

Toponymy in the Service of Biography

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IT HAS LONG BEEN THE PRACTICE of explorers and mapmakers to name geographical features after famous men and women, monarchs, sponsors, and companions. To cite but one example, Henry Hudson dispensed honors of this kind to Sir Thomas Smythe, Sir Dudley Digges, Sir John Wolstenholme, Sir William Romney and others – not to mention the royal family. These were backers of his voyage to Hudson Bay, and it was natural that he should name islands, capes, and so on, after them. Such names reveal nothing that is not already known. But in the case of a much-traveled friend of Hudson's, the careful study of the names appearing on the maps for which he was responsible has materially contributed to our knowledge of his personal life.

Captain John Smith, of Virginia fame, is the man in question, and his maps offer a peerless example of this quality. Outside of the invaluable record of the names of Indian villages in both Virginia and New England, Smith has here provided us with clues to friendships and ties which are otherwise virtually unknown, and through toponymical hints has thrown not a little light on his life during those years when, as Bradford Smith wrote a dozen years ago, "what else Smith was doing [beyond writing books] we do not know."¹

Smith's first map, that of Virginia dated 1612,² shows in its original state little beyond the usual names of fellow explorers, along with those of a very few friends in England. Four years later, however, his map of New England³ already begins to give evidence of

¹ Bradford Smith, *Captain John Smith: His Life and Legend* (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 182.

² Prepared for and bound with Smith's *A Map of Virginia* . . . (London, 1612), and reproduced in *Capt. John Smith, Works*, ed. by Edward Arber (The English Scholar's Library, Birmingham [Warwick], 1884), hereafter referred to as *Smith, Works*.

³ Prepared for and bound with Smith's *A Description of New England* . . . (London, 1616), and reproduced in *Smith, Works*. The map was dated 1614 because that was the year of Smith's explorations.

the explorer's place-naming as a means of thanking men who had befriended him, or from whom he wanted favors. Among the names on this map which commemorate well-wishers are *Willowby IIs*, for Robert Bertie, Lord Willoughby, and *Barty IIs*, for the Bertie family (or perhaps more restrictedly for Sir Peregrine, Robert's brother). Robert Bertie was John Smith's English landlord as well as personal friend, and there is ample testimony in Smith's writings to his indebtedness to the Bertie family and their connections.

Hoghton IIs, on the other hand, seem to be named in honor of a more recent friend or hoped-for benefactor, Sir John Holles, who was created Baron Houghton on July 9, 1616.⁴ Sir John had been comptroller of the household of Prince Henry until the latter's death, and was still an influential courtier. Nearby, in larger print that hints at flattery, *Pembrocks Bay* is a conspicuous example of an "honor" to a potential backer — William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, reputed to be the wealthiest peer in England. This "honor" is accompanied by two suitable map-mates, *Talbotts Bay* and *P[oint] Kent*, obviously for the Countess of Pembroke, born Mary Talbot, and her sister Elizabeth, who married the Earl of Kent.⁵ These are far from the only appeals ever made by John Smith to distinguished ladies.

Such tokens of gratitude seem not to have been given in vain, for Smith went out of his way years later to dedicate his *True Travels* to William Herbert, as well as to Robert Bertie and another maeccenas in the form of Henry Carey, then fledgling Earl of Dover.⁶ In 1616 Henry Carey was apparently already a friend or backer, for the *Cary IIs* seem clearly to refer to him. These names appear in small, cursive script (in contrast to the bold lettering for Pembroke and his family), as was fitting. Carey would not have a title until 1617, when his father died and left him that of Lord Hunsdon.⁷

Thus, while John Smith states that Prince Charles personally named "the most remarqueable parts" of New England, it is evident that Smith had a considerable hand in the process. In fact, he admits

⁴ Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1890), 2.925.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.1030.

⁶ Smith, *Works*, p. 808.

