

Chickahominy Place Names in Captain

John Smith's *True Relation*

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I. Introductory

THIS PAPER DEALS WITH the Indian nomenclature of the relatively small Chickahominy River basin in Virginia, in 1607. Its purpose is to present some of the problems, to suggest solutions where possible, and to offer the most complete list of place names yet published for this one area. The author hopes that it will mark a step toward a complete study of Indian place names in the entire state.

The Chickahominy basin offers a good starting point for several reasons. The region was a homogeneous enclave in the Powhatan despotate, which maintained a certain independence by paying tribute to the "emperor." With its population of 900 to 1,000 souls in an area of 60 to 65 square miles, it was densely populated in terms of Tidewater Virginia (15 inhabitants per square mile as against an overall average of only one). The tribe formed a single cultural unit, spoke a single language or dialect, and was governed by an "old-fashioned" council of elders, not by a "king." The basin also was the first region to be fully explored by the Jamestown Colony (in the person of Captain John Smith), before mistrust, misunderstanding and misconduct permanently damaged Anglo-Amerind relations. And, perhaps most important of all, a handful of notes on the Chickahominy place names have survived, independently of our usual sole source – Captain John Smith.

Until a year ago, it seems not to have been known that one copy of Smith's *True Relation* in the British Museum contains marginal annotations, in a hand that can hardly be dated later than 1620, which reveal personal knowledge of Virginia, necessarily acquired in the early days. So far, the identity of the annotator has not been established, although it can be said that it was neither William Strachey nor John Rolfe, nor indeed Alexander Whitaker, who died

in Virginia. Nevertheless, his points are well-taken. He shows us that Smith has slipped into error on occasion, and it is interesting to note that Smith himself corrected some of these errors in later editions of his works. (For fuller information, see Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Jamestown Voyages under the First Charter, 1606-1609*, scheduled for publication by the Hakluyt Society, London.)

Sources

1. Smith's *True Relation*, London, 1608 (the annotated copy is British Museum, shelf-mark C 33. c. 5), reprinted in Edward Arber's edition of Smith's *Works*, Birmingham, 1884, and Edinburgh, 1910. Abbreviated as JS 1608. 2. Sketch map of Chesapeake Bay, sent to Spain by the Spanish Ambassador Don Pedro de Zúñiga on August 31 (September 10, new style), 1608, and preserved in the Archivo General de Simancas, Simancas (Valladolid), Spain. This is obviously based on sketches by, if not directly copied from, Smith. Abbreviated as PZ. 3. William Strachey's *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, written 1610-1612, and edited by Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund for the Hakluyt Society, 2nd ser., CIII (1953). Abbreviated as WS. 4. Smith's map of Virginia, engraved by William Hole for Smith's book *A Map of Virginia*, Oxford, 1612 (reprinted in Arber, as above). Abbreviated as JS 1612. 5. Frederick Webb Hodge's *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. 2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1907-1910. 6. Fannie Hardy Eckstorm's *Indian Place-names of the Penobscot Valley and the Maine Coast*, Orono, Maine, reprinted 1960. Abbreviated as FHE. 7. Augustin Herrman's "Virginia and Maryland" map, surveyed in 1670 and published in 1673. 8. U. S. Geological Survey maps, scale 1:24,000. Abbreviated as USGS.

Other sources not quoted here are the accounts of Henry Spelman, Edward Maria Wingfield, and George Percy (printed in Arber's *Smith*); Robert Tindall's map (reproduced in WS); the map sent to Spain in 1611 by Ambassador Velasco (reproduced in Alexander Brown's *Genesis of the United States*, 2 vols., Boston, 1890); Ralph Hamor's *True Discourse* (London, 1615, ed. A. L. Rowse, for the Virginia State Library in 1957); and Theodore Stern, "Chickahominy: The Changing Culture of a Virginia Indian Community," *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, Vol. 96 (1952), 157-225.

