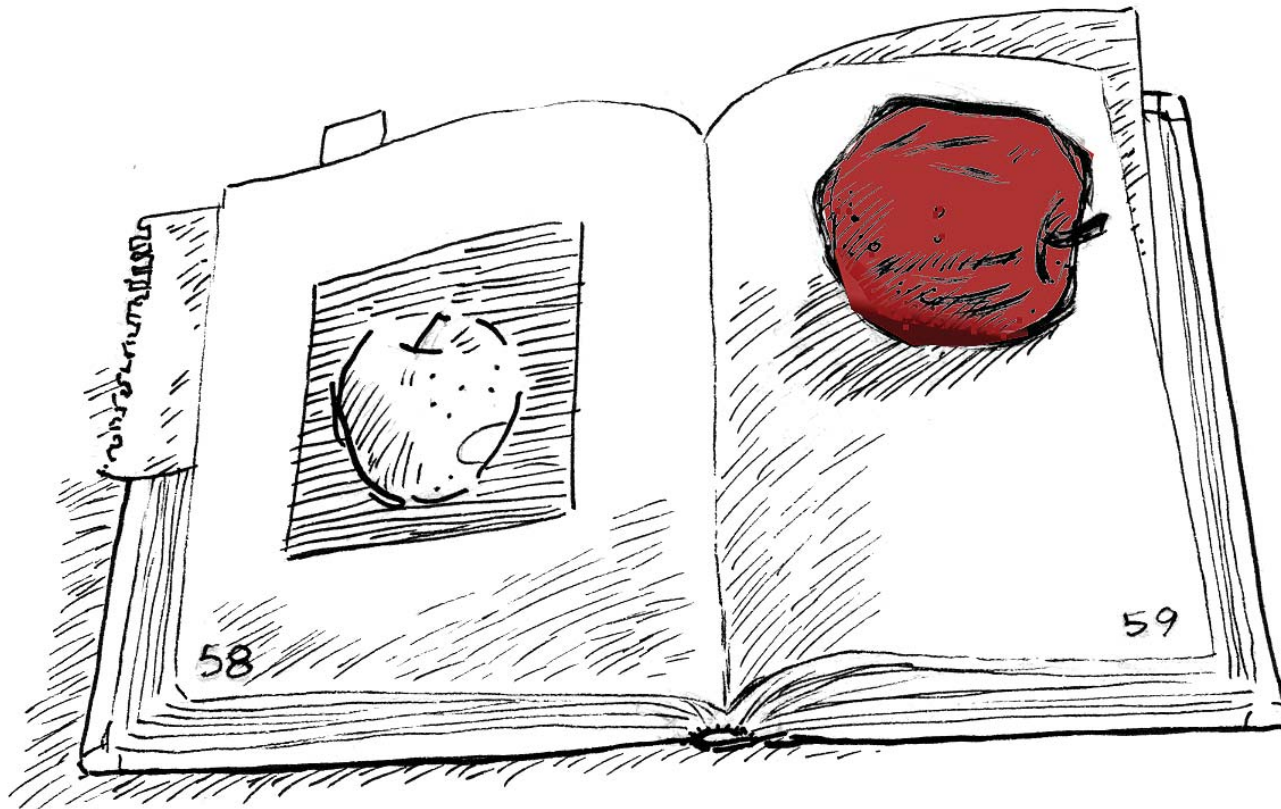


# Thomas Harriot & John Smith

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# *Thomas Harriot*

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**Harriot is a true renaissance man in all meaning of the phrase.**

He is known for multiple achievements in numerous fields.

