**Pocahontas and John Smith**

*Captain John Smith was an adventurer. In 1596, at age 16, Smith left his home in England to fight against Spain in support of Dutch independence from the Spanish Crown. Two years later he signed on as a crew member of a Mediterranean merchant ship. In 1600 he joined Austrian forces fighting the Turks in Hungary. Captured by the Turks, Smith was enslaved and transported to Istanbul. He escaped by murdering his master, returned to Hungary and rejoined the fighting. Released from military duty with a large reward, Smith made his way back to England in 1604.*

*The 25 year-old Smith soon grew restless. The Virginia Company had recently been granted a charter by King James I to colonize Virginia and Smith eagerly joined the expedition which left England in December 1606. The voyage lasted four months during which the abrasive Smith so irritated his fellow colonists that they placed him in irons. Arriving in Virginia in April 1607, the expedition leaders opened a locked box containing the names of seven men selected by the Virginia Company to govern the new colony. We can only imagine their shock when they discovered Smith's name on the list.*

*The inexperienced colonists struggled for their survival in the harsh environment they now called home. Disease, severe weather, Indian attacks, laziness, internal squabbling and starvation all threatened to destroy the colony. Smith's firm leadership (he was soon elected president of the colony) held the colonists together and narrowly avoided extinction. Wounded by an explosion of gunpowder, Smith sailed to England in late 1609 to recover. He never returned to Virginia.*

*He did return to the New World, however, as part of an expedition to explore Maine and Massachusetts in 1614 giving the area the name New England. His independence and abrasiveness disqualified him from any further royal sponsorship and he spent the rest of his life in England writing of his adventures. He died in 1631 at age 51.*

**John Smith, *The General Historie of Virginia,* “Saved by an Indian Maiden”**

"… some idle exceptions being muttered against Captain Smith for not discovering the head of Chickahamania River, and taxed by the Council to be too slow in so worthy an attempt. The next voyage he proceeded so far that with much labor by cutting of trees asunder he made his passage; but when his barge could pass no farther, he left her in a broad bay out of danger of shot, commanding none should go ashore till his return: himself with two English and two savages went up higher in a canoe; but he was not long absent but his men went ashore, whose want of government gave both occasion and. opportunity to the savages to surprise one George Cassen, whom they slew, and much failed not to have cut off the boat and all the rest.

Smith, little dreaming of that accident, being got to the marshes at the river's head, twenty miles in the desert, had his two men slain, as is supposed, sleeping by the canoe, whilst himself by fowling sought them victual: finding he was beset with 200 savages, two of them he slew, still defending himself with the aid of a savage his guide, whom he bound to his arm with his garters, and used him as a buckler, yet he was shot in his thigh a little, and had many arrows that stuck in his clothes; but no great hurt, till at last they took him prisoner. When this news came to Jamestown, much was their sorrow for his loss, few expecting what ensued.

Six or seven weeks those barbarians kept him prisoner, many strange triumphs and conjurations they made of him, yet he so demeaned himself amongst them, as he not only diverted them from surprising the fort but procured his own liberty, and got himself and his company such estimation amongst them that those savages admired him more than their own Quiyouckosucks.

The manner how they used and delivered him is as follows. . . .

He demanding for their captain, they showed him Opechankanough, king of Pamaunkee, to whom he gave a round ivory double compass dial. Much they marveled at the playing of the fly and needle, which they could see so plainly and yet not touch it because of the glass that covered them. But when he demonstrated by that globe-like jewel the roundness of the earth and skies, the sphere of the sun, moon, and stars, and how the sun did chase the night round about the world continually; the greatness of the land and sea, the diversity of nations, variety of complexions, and how we were to them antipodes, and many other such like matters, they all stood as amazed with admiration. Notwithstanding, within an hour after they tied him to a tree, and as many as could stand about him prepared to shoot him: but the king holding up the compass in his hand, they all laid down their bows and arrows, and in a triumphant manner led him to Orapaks, where he was after their manner kindly feasted, and well used.

At last they brought him to Werowocomoco, where was Powhatan, their emperor. Here more than two hundred of those grim courtiers stood wondering at him, as he had been a monster; till Powhatan and his train had put themselves in their greatest braveries. Before a fire upon a seat like a bedstead, he sat covered with a great robe, made of raccoon skins, and all the tails hanging by. On either hand did sit a young wench of sixteen or eighteen years, and along on each side the house, two rows of men, and behind them as many women, with all their heads and shoulders painted red, many of their heads bedecked with the white down of birds, but every one with something, and a great chain of white beads about their necks. At his entrance before the king, all the people gave a great shout. The queen of Appamatuck was appointed to bring him water to wash his hands, and another brought him a bunch of feathers, instead of a towel to dry them. Having feasted him after their best barbarous manner they could, a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could laid hands on him, dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs to beat out his brains, Pocahontas, the king's dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save his from death: whereat the emperor was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper; for they thought him as well of all occupations as themselves. For the king himself will make his own robes, shoes, bows, arrows, pots; plant, hunt, or do anything so well as the rest.

