

Captain John Smith's Encounter with the Susquehannock Indians
Educational Content Key, Pennsylvania Archaeology Month 2019

Second Voyage- July 24 to September 7, 1608 (12 crew)

Captain: John Smith

Doctor: Anthony Bagnall

Gentlemen (familiar with firearms): James Bourne, Richard Fetherstone, Thomas Momford, Nathaniel Powell, Michael Sicklemore

Carpenter (boat repair): Edward Pising

Fish Merchant (knew edible fish): Richard Keale

Fisherman/Sailor: Joans Profit

Laborer/Solder: James Watkins

Soldier: Anas Todkill

Tailor (clothes and sails): William Ward

From July 24 to September 7, 1608, Captain John Smith and his crew went on their second journey to explore and map the Chesapeake Bay. In early August, they reached the head of the bay near **Garrett Island** Maryland, which is just south of the Pennsylvania/ Maryland border. It was here that the first chronicled contact between Europeans and 60 **Susquehannock** Indians occurred. The Washington Boro village site in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania was most likely the principal settlement of the Susquehannock at the time.

1. **Laughing Gulls** – Laughing Gulls (*Leucophaeus atricilla*, got their name from their shrill, laugh-like call. They are found on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts. On average Laughing Gulls are 16 ½" long, with wing spans of 40" and they weigh 11 oz. Most of the Laughing gulls found in the Chesapeake Bay area are migrants, but it is not unusual to find them in the Bay area year-round. The gulls visit the Chesapeake Bay in the summer to breed in large nesting colonies of up to 25,000 pairs. They are depicted here in breeding plumage with their black heads and deep red bills. One of the noted features of Laughing Gulls is that they are scavengers and will take advantage of any discarded scraps or unguarded food associated with humans. Native Americans collected their eggs for food in the summer months. The parent birds could also be captured and killed while nesting.
2. **Cownose Ray**- Cownose rays visit the Chesapeake Bay's shallow waters from June through October each year to breed. They grow quickly, with males typically reaching 35 inches wide and weighing 26 pounds, and females reaching 28 inches wide and weighing 36 pounds. There are some reports of rays growing as much as three feet wide and weighing 50 pounds. They eat various clams, oysters, hard clams and invertebrates. Rays have venomous spines at the base of their tails. A sting from a cownose ray can be very painful and require medical attention. If stung in the abdomen, it could cause death. On July 17, 1608 near the mouth of the Rappahannock River, Captain Smith speared a "large flat fish" with his sword and, while attempting to take it off, was so seriously wounded by the ray that the crew thought he was going to die. He recovered from this ordeal and reported that he ate the ray. The area along the Rappahannock River where he was stung is known today as "Stingray Point."

