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The Voyage of
Martin Pring,
1603

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INTRODUCTION

MARTIN PRING was only twenty-three years of age when, by "sundry of the chiefest merchants of Bristol," he was placed in command of an expedition to the American coast. In making this venture, these merchants evidently received encouragement from the reports brought back to England by Gosnold and his associates. Two vessels were employed in the expedition — one of about fifty tons, the *Speedwell*, commanded by Pring, with Edward Jones as mate; and another of twenty-six tons, the *Discoverer*, commanded by William Broune, with Samuel Kirkland as mate, Pring being "Master and Chief Commander." Robert Salterne, who was on the American coast with Gosnold the year before, was chief agent and supercargo; and another of Gosnold's best men, John Angell, accompanied Pring. The mistake of Gosnold and Gilbert the year before was not made by Pring's promoters, and permission for the undertaking was secured from Sir Walter Raleigh.

Pring made a voyage to the coast of Guiana in 1604. In 1606 he was again on the New England coast, and brought back with him such an encouraging report, with valuable information concerning the coast of Maine, that the Popham colony followed in 1607. It is supposed that Pring entered the East India service about that time, though no mention of him is found in that relation until 1614, when he was master of a large new ship. Purchas makes several extracts from manuscript journals of two voyages to the East Indies, made by him between 1614 and 1621. In the last of these voyages Pring commanded a squadron of five ships, one of which was of more than one thousand tons. In 1619, on the death of Dale,

Pring succeeded to the command of the whole English East India squadron. He returned to England in 1623. It is thought that he may have gone to Virginia two or three years later. If so, he died soon after his return to England, as his monument in St. Stephen's Church, Bristol, records his death in 1626.

The story of the voyage of 1603 was secured from Pring by Richard Hakluyt, but this of course was after the publication of Hakluyt's great work. Many of Hakluyt's papers, however, after his death, which occurred in 1616, passed into the hands of Samuel Purchas, and this narrative of Pring's voyage appeared in Purchas's *Pilgrimes*, fourth volume, published in 1625. The account of the voyage, though ascribed to Pring by Purchas, seems to have been written in part by other hands, as in the last paragraph, where mention of "our Captaine" is made. A careful reprint of the "Relation" appears in Winship's *Sailors' Narratives of New England Voyages*, pp. 53-63. A biographical account of Pring, by Professor Alfred L. P. Dennis, was printed by the Maine Historical Society in 1906, in its *Collections*, third series, II. 1-50.

H. S. B.

THE VOYAGE OF MARTIN PRING, 1603

A Voyage set out from the Citie of Bristoll at the charge of the chiefest Merchants and inhabitants of the said Citie with a small Ship and a Barke for the discoverie of the North part of Virginia.

WE set saile from Milford Haven¹ (where the winds had stayed us a fortnight, in which space we heard of Queen Elizabeths death) the tenth of Aprill 1603. In our course we passed by the Iles of the Açores, had first sight of the Pike,² and afterward of the Iland of Cuervo³ and Flores, and after we had runne some five hundred leagues, we fell with a multitude of small Ilands on the North Coast of Virginia, in the latitude of 43. degrees, the — of June, which Ilands wee found very pleasant to behold, adorned with goodly grasse and sundry sorts of Trees, as Cedars, Spruce, Pine and Firre-trees. Heere wee found an excellent fishing for Cod, which are better then those of New-found-land, and withall we saw good and Rockie ground fit to drie them upon: also we see no reason to the contrary, but that Salt may bee made in these parts, a matter of no small importance. We sayled to the Southwest end of these Ilands, and there rode with our ships under one of the greatest. One of them we named Foxe Iland,⁴ because we found those kind of beasts thereon. So passing through the rest with our Boates to the mayne Land, which lieth for a good space North-east and Southwest, we found very safe riding among them, in sixe, seven, eight, ten

¹ A harbor of Pembrokeeshire, Wales. It was from this port that John Cabot, in 1497, made his voyage to America.

² The island called Pico, a high conical mountain. ³ Or Corvo.

