massawomecks" who lived farther up the Bay. Because one of Smith's goals was to find a northwest passage, he was anxious to locate and interview the people of that nation, so he probably recorded the information and sailed back to the mouth of the river to spend the night.

On June 11, Smith and the men sailed west through Hooper Strait between the mainland and Bloodsworth Island, past the Honga River and Nancy Point on the south end of Hooper Island. In the distance, as he sailed across the Bay, Smith saw high cliffs just above the horizon—the eroding cliffs between Drum Point and Little Cove Point—and made for them. Once across, he sailed north past the mouth of the Patuxent River and Calvert Cliffs, noting Plum Point Creek at Breezy Point and Fishing Creek at Chesapeake Beach. He probably anchored for the night between Fishing Creek and Randle Cliff.

The next day, Smith continued north along the shore, sailing all the way to the mouth of the Patapsco River and recording Herring Bay, the South River, White Hall Creek, and the Magothy River. He found no towns, suggesting that attacks by Iroquoian tribes to the north and west had depopulated the area. Smith probably stopped for the night at the mouth of the Patapsco.

Smith explored up the Patapsco River past the site of present-day Baltimore on June 13. First the men rowed the shallop upstream as far as today's town of Elkridge, and then they went on foot past the first falls of the river near the present Interstate 95 bridge to a point about half a mile beyond present-day Avalon. He and his men looked for minerals but found none. They placed a brass cross claiming the valley for England at the farthest point they explored. Since the river obviously was not a navigable route to the interior, Smith returned to the mouth, exploring Northwest Harbor and Middle Branch on the way.

Whatever spirit of adventure the men had possessed when the voyage began had by this time worn thin, and they wanted to go back to Jamestown. Storm water had wet their bread and caused it to rot, and the crew had been jammed into the shallop for almost two weeks. The sudden absence of towns also may have made them uneasy. Smith gave them an oration, observing that there was no more risk in sailing on to find the Massawomeck nation than in returning to Jamestown, and they agreed to go on.

Nature intervened, however. A storm blew in on June 14, probably a northeaster with cold wind and rain, preventing the shallop from leaving the Patapsco. Five men fell ill, and Smith decided to return to Jamestown. The next day the wind propelled them south to Herring Bay, an easy sail that probably lifted the men's spirits. They spent the night there, and then sailed south again to the mouth of the Potomac River. On June 17, they navigated up the river about twenty miles to Nomini Bay on the south (Virginia) side. There they saw two Native men and accepted their invitation to come with them up Nomini Creek to Onawmanient town. It was an ambush, however, with several hundred men emerging from the woods to shoot arrows at the Englishmen, who responded with gunfire deliberately aimed low. The warriors, perhaps both Chicacoan (Sekakawon) and Wicocomoco, laid down their weapons and agreed to an exchange of hostages. Soldier James Watkins was given up to the Native men, and a parley followed. The Onawmanient chief told Smith that Powhatan had ordered the attack, but Smith thought that malcontents at Jamestown had put him up to it. It is possible that Powhatan ordered Smith punished or chastised for wandering through the Chesapeake Bay region, trading with some who might be Powhatan's enemies, without his permission. Powhatan may have heard about the expedition from the Accomac. Chastised or not, Smith spent the night either with the Onawmanient chief or aboard the shallop in Nomini Bay.

Smith's travels on the Potomac River over the next four weeks—June 18 to July 15—are difficult to reconstruct because he wrote of them briefly and did not indicate their sequence or the exact time for each stage. At some point early in his journey up the Potomac, Smith met a Wicocomoco man named Mosco, who had an unusually heavy beard that suggested some European ancestry via earlier explorers. He assumed the position of guide and coordinator for Smith and his men, both on this and on Smith's

second voyage of exploration. Mosco took the Englishmen mostly along the north bank of the river upstream as far as Patawomeck, where he remained while they went on. His plan may have been to keep them out of Powhatan's polity, where they were likely to encounter more chastisement (as apparently also occurred at Patawomeck and elsewhere on the south bank).

Smith, his men, and Mosco sailed to Saint Clement Bay due north across the river from Nomini Bay, then upriver to the Yeocomico (Wicomico) River, and next to Cecomocomoco back on the Potomac River. They visited the Potopaco people on the Port Tobacco River; this was part of the Piscataway polity, outside Powhatan's realm. Next came the Nanjemoy, followed by Patawomeck, where Mosco remained behind while the Englishmen continued upriver. They received hospitality from a number of people en route, including the Tauxenent (Dogues), supposedly on the edge of Powhatan's polity, the Pamacocack, Moyaone (Piscataway), and Nacotchtank. Eventually Smith reached the Little Falls of the Potomac, a mile upstream from present-day Washington, D.C., and traveled overland to the Great Falls, where the party examined the rocks and studied the sediments that glittered with yellow dust (mica). He traded for furs with Native people he encountered in canoes there and then worked his way back downstream to Patawomeck on Potomac Creek.

There he found that Mosco had persuaded the chief to allow Smith to visit a valuable mine. Located far up Aquia Creek, the mine produced an "ore" with silvery glitter (perhaps specular hematite) that was washed out, bagged, and traded over considerable distances. The silver specks were mixed with grease and paint to decorate faces and were highly esteemed. Several Patawomeck men led Smith and six of his party up the creek in the shallop about thirteen miles, and then they walked the rest of the way, about eight miles. Smith was vague about the mine's exact location, which seems to have been on a tributary of Aquia Creek. The group dug some of the ore, but when it was assayed in England later it was found to contain no silver.

Smith and his men returned downstream to the mouth of the Potomac River, probably visiting Ozatawomen town on Upper Machodoc Creek and perhaps Chicacoan on the Coan River. Eager to explore the Rappahannock River, Smith headed south along the shore of the Northern Neck on July 15, examining the creeks along the way and visiting Wicocomoco on the Great Wicomico River and the town of Conquack. From Ingram Bay, the next day Smith and his men sailed and rowed to Fleets Bay. On July 17, at low tide the shallop ran aground at the mouth of the Rappahannock River, where shoals extend for some distance into the Chesapeake Bay. Smith and his men decided to fish while they waited for the tide to float the boat, and employed their swords to impale the fish that swam through the shoals in abundance. Smith had the misfortune to spear a cow-nose ray, which sank its tail spine into his wrist as he tried to remove the fish. His arm, shoulder, and chest swelled from the toxin, but Dr. Russell applied oil from his medical stores and by evening Smith was well enough to eat the ray for supper. He called the place Stingray Point, a name it bears to this day.

That night, Smith—still feeling the effects of the ray’s sting—decided to postpone his exploration of the Rappahannock River and return to Jamestown. The incoming tide had floated the shallop off the shoal, and during the night the crew made enough progress to round Old Point Comfort and put in at Kecoughtan by the next evening. The Kecoughtan people, seeing the goods for which Smith had traded (including bows, arrows, warclubs shields, mantles, and furs), thought that the Englishmen had successfully fought the much-feared Massawomeck. Smith allowed them to believe this, and the night may have been spent feasting in celebration.

On July 20, the party made little progress up the James River, probably because of contrary winds. Smith landed for the night at Waraskoyack, only about fifteen miles upstream, but was consoled by additional celebrating, as word of his “victory” over the Massawomeck had reached at least that far. The next day, as the explorers approached Jamestown, they played a little joke on the inhabitants. Knowing that the colonists lived in dread of a Spanish attack and to test their responsiveness, Smith and his men decorated the shallop with painted streamers that looked Spanish rather than English, so that the Jamestown residents would think the vessel was a scouting boat in advance of a Spanish frigate. It is doubtful that Ratcliffe and the others were amused, because the situation at Jamestown had gone from bad to worse in Smith’s absence.

According to Smith, Ratcliffe’s role as president had turned him into a tyrant. He had plundered the stores and forced the workers to build him a “pallace in the woods.” The men—perhaps as impressed with Smith’s apparent military success as the Native people had been—begged him to overthrow Ratcliffe, and Smith agreed. In short order, he somehow deposed Ratcliffe, installed his friend Matthew Scrivener as acting president, and decided to continue his exploration of the Chesapeake Bay. This time he would concentrate first on the upper reaches of the Bay and then the Rappahannock River.

#### Smith’s Second Chesapeake Bay Voyage

For his second voyage, Smith reduced the number of men from fourteen to twelve, keeping most of the same crew but replacing a few of them who were needed at Jamestown. He took five gentlemen instead of six, retaining James Bourne, Richard Featherstone, Thomas Momford, and Michael Sicklemore, adding Nathaniel Powell, and dropping William Cantrill and Ralph Morton. Anthony Bagnall replaced Walter Russell as physician. Edward Pising took Robert Small’s place as carpenter, William Ward replaced John Powell as tailor, and blacksmith James Read remained behind. Fisherman Jonas Profit, fish merchant Richard Keale, and soldiers James Watkins and Anas Todkill, all members of the first expedition, also joined the second.

The first voyage had taught Smith that the Northwest Passage probably could not be found by sailing up the rivers that flowed into the Bay. He knew that the navigability of the James, the Potomac, and several other rivers terminated in rocky falls, and none of the Native people he interviewed thought that a great sea was accessible by sailing farther west. On his second voyage, Smith would test the head of the Bay and the Rappahannock River, but he probably knew that any such passage lay elsewhere, if it existed.

Smith and his crew left Jamestown on July 24 and stopped that night at Kecoughtan, where the winds then shifted and delayed them for the next couple of days. The Kecoughtan people, convinced that Smith was on his way north to thrash the Massawomeck again, hosted him and his men. On July 27, the wind turned favorable, and the expedition sailed into the Bay, headed north, and made Stingray Point that evening—a distance of about forty-five miles. The next day, the wind may have carried Smith and his men past the mouth of the Potomac River to Cove Point.

On July 29, the shallop sailed all the way to the mouth of the Patapsco River. A problem had developed, however. Half of the men, mostly those who had arrived in the “first supply” in January and were not yet “seasoned” by surviving a full year in the colony, had become very ill. Only six, including Smith, remained physically fit, which meant that rowing the heavy boat was virtually impossible and the smaller tributaries would have to remain unexplored. Under sail, the next day the vessel reached Turkey Point, where Smith saw that the Bay divided itself into four main rivers: the Susquehanna, the North East, the Elk, and the Tockwogh or Sassafras. He sailed the shallop into the North East River and anchored for the night.

Several crewmen walked six miles up Little North East Creek along the bank the next day, July 31, and placed a cross where the stream divided to claim the head of the Bay for England. They then returned to the shallop and sailed out into the Bay and west to the Susquehanna River. Contrary winds and the river current kept them from entering the mouth that day, so they sailed instead back across the Bay to the Sassafras River. As they approached the mouth, they saw seven or eight birch-bark canoes coming out, loaded with Massawomeck men. Smith hid his sick men—half the crew—under a tarpaulin, placed sticks with their hats along the gunwales with two muskets between each hat, and hoped that the warriors would think he had more armed men than he actually had. The ruse seemed to work. The Massawomeck turned and landed on one riverbank while Smith anchored opposite them, and both sides stared at each other for a while. Finally, two canoeloads of Massawomeck ventured out, and Smith gave them metal bells that broke the tension. Everyone soon got down to business, and Smith traded into the evening for venison, bear meat, bearskins, fish, weapons, and shields. The Massawomeck told him that they had just come from a fight with the Tockwogh and showed him their wounds. The next morning, the Englishmen awoke to find them gone (across the Bay and up the Bush River, as Smith later learned).

