

John Pory to Treasurer of the Virginia Company of London [January 1622/3]

By whom this new Plymouth (situated according to Captain Jones his computation in 41 degrees and 48 minutes) is now presently inhabited, your Lordship and the honorable Company do know better then myself; for whom how favorable Gods providence, without and indeed quite besides any plot or design of theirs hath wrought, especially in the beginning of their enterprise, is worthy to be observed. For whereas your Lordship knows, their voyage was intended for Virginia, being by letters from Sir Edwin Sandys and Mr. Deputy Ferrar recommended to Sir Yeardeley, then governor, that he should give them the best advise he could for trading in Hudson's river, whether it were by contrariety of wind, or by the backwardness of their master or pilot, to make (as they thought it) too long a journey, they fell short both of the one and the other, arriving first at that stately harbor called Cape Cod, called by Indians Pamet, from whence in shallop the pilot (a more forward undertaker then performer) promised to bring them to be seated in a pleasant and fertile place called Angawam, situated within Cape Anne about 40 leagues from Plymouth. After some dangerous and almost incurable errors and mistakings, he stumbled by accident upon the harbor of Plymouth, where after the planters had failed of their intention, and the pilot of his, it pleased Almighty God (who had better provided for them then their own hearts could imagine) to plant them upon the seat of an old town, which divers years before had been abandoned of the Indians. So they both quietly and justly sat down without either disposing any of the natives, or being resisted by them, and without shedding so much as one drop of blood, which facility of theirs is confirmed unto them even by the voices of the savages themselves, who generally do acknowledge not only the seat, but the whole seignorie thereto belonging, to be, and do themselves disclaim all title from it, so that the right of those planters to it is altogether unquestionable, a favor which since the first discovery of America God hath not vouchsafed, so far as ever I could learn, upon any Christian nations within that Continent, yet can it not be denied, but that these of the Summer Islands are blessed with the same privilege according to the sayings of St. Paul, If the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; but to leave this privilege to them whom it concerns, and to describe to your Lordship the excellency of this place, first, the harbor is not only pleasant for air and prospect, but most sure for shipping both small and great, being land-locked on all sides. The town is seated on the ascent of a hill, which besides the pleasure of variable objects entertaining the unsatisfied eye, such is the wholesomeness of the place (as the Governor told me) that for the space of one whole year, of the two wherein they had been there, dyed not one man, woman, or child. This healthfulness is accompanied with much plenty both of fish and fowl every day in the year, as I know no place in the world that can match it. In March the eels come forth out of places where they lie bedded all winter, into the fresh streams, and there into the sea, and in their passages are taken in pots. In September they run out of the sea into the fresh streams, to bed themselves in the ground all winter, and are taken again in pots as they return homewards. In winter the inhabitants dig them up, being bedded in gravel not above two or three feet deep, and all the rest of the year they may take them in pots in the salt water of the bay. They are

passing sweet, fat, and wholesome, having no taste at all of the mud, and are as great as ever I saw any. In April and May come up another kind of fish which they call herring, or old wives, in infinite schools into a small river running under the town, and so into a great pond or lake of a mile broad where they cast their spawn, the water of the said river being in many places not above half a foot deep. Yea, when a heap of stones is reared up against them a foot high above the water, they leap and tumble over and will not be beaten back with cudgels, which confirmeth not only that of Horace, *Naturam expellas furca licet*, etc. But that also which was thought a fable of Friar Beatus Odericus, namely, that in some parts where he had traveled, the fish in the springtime did cast themselves out of the sea upon the dry land. The inhabitants during the said two months take them up every day in hogsheads, and with those they eat not they manure the ground, burying 2 or 3 in each hill of corn, and may, when they are able, if they see cause, lade whole ships with them. At their going up they are very fat and savory, but at their coming down, after they have cast their spawn, they are shot, and therefore lean and unwholesome.