## Astronomy

- developed first working telescope
- mapped moon and sunspots

## Cartography/ Navigation

## Natural Science

## Mathematics

## Early Linguistic studies of Native Americans

## English exploration of northern America

## Travelogue writer of his ventures overseas

Last name has alternative spellings: Hariot, Hariott

# *Thomas Harriot*

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- His document, titled *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, was published February 1588, just a few months before the sinking of the Spanish Armada in May 1588
- in 1590 the work was reprinted by Theodor de Bry who produced elaborate engravings to accompany Harriot's report
- a selection of the work was also reprinted by Sir Richard Hakluyt in his *Principall Navigations of the English Nation*

# *Thomas Harriot*

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**For a sense of his placement in history, he was a contemporary of:**

the playwright William Shakespeare

the astronomer Galileo Galilei

and the explorer Sir Walter Raleigh

*just to name a few important figures in his day*

Furthermore, Harriot corresponded with major scientists of his time:

Johannes Kepler

Galileo Galilei

Giordano Bruno

> these three men proposed radical theories opposed to Church doctrine; Bruno was burned as a heretic for his scientific discoveries

# *Thomas Harriot*

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***A Brief and True Report is a rare publication his work.***

He published very little during his lifetime;

furthermore not many papers survive of his notes.

- this could be due to the intense environment of the time—
  - > scientists were often branded as heretics and then killed for proposing ideas which countered church doctrine
  - > political rivals within the royal courts of Elizabeth and later James were often executed for appearing as threats to national security
  - > at one point he himself served a term in the Tower of London in the early 1600's due to his connection with Raleigh who was feuding with King James at the time
- it is believed he burned much of his material before imprisonment

# *Harriot vs. Raleigh*

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**Sir Walter Raleigh published a travelogue titled *Discoverie of Guiana* in 1596, after Harriot's document first appeared in 1588.**

- both publications deal with studies of Native people
- these publications appear before any major colonial advancements were made by the English
  - > Roanoke Island the “Lost Colony” was founded by Raleigh in 1584;  
this colony is the focus of Harriot's document
  - > one of the first ventures by English
  - > present day North Carolina
  - > mysterious circumstances surround the missing colonists;  
in modern times people still look for answers

# *Harriot vs. Raleigh*

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**Raleigh's publication *Discoverie of Guiana* deals mainly with his search for the legendary El Dorado, the city of gold**

- modern Guyana is located on the northern top side of South America which consists of a different territory all together
- pessimistically, Raleigh is attempting to regain favor in the English courts, renew interests and royal funding for his colonial investments overseas
- optimistically, Raleigh wants to create a record of a new era and embed his personal sense of adventure into the average Englishman
- pessimistically, Harriot's work echoes previous explorers' attempts of propaganda for future colonial expansion in the regions of the Americas
- optimistically, Harriot's work can be seen as an early attempt at *diplomatic* understanding of the Natives as well as studying the natural aspects of the new continent

# *Roanoke Island Colony*

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## **The Roanoke Island Colony is also known as the Lost Colony**

- *A Brief and True Report* exists as an account of Harriot's experience during the second 1585 expedition; it is possible that he was also part of the first voyage in 1584— unsubstantial data exists however
- in June 1585, Ralph Lane assumed command of the colony after Sir Richard Greenville returned to England— both of these men were not skilled in dealings with Native cultures and concepts
- the timing of the colonists' arrival did not permit the planting of crops
- ironically, the goodwill of the Native Americans in the area, led by chief Manteo and other neighboring tribes, helped maintain survival of the colonists
- English-Indian relations, however, remained unstable throughout the year

# *Roanoke Island Colony*

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- during this period, Harriot built up a substantial record of events and studies of the Natives which became the basis of the writing
- Harriot's does relate how the English territory of Virginia was not abundant in gold as was once hoped
- with colonist John White, Harriot created elaborate maps, drawings, and developed anthropological studies of the various tribes in the region
- Harriot left the colony in 1586

# *A Brief and True Report*

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**A common technique in Harriot's time was to use long elaborate titles.**

The full 1588 title reads:

*A briefe and true report of the new foundland of Virginia: of the commodities there found and to be rayed, as well as marcftantable, as others for victuall, building and other neccessarieuses for those that are the planters there, and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitants: Discovered by the English Colony there seated by Sir Richard Grenville knight in the year 1585 which remained under the government of Rafe Lane Esquire, one of her Majesties Equieres during the space of twelve monethes: as the special charge and direction of the Honourable Sir Walter Raleigh Knight, Lord Warden of the stanneries; who therein hath beene favored and authorized by her Majestie and her letters patents*

# *A Brief and True Report*

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Most importantly, in both publications, notice he states on the title page that his accounts are as well: “directed to the adventurers, favorers, and welwillers (well-wishers) of the action, for the inhabiting and planting there.”