On August 1, Smith slowly explored up the Sassafras River. Word of the strange craft quickly spread, and soon Tockwogh men arrived in canoes to surround and attack the Englishmen. Smith tried to persuade them of his friendly intentions in the Powhatan language but the Tockwogh spoke a different Algonquian language. Fortunately, one of them proved bilingual and he conveyed Smith’s words to the others. When the Tockwogh spotted the Massawomeck weapons and shields, they (like the Kecoughtan) assumed that Smith had taken them by force. Smith said nothing to disabuse them of the notion. They escorted the Englishmen seven miles upriver to their palisaded town, where Smith noticed that they had tools of iron and brass and asked where they had come from.

Told they were from the Susquehannock, who lived two days' journey above the falls of the Susquehanna River, Smith asked the bilingual Tockwogh to take another Tockwogh who spoke Susquehannock and invite representatives to a meeting at the town for trade.

The next day, the Englishmen and the Tockwogh men sailed across the Bay to the mouth of the Susquehanna River, then up to the falls. The Native men departed, telling Smith that they would need three days to reach Susquesahanough, the principal town (located in present-day Pennsylvania near Washington Boro, southeast of Lancaster), and return—roughly forty miles each way from the river's mouth. After they left, Smith had his men plant a cross, and then they sailed back down the river and explored islands along the way, spending the night in the Susquehanna Flats just outside the river's mouth. The Tockwogh men got into Pennsylvania before bivouacking.

On August 3, Smith sailed east across the Bay and spent the night at the mouth of the Elk River. The Tockwogh men reached Susquesahanough, where they rested for a day and answered questions about the Englishmen. The able-bodied from among Smith's crewmen, meanwhile, explored about eight miles up Big Elk Creek. At the stream's fork, they climbed a hill from which they may have been able to see Delaware Bay to the east, and planted another cross to claim the river for England. They then returned to the shallop for the night. On August 5, the Englishmen sailed back across the Bay and up the Susquehanna to the falls to wait for the Tockwogh men. At Susquesahanough, the Susquehannock leaders agreed to meet with Smith, organized a trading party, packed trade goods into canoes, and got ready for the quick half-day trip downstream.

The next day, the canoe fleet arrived at the falls with about sixty men and many gifts and trade goods. While most of the canoes remained in the river because of wind and chop on the Bay, intending to follow after the weather calmed, Smith took the five Susquehannock leaders and two interpreters aboard the shallop and sailed across to the Sassafras River and Tockwogh. Dancing and feasting took place there during the night. In the morning, Smith conducted an Anglican prayer service, which included a chanted psalm. The Susquehannock leaders reciprocated with a song, then embraced Smith and gave him a large number of presents. The Susquehannock may have intended the exchange to mark an alliance with the English, as they like the Tockwogh believed that Smith had defeated their mutual enemy, the Massawomeck. The remaining Susquehannock men probably arrived soon thereafter, and more feasting and trading followed.

On August 8, Smith departed Tockwogh, heading south to explore other rivers including the Rappahannock on the way back to Jamestown. He and the Native people probably saw this week of close contact as mutually beneficial: the Susquehannock and Tockwogh had a new trading partner and ally against the Massawomeck, while Smith had learned of other tribes with whom the Susquehannock traded—a network that reached into Canada. He had also learned, from the local inhabitants as well as from his own observations, that the head of the Chesapeake Bay did not lead to the Northwest Passage. It was not what he had hoped to find, but it was useful information nonetheless. His men, by this time, probably were feeling better, too. Before the end of the day, driven by good winds, the

shallop got at least as far as Rock Hall on the Eastern Shore, and perhaps all the way to Sandy Point at the mouth of the Chester River.

Smith sailed south and west across the Bay to the Patuxent River on August 9, and the next day sailed and rowed upstream past two towns on the eastern bank to the principal town of Pawtuxunt on Battle Creek. After a night of rest and feasting there, Smith and his men, probably accompanied by a Pawtuxunt guide, sailed upriver and noted two more towns on the eastern side. They then entered a hunting area between the Pawtuxunt and the upriver tribes, whose leader resided at Mattpanient. Smith probably stopped there for a courtesy call, and reached the vicinity of today's Merkle Wildlife Management Area. On August 11, Smith halted downstream at Acquintanacsuck town for another courtesy call and a bit of trading. He and his men then continued to the town of Opanient near the mouth of the river, to drop off their guide and spend the night.

On August 13, the expedition sailed and rowed south toward the Rappahannock River, probably stopping for the night at Saint Jerome Creek. Smith reached the mouth of the Rappahannock the next day and then sailed upstream to Moraughtacund town on Lancaster Creek, where he had a reunion with Mosco. The bearded Wicocomoco man had heard his friends were exploring up the river, so he trekked to Moraughtacund to join them. The leader there treated the Englishmen well, and they rested and feasted for a day or two.

Mosco guided Smith and his men upriver into the territory of the Rappahannock people on August 17, but with a warning. Because the Moraughtacund leader had recently appropriated three of the Rappahannock leader's wives, and because Smith had accepted Moraughtacund hospitality, the Rappahannock would consider him their enemy. Smith thought the Moraughtacund simply wanted all the trade for themselves, so he pressed on upstream and eventually approached the north bank, probably opposite Piscataway Creek just below present-day Tappahannock. There he saw a dozen Rappahannock men beckoning to him and displaying baskets of goods. Hostages were exchanged for good behavior, but suddenly the Rappahannock attacked. Smith and his men fought back with musket fire, set shields on their arms and rescued English hostage Anas Todkill, looted the Rappahannock dead (the survivors had fled), and departed in the shallop with Rappahannock canoes in tow. These Smith gave to Mosco, and then the party returned to Moraughtacund for feasting and celebration.

The next morning, Smith, his men, and Mosco departed upstream again, this time sailing past the Rappahannock towns and keeping close to the south bank. They had reached a point where the river narrows and turns left, not far from present-day Leedstown, when Rappahannock men hiding in the bushes let fly a volley of arrows. Smith replied with musket fire and passed safely out of range. When they were half a mile upriver, Smith looked back and saw the Rappahannock dancing and singing in derision. After another five miles, the party reached Pissaseck town, where the leader welcomed the Englishmen and they spent the night.

On August 19, Smith continued his expedition up the meandering Rappahannock and stopped at Nandtaughtacund at Portobago Bay to trade and spend the night. The next day the Englishmen arrived at Cuttatawomen town at Skinkers Neck, where amid the feasting they were concerned about Richard Featherstone, one of the gentlemen among the crew, who had grown seriously ill, possibly with heatstroke. On August 21, near Moss Neck, Featherstone died and was buried. The rest of the group probably spent the night nearby.

The next day, Smith and his men rowed to the vicinity of present-day Fredericksburg, just below the fall line. They went ashore, “digging in the earth, looking of stones, herbs, and springs.” Suddenly, after an hour, a group of warriors attacked; Smith and his crew fired back, and Mosco fought with them. When the attackers withdrew, leaving behind their dead, the Englishmen found one of them unconscious and carried him to the shallop, where Mosco questioned him for Smith after he regained consciousness. The man’s name was Amoroleck, and he was from a Mannahoac town, Hassinunga, on the upper Rappahannock River. The Mannahoac, like the Monacan, were Siouan speakers who lived outside the Powhatan polity. Amoroleck knew that there were mountains west of his town, but nothing about what lay beyond them. He also said that his companions would return for their dead. Smith and his men, with Mosco and Amoroleck, boarded the shallop, arranged their shield collection on the appropriate side of the vessel to help protect them, and anchored in mid-river. After dark, the Mannahoac returned with reinforcements and attacked, but their arrows fell short. Their war cries were so loud that Amoroleck’s cease-fire shouts could not be heard. Smith raised anchor and the boat drifted downstream, the Mannahoac following and shouting taunts, for about nine miles to Hollywood Bar.

On August 23, the next day, Smith and his crew had breakfast and took down the shields so that the Mannahoac men could see Amoroleck safe and sound. He told his compatriots that the Englishmen were friends, and soon they were convinced. Some trading took place, Smith probably made further inquiries about what lay over the mountains (the Hassinunga leaders did not know), and the explorers finally got underway, heading back downstream to Cuttatawomen. Smith had succeeded in establishing peaceful trading relations with the Mannahoac, Powhatan’s enemies of interior Virginia.

The next day, Smith continued downriver. So that his great “victory” over the Mannahoac could be celebrated, he probably stopped at several towns including Pissaseck. There the leaders of that town and Nandtaughtacund convinced Smith to make peace with the Rappahannock. Smith struck a hard bargain, however, since the Rappahannock had attacked him twice: they would have to come to the meeting unarmed, make peace with the Moraughtacund, present Smith with their leader’s bow and arrows, and send the leader’s son as a hostage in advance of the meeting. The Rappahannock, when they received the terms, agreed to all but one. The meeting took place on August 25 at Piscataway Creek, where the first ambush had occurred. The Rappahannock leader, three of whose wives had earlier been appropriated by the Moraughtacund leader, asked to make a present of his claim to them to Smith in lieu of his son, with whom he could not bear to part. Smith agreed, although he had no intention of keeping the women. Over

the next three days, Smith got the Moraughtacund leader to surrender the women to him in the interest of peace.

On August 29, after the Native men had scoured the woods for deer, a huge feast was laid on at Moraughtacund. Smith sealed his friendship with the leaders by distributing the women among them. First he gave each of the women beads, next he had the Rappahannock choose his favorite wife, then he had the Moraughtacund make his selection, and finally he gave the third woman to Mosco. The guide's importance and wealth had grown considerably not only because of his role in the expedition but also because of the booty he had received after the battles. Now he changed his name to Uttasantascough—meaning stranger or Englishman—in honor of Smith and his crew. By the time Smith left, he later wrote, the people of the Rappahannock had promised to plant extra corn for the English the next year. Beside trading peacefully with the Mannahoac, Smith had also brokered a peace between adversaries within Powhatan's polity, breaking yet another rule.

The Englishmen bade farewell to their guide and new friends and departed about the last day of August, while the feasting continued. Smith had to return to Jamestown by September 10, when he was due to assume the presidency of the colony legitimately. He also had another river to explore, and at this time of year the winds were uncertain. By the evening of August 31, the shallop was anchored at the mouth of the Piankatank River. Over the next three days, Smith explored up and down the river, mapping it and visiting the Piankatank town, which like other towns along the river was virtually empty as the men were away hunting. As in other towns Smith had visited, he got those who remained in Piankatank town to promise him a share of the corn crop.

On the morning of September 3, a windless day, the crew began rowing down the Bay toward the James River. They made the mouth of the Poquoson River by dusk, but then a violent thunderstorm struck and they had to bail to keep from foundering. Smith hoisted sail in the dark to take advantage of the wind and steered the shallop to Old Point Comfort, its way illuminated by the lightning, and took shelter there. The next day was spent resting and drying clothes. On September 5, the group began sailing up the James River and explored the Elizabeth and Nansemond Rivers. Smith later wrote an account that claimed he had a running battle with the Nansemond, but this is questionable. On September 7, laden with notes, maps, war booty, gifts, and trade goods, the shallop docked at Jamestown.

John Smith's explorations of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries had ended. He had failed to find gold, silver, or the Northwest Passage. But he had accomplished a great deal, for good and ill. He saw more with his own eyes (and wrote more about it) than any other Englishman then in Virginia. He gathered data for a map that would guide English explorers and settlers for decades to come. He journeyed a great distance for the time, in an open boat with crews that were often ill, and lost only one man. He faced storms and combat and brought his men and his vessel safely home. He formed alliances with a vast number of American Indian tribes, using courage and bluster and deception in the process, but he also violated the agreement with Powhatan and unwittingly endangered

both Jamestown and the great chief. Smith's voyages brought out his best qualities—personal bravery, coolness in times of stress, canny negotiating skills, and a knack for leadership. They also illustrated his worst—deceit, manipulation, and the ability to wreak havoc among the Native peoples through ignorance and stereotypical English arrogance. Regardless of the outcomes, however, Smith and his companions had survived a grand adventure, and the voyages were a great accomplishment.