Into another river some two miles to the northeast of Plymouth all the month of May the great smelts pass up to spawn likewise in troops innumerable, which with a scoop, or a bowl, or a piece of bark, a man may cast up upon the bank. About mid-way come into the harbor the many schools of bass and blue fish, which they take with skeins—some fishes of a foot and a half, some of two feet, and some of 3 feet long, and with hooks those of 4 and 5 feet long. They enter also at flowing water up into the small creeks, at the mouths whereof the inhabitants, spreading their nets, have caught 500 and 700 at a time. These continue good May, June, July and August. Now as concerning the blue fish, in delicacy it excelleth all kind of fish that ever I tasted, I except not the salmon of the Thames in his prime season, nor any other fish. We called it by a compound name of black, white, blue, sweet, fat, the skin and scale blue; the flesh next under the scale for an inch deep black, and as sweet as the marrow of an ox; the residue of the flesh underneath purely white, fat, and of a taste requiring no addition of sauce. By which alluring quality it may seem dangerously tending to a surfeit, but we found by experience that having satisfied and in a manner glutted ourselves therewith, it proved wholesome unto us and most easy of digestion. In the same bay lobsters are in season during the 4 months, so large, so full of meat, and so plentiful in number, as no man will believe that he hath not seen. For a knife of 3 half pence I bought 10 lobsters that would have dined 40 laboring men; and the least boy in the ship with an hour's labor, was able to feed the whole company with them for two days, which, if those of the ship that come home do not affirm upon their oaths, let me forever lose my credit. Without the bay in the ocean sea, they have all the year long in a manner goodly fishing of cod and hake as in other parts of Canada. Within 2 miles southward from their plantation do begin goodly ponds and lakes of fresh water, continuing well nigh 20 miles into the land, some with islands in them, the water being as clear as crystal, yielding great variety of fish. Muscles and clams they have all the year long, which being the meanest of God's blessings here, and such as these people fat their hogs with at a low water, if ours upon any extremity did enjoy in the South Colony, they would never complain of famine or want, although they wanted bread. Not but that by God's blessing the South Colony using their industry many in few years attain to that plenty, pleasure, and strength as that they shall not need much to envy or fear the proudest nations in Europe. Oysters there are none, but at Massachusetts some 20 miles to the north of this place there are such huge ones by

savages' report, as I am loath to report. For ordinary ones of which there be many, they make to be as broad as a bushel, but one among the rest they compared to the great cabin in the *Discovery*, and being sober and well advised persons, grew very angry when they were laughed at or not believed! I would have had Captain Jones to have tried out the truth of this report, and what was the reason? If, said I, the oysters be so great and have any pearls in them, then must the pearls be answerable in greatness to the oysters, and proving round and orient also, would far exceed all other jewels in the world! Yea, what strange and precious things might be found in so rare a creature! But Captain Jones his employing his pinnace in discovery, his graveing of the ship, his haste away about other occasions and business, would not permit him to do that which often since he wished he could have done. From the beginning of September till the end of March, their bay in a manner is covered with all sorts of water fowl, in such sort of swarms and multitudes as is rather admirable then credible.

The reasons of their continual plenty for those 7 months in the year may be the continual tranquility of the place, being guarded on all sides from the fury of storms, as also the abundance of food they find at low water, the bottom of the bay then appearing as a green meadow, and lastly the number of frishets running into the bay, where after their powdered sallets, their brackish shellfish, and other cates they may refresh and quench their thirst. And therefore this bay is such a pond for fowl, as in any man's knowledge of our nation that hath seen it, all America hath not the like. Thus far I proceeded and dated my letter at Angra, Jan: 13, 1622. Touching their fruit I will not speak of their meaner sorts of raspes, cherries, gooseberries, strawberries, delicate plumbs and others, but they have commonly through the country 5 several sorts of grapes, some whereof I tasted, being fairer and larger than any I ever saw in the South Colony, but of a muscatel taste, which being transplanted would prosper better in the south. But wine vines may compare with Martha's Vineyard, which I dare say will fall to the south of 40 degrees, and will be an earthly paradise to him that can be master of it. Sassafras wanteth not all over this main. In this land (as in other parts of this main) they have plenty of deer and of turkeys as large and as fat as in any other place.

