

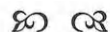
AMERICAN JOURNEYS COLLECTION



Briefe and True Relation of the
Discoverie of the North Part of
Virginia in 1602

by John Brereton

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Discoverie of the North Part of
Virginia in 1602

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INTRODUCTION

ENGLISH voyagers to the American coast in the sixteenth century made their way thither by the island of Newfoundland, or the islands of the West Indies. Bartholomew Gosnold and Bartholomew Gilbert evidently aimed directly for the New England coast, avoiding the more northerly region visited by Cabot, and afterward by the French explorers, and the region visited by the expeditions sent out by Sir Walter Raleigh. They made at Cuttyhunk the first, though temporary, English settlement in New England. Brereton's *Relation*, which was printed in 1602, and is dedicated to Sir Walter Raleigh, states that the voyage was undertaken with Raleigh's permission. This is an error, although Raleigh allowed the statement to stand. The voyage was without Raleigh's knowledge. A fall in the price of sassafras, which had been held as high as twenty shillings a pound in the London market, occasioned an inquiry on Raleigh's part as to the cause of the lessening value of this New-World commodity. This inquiry led to the discovery of Gosnold's successful venture, and to a complaint on Raleigh's part that Gosnold and his associates had infringed on his rights as patentee. It was found, however, that persons of prominence had aided Gosnold and Gilbert in their enterprise; and as it was desirable that the matter should be set before the public in as favorable a light as possible, Raleigh consented to the statement that the expedition had his permission. Bartholomew Gilbert was a son of Sir Humphrey Gilbert. He at once made his peace with Raleigh, and the next year, in Raleigh's service, he came to Virginia, where he lost his life, some say in Chesapeake Bay, but more probably on

the mainland. Gosnold, also, was again interested in New-World enterprises, and December 19, 1606, he sailed for Virginia with the Jamestown colonists. He was one of a large number of the colonists who died shortly after their arrival on the James. Brereton's *Relation* is the earliest English book relating to New England. Two editions of it were published in 1602, the one in twenty-four pages, the other in forty-eight, containing additional matter not deemed necessary to the present volume. The former issue, represented by a copy in the John Carter Brown Library at Providence, was reprinted in black-letter facsimile by Mr. L. S. Livingston in 1903, and is the one reprinted on the following pages. The other is reprinted in the third series of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. VIII., pp. 83-103, and in Winship's *Sailors' Narratives of New England Voyages*. There is also another "Relation" of this voyage, made by Gabriel Archer, who was "a gentleman in the said voyage." Purchas printed it in his fourth volume. A reprint of it will be found in the third Series of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. VIII., pp. 72-81.

BRIEFE AND TRUE RELATION OF THE
DISCOVERIE OF THE NORTH PART OF
VIRGINIA IN 1602

*A Briefe and true Relation of the Discoverie of the North part
of Virginia; being a most pleasant, fruitfull and
commodious soile:*

*Made this present yeere 1602, by Captaine Bartholomew
Gosnold, Captaine Bartholomew Gilbert, and divers
other gentlemen their associats, by the permission of
the honourable knight, Sir Walter Raleigh, &c.*

Written by M. John Brereton one of the voyage. . . .¹

To the honourable, Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight, Captaine
of her Majesties Guards, Lord Warden of the Stanneries,
Lieutenant of Cornwall, and Governour of the Isle of Jersey.

Honourable sir, being earnestly requested by a deere
friend, to put downe in writing, some true relation of our late
performed voyage to the North parts of Virginia; at length
I resolved to satisfie his request, who also imboldened me, to
direct the same to your honourable consideration; to whom
indeed of duetie it pertaineth.

May it please your Lordship therefore to understand, that
upon the sixe and twentieth of March 1602, being Friday, we
went from Falmouth, being in all, two and thirtie persons,²
in a small barke of Dartmouth, called *The Concord*, holding a
course for the North part of Virginia: and although by chance
the winde favoured us not at first as we wished, but inforced
us so farre to the Southward, as we fell with S. Marie, one of

¹ These words in italics are taken from the title-page, which ends with
the imprint: "Londini, Impensis Geor. Bishop, 1602."