#### The End of Smith's Sojourn in Virginia

One benefit of the voyage for Smith's men was that they had avoided the worst of the sickly season at Jamestown, where disease and poor sanitation had taken its usual toll. When Smith was elected president on September 10, 1608, he instituted a campaign of cleanup and repair. He had the fort rebuilt and enlarged, and also ordered the construction of another fort on the south side of the James River. Earthen remnants of that stronghold—the oldest-surviving English structure in Virginia—are located in present-day Surry County, on a site open to the public called Smith's Fort Plantation.

The settlers anticipated the imminent arrival of the “second supply.” The fleet, led by Christopher Newport, appeared in mid-October with seventy more colonists and provisions that Smith considered inadequate. In addition, Newport proposed to the council that he lead an expedition up the James River to look for mines in the land of the Monacans. Smith thought the time would be better spent in preparing for winter by gathering food stores and also in producing commodities for export to England. The council overruled Smith.

Newport also informed the council that the London Company had decided to stage a “coronation” ceremony for Powhatan at Jamestown, and had sent a large number of gifts for the chief in the name of the king. The purpose of the coronation was to recognize Powhatan's leadership of his own people as well as to symbolize his submission to King James I. Smith led a band of men to Werowocomoco to issue the invitation.

Smith found Powhatan absent, but the town's inhabitants entertained him and his party while they waited. When Powhatan arrived the next day, he scoffed at the invitation. According to Smith, Powhatan said, “If your king have sent me presents, I also am a king, and this my land, 8 daies I will stay [at Werowocomoco] to receive them. Your father [Newport] is to come to me, not I to him, nor yet to your fort.” Powhatan then dismissed Smith.

Newport agreed to Powhatan's demands, and the gifts were carried to Werowocomoco. The ceremony proved a fiasco for the English. After presenting Powhatan with the gifts (copper, a basin and pitcher, and a bed and bedclothes), Newport attempted to get the chief to kneel to receive his crown. Powhatan refused, despite pleadings and demonstrations, but finally, with men “leaning hard” on his shoulders to bend him slightly, Newport got the crown on his head. In return, Powhatan gave Newport a pair of his old shoes and a cloak. He refused, however, to assist Newport in his expedition into Monacan country beyond sending a guide with him.

In this episode, Powhatan clearly showed his awareness of English strategy. He had made the English come to him, he had accepted the crown largely on his own terms, and he had accepted gifts as the tribute of the English. He had demonstrated that he was indeed the “king” in his own land.

Newport’s journey to the interior proved as frustrating as the coronation. He took a hundred and twenty men with him, leaving eighty with Smith at the fort. Newport marched some forty or fifty miles beyond the falls and visited a couple of Monacan towns, but he had no better luck at finding gold mines or the Northwest Passage than had Smith. When Newport returned, his men were out of food; Newport had not been able to trade for corn, either.

Meanwhile, Smith busied himself organizing the remaining men to produce export goods. A “Glasse House” had been constructed about a mile from Jamestown, where German and Polish artisans made samples of glass. Other men produced pitch, tar, soap ashes, wainscot, and clapboard. Smith also organized his own expedition to the land of the independent Chickahominy to trade for corn. The Native people refused to trade until Smith threatened them with military force. Smith eventually obtained several hundred bushels of corn and returned to the fort.

Factional divisions had intensified since Newport’s arrival, and Smith gave his side of the story in a long letter that he sent to the London Company. According to him, Newport’s sailors were hoarding supplies intended for the colonists as well as carrying on private trade with the Powhatan. Newport and Ratcliffe were promoting dissention and undermining his presidency. The Company’s plans, too, were unrealistic. Although gold and other valuables might be discovered eventually, the colony needed to be seen as a long-term investment rather than as a get-rich-quick scheme. What was needed was large numbers of colonists to farm, build houses and towns, and secure territory from the Native peoples. His voyages had proven to his satisfaction, he wrote, that Virginia had the advantage “over the most pleasant places of Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, for large and pleasant navigable rivers; heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for mans habitation being of our constitutions, were it fully manured and inhabited by an industrious people.” He also described the superabundance of natural resources and useful flora and fauna available for industrious settlers. Only a few thousand Native people, he wrote, would have to share the resources. Commerce in goods other than gold or silver would be the salvation of the colony.

To accompany his letter, Smith enclosed the map he had been laboring over for months, which distilled the information he had gathered on his voyages from both his own observations and the descriptions given by local inhabitants. The map showed, as he wrote, the “way of the mountaines and current of the rivers, with their severall turnings, bayes, shoules, Isles, Inlets, and creekes, the breadth of the waters, the distances of places and such like.” Smith’s map would be published in 1612 and form the basis for his 1624 map as well. It established beyond challenge that the English had explored and “claimed” the Bay. It served the immigrants to come, helping them establish new

colonies such as William Claiborne's 1632 settlement on Kent Island and Lord Baltimore's Maryland colony in 1634.

Once Newport departed, Smith faced in December 1608 the problem of provisioning the colony for the winter. First, he took two boats to the Nansemond, but they agreed to trade for corn only when he threatened force. Next, he tried the upstream James River towns all the way to the Appomattox River, but found the towns virtually deserted and the people willing to trade only for small quantities of corn. Obviously, Smith concluded, Powhatan was trying to starve the colony and would have to be confronted. Powhatan sent word that he would provision the English if Smith would agree to build him an "English house" at Werowocomoco and visit him there, bringing a cannon, copper, beads, and swords and a grindstone as presents. Having no intention of arming Powhatan, Smith dispatched Richard Savage and four of the Germans overland to begin work on the house, and then followed with forty-six well-armed men, the shallop, and two barges on December 29.

By December 30, the party "lodged at Kecoughtan," as Smith later recounted in *The Generall Historie*. Because a storm kept him and his men there for the next six or seven days, the English celebrated Christmas amid the hospitality of the Native people, "where we were never more merry, nor fed on more plenty of good oysters, fish, flesh, wildfowl, and good bread, nor ever had better fires in England than in the dry, warm, smoky houses of Kecoughtan." Thus Smith wrote in the first description of Christmas in English America.

The weather was bitterly cold, almost as chilly as the reception Smith received on January 12, 1609, at Werowocomoco after a two-week voyage down the James River and up the Pamunkey (York). Powhatan denied having sent for him and asked when he would leave. He looked with disdain on the trade goods Smith had brought and said that although he had no corn to spare, he would part with some at the exorbitant rate of one bushel per sword. Years later, when Smith reported the conversation between the two men, it was clear that Powhatan had finally discovered the truth: that the Englishmen intended to stay and take over his country. Smith, he said, had failed to acknowledge his authority even though the English had been incorporated into the Powhatan polity, and although they only survived because the Powhatan people fed them. He had treated Smith better than any of his other chiefs, and yet Smith refused to obey him, would not give him the arms he asked for, and had come to meet him with a party of armed men, not as a friend. Smith, who would hardly even obey Newport, told Powhatan that he could only subordinate himself to King James I. He could not be Powhatan's subject but could be his friend—not that he needed to do so for food, for the English could always take what they wanted by force—but because he desired to live in peace. He said that as a sign of trust he would put his arms aside the next day and continue negotiations. Powhatan rose and left, and the two men never saw each other again.

Smith had been warned at Warraskoyack, where he and his men stopped en route to Werowocomoco, that Powhatan intended to kill him. He now concluded that the report was true. He decided to kidnap Powhatan the next day and escape with as much corn as

he could carry. First, however, he had to force his way through a crowd that had formed around Powhatan's residence (probably not the English-style house; it is not known whether it was ever completed). He then had to wait for the tide to turn. In the meantime, the people feasted him, gave him presents including some corn, and generally attempted to delay him. Smith had his men stay armed and alert until the time was right, and then the English departed.

Instead of returning immediately to Jamestown, Smith sailed upstream to Pamunkey territory, where Opechancanough, Powhatan's kinsman, was the leader. By the time he arrived, Opechancanough of course had heard all about what had transpired at Werowocomoco and had formulated a plan of his own. While trading with Smith for corn, he had several hundred men quietly surround the English. Smith responded first by challenging Opechancanough to single combat, then by grabbing his hairlock and holding a pistol to his chest while the Englishmen escaped to their boats. Once all were aboard, Smith released Opechancanough. Now all was clear: the alliance was dissolved and the English were at war with the Powhatan in the first of several bloody conflicts (this one continued until 1614).

Smith arrived at Jamestown with enough corn to sustain the colony for a while, but found that his friend Matthew Scrivener and several others had drowned when their boat overturned. The settlers were hungry, frightened, depressed, and on the verge of mutiny. Some had already mutinied. Two of the Germans assigned to build Powhatan's English house had gone over to the Native people, relieving the fort of arms and other supplies in Smith's absence and encouraging several other colonists to join them. Smith tried to put everyone to work, declaring that "he that will not worke shall not eate," but some of the men refused to cooperate because planting and fishing were beneath their social status. They also knew that any surplus or profit from their labors would go to the investors in England.

Smith dispersed the settlers in the spring, sending almost half of them to various locations up- and downstream. This move reduced the mortality rate that summer, although it exposed more colonists to attack by the Powhatan warriors. But the situation remained desperate, with the colony riddled with factions, with hunger still a problem, and with the Native people uncooperative or hostile.

In England, meanwhile, the Virginia Company had absorbed Smith's letter as well as other reports and had arrived at a new, harsh policy regarding the Native people. Seeing them as devil worshipers in thrall to their "priests" and as the downtrodden subjects of a despotic Powhatan, the Company decided that the religious leaders should be killed or imprisoned, the people converted to Christianity and transformed into farmers, and Powhatan overthrown and replaced with English rule. The Native inhabitants would pay tribute to the English, and trade with the Powhatan and other polities was to be strictly regulated. In addition, the English settlers were to move inland as soon as possible.

On July 13, the Virginia colonists received some relief when Captain Samuel Argall arrived with a few supplies. Immediately behind him, however, came a Spanish scouting

vessel. Its captain had sailed from Florida to determine whether the English had established a foothold in Spanish Virginia. Stopping at a Native town on the Santee River in present-day South Carolina, at least three hundred miles south of Jamestown, the captain learned a great deal of accurate information about the colony. He was told of its location, that the colonists had allied with Native people for food, that they spent more time on fortifying their island than on planting, and that vessels (probably the shallop and barges) went to and from the island frequently. When the Spaniard arrived in the Chesapeake Bay and spotted Argall's vessel at the mouth of the James River, he hesitated at first and then approached. After he saw smoke signals rising from various places along the shore, however, he knew he had lost the element of surprise and turned back for Florida. For the moment, the English colony was safe from Spanish attack.

Early in June, a large resupply fleet under Christopher Newport had departed Plymouth harbor for Virginia. Besides Newport, it also carried Sir Thomas Gates, the colony's interim governor pending the arrival of Governor Thomas West, baron De La Warr, later in the year. Sir George Somers, appointed admiral of Virginia, and other gentlemen who would play important roles in the colony, including John Rolfe, came as well. On July 24, about a week out from Cape Henry, the fleet encountered a ferocious hurricane that dispersed the ships hither and yon. The *Sea Venture*, carrying Newport, Gates, and Somers, almost sank but miraculously stayed afloat. It then struck rocks but remained upright just off one of the Bermuda islands—an adventure later transformed and immortalized in Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. The rest of the fleet straggled into Jamestown beginning August 11.