⁴ An island on the coast of Maine, east of Penobscot Bay. The group still bears the name. The larger islands of the group are North Haven and Vinalhaven.

and twelve fathomes. At length comming to the Mayne in the latitude of 43. degrees and a halfe, we ranged the same to the South-west. In which course we found foure Inlets, the most Easterly whereof was barred at the mouth,¹ but having passed over the barre, wee ranne up into it five miles, and for a certaine space found very good depth, and comming out againe, as we sailed South-westward, we lighted upon two other Inlets, which upon our search we found to pierce not farre into the land, the fourth and most Westerly was the best, which we rowed up ten or twelve miles.

In all these places we found no people,² but signes of fires where they had beene. Howbeit we beheld very goodly Groves and Woods replenished with tall Okes, Beeches, Pine-trees, Firre-trees, Hasels, Wich-hasels and Maples. We saw here also sundry sorts of Beasts, as Stags, Deere, Beares, Wolves, Foxes, Lusernes, and Dogges with sharpe noses. But meeting with no Sassafras, we left these places with all the foresaid Ilands, shaping our course for Savage Rocke discovered the yeere before by Captaine Gosnold, where going upon the Mayne we found people, with whom we had no long conversation, because here also we could find no Sassafras. Departing hence³ we bare into that great Gulfe which Captaine Gosnold over-shot the yeere before, coasting and finding people on the North side thereof. Not yet satisfied in our expectation, we left them and sailed over, and came to an Anchor on the South side in the latitude of 41. degrees and odde minute: where we went on Land in a certaine Bay, which we called Whitson Bay,⁴ by the name of the Worshipfull Master John Whitson then Major of the Citie of Bristoll, and one of the

¹ It has been conjectured that this was the Saco River. The other inlets, then, would be the Kennebunk, York and Piscataqua rivers.

² Probably at that season of the year the Indians were fishing at the falls of the river.

³ The language here does not necessarily locate Savage Rock at Cape Ann. The description evidently is general not particular.

⁴ Bancroft, following Belknap, identifies Whitson's Bay with the harbor of Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard, which is in the latitude of 41° 25'. The narrative implies that Pring passed from the north to the south side of the "greate Gulfe," and Dr. De Costa (*Magazine of American History*, VIII.

chiefe Adventurers, and finding a pleasant Hill thereunto adjoyning, we called it Mount Aldworth, for Master Robert Aldworths¹ sake a chiefe furtherer of the Voyage, as well with his Purse as with his travell.² Here we had sufficient quantity of Sassafras.

At our going on shore, upon view of the people and sight of the place, wee thought it convenient to make a small baricado to keepe diligent watch and ward in, for the advertizement and succour of our men, while they should worke in the Woods. During our abode on shore, the people of the Countrey came to our men sometimes ten, twentie, fortie or three-score, and at one time one hundred and twentie at once. We used them kindly, and gave them divers sorts of our meanest Merchandize. They did eat Pease and Beanes with our men. Their owne victuals were most of fish.

We had a youth in our company that could play upon a Gitterne, in whose homely Music they tooke great delight, and would give him many things, as Tobacco, Tobacco-pipes, Snakes skinned of sixe foot long, which they use for Girdles, Fawnes skinned, and such like, and danced twentie in a Ring, and the Gitterne in the midst of them, using many Savage gestures, singing lo, la, lo, la, lo: him that first brake the ring, the rest would knocke and cry out upon. Some few of them had plates of Brasse a foot long, and halfe a foote broad before their breasts. Their Weapons are Bowes of five or sixe foot long of Wich-hasell, painted blacke and yellow, the strings of three twists of sinewes, bigger then our Bow-strings. Their Arrowes are of a yard and an handfull long not made of Reeds, but of a fine light wood very smooth and round with three long and deepe blacke feathers of some Eagle, Vulture, or Kite, as closely fastened with some bind-

807-819), more accurately, it would seem, identifies Whitson's Bay with Plymouth harbor.

¹ Robert Aldworth was a son of Thomas Aldworth, a prominent merchant of Bristol, and the patron of Hakluyt. He died in 1590. His son Robert inherited his father's interest in western discovery and colonization. With Giles Elbridge he obtained, in 1631, letters patent for a grant of land at Pemaquid. He died in 1634.