⁷ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. by Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1939), 2.71.

that he named the islands for the Berties, Willoughby, and Houghton.⁸ Further examples of Smithian nomenclature, and the reasons for them, are *Fullerton IIs* and *P[oint] Murry*, on either side of *Cary IIs*. Sir James Fullarton was first gentleman of the bedchamber to Prince Charles, and in a position to do Smith a good turn, while John Murray was a young Scot who had accompanied King James to England and in 1616 was enjoying mounting favor with him.⁹

Years later, after Charles had become King, John Smith erased Fullarton, Murray and Carey from the map¹⁰ – the last two probably because they had been created peers, and Fullarton perhaps from disappointment that there was no recompense for Smith's "honors." These three names were replaced by *Francis Ile*, *P[oint] Saltonstale* and *Claiborns IIs*, respectively. Since a *West's Bay* was also added about the same time, it may be guessed that the last two were named for Francis West and William Claiborne. West had treated Smith rather shabbily back in 1609, but had since become a power in New England as well as Virginia. In March, 1626, he was appointed to the Council in Virginia, the "Secretarie of State, of and for" which was William Claiborne. It may also be guessed that *Francis Ile* refers to Sir Edward Francis, a "servant" of George Percy's brother, the Earl of Northumberland, whose wife was a first-cousin of Francis West. George Percy and John Smith were at odds in 1626. Sir Edward Francis had some ties with Sir John Holles, mentioned above, and Smith may have sought him out for the purpose of sweetening his relationship with the Earl. In any case, Sir Edward was a Member of Parliament, and Smith may have had other reasons for wanting to show him some appreciation.¹¹ It is very

⁸ Smith, *Works*, pp. 699–700.

⁹ For the information on Fullarton, I am indebted to Dr. C. T. McInnes, then Curator of Historical Records, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh (personal communication, dated September 27, 1960). The information on Murray was obtained by me at the Scottish Record Office, in March, 1962, from a number of sources and with the assistance of Mr. John Imrie, Dr. McInnes's successor.

¹⁰ For the changes in the maps, see Joseph Sabin (*et. al.*), *A Dictionary of Books Relating to America*, 29 vols. (New York, 1868–1936), 20.227–33.

¹¹ On West and Claiborne, see Alexander Brown, *Genesis*, 2.1046–47, and *The First Republic in America* (Boston, 1898), p. 646 and elsewhere (see Index). The identification of *Francis Ile* is still too uncertain to justify reference to sources consulted. It may refer to two otherwise unknown shareholders in the Virginia Company, Giles and Thomas Francis.

uncertain, but with *P[oint] Saltonstale* we are again on firm ground. Several Saltonstalls, particularly Sir Samuel and his son Wye, were developing into close friends of John Smith in those days, and will be mentioned again below.

The names *Poynt Sutcliffe* and *Poynt Gorge*, just north of Plymouth on the map, are clear cases of expressed appreciation to Matthew Sutcliffe, Dean of Exeter, and Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Governor of Plymouth, who were Smith's staunchest friends in 1616. They are important only in that they clarify points which might otherwise be in doubt: first, that Plymouth [Massachusetts] was so named because of the support John Smith got in Plymouth [Devonshire], not because the Pilgrims were forced to stop there on their way to New England; and second, that Sir Ferdinando pronounced his name Gorge, not Gorgeous or George.

The names of two other New England colonists were added at the same time as *Francis Ile*, and so on, in token of Smith's appreciation of their value to the New England Colony: *P[oint] Wynthorp*, which seems a remarkably early reference to John Winthrop as a colonizer, and *P[oint] Standish*, an obvious reference to Captain Miles. Purely personal, on the other hand, were *Martins Ile* and *P[oint] Reeves*. James Reeve had just been made printer of the map in place of George Low, as he had been the printer of the map and sketches of "The Summer IIs" (Bermuda) in Smith's *Generall Historie*, and also of the map (with illustrations) called "Ould Virginia," in the same work. It is pertinent to add here, also, that Reeve was to print the plate of Smith's adventures for the *True Travels*, in 1630, for which John Payne drew the sketches, and which Martin Droeshout engraved. *Martins Ile* seems therefore to refer rather to Droeshout than to the Martin family which was somewhat unpleasantly known to John Smith. Indeed, Droeshout had gained fame as recently as 1623 for his engraving of a Mr. William Shakespeare, who wrote comedies, histories, and tragedies. To tie it all together, John Payne had already been honored with *Paynes IIs* shortly before.¹²