Although Smith welcomed the supplies and the new colonists, the problems of infighting, jealousies, and wild charges of disloyalty threatened to rend the colony asunder again. Smith dispersed large numbers of colonists, both to break up the cabals and to save the rapidly dwindling food supply. He wanted the dispersed settlers to share dwellings and food with friendly inhabitants. Francis West led a hundred and twenty men to Powhatan town at the falls of the James River, while John Martin and George Percy took sixty to Nansemond. Martin and Percy tried to purchase land from the Nansemond chief but, when he refused to sell, burned the town and desecrated the temples where the remains of dead chiefs lay in honor. Soon their settlement was virtually under siege by the outraged Nansemond people.

Upriver, meanwhile, West began constructing a fort near the bank, which Smith thought liable to flooding; he ordered West to occupy the palisaded town instead. West and his men refused with such vehemence that Smith withdrew out of concern for his own safety. Later, he made another unsuccessful attempt to persuade them. When Native men killed several of West's men in the woods, however, the remainder reconsidered. Smith arrived at the falls in West's absence and got them into the town after negotiating with Parahunt, Powhatan's son who was the chief there. When West returned—irate at what he considered Smith's interference—they all went back to the fort. Some of the men suspected that Smith had conspired with the Powhatan people to kill West and set himself up as a sort of king. Smith perhaps had wanted them to live in the town with the Powhatan to avoid the appearance of establishing a permanent settlement.

Smith gave up and departed for Jamestown. As he slept in his boat, a lighted match “accidentally” ignited his gunpowder bag, which exploded, setting his clothes afire and burning his leg especially badly. Smith leapt into the river to extinguish the flames, and his crew returned him to Jamestown half-mad with pain. Smith later claimed that Martin, Ratcliffe, and Gabriel Archer plotted to murder him in his bed there, but instead they packed him off to England. They also sent a letter to the Company detailing several charges against Smith: ruling alone without the aid of the council, plotting with Powhatan to make himself a “king” and starving the men in order to force them to work. They also accused him of being too harsh in his treatment of the Native people, an ironical assertion given what happened later. Smith arrived in London, slowly recovering from his injuries, late in November. Although the Company declined to pursue the charges against him, it never again sent him to the colony. John Smith’s Virginia adventure had ended.

### Smith the Writer

While Smith continued to seek employment, he also set about turning his earlier work, *A True Relation*, and his notes and sketch maps from his Chesapeake Bay voyages, into a book. The result, *A Map of Virginia*, appeared in 1612. It consists of a book in two parts, and the map, which was reissued in many “states” between then and 1632. The first part of the book is Smith’s “Description of the Country,” which details the fauna and flora of the Chesapeake region, as well as the American Indians who lived there. The second part describes the history of the colony and has a separate title page: *The Proceedings of the English Colonie In Virginia since their first beginning from England in the yeare of our Lord 1606, till this present 1612*. Although Smith contributed to this section, other authors’ names are on the title page. Interestingly, three of them—Anas Todkill, Walter Russell, and Nathaniel Powell—accompanied Smith on one or both of his Chesapeake Bay voyages.

Smith returned to America in 1614, when he explored present-day Maine and the Massachusetts coast, and then sailed back to England. Attempting to return the next year in the employment of the Plymouth Company, he was captured by pirates but escaped to France, then England. There he wrote *A Description of New England*, published in 1616. Although he advanced several schemes for colonization and other endeavors in America, he remained in England the rest of his life. In 1624, he published his magnum opus, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*. It is in part a compilation of others’ writings as well as his own efforts. It also reflected his frustration over not recovering a leadership role in the colonization movement, and his anger with the Powhatan over the attack of March 22, 1622. Nonetheless, despite his personal disappointments, Smith continued to promote colonization for the rest of his life.

He wrote several other books as well as poems, but it is for the *True Relation*, the *Map of Virginia*, and the *Generall Historie* that he is best remembered. They are self-promoting, of course, but also readable and exciting firsthand accounts of the wonders that he saw, especially in the Chesapeake Bay region. Smith viewed himself as the father of England-in-America, as he explained in one of his books: “that the most of those fair plantations did spring from the fruits of my adventures and discoveries is evident.” He died on June

21, 1631. His epitaph was his last act of self-evaluation, delightfully ironic given the skepticism with which his writings often have been read:

Here lies one conquered that hath conquered kings,  
Subdu'd large territories, and done things  
Which to the world impossible would seem  
But that the truth is held in more esteem.

If Smith's claim to be the father of Virginia and New England seems farfetched, it is also difficult to imagine who might have a better claim to the title. He was not the prime mover of the colonies' settlement, but through his maps and writings he enticed many thousands of adventurous souls to follow in his wake. He helped establish English primacy on America's East Coast. He understood early that the colonies would not be successful without allowing the settlers to work for themselves instead of for a faceless company across the sea. He knew that the corporate model had to change or else it would fail. The London Company did collapse, and the Virginia colony was taken over by the Crown, but not before his vision of small private landholdings had been adopted. This, and his understanding that the wealth of America lay in its natural resources, not merely in precious metals or as an imagined trade route to the East, make him as much a father to colonial success as anyone might have a right to claim.

Smith remains for Americans today a fascinating, contradictory character, perhaps because he seems to personify so many traits that have come to be regarded as quintessentially American. He was bold and brave and blustery; he was certain of his own rectitude; he was not reluctant to lead; he was not the best of followers; he was cool in times of crisis; he was opportunistic, pragmatic, and ambitious. He rose from modest means to become a figure of heroic proportions—according to his account—largely through his own wit and skill. His relentless self-promotion was typical of his time (and ours), not an aberration. And it was largely based on real accomplishments, most notably his voyages of exploration and “discovery” on the Chesapeake Bay. With crews of sometimes ill and frightened amateurs, in the heat of the summer, he sailed and rowed hundreds of miles, seeing and recording new things every day. The maps and books he produced from these and other adventures bore consequences for the Native peoples as well as for new settlers for many years to come. His voyages were magnificent achievements not surpassed, perhaps, until the Lewis and Clark expedition almost two centuries later.

#### The Survival of the Virginia Colony

Powhatan had abandoned Werowocomoco soon after his last meeting there with John Smith in January 1609. He moved his capital first to Orapacks, on the Chickahominy River near present-day Bottoms Bridge, and then by 1614 at the latest to Matchut on the upper Pamunkey River. This town, located about fifty miles from Jamestown, was as far away from the English as Powhatan could get and still govern his polity. It was also very close—just across the river—from Youghatanund, Opechancanough's capital. Powhatan remained well informed about the Englishmen and their activities, and no doubt watched with interest as the foreign settlements seemed to collapse.

During the winter of 1609–1610, conditions in the colony deteriorated to perhaps their lowest point. This was the infamous “starving time” that made the hardships of previous years pale in comparison. Desperate Englishmen attempted to flee to the Native people and were killed. Others, such as those at the outpost in Nansemond territory, were wiped out. Their bodies were later found, in the words of George Percy, “their mowthes stopped full of Brede, beinge donn as it seamethe in Contempte and skorne thatt others might expecte the Lyke when they shold come to seeke for breade and reliefe amongste them.” Most of the survivors, except for a garrison at Point Comfort, fled to Jamestown, as did West’s men from Powhatan town at the falls.

Percy had been elected temporary president, and he acted to relieve the colonists’ suffering by sending two expeditions to the Virginia Indians to trade for food. Both failed miserably. One, invited to Orapaks by Powhatan, was ambushed; most of the men were killed and their leader, the unfortunate Ratcliffe, was captured and then honored with a warrior’s death by torture. The other group, under West, sailed up the Chesapeake Bay to trade with the Patawomeck. Although West succeeded in filling his boat with corn, he so ill-treated the Patawomeck, killing several, that he made enemies of them. Finally, when his men learned from the Point Comfort garrison of the increasingly grim conditions at Jamestown, they mutinied and sailed for England. Powhatan then waged a war of attrition against the survivors at the settlement, closing it off from the surrounding land, killing livestock foraging in the woods, and slaying settlers who strayed from the fort.

By the spring of 1610, the colonists had had enough. The Powhatan people had lifted the siege to attend to their own planting, but the Englishmen made plans to abandon Jamestown. Before Percy could act, however, two small vessels arrived. They contained Gates and Somers and their men, who had survived in Bermuda and constructed the ships. They found Jamestown almost in ruins, with almost three-fourths of the colonists there having either died or run off. The survivors looked like “anatomies,” as George Percy described them: walking corpses shriveled into skeletons. Gates decided to abandon Virginia altogether and sail to the English fishing colony in Newfoundland. As the colonists left on June 7, however, they encountered ships sailing upriver with the governor, Lord De La Warr, who ordered them all back to Jamestown. He had brought with him a large number of well-equipped men, including soldiers, as well as women and children—about five hundred people altogether—and enough food to last them all for some time. The fortunes of the colony had just been reversed.

The Virginia Company had reorganized the colony along military lines and secured a new charter in 1609 that greatly increased the area of “Virginia” to include most of what later became the United States. Whereas until then all the land had been under the Company’s control, now the concept of the private ownership of land was introduced into the colony, although it did not become a viable policy until the charter of 1618 was issued. The Company based its new plans and its instructions to the directors in Jamestown in part on John Smith’s *True Relation*, his letter, and the map he had drawn.

It also ordered a new policy toward the Native people that made the harsh behavior of which Smith was accused look like coddling.

De La Warr took charge at once. Chastising the colonists for their laziness and bickering, he instituted a military regime. He “drafted” the civilians into a quasi-military unit and trained them. He organized Jamestown’s day by using bells to summon people to work, meals, and rest. He created a chain of command and expanded and strictly enforced the code of laws and regulations that Gates had already introduced. Realizing that Jamestown had to become self-sufficient to survive, especially given the vagaries of resupply from England and the embargo instituted by the Powhatan, he set some of the colonists to farming and others to fishing, while he dispatched Somers and Argall to Bermuda to retrieve hogs. He also set men to repairing the town itself including the palisade.

De La Warr then turned to the Virginia Indians. He sent a message to Powhatan: whereas he had accepted “upon his knees a Crowne . . . thereby obliging himselfe to Offices of dutie to his Majestie,” Powhatan must now return all escaped settlers, tools, and weapons to Jamestown. Powhatan retorted that the English could either “depart his Country, or confine themselves to James Towne only,” or he would order his people to kill them wherever they were found. He also told De La Warr not to send messengers again unless they brought him a coach and horses such as men of his station used in England. De La Warr replied that if Powhatan failed to comply with his demands, then the Englishmen would kill any Native people they saw and burn their towns and crops.

De La Warr sent Gates and others on expeditions against the Powhatan. After one of his men was killed, Gates landed at Kecoughtan, whose inhabitants he blamed, had his drummer play to attract a crowd, and then opened fire. Twelve to fourteen were killed and the rest fled, leaving the town and cornfields to Gates. George Percy led an attack on Paspahegh on August 10, killing fifteen or more, decapitating the wounded, torching the town, and carrying off the corn. He took the chief’s wife and children prisoner; soldiers threw the children into the river and then shot “owtt their Braynes in the water,” and a short time later others led their mother into the woods and slaughtered her. Other expeditions were launched against the Chickahominy and Warraskoyack. Believing that he had intimidated the Powhatan, De La Warr sent an expedition up the James River to Appomattoc to search for mines. The Englishmen accepted an invitation to a feast there, then were attacked; only one escaped. A second, military expedition burned the town.