Smith's Chickahominy Voyages

The first voyage for trade and exploration began on November 9 (more likely, 19), 1607, when Smith determined to investigate the Chickahominy country on his way to Powhatan village to trade for corn. An ebb tide forced him to anchor, and an Indian in a canoe paddled up and "offered to conduct" him there. Since it was a moonlight night (a detail which necessitates the corrected date, for there was a new moon on November 9), Smith was happy to accept; and they reached the Indian's village about midnight. After returning to the barge to sleep, Smith brought it up the river the next morning, instead of going to Powhatan village, and spent the day trading gewgaws for food. So successful was he with this that he abandoned the Powhatan trip in favor of continued voyages into the Chickahominy country.

In all, Smith took the barge there three times, each time returning well laden with food. By then, however, his curiosity was so aroused that he decided to return once more, for exploration only. Early in December, then (the tenth, according to Wingfield, who was not always careful about dates), the fourth voyage started. Smith went quickly up the river for some 40 miles, to a village he called Apokant. Ten miles beyond, the river was too shallow for the barge, and Smith turned back as far as Apokant, left the barge there, and hired a canoe with two Indians to take him and a pair of companions as far upstream as possible.

When they had gone about 22 miles, and were resting and preparing lunch, a party of Indians attacked, taking Smith prisoner. After some discussion with the werowance (chief), Opechancanough by name, it was decided to take Smith to the "emperor" Powhatan himself, who had not yet been seen by the English. Smith was led, in a picturesque Indian march, to a hunting lodge six miles away, and with that episode the Chickahominy expedition ended. Of course, as every girl and boy knows, Smith was rescued (by Pocahontas), and lived to explore nearly all of Tidewater Virginia, and to record the names of scores of Indian villages, tribes, and streams.

The Chickahominy villages now follow, after a word of caution and the observation that there was a Chickahominy River and a Chickahominy tribe, but no village named Chickahominy.

A Word of Caution

Indian place names were usually descriptive of their sites. The author has therefore avoided speculations involving what may have been personal names or names based on some event (of the type of *Chief-Orono-town* or *Where-We-First-Landed-town*). In short, where an attempt at interpretation has been made, it has always been with an eye to the site. Where the suggested meaning for the name does not fit the site, the meaning has not been considered. Powhatan village, for example, can scarcely have had the meaning "water-fall" which has often been assigned it, because the James River Falls are too far from the site as described in 1607-1608 to be seen or heard; Winauk Point meant "sassafras" only if sassafras grew there in 1607; and so on.

Then, no name should be taken literally in its written or printed form unless we think we know (1) that the Indian who supplied it spoke distinctly, (2) that the Englishman who recorded it heard it correctly, and (3) what the phonetic value of the transcription is — three almost unsolvable problems. In addition, we must be confident that notes jotted down in 1607 or 1608 were correctly copied on maps, or correctly printed in books. Since this is not always the case, we must attempt to make informed guesses as to what sort of mistakes were likely to be made. For example, the sound represented by "z" in modern English did not exist in the Virginia Algonkian languages. Any name containing a "z" consequently contains a mistake. It is most likely wrong to assume that the "z" stands for an "s" (implying a case of mishearing), but knowledge of contemporary handwriting will show that an early seventeenth-century "z" can easily be confused with an "r" or an "i" or "y," and vice versa. In addition, the value of English vowels was not the same in 1607 as today. Although, for instance, "ea" may equal "ee," Shakespeare rhymed "sea" with "play"; the ah-sound in modern English "father" was scarce in 1607, perhaps even non-existent; and there is evidence that "now" and other "-ow" words came closer to rhyming with "you" than with "Mao" (as in Mao Tse Tung).

Finally, in the worst cases, neither logic nor analytical ingenuity will be of any avail. In one instance, Smith's *Generall Historie* refers to a river named Sliou (Arber ed., p. 340). Here Smith borrowed the entire passage from Samuel Purchas's *Pilgrimes*, and there we discover that the *Rhoane* (Rhone) River was meant.

