

Captain John Smith and The Explorer

by Captain Bob Cerullo



Go Smith.

In the new movie *The New World*, starring Colin Farrell, Christian Bales and Q'Oranka Kilcher, the story of the rebellious Captain John Smith, portrayed by Colin Smith, is told from a far different perspective than the one in which he was portrayed in the 1995 Disney animated film. The new Terrence Malick/ New Line Cinema film tells the story of the turbulent relationship between the arriving explorers and the tribe to which Pocahontas belonged from the point of view of the Native Americans, or "Naturals" as the explorers called them.

When Captain John Smith landed in the new world in 1607, he was in irons and facing execution for the charge of mutiny. Luckily his services were needed and he was allowed to participate in the settlement of what eventually became Jamestown, but not before almost being executed once again, this time by the Native Americans (Naturals). Enter Pocahontas, a young Native American Capt. Smith befriended while he was wandering around the new country while the rest of the explorers were back at the fort mingling with the "Naturals".

Things were going along pretty well at the fort until one trigger-happy settler shot a Natural he thought was stealing a weapon. Hostilities began when Capt. Smith was captured while on his way to talk to Chief Powhatan about establishing trade. Smith was about to be murdered by the Naturals but

Pocahontas interceded and pleaded for his life. Once again Captain John Smith escaped execution and eventually made his way back to England leaving Pocahontas broken-hearted.

Then in 1616 word came to Captain Smith that Pocahontas was coming to visit England with her husband, John Rolfe, and her young son. Pocahontas had come a long way from her primitive days as a young Native American. She had learned to speak English and wear the fashionable clothes of English nobility. When Captain Smith, who by now was well-respected as one of the most famous explorers in England, heard Pocahontas was coming to England, he was concerned Queen Anne might not appreciate her as well as he thought she deserved. In his letter to Queen Anne, Captain Smith details how Pocahontas helped him and actually saved his life on more than one occasion.

He goes on in his letter to the Queen to explain, "So it is, that some ten years ago being in Virginia, and taken prisoner by the power of Powhatan their chief King, I received from this great Salvager exceeding great courtesy, especially from his son Nantaquaus, the most manliest, comeliest, boldest spirit, I ever say in a Salvager, and his sister Pocahontas, the Kings most dear and well beloved daughter, being but a child of twelve or thirteen years of age, whose compassionate pitiful

heart, of my desperate estate, gave me much cause to respect her: I being the first Christian this proud King and his grim attendants ever saw: and thus enthralled in their barbarous power, I cannot say I felt the least occasion of want that was in the power of my mortal foes to prevent notwithstanding all their threats. After some six weeks fasting amongst those Salvages courtiers, at the minute of my execution she hazarded the beating out of her brains to save mine; and not only that, but prevailed with

her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown: where I found about eight and thirty miserable poor and sick creatures, to keep possession of all those large territories of Virginia; such was the weakness of this poor commonwealth, as had the Salvages not fed us, we directly had starved. And this relief, most gracious Queen, was commonly brought us by this Lady Pocahontas."

So it turns out that were it not for Pocahontas, Captain John Smith might have met

his demise long before he almost single-handedly preserved the early colony that was to become Jamestown, the first settlement in America. He went on to battle with fellow settlers and their elected officials. Some accused him of plotting to be the tyrant King of Jamestown. It is said that when he got himself elevated to the office of president, he terrorized the Naturals, bullied Englishmen and ordered the flogging of anyone who crossed him. At one point it was reported that he commanded the assassination of a squad of turncoat colonists by poisoning.

The legendary Captain John Smith indeed did save Jamestown; in fact, he was a pretty ruthless fellow. But, time has a way of forgiving the bad things he did in favor of remembering his relationship with Pocahontas and



Pocahontas saving life of John Smith

his contributions to the establishment of the New World. He died in 1631.

The Deltaville Maritime Museum, located in Deltaville, VA not far from where Captain John Smith came ashore at Stingray Point, is holding the 2007 Jamestown Celebration. In 1608 Captain Smith had yet another brush with death when he was wounded by a stingray's tail on what is now known as Stingray Point. The Deltaville Maritime Museum is dedicated to preserving the boats and artifacts of watermen in the Deltaville area, so it is fitting that the museum built a replica of the *Explorer*, the boat Capt. Smith used when he landed on the shores in Middlesex County, VA. Since no one really knows exactly what the original *Explorer* looked like, builder Stefan Auer built a boat designed by Mr. Jim Thimsen as close to the few descriptions of the *Explorer* as possible.

The modern day *Explorer* was launched at the Deltaville Marina on Jackson Creek in Deltaville, VA on Saturday, September 23, 2006. The 30-foot wooden boat is a replica of Captain John Smith's barge. It was christened by Ms. Jinks Holton, wife of former Virginia Governor Linwood Holton. A crowd of some 200 people watched as Ms. Holton smashed a bottle of champagne on the stem post of *Explorer*. The *Explorer* was then lowered into the waters of Jackson Creek for

continued on page 14



Pocahontas and son