Powhatan’s retaliatory movements did not follow the English model, with armies marching to and fro and fighting pitched battles. His conflicts could scarcely be called wars at all, but were instead a series of raids. They were usually small in scale, often punitive in nature or conducted for the purpose of testing young men as well as protecting Powhatan territory from interlopers. The obliteration or defeat of the enemy frequently was less important than delivering a message or exhibiting courage. The Powhatan people pursued this sort of war against the English, who had increased the stakes by massacring the Paspahegh chief’s wife and children (according to the Powhatan rules of combat, only men were to be killed).

As the conflict continued, more Englishmen continued to die of disease. De La Warr himself fell ill and left Virginia at the end of March 1611, eventually reaching England and writing a rosy report on the colony's progress. Gates had come home before De La Warr, and his story of shipwreck and survival in the Bermudas caused a sensation. Just before De La Warr had left Virginia, the London Company dispatched yet another large fleet with three hundred settlers as well as cattle and a year's worth of provisions. Sir Thomas Dale was now in charge as deputy governor.

Dale continued De La Warr's military discipline, strictly enforcing the laws and putting everyone to work clearing land, planting corn, or rebuilding the ever-deteriorating Jamestown. He established other fortifications in addition to the one at Point Comfort (Fort Algernon). He also led large-scale military operations, such as one against the Nansemond, in which English soldiers in full armor killed the people, burned their towns, and stripped their cornfields.

Most important for both the colonists and the Powhatan people, Dale pressed on with the Company's plans to establish a new capital farther inland, near the falls of the James River, as well as other new settlements. In August 1611, Gates arrived back in Virginia with another three hundred colonists, a hundred head of cattle, and more provisions and ammunition. The next month, Dale sent Captain Edward Brewster with three hundred and fifty men overland to the falls, while he followed by water with supplies, tools, and cut timber. Powhatan realized that the English were now invading the heart of his polity and attacked Brewster on his march. His people kept up the attacks while the new town, called Henrico, was under construction, but could not stop its progress. The Powhatan warriors were hampered not only by English armor, but also by the palisade with watchtowers built across the neck of land to protect Henrico. In addition, Dale led attacks against Appomattoc towns, which he burned. This type of warfare continued for the next two years.

In the spring of 1613, however, matters took a dramatic turn. Pocahontas, Powhatan's daughter, was visiting friends among the Patawomeck when Captain Samuel Argall, who was on a trading mission nearby, learned of it. He used his influence as well as threats against a Patawomeck chief to set a kidnapping plot in motion. The chief and his wife came aboard Argall's ship with Pocahontas for dinner and to spend the night, and the next morning they slipped off, leaving Pocahontas in Argall's custody. He sailed away with her and sent a message to her father that if he ever wanted to see his daughter again he must return all English captives, with their weapons and tools, as well as a large quantity of corn. Powhatan eventually complied, but only in part, for he could not allow his people to see him as weak. His polity, however, was disintegrating nonetheless as individual tribes, weary of fighting and having their towns destroyed, sued for peace with the English.

In March 1614, Dale forced the issue to a climax by sailing up the Pamunkey (York) River with Pocahontas in tow to confront Powhatan at Matchut. After many threats by both sides, Powhatan not only agreed to Dale's demands but also surrendered Pocahontas

to him and agreed to peace. On learning of this, Pocahontas agreed to baptism as a Christian and took the name Rebecca. She subsequently married John Rolfe early in April, and Powhatan sent representatives to the ceremony. A couple of weeks later, the Chickahominy also asked for peace with the English, and soon an accord was reached. Dale and the English may have thought that the Virginia Indians had largely been subjugated. To Powhatan, however, the peace agreement merely terminated the state of war and signified his grudging agreement to allow the Englishmen to occupy some of his land because he could not dislodge them. He remained no one's subject. On this uneasy note ended the first sustained conflict between the English and the Powhatan.

Two years later, in March 1616, Captain Samuel Argall sailed for England. Aboard his vessel were Dale, returning home for his health, John Rolfe with Pocahontas and their infant son, Thomas, and an assortment of Powhatan men and young women. During the next year, Pocahontas gained fame in London, met King James I, had a brief reunion with John Smith, and died as she prepared to return to Virginia in March 1617. John Rolfe came back alone, leaving his son to be reared as an Englishman.

Before he departed Virginia for England, Rolfe, the secretary of the colony, had drawn up a list of settlements. There were six: Henrico, Bermuda Hundred just below Henrico, West and Shirley Hundred downstream from Bermuda Hundred, Jamestown, Kecoughtan on the Hampton River, and on the Eastern Shore near Cape Charles, Dale's Gift. The colony had spread out considerably under Dale's regime.

A decade after the first colonists arrived, they still had not found large quantities of precious metals or the Northwest Passage. Rolfe, however, had discovered something else that would put the colony on a relatively sound economic footing: tobacco worthy of export. The tobacco that the Powhatan people used was dark and bitter. Rolfe altered the course of tobacco history about 1612 by importing seeds from the Orinoco River valley, Spanish territory in what is now Venezuela. When planted in the relatively rich bottomland of the James River, the seeds produced a milder, yet still-dark leaf that soon became the standard in London. Although the Company discouraged the widespread growing of tobacco, its increasing popularity in England soon made it Virginia's money crop. Settlers who once neglected to plant corn so they could search for gold later neglected that crop so they could cultivate tobacco.

Samuel Argall assumed the position of deputy governor in May 1617, when he arrived back in Virginia. He brought with him a new policy from the London Company that expanded the private ownership of land to virtually every settler. This policy, the headright system that granted a hundred acres to "ancient planters" and fifty acres to each new settler, was confirmed in the Company's new charter issued on November 18, 1618. The Company had decided on this course to encourage immigration and promote self-sufficiency. Now groups of investors could join together to obtain large tracts and private plantations. The policy succeeded in its goal of attracting thousands of new settlers over the next few years. It also increased the pressure on the Powhatan people as those settlers arrived and spread out over the land. The colonists not only expanded agriculture into new parts of the polity, but also constructed an ironworks on Falling

Creek, a tributary of the James River upstream from Henrico. As the demand for tobacco—an infamously labor-intensive crop—increased, the demand for workers accelerated, too. A hint of the future arrived in August 1619, when “20. and Odd Negroes” disembarked in Virginia from a Dutch vessel. Slavery was not instantly established in the colony, it evolved slowly over the next thirty or forty years, and became institutionalized later in the century as the number of indentured servants from England declined.

In 1620, thirteen years after the first permanent English colony was established in Virginia, the second one was founded at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Among the ways in which the colonists aboard the ship *Mayflower* differed from the Jamestown pioneers was that women and girls, indeed entire families, were among them. English women first came to Virginia in significant numbers that same year, although some had arrived earlier either with their husbands or following them. The ninety unmarried women who came in 1620 were followed the next year by a smaller number of single girls and widows. Company policy encouraged the settlers to marry and found families now that, it was believed, the Virginia colony was more stable.

Perhaps stability was assumed because there had been peace for several years and because Powhatan had died in March 1618. His power and influence among his people probably dwindled slowly during his later years, as it became evident that the English were beyond his control. He might have been the “king” in his own country, but he was no longer the master of his own house. As Powhatan’s fortunes declined, Opechancanough’s rose, perhaps because he was more active throughout the polity in both domestic and military matters. He also developed a plan to confine the English to Jamestown, or perhaps even to drive them from his country.

On March 22, 1622, Opechancanough set his plan in motion. He had taken several years to design it. During the period of peace, the English had become accustomed to the comings and goings of Powhatan people in their settlements. Acting on the Company’s instructions, many of the colonists embraced the Native people, taking their children into their families with the idea of educating and converting them to Christianity. Other Indians worked on farms, or came around frequently to trade. But on the morning of March 22, the Powhatan suddenly attacked and killed an estimated 347 of the English, destroying the Falling Creek ironworks as well. Most of the onslaught occurred in outlying settlements. Some were wiped out entirely, while others were spared when Native inhabitants who had become fond of specific English families warned them. The effect of the attack on the colony was devastating.

Opechancanough did not intend to kill every English man, woman, and child in Virginia, but to punish the families that had moved much beyond the bounds of Jamestown, the only part of his polity in which they had been given permission to live. He probably hoped to strike such a blow as would at least cause the settlers to limit severely the colony’s territory. He may have also hoped that they might leave altogether, as they had almost done on more than one occasion in the early years.

The attack failed to accomplish its goals. Not only did the Company refuse to limit, much less abandon, the colony, it sent even more settlers as well as armor and arms with which to attack the Native people. It had a new goal: to wipe the Powhatan from Virginia's face. For the next decade, until 1632, the colony's leaders sent roving armies against the Native inhabitants, destroying towns, crops, and fish weirs, in the hope that they would either agree to become the colonists' laborers or leave. The English themselves endured another "starving time" during the winter of 1622–1623 but continued to inflict damage on the Powhatan. In April 1623, under the guise of a peace parley and feast, Captain William Tucker first poisoned and then shot a large number of Kiskiack Indians. Opechancanough may have been among them; he survived. The next year, in July, Governor Sir Francis Wyatt led a force against the Pamunkey and, in a pitched battle over two days, defeated them and destroyed their crops and town.

In the midst of the war, a major change occurred in the colony's governance. King James revoked the Company's charter on May 24, 1624, and the colony reverted to the Crown. Opechancanough's attack had revealed the inability of the Company to defend its interests sufficiently, and henceforth the English government would control the Virginia colony. When James died in March 1625, his son Charles I occupied the throne and confirmed the new arrangement.

The colony soon recovered from the effects of Opechancanough's attack of 1622. The Powhatan polity gradually declined in the colonial government's consideration as an entity, and peace arrangements were made with individual tribes as they gave up the fight. In 1632, for example, a peace treaty was concluded between the English and the Pamunkey, as well as the Chickahominy, that effectively ended the second major conflict between the English and the Powhatan.

Two colonists, Henry Fleet and William Claiborne, profited from the peace by establishing trading operations on the Potomac River and upper Chesapeake Bay respectively. Claiborne transported colonists to Kent Island in present-day Maryland, where he traded with the Susquehannock; they gave him Palmer Island at the mouth of the Susquehanna River for a trading post more convenient to their territory. Fleet, meanwhile, was frustrated by the Anacostian people, who had become allied with the Massawomeck up the Potomac River and served as trading middlemen. After Cecil Calvert—Lord Baltimore—obtained his Maryland charter from King Charles I and the first colonists arrived in 1634, they allied with Fleet. Conflicts soon erupted between Maryland governor Leonard Calvert and Claiborne and his Susquehannock allies. They were not settled until 1652, when Claiborne's forces took over the colony.

As the English gradually dominated more of the coastal plain, with farms and families spreading over the land, the Virginia colony assumed the appearance of permanence. The General Assembly, the first legislative body in America, held its initial meeting in 1619, the same year that the colony was subdivided into four large corporations. During the 1620s, local courts were established, and by the mid-1630s the governmental subdivisions known as counties had been created. The earliest surviving court records

date to 1632. Other records for the period are scarce, however, and it is difficult to reconstruct accurately the relations between the Native people and the English settlers.

Jamestown itself began to take on the appearance of an English port town early in the 1620s. Located east of the old fort, the capital had escaped the attack of 1622 unscathed. By the time Virginia became a royal colony, the growing community housed merchants, artisans, and government officials, and contained workshops and storehouses as well as dwellings. Jamestown had become a center of commerce and trade, from which tobacco was exported to England, and through which goods passed to the settlers. It was also the place where the small but growing number of African servants arrived in Virginia. There the settled commercial colony that John Smith and the other first adventurers had imagined was finally emerging as midcentury approached. Other towns emerged in the Chesapeake in Virginia and Maryland only much later in the century, primarily growing around tobacco inspection stations and warehouses.

