

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“A Brief Embellished History of Virginia, Part I”

The following is the first of two columns that represents an edited version of Ron’s comments at the 2007 Herndon Chamber of Commerce Awards Gala.

Since this year marks the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in Virginia, I thought it might be fun to explore a brief recap of the history of our fair state. Please be aware that while many of these facts may be true, some embellishment has occurred because...uh, well...the facts are just not that entertaining.

To begin, it’s important to realize that Jamestown was *not* the first settlement in Virginia. Native Americans settled here thousands of years earlier. We know them as Indians, a name given to them by Christopher Columbus who was apparently “continent dyslexic” thinking he had landed in the West Indies—which by the way is where we get the term “incontinent” meaning, “Urine...the wrong place.”

In 1584, prior to the founding of Jamestown, Walter Raleigh attempted to establish the first colony on Roanoke Island in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. However, that colony mysteriously disappeared. While there is suspicion that it’s buried beneath Giant Stadium in New Jersey, the Outer Banks was soon re-populated by log cabin timeshares and seafood taverns enticing early colonial families to travel for days to enjoy the sun, the sand and the scurvy. One permanent fixture was a “delightfully tacky yet unrefined” pub featuring female colonists in short dresses and tight corsets called Pewters. Over 350 years later, the pubs would adopt an owl as their mascot, change their name to Hooters and become a chain of 435 restaurants in 46 states and 20 countries featuring quality food, spirits and breathtaking “scenic overlooks.” But I digress.

After the failed attempt at Roanoke Island, the responsibility for New World colonization fell to the Virginia London Company which, in 1606, dispatched 144 colonists in four ships under the command of Christopher Newport. The ships were the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, the Discovery and the Titanic. Captain Newport later said, “I had a sinking feeling that only three of those ships would actually make it to the New World.”

Once here, the colonists sailed up the James River to find safer land and founded Jamestown in honor of King James I who I believe, and don’t quote me on this, was the author of the Bible, the second biggest selling book behind Harry Potter.

When the first English settlers arrived in 1607, Native American Tribes owned the land. To their surprise, all of these British people arrived and began gathering each day at the 7-9, a local two-hour convenience store, looking for work. Believing that these new settlers were here illegally, the Indian Tribal Council began “scouting” out the activity at the 7-9 and drawing sketches of the local business people who hired them. Thank goodness we live in a more civilized world today. Eventually, tempers flared, letters were written to the *Jamestown Observer* and eventually, the settlers who had the advantage of guns, stylish iron breastplates and matching headgear, *negotiated* with the Indians forcing them out of their land and into the west in exchange for the world’s largest casinos and their likenesses on football helmets. By the way, the word “casino” is Cherokee for “Take white man’s money” and is still used today for the same purpose.

Speaking of words, the name of our great state, “Virginia,” was chosen in honor of Queen Elizabeth I who was known as the Virgin Queen because she never married. That’s pretty funny but not nearly as bad as it could have been. We could have ended up living in “The Old Maid Dominion,” “Spinsterchusetts” or “Fridgidaria.” We should consider ourselves lucky.

As the colony got settled, Captain John Smith took charge of Jamestown and helped sustain it during the early years. Then, Thomas West took charge in 1610 and proudly led Virginia through the process of creating the House of Burgesses, the first elected legislative assembly in the New World and ancestor to Burgess Meredith, the brilliant actor known for Rocky I–XXI and as the penguin in the original *Batman* television show.

Next month we’ll see how the State of the Virgin Queen created slave trade, kicked some British butt and helped resist that awful War of Northern Aggression while spawning such great leaders as Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Heather Locklear and Cindy Crawford (I’m not sure about those last two but a man can dream, can’t he?).

Until next time, just humor me.

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