

JAMESTOWNE, VIRGINIA

400 YEARS AGO

In order to understand what happened 400 years ago, we must tread a little further back in history, to the 17th of November 1558. Princess Elizabeth, 25 years old, was sitting under an oak tree in the park of Hatfield House. She had recently been released from the Tower, where her half-sister, Queen Mary, imprisoned her. While still under guard, she received the thrilling news – confirmation that she would be Queen of England. Mary had drawn her last breath. During Mary's reign, she dictated over and had dismantled Church and State. Her inefficient leadership created a poor and destitute country, making England vulnerable.

When Elizabeth succeeded to the throne of an England economically poor and politically weak, with hordes of unemployed becoming hordes of thieves and robbers, torn by religious contentions, bleeding from Queen Mary's efforts to save her own soul by burning those that opposed her beliefs. By her fair-minded policy of giving every man his chance and by her encouragement of agriculture and trading, manufactures and commerce, exploration and discovery, music and the drama, scholarship and literature, Queen Elizabeth brought it up in the forty-five years of her reign to the golden age of peace, prosperity and cultural wealth and integrity.

The brilliant, headstrong, and high strung young daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn on whom England's crown had so suddenly descended was no saint. She

regarded religion as part of the life of civilized human beings and the church as a necessary feature of the government. She was precise in the observance of religious duties and regarded the Church as an inseparable function of the State. Though she composed some eloquent prayers which have been preserved, Elizabeth was without convictions to make her either Catholic or Protestant. Yet by her skilled tact she effected separation from the Church of Rome and made the "new religion" the national Church of England.

She is known as the Virgin Queen who had ruled England as absolute monarch for two generations and whose government made her the adored mother of the masses of her people. The anniversary of her accession was celebrated in England for a century after her death at age 70 and during all those years the American Colonies were receiving supplies of men and women whose imaginations were under the spell of traditions kept alive by these celebrations. Nothing was ever more appropriate than the naming of Virginia in honor of this Virgin Queen. What her reign did for England and Englishmen is the foundation stone of Virginian and American history.

For nearly two generations the influence of this absolute yet democratic monarch planted and nurtured the liberty loving spirit that English colonists brought to America. The most dramatic feature of Elizabeth's career, and one which profoundly affected the English colonies, the greatest menace to England in her time was, of course, Spain, under the rule of Philip II. The most monumental service of Elizabeth's reign, not only to England but to America, was the breaking of this power – too gigantic for the world's safety in the

hands of any one monarch, and especially dangerous in the hands of bigot whose duty, as he saw it, was bloodily to stamp out all who differed from him in religious opinion. Does this sound like the world today? Through most of Elizabeth's reign she and her subjects were in a virtual state of war with Spain, though without actual declaration. After many battles, Spain became bankrupt and broken. The Elizabethans had done their great work and could now in defiance of Philip's orders, undertake in earnest the Queen's newest enterprise – colonization. It was through the reduction of Philip's power by Queen Elizabeth's soldiers and ships that the United States of today can claim England as mother country instead of Spain.

Craving love and patriotically desiring a proper successor for her crown, she knew that marriage abroad, especially to a prince of France or Spain, might endanger England's peace, and it was out of the question for her to marry a subject. Knowing too, it is believed, that it was impossible for her to become a mother, she made England and its people her husband and her children and devoted her life to their welfare. Her one cry of protest against her lonely estate escaped her when she heard of the birth of a son (James, who was to become James I of England) to her cousin and foe, Mary Queen of Scots.

It was her passionate love for England and desire, which was something new in a sovereign, for the love of its whole people – not of the court especially, not of a select few but all, the poor and obscure as well as the rich and great, that made her reign what it was. She dearly desired all England to be merry England, every man of every class to

have his chance in life. She wanted peace and order and exerted herself to secure it for her subjects.

Many attempts were made to send ships to America. In 1578, seven ships were sent. Again in 1583 another five ships were sent. In 1584 was the discovery of the part of the country now called Virginia where colonists lost their lives to fights with the Spaniards or the natives; or stormy, icy weather and dwindling provisions. In 1586, finding the colony gone, fifteen men and provisions for two years were left. In the spring of 1587 another colony of one hundred and fifty persons, seventeen of whom were women were sent and stopped at Roanoke Island where they found the remains of the luckless fifteen that told a ghastly story of massacre. The ships arrived on the American coast July 22, 1587 and on August 18 was born Virginia Dare the first American child of English parentage. It was not until March 1591 that another ship was sent to America, because all English ships were fighting the Spanish. When the ship arrived, no one was found. After this Sir Walter Raleigh sent five successive expeditions (the last in 1603) in search of his lost colony, but no trace of it was ever found.