Relations between the Maryland colonists and the Native peoples there got off to a better start than in Virginia, except for the periodic conflicts between the Fleet and Claiborne factions and their Native supporters. Fleet and Governor Calvert asked permission before establishing settlements on Native lands, cooperated with them in planting crops, and generally treated them with respect. Early in the 1640s, however, the situation changed when the English Civil War, which had begun with the deposition of Charles I in 1642, spilled over into the Chesapeake region. More internal strife occurred in both colonies. Stability returned to Maryland in 1646–1647 and the tide of immigration swelled, putting great pressure on the Native peoples.

The Virginia colonists, meanwhile, continued to keep a wary eye on Opechancanough and the Powhatan Indians for many years. On April 18, 1644, however, he struck again, attacking outlying settlements and killing perhaps four to five hundred English. The settlements on the south side of the James River and the upper reaches of the York River were especially hard hit. By this time, however, the English population stood at about ten thousand, so the effect of the attack was less severe than in 1622. The governor, Sir William Berkeley, mounted expeditions against various Powhatan districts including the Pamunkey and Chickahominy, constructed additional forts, and so harassed the people that the Weyanock and some of the Nansemond moved out of the area altogether.

In March or April 1646, Opechancanough himself was captured and brought to Jamestown. Estimated to be almost a hundred years old, shriveled and unable to open his eyes without someone lifting the lids, Opechancanough remained defiant. Crowds gathered to gawk at him, and when he heard the commotion and saw them, he “scornfully” told the governor that “had it been his fortune to take Sir William Berkeley prisoner, he should not meanly have exposed him as a show to the people.” Shortly thereafter, one of his English guards shot him in the back, and Opechancanough died.

On October 5, 1646, a new paramount chief—Necotowance—signed a peace treaty with the colony. The treaty divided the old polity into English and Virginia Indian sections (the boundaries of which the colonists would soon enough ignore), and it also made clear

in its very first article that the balance of power had shifted forever: “Necotowance do acknowledge to hold his kingdom from the king’s Majesty of England, and that his successors be appointed or confirmed by the king’s governors from time to time.” The colony of Virginia would henceforth survive and grow, and the Native people of Tsenacomoco would have no say in the matter. In 1650, as settlement pushed north of the York River, Necotowance and two other tribal leaders asked the English to set aside acreage for their people; the Powhatan polity had disintegrated.

The year 1646 marked both an end and a beginning. The English colony’s survival was assured as early as the 1620s, despite the great attack of 1622, because the Powhatan could not stop the flood of new settlers encouraged by the headright system. Sheer numbers, technological superiority, self-sufficiency, and the determination to expand regardless of Native opposition tilted the balance to the English long before 1646. It took Opechancanough’s last attack and defeat, however, for the Native peoples to acknowledge that reality. In addition, Opechancanough’s death in that year cut the last link to the first years of the colony and especially to John Smith. Opechancanough was the sole surviving major player in that drama who had known Smith, spoken with him, and fought with him. Truly, an era had ended with the old man’s death.

The other colonies established in the Chesapeake Bay watershed—Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania—eventually followed the pattern of English-Native relations in Virginia. Before long, many of the tribes that John Smith had encountered in his voyages had either disappeared from English records or had been vastly reduced in numbers from disease, intertribal and intercultural conflicts, and immigrations to other parts of the country. The last significant war against the Native people in seventeenth-century Virginia was Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. A few tribes survived on reservations, some lived quietly in self-contained communities, while others emigrated or lost their cohesion and were assimilated into the surrounding population of non-Natives. In Virginia, even the surviving tribes were officially stripped of their identities as Virginia Indians by the “racial purity” laws of the early twentieth century. Only recently, in historical terms, have they emerged from the shadows to claim recognition by state and federal authorities, a struggle that is far from over.

John Smith’s voyages on the Chesapeake Bay had far-reaching consequences. His “discoveries,” recorded in his maps and books, helped to change Company policy toward private landholding and promoted the transformation of the Bay’s environment through farming and the settlers’ exploitation of natural resources. The large-scale emigration from England that followed in Smith’s wake increased the pressure on the Native peoples and the Bay itself. Smith’s model for settlement in the Bay region largely became the model for English America from New England to the Carolinas. His maps served settlers and colonial governments until late in the seventeenth century. And the stories of his exploits continue to intrigue Americans today.

The threats to the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, with which the Native peoples had lived for so many centuries, are well documented and beyond the scope of this study. Perhaps,

as modern tourists follow the trail of exploration laid down by John Smith, they will come to revere the Bay as did those first Americans.

## Timeline

### Before 1607

- 1524, Spanish explorer may have visited Chesapeake Bay
- 1546, French vessel enters the Chesapeake Bay
- Ca. 1547, Powhatan (Wahunsenacawh) born
- Ca. 1561, Paquinquino ("Don Luis") sails away with Spanish under Pedro Menendez de Aviles
- Ca. 1570–1600, Powhatan inherits and expands polity
- 1570, September, Don Luis returns; Spanish establish Jesuit mission on York River
- 1571, February, Don Luis exterminates Spanish Jesuit mission
- 1572, Spanish retaliate against Virginia Indians for deaths of missionaries
- 1584–1585, English establish settlement at Roanoke Island (North Carolina)
- 1585–1586, winter, English from Roanoke Island explore Chesapeake Bay
- 1586–1587, English abandon Roanoke Island settlement
- 1587, Second English colony established on Roanoke Island (abandoned before 1590)
- 1588, Spanish return to explore Chesapeake Bay under Captain Vincente Gonzalez
- Ca. 1597, Pocahontas (Amonute; Matoaka; Rebecca) born
- Ca. 1603, English mariners explore Chesapeake Bay
- 1606, April 10, Plymouth Company and London Company chartered
- 1606, August, First Plymouth Company expedition to America captured by Spanish
- 1606, October, Second Plymouth Company expedition reconnoiters North American coast
- 1606, December 20, London Company colonizing expedition sails for Virginia
- 1607, April 26, English colonists enter Chesapeake Bay and land at Cape Henry
- 1607, May 13, Colonists arrive at Jamestown Island after exploring James River
- 1607, December, to 1608, January 2, Smith captured by Opechancanough, meets Powhatan at Werowocomoco, is adopted as a werowance, and returns to Jamestown

### Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay Voyages

- 1608, June 2–July 21, Smith leads 15 men on first exploration of Chesapeake Bay
  - June 2–3, Smith's party sails from Jamestown to Cape Charles
  - June 3, Cape Charles to Accomack Town
  - June 4, Accomack Town to Chesconnessex Creek
  - June 5, Chesconnessex Creek to Wicocomoco Town (Md.)
  - June 6, Wicocomoco Town to Bloodsworth Island
  - June 7–8, Bloodsworth Island
  - June 8, Bloodsworth Island to mouth of Nanticoke River
  - June 9, Mouth of Nanticoke River
  - June 10, Up Nanticoke River and back
  - June 11, Nanticoke River to Randle Cliff
  - June 12, Randle Cliff to Sillery Bay on Patapsco River
  - June 13, Sillery Bay to Elkridge and back, on Patapsco River
  - June 14, Patapsco River
  - June 15, Patapsco River to mouth of Herring Bay
  - June 16, Herring Bay to Cornfield Harbor

June 17, Cornfield Harbor to Nomini Creek (Va.)  
 June 18–July 15, Nomini Bay to Great Falls, return to mouth of Potomac River  
 (Va. and Md.)  
 July 15, Mouth of Potomac River to Ingram Bay (Va.)  
 July 16, Ingram Bay to Fleets Bay  
 July 17, Fleets Bay to Stingray Point, Rappahannock River  
 July 18–19, Stingray Point to Kecoughtan on James River  
 July 20, Kecoughtan to Warraskoyack  
 July 21, Warraskoyack to Jamestown

1608, July 24–September 7, Smith leads 12 men on second Chesapeake Bay exploration  
 July 24, Jamestown to Kecoughtan  
 July 25–25, Kecoughtan  
 July 27, Kecoughtan to Stingray Point  
 July 28, Rappahannock River to Cove Point (Md.)  
 July 29, Cove Point to mouth of Patapsco River  
 July 30, Patapsco River to head of Northeast River  
 July 31, Northeast River to Tockwogh (Sassafras) River  
 August 1, Up the Tockwogh River  
 August 2, Tockwogh River to Smith Falls on the Susquehanna River (Pa.)  
 August 3, Susquehanna River to head of Elk River (Md.)  
 August 4, Head of Elk River to Big Elk Creek  
 August 5, Elk Creek to Smith's Falls on the Susquehanna River (Pa.)  
 August 6, Susquehanna River to Tockwogh town (Md.)  
 August 7, Tockwogh town  
 August 8, Tockwogh River to Rock Hall Harbor, mouth of Chester River  
 August 9, Chester River to Patuxent River  
 August 10, Up Patuxent River to Pawtuxunt town on Battle Creek  
 August 11, Pawtuxunt town to Mattpanient town  
 August 12, Mattpanient town to Acquintanacsuck town  
 August 13, Patuxent River to St. Jerome Creek below Point No Point  
 August 14, Potomac River to Rappahannock River (Va.)  
 August 15–16, Up Rappahannock River to Moraughtacund town  
 August 17, Moraughtacund town to Rappahannock ambush at Cat Point Creek  
 August 18, Cat Point Creek to Pissaseck  
 August 19, Pissaseck to Nantaughtacund towns  
 August 20, Nantaughtacund to Upper Cuttatawomen towns  
 August 21, Cuttatawomen town to Fetherstone Bay  
 August 22, Fetherstone Bay to the fall line to Hollywood Bar  
 August 23, Hollywood Bar to Cuttatawomen  
 August 24, Cuttatawomen to Pissaseck towns  
 August 25, Pissaseck to Rappahannock ambushing place near Moraughtacund  
 August 26–29, Negotiations near Moraughtacund  
 August 30–31, Moraughtacund to Piankatank River  
 September 1–3, Piankatank River exploration  
 September 3–4, Piankatank River to Old Point Comfort

September 5–7, Point Comfort to Jamestown with explorations of Elizabeth and Nansemond Rivers

1608, December, Smith sends “Mappe of the Bay and Rivers” and narrative to London Company

1609, May, Sir Thomas Gates sails to Virginia with instructions from London Company for expanding colony based on Smith’s map and narrative

1609, May 23, New charter issued to former London Company, now Virginia Company

#### Later Significant Dates

1609, September, Smith suffers gunpowder burns, sails for England

1609, November, Smith arrives in London

1610, June, Lord De La Warr begins to pursue war against Powhatan peoples

1612, March 22, Third charter issued to Virginia Company

1612, John Smith publishes *A Map of Virginia* and *The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia*

1612, John Rolfe successfully plants and cultivates tobacco crop

1612, Dutch establish colony on Manhattan Island, New York

1613, Sir Samuel Argall attacks French settlements in Maine

1613, Spring, Argall kidnaps Pocahontas at Patawomeck and takes her to Jamestown to be held for ransom

1614, April, Powhatan agrees to peace; Pocahontas converts to Christianity

1614, April, John Rolfe marries Pocahontas

1614, John Rolfe sends first tobacco cargo to England

1616, John Rolfe, Pocahontas, and others visit England

1617, March, Pocahontas dies and is buried in England

1618, April, Powhatan dies

1618, November 18, new Company charter establishes headright system, fueling settlement