So much of the wholesomeness and plenty of the country. Now as concerning the quality of the people, how happy were it for our people in the Southern Colony, if they were as free from wickedness and vice as these are in this place! And their industry as well appeareth by their building, as by a substantial palisado about their settlement of 2700 feet in compass, stronger than I have seen any in Virginia, and lastly by a blockhouse which they have erected in the highest place of the town to mount their ordinance upon, from whence they may command all the harbor. As touching their correspondency with the Indians, they are friends with all their neighbors, as namely with those of Cohasset and Massachusett to the north, and the great king of Pokanoket to the south-west, with those of Pamet, Nauset, Capawack and others to the east and south. And not withstanding that those of the isle Capawack are mortal enemies to all other English, ever since Hunt most wickedly stole away their people to sell them for slaves, yet are they in good terms with them of Plymouth, because as they never did wrong to any Indian, so will they put up no injury at their hands. And though they gave them kind entertainment, yet stand they day and night precisely upon their guard. True it is that Narragansett, situate to the west of Pokanoket, being set on either by the French or Flemings, sent them a snake's skin full of arrows, in token of hostility and defiance. In

answer whereof having filled the same with shot and powder, they sent it back again with this message, that whensoever he should be welcome and should find them ready to entertain him. The shot and powder he liked not, nor would meddle with it, but caused it to be cast into the river. One thing which made them to be much respected was the revenge which they attempted in the night upon Corbitant, the chief man about the great king, because they were (though falsely) informed, that he had slain Tisquanto, Sir Ferdinando Gorges his Indian, who lived as their servant under their protection, interpreting the injury done to him as done to themselves. Besides when Tisquanto was earnestly required to be sent home by the great king, they chose rather to hazard a falling out with him, then to break their faith and promise to Tisquanto, who had been sure to have gone to the pot, if they had delivered him up, which faith and courage of theirs hath made other distracted Indians to retire themselves into their protection, of whose labor and service they have made good use, but especially of Tisquanto's. And since I have taken occasion to speak both of amity and enmity, give me leave to note unto your Lordship the general enemy of all, both Christian and Indians in Canada, that inhabit toward the ocean, being as they of New Plymouth relate an Indian nation of man-eaters called Mohawk, who go armed against arrows and jacks made of cordage, and they themselves use clubs only. Of the language of the natives about Plymouth and Cape Cod I have collected a small dictionary wherein I find many words agreeing with those of the South Colony, and of the eastern shore of the bay. I have one great design, namely to find out what Sea that is, which the Frenchmen put down in their charts to west in 40 degrees over against the bottom of the said bay, whether or no an inlet of the South Sea. It must be done by the grace of God through the guidance of the Sasquasahanacks, a most barbarous nation and supposed to be man-eaters, yet upon this condition I will adventure myself with them by land, if I may have a convenient bark to keep for my security 3 or 4 hostages.

John Pory to the Governor of Virginia to Sir Francis Wyatt, Autumn 1622.

Whereas heretofore a vulgar error, namely that fish is not to be had here at all times of the year, had generally possessed the minds of all men, experience hath now taught us the contrary: that in some two months of the cod, which never bites but in the daytime, comes altogether as good a fish called a hake, to be caught in the night. The places of fishing upon this coast are as universal as the times, for it is experimented now by one John Gibbs, who this summer hath passed five or six times between this place and New Plymouth, that a man cannot cast out a hook at any ledge at sea in that distance, but he shall draw up goodly fish at pleasure, upon whose relation divers mean to fish the next year more toward the southwest. And Cape Cod itself hath not that name for naught: for it is thought that one shallop's fishing only would suffice the whole plantation of New Plymouth all the year long. To the east and north of this place is found as great plenty as to the south and west. Now whether there be any cod or no to the south of the place (as the Company desire to be informed), although Mr. Vengham, a man of experience in those parts, do seem to doubt. Yet a Flemish pilot, who is to conduct Captain Argall his pinnace into Hudson's River, putteth down in his plot a place some fifteen leagues to the west of Elizabeth's Island, which he calleth Cod Island.