3. **Shellfish-** Different types of bivalves such as oysters, clams and mussels, live throughout the Chesapeake Bay. Oysters live in marine or brackish habitats, mussels can be found in low marshes and mud flats throughout the middle and lower Chesapeake Bay, and Soft-shelled clams live buried in soft sediments in the middle Chesapeake. Oysters, mussels and clams all feed by filtering the water. They used to be so abundant that they could filter nutrients from the estuary every three to four days. Today, due to a dramatic decline in population, it would take nearly a year. Shellfish were an important part of the diet of Native Americans. Oysters were harvested by hand in very shallow waters. In deeper waters they were collected by diving. Native American boys would dive up to 25 feet below the water's surface to collect them. Shellfish were probably cooked by steaming them in pits lined with heated rocks and plant material. The shells would be used to make beads and other jewelry.
4. **Dogs-** Dogs had already been domesticated when the first people arrived in North America around 12,000-15,000 years ago. In Illinois, dog bones that were over 9,900 years were found. Dogs played a vital role in the lives of Native Americans. They aided in hunting, hauling and pulling sleds, and for protection. Dogs were highly regarded. Some tribes ate dogs, possibly as part of a religious ritual or because they were viewed as medicine. Some dogs were buried alongside people. Dog remains have been recovered at numerous archaeological sites including a Susquehannock site, the Lemoyne site (36Cu194), in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.
5. **Tattoos** –The Susquehannock, like many other tribes, had tattoos. Tattoos were used to identify what clan a person belonged, or to show how many enemies were killed. Tattooing was often part of a religious ritual and were made by dotting or cutting the design into the skin with bone needles, awls, sharp teeth of fish, thorns, or sharp flint flakes. The area would be rubbed with powdered charcoal, minerals, or plant pigments.
6. **Dugout Canoe-** The dugout canoe was used by native tribes in the eastern woodlands. They were often made of yellow pine, cypress, or poplar. They were made using a tree that was hollowed out by burning then scratching or chipping away the charred wood with stone and shells. They measured about 45 inches deep and 40 or 50 feet long. Some were large enough to carry 40 people, but most were built to carry between 10 to 30 people. Paddles and sticks were used to row the canoes which could row faster than John Smith's crew on their boats. To keep the canoe in one place, stone **canoe weights** would be used.
7. **Bows and arrows-** The use of bows and arrows in the Eastern Woodlands was common by 500 A.D. The bow and arrow may have been used earlier in other parts of North of America. Bows were made of flexible wood from trees like ash, hickory, and locust. Bow strings were made of sinew, rawhide, gut, or cordage. Arrow shafts were made of dogwood, wild rose, ash, and other hardwoods. Turkey feathers were often chosen for the fletching, but other bird feathers were sometimes used. The arrow points were made of fine-grained stone-like flint or chert. Smith described Susquehannock weapons as arrows 45 inches long. The points of “flints or splinters of white crystal-like stone [possibly quartz], in form like a heart, an inch broad, and an inch and a half or more long” were on the end. Sometimes, arrows points were made of brass or copper from European traders. Smith described the arrows as being held “in a wolf’s skin” worn on the back.

8. **Netting** – Native Americans used nets made from plant fibers to catch birds and fish. Plants with long fibers like stinging nettle, the inner bark of basswood, and evergreen root were used in net making. Stinging nettle was a favorite due to its strength. The outer bark of stinging nettle would be split into strands, and dried. Cordage was made by twisting plant fibers together on the thigh. Nets would be knotted together using this cordage. Early European explorers found Native American nets were much stronger than their nets. Weights (stone net sinkers) or floats (bottle gourds) were used to weigh down or suspend nets in the water.

9. **Woven baskets/bags**- Native Americans used baskets for moving and storing food and other items. Baskets could be as large as four bushels or as small as one pint. Baskets were made using plant materials including hemp, rushes, grasses, and tree bark such as birch. Weaving and coiling together plant materials or by bending and sewing bark together formed the shape and size of baskets. Many tasks used baskets. Examples include, sifting baskets to sift corn and net-like baskets (like the ones shown here) carried shellfish.

10. **Axe** – As European iron trade axes became more common, stone axes traditionally used by Native Americans were replaced. Iron axes became an important tool and status symbol for the Susquehannock Indians. Axes found by archaeologists vary in size, but most have a downward-curving blade. Axes were utilized for cutting small saplings for construction of longhouses, dugout canoes and stockades.

11. **Atlantic Sturgeon**- These fish typically reach 5 to 6 feet long, but the largest one caught was 14 feet long and weighed 811 pounds. Sturgeon spend most of their life in the ocean, but in the spring, they migrate into the Chesapeake Bay to spawn. At this time, they live at the bottom of freshwater rivers where they feed on clams and other mollusks, crustaceans, worms and insects. For the native tribes in the area, sturgeon was an important part of their diet. They caught these fish by spearing with a javelin, by using a seine or net, and by snaring fish by the jowl.

12. **John Smith**- John Smith was born in Lincolnshire, England and baptized on January 6, 1580. He was a soldier, admiral, explorer, author and colonial governor of the Virginia Colony, which was based at Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in North America. He saved the colony at Jamestown from starvation by teaching them farming and trade skills. Between September 1608 and August 1609, he led two expeditions to explore and map the rivers of Virginia and the Chesapeake Bay. After being hurt by a gunpowder explosion, Smith returned to England. He died in London in 1631.

