

The Rare Marriage of John Rolfe to Pocahontas

John Rolfe and PocahontasInitially, there were virtually no white women in Jamestown.

And those women in James during the massacre of 1622 were killed. The demand for wives caused the settlers to purchase wives transported into the colony for that purpose.

The Pocohantas marriage of the Powhatan tribes in Jamestown to John Rolfe was an exception. John Rolfe was born in Norfolk, England and his first wife died in 1610. In 1614, he was married to Pocahontas.

Captain John Smith negotiated a political marriage in the same way that royalty secured peace with other countries and legitimacy to the throne. Pocohantas was taken back to England and paraded before the king.

Apparently this marriage (and later death of Pocahontas in 1617) failed to keep a lasting peace with the waring Powhatan tribes, because in 1622, the tribes set out to massacre the entire white population. Interestingly, Rolfe was married again two years later to Jane Pierce. As one can surmise, the lack of available women in the colony was a problem.

My own ancestor, Gabriel Holland who came on on a Supply ship in 1620, returned to London to find a wife. He returned to Jamestown in 1623 with Mary Wicker.

A year later, Mary was dead and Gabriel had married a widowed lady who inherited a small plot of land from her deceased husband. She soon died, and once again Gabriel returned to London to secure his third wife.

John Rolfe, the Pioneer Tobacco Planter



John Rolfe

John Rolfe is credited with making the first trail of growing tobacco in the year of 1612. The first general planting occurred in 1616 (when the colony only numbered 51 persons) at West and Shirley Hundred along the North side of the river where Captain Maddeson had employed twenty-five persons, solely to plant and cure the crop.

The Indians had freely sold six precincts, viz: Henrico, Bermuda Nether Hundred, West and Shirley Hundred, James Towne, Kequoughtan and Dales-Gift. The main body of the planters consisted of officers, laborers and farmers. The officers had charge over the laborers and farmers and were required to maintain themselves and families with food and raiment. Those employed in the general operation of things were smiths, carpenters,

shoemakers, tailors, tanners, etc.