



Landfall along the Chesapeake: In the Wake of Captain John Smith

Susan Schmidt

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In 2002, Susan Schmidt retraced John Smith's 1608 voyage on the Chesapeake Bay. In *Landfall along the Chesapeake*, a cruising guide for Chesapeake boaters and a field log for naturalists, Schmidt compares the beauty of ancestral legacy and childhood memory to her observations on a 100-day voyage in a 22-foot boat.

As she circles the Bay counterclockwise from Jamestown, she explores Smith's encounters with Native Americans and the Bay's ecological changes over the past four hundred years. On each river and creek, she quotes Smith's journals on matching wits with Powhatan, meeting Pocahontas, surviving thunderstorms, ambush, and a stingray's barb. Anchored on wild creeks, Schmidt observes swans and dragonflies, lightning and sunsets; in port she interviews colorful characters and working watermen about blue crabs and oysters.

Scientists explain the Bay's nitrogen overload, water-level rise, anoxia, Pfiesteria, Kepone, and the Ghost Fleet. Native American chiefs discuss their heritage then and now. Ashore, Schmidt walks on her ancestor's farm, now a military chemical dump, and climbs her grandfather's lighthouse. Despite her despair at bad air quality and diminished fisheries, and her dread of high wind and rough seas, Schmidt expresses gratitude for small-town hospitality and the navigation skills her father taught her.

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