

POCAHONTAS' PLAYMATES



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To Harmon Mann
again with apologies

SMB.

Traditional evidence has painted a pretty picture of a little Princess of Virginia's primeval forests playing on the streets of Jamestown with the children of the settlers, teaching them the calls of the wild things, the use of the bow, and turning handspings simply for the joy of living. Perhaps historians have done the reputation of Pocahontas a violence by attributing to her heroics of which the artless Indian maid could hardly have been guilty and which really added little or nothing to her stature as a courageous and remarkable woman. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to dwell on Pocahontas but rather to call attention to three other little girls of her same age who, in the Fort and on the Island, must have sometimes been her companions. It is interesting that all four little girls have had descendants living in Virginia and sharing Virginia's fortunes from the founding of Jamestown to this date. It is interesting that the three little white girls lie buried in Pocahontas' native land and Pocahontas lies at Graves End in an English churchyard.

Ann Burrus, age 13, arrived in Jamestown in 1608 aboard the *Mary and Margaret* as maid to Mrs. Forrest, wife of Thomas Forrest, Gentleman. The little ship carried a distinguished company including two members of the Council, Francis West, the brother of Lord De La Warr, fourteen tradesmen, twelve laborers, and some Dutchmen. Neither the names of Mrs. Forrest nor that of her husband appear again in the available records, but the child, Ann Burrus, married John Laydon, a carpenter who had come over on the *Susan Constant* in the spring of 1607. This was the

first marriage of English in America. In due course it was blessed with the arrival of a little girl whom they named Virginia.

What an American story there must be in that of the Laydons! The record of their particular deeds and adventures is lost. They lived through all the tribulations of the early years—epidemics, starvation, and massacres. They conquered the wilderness about them, and they prospered. Their four daughters, Virginia, Katherine, Alice, and Margaret, are listed in the census of 1625, and in 1636 John and Ann, as ancient planters, were granted ". . . an additional 1250 acres in Warrick River County". It is probable that John survived all the original company who came to Jamestown in 1607.

Whatever privileges the Laydons enjoyed as ancient adventurers they most certainly earned. The chroniclers of their times did not record the modest part John took in building and defending the Fort and the Church in which the Rev. Robert Hunt married him and Ann and which he must have loved. Doubtless, as a laborer, he had no voice in the decision to abandon the Colony when only John Martin is recorded as voting "Nay". But he and Ann turned again up the great River with Lord De La Warr and never in their lives left Virginia. The historians of that era did not record Ann's services to the sick and dying during the starving time nor the heroism of a teenage girl in the raw and tragic wilderness, but they did recite punishment meted out to her for a breach of discipline, probably in 1611 or 1612.

Ann Laydon, Jane Wright, and other women were assigned the task of making shirts for

the colonists. If they exceeded their allotment of material they lost their allowance of food. Other deficiencies incurred various punishments. The record reads: "Because their thread was naught and would not serve, they took out a ravel in the lower part of the shirt to make an end of the work so the shirts of those that had raveled out part proved shorter than the rest, for which fact Ann Laydon and Jane Wright were whipped and Ann being with child miscarried".

At the other end of the English social ladder there was another young lady, another girl of 13 years who had felt the strong appeal of the New World of opportunity. Her name was Temperance Flowerdieu. Tradition has it that even then she was susceptible to the charm of a young soldier, possibly a cousin, whose name was George Yeardley. Their dreams too are not recorded but there remains abundant evidence of their courage. They left England in the spring of 1609 in a convoy of nine ships with 500 passengers, all under the command of Sir George Sommers. Temperance was on the *Falcon*, the Vice Admiral of the fleet, and George was on the *Sea Venture*, the Admiral. "A most terrible hurricane struck the fleet and scattered it." The *Sea Venture* was wrecked on Bermuda, two of the ships were never heard of again, and John Martin, the ancient adventurer who had also sailed around the world with Drake, brought the *Falcon*, the *Blessing*, the *Lion*, and the *Unity* to Jamestown. Yeardley, John Rolfe and his first wife, Newport, and other survivors reached Jamestown almost a year later on the *Deliverance* and the *Patience*, little ships that had been built from the wreckage of the *Sea Venture* and *Bermuda Cedars*. Strachey, who wrote the letter to the "Noble Lady", which was the inspiration of Shakespeare's *The*

Tempest, was on the *Deliverance*. Could it be that Ferdinand and Miranda were akin to Temperance and George Yeardley? They were the same age.