These are random indications of what can be found in place-names as sources for biographical data. Other, and equally important, bits of information can be gleaned from the additions to the

¹² See the maps in question, in Smith, *Works*. Droeshout signed as *MRten Dr sculptor* (see also Sabin, *Dictionary*, 20.260).

famous map of Virginia already mentioned. These all date from 1624, and point to a widening circle of friends as John Smith began to be better known in London. The first group of new names includes that of John Taverner, who arrived in Jamestown on January 2, 1608, owned shares in the Virginia Company, and came to be a friend of Smith's; Dr. Thomas Winston, who possibly treated Smith's burns on his return to London in 1609; a certain Mr. Brookes, who was probably Sir John Brooke who took Smith's side in his disagreements with the Virginia Company; and Edmund Gunter, the mathematician "with a gift for instrumental invention" whose works were recommended by John Smith in his *Accidence and Sea Grammar*.¹³

As Gunter was the most important scientific writer who appears to have known John Smith during the 1620's, so undoubtedly was Robert Burton, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the most distinguished satirist and proto-psychologist.¹⁴ Smith probably got to know him through his brother George, who was in Virginia, or through the Berkeley family, at least one of whom was a friend of Smith's. Burton held a living in Leicestershire through the Berkeleys.

More revealing of Smith's troubles during this period is his collection of place-names derived from printers and publishers. In addition to Reeve, three other members of that trade are remembered on Smith's maps: Michael Sparkes, Puritan, who was so honored twice; Henry Fetherstone, who was publisher for Samuel Purchas; and James Bowler, who was connected with Fetherstone and who later published at least some of Gunter's works. It is to be assumed

¹³ These identifications are hypothetical, but based on careful study, and elimination of improbables. There can be no doubt about Gunter, however. (See also D. W. Waters, *The Art of Navigation in England in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Times* [Yale U. Press, 1958], p. 358.)

¹⁴ The identification is based on circumstantial evidence. There was a George Burton with Smith in Virginia (Smith, *Works*, pp. 129, 131, 445, 448). Robert Burton had a brother named George (Harleian Society Publications, II [1870], *Visitation of the County of Leicester* . . . , p. 57). Smith added the names *Democrites tree* and *Burtons Mount* in the sixth state of his map of Virginia (Sabin, *Dictionary*, 20.228). Democritus Junior was Robert Burton's pseudonym, and it does not seem likely that Smith would place Democritus and Burton so close together unless he was referring to two Burtons. (Compare his *Willowby IIs* and *Barty IIs*.)

that Smith had to do a little searching before he got Michael Sparkes to put his *Generall Historie* on the market.¹⁵

If there were troubles about finding a publisher, however, there were evidently even greater ones about financing the book. Writing for profit was still in its swaddling clothes, and with few exceptions it was only the mechanical producers of a book who made money enough to live on – not the author. To get his brain-child before the public was a many-sided challenge for John Smith. The place-names derived from wealthy or influential subjects of King James who might back his project testify to Smith's perseverance.

In the map of Virginia there is already evidence of at least three whom he approached: *Blands C[ape]*, possibly in honor of John Bland, the wealthy son of Adam Bland, a skinner; *Downes dale*, very likely with reference to the family of that name in Lambeth, also wealthy, and also represented by a John, who was a dozen or so years younger than John Smith; and *Washeborne C[ape]*, almost certainly named for John Washborne, who shortly thereafter was named Secretary of the Plymouth Company. Although Washborne was nearly eighty, he was still active and his marriages with ladies of the Savage and Lygon families and connections with the Sandyses and Throckmortons put him close to the whole colonial development. (There may even have been some tie with William Brewster, the Pilgrim elder with whom John Smith had wanted to go to New England.)¹⁶ But it was first and only in the map called *Ould Virginia* that Smith gives us what amounts to a catalogue of backers, along with other sundry information.

