

Pory, John ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

March 1572–March 1636

John Pory, explorer, newsletter writer, and geographer, was born at Butters Hall, Thompson, Norfolk, England. The son of William Pory, he was graduated in 1592 from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where for a brief time he was instructor in Greek. He studied and worked with Richard Hakluyt and assisted Hakluyt in the preparation of *The Voyages . . . of the English Nation*, published in 1600. In the same year Pory's own *Geographical Historie of Africa* was published, a work that was consulted by Shakespeare and other contemporary writers and that was the basis of English information on Africa and attitudes towards blacks for several centuries.

Pory served in Parliament during the period 1605–11, was a grantee of the Virginia Company of London in 1609, traveled abroad for several years, and was employed in the English Embassy in Constantinople for three years. He was secretary of the Virginia colony from 1619 to 1621 and while in Jamestown served as speaker of the [first American legislature](#) ^[2], organizing it along the lines of the House of Commons. In January and February 1622, while awaiting passage home, he explored the Chowan River area in modern North Carolina. He described what he saw there in glowing terms, reported that the Indians wanted to engage in trade with the English, and predicted that when the region was settled it would be a profitable place for agriculture and the production of [naval stores](#) ^[3] in the vast pine forests that he discovered.

Much of Pory's life was spent as a newsletter writer in the employ of prominent Englishmen; this was before and at the time of the first appearance of a printed newspaper in England. Among other topics, he wrote about the Thirty Years' War and social and political conditions. He was also employed at court on several occasions and returned to Jamestown in 1624 in connection with an investigation of the Virginia Company. He was the author of several other published works of a geographic and religious nature. Pory was buried in the churchyard in the village of Sutton St. Edmunds, Lincolnshire, where his family apparently had originated and where he had relatives.

References:

William S. Powell, *John Pory, 1572–1636: The Life and Letters of a Man of Many Parts* (1977).

Additional Resources:

"The First Legislative Assembly." Historic Jamestowne, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/jame/historyculture/the-first-legislative-assembly.htm> ^[2] (accessed May 2, 2014).

Pory, John. *John Pory's lost description of Plymouth colony in the earliest days of the Pilgrim Fathers, together with contemporary accounts of English colonization elsewhere in New England and in the Bermudas, ed. with an introduction and notes*. Boston, Houghton. 1918. <https://archive.org/details/johnporyslostde00pory> ^[4] (accessed May 2, 2014).

Leo, Africanus; Prory, John; Brown, Robert. *The history and description of Africa : and of the notable things therein contained*. London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society. 1896. <https://archive.org/details/historydescripti93leoa> ^[5] (accessed May 2, 2014).

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