- A quick scan of Harriot’s text in the *Norton Anthology* shows anthropological discussions on Native culture referencing:

clothing

government

war

intelligence

religion

health

# *A Brief and True Report*

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- Within the text he likewise shows a brief comparison between the English and Native American cultures:

In respect of us, they are a poor people, and for want of skill and judgment in the knowledge and use of our things, do esteem our trifles before things of greater value. Notwithstanding [this] in their proper manner (considering the want of such means as we have), they seem very ingenious, for although they have no such tools, nor any such crafts, sciences, and arts as we, ye in those things that they do, they show excellence of wit. (50)

# *Thomas Harriot*

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- Harriot also unwittingly documents the manner how the European presence transmitted harsh diseases to the Native population:

[W]ithin a few days after our departure from every such [Native] town, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space, in some towns about twenty, in some forty, and in one six score, which in truth was very many in respect of their numbers. This happened in no place that we could learn, but where we had been, where they used some practice against us, and after such time. The disease also was so strange, that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it, [for] the like by report of the oldest men in the country never [had] happened before, time out of mind. (53)

# *Thomas Harriot*

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## **Some Basic Comparisons Over-all**

- whereas Columbus' notes on the Natives seem to promote a potential source for slaves, or "servants," Harriot appears to be examining the make-up of their culture for scientific means
- like Las Casas, Harriot views the Native Americans as humans who could be converted to Christianity—in this case, Protestant values

# *Thomas Harriot*

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Essayist Michael Sstrom comments that Harriot:

took pains in his report to point out the abundance of commercially viable and edible plants and animals, cataloging the variety of flora and fauna and their commercial potential. In describing the abundance and nature of silk worms, the dense pine forests, the rich soil, the profusion of game animals, and medicinal plants, Harriot presented the New World as a land of wealth. [His] words and images both inspired potential English investors and settlers and enlightened them with practical information necessary for survival. (*Documenting the American South*)

# *Thomas Harriot*

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His collective body of existing work, as limited as it is, presents a dignified and peaceful portrait of the Indians to counter the charge that they were violent savages. [His] drawings and writings comprise one of the best records of sixteenth-century Native Americans during the time of first contact with Europeans (*Documenting the American South*).

Sabine Schülting, faculty member of the Graduate School of North American Studies in Berlin, is less optimistic regarding Harriot's motives: "Harriot's report reveals the dependency of colonial power on the construction of a superstitious Other" ("Bringing 'this monstrous birth to the world's light': Colonial Mimicry in Early Modern Writing").

*Eurfurt Electronic Studies in English* <http://webdoc.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/eese.html>

# *Thomas Harriot*

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- She cites as evidence the scene displayed when Harriot presents European instruments to the Natives:

Most thinges they sawe with vs, as Mathematicall instruments, sea compasses, the vertue of the loadstone in drawing yron, a perspectiue glasse whereby was shewed manie strange sightes, burning glasses, wilde-fire woorkes, gunnes, bookes, writing and reading, spring clocks that seem to goe of themselues, and manie other thinges that wee had, were so straunge vnto them, and so farre exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and meanes how they should be made and done, that they thought they were rather the works of gods then of men , or at the leastwise they had bin giuen and taught vs of the gods.  
 (“— Colonial Mimicry in Early Modern Writing”)

*The Norton Anthology* also presents the same scene on page 52 of the text.