And by the way, that you may know how strongly the Flemings make title from 40 to 44 degrees, they call Hudson his river, "Prince Maurice his river"; Cape Cod, the "States Hooke"; Sagadahoc or thereabouts, "Prince Hendrick's river"; and the great bay wherein Port Royal (taken by Captain Argall from the French) was seated, "Grave Williams Bay." And in the same place they confine Virginia within the Cape Henry and Charles, as if it had no further extension both north and south. Also, to the south of Hudson's River, they name the country "Aquahanacke."

Besides that plantation of New Plymouth in 41 degrees and one half, and that other in Massachusetts in 42 or thereabouts, there is a third in Canada at Damariscove in 43 and 45 minutes, at the cost of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, consisting of some thirteen persons, who are to provide fish all the year with a couple of shallops for the most timely loading of a ship, and to keep that island to be farmed out in Sir Ferdinando's name to such as shall there fish. And lest the French or the savages should root them out in winter, they have fortified themselves with a strong palisado of spruce trees of some ten foot high, having besides their small shot, one piece of ordnance, and some ten good dogs.

Howsoever they speed, they undertake an hazardous attempt, considering the savages have been this year, as those to the north use to be by the French, furnished (in exchange of skins) by some unworthy people of our nation with pieces, shot, powder, swords, blades and most deadly arrow heads; and with shallops from the French, which they can manage as well as any Christian, as also their pieces, it being an ordinary thing with them to hit a bird flying. And how little they are to be trusted here as well as in Virginia, may appear by the killing lately of the master of a ship of Plymouth with eighteen of his company among the islands toward the northeast, which was the cause that the same ship lost her fishing voyage and went empty home.

Now, as concerning the soil, it is all along, as far as I could perceive, rocky, rough and uneven; and, that as I hear, from a little on this side of Cape Cod as far as to Newfoundland, being all along the sea coast a labyrinth of innumerable islands or broken lands rent in sunder by intricate channels, rivers and arms of the sea. Upon these rocky grounds do grow naturally fir, spruce, birch and other trees, and in some open places abundance of rasps, gooseberries, hurts and such fruit; in other places, high rank grass for the grazing of cattle, to make hay withal; as likewise, great plenty of peas like our English peas, growing naturally without any tilth. Upon these rocky places, there is passing good soil, yet culturable with hoe and spade rather than with the plow. Yet they say that up the river Prinaquier there is a place of even champaign country without any rocks, abounding with variety of excellent timber, and like at Angawam nearer unto Cape Anne, a level of more beauty and largeness.

Within an infinity of rocks may be entombed abundance of rich minerals, among which silver and copper are supposed to be the chief. Out of these rocks do gush out delicate streams of water which, together with the temper of the air, maketh this place marvelous wholesome in summer, which is the cause I have not known one man sick all the time I was there, save only that villain which accused you falsely concerning Swabber, and died (aboard the *Bona Nova*) as he had lived, frantic. Yet is the air too cold here for the summer, but with an easterly wind subject to fogs and mists.

The people seem to be of one race with those in Virginia, both in respect of their qualities and language. They are great lovers of their children and people, and very revengeful of wrongs offered. They make their canoes, their arrows, their bows, their tobacco pipes and other their implements far more neat and artificially than in those parts. They dress, also, and paint leather; and make trousers, buskins, shoes with far greater curiosity. Corn they set none in their parts toward the north, and that is the cause why Indian corn, peas and such like is the best truck for their skins, and then in winter especially, when hunger doth most pinch them, which is the season when the French do use to trade with them. They have the same names of numbers with them in the south. *Accamus* (in the southern language, a dog) they call here *Aramouse*. For *Malta* (no), they pronounce *Madda*; for *Matcheray* (naught), *Mathat*; for *Mitchin* (to eat), *Mitterin*; for *Kijos* (the sun), *Hijos*; and many other like or self-same words spoken by the rebels of the South Colony. Neither is their manner of singing and dancing much different. Their babes here also they bind to a board and set them up against a wall, as they do here in the south. Likewise, their head they anoint with oil mixed with vermilion; and are of the same hair, eyes and skin that those are of.