THE VIRIGINIA COMPANY

Thus when James I of England became king and after many years of fighting the Spanish, the King refused to finance another trip. A group of gentlemen adventurers and merchants of London founded the Virginia Company in 1606 for the purpose to finance the colonization. My ancestor, Sir Thomas Hinton, was one of those men who financed this exposition.

THE CROSSING

So it was that on December 19 and 20 of 1606, the members of the first Jamestown voyage boarded the Susan Constant, the Godspeed and the Discovery expecting to find riches, welcoming natives and an easy life on the other shore.

The flagship of the voyage, the 120-ton Susan Constant was modest enough in size around 116 feet in all. The others were smaller still: the Godspeed was roughly 68 feet long and had a capacity of 40 tons and the Discovery was about 50 feet and 20 tons. How the men were able to cope with their cramped quarters over the four-month journey is difficult to conceive. The 105 or so colonists were joined by 39 crewmen with the result that 71 bodies somehow had to be jammed onto the flagship, 52 on the Godspeed and 21 on the tiny Discovery. The ships had not even been built to carry passengers, as they were cargo ships. The men had to take turns sleeping and there were no bathroom facilities. Which brings us to understand the term "Poop Deck"

On Saturday, December 20, 1606, The Susan Constant, The Godspeed and the Discovery lay at anchor on the Thames River. The fleet sailed down the Thames River to the Downs, but was compelled by contrary winds to anchor there, "where we suffered great storms, but by the skillfulness of the Captaine wee suffered no great losse or danger." There was dissension and all sorts of discomfort, including seasickness and evil smells in the crowded, storm-tossed ships, during the six weeks they were kept in sight of England, and many of the company would have given up the voyage but for the "true devoted example" of Parson Hunt who was made so "weake and sicke" by the rough weather.

They sailed down to the Canaries for fresh water then on to the West Indies and anchored there where they traded with the Indians for food. On March 28, 1607 the colonists anchored at the Island of Nevis where for the health of the men they camped six days. It was on one of these islands that John Smith was arrested, charged by Edward Wingfield with mutiny. The absurd false charge was that Smith plotted on arrival in Virginia, to murder the Council and make himself king, and that he had confederates dispersed through the fleet to help him carry out this plan.

Captain Christopher Newport was given sole charge and command of the Fleet and of all the captains, soldiers and mariners and other persons that sailed on this voyage. Captain Newport with Captains Gosnold and Ratcliffe were given charge of a box, with the council's seal containing the names of those appointed by His Majesties Council in England to compose the Counsel in the said country of Virginia. This prize box was to be opened by its three guardians within four and twenty hours after the arrival in Virginia.

On the morning of April 21, 1607 they joyfully saw the "Land of Virginia". That day they entered the famous Chesapeake Bay. That night the box was opened and the orders read in which Bartholomew Gosnold, Edward Wingfield, Christopher Newport, John Smith, John Ratcliffe, John Martin and George Kendall were named to be of the Council and to choose a President amongst them for a year. Because John Smith was named on the counsel, the charges against him were dropped. At Edward Wingfield's trial on

September 17, 1607 among other things brought against him were the false charges against John Smith.

On May 14th, the colony disembarked and every man brought ashore his personal items and furniture together with the general provision. Then Chaplain Hunt, dedicated the spot to the glory of God and they “began thereon in the name of God to raise a fortresse”.

THE POWHATAN INDIANS AND POCAHONTAS

The colonist befriended the Powhatan Indians and traded with them. Captain Newport returned to England and promised the colonists that he would be back in twenty weeks – that is in November 1607 with more supplies. The colonists unwisely placed their hopes on his returning on schedule. The colonists were all men that were listed under three headings: gentlemen, carpenters and laborers. Captain John Smith was in charge of the colonists and could not get the men to work or help themselves. They were in such despair as they would rather starve and rot with idleness than to be persuaded to do anything for their own welfare. Lacking enough willing and able hands to gather food, Smith went to the Indians and traded for corn. It was on one of these visits, that John Smith was captured by the Indians and was saved by the 11 year old, Pocahontas, Princess of the tribe. Captain John Smith left Jamestown in October 1609 and Pocahontas was not seen or heard from by the colonist until April 1613. She was captured and held captive at Jamestown where she was taught the English ways and became the first Virginia Indian converted to Christianity. Her Indian name was

Matoaka, Pocahontas was a pet name given her by the Powhatan Indians. Parson Bucke baptized her Rebecca.