With these, and many other vagaries in mind, the author has done what he could to guide "buffs" up the Chickahominy River. He begs their indulgence for his shortcomings.

II. Chickahominy Place Names

1. **Chickahominy**, river and people. The meaning is far from certain, despite WS's *tsekehica*, "to sweep," and Lenâpé *tschikhammen*, the same. William Gerard offered "swept-place, clearing," while W. W. Tooker suggested "coarse-pounded-corn people." The author offers Lenâpé *tschikenum*, "turkey," plus common Algonkian *-hanne*, "river," as a wild guess, nothing more.

2. **Apanaock**. JS 1612, no; JS 1608, once; PZ (Apahaock), just above Mansa; USGS, right bank, near Mount Airy. Compare Apponaug, Rhode Island, and Aponeg, Maine. The latter has been interpreted to mean "where [the water] spreads out" (FHE, 124-25). If Apanaock is a cognate, the marsh opposite the location suggested must have been under water, an assumption supported by the confused hydrographic picture shown in JS 1612, and by the author's personal inspection of the neighborhood.

3. **Apokant**. JS 1612, left bank, head of navigation; JS 1608, twice; PZ, as on JS 1612; USGS, left bank, above uppermost swamps, near modern cut-off at Providence Forge. Compare WS's *apooke*, "tobacco." If this is the root, *-kant* or *-ant* may be a locative ending, with the full meaning "tobacco [plenty] place."

4. **Askakap**. JS 1612, location confused; JS 1608, once; PZ, clearly on left bank of a large tributary creek; USGS, perhaps between Diascund Creek and Edwards Swamp (Hodge, *Handbook*, I, 101, is in error). Compare Muskagwah marshes in Vermont (with *M-* elided). The meaning was very likely "swampy place," from a cognate of Cree *muskek*, "swamp," plus a locative ending.

5. **Attamuspinck**. JS 1612, no; JS 1608, once, but the anonymous annotator denies its existence; PZ, left bank, below Apokant; USGS, a mile or less southeast of Windsor Shades. The herbalist John Parkinson wrote in 1629 that the Indians had a kind of daffodil which they called *attamusco*, and which is called the "atamasco lily" today. On this basis, if the place existed, the name could have meant "atamasco-lily place."

6. **Chosick.** JS 1612, no; JS 1608, no; PZ, right bank, above Mo[y]sonek, near where JS 1612 has Mamanahunt. Compare Coasuck Brook, Massachusetts, "pine-tree place." Chosick seems an incomplete word, however, and may well be only an apocoped form of Menascosic, q.v.

7. **Cinquoateck.** JS 1612, no; JS 1608, no; PZ, left bank, just above mouth; USGS, near Route 5 bridge, and possibly identifiable with the Hoffmeyer archeological site. This place name is recorded at least three other times in Virginia, but can hardly be identified with Chincoteague Bay, Delmarva peninsula east coast, which has (probably correctly) been interpreted to mean "big river (or tidal estuary)." Cinquoateck appears to be derived from the common Algonkian root meaning "cold" (Cree [Ellis], *sihku-*), plus *-teck*, "(tidal) river," but this is little more than a guess.

8. **Mamanahunt** (see also Menascosic). JS 1612, right bank, above Moysonek; JS 1608, twice; PZ, right bank, opposite Mo[y]sonek. Since JS 1608 clearly implies that Mamanahunt was before Askakap and Moysonek, going upstream, JS 1612 is in error. Mamanahunt may therefore be located on USGS, right bank, on high ground opposite Diascund Creek mouth, just above Big Marsh Point. The name seems to contain the same first element as Mamanassy, opposite the junction of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers, and Mamasasco Lake, Ridgefield, Connecticut, said (Huden) to mean "two sharing same outlet." [?]