² Archer says twelve were to return to England with the ship, and the
rest were to remain "for population."

the islands of the Agores (which was not much out of our way) yet holding our course directly from thence, we made our journey shorter (than hitherto accustomed) by the better part of a thousand leagues, yet were wee longer in our passage than we expected; which happened, for that our barke being weake, we were loth to presse her with much saile; also, our sailers being few, and they none of the best, we bare (except in faire weather) but low saile; besides, our going upon an unknowen coast, made us not over-bolde to stand in with the shore, but in open weather; which caused us to be certeine daies in sounding, before we discovered the coast, the weather being by chance, somewhat foggie. But on Friday the fourteenth of May, early in the morning, we made the land,¹ being full of faire trees, the land somewhat low, certeine hummocks or hilles lying into the land, the shore ful of white sand, but very stony or rocky. And standing faire amongst by the shore, about twelve of the clocke the same day, we came to an anker, where sixe Indians, in a Baske-shallop² with mast and saile, an iron grapple, and a kettle of copper, came boldly aboard us, one of them apparelled with a waistcoat and breeches of blacke serdge, made after our sea-fashion, hose and shoes on his feet; all the rest (saving one that had a paire of breeches of blue cloth) were all naked. These people are of tall stature, broad and grim visage, of a blacke swart complexion, their eie-browes painted white; their weapons are bowes and arrowes: it seemed by some words and signes they made, that some Basks³

¹ Concerning Gosnold's landfall, Archer says, — "The fourteenth, about six in the morning, we descried Land that lay North, &c., the Northerly part we called the North Land, which to another Rocke upon the same lying twelve leagues West, that wee called Savage Rocke, (because the Savages first shewed themselves there)." It is admitted by all who have given any attention to this voyage that Gosnold made his approach to the land north of Massachusetts Bay. "North Land" is probably best identified as Cape Porpoise, and "Savage Rock," as Cape Neddock, — both on the southerly part of the Maine coast.

² This is evidence that Basque fishermen extended their voyages to the coast of Maine.

³ They "could name Placentia of the New-found-land," says Archer. This is added evidence that French fishermen, visiting the Newfoundland fishing banks, came to the New England coast.

or of S. John de Luz, have fished or traded in this place, being in the latitude of 43 degrees. But riding heere, in no very good harbour, and withall, doubting the weather, about three of the clocke the same day in the afternoone we weighed, and standing Southerly off into sea the rest of that day and the night following, with a fresh gale of winde, in the morning we found our selves embayed with a mightie headland;¹ but comming to an anker about nine of the clocke the same day, within a league of the shore, we hoised out the one halfe of our shallop, and captaine Bartholmew Gosnold, my selfe, and three others, went ashore, being a white sandie and very bolde shore; and marching all that afternoon with our muskets on our necks, on the highest hilles which we saw (the weather very hot) at length we perceived this headland to be a parcell of the maine, and sundrie Islands lying almost round about it: so returning (towards evening) to our shallop (for by that time, the other part was brought ashore and set together) we espied an Indian, a young man, of proper stature, and of a pleasing countenance; and after some familiaritie with him, we left him at the sea side, and returned to our ship, where, in five or sixe hours absence, we had pestered our ship so with Cod fish, that we threw numbers of them over-boord againe: and surely, I am persuaded that in the moneths of March, April, and May, there is upon this coast, better fishing, and in as great plentie, as in Newfoundland: for the sculles of mackerell, herrings, Cod, and other fish,² that we dayly saw as we went and came from the shore, were woonderfull; and besides, the places where we tooke these Cods (and might in a fewdaies have laden our ship) were but in seven faddome water, and within lesse than a league of the shore; where, in New-found-land they fish in fortie or

¹ If Cape Ann was the starting-point, as some maintain, this "mightie headland," Cape Cod, would have been discovered much earlier by Gosnold in proceeding down the coast. Earlier voyagers, from the time of the Northmen, had descried this "mightie headland," "where wee tooke great store of Cod-fish," says Archer, "for which we altered the name, and called it Cape Cod."