This was in 1610. Temperance was 14 years old. Other women were in the Colony. John Smith had been sent home as George Percy wrote "with other unruly youths, none of whom were desired". John Rolfe's wife died. Life was confronted by harsh realities. Men and women survived by their fortitude and faith in their destiny. If anyone knew the Pocahontas-Smith legend nothing was said or written about it, then or later. However, there is a record of an intriguing ballet which the Indian Princess and her maidens, as naked as Diana, performed midst autumn leaves for the entertainment of Newport, Smith, and other dignitaries while the Great Chief lay before them the finest foods the forests and rivers could yield.

There is no adequate record of those who lived and those who died and lie in the unmarked graves around the cross which was erected two years ago. How long Temperance stayed in Jamestown and how many trips across the great ocean were made by George is not recorded. However, in 1618 they were married in London. George was knighted by King James and returned on his honeymoon to Virginia as its Royal Governor with his Lady. Their flesh and blood and that of their descendants are forever a part of Virginia.

It was Sir George Yeardley who brought the great charter to Virginia and called the first free election in the New World for legislative representatives. He encouraged his and Temperance's relatives to come to Virginia.

Their names appear on the land and on the honor rolls of the Colony. The Yeardleys set high standards of public service and community responsibility which at a later date became a characteristic of the landed gentry and the plantation aristocracy. Sir George died in 1627 and lies buried in the Church at Jamestown. He was survived by Temperance, two sons, Argall and Francis, and a daughter Elizabeth. The communion service he left to the Church at South Hampton is now at Saint John's Church, Hampton, Virginia. His will provided for liberal legacies to the charities of the day and the remainder of his estate he divided among his family.

In those days attractive women did not long remain unmarried; so, in some haste Temperance decided all the property she had inherited from Sir George to their children and married probably the most prominent man in the Colony, Francis West, erstwhile Governor and brother of Lord De La Warr.

There were many women at Jamestown in those days who had fitted into England's stratified social structure somewhere between Ann Burrus and Temperance Flowerdieu. Nothing is known of Ann's antecedents. Of Temperance's much is known. She was of the gentry of Norfolk County. Her mother was the daughter and heiress of John Stanley. Her paternal grandparents were related to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Her family connections were prominent and their position firmly established.

The little Indian Princess must have had other playmates on the streets of Jamestown. Sisley Jordan came over on the *Swan* in 1610. She was then 9 years old and so far as is known

never left Virginia. She is listed in the muster of 1625-26 as 24 years old, a widow living with her three children on her deceased husband's plantation known as Jordan's Journey, Charles City County. The plantation was overrun by Indians during the Massacre of 1622. What deeds of heroism were performed by Sisley in defense of her little family are not known. Her husband, who had also come to Virginia in 1610, had been a member of the first House of Burgesses and was a member of the committee to review the first four books of the Great Charter.

Sisley must have been fair to behold, in addition to being an heiress, for two days after Samuel Jordan died the Reverend Greeville Pooley of the Established Church ardently sought her hand in matrimony. Sisley succumbed to his entreaties but insisted that the ceremonies be delayed until after the arrival of her unborn Jordan baby. This concession to propriety cost Pooley his bride. In the meantime William Farrar who had qualified as administrator of Samuel Jordan's estate apparently felt that he could the better perform his fiduciary duties by moving into the Jordan household, for the muster records reveal that Sisley Jordan and William Farrar "maintained a joint household". This romantic arrangement culminated in their marriage, but not before the discarded lover, the Rev. Pooley, had instituted breach of promise proceedings in the General Court seeking specific performance. The contest was referred to the Council of the Virginia Company in London who tactfully returned the suit to Jamestown with the notation that they ". knew not how to decide so nice a difference".

In the first 10 years of the Colony there were all told several hundred women at

Jamestown. There were the "maids" who were shipped over to become the wives of the planters, there were the three daughters of Sir Thos. Gates, Margaret, May, and Elizabeth, whose mother had died on the voyage over. There were the young, sometimes beautiful, wives of adventurous young men from every walk of English life, and there were the indentured servants.

Ann Burrus, Temperance Flowerdieu and Sisley Jordan can represent all the unsung heroines of that heroic age. They possessed that courage, stamina, and faith in the new land characteristic of all their "sisters", those who were the silent partners of the master adventurers in the New World who founded a new nation and whose blood is the strength of the backbone of America today. Ann, Temperance, and Sisley can represent them all. They were contemporaries of Pocahontas but unlike Pocahontas their bodies are forever a part of Virginia's soil.