

# **A HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT OF VIRGINIA**

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A history of the settlement of Virginia by John Smith

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SETTLEMENT OF VIRGINIA.



BY  
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CAPT. JOHN SMITH.

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# CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH was born in Willoughby, Lincolnshire, England, in 1579, and on the death of his parents, when he was about thirteen years of age, he was left with a competent fortune, but his guardians, regarding his estate more than himself, gave him full liberty and no money. At the age of fifteen he was bound as apprentice to the greatest merchant in his part of the country, but, because of Smith's love of adventure and his disappointment at not being sent to sea at once, he ran away and did not see his master for eight years.

He went as an attendant into France, and on again returning to England, received ten shillings, of money already belonging to him, to relinquish all claims in his deceased father's estate. Going back to France he served as a soldier in that country, and afterwards in the Low Countries. In 1599 he embarked for Scotland, where he expected, through letters that had been given him, to obtain a place at court, but failing in this he returned to Willoughby, his native place, and there built himself an isolated lodge, and devoted his attention to the study of the arts of war and of horsemanship.

Again becoming restless, he went into the Netherlands, where he was duped by four French rogues to sail for France, only to be robbed of all his baggage, and finally to be landed with but a single piece of gold in his pocket, so that he was forced to sell his cloak to pay his passage. Pitying friends afforded the means to meet immediate needs and to resume his wanderings. It was not long after this that he met one of the rogues, and easily vanquished him in single combat.

He embarked for Italy, but the pilgrim passengers from the



provinces, on their way to Rome, took so great offense to him because of his nationality that they threw him overboard. Reaching a desert island he hailed a ship, which had sought refuge from the storm, and was taken aboard. According to his own account, Smith so won the favor of the captain that he easily got passage through to the Adriatic, where, meeting with a Venetian argosy, a fight ensued and resulted disastrously to the argosy and her cargo, half of which was seized. Smith was landed with four hundred and fifty pounds (£450) more than he had when he was picked up. He therefore improved the opportunity of traveling through Italy and of going to Rome. It was while on these travels that he met in Austria with a baron whose regiment he joined on an expedition to Turkey, where he proved himself so ingenious in devising stratagems, which were most successful on two occasions, that he was soon made captain of horse. On another occasion he improvised a very effective bomb, which brought sad havoc to the Turks.

During one long and tedious siege the Turks in derision sent the following challenge: "That to delight the ladies, who did long to see some court-like pastime, the lord Turbashaw did defy any captain that had command of a company who durst combat with him for his head."

After much discussion the challenge was accepted, and Captain Smith was chosen by lot to champion the British. At the first charge his lance passed through the head of his adversary, who fell dead. This death so enraged a friend of Turbashaw, that he at once sent a challenge, which Smith in turn accepted. The Turk was shot from his horse, and his head, horse, and armor taken as prize. After this Smith sent a challenge to any Turk who would meet him. It was accepted, and Smith was again the victor.

In 1602 Smith was found wounded after the battle of Rotten-ton and taken prisoner. A short time afterwards he was sold as a slave and sent to Constantinople. Thence he was taken from court to court in Tartary. His head was shaved "so bare as his hand," a great ring of iron was riveted about his neck, and a hair coat was put on him. During all these experiences Smith care-

fully noted the manners and customs of the people, their diet, clothing, houses, treatment of slaves, feasts, religion, and conduct in war. After a year's captivity, in revenge for cruel treatment, he beat out his master's brains with a "threshing bat" while working in the field. Then realizing his desperate strait, he donned his master's clothing, hid the dead body under the straw, filled his knapsack with corn, and mounting his horse started into the desert. After traveling many days Smith reached a Muscovite garrison on the river Don. The governor used him kindly. After this he made a thorough tour of Europe, turned his course through the heart of Europe, crossed to Africa, and then back to Portugal. In 1604 he returned to England on a man-of-war.

Of Smith's adventures in America the abstracts to be found in this book will give a fair account. However improbable it may seem, we can hardly deny that it is consistent with the story given of Smith's earlier wanderings through almost every part of the then known world.

Having considered Smith as an adventurer, it remains to speak of his writings, which were but the narratives of his adventures. Our chief interest in them springs from the fact that he was the first contributor to American literature; and further, that the subjects which he chose are the first records of the first American settlement.

Though quite a prolific writer, only three of Smith's books were written in America. The first, "A True Relation of Virginia," was written within the first thirteen months after the settlement of the Virginia colony, and was sent to London, where it was published in 1608. The character of this work may be judged from the selections which are given in this book.

It was not long after the publication of "A True Relation" that Smith was made Governor of Virginia. As such he was responsible to the London Company, who had secured the patent to the new territory and had spent money for its colonization. Becoming somewhat impatient at not receiving large and immediate dividends from their investment, the proprietors sent a

letter of inquiry in the form of seven questions to the Governor. The questions called forth seven categorical answers, and these answers comprise Smith's second contribution to American literature. By the same vessel which conveyed Smith's letter to his company in London he sent the manuscript for his third American work, entitled "A Map of the Bay and the Rivers, with an annexed Relation of the Countries and Nations that inhabit them." As its title indicates, the book is devoted to the topography, climate, vegetation, and inhabitants, all of which are graphically described, as may be judged from reading the selection on "The Natural Inhabitants." The book was not printed until 1612. All of Smith's writings are marked by the same spirit of bold romance which characterized his life.

In the Fall of 1609, Smith, probably at the suggestion of the London proprietors, returned to England, where his further services as one of the Virginia Colony were dispensed with. "Smith thus disappeared from the stage of affairs in Virginia, but he had played a great part in the first scenes of American history, and his character and subsequent career deserve some notice." In 1614 he made a voyage of exploration, of which a map of the New England coast from the Penobscot River to Cape Cod is the result. In 1615 he sailed with a colony for settlement in New England.

On the voyage he was captured by a French pirate and taken as a prisoner to Rochelle, and though he soon made his escape to England he never again left that country. Until his death in 1631, his interest in the colonizing of America was unflagging.

"So snapped the chords of a stout heart, and a remarkable life ended. The character of the man must have appeared from his career. He was brave as his sword, full of energy, impatient of opposition, and had all the faults and virtues of the dominant class to which he belonged. His endurance was unshrinking, and his life in Virginia indicated plainly that he had enormous recoil. He was probably never really cast down, and seems to have kept his heart of hope, without an effort, in the darkest hours, when all around him despaired. He is said to have been cordial and winning in his manners, and even his critics declared that he had 'a prince's heart in a beggar's purse;' it is equally certain that he was im-