² *I.e.*, travail.

ing matter, as any Fletcher of ours can glue them on. Their Quivers are full a yard long, and made of long dried Rushes wrought about two handfulls broad above, and one handfull beneath with prettie workes and compartiments, Diamant wise of red and other colours.

We carried with us from Bristoll two excellent Mastives, of whom the Indians were more afraid, then of twentie of our men. One of these Mastives would carrie a halfe Pike in his mouth. And one Master Thomas Bridges a Gentleman of our company accompanied only with one of these Dogs, and passed sixe miles alone in the Countrey having lost his felowes, and returned safely. And when we would be rid of the Savages company wee would let loose the Mastives, and suddenly with out-cries they would flee away. These people in colour are inclined to a swart, tawnie, or Chestnut colour, not by nature but accidentally, and doe weare their haire brayded in foure parts, and trussed up about their heads with a small knot behind: in which haire of theirs they sticke many feathers and toyes for braverie and pleasure. They cover their privities only with a piece of leather drawne betwixt their twists and fastened to their Girdles behind and before: whereunto they hang their bags of Tobacco. They seeme to bee somewhat jealous of their women, for we saw not past two of them, who weare Aprons of Leather skins before them downe to the knees, and a Beares skinne like an Irish Mantle over one shoulder. The men are of stature somewhat taller then our ordinary people, strong, swift, well proportioned, and given to treacherie, as in the end we perceived.

Their Boats, whereof we brought one to Bristoll, were in proportion like a Wherrie of the River Thames, seventeene foot long and foure foot broad, and made of the Barke of a Birch-tree, farre exceeding in bignesse those of England: it was sowed together with strong and tough Oziers or twigs, and the seames covered over with Rozen or Turpentine little inferiour in sweetnesse to Frankincense, as we made triall by burning a little thereof on the coales at sundry times after our coming home: it was also open like a Wherrie, and sharpe

at both ends, saving that the beake was a little bending roundly upward. And though it carried nine men standing upright, yet it weighed not at the most above sixtie pounds in weight, a thing almost incredible in regard of the largenesse and capacitie thereof. Their Oares were flat at the end like an Oven peepe,¹ made of Ash or Maple very light and strong, about two yards long, wherewith they row very swiftly: Passing up a River we saw certaine Cottages together, abandoned by the Savages, and not farre off we beheld their Gardens and one among the rest of an Acre of ground, and in the same was sowne Tobacco, pompions, cowcumbers and such like; and some of the people had Maiz or Indian Wheate among them. In the fields we found wild Pease, Strawberries very faire and bigge, Gooseberries, Raspices, Hurts, and other wild fruits.

Having spent three Weeks upon the Coast before we came to this place where we meant to stay and take in our lading, according to our instructions given us in charge before our setting forth, we pared and digged up the Earth with shovels, and sowed Wheate, Barley, Oates, Pease, and sundry sorts of Garden Seeds, which for the time of our abode there, being about seven Weeks, although they were late sowne, came up very well, giving certaine testimonie of the goodnesse of the Climate and of the Soyle. And it seemeth that Oade, Hempe, Flaxe, Rape-seed and such like which require a rich and fat ground, would prosper excellently in these parts. For in divers places here we found grasse above knee deepe.

As for Trees the Country yeeldeth Sassafras a plant of soveraigne vertue for the French Poxe, and as some of late have learnedly written good against the Plague and many other Maladies; Vines, Cedars, Okes, Ashes, Beeches, Birch trees, Cherie trees bearing fruit whereof wee did eate, Hasels, Wich-hasels, the best wood of all other to make Sope-ashes withall, Walnut-trees, Maples, holy to make Bird-lime with, and a kinde of tree bearing a fruit like a small red Peare-plum with a crowne or knop on the top (a plant whereof carefully wrapped

¹ A baker's wooden shovel.

up in earth, Master Robert Salterne brought to Bristoll.) We found also low trees bearing faire Cherries. There were likewise a white kind of Plums which were growne to their perfect ripenesse. With divers other sorts of trees to us unknowne.