9. **Mansa.** JS 1612, no; JS 1608, between Oraniocke and Apa-naock; PZ, right bank, just below the latter; USGS, perhaps on or just west of Parsons Island. The name looks incomplete, though the first syllable may be the common root *man-*, or *men-*, "island."

10. **Matinoack.** JS 1612, no; JS 1608, no; PZ, left bank, below Shipyard Creek; USGS, possibly Yarmouth Island. Compare JS 1612 Mattanock, left bank of Nansemond River (also on Velasco 1611 map), Matinnack and Metinicus in Smith's *Description of New England*, Matinecoc tribe of northwestern Long Island, New York, and Mattaneaug (or Matianock), Connecticut. The first element of all these is evidently a cognate of Cree *matin-*, which implies "separation, being cut off, divided," while in the case of the New England names the second element is *-naghe-*, "island." If a cognate of this existed in the Powhatan language, Matinoack could mean "sepa-

rated or cut-off island" (the *-o-* need not disturb anyone, for it could easily have been an *-e-*).

11. **Mattahunt.** JS 1612, no; JS 1608, once, misprinted as Mattalunt (the dialect had no "t"), and noted as non-existent by the anonymous annotator; PZ, right bank, just below Apokant; USGS, perhaps near Oldhouse Landing. Compare JS 1612 Mattacunt, Potomac River right bank just below Patawomeck King's House, and Mattahunt Islands, New England, in Smith's *Description of New England* (Arber, *Smith*, 192, etc.). The name could mean "at end of stream" (FHE, 60-61), but that would not explain the islands.

12. **Mattapanient.** JS 1612, left bank, near mouth; JS 1608, the only place name added in Smith's third Chickahominy voyage which was accepted by the anonymous annotator; PZ, left bank, above a large tributary which must be Yarmouth or Shipyard Creek on USGS. Compare JS 1612 Mattapanient River (modern Mattaponi) and Mattapanient village, Patuxent River right bank, and a number of other similar names listed by Hamill Kenny in his *The Origin and Meaning of Indian Place Names of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1961). The author agrees with Dr. Kenny's analysis: from elements meaning "joined" (*matta-*) and "water[s]" (*-apo-*), plus a termination of uncertain value (in the present author's opinion, merely a locative ending).

13. **Menascosic** (see also Mamanahunt). JS 1612, right bank, opposite Moysonek; JS 1608 (Manosquosick), the first Chickahominy village Smith visited, of which the anonymous annotator wrote, here "they mocked [deceived] him, for y^e name of it is woo[??]-niucke" (see Oraniocke); PZ, no, although Mamanahunt occupies the site opposite Moysonek, and Chosick is placed where JS 1612 has Mamanahunt. The USGS location for Menascosic (Chosick) would be on a slight elevation, right bank, between Barrows Creek and Wilcox Neck. Compare JS 1612 Menaskunt, Rappahannock River left bank, and Menaskous, a name for Arrowsic Island reported by Sebastian Rasles in 1721 (FHE, 132), the derivation of which is probably *men-* "island," *-ask-* "green, grassy," and *-esek* for *-esset* "in the vicinity of" (FHE, 132). Since there are islands in the river near here, the meaning is appropriate, and it seems confirmed by WS's "an Island - *Mennunahqus*" (p. 189), where the *-h-* represents a weak *-s-*, and the final *-us* may be a diminutive.

14. **Morinogh.** JS 1612, no; JS 1608, between Mattapanient and Askakap, but non-existent according to the anonymous annotator; PZ, no; USGS useless here. Compare Smith's 1612 book, which mentions a werowance *Mawmarinough* who resided near Jamestown, and the Maine place name Mollineagan (with *-ll-* for *-r-*), analyzed as meaning "lazy portage" (FHE, 154). WS, however, gives a word for "turkey," *monanaw*, *moninagh*, *monynawgh* (with *mon-* for *mor-*). Under such conditions, the meaning cannot be certain.