¹⁵ Again the evidence is circumstantial. There was a Richard Fetherstone who died in Virginia in August, 1608, and was buried at *Fetherstones Bay*, but Smith did not add this name to the map of Virginia until the eighth state, when it came with the correction of *Sparkes content* to *Sparkes Vaylley*, and the addition of *Sparkes Poynt* and *Bollers Bush*. Sparkes was surely Michael Sparkes, the publisher. *Bollers Bush* was soon corrected to *Boollers*, but so clumsily that it may have been meant for *Bowlers*. James Bowler was connected with Henry Fetherstone, and there is no record of any other Bowler who would have had any reason to be known to John Smith. It therefore seems logical that this group of additions had to do with publishers, and that the Fetherstone posted probably referred to Henry. (Richard may of course have been a relative.)

¹⁶ These three additions, which appear in the ninth state, make sense if they refer to the families or individuals named. The identifications are tentative, but seem sound in the absence of any other likely candidates.

This map was engraved by a hack artist by the name of Robert Vaughan,¹⁷ presumably after Smith had already published his broadside, or prospectus, for the *Generall Historie*, in which the title and contents to be treated were already listed in approximately final form.¹⁸ This work he circulated widely in London, with an entreaty to those who might read it “either to adventure [invest], or give what you please towards the impression.” The indications are that the response was extenuated, but a single donor provided all the funds that were needed. Smith gratefully made sure that the map of Ould Virginia would immortalize the names of *all* benefactors real or hoped for, in addition to that of the donor.

Robert Vaughan was not employed to design a new map, it seems, but rather to provide a monument that would outlast bronze – as Horace put it. For his basis, he took the engraving entitled *Americae pars, Nunc Virginia dicta . . .* by Theodore de Bry, which in turn was taken from John White’s drawings of eastern North America. To this he added a few details taken from the original (now lost) of the map today called the Velasco map, from the surmise that it was the map sent by Ambassador Alonso de Velasco from London to Philip III with his letter of March 12/22, 1611. This map showed only some thirty place-names, and provided virtually virgin soil for planting the perennials of John Smith’s gratitude, past, present and promissory.¹⁹

Twenty-five of the original place-names were copied in the Vaughan map, many of them carelessly. To these were appended a dozen honorifics, the two most prominent of which were *Howards Mountaynes* and *Alice Smith-field* – the largest names on the map – in evident honor of Frances Howard, whose donation was large enough to guarantee publication of John Smith’s book, and Alice

¹⁷ On Robert Vaughan, see Philip L. Barbour, *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith* (Boston, 1964), “Commentaries,” p. 481.

¹⁸ The sole surviving copy of this is located in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries, in London. There is a facsimile with notes by Luther S. Livingstone (Cambridge [Massachusetts], privately printed, 1914).

¹⁹ For a convenient study of these maps, see *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584–1590*, ed. by David Beers Quinn (The Hakluyt Society, 2nd ser., CIV–CV [1955]), 1.460–61, and 2.846–52. As mentioned, Smith and Vaughan borrowed from the Velasco map, not the other way around.

Smith, his mother.²⁰ Then there was *Hertfords Ile*, commemorating Smith's earlier benefactor and Frances Howard's earlier husband, along with *Beauchamps playne*, after Lord Hertford's son, Lord Beauchamp.²¹ Suitably, Smith and Vaughan also commemorated Sir Richard Grenville and Ralph Lane of the Roanoke Colony (as had the Velasco map), and added *C[ape] Amidas* (in place of the Velasco Cape Kenrick) and *Heriots Ile*, in honor of the first leader and first scientist connected with Roanoke.

