

CPA Paddles Back in Time: The Voyage of 1608 Comes Home

By Lynn Erwin

On June 7th, an able bodied group of paddlers took to the waterways near Mount Vernon and Piscataway Creek to retrace a portion of Captain John Smith's famous voyage of the Chesapeake Bay in 1608. CPA paddlers joined with others to help celebrate the 400th anniversary of John Smith's 1,700 mile voyage. Page D reports that CPA coordinator Dave Biss organized the paddle and Nelson Labbe scouted put-in sites from the George Washington Parkway. While some eventually put in near Mount Vernon, others launched out of Piscataway Creek. The group met at the confluence of the Potomac for a paddle to National Colonial Farm in Maryland.

The paddle was part of the Captain John Smith Four Hundred Project—an inaugural program that will create America's first all-water National Historic Trail. "Overseen by the National Park Service, the John Smith Trail will allow modern-day adventurers to explore the Chesapeake while learning about Native American history, early English settlements and the Chesapeake's abundant natural resources" (see [NPS website](http://www.nps.gov/johnsmith)).



The Shallop underway, photo by Michael Wootton

The centerpiece of the celebration is the replica of the 30-foot open boat or "shallop" that was manned by Smith and fourteen English colonists. The 1608 crew of the shallop witnessed perhaps the peak of our Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem and partnered (or fought) with a large multitude of Native Americans. John Smith noted the phenomenal abundance of the Bay waters:

"... a few Bevers, Otters, Beares, Martins and minkes we found, and in divers places that abundance of fish, lying so thicke with their heads above the water, as for want of nets (our barge driving amongst them) we attempted to catch them with a frying pan: but we found it a bad instrument to catch fish with: neither better fish, more plenty, nor more variety for smal fish, had any of us ever seene in any place so swimming in the water, but they are not to be caught with frying pans: some small codd also we did see swim close by the shore by Smiths Iles, and some as high as Riccards Clifts (Calvert Cliffs)." John Smith, log of the First Voyage, at <http://www.johnsmith400.org/journalfirstvoyage.htm>



On August 4, you can join CPA trip leader Greg Welker on a rare chance to experience the Patuxent River and the history surrounding the river during the time of John Smith's exploration of the Chesapeake. The paddle will launch from Solomon's Island or Greenwell State Park (depending on weather conditions) and paddle over to Jefferson-Patterson Park and Museum on the shores of the Patuxent River. The paddle will be about 10-12 statute miles, round trip, and will be suitable for Advanced Beginners. The group will then secure the kayaks and take a short walk over to the Patuxent Encounters Festival. The Festival is a two day program focused on the lasting contributions that American Indians have made and continue to make, to the social, political, technological, and cultural fabric of this nation. The Sultana Project's John Smith Shallop will be arriving sometime on August 4th if they have good weather. The Patuxent Encounters Festival has an admission fee—\$6 for a one day pass in advance, \$10 at the gate. (2 day passes available). If you contact Greg Welker at least one week in advance of the August 4th paddle, he can reserve tickets for you. You may bring your lunch or buy food from the Festival menu on the premises.



Replica village at Jefferson-Patterson Park

If you are interested in joining Greg Welker on this CPA trip, please contact him at gdweker@verizon.net and give him a contact phone number, or call him at 301-249-4895.

For Page D's trip report see <http://letsgo2sea.com/Paddle%20John%20Smith%20Shallop%20June%2007/>

For more background on the Sultana shallop project, see <http://www.johnsmith400.org/>

And for Patuxent Encounters, see <http://www.jefpat.org./Patuxent%20Encounters/PEWebMain.htm>

And a video at <http://www.jefpat.org/johnsmith%20spot2.wma>