1619, August, First Africans arrive in Virginia

1619, July 30–August 4, Virginia General Assembly first meets

1620–1621, Opechancanough plans attack on English settlements

1620, November 9, *Mayflower* reaches Cape Cod, Mass., with Puritans

1622, March 22, Opechancanough’s attack on English settlements

1622–1632, Era of warfare between English and Powhatan Indians

1623, English settlements sprout in Mass., New Hampshire, and Maine

1624, John Smith publishes *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*

1628–1629, Opechancanough becomes paramount chief

1632, Peace treaty between English and Pamunkey and Chickahominy Indians

1632–1644, English expand settlements; growing population crowds Powhatan people

1632, June 30, Lord Baltimore receives charter for Maryland colony

1633, November 22, Gov. Leonard Calvert sails with two hundred settlers for Maryland

1634, February 27, Maryland colonists sail into Chesapeake Bay

1635, February 26, First Maryland assembly meets

1635, April 23, Naval skirmish occurs between vessels of Virginia fur trader William Claiborne and Maryland government

1642, Oliver Cromwell overthrows King Charles I and establishes Parliamentary rule

1644, March 24, Roger Williams receives charter for Rhode Island colony

1644, April 18, Opechancanough launches second attack on English settlements

1644–1646, English retaliate against Powhatan people, who begin to abandon eastern Virginia

1645–1647, Conflicts in Maryland between Catholic government and Protestant rebels

1646, between spring and fall, Opechancanough captured, taken to Jamestown, and shot and killed

1646, October 5, English colonists conclude peace treaty with Powhatan polity

#### 4. Significance Themes

In reviewing the story of Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages and the context in which they occurred, several historical themes emerged. These themes relate to military history, the stories of women and African Americans, the role in the colony of craftsmen and artisans ranging from carpenters to glassblowers to goldsmiths, business and political history, international diplomacy, and the long-term transformation of the Chesapeake Bay environment. Three themes stand out, however, as most immediately related to Smith's expeditions and their effects: cultural conflicts between the American Indians and the English; the exploration and settlement of North America; and the establishment of commercial and trading ties between the colonists and the Native people as well as the colony and England. Each of these three principal themes is discussed in more detail below.

Theme: Cultural Relations between American Indians and English Colonists

“We demanded [of Amoroleck] why they [the Mannahoac] came in that manner to betray us that came to them in peace and to seek their loves. He answered they heard we were a people come from under the world to take their world from them.”

—John Smith, *The Generall Historie* (1624)

**Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because they accelerated the processes that destroyed the Powhatan polity, disrupted the American Indian world, and established the primacy of English culture in the region and beyond.**

When the English entered the Chesapeake Bay on April 26, 1607, they soon encountered a variety of Native peoples whose politics, societies, economies, and religions had long been organized. A variety of polities throughout the region governed the peoples, social structures and systems of etiquette guided their personal and intra-tribal interactions, a complicated web of trading networks spread their goods over hundreds of miles, and worldviews that joined the seen and the unseen in a seamless whole formed the foundation of their religions. The Bay had served the Native societies for generations as a highway for settlement and trade, linking the coastal communities with other societies as far away as present-day Ohio and the Great Lakes.

The American Indians, particularly the Powhatan people, the Piscataway, and the Susquehannock, saw themselves first as the superiors and later as the equals of the English. The Native peoples' cultures were ancient and their manner of living in their environment was long established. They outnumbered the newcomers in 1607: a Native population in Tidewater Virginia of thirteen to fifteen thousand or more versus fewer than a hundred and fifty—a number that plummeted rapidly—for the English strangers. From the perspective of the paramount chief Powhatan, the English came to his country uninvited, sailed up and down his rivers, neglected at first to pay their respects to him or to the district chiefs, and occupied part of his land without asking permission. Powhatan must have watched in astonishment as the newcomers chose a swampy island for the settlement that would become Jamestown, planted crops or ate unfamiliar foods only

when faced with starvation, and suffered the effects of infighting, paranoia, and the lack of effective leadership.

Instead of attacking the strangers, however, Powhatan followed the custom of his people and gave them hospitality. His people guided them through the woods and up rivers and streams. They answered the strangers' questions about mines and other tribes and what lay around the next river bend or over the next mountain. They drew maps for them in the sand of riverbanks. They gave them feasts when they visited their towns, laboring hard to fulfill their obligations as good hosts. They brought venison and corn to Jamestown, depleting their own stocks of food so that the strangers would not starve. They even took some of them into their towns and homes to keep them warm and well fed during the winter.

The English, however, continued to go where they wished and occupied other people's land. They made their own alliances within and outside the polity and disrupted long-established networks of trade and politics. Their assumption of their own ethnic, religious, political, social, and economic superiority set them on a cultural collision course with Powhatan—indeed with the entire American Indian world of the Chesapeake.

Powhatan, having had some prior experience with Europeans, at first attempted to accommodate the English. After all, they had interesting weapons, they might prove useful in campaigns against the Monacan, and they displayed an active interest in trading that could benefit the Powhatan people. When Opechancanough captured John Smith, Powhatan offered to resettle the colonists away from their unhealthy river location, to Capahowasick downriver from Werowocomoco, where he might keep an eye on and control them. Finally, Powhatan incorporated the English, through the "induction ceremony" for Smith, into his polity. The English then came under his protection but also owed him certain obligations. Powhatan believed that an agreement had been reached.

Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages violated every article of the agreement. He explored without Powhatan's permission, traveled into and out of the polity with impunity, visited some towns but not others (violating the Native etiquette of hospitality), negotiated trade agreements and alliances that were not his to negotiate, fought with some of the tribes (again, Powhatan's prerogative), and generally stirred up the entire Chesapeake Indian world. Smith demonstrated independence from Powhatan, to whom he owed obedience, rather than appropriate submission.

The situation deteriorated further, from Powhatan's perspective, after Smith returned from his voyages, assumed the presidency of the colony, and began dispersing the settlers. The dreadful "coronation" ceremony amply illustrated the cultural impasse that had been reached. Powhatan probably thought that he had demonstrated his superiority over the English, who had staged the coronation to make Powhatan a "prince" subject to King James I. It was a fatal misunderstanding for both sides. When the English continued their expansionist policies, further showing that they did not recognize Powhatan's authority much less consider him their equal, Powhatan held a final interview

with Smith in January 1609. The two men finally understood that the situation was hopeless, the gulf too wide to bridge. Powhatan departed, withdrawing his and his people's support from the English. Perhaps he continued to hope that the settlers would either give up and go home or limit themselves to Jamestown, where they could be contained.

For Powhatan to have any hope of success, however, he would have had to maintain unity within his territory. This did not happen, and in part it was Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages that began the breakup by exposing weaknesses in the Powhatan polity. Those weaknesses included Powhatan's relative lack of authority over the tributary tribes at some distance from him, the willingness of several tribes to make their own trade agreements with the English, and Powhatan's reliance on advice from his priests; they soon became the special targets of attacks by the English, who knew that their destruction would weaken the Native culture. Years later, the polity would fall apart under the brutal pressure of English-style warfare as individual tribes sued for peace rather than be obliterated.

Powhatan's personal decline as paramount chief took several years. Perhaps it began in January 1609 when he abandoned Werowocomoco, which had been a center and source of power for countless years. His withdrawal may have been viewed in the polity as a sign of desperation, akin to the king of England abandoning London. If times of plenty and contentment were seen as indicators that Powhatan's leadership was "right" for the people, what did such a withdrawal in the midst of a drought signify? If Powhatan could not control these weak, self-destructive strangers—even this headstrong Smith—what did that say about his leadership? But the people also knew that Powhatan had led them successfully through other periods of difficulty. Perhaps this trial, too, would pass. The faith of the people in Powhatan was not easily shaken, because he maintained his position for years to come, but the decline of Powhatan and his polity likely began during John Smith's voyages.

That the English came to dominate the Chesapeake Bay region within a generation is due in large part to John Smith. His voyages revealed that although there were no Northwest Passage or large-scale mines of precious metals there, the Bay nonetheless offered a great deal of value, including fish, furs, timber, and farmland. His early vision of privately owned farms spread over the landscape came to pass before long, ensuring that the Bay region would be English instead of Spanish or Dutch. The English culture, governmental structure, and language followed him there along with the farming patterns of the old country. In addition, the cultural conflicts between the English and the Powhatan polity became the model for the treatment of the Native peoples for the next two centuries. The English disdain of Native worldviews, the assumption of English cultural superiority, the lack of respect for Native religion, and the presumption that land used for hunting and gardening was available for English occupation—over the years that followed, that story was repeated with different players from one coast to the other. English culture in what became the United States eventually overwhelmed or absorbed the Dutch, French, and Spanish cultures as well. The consequences of John Smith's voyages reached far into the future.

Theme: Exploration and Settlement

“The six and twentieth day of April, about four o’clock in the morning, we descried the land of Virginia; the same day we ent’red into the Bay of Chesupioc directly without any let or hindrance; there we landed and discovered a little way, but we could find nothing worth the speaking of but fair meadows and goodly tall trees, with such fresh waters running through the woods as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof.”

—George Percy

**Captain John Smith’s Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because of the impact of his subsequent maps and writings on English and colonial policy regarding the exploration and settlement of North America, as well as the transformation of the Bay’s environment.**

It is impossible to read the accounts written by Englishmen viewing their new home for the first time and not imagine them crowding the decks for a better look, pointing out the sights to each other, and shivering with a range of emotions. Relief: land at last, after long months jammed on tiny ships with bad food, bad water, and a mob of sick, bickering, smelly men. Wonder: everything was bright and new; the trees were tall and goodly, the meadows were fair, and the waters looked fresh and cool. Fear: they probably suspected that what lay ahead for most of them was death, far from home and loved ones, and each man no doubt prayed that he would survive and beat the odds. Pride: they were the vanguard of a new empire, defying prior Spanish claims and planting crosses for Protestant England. Ambition: they would make better men of themselves, if not morally then at least in terms of wealth, and return sometime to England more prosperous than when they left.

Wonder and excitement soon gave way to the realities of a life that was far from familiar to most of them. They quickly discovered that despite all the planning back in England, they lacked accurate information about their new home. The interior of Virginia was not the same as coastal North Carolina. Some of them had read the works of Hakluyt and others, but they soon found that reality trumped propaganda, as well as their own dreams. Being on land quickly lost its charm, especially after the first Native attack and as the contentions that had erupted aboard ship continued. The trees concealed enemies, the meadows did not yield abundant game, and the waters were salt-poisoned. Their fears of death were soon realized, as more and more men fell ill and succumbed. Patriotism did not put meat in the pot, and the supposed riches of the land were not found immediately. Instead of accumulating wealth for themselves or investors in the Company, the colonists struggled simply to survive.

They also explored the rivers and, in 1608, John Smith led two well-organized voyages up the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Smith already had led expeditions to Powhatan towns near Jamestown, learning more about the land and its inhabitants along the way. He made notes on his “discoveries” and began sketching maps. Just as he was about to depart on his first voyage on the Bay, he sent a letter and a map back to England. The letter soon formed the basis for the much-edited volume *A True Relation*. The

Spanish ambassador in London, Don Pedro de Zuñiga, obtained a copy of part of Smith's map and sent it to King Philip III to urge him to eliminate the English presence in territory claimed by Spain. Very quickly, then, Smith's first map became a document of international significance.

Smith did not travel alone. He took fourteen Englishmen on the first trip and twelve on the next. He also utilized the services of many Native people as scouts, guides, translators, and emissaries. Others remained in their towns but described to Smith what lay over the horizon or up the river, or drew maps for him in the earth. He could not have accomplished his mission without the assistance of the Native peoples.

