



John Smith



Born: Approximately January 6, 1580 in Willoughby, United Kingdom

(This was his infant baptism date. His birthdate is unknown)

Died: June 21, 1631 in London, Kingdom of England

Also referred to as: Captain John Smith

Famous Quote: “He that will not work, shall not eat.”

Who was John Smith?

- He was the child of George and Alice Smith, farmers who owned land and rented additional farm land from Lord Willoughby near Alford, Lincolnshire, U.K.
- He never wanted to be a farmer so his father made him apprentice with a local merchant.
- At age 16 his father died and he left home and school to find work. He served as a mercenary for King Henry IV of France with the English to fight Spain. He returned to England with the title Captain for his service overseas.
- In between his time at war, he returned home to England and taught himself to live off of the land. He also read books about politics and rules of war and improved his horsemanship and jousting skills.
- He then worked as a privateer in the Mediterranean and even fought against the Ottoman Turks in the Long Turkish War. His success in this war resulted in him being knighted by the Prince of Transylvania and given a horse and coat of arms that reflected the three Turks' heads he reportedly beheaded during the war.

- In 1606, he joined the Virginia Company of London which had been granted a charter by King James to colonize Virginia as a for profit venture. They arrived in April of 1607 and on May 13, 1607 they named the colony Jamestown in honor of the king. The colony struggled with little food and people died daily. John Smith was one of the leaders of the colony and saw the poor conditions and lack of food. He is credited with building trade relationships and helping obtain food from the Powhatan Native American Indians to help the new colony succeed. He was elected president of the colony in 1608.
- During an expedition to the Powhatan villages he was kidnapped and rescued by Chief Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas.
- His greatest accomplishments were his exploration of the Chesapeake Bay waterways and his creation of the first map of Virginia that became vital for explorers and early American settlers as well as the mapping of New England.
- After returning to England, he wrote about his life's adventures. This is very important because it documents the founding of America.
- The following were books he wrote:

The Generall Historie of Virgina, New-England, and the Summer Isles 1624

A Description of New England 1616

Pocahontas: My Own Story 1624

The Journals of Captain John Smith: A Jamestown Biography

A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate As Hath Happened in Virgina New England's Trials

A True Relation of Virginia