15. **Moysonek** (or *-c*). JS 1612, left bank, just above junction with Diascund Creek; JS 1608, minutely described, but listed by the anonymous annotator as non-existent, with further insistence on the next page, "No such town"; PZ (Mosonek), same site; USGS, peninsula between the Chickahominy and Diascund Creek, a site personally inspected by the author and found to conform with Smith's description. The site has apparently not been tested archaeologically, but even if remains of an Indian village are found there, it may be that the name was incorrectly recorded by Smith. This in a sense is borne out by the difficulty of analyzing it. The author is baffled so far.

16. **Nechanicock.** JS 1612, right bank just below Apokant; JS 1608 (Nechanichock), but its existence was denied by the annotator; PZ, right bank below Mattahunt; USGS, perhaps just west of Winns Landing. The annotator may be right, for Smith does not mention the place again. There are no comparable place names elsewhere so far as the author has observed.

17. **Oraniocke.** JS 1612 (Ozenick), left bank between Mattapanient and Werawahone; JS, Oraniocke; PZ, left bank below Werawahone; USGS, high land opposite Watts Point. This is evidently the place Smith first called Menascosic, which the anonymous annotator remarked was called "woo[??]niucke." If *-ra-* is supplied for the missing letters, we get *Wooraniucke*, which corresponds with JS 1608 and PZ, and with Herrman's map (Onanye Creek, with *-n-* for *-r-*). Furthermore, in a later version, Smith mentions the Chickahominy Ozenieke (misprint, *-z-* for *-r-*) as "not past six miles" from Opechancanough's chief town on the Pamunkey (a considerable underestimate if the village was on the Chickahominy, but not if it was somewhat up Diascund Creek

[Herrmann's *Onanye*]). Compare Orenaug Hill, Woodbury, Connecticut, JS 1612 Ozenye on Chesapeake Bay east shore, and modern Onancock in Accomack County, Virginia, which is Smith's Onaucoke (misprint, -u- for -n-) in the *Generall Historie*, and is also to be found on Herrman's map. Analysis of the name may hinge on the possibility of linking it with the common Algonkian root *inini* "man, mankind," whence also Illinois, and possibly Orange, New Jersey. While this root seems plausible, the subject is too complicated for discussion here, and no firm meaning can yet be assigned to the name.

18. **Paspanegh**. JS 1612, right bank, below Righkahauk; JS 1608, no; PZ, as on JS 1612; USGS, probably on Matahunk Neck (borrowed from Mattahunt?). If this is the same as Paspahagh, it is odd that it is so carefully written with an "n." The matter requires further study.

19. **Qosaugh** (or *Po-* or *Ro-*?). JS 1612, no; JS 1608, no; PZ, left bank above Mo[y]sonck; USGS, west of Lanexa. Compare JS 1612 Quotough, Patuxent River, right bank, Maryland, which could be the same name (bad copying). Although no immediate source occurs to the writer, it is significant that a village existed in this area which was uncovered during excavations begun in 1949 by Dr. Ben C. McCary, of Williamsburg, Virginia. This site, called the Potts Site, is on the left bank, two miles airline northwest of Diascund Creek mouth, three-fourths of a mile southeast of the dam at Walker, and a half mile west of Lanexa. See Ben C. McCary, "The Potts Site," *Quarterly Bull. Va. Archeol. Soc.*, VIII (1953), No 1, for details.

20. **Rassawek** (or *Rasawrack*). JS 1612, no; JS 1608, once, but denied by the anonymous annotator; PZ, halfway between source of the Chickahominy and the Pamunkey; USGS useless here. Despite the evidence of PZ, the annotator was undoubtedly right. The place was only a temporary hunting lodge, which was abandoned when Smith was taken away, a captive. Compare *Rassawek*, the Powhatan name for a Monacan town in the fork of the James and Rivanna rivers, and related place names in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and so on, all of which meant "place between (streams), place in the middle," from common Algonkian *nassawa*.

