

1. Before New Hampshire

Up to the 1620s

The land now known as New England was once covered with glaciers that erased ancient mountain ranges and deposited countless tons of sand, rocks, and clays in the region. For that reason, you are unlikely to find fossils in Greenland's sandy soil. The hills and coastline do show where the glaciers moved forward and backwards like a snow plow, mounding up sand and earth into today's hills and creating Great Bay's shoreline.

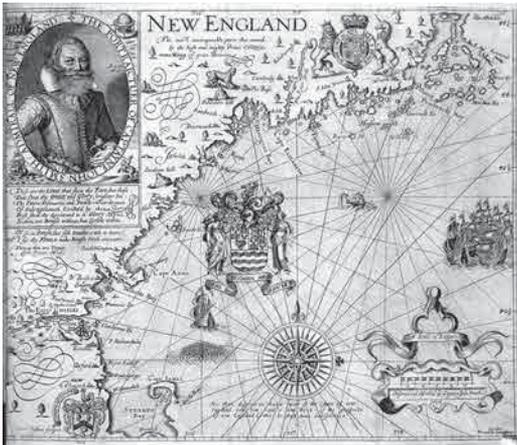
Before 1600, the Great Bay area was only known to Native American tribes called Abenaki, and to a few brave sailors from Europe who came to fish.

European fishermen arrived sometime in the 1500s to fish the rich local waters, but their exploits are poorly recorded, and the surviving charts are often inaccurate. The first explorers of note included Samuel de Champlain for France from 1605–1606, and Henry Hudson for Holland in 1609.

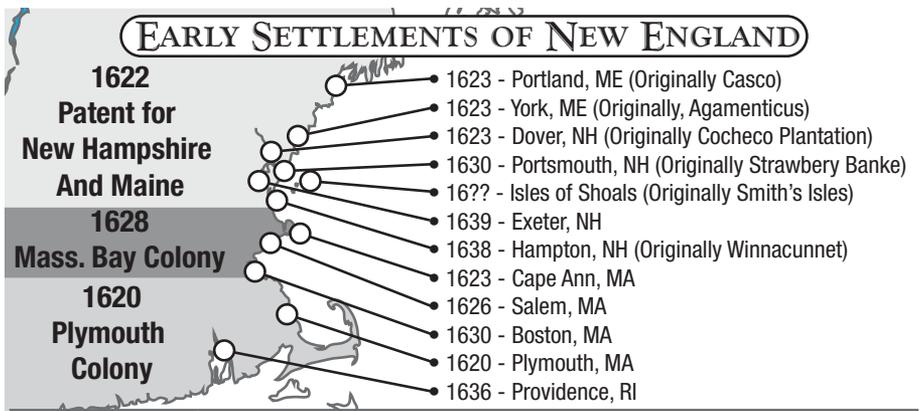


Above: The Captain Smith Memorial at the Rye Harbor State Park.

Below: His map of New England.



In early 1614, Captain John Smith was dispatched from Jamestown, Virginia to try and catch whales in the waters around Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine. Whales were hard to catch, so while some of his crew turned to fishing and trading for furs, Smith turned his attention to exploring the coastline. With basic surveying equipment, they charted 350 miles of coastline



from the Bay of Fundy to Cape Cod. This was used to create the first accurate map of the region, which was included in Smith’s 1616 book, *A Description of New England*. In addition to naming the region, he gave place names that are still used today, identifying Plymouth where the Pilgrims settled, Cape Ann, and Cape Elizabeth. One name that did not stick was Smith’s Isles off the New Hampshire coastline, which are now known as the Isles of Shoals

Meanwhile, many of the Abenaki people along the coastline had fallen ill from a pandemic they called “The Great Dying” — leaving an empty land to the first European colonists.

At the same time, European powers began to claim the land for themselves. France took what is now Canada. Holland took what is now New York. England took New England. Fishermen already had a seasonal settlement at the Isles of Shoals, with a trading post on what is now called Lunging Island. In 1620, the Pilgrims arrived and established their colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Other settlements would quickly follow.

In New Hampshire, Pannaway Manor was established as a trading post at Odiorne Point in Rye in 1623. This settlement helped save the Pilgrims from starvation. Up river on the Piscataqua, the future city of Dover was founded in 1623, and is considered the oldest community in the state.

While the Pilgrims and Puritans came for religious freedom, the settlers of New Hampshire came to make a living. At first, they explored the land, looking for gold, silver, and gems. They didn’t find any, but they found animals like beaver, whose fur was wanted in Europe. The Native Americans brought fur to the settlers to trade for metal knives, pots, and other things they did not know how to make. Fishing and harvesting timber for local and European markets were other major industries of the region.

Eventually, Pannaway Manor was abandoned. Strawberry Bank would be established in 1630 due to its better anchorage for ships, and a far more defensible position of New Castle. It would be renamed Portsmouth in 1653.

Soon, settlers began arriving in the land that became Greenland, NH.