

Nova Virginiae Tabula, or "New Map of Virginia"

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1671



Title Statement

Nova Virginiae Tabula, or "New Map of Virginia"Guide to Nova Virginiae Tabula, or "New Map of Virginia"
C0543

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

C0543

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/768

Unit Date

1671

box

1 (folder)

Language

Latin

Abstract

Single-sided hand-colored map of the Chesapeake Bay region titled Nova Virginiae Tabula engraved in Amsterdam by Jacob van Meurs, based on the 1612 map attributed to Captain John Smith.

Creator

Meurs, Jacob van, 1619-1680

source

Smith, John, 1580-1631

Extent

.01 Linear Feet 1 folder

Physical Location

R 71, C 1, S 1

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

Public Domain. There are no known restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Purchased from L&T Respress Books in 2017.

Processing Information

Processing and finding aid completed by Meghan Glasbrenner in January 2026.

Preferred Citation

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Biographical Information

John Smith was born circa 1579-1580, his baptism being recorded on January 9, 1580 at Saint Helena's Church in Willoughby, Lincolnshire, England, to yeoman farmer George and Alice Smith. In 1596, Smith sailed to France and joined English soldiers fighting the Spanish and over the next ten years earned a reputation for his military strength, eventually attaining the rank of Captain. In December 1606, Captain Smith was chosen to accompany the newly formed Virginia Company across the sea to establish an English colony in Virginia. Named Jamestown in honor of King James I, the colony was formally established on May 13, 1607. The first months in Jamestown were difficult and in the fall of 1607, Captain Smith led expeditions to the nearby Powhatan villages in search of food. It was during one of these expeditions that Captain Smith was captured by a hunting party and eventually brought before Wahunsenacawh, the paramount chief of the Powhatan, and released, leading to the largely fabricated folk legend of his encounter with Wahunsenacawh's daughter Pocahontas.

From June - September 1608, Captain Smith and a group of other colonists set out to explore and document the 2,500 miles of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers, leading to Smith's creation of the most accurate map of the area at this time, including the location of Native American villages. Upon his return to Jamestown in September 1608, Captain Smith was elected president of the colony and head of the council. However, in the fall of 1609 a severe injury from a gunpowder explosion forced his return to England. Captain Smith would continue his exploration of the shores of northern Virginia and in his later years wrote extensively about his life and experiences as a soldier and colonist. He passed away on June 21, 1631 at the age of 51 and his buried at London's Holy Sepulchre Church (formally known as Saint Sepulchre-without-Newgate).

Scope and Content

Single-sided hand-colored map of the Chesapeake Bay region titled Nova Virginiae Tabula engraved in

Amsterdam by Jacob van Meurs, based on the 1612 map attributed to Captain John Smith, originally for inclusion in the 1671-1673 Dutch edition of Arnold Montanus's *Die Unbekante Neue Welt* (translated as *The New and Unknown World* in English), the first encyclopedia of the Americas.

The map includes the location of Native American villages and the English settlement of Jamestown, with all text written in Latin. A cartouche in the upper right corner includes illustrations of two Native American figures with a llama, unicorn, and two goats, animals believed by some Europeans at the time to be native to Virginia. These illustrated figures surround a short legend with the heading "Notarum Explicatio" (translated as "Explanation of Signs/Notes" in English). The upper left corner includes an illustration of two cherubs pulling back a curtain to reveal the map's title and illustrations of three additional cherubs are located along the bottom surrounding a scale measurement labeled "Miliaria Germanica communia" (translated as "common German mile" in English). No engraver's mark is present.

Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds other maps and engravings, such as the "United States Japan Expedition by Com. M.C. Perry. Vol. II. Maps" bound volume and "A New Atlas of the British West Indies" bound volume.

The Library of Virginia holds historic maps of Virginia including John Smith's Map of Virginia and Its Derivatives.

Keywords

Maps
Engraving
Virginia
Virginia -- History
Chesapeake Bay (Md. and Va.)
Montanus, Arnoldus, 1625?-1683
Smith, John, 1580-1631

Bibliography

British Museum. n.d. "Jacob van Meurs | British Museum." Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG38265>.

National Park Service. n.d. "Captain John Smith - Historic Jamestowne Part of Colonial National Historical Park." Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://www.nps.gov/jame/learn/historyculture/life-of-john-smith.htm>.

"Nova Virginiae Tabula." n.d. Encyclopedia Virginia. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/2221hpr-18c8da8b57bdf9/>.

Schneider, Becky. n.d. "Research Guides & Indexes: John Smith's Map of Virginia and Its Derivatives: Maps." Library of Virginia. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://lva-virginia.libguides.com/smith-map/maps>.

Arrangement

This is a single item collection.