# *Thomas Harriot*

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Schülting further repeats the subsequent scene when Harriot presents a copy of the Bible to the Natives:

And although I told them the booke materially & of it self was not of anie such vertue, as I thought they did conceiue, but onely the doctrine therein contained; yet would many be glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kisse it, to hold it to their brests and heades, and stroke ouer all their bodie with it; to shewe their hungrie desire of that knowledge which was spoken of  
 (“— Colonial Mimicry in Early Modern Writing”)

- Schülting uses these two incidents as examples of an early explorer wanting to establish a notion of superiority over an indigenous people
- as a result, the average reader in England would justify the civilized culture having the right to take over any savage intellect

# *Thomas Harriot*

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One final opinion, from Vance Brice, who comments:

It was thus perhaps natural that Raleigh should send Harriot on the first English colonizing attempt in America with directions to categorize the wildlife there, observe the natives, and upon return to England, write his report. Harriot's loyalty to and financial dependence upon Raleigh ensured that he would write his Report in order to protect Raleigh's stake in the American [based] colony. Any current reading of the Report, then, must take into account the varying forces that dictated and colored its contents: Raleigh's duties and advantages under his patent, the hardships of the year-long 1585 expedition, and Raleigh's mostly disastrous attempts to colonize his new world to 1590, when the folio of the Report appeared. ("The Credit of Truth: Thomas Harriot and the Defense of Raleigh")

<http://www.grandiose.com/vb/hariot.html>

# *Thomas Harriot*

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- Raleigh had been involved in efforts to settle America as early as 1569
- maintaining a colony in the new territory was essential for the English to justify a claim to the American lands
- notion was equivalent to the more modern Cold War in the Twentieth Century; the Protestant England wanted to defy the Roman Catholic Spain at any cost
- the diverse governments of Europe all held conflicting monetary and political reasons for wanting to settle in the New World—oftentimes they used a mask of religion to succeed in their goals

# *John Smith*

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## **Jamestown, Virginia**

The first successful colony from England was Jamestown, Virginia, established in 1607.

- Jamestown was a mercantile colony, seeking gold.
- The area selected by the English for Jamestown was land earlier rejected by the Native Americans living in the general vicinity: the Algonquian Tribe, members of the Powhatan Confederacy.
- The Indians rejected this land due to poor agriculture results: too marshy, too remote.

**John Smith, unlike Thomas Harriot, has a more overt, obvious agenda.**

# *John Smith*

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## **Smith's writings are a form of New World propaganda.**

*The Norton's* collected material by Smith serve multiple purposes.

- In one fashion the documents are a means of self-promotion, a way to regain status of as an important English explorer.
- On the other hand, his *Description of New England* is a means for himself to find investors for developing further trade routes with the New World.
- Just like C. Columbus writings a few hundred odd years prior, Smith often over-embellishes the circumstances of the region, exaggerates the living conditions in order to generate interest and excitement and notoriety.
- Likewise the adventure concerning Pocahontas contains numerous elements of exaggeration as well; elementary text books over-dramatize the story because it makes good reading.
- His *Description* was published in the year 1616.

# *John Smith*

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- This one adventure is one of the earliest examples of what will become a popular genre “Indian captivity narratives”—a plot device for hundreds of years, over-used by Hollywood even into the 1990’s with the Kevin Costner film *Dances With Wolves*.
- This text in particular is intended for men to read; anyone looking for adventure or the means of quickly moving outside of their working class status.
- In the full text, Smith opens up with a quick first-hand account of discovery, immediately detailing circumstances of his first voyage overseas with the intentions for he and the crew to: “take Whales and make tryalls of a Myne of Gold and Copper” (17).
- Smith quickly asserts in order to regain invested interest, the members of the trip shifted between various ideas to find a means of bringing back to England some financial gain; he wants to promote the variety of possible venture.

