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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 201

Offered January 19, 2006

Honoring Pocahontas for her vital contributions to the settlement at Jamestown.

Patrons—Morgan, Abbitt, Albo, Armstrong, Athey, Barlow, Byron, Callahan, Carrico, Cline, Cole, Cosgrove, Cox, Crockett-Stark, Dudley, Fralin, Gear, Gilbert, Griffith, Hamilton, Hogan, Hugo, Hull, Hurt, Iaquinto, Ingram, Janis, Jones, S.C., Kilgore, Landes, Lingamfelter, Lohr, Marshall, D.W., Marshall, R.G., May, McQuigg, Melvin, Nixon, O'Bannon, Oder, Orrock, Purkey, Putney, Rapp, Reid, Rust, Scott, E.T., Sherwood, Spruill, Suit, Wardrup, Ware, R.L., Welch and Wright; Senators: Bell, Blevins, Chichester, Cuccinelli, Devolites Davis, Hawkins, Martin, McDougle, Norment, Obenshain, O'Brien, Potts, Quayle, Rerras, Ruff, Stolle, Wagner and Watkins

WHEREAS, Pocahontas, an Algonquian princess and wife of the English settler and farmer John Rolfe, made vital contributions to the settlement at Jamestown; and

WHEREAS, Pocahontas was the daughter of Chief Powhatan, whose name was Wahunsenacawh, the powerful ruler of the Powhatan Confederacy of Tidewater Algonquian tribes during the establishment of the Jamestown Colony; and

WHEREAS, Pocahontas, whose birth name was Matoaka, was born in 1595 in Werowocomoco (Wicomico) in Gloucester County and died in Gravesend, England, on March 17, 1617; and

WHEREAS, in 1607 Pocahontas first interacted with the 104 Jamestown settlers; and

WHEREAS, the colonists were struggling to survive the hot, oppressive summers and the mosquito-infested swamps of the James River peninsula; there were few skilled workers in the camp to insure survival, and deadly skirmishes between the English and the Indians were common; and

WHEREAS, the dramatic events of Pocahontas' brief life and her lasting friendship with the colonists at Jamestown have formed the basis of popular and highly romanticized legend; and

WHEREAS, the story that Pocahontas rescued Captain John Smith from execution by her father, as well as celebrated tales of a love affair between them, are considered fiction by most scholars; and

WHEREAS, most historical accounts agree that Pocahontas brought tangible benefits to the English proving to be a valuable liaison with the Indians, and her frequent visits to the settlement brought Algonquian customs and language, and thus communication, as well as important means of sustenance and survival to the settlers; and

WHEREAS, in 1612, at the age of 17, Pocahontas was taken prisoner by the English and held hostage at Jamestown for over a year in order to obtain concessions from Chief Powhatan; and

WHEREAS, in 1614 during her captivity, Pocahontas married the prominent 28-year-old widower, John Rolfe, who had cross-bred imported Trinidad tobacco seed with indigenous tobacco, creating a superior tobacco product and the future economic stability of the colonies; and

WHEREAS, the arranged union of Pocahontas and John Rolfe was of great importance because it brought a period of peace between the Indians and the English colonists; and

WHEREAS, Pocahontas, who took the name Rebecca, was the first Indian in America to learn English, as well as the first to be baptized as a Christian; and

WHEREAS, Captain Smith wrote to Queen Anne in England that Pocahontas "was . . . the instrument to preserve this Colonie from death, famine and utter confusion"; and

WHEREAS, in the spring of 1616, John Rolfe, his wife, and their infant son, Thomas, sailed to England, where Pocahontas was presented at court to King James I and introduced to a glittering London social life; she also was exploited by the Virginia Company to promote their Jamestown investment; and

WHEREAS, the story of Pocahontas ended sadly, when she, John Rolfe, and their son set sail for their Virginia home in March of 1617 and she became seriously ill and was taken off the ship at Gravesend, England, where she died on March 21, 1617; and

WHEREAS, the oldest treasure in the National Portrait Gallery's 18,000-piece collection is the widely-recognized engraving of Pocahontas and her only known life portrait, in which she appears in a "Jacobean stovepipe hat and lacy ruff" as the regal and exotic princess of America who aided and befriended the English colonists; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly honor Pocahontas for her vital contributions to the settlement at Jamestown; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Princess Pocahontas Foundation in Gloucester, Virginia, so that its constituents may be apprised of the esteem in which Pocahontas is held by the General Assembly.

INTRODUCED

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