² The abundance of fish on the New England coast is mentioned by all of the early explorers.

fiftie fadome water, and farre off. From this place, we sailed round about this headland, almost all the points of the compasse, the shore very bolde: but as no coast is free from dangers, so I am persuaded, this is as free as any; the land somewhat lowe, full of goodly woods, but in some places plaine: at length we were come amongst many faire Islands,¹ which we had partly discerned at our first landing; all lying within a league or two one of another, and the outermost not above sixe or seven leagues from the maine: but comming to an anker under one of the[m],² which was about three or foure leagues from the maine, captaine Gosnold, my selfe, and some others, went ashore, and going round about it, we found it to be foure English miles in compasse, without house or inhabitant, saving a little old house made of boughs, covered with barke, an olde piece of a weare of the Indians, to catch fish, and one or two places, where they had made fires. The chiefest trees of this Island, are Beeches and Cedars; the outward parts all overgrown with lowe bushie trees, three or foure foot in height, which beare some kinde of fruits, as appeared by their blossomes; Strawberies, red and white, as sweet and much bigger than ours in England, Rasberies, Gooseberies, Hurtleberies, and such; an incredible store of Vines, aswell in the woodie part of the Island, where they run upon every tree, as on the outward parts, that we could not goe for treading upon them: also, many springs of excellent sweet water, and a great standing lake of fresh water, neere the sea side, an English mile in compasse, which is mainteined with the springs running exceeding pleasantly thorow the woodie grounds which are very rockie. Here are also in this Island, great store of Deere, which we saw, and other beasts, as appeared by their tracks, as also divers fowles, as Cranes, Hernshawes, Bitters, Geese; Mallards, Teales, and other fowles, in great plenty; also, great store of Pease, which grow in certeine plots all the Island over.

¹ Nantucket would be one of the first.

² A note in the margin of the original reads, "The first Island called Marthaes vineyard." The island was no doubt the present No Man's Land, near the larger island now called Martha's Vineyard.

On the North side of this Island we found many huge bones and ribbes of Whales. This Island, as also all the rest of these Islands, are full of all sorts of stones fit for building; the sea sides all covered with stones, many of them glistening and shining like minerall stones, and very rockie: also, the rest of these Islands are replenished with these commodities, and upon some of them, inhabitants; as upon an Island to the Northward, and within two leagues of this; yet wee found no townes, nor many of their houses, although we saw manie Indians, which are tall big boned men, all naked, saving they cover their privy parts with a blacke tewed skin, much like a Black-smithes apron, tied about their middle and betweene their legs behinde: they gave us of their fish readie boiled (which they carried in a basket made of twigges, not unlike our osier) whereof we did eat, and judged them to be fresh water fish: they gave us also of their Tabacco, which they drinke¹ greene, but dried into powder, very strong and pleasant, and much better than any I have tasted in England: the necks of their pipes are made of clay hard dried (whereof in that Island is great store both red and white) the other part, is a piece of hollow copper, very finely closed and semented together: we gave unto them certeine trifles, as knives, points, and such like, which they much esteemed. From thence we went to another Island,² to the Northwest of this, and within a league or two of the maine, which we found to be greater than before we imagined, being 16 English miles at the least in compasse; for it containeth many pieces or necks of land, which differ nothing fro severall Islands, saving that certeine

¹ "We dranke of their excellent Tabacco," says Rosier, in his relation of Waymouth's voyage to the coast of Maine in 1605. "Drinking" tobacco was the term generally employed at that time, when the reference was to smoking it. Drake, *Book of the Indians*, p. 22, cites an entry in the Plymouth records in 1646 as follows, "Anthony Thatcher and George Pole were chosen a committee to draw up an order concerning disorderly drinking of tobacco."

² Cuttyhunk, one of the Elizabeth group of islands. A circumference of sixteen miles can be ascribed to it, however, only by combining with it the next island northward, now separated by a narrow strait. Archer says, "This Iland Captaine Gosnoll called Elizabeths Ile."