Smith, John. *A Description of New England*. Paul Royster, ed. University of Nebraska-Lincoln. *DigitalCommons*. 2006. Web. June 15 2009. < <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/4/>>

# *John Smith*

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- After this brief introduction of personal experiences, he gives a geographical lesson regarding the territory, then apologizes to the reader with exaggerated politeness, typical with the strategy of his day. He writes:

New England is that part of America in the Ocean Sea opposite to Noua Albyon in the South Sea; discovered by the most memorable Sir Francis Drake in his voyage about the worlde. In regarde whereto this is stiled New England, beeing in the same latitude. New France, off it, is Northward: Southwardes is Virginia, and all the adioyning Continent, with New Granado, New Spain, New Andolosia and the West Indies.

Now because I haue beene so oft asked such strange questions, of the goodnesse and greatnesse of those spatious Tracts of land, how they can bee thus long vnknown, or nor possessed by the Spaniard, and many such like demands; I intreat your pardons, if I chance to be too plaine, or tedious in relating my knowledge for plaine mens satisfaction. (18-19)

- This paragraph shows how Europe is responding to the availability of land.

# *John Smith*

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- Frequently throughout the piece he lists many English explorers known to have been associated with the New World, among them Raleigh, Lane, and Harroit: “Southward adioyneth that part discovered at the charge of Sir Walter Rawley, by Sir Ralph Lane, and that learned Mathematician Mr. Thomas Heryot” (19).
- Later in the text he displays a list of Spanish explorers who he compliments for the successful journeys in the New World; these men are the few who merited the qualities he lists in the opening sentence. He writes:

[I]t is not a worke for euery one, to manage such an affaire as makes a discoverie, and plants a Colony: It requires all the best parts of Art, Iudgement, Courage, Honesty, Costancy, Diligence and Industrie, to doe but neere well. Some are more proper for one thing then another; and therein are to be imployed: and nothing breedes more confusion then misplacing and misimploying men in their vndertakings. Columbus, Cortez, Pitzara, Soto, Magellanes, and the rest serued more then

# *John Smith*

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aprentiship to learne how to begin their most memorable attempts in the West Indes: which to the wonder of all ages succesfully they effected, when many hundreds of others farre aboue them in the worlds opinion, beeing instructed but by relation, came to shame and confusion in actions of small moment, who doubtlesse in other matters, were both wise, discreet, generous, and couragious. I say not this to detract any thing from their incomparable merits, but to answer those questionlesse questions that keep vs back from imitating the worthinesse of their braue spirits that aduanced themselues from poore Souldiers to great Captaines, their posterity to great Lords, their King to be one of the greatest Potentates on earth, and the fruites of their labours, his greatest glory, power and renowne. (22)

# *John Smith*

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- Most often he calls the natives “savages” and outlines how easy it is to overcome their forces with only 30 or 40 good men— as did the Columbus letter, years earlier:

First, the ground is so fertill, that questionless it is capable of producing any Grain, Fruits, or Seeds you will sow or plant, growing in the Regions afore named: But it may be, not euey kinde to that perfection of delicacy; or some tender plants may miscarie, because the Summer is not so hot, and the winter is more colde in those parts wee haue yet tryed neere the Sea side, then we finde in the same height in Europe or Asia; Yet I made a Garden vpon the top of a Rockie Ile in 43. 1—2 , 4 leagues from the Main, in May, that grew so well, as it serued vs for sallets in Iune and Iuly. All sorts of cattell may here be bred and fed in the Iles, or Peninsulaes, securely for nothing.

# *John Smith*

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- Most often he calls the natives “savages” and outlines how easy it is to barter with cheap materials for corn or overcome their forces with only 30 or 40 good men. Smith continues with his description:

In the Interim till they [cattell] encrease if need be (obseruing the seasons) I durst vndertake to haue corne enough from the Saluages for 300 men, for a few trifles; and if they should bee vntoward (as it is most certaine they are) thirty or forty good men will be sufficient to bring them all in subiECTION. (30)

- In addition he states the Natives will certainly “bee vntoward,” towards colonists, meaning they will become hostile and violent.
- Smith is encouraging the stereotypical image of a brutish savage for the Native inhabitants.
- Comparing this material to Harriot, the latter comes across more diplomatic.