John Rolfe is known in American history as developing the first tobacco crops in Virginia, which saved the economy of Virginia. He met and courted Pocahontas and they were married April 5, 1614. Since then there was peace with the colonists and the local Indians. In 1615, Thomas Rolfe was born. In May 1616, to promote the growing and shipping of tobacco, John, Pocahontas and their infant son, Thomas sailed for England. It was important that the English people see and get to know Pocahontas as the Indian Princess that had changed to the English way of life. It was in England that Pocahontas met Captain John Smith again. The family was returning to Jamestown and on March 21, 1617 when in route at Gravesend, England, Pocahontas became ill and died. She is buried in the Churchyard of St. George's Church. John left Thomas to be raised by relatives in England and returned to Jamestown. John married Jane Pearce and had another family with her. John died sometime in 1622, during an Indian attack in his Virginia home.

Pocahontas' father was extremely upset with the death of his favorite daughter and became a recluse and died in the woods of Virginia in April 1618. His brother, Opechancanough, took over as King of the Powhatan tribe and disliking the English people and seeing that more and more kept coming and taking over his land, on March 22, 1622 the Indians attacked the small English settlements in Virginia including Jamestown and massacred about 400 colonists.

IN CONCLUSION

To give us some idea of what it was like to live in the 1600's: If you lived to be in your 30's you were considered old. Most families had an average of 8 children with only 2 living to be adults. Most men were married more than once and had multi families. The original 140 or so men who came to America in 1607 had a very rough life and 80% of them did not survive. They paved the way as more and more English men and women would come to the American colony. To put it into this day and age, it would be like a space ship heading into the sky to a star far far away and not knowing what to expect or if they would ever return home again.

They had to be a very special people and true adventurers.

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SANDRA LEE (TREFNY) MICHAELS

Installed as a DAR member on April 8, 1993.

Ansel Brainerd Cook Chapter-Libertyville Illinois:

Offices held since 1993:

National Defense

Historian-Librarian

American History Essay Contest

Veterans

Vice Regent

Regent from 2001 to 2007

District IV:

Ways and Means 2003-2005

Ways and Means Chairman 2005-2007

State Chairman:

Commemorative Events 2005-2007

Illinois Cameo Society:

Vice President 2005-2007

President Elect 2007-2009

DAR Programs that I have given:

Poinsettias (12/2000)

WW II La Mesa Texas Glider Training School (1/2001)

Christmas Cards and Customs (12/2001)

Ansel Brainerd Cook (9/2002)

Jamestown VA - 400 Years Ago (1/2007)

Professional Life outside of the DAR:

Cake Decorating Instructor for 20 years at JC Penney Lakehurst.

Accounting work all my adult life - the last 12 years with Lake County Public Works

I retired on 12/27/2006 -- Now working part-time for H & R Block and taking care of my granddaughter, Skylin as my daughter is going back to school to get her Masters Degree.

Family Life:

I have been married to Richard since June 1973.

We have 4 children:

Michelle is a DAR member and was married on September 15, 2006 to James Ricker.

Graduated with her Bachelors from NIU and is a victim's counselor for the States Attorney's office-Juvenile Division.

Todd will be getting his Master's Degree in Chemistry from SIU-Carbondale this May and will be getting a real job soon.

Andrea is a DAR member and has her Bachelors from University of Wisconsin-Parkside in English and Woman's Studies. She is working for Lake County Regional Superintendent of Schools and will be returning for her Master's so that she can teach on the College level. She is the mother of my only grandchild, Skylin who is 7 years old.

Joseph graduated last May with this Bachelor's in University Studies from SIU-Carbondale. He is now working on his Master's in Computer Education. Joe was married on July 5, 2006 to Christy Wei. She is from Taiwan and already has a Master's from SITJ in Languages.