banks of small bredth do like bridges joyne them to this Island: on the outsides of this Island are many plaine places of grasse, abundance of Strawberies and other berries before mentioned: in mid May we did sowe in this Island (as for triall) in sundry places, Wheat, Barley, Oats, and Pease, which in foureteene daies were sprung up nine inches and more:¹ the soile is fat and lustie; the upper crust, of gray colour; but a foot or lesse in depth, of the colour of our hempe-lands in England; and being thus apt for these and the like graines; the sowing or setting (after the ground is cleansed) is no greater labour, than if you should set or sowe in one of our best prepared gardens in England. This Island is full of high timbered Oaks, their leaves thrise so broad as ours; Cedars, strait and tall; Beech, Elme, Hollie, Walnut trees in abundance, the fruit as bigge as ours, as appeared by those we found under the trees, which had lien all the yeere ungathered; Haslenut trees, Cherry trees, the leafe, barke and bignesse not differing from ours in England, but the stalke beareth the blossomes or fruit at the end thereof, like a cluster of Grapes, forty or fifty in a bunch; Sassafras trees² plentie all the Island over, a tree

¹ Other like statements concerning the remarkable fertility of the soil occur in the "Relations" of these early voyagers, and are indications of easy exaggeration. Shakespeare, in the *Tempest* (Act IV. Scene i.) makes Iris say to Ceres:—

"Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and pease."

The *Tempest* was written, it is thought, in 1610–1611, and in this and other descriptions of the "uninhabited island," the scene of the play (which Shakespearian scholars have identified with Bermuda, Lampedusa, Pantalaria, and Coreyra), Edward Everett Hale finds intimations that Shakespeare was familiar with the story of Gosnold's Elizabeth Isle and used it in the play. In the *Tempest*, he says, "there is no allusion to an orange, a banana, a yam, or a potato, or a palm-tree, or a pineapple, or a monkey, or a parrot, or anything else which refers to the Gulf of Mexico or the tropics. Does not this seem as if he meant that the local color of the *Tempest* should be that which was suggested by the gentlemen adventurers and the seamen who were talking of Cuttyhunk, its climate and productions, as they told travellers' stories up and down London?" The Earl of Southampton, the patron and friend of Shakespeare, was the patron of Gosnold in this voyage.

² Sassafras was regarded as "a plant of Sovereigne vertue." Archer, in his "Relation," Purchas, IV. 1649 (*Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, third series,

of high price and profit; also divers other fruit trees, some of them with strange barks, of an Orange colour, in feeling soft and smoothe like Velvet: in the thickest parts of the woods, you may see a furlong or more round about. On the Northwest side of this Island, neere to the sea side, is a standing Lake of fresh water, almost three English miles in compasse, in the midst whereof stands a plot of woodie ground, an acre in quantitie or not above: This Lake is full of small Tortoises, and exceedingly frequented with all sorts of fowles before rehearsed, which breed, some lowe on the banks, and others on lowe trees about this Lake in great abundance, whose young ones of all sorts we tooke and eat at our pleasure: but all these fowles are much bigger than ours in England. Also, in every Island, and almost in every part of every Island, are great store of Ground nuts, fortie together on a string, some of them as bigge as hennes egges; they grow not two inches under ground: the which nuts we found to be as good as Potatoes. Also, divers sorts of shell-fish, as Scallops, Muscles, Cockles, Lobsters, Crabs, Oisters, and Whilks, exceeding good and very great. But not to cloy you with particular rehearsall of such things as God and Nature hath bestowed on these places, in comparison wherof, the most fertil part of al England is (of it selfe) but barren; we went in our light-horsman fro this Island to the maine, right against this Island some two leagues off, where comming ashore, we stood a while like men ravished at the beautie and delicacie of this sweet soile; for besides divers cleere Lakes of fresh water (whereof we saw no end) Medowes very large and full of greene grasse; even the most woody places (I speake onely of such as I saw) doe grow so distinct and apart, one tree from another, upon greene grassie ground, somewhat higher than the Plaines, as if Nature would shew herselfe above her power, artificiall. Hard by, we espied seven Indians; and comming up to them, at first they expressed some feare; but being emboldned by our courteous

VIII. 77, 78), says, "The powder of Sassafrage in twelve houres cured one of our Company that had taken a great surfett by eating the bellies of Dog-fish, a very delicious meate."

