

This is the foundation map of New England cartography, the one that gave it its name and the first devoted to the region. It covers the area from the present Penobscot Bay in Maine, to Cape Cod, Massachusetts. After a period of inactivity following his Virginian escapades, Captain John Smith was invited by four London merchants to explore the coastline of north Virginia (New England as it was then known). These men, Buley, Langham, Roydon and Skelton, financed two ships that sailed in March 1614 with instructions to return with a profitable cargo. There had been earlier English voyages between the years 1602 and 1605 by men like Gosnold, Pring and Weymouth. Although these did not amount to anything of great importance, Gosnold is credited with naming Cape Cod.

Smith made a good crossing in six weeks, arriving off Monhegan Island near the Kennebec estuary. By now the waters of New England, particularly Maine, were visited by dozens of English and French fishing vessels a year. One of Smith's vessels concentrated on catching fish and collecting other valuable commodities. Smith continued down the coast to chart and explore, lamenting the poor quality of existing maps: '[he] had six or seauen seuerall plots of those Northern parts, so unlike each to other, and most so differing from any true proportion, or resemblance of the Countrey, as they did mee no more good, then so much waste paper, though they cost me more'. Naming Plymouth Rock he described the place as 'an excellent good harbour, good lands, and no want of anything but industrious people'. This proved the incentive six years later for the 'Mayflower' Pilgrims to relocate here after their first choice proved unwise. In mid July after just six weeks Smith returned to England. It is remarkable that in this short time he managed to glean so much of the coastline. Indeed, the amount of work that is actually his own has been called into question by some.

Smith settled up with the four merchants who had backed him and approached the Plymouth Company with the idea of founding a colony. By now though Smith's luck had run out. Setting off in 1615, he was held back by appalling weather which destroyed his ship and nearly cost him his life. Undaunted he set out again and ran into one pirate ship, and then two French privateers. Finally, he was interrupted by four French warships suspecting that he was a privateer. Whilst Smith was on board one of the French ships to present his credentials, the shipmaster, Captain Chambers, fled, leaving Smith stranded with the French. Captive, he sailed with them as they attacked ships of all nations. When the ship he was in became shipwrecked, he managed to survive and make his way back from France, arriving in England in December 1615. He was thought to have perished. Smith tried many more times to travel to America, but never succeeded. Whilst on board the French vessel, Smith had passed the time writing a manuscript entitled *A Description of New England*. This he carried to London and published in June 1616.

To accompany this work Smith had Simon van de Passe engrave a map of his surveys. The young Prince Charles provided much of the nomenclature, most of which does not survive today. The notable exceptions are the *River Charles and Plimouth*. The book was successful, not least because America was very popular at the time. Rebecca Rolfe, otherwise known as Pocahontas, was in London causing quite a stir. During its life the plate was changed numerous times, creating nine recorded states. States 1 and 2 properly belong to the *Description*. Sabin quotes the *Generall Historie* as evidence that it was included in some copies of *New Englands Trails*, 1620. By now Smith was becoming unpopular and the book was probably unsuccessful. This is reflected in the fact that only four examples of the book have survived. It was used again in all editions of *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England and the Summer Isles*, Smith's *Advertisements* of 1631 and the three issues of the atlas *Historia Mundi*. A brief description follows, abbreviated from Sabin, of the different states known:

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|---------|--|
| State 1 | Lacking the date 1614 below the scale  |
| State 2 | 1614 added below the scale. No Smith's arms. <i>P Travers</i> and <i>Gerrards IIs</i> added top right  |
| State 3 | Smith's arms added lower left without a motto  |
| State 4 | Motto added — <i>Vincere est Viuere</i> . Latitude scale added to the left margin, longitude to the top and bottom. No <i>Paynes IIs</i> east of Cape Elizabeth  |
| State 5 | <i>Paynes IIs</i> added east of Cape Elizabeth. Crossed lines appear on armour and in the background of Smith's portrait. The printer's name is still Low, <i>Pasaeus</i> lower left now <i>Passæus</i>                                  |
| State 6 | Printer's name lower right now <i>Iames Reeue</i> . Fourth line in the title is still <i>Prince of great Britaine</i>  |
| State 7 | Fourth line of the title now begins <i>nowe King ...</i> No Council of New England arms in the centre. <i>Salem</i> added and <i>NEW</i> above Plimouth  |
| State 8 | Council of New England arms added in the centre of the map. No school of fish shown below. No text below the compass rose. <i>Salem</i> erased and moved to its correct position below <i>Bristow</i>                                    |
| State 9 | School of fish added off Cape Cod. Text referring to Wood's <i>New Englands Prospect</i> added below the compass rose. The River Charles extended westwards to the edge of the map. <i>Boston</i> , <i>Charlestowne</i> and others added |

Unlike most earlier maps of New Spain this concentrates more on the central region. It does, however, show quite a bit of present day Texas. The *R.d.Palmas* marks the current border, the *R.Escondido* is quite possibly the Nueces River. For more information on the atlas and the various editions, please see the first Bertius entry of 1616.

