

Virginia Dare Nearing 400th Birthday Celebration

She's famous, but we know almost nothing about her.

We know her birthday, August 18. We know that she was born and baptized on Roanoke Island. And we know her name.

She's Virginia Dare, whose birth in 1587 made her the first English child born in the New World.

Virginia's parents, Eleanor and Ananias Dare, arrived in what is now North Carolina July 22, 1587, as part of the second of Sir Walter Raleigh's attempts to colonize the new world. An exploratory expedition had reached the Outer Banks in 1584, and a 1585 colony had failed after a year.

The settlers landed on Roanoke Islands in what is now Dare County. Among the colonists were 100 men, 17 women and nine children.

Together they were to become the "lost colony."

Several weeks after their arrival, Eleanor gave birth to a daughter who quickly became the object of affection of all the colonists.

When a neighbor suggested naming her for their good queen, Elizabeth was promptly rejected as a name. Some have since written that, although a queen, Elizabeth I was "the veriest shrew" and "a vain and worldly woman."

Finally, John White, governor of the colony and the baby's grandfather, suggested she be named "for this fair land to which she has come, our new home, Virginia."

The following Sunday, the first English child born in the new

world was christened "Virginia Dare."

Meanwhile, the colonists were fast realizing they'd need far more supplies than they had estimated. Governor White, though reluctant to leave his family, including the 10-day-old Virginia, prepared for the long voyage back to England.

Accounts say that the colonists agreed with Governor White that if they should leave the island, they would carve the name of their destination on a tree. If they had to leave in danger, the same signal would have a cross carved above it.

John White sailed away to England leaving the tiny band in the wilderness.

Finally, in the spring of 1590, Governor White was able to outfit

a ship and return to "Roanok" Island.

At first light, White searched the island and found it deserted. The houses were dismantled, but the palisades remained. Buried chests had been dug up and rifled. White later wrote, "One of the chiefs trees or postes at the right side of the entrance had the barke taken off and 5. foote from the ground in fayre Capitall letters was grauen 'Croatoan' without any crosses or signs of distress."

Taking heart at "no sign of distress," White urged the ship's captain to take him to the mainland camps of the Croatoan Indians where he was sure he would find the colonists, but a raging storm drove the vessel out to sea. No amount of entreaty could

lure the captain back once his bow pointed toward England.

Back home the grieving governor soon died, never to see his family and friends again.

And Virginia Dare? Virginia disappeared along with the rest of the colonists.

Many legends have persisted about the lost colony.

Some believe the English did indeed go to live with the friendly Croatoan Indians. Some believe the colonists were annihilated by the Indians or the hostile Spanish from the south. Others insist the settlers built a crude boat, set sail and were lost at sea.

One legend says Virginia grew into young womanhood and was

changed by the sorcery of a rejected lover into a white doe. She roamed the lonely island until true love restored her to human form, only to be killed by a silver arrow shot by a cruel chieftain.

Through the years, historians and researchers have pored over the meager shreds of evidence left by the colonists to no avail. Theories abound, but after four centuries, the fate of the lost colony is still unknown.

Unknown, perhaps, but eternally fascinating. The saga of Virginia Dare and the "lost colony," has been captured in dramatic story and song in Paul Green's symphonic drama, "The Lost Colony," performed every summer on Roanoke Island.



VALU-MART

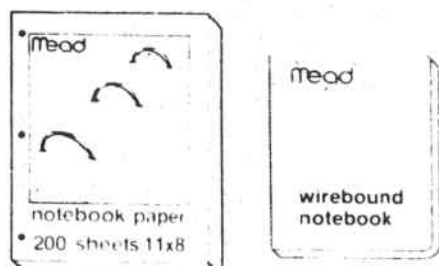
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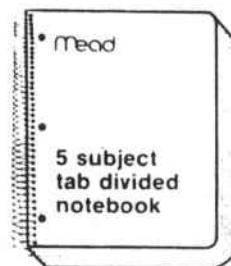
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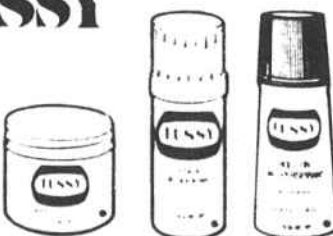


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