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† Famous American Indians †

POCAHONTAS—FIRST GREAT AMERICAN INDIAN

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The first great American Indian was Pocahontas. She was the daughter of Chief Powhatan, and might be termed one of the "reception committee" that received John Smith and the colonists at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607.

Not long after the founding of the colony John Smith, while exploring the Chickahominy River, was set upon by the natives. Seizing the Indian guide, who was with him, and using him as a shield against their arrows, and at the same time defending himself with his pistol, Smith fought desperately, but the Indians finally surrounded Smith and led him to their village.

Smith told the following story: "I presented him, the chief Appachangough, with a compass, describing by my best means the use thereof. He was so amazed and admired the object so greatly that he suffered me to tell him of the planets, stars and sun, and the roundness of the earth. With kind speeches and bread he requited me. I was taken to their village six miles away. For supper I had a quarter of venison and some ten pounds of bread. What I left was reserved for me. Each morning I was presented with three platters of bread and more venison than ten men could eat.

"One day I greatly astonished them by writing a note to my party. They couldn't understand how I could convey messages on paper. They were more astonished when what I ordered was delivered to me."

At a later date Smith was taken to the Indian Chief Powhatan. Smith describes him as a man "seventy years of age and of majestic appearance. He was tall, well proportioned and exceedingly vigorous. He wore an ornamental robe of raccoon skins and his headdress was composed of many feathers wrought into a kind of crown. He usually kept forty or so men for his guards when he slept, but when the English came over here he increased the guards to two hundred."

Powhatan received Smith graciously, assuring him of his friendship, offering platters of victuals, and promising Smith his liberty in four days. The chief promised to give corn and venison to the colonists and

Smith in return promised hatchets and other utensils. Smith found Powhatan proudly lying upon a bedstead about a foot high. Around his neck were many pearly beads and his body was partially covered with raccoon skins. At his head sat a woman, and another sat at his feet. On each side of him seated on the ground were his chief men, ten in rank, and behind them as many young women, each wearing a very large chain of white beads. Their foreheads were painted red. When Smith entered a great shout arose. One of the important women brought water for him to bathe his hands and another brought him feathers to use in place of a towel.

Smith gives the following account of Pocahontas saving his life: "Having feasted me after the best barbaric manner they could, two great stones were placed before Powhatan and as many as could laid hands on me, dragged me before them and thereon laid my head, and were ready with their clubs to beat out my brains, when Pocahontas, the chief's dearest daughter, rushed in and seeing what was about to happen put her arms about my head and placed her own upon mine to prevent me from being killed." Powhatan spared Smith's life.

Some time after Powhatan, feeling hostile toward the English, planned to attack them at night. Pocahontas warned the colonists of his design and again proved her sincere friendship for the colonists. "This Indian maiden far excelled all others for features, countenance and proportions, and for wit and spirit was the only nonpareil of this country."

When about twelve years of age Pocahontas was sent by Powhatan to Jamestown to procure the release of some Indians detained there. She was accompanied by Rawbunt, her father's trusty messenger, who assured Smith of Powhatan's love and kindness in that he had sent his most loved child to see him, and venison and bread besides for a present. The prisoners were given to Pocahontas "in regard to her father's kindness" and such trifles as contented her were given to Pocahontas.

Here started our first historical romance. John Rolfe, a worthy Englishman, fell in love with Pocahontas, and asked her to marry him. In April, 1614,

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