

## John Smith

English explorer John Smith (1580–1631) sailed to North America and helped found the Jamestown (Virginia) colony in 1607. The record of his exploration, *A True Relation of Virginia*, was published in 1608. This journal and its sequel, including his experience with the leader Powhatan and his daughter Pocahontas, played a pivotal role in the early settling of the continent, though the famous rescue by Pocahontas is not mentioned in the original account. Smith's storytelling resulted in some discrepancies among the early accounts of relations with the Chesapeake and other tribes, but his adventures helped popularize the idea of settlement and helped the early colonizing efforts. Smith later explored the northeastern coast of the continent, which he named New England.



### From *The Journal of John Smith*

#### Chapter II

##### *What Happened till the First Supply*

Being thus left to our fortunes, it fortune'd that within ten days, scarce ten amongst us could either go or well stand, such extreme weakness and sickness oppressed us. And thereat none need marvel if they consider the cause and reason which was this: While the ships stayed, our allowance was somewhat bettered by a daily proportion of biscuit, which the sailors would pilfer to sell,

give, or exchange with us for money, sassafras, furs, or love. But when they departed, there remained neither tavern, beer house, nor place of relief but the common kettle. Had we been as free from all sins as [we were free from] gluttony and drunkenness, we might have been canonized for saints, but our President would never had been admitted [to sainthood], for [he was guilty of] engrossing to his private,° oatmeal, sack,° oil, aqua vitae,° beef, eggs, or what not but the kettle; that indeed he allowed equally to be distributed, and that was half a pint of wheat and as much barley boiled with water for a man a day, and this, having fried some twenty-six weeks in the ship's hold, contained as many worms as grains so that we might truly call it rather so much bran than corn; our drink was water, our lodgings castles in the air.

With this lodging and diet, our extreme toil in bearing and planting palisades° so strained and bruised us, and our continual labor in the extremity of the heat had so weakened us, as were cause sufficient to have made us as miserable in our native country or any other place in the world. From May to September, those that escaped [death] lived upon sturgeon and sea crabs. Fifty in this time we buried; the rest [of us] seeing the President's projects to escape these miseries in our pinnace by flight (who all this time had neither felt want nor sickness) so moved our dead spirits as we deposed him and established Ratcliffe in his place (Gosnold being dead), Kendall [having been] deposed. Smith [being] newly recovered, Martin and Ratcliffe were by his care preserved and relieved, and the most of the soldiers recovered with the skillful diligence of Master Thomas Wotton our surgeon general. But now was all our provision spent, the sturgeon gone, all helps abandoned, each hour expecting the fury of the savages, when God, the patron of all good endeavors, in that desperate extremity so changed the heart of the savages that they brought such plenty of their fruits and provision as no man wanted.°

And now where some affirmed it was ill done of the [London] Council to send forth men so badly provided, this intractable reason will show them plainly they are too ill advised to nourish such ill conceits.° First, the

*engrossing to his private*: keeping for himself

*sack*: a dry white wine

*aqua vitae*: alcohol (brandy, whiskey, etc.; from Latin "water of life")

*palisades*: long narrow stakes to be used as fence

*as no man wanted*: that no one did without

*conceits*: ideas, notions