



California fifth grader compiles 'excellent' report on Penelope Barker

Gets assistance from Boyd and Nicholls

BY JEANETTE WHITE
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When Rosalie Boyd suggested to a young California girl that maybe she should write a book about Penelope Pagett Barker, the child did the next best thing.

Alison Kranz, a fifth-grade student at Mission Avenue Open School in Sacramento, CA, contacted Ms. Boyd, librarian at Shepard-Pruden Library, and asked for information about Penelope Barker and the Edenton Tea Party. The student wanted to do a biographical report as a class project.

Ms. Boyd copied available information and sent it to Alison with a letter.

"I told her there is no book on Penelope Barker and maybe she should be the one to write the book," Ms. Boyd said.

Nancy Nicholls, Director of Chowan County Tourism Development Authority, thinks maybe Alison discovered Edenton on the computer Internet and wrote to TDA asking about Penelope and the Tea Party held in 1774.

Ms. Nicholls sent a packet of information designed for students.

Since Edenton went on-line, inquiries for information about the town have increased. TDA

had 1,500-1,600 requests for information between January and March. TDA gets about 600 inquiries each month now or about 20 "hits" per day. It will take a few more months for data to be complete on how many who ask for information actually visit Edenton.

"The Internet has opened up a whole new world for us," Ms. Nicholls said.

Recently Ms. Boyd received a copy of Alison's completed report, "Penelope Pagett Barker and The Edenton Tea Party", along with comments from her teacher, who gave Alison an "excellent report" grading.

The report says Penelope Pagett was born in Edenton in 1728 to Dr. Samuel Pagett and his wife, Elizabeth, daughter of the prominent James Blount.

Penelope had two sisters and one of them, Elizabeth, and the doctor died while Penelope was still in her teens.

When Penelope was 16, she wed her sister's widower, John Godgson, and they had two sons within two years. When Penelope was 19, John died and she wed Edenton farmer James Craven in 1751.

The couple had no children and James died four years after the wedding.

Her beauty and wealth are



Alison Kranz of California is one of thousands of Americans who have discovered Edenton via the Internet. (Submitted photo)

said to have drawn many suitors before Penelope married Edenton attorney Thomas Barker in 1757. They had three children, but none lived to be 12 months old. Penelope still had the responsibility of caring for Elizabeth's children.

But perhaps her greatest claim to fame came from Edenton's Tea Party.

When Britain closed the Boston port because of that town's tea party, Edenton sent help, including one ship named "The Penelope".

Then on October 25, 1774, 51 of Edenton's finest ladies signed a resolution banning Britain's tea because of the tea tax.

The women gathered at the home of Elizabeth King and drank a brew of dried raspberry leaves. The party was organized by Penelope Barker.

Alison says the resolution read, "We the Ladies of Edenton, do hereby solemnly engage not to conform to ye pernicious Custom of Drinking Tea, or that we the aforesaid Ladies, will not promote ye wear of any manufacture from England until such time that all Acts which tend to enslave this

our Native country shall be repealed."

The resolution was sent to England, where people said Carolina's men were hiding behind the ladies' skirts.

On January 16, 1775, "The Morning Chronicle" and "London Advisor" in England printed cartoons reviling the women of Edenton.

Edenton's Tea party was the first political event by women in America and the town still uses the teapot as its symbol.

Thomas Barker had sailed to England in 1761 as agent for the North Carolina Colony. The Edenton port was closed because of the Revolutionary War and Barker did not return to Edenton until 1778.

In 1782, the couple built the Barker House and Thomas died in 1789. Penelope lived until 1796, when she was 68, and was buried at Hayes Plantation.

Alison says Penelope was very brave to organize the Tea Party "because if the British were to punish them, they might have taken away her money and land...I like how she stood up to Great Britain and fought for her colony."

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