13. **Helmet** - The helmet worn by John Smith and the crew is a morion style helmet. The English used this type of helmet in the 1700s and 1800s. The crest or comb on the top of the helmet made it stronger. Later, they added cheek guards and removable faceplates to protect the soldier from sword cuts.

14. **Halberd**- The halberd was a two-handed pole-type weapon. It had a spike-topped axe blade mounted on a long shaft. It was used during the 1500s and 1600s. By the 1700s, halberds were mainly used for show and were carried by officers and bodyguards for important people. If needed, it could still be used as a weapon.
15. **Mail and Plate Armour** – Mail and plate armor consisted of cloth mail, also called chain mail, that had plates attached for protection. After the 1700s, both chain mail armor and plate and mail armor stopped being used. Instead, people began to use only plate armor, which gave better protection.
16. **Shallop**- A shallop is a small workboat that was used in the 1600s for travelling along the coast. This type of boat could be moved along the water by either oars or by sails. It could travel in both deep or shallow waters. It had a mast that could be taken down and stored inside the boat. It was light enough to be pulled to shore but was still able to carry heavy loads. Captain Smith's shallop could carry 15 individuals. It is estimated to have been about 30 feet long and 8 feet wide. It would have been built of oak planks fastened together with wooden pegs with one or two sails of hemp canvas.
17. **Glass Beads** - Blue and white glass beads were made in Europe for trading with the Native Americans in exchange for furs. These colorful objects replaced native made bone and shell beads and provide archaeologists with an important tool for dating archaeological sites. White oval-shaped beads such as those in the painting were abundant at the Schultz site (36La7) in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which dates from 1575-1600 AD. Blue beads are a symbol of this early period and commonly found in the archaeological record for Susquehannock sites.
18. **Iron Knife** - The introduction of iron knives to the Susquehannock was a big change from the traditional stone tools they had been using and made it easier for them to hunt and prepare hides and meat. Flat knives appear earliest in the archaeological record with daggers and rapier blades appearing later along with pocket or clasp knives.
19. **British Union Jack**- In 1603, just before dying, Queen Elizabeth I of England named her cousin, James VI of Scotland as the leader to replace her. This united the two nations of England and Scotland. On land, each nation continued to use their own flag- the cross of St. George in England for their patron saint, and the cross of St. Andrew in Scotland for their patron saint. However, in 1606 a combination of both flags was adopted as the one to be used by ships while at sea. It was probably during this time that it became known as the "Union Jack" because it was flown at the bow end of the ship from the jack staff. This was the flag used by Smith, and the one that flew over the settlement of Jamestown, Virginia.
20. **Shell beads**- Shell disc-shaped beads were made and worn by Indians long before European glass trade beads. These shell beads and pendants were made from white whelk shell or occasionally purple quahog shell into short cylinders called *peak* or *wampumpeak*. Later, these became a form of money known as wampum. The early Virginia colonists saw mostly white wampum, which they referred to as "coral." The dark blue or purple wampum was not as common, so they were much more valuable.

Artist bio:

Linda Heberling- Linda grew up in Clearfield County, PA but moved with her family to Tulare, California in 1962. It was in those early school years that she became fascinated with the Spanish language. Linda graduated with a BFA from Kutztown State College in 1978. She and her husband, Keith, live in Berks County in an 1800's log home that they moved and restored. Linda has also taught Spanish in the Tulpehocken Area School District for immigrant students since 1994.

Linda's depiction of John Smith's encounter with the Susquehannock's is a beautifully executed example of her expertise having illustrated for Pennsylvania Magazine, Pennsylvania Archaeologist and privately published books. She has participated in local juried art shows and her most recent works were featured as a solo exhibitor at the Reading Public Museum's "Berks Now" event.