usage, and some trifles which we gave them, they followed us to a necke of land, which we imagined had beene severed from the maine; but finding it otherwise, we perceived a broad harbour or rivers mouth, which ranne up into the maine: but because the day was farre spent, we were forced to returne to the Island from whence we came, leaving the discoverie of this harbour, for a time of better leasure: of the goodnesse of which harbour, as also of many others thereabouts, there is small doubt, considering that all the Islands, as also the maine (where we were) is all rockie grounds and broken lands. Now the next day, we determined to fortifie our selves in the little plot of ground in the midst of the Lake above mentioned, where we built an house, and covered it with sedge, which grew about this lake in great abundance; in building whereof, we spent three weeks and more:¹ but the second day after our comming from the maine, we espied 9 canowes or boats, with fiftie Indians in them, comming towards us from this part of the maine, where we, two daies before, landed; and being loth they should discover our fortification, we went out on the sea side to meet them; and comming somewhat neere them, they all sat downe upon the stones, calling aloud to us (as we rightly ghessed) to doe the like, a little distance from them: having sat a while in this order, captaine Gosnold willed me to go unto them, to see what countenance they would make; but assoone as I came up unto them, one of them, to whom I had given a knife two daies before in the maine, knew me (whom I also very wel remembered) and smiling upon me, spake somewhat unto their lord or captaine, which sat in the midst of them, who presently rose up and tooke a large Beaver skin from one that stood about him, and gave it unto me, which I requited for that time the best I could: but I pointing towards captaine Gosnold, made signes unto him, that he was our captaine, and

¹ Noah Webster in 1797 (*Belknap's American Biography*, II. 114), Francis C. Gray in 1817 (*North American Review*, V. 313), and John Wingate Thornton in 1848 (*Cape Anne*, p. 21), maintained that they discovered on the islet plain outlines of Gosnold's fort and house; but the writer of this note, the general editor of the present series, found none in 1905. In 1902 a stone tower commemorative of Gosnold's sojourn was erected on the islet.

desirous to be his friend, and enter league with him, which (as I perceived) he understood, and made signes of joy: whereupon captaine Gosnold with the rest of his companie, being twentie in all, came up unto them; and after many signes of gratulations (captaine Gosnold presenting their L.¹ with certeine trifles which they wondred at, and highly esteemed) we became very great friends, and sent for meat aboard our shallop, and gave them such meats as we had then readie dressed, whereof they misliked nothing but our mustard, whereat they made many a sowre face. While we were thus merry, one of them had conveyed a target of ours into one of their canowes, which we suffered, onely to trie whether they were in subjection to this L. to whom we made signes (by shewing him another of the same likenesse, and pointing to the canowe) what one of his companie had done: who suddenly expressed some feare, and speaking angerly to one about him (as we perceived by his countenance) caused it presently to be brought backe againe. So the rest of the day we spent in trading with them for Furres, which are Beavers, Luzernes, Marterns, Otters, Wild-cat skinnnes very large and deepe Furre, blacke Foxes, Conie skinnnes, of the colour of our Hares, but somewhat lesse, Deere skinnnes very large, Seale skinnnes, and other beasts skinnnes to us unknownen. They have also great store of Copper, some very redde, and some of a paler colour; none of them but have chaines, earrings or collars of this mettall: they head some of their arrows herewith, much like our broad arrow heads, very workmanly made. Their chaines are many hollow pieces semented together, ech piece of the bignesse of one of our reeds, a finger in length, ten or twelve of them together on a string, which they weare about their necks: their collars they weare about their bodies like bandelieres a handfull broad, all hollow pieces, like the other, but somewhat shorter, foure hundred pieces in a collar, very fine and evenly set together. Besides these, they have large drinking cups, made like sculles, and other thinne plates of Copper, made much like our boare-

¹ Lord.