Two days after, Powhatan having disguised himself in the most fearfulest manner he could, caused Captain Smith to be brought forth to a great house in the woods, and there upon a mat by the fire to be left alone. Not long after, from behind a mat that divided the house was made the most dolefulest noise he ever heard; then Powhatan, more like a devil than a man, with some two hundred more as black as himself, came unto him and told him now they were friends, and presently he should go to Jamestown, to send him two great guns, and a grindstone, for which he would give him the county of Capahowosick, and for ever esteem him as his son Nantaquoud."

**Pocahontas and John Smith**

*Chief Roy Crazy Horse was the longtime leader of the Powhatan Renape Nation. Crazy Horse became chief of the Powhatan Renape Nation in 1972, and was a vocal advocate for Indian and civil rights throughout his life. In 2000, then-Governor Christie Whitman named him to the commission studying discrimination in state employment and contracting. He also served as chairman of the state Commission on American Indian Affairs.*

*Crazy Horse frequently criticized the mythology surrounding Christopher Columbus and inaccurate portrayals of Indians in popular media. He wrote several books, and Thomas Edison State College granted him an honorary doctorate in humane letters in 2001 in recognition "for the work he's done for his people and in educating others."*

*Crazy Horse was most proud of his role in establishing the Rankokus Indian Reservation in Westampton. In 1983, the state agreed to rent 225 acres in Rancocas State Park to the nation for 25 years. He died at the age of 79 on November 11, 2004.*

**Chief Roy Crazy Horse, *“*The Pocahontas Myth*”***

In 1995, Roy Disney decided to release an animated movie about a Powhatan woman known as "Pocahontas". In answer to a complaint by the Powhatan Nation, he claims the film is "responsible, accurate, and respectful."   
  
We of the Powhatan Nation disagree. The film distorts history beyond recognition. Our offers to assist Disney with cultural and historical accuracy were rejected. Our efforts urging him to reconsider his misguided mission were spurred.   
  
"Pocahontas" was a nickname, meaning "the naughty one" or "spoiled child". Her real name was Matoaka. The legend is that she saved a heroic John Smith from being clubbed to death by her father in 1607 - she would have been about 10 or 11 at the time. The truth is that Smith's fellow colonists described him as an abrasive, ambitious, self-promoting mercenary soldier.   
  
Of all of Powhatan's children, only "Pocahontas" is known, primarily because she became the hero of Euro-Americans as the "good Indian", one who saved the life of a white man. Not only is the "good Indian/bad Indian theme" inevitably given new life by Disney, but the history, as recorded by the English themselves, is badly falsified in the name of "entertainment".   
  
The truth of the matter is that the first time John Smith told the story about this rescue was 17 years after it happened, and it was but one of three reported by the pretentious Smith that he was saved from death by a prominent woman.   
  
Yet in an account Smith wrote after his winter stay with Powhatan's people, he never mentioned such an incident. In fact, the starving adventurer reported he had been kept comfortable and treated in a friendly fashion as an honored guest of Powhatan and Powhatan's brothers. Most scholars think the "Pocahontas incident" would have been highly unlikely, especially since it was part of a longer account used as justification to wage war on Powhatan's Nation.   
  
Euro-Americans must ask themselves why it has been so important to elevate Smith's fibbing to status as a national myth worthy of being recycled again by Disney. Disney even improves upon it by changing Pocahontas from a little girl into a young woman.   
  
The true Pocahontas story has a sad ending. In 1612, at the age of 17, Pocahontas was treacherously taken prisoner by the English while she was on a social visit, and was held hostage at Jamestown for over a year.   
  
During her captivity, a 28-year-old widower named John Rolfe took a "special interest" in the attractive young prisoner. As a condition of her release, she agreed to marry Rolfe, who the world can thank for commercializing tobacco. Thus, in April 1614, Matoaka, also known as "Pocahontas", daughter of Chief Powhatan, became "Rebecca Rolfe". Shortly after, they had a son, whom they named Thomas Rolfe. The descendants of Pocahontas and John Rolfe were known as the "Red Rolfes."   
  
Two years later on the spring of 1616, Rolfe took her to England where the Virginia Company of London used her in their propaganda campaign to support the colony. She was wined and dined and taken to theaters. It was recorded that on one occasion when she encountered John Smith (who was also in London at the time), she was so furious with him that she turned her back to him, hid her face, and went off by herself for several hours. Later, in a second encounter, she called him a liar and showed him the door.   
  
Rolfe, his young wife, and their son set off for Virginia in March of 1617, but "Rebecca" had to be taken off the ship at Gravesend. She died there on March 21, 1617, at the age of 21. She was buried at Gravesend, but the grave was destroyed in a reconstruction of the church. It was only after her death and her fame in London society that Smith found it convenient to invent the yarn that she had rescued him.   
  
History tells the rest. Chief Powhatan died the following spring of 1618. The people of Smith and Rolfe turned upon the people who had shared their resources with them and had shown them friendship. During Pocahontas' generation, Powhatan's people were decimated and dispersed and their lands were taken over. A clear pattern had been set which would soon spread across the American continent.