# *John Smith*

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He likewise begins a long catalog list of the available resources in the region:

¶ With free power to conuert the benefits of their fraughts to what aduantage they please, and increase their numbers as they see occasion; who euer as they are able to subsist of themselues, may beginne the new Townes in New England in memory of their olde: which freedome being confined but to the necessity of the generall good, the euent (with Gods helpe) might produce an honest, a noble, and a profitable emulation [...]

¶ Of the Musk Rat may bee well raised gaines, well worth their labour, that will endeuor to make tryall of their goodnesse.

¶ Of Beuers, Otters, Martins, Blacke Foxes, and Furies of price, may yearely be had 6 or 7000 [...]

¶ Of Mynes of Golde and Siluer, Copper, and probabilities of Lead, Christall and Allum, I could say much if relations were good assurances.

It is true indeed, I made many trials according to those instructions I had, which doe perswade mee I need not despaire, but there are metalls in the

# *John Smith*

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Coutrey: but I am no Alchymist, nor will promise more then I know: which is, Who will vndertake the rectifying of an Iron forge, if those that buy meate, drinke, coals, ore, and all necessaries at a deer rate gaine; where all these things are to be had for the taking vp, in my opinion cannot lose. [...] ¶ The waters are most pure, proceeding from the intrals of rockie mountaines; the hearbes and fruits are of many sorts and kindes: as alkermes, currans, or a fruit like currans, mulberries, vines, respices, goosberries, plummes, walnuts, chesnuds, small nuts, &c. pumpions, gourds, strawberries, beans, pease, and mayze; a kinde or two of flax, wherewith they make nets, lines and ropes both small and great, verie strong for their quantities. Oke, is the chiefe wood; of which there is great difference in regard of the soyle where it groweth. Firre, pyne, walnut, chesnut, birch, ash, elme, cypresse, ceder, mulberrie, plumtree, hazell, saxefrage, and many other sorts. Eagles, Gripes, diuerse sorts of Haukes, Cranes, Geese, Brants, Cormorants, Ducks, Sheldrakes, Teale, Meawes,

# *John Smith*

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Guls, Turkies, Diue-doppers, and many other sorts, whose names I knowe not. Whales, Grampus, Porkpisces, Turbut, Sturgion, Cod, Hake, Haddock, Cole, Cusk, or small Ling, Shark, Mackerell, Herring, Mullet, Base, Pinacks, Cunners, Pearch, Eels, Crabs, Lobsters, Muskles, Wilkes, Oysters, and diuerse others &c. Moos, a beast bigger then a Stagge; deere, red, and Fallow; Beuers, Wolues, Foxes, both blacke and other; Aroughconds, Wild-cats, Beares, Otters, Martins, Fitches, Musquassus, & diuerse sorts of vermine, whose names I know not. All these and diuerse other good things do heere, for want of vse, still increase, & decrease with little diminution, whereby they growe to that abundance. You shall scarce finde any Baye, shallow shore, or Coue of sand, where you may not take many Clampes, or Lobsters, or both at your pleasure, and in many places lode your boat if you please; Nor Iles where you finde not fruits, birds, crabs, and muskles, or all of them, for taking, at a lowe water. And in the harbors we frequented, a little boye might take of Cunners, and Pinacks,

# *John Smith*

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and such delicate fish, at the ships sterne, more then sixe or tenne can eate in a daie; but with a castingnet, thousands when wee pleased: and scarce any place, but Cod, Cuske, Holybut, Mackerell, Scate, or such like, a man may take with a hooke or line what he will. And, in diuerse sandy Baies, a man may draw with a net great store of Mulletts, Bases, and diuerse other sorts of such excellent fish, as many as his Net can drawe on shore: no Riuer where there is not plentie of Sturgion, or Salmon, or both; all which are to be had in abundance obseruing but their seasons. But if a man will goe at Christmasse to gather Cherries in Kent, he may be deceiued; though there be plentie in Summer: so, heere these plenties haue each their seasons, as I haue expressed. (32-41)

- The above is just a brief litany of material he promotes in this intense travelogue of his experiences.