Robert Vaughan was not ashamed to add his own name to a point now in Dare County, North Carolina, and Smith properly indicated his great indebtedness to Samuel Purchas by naming some islands near the mouth of the Roanoke River for him. But the most intriguing of these toponymical additions to de Bry's map is undoubtedly *Abigail's Ile*. Although a ship of that name was in the Virginia service from 1621 to the time the map was drawn, Smith named no other geographical feature for a ship, nor was there any apparent reason for him to honor the *Abigail* in this instance. It therefore seems much more likely that Abigail was some lady of his acquaintance, perhaps even the true-love of his intimate life which he has so successfully kept to himself. Can it be suggested that the isle was named for Abigail Baker, illegitimate half-sister of Sir Samuel Saltonstall? There is much that is obscure between John Smith and the Saltonstalls.²²

For reasons of space, it is impractical to list all of the persons signalized by Smith and Vaughan, but it is certainly worth noticing that shortly after the map was made, Smith submitted a block of twenty-five names to be added. Frances Howard was again honored, in *Richmonds steps* and *Lenox rocks*, with the titles she had received through her third and last husband, Ludovic Stuart, cousin of King James.²³ The Stuart family was of course thrown in also, along with two Howard cousins, the Earl of Arundel and Lord Howard of Walden. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London

²⁰ Since Smith left a memento of his mother's family in *Rickards cliffes* (map of Virginia), it is possible that Alice Smith-field refers to his sister of the same name. The sister, however, is not mentioned anywhere after 1596 (Smith, *Works*, p. xx), not even in John Smith's will. My surmise is therefore that this is another reference to his mother.

²¹ On Smith and the Earl of Hertford, see my *Three Worlds*, pp. 293 and 361-64.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 377-78, 380, 383, 387, 392, and 394.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 361-65; see also John Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of the Court of England During the Reign of the Stuarts*, 3 vols. (London, 1840), 1.173-76.

had an island and a forest named for them, and it may be guessed that the last addition to the map, *Adams Sound*, was intended to exalt a third member of the clergy, “the prose Shakespeare of Puritan theologians,” Thomas Adams, a friend of several to whom Smith otherwise appealed or was indebted.

By this time, the young Scot named Murray whom Smith had sought out before was created Earl of Annandale,²⁴ and he was accorded a place-name here, in substitution for the *P[oint] Murry* which had been erased from the map of New England. Perhaps Smith did indeed receive some favor from him. Other members of the nobility mentioned were the young Earl of Essex, the earls of Worcester and Bedford, and Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans. A *P[oint] Barkley* certainly commemorates one of the vast Berkeley family, probably the merchant named George, who spelled his name that way and was a friend of Smith’s, although it could have been intended for Lord Berkeley – for reasons too involved to be discussed here. Then there is a toponymical epitaph for Robert Cecil, who was so important in the early history of the colonization of Virginia, while *Townsrows end* may also have been an *in memoriam*. John Towneraw of Ashby by Horncastle, Lincolnshire, was killed in the Netherlands in 1602, and his nephew George is last heard of in 1621.²⁵

Beyond indicating those who helped John Smith, as well as those from whom he hoped for help, the map of Ould Virginia also supplies a clue to one of the largest mysteries in Smith’s life: the source of the names he gave to rivers, towns and districts in eastern Europe when he wrote his sketchy and garbled autobiography, *The True Travels . . .*

Between *P[oint] Box* and *Salvage Ile*, almost certainly named for William Box and Thomas Savage (supporters of Smith in Virginia), the map shows *Ynys Ulygod*. This is good Welsh for *Rat Island*, which is the name Smith used once for Ile de Ré, France, and which he appears to have derived from its Latin name, *Ratis Insula*. It was past the Ile de Ré that Smith rowed to safety after escaping from French privateers in 1615.

²⁴ 1625. His overt rise dated from 1622 (Chamberlain, *Letters*, 2.70fn, 442, 515, 555).

²⁵ The name seems unknown outside of Lincolnshire at the time, and the family seat was only 12–15 miles from Smith’s home village.