speare blades, all which they so little esteeme, as they offered their fairest collars or chaines, for a knife or such like trifle, but we seemed little to regard it; yet I was desirous to understand where they had such store of this mettall, and made signes to one of them (with whom I was verie familiar) who taking a piece of Copper in his hand, made a hole with his finger in the ground, and withall, pointed to the maine from whence they came. They strike fire in this maner; every one carrieth about him in a purse of tewed leather, a Minerall stone (which I take to be their Copper) and with a flat Emerie stone (wherewith Glasiers cut glasse, and Cutlers glase blades) tied fast to the end of a little sticke, gently he striketh upon the Minerall stone, and within a stroke or two, a sparke falleth upon a piece of Touchwood (much like our Sponge in England) and with the least sparke he maketh a fire presently. We had also of their Flaxe, wherewith they make many strings and cords, but it is not so bright of colour as ours in England: I am persuaded they have great store growing upon the maine, as also Mines and many other rich commodities, which we, wanting both time and meanes, could not possibly discover. Thus they continued with us three daies, every night retiring themselves to the furthestmost part of our Island two or three miles from our fort: but the fourth day they returned to the maine, pointing five or six times to the Sun, and once to the maine, which we understood, that within five or six daies they would come from the maine to us againe: but being in their canowes a little from the shore, they made huge cries and shouts of joy unto us; and we with our trumpet and cornet, and casting up our cappes into the aire, made them the best farewell we could: yet sixe or seven of them remained with us behinde, bearing us company every day into the woods, and helpt us to cut and carie our Sassafras, and some of them lay aboard our ship. These people, as they are exceeding courteous, gentle of disposition, and well conditioned, excelling all others that we have seene; so for shape of bodie and lovely favour, I thinke they excell all the people of America; of stature much higher than we; of complexion or colour, much like a darke

Olive; their eie-browes and haire blacke, which they weare long, tied up behinde in knots, whereon they pricke feathers of fowles, in fashion of a crownet: some of them are blacke thin bearded; they make beards of the haire of beasts: and one of them offered a beard of their making to one of our sailers, for his that grew on his face, which because it was of a red colour, they judged to be none of his owne. They are quicke eied, and stedfast in their looks, fearlesse of others harmes, as intending none themselves; some of the meaner sort given to filching, which the very name of Salvages (not weighing their ignorance in good or evill) may easily excuse: their garments are of Deere skins, and some of them weare Furres round and close about their necks. They pronounce our language with great facilitie; for one of them one day sitting by me, upon occasion I spake smiling to him these words: How now (sirha) are you so saucie with my Tabacco? which words (without any further repetition) he suddenly spake so plaine and distinctly, as if he had beene a long scholar in the language. Many other such trials we had, which are here needlesse to repeat. Their women (such as we saw) which were but three in all, were but lowe of stature, their eie-browes, haire, apparell, and maner of wearing, like to the men, fat, and very well favoured, and much delighted in our companie; the men are very dutifull towards them. And truely, the holsomnesse and temperature of this Climat, doth not onely argue this people to be answerable to this description, but also of a perfect constitution of body, active, strong, healthfull, and very wittie, as the sundry toies of theirs cunningly wrought, may easily witnes. For the agreeing of this Climat with us (I speake of my selfe, and so I may justly do for the rest of our companie) that we found our health and strength all the while we remained there, so to renew and increase, as notwithstanding our diet and lodging was none of the best, yet not one of our company (God be thanked) felt the least grudging or inclination to any disease or sicknesse, but were much fatter and in better health than when we went out of England. But after our barke had taken in so much Sassafras, Cedar, Furres,

Skinnes, and other commodities, as were thought convenient; some of our company that had promised captaine Gosnold to stay,¹ having nothing but a saving voyage in their minds, made our company of inhabitants (which was small enough before) much smaller; so as captaine Gosnold seeing his whole strength to consist but of twelve men, and they but meanly provided, determined to returne for England, leaving this Island (which he called Elizabeths Island) with as many true sorrowfull eies, as were before desirous to see it. So the 18 of June, being Friday, we weighed, and with indifferent faire winde and weather came to anker the 23 of July, being also Friday (in all, bare five weeks) before Exmouth.²

Your Lordships to command,

JOHN BRERETON.

¹ Gosnold seems to have had in mind a permanent trading post. Archer says, "The eighth wee divided the victuals, *viz.*, the ships store for England, and that of the Planters, which by Captaine Gilberts allowance could be but sixe weekes for sixe moneths, whereby there fell out a controversie, the rather, for that some seemed secretly to understand of a purpose Captaine Gilbert had not to returne with supplie of the issue those goods should make by him to be carried home."

² A town in the county of Devon on the east side of the estuary of the Exe, and at present a celebrated watering-place.