**References:** Koeman (1967) vol. 1, pp. 60-2 & vol. 2, Lan 11A/ *The A. E. Nordenskiöld Collection* no. 15/ Sabin (1868) no. 5014. See also the Mercator entry of 1595.

For a list of locations please see the first Bertius entry of 1616.

## 187 John Smith

London, 1616

*NEW ENGLAND/ The most remarqueable parts thus named./ by the high and mighty Prince CHARLES,/ Prince of great Britaine/ Observed and described by Captayn John Smith./ Simon Pasceus sculpsit./ Robert Clerke excudit./ London/ Printed by Geor:Low*

Copperplate engraving,  
305 x 350 mm.

From: A Description of New England

Plate 187

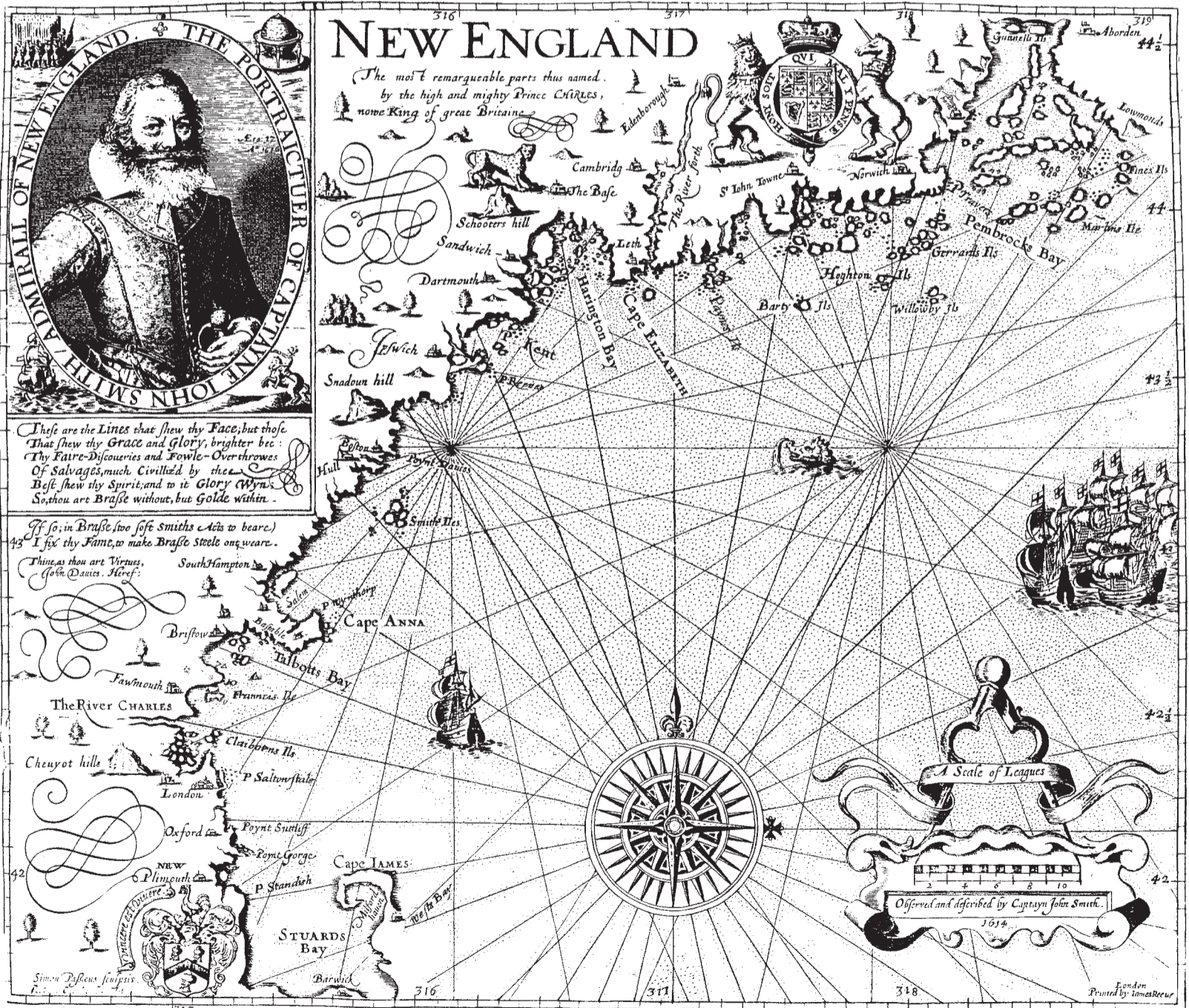


PLATE 187 (Entry 187). John Smith (London, 1616). This is the foundation map of New England cartography, the one that gave it its name and the first devoted to the region. This is an example of state 7.