During the voyages, Smith made extensive notes about the features of the Chesapeake Bay. He recorded its animals, fish, and birds, as well as the flora that lined its shores and riverbanks. He also wrote of the people he encountered, their customs, and the assistance they gave him. He noted distances between points, the shapes of rivers, the locations of marshes, the positions of towns, and where he and his men had placed crosses to claim land and waterways for England. After Smith returned to England himself late in 1609, he began to expand *A True Relation* and his Chesapeake Bay notes and maps into his 1612 book, *A Map of Virginia*. He included the writings of Anas Todkill, Walter Russell, and Nathaniel Powell, who had shared his adventures on the Bay. In 1624, Smith published his *Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*.

Smith did not find precious metals, he wrote, or anything else “to encourage us, but what accidentally we found Nature afforded”—in other words, the rich natural abundance of the land, the rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. To exploit such resources, however, in Smith's opinion would require not exploring parties or trading posts, but a primarily agrarian society composed of farmers, town dwellers, merchants, and support industries such as ironworks. To create that kind of economy, the land and its Native inhabitants must first be occupied and subdued, which would require a massive influx of settlers. This gradually became the Company's policy, but it needed the royal government to carry it into full effect.

Smith's maps of the Chesapeake Bay were of vital importance to the Virginia Company and, with his writings, helped persuade the Company to make essential changes in policy that affected the future course of the colony. His model for settling the land, arising as it did from his months of exploring the Bay and its tributaries and the books he wrote about his experiences, proved to be the right one for the North American colonies. He influenced their development for many years thereafter and contributed to the flood of immigration that populated the colonies during the next two centuries and forced the Native peoples to immigrate to other localities. Thomas Jefferson, more than a century and a half later, quoted Smith's *Generall Historie* at length in his own *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787). So accurate were Smith's maps in their various editions or states that they remained the standard for the Chesapeake Bay and vicinity for most of the seventeenth century. They were used in boundary disputes between Virginia and Maryland, and were reprinted by Virginia in 1819.

Although Smith wrote extensively about the rich fishing grounds off the coast of New England, his words proved particularly applicable to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The Bay's fish and shellfish—most notably oysters—long savored by the American Indians who lived in the region, also proved popular with early English colonists and succeeding generations of farmers and townspeople. Once food-preservation methods and transportation improved in the nineteenth century, the increasing demand for oysters nationwide resulted in the eventual depletion of the beds and the eruption of “oyster wars” between Virginia and Maryland oystermen. The growing American population, runoff from farms, roads, and parking lots, and other environmental factors have contributed for many years to the problems facing the Chesapeake Bay. To Smith, the Bay's resources must have seemed infinite; he could not know how fragile is the environment that sustains them. The very qualities that made the Bay so perfect for human habitation—its natural resources—eventually would contribute to the transformation of that environment as settlers lured by Smith's descriptions and guided by his maps established farms and communities in Virginia and, in the 1630s, in Maryland.

Neither could Smith foresee the other fruits of his voyages, his books, and the evolution of the Chesapeake colonies: tobacco plantations supporting a system of chattel slavery and vice versa. He was not in Virginia when John Rolfe harvested the first successful tobacco crop in 1612, when the first Africans arrived in 1619, or when the institution of slavery began to grow as tobacco became the money crop in the Chesapeake Bay region during the next few decades. Yet his voyages, his maps, his writings, and his dispersal of the colonists as president, as well as the subsequent change in the landholding policies of the London Company, all played a role in laying the groundwork for the plantation economy that formed the foundation of Chesapeake society and eventually spread throughout the American South, with violent and tragic consequences.

Theme: Commerce and Trade

“And more over wee doe grannte and agree for us, our heires and successors, that the saide severall Counsell of and for the saide severall Colonies shall and lawfully may by vertue hereof, from time to time, without interuption of us, our heires or successors, give and take order to digg, mine and searche for all manner of mines of goulde, silver and copper.”

—*First Virginia Charter*, April 10, 1606

**Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because of their impact on the commerce and trade of North America and the Native peoples.**

The promotion of commerce and trade was a major reason why the English Crown authorized the exploration and settlement of North America. To secure trade routes to the Orient, to deny resources and products to other nations, to achieve mastery of the seas, to enrich England, to establish an empire built on commerce—these were the goals of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, and the Virginia Companies of London and Portsmouth were the instruments by which the goals would be reached. The colonists

who came to Virginia hoped they would make discoveries to that would bring wealth to the nation, the Company, and themselves through commerce and trade.

Before the colonists could begin trading with England, however, they first had to survive, and that meant dealing with the Native peoples. The Powhatan and other peoples of the Chesapeake Bay region were old hands at trade and commerce. A vast network of rivers and footpaths connected the American Indians of the Eastern Seaboard with those of the Great Lakes and Canada. Items of value were dug from the earth, crafted from shells, and derived from plants, and then transported by canoe or on foot from one place to another. The haggling and sharp trading-practices common to every culture on the planet were part of the Native peoples' economy as well. John Smith and other Englishmen quickly found that the Powhatan traders were as canny as their counterparts in Europe and elsewhere.

There were differences, however, in what the English and the Powhatan counted as wealth. Smith was amazed that he could obtain large quantities of corn—an item of immense value to the starving colonists—for a small number of cheap beads or a few pieces of ordinary copper. To Powhatan, though, the beads and copper were valuable for what they symbolized: religious values in the color of the sky and the earth. Individual wealth did not count for as much among the Powhatan people as it did among the English; it was not what one could purchase with the goods but what kind of power was associated with the item that was important. As Powhatan acquired items containing religious power, for example, his personal power increased, but his shamanic authority over the people grew even more. Gold, silver, and copper were valuable to the English primarily as the means to the acquisition of other things (land, livestock, dwellings), or, when they were crafted into ornaments, as symbols of personal wealth and influence. Among the Powhatan people, however, these precious metals were of more value to the status of the tribe as a whole, or the status of its leaders and hence the tribe indirectly, although they could also promote individual status. Each side probably never fully understood these basic differences in their philosophies of wealth.

John Smith's voyages around the Chesapeake Bay opened up the world of trade with the Native peoples to the English. Henceforth, the colonists would not be limited to the tribes near Jamestown—much to Powhatan's annoyance. Smith's journeys also informed him about the types of goods to be found in various places, from furs to silvery glitter for face paint to iron hatchets. His voyages also informed him about what was not to be easily discovered: gold, silver, and copper. The English thought that the metals they desired would be found in relative abundance, if not in Tidewater Virginia near Jamestown then perhaps above the falls or around the next bend in the river or over the next range of mountains or up the Bay. How soon did Smith begin to wonder, if the precious metals were supposed to be abundant, why did he not find any Native peoples decked out in them?

Smith's pragmatism regarding the natural resources available to the colony for trade surfaced even before his Chesapeake Bay voyages, when he loaded Captain Francis Nelson's *Phoenix*, bound for England in June 1608, with fresh-cut Virginia cedar. That

fall, as president, Smith watched Christopher Newport lead an expedition up the James River in search of mines again. Smith, however, set the men remaining in Jamestown to work making glass, soap ashes, pitch, and tar, and also led a gang into the forest to cut timber for wainscot and clapboards. These, he believed, were what the colony could produce immediately for the benefit of the Company and England, whether gold was ever found or not.

Over the next hundred years, Virginia and the other colonies would become major trading partners with England and other nations. Most of that commerce would include not the precious metals the Company and early colonists dreamed of, but the natural resources of the woods and fields. Furs, timber, tar, and the products of thousands of farms and plantations—tobacco, sugar, and cotton especially—would comprise much of the wealth of colonial and antebellum America. John Smith was among the first to recognize where the future economic foundation of the country lay in terms of commerce and trade, and he promoted in his books the vast and seemingly limitless resources of America. He could not, however, foresee the consequences of his vision for the Chesapeake Bay: the deforestation that resulted from the spread of farms, the pollution of the Bay's waters by fertilizers and other compounds carried by runoffs, the depletion of the Bay's resources such as oysters and sturgeon from overharvesting as well as pollution, and the development of towns and cities that permanently altered the Bay's environment. The intensive exploitation of the Bay's natural resources became the model for the exploitation of the continent as the English and other settlers spread across North America. John Smith played a vital role in creating that model through his voyages, maps, and writings.

## 5. Bibliographical Essay

Much has been written over the years about John Smith, the Chesapeake Bay, the Native peoples of the region, and the histories of the several English colonies established around the Bay. There are also a vast number of archaeological site reports on file in the state historic preservation offices of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, as well as soil surveys, environmental analyses, and other esoteric documentation. For the purposes of this report—to describe the early history of the Virginia colony as it relates to John Smith’s Chesapeake voyages—a few important works are discussed below, and some others are listed as well.

### Captain John Smith’s Chesapeake Bay Voyages

A detailed day-by-day itinerary of Smith’s voyages has been put together by Helen C. Rountree, Wayne E. Clark, Kent Mountford, et al., in “John Smith’s Chesapeake Voyages, 1607–1609,” a draft report (2005) that is currently being revised for publication by the University of Virginia Press. The report discusses the Bay’s seventeenth-century environment, the world of the Native peoples who lived there then, the coming of the English, Smith’s voyages, and the various rivers and drainages that feed the Bay. An epilogue brings the story of the Bay up to date, and a very detailed bibliography lists virtually everything ever published about the Bay, its history, and its environment.

### Primary Sources

The principal sources for descriptions of Smith’s voyages on the Chesapeake Bay and his other experiences in Virginia are three of his own works: *A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia since the first planting of that Collony* (1608), *A Map of Virginia* (1612), and *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*. The standard edition of Smith’s writings is Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Virtually everything the other colonists wrote during the period is in Edward Wright Haile, ed., *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade: 1607–1617* (Champlain, Va.: RoundHouse, 1998), with modernized spelling. Among the “eyewitnesses” were Gabriel Archer, Samuel Argall, Thomas Dale, Thomas Gates, George Percy, and John Rolfe. For similar documentation of the Maryland colony, see Clayton C. Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633–1684* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910).

### Secondary Sources

Helen C. Rountree, Professor Emerita of Anthropology at Old Dominion University, is one of the foremost authorities on the Powhatan Indians. Her books include *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989) and *Pocahontas’s People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). With Thomas E. Davidson, she wrote *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997) and, with E. Randolph Turner III, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia’s Powhatans and Their Predecessors* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida). Her most recent book is *Pocahontas, Powhatan, Opechancanough: Three*

*Indian Lives Changed by Jamestown* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), in which she tells the story of the Powhatan, Jamestown, and John Smith through Indian eyes. Though necessarily speculative in nature, her study examines the era from a perspective with which the public has little familiarity.

Several other works were especially helpful in preparing this report. Frederic W. Gleach, lecturer and curator of anthropology at Cornell University, in *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), describes how these two cultures, with their very different worldviews, attempted to “civilize” and incorporate each into the other’s polity. James Horn, O’Neill Director of the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, wrote *A Land as God Made It* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). In this more conventional study of the origins and history of the Jamestown colony, Horn suggests that John Smith’s 1609 powder-bag “accident” was in fact a murder attempt by disgruntled colonists. Everett Emerson, the late Alumni Distinguished Professor of English at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, examined Smith’s writings as literature in *Captain John Smith, Revised Edition* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993). Camilla Townsend, associate professor of history at Colgate University, who wrote *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma: An American Portrait* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), places the story of Pocahontas within the context of the cultural conflict between the Powhatan and the English settlers.

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