The Beasts here are Stags, fallow Deere in abundance, Beares, Wolves, Foxes, Lusernes, and (some say) Tygres, Porcupines, and Dogges with sharpe and long noses, with many other sorts of wild beasts, whose Cases and Furies being hereafter purchased by exchange may yeeld no smal gaine to us. Since as we are certainly informed, the Frenchmen brought from Canada the value of thirtie thousand Crownes in the yeare 1604. Almost in Bevers and Otters skinned only. The most usuall Fowles are Eagles, Vultures, Hawkes, Cranes, Herons, Crows, Gulls, and great store of other River and Sea-fowles. And as the Land is full of Gods good blessings, so is the Sea replenished with great abundance of excellent fish, as Cods sufficient to lade many ships, which we found upon the Coast in the moneth of June, Seales to make Oile withall, Mulletts, Turbutts, Mackerels, Herrings, Crabs, Lobsters, Creuses and Muscles with ragged Pearles in them.

By the end of July we had laded our small Barke called the *Discoverer*, with as much Sassafras¹ as we thought sufficient, and sent her home into England before, to give some speedie contentment to the Adventurers; who arrived safely in King-rod² above a fortnight before us. After their departure we so bestirred our selves, that our shippe also had gotten in her lading, during which time there fell out this accident. On a day about noone tide while our men which used to cut down Sassafras in the Woods were asleepe, as they used to doe for two houres in the heat of the day, there came downe about seven score Savages armed with their Bowes and Arrowes, and environed our House or Barricado, wherein were foure of our men alone with their Muskets to keepe Centinell, whom they

¹ Evidently the voyage was not for discovery, but for this marketable commodity.

² A channel in the estuary of the Severn, near Bristol.

sought to have come downe unto them, which they utterly refused, and stood upon their guard. Our Master likewise being very carefull and circumspect having not past two with him in the shippe put the same in the best defence he could, lest they should have invaded the same, and caused a piece of great Ordnance to bee shot off, to give terrour to the Indians, and warning to our men which were fast asleepe in the Woods: at the noyse of which Peece they were a little awaked, and beganne a little to call for Foole and Gallant, their great and fearefull Mastives, and full quietly laid themselves downe againe, but beeing quickned up eftsoones againe with a second shot they rowsed up themselves, betooke them to their weapons and with their Mastives, great Foole with an halfe Pike in his mouth drew downe to their ship: whom when the Indians beheld afarre off, with the Mastive which they most feared, in dissembling manner they turned all to a jest and sport, and departed away in friendly manner: yet not long after, even the day before our departure, they set fire on the Woods where wee wrought, which wee did behold to burne for a mile space, and the very same day that wee weighed Anchor, they came downe to the shoare in greater number, to wit, very neere two hundred by our estimation, and some of them came in their Boates to our ship, and would have had us come in againe: but we sent them backe, and would none of their entertainment.

About the eighth or ninth of August, wee left this excellent Haven at the entrance whereof we found twentie fathomes water, and rode at our ease in seven fathomes being Landlocked, the Haven winding in compasse like the shell of a snaile, and it is in latitude of one and forty degrees and five and twentie minutes.

This by the way is not to be forgotten, that our Captaine fell so much to the Northward because he would find high grounds, where commonly the best Havens are: which also fell out to his expectation. We also observed that we could find no Sassafras but in sandie ground. In our returne we brought our selves into the latitude of eight and thirtie degrees

about the Açores for certaine causes, and within five weekes space came from our Port of Virginia, into the Soundings of England, but there being long encountred with Easterly winds, we came at length into Kingrode, the second of October 1603. The *Discoverer* was out five moneths and an halfe. The *Speedwell*¹ was out sixe moneths upon the Voyage.

¹ A vessel bearing this name and with a like tonnage — also from the same part of England — was in Sir Francis Drake's fleet in 1587. In the fight with the Spanish Armada in 1588, also, Drake had a vessel of the same name and about the same tonnage — probably the one with Drake in the preceding year, and one of the many merchantmen engaged in that memorable contest. The *Speedwell* of Pring's voyage, therefore, may have been the vessel which was with Drake in 1587 and 1588.