21. **Righkahauk.** JS 1612, right bank, just below Nechanicock; JS 1608, once, but its existence denied by the anonymous annotator; PZ, Youghtacut, which could be read as Roghtacut; USGS, probably at or near Cypress Bank Landing. Compare Ricahokene, a Weapemoc (North Carolina Algonkian) village about which nothing further is known; Smith's Rickahake between Chesapeake village and the Nansemond River (*Generall Historie*); and John Lederer's Ricahecrian tribe in the Blue Ridge Mountains in 1670. Hamill Kenny also lists a number of other instances of the name outside Virginia (*Place Names*, 121–22). The place names may not all be derived from the same root, for WS gives *rokayhook*, “otter,” and *racawh* “sand” (Cree *yekaw*). In the former, the ending would have been lost, and in the latter there would be a second element *-aki* “place, land, etc.” It may be questioned, however, whether a Chickahominy village existed with this name.

22. **Werawahone.** JS 1612, in the great loop below Moysonek; JS 1608, once; PZ, on left bank, between Askakap and Oraniocke; USGS, more or less opposite Watts Point, perhaps near Brickyard Road. Although the author has not noted any directly comparable place names elsewhere, *werow-* is a common element in the Powhatan language, meaning “rich, productive,” or even “noble.” If *-hone* represents a cognate of the second element in Lonaconing (Md.), the name would mean “rich-earth place, where there is rich earth” (Kenny, *Place Names*, 81–82).

Newtown, Connecticut

Editor's Note: Mr. Barbour's article raises several questions. 1. It does not detract from his remark that *z* in Powhatan names is usually a mistake to point out that Strachey (Brit. Mus. and Bodleian) lists *catzahanzamusheis* “the flame” and *zanchone* “to sneeze.” In Carolina Algonquian (*Roanoke Voyages* [Hakluyt], II, 890ff.) there are *meemz* (a bird), *qvunziuck* (a bird), *veroanza* (fem. of *wiroans*), *wickonzour* (a plant). 2. Appeals (as with Apanaock, Va., vs. Aponeg, Me.) to Fannie Eckstorm's findings depend for their validity on the correctness of the analogy and on the correctness of Mrs. Eckstorm. 3. For the *-kant*, *-ant* of Apokant to be a locative (representing *-ink*; PA **-enki* [Bloomfield]) gross scribal error must be assumed. I defer to Mr. Barbour's judgment. 4. As to Askakap one wonders

whether enough is known of Powhatan accentuation and phonetics to justify the belief that an initial Powhatan *m-* (**M-askakap*) could be lost. The same remark can be made of Chosick from Menaschosick — though the loss of opening syllables is easier to explain than the loss of an opening consonant. 5. In Attamuspineck the *-p-* must be explained. Here it is possible that *-min* “seed, nut” has been replaced by *-pin* (N. B. *chincapin*, where *-pin* = *-min*). A different analysis could be based on Strachey’s *attemous* “dog.” 6. What one puts down for “common” Algonquian “root” requires precision and authority. Probably the best expression of such a root (when attainable) is its PA form (e.g., PA **-e^otekw* “stream” [Geary]). However, an instance from one of the more important languages is acceptable (e.g., Ojibwa *miniss*, Micmac [Rand] *mūnegoo*, *mūnuskw* “island”). 7. Again, as to the locative, for the *-ient* of Mattapanient to be a locative, one must regard the *-i-* as intrusive, and the final *-t* as a mistake for *-k*. 8. The Herrman and Smith spellings of Oraniocke (Onanye, Ona[n] . . . coke) suggest an *n*-dialect (*n* from PA **l*), especially if PA **-ilenīwa* “man” is the prototype. The common Algonquian root *inini* is perhaps best indicated by PA **-ilenīwa*. Oraniocke, with some phonetic latitude, could also be ascribed to Strachey’s *oranacah* “a garden or plot of ground to sow corne.”

H. K.