Robert Vaughan was a Welshman, and undoubtedly inserted the Welsh name as a joke. But for this to happen, Smith must have told him all about his escape, which had occurred in a storm which killed the captain of the privateer-ship. Since Smith shows every sign of having been anything but taciturn, he can be counted on to have elaborated on his other adventures as well. As a result of chats with Vaughan, then, we may surmise that Smith decided to name the unknown region of southern Russia where he escaped from another kind of captivity – from a slave-labor camp – after the newly popular name of Wales, *Cambria*. And since he was not sure up which river he had sailed to *Cambria*, he appears to have named that *Bruago*, after the salt-market on another unknown river (i. e., unknown to Smith) near where he landed after his adventures off the Ile de Ré, a place then famous throughout Europe called Brouage. Indeed, the *o* at the end of Bruago may simply be a mistake for Bruage, for *o*'s and *e*'s were very much alike in the handwriting of the day.²⁶

While it is beside the point to go into every detail of the seven or eight score English place-names on John Smith's maps, one final example may be given, for it hints at a phase of Smith's life of which there is no surviving record. Next to *Ynys llygod* the map of Ould Virginia shows *Gordens Ile*. The name Gordon is far from uncommon, and considerable study was needed in the Scottish Record Office to find a Gordon who would fit in with John Smith's career. This would seem to be Sir Robert Gordon of Lochinvar, son of Alexander, eleventh or twelfth Earl of Sutherland, and Jean Gordon, the lady who was divorced by Bothwell so that he could marry the Queen of Scots. Sir Robert was a gentleman of the privy chamber to James I and Charles I, but – more important – he was interested in the colonization of Nova Scotia. In 1625 he published a pamphlet of *Encouragements* for would-be colonists, and in the same year was created one of the new baronets of Nova Scotia.²⁷ If a reference to Captain John Smith in the *Encouragements* as "a worthie ac-

²⁶ See Philip L. Barbour, "Fact and Fiction in Captain John Smith's *True Travels*," *Literature as a Mode of Travel* (New York Public Library, 1963), p. 112.

²⁷ See the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 22.224. The quotation is from *Encouragements for such as shall have intention to be Under-takers in the new plantation of Cape Briton, non Neu Galloway in America, by mee Lochinvar* [Sir Robert Gordon], reprinted from the 1625 edition (Edinburgh) by the Bannatyne Society.

tour in the businessse" of colonizing confirms this identification, here is a hint that Smith had not yet given up trying to take an active part in the British colonization of North America.

These examples in point, then, give a fair notion of what can be found in, or surmised from, the place-names so profusely scattered over the maps printed (or reprinted) for Smith's *Generall Historie*. Where the identification is – on circumstantial grounds at least – virtually certain, these names have contributed to the reconstruction of Smith's life during the years after his return from Virginia to London. Where they are uncertain – merely guesses, or logical surmises – they supply clues or hints as to where to look for further information. The analyses given here all tie together, and make sense with Smith's known history. A very few still need investigation. But the burden of this entire study is that place-names can prove an extremely valuable adjunct to biographical research. In the instance of Captain John Smith they have effectively altered the entire picture of his later life.

Editor's Report for 1963

The eleventh volume of *Names* contained a total of 292 pages, with 12 articles (one of which consisted of three parts) and 11 book reviews. During 1963 the issues were mailed directly from Heidelberg, with varying success. The Secretary and the Editor feel that it would probably be more satisfactory to return to the former method of distribution, namely, through the Secretary's office.

The Editor has again had the utmost cooperation of Professor Kelsie B. Harder; Elsdon C. Smith, the Book Review Editor; Professor Audrey R. Duckert, the Associate Editor, who processes popular items and contributes her regular column, "Notes and Queries"; the members of the Editorial Board; and the other officers of the Society.

Our editorial conviction (now grown stronger) is that the standards of the journal must be maintained. The majority of articles published here, we feel, should probably remain semi-popular, but there should also be room for a few highly technical items and occasionally light ones. We do insist on a reasonable smoothness of style. Our offering must also be primarily onomastic, i.e., discussions of *names* per se and not statistical treatments largely devoid of onomastic examples, nor studies in the general vocabulary which belong to the realm of dictionary compilation.

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