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## A Modern Bermuda Connection:

The fifth Native American festival will be held on Saturday June 20 and Sunday June 21, 2009 at the St David's County Cricket field starting at 11 am. For more information contact Stephen Tucker at 441 297-1597, email [stucker@bldc.com](mailto:stucker@bldc.com) or [vtucker@ibl.bm](mailto:vtucker@ibl.bm).

## Contacts in the Library

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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA  
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Bermuda History ~

**Pocahontas :  
her Bermuda  
connection**



The Sedgford portrait of Pocahontas and her son, Thomas Rolfe. Currently in King's Lynn Museum, Norfolk, England.

*At your service, Bermuda!*

## How was Pocahontas Connected to Bermuda?

Did you know that Pocahontas did not marry John Smith, whom she rescued in 1607? She was, however, married to John Rolfe.

Pocahontas, who's real name was Matoaka Powhatan, is thought to have been born around 1595. Pocahontas was a nickname meaning 'little wanton'. She was raised by her father Chief Powhatan.

There are many interpretations of John Smith's adoption into Powhatan tribe. The most popular tale is that Pocahontas, as a child, saved John Smith's life after he was captured by the Powhatan. According to John Smith's account he was laid across a stone and just as he was to be executed Pocahontas threw herself across his body. Many scholars believe that this 'execution' was actually a ritual misunderstood by Smith. In either case, Pocahontas and John Smith became friends and she visited him at the Fort often. Smith says that Pocahontas saved the people at the Fort from starvation by bringing them provisions. This friendship led to the romantic tales of Pocahontas and John Smith which continue to this day; with many people wrongly believing that they were once married. In October 1609, John Smith was badly injured in a gunpowder explosion and was forced to return to England. When Pocahontas went to visit him at the Fort she was told that John Smith had died.

In 1610 Pocahontas was captured by Captain Samuel Argall for arms stolen by her father Chief Wahunsonacock Powhatan and was

held captive by him until 1613. In April 1613, Pocahontas was moved to Henrico and put in the care of Sir Thomas Dale. During her two-year captivity she was taught English and was converted to Christianity. It was here she began her education in the Christian faith and met the man she would later marry, John Rolfe.

John Rolfe was a gentleman who set sail for Jamestown aboard the "Sea Venture" from England June 2, 1609. As all Bermuda historians know, the "Sea Venture" was shipwrecked on Bermuda on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1609. John Rolfe's wife accompanied him on this journey. Mistress Rolfe gave birth to a baby girl, Bermuda, on February 11, 1610. Bermuda Rolfe did not live long however and was buried in Bermuda before the castaways sailed for Virginia. The passengers sailed for Jamestown on two ships, the "Patience" and the "Deliverance", on May 10, 1610, arriving in Chesapeake Bay ten days later. Tragically, Mistress Rolfe died soon after reaching Virginia.

In 1611 John Rolfe began experimenting with tobacco seeds and became the first Colonial Planter to grow tobacco successfully. It is believed that he met Pocahontas in July 1613; the same year he sent tobacco to England.

Reverend Richard Bucke, another "Sea Venture" wreck survivor, performed the ceremony which married John Rolfe and Pocahontas on April 6, 1614. After her baptism and subsequent marriage Pocahontas was known as Rebecca.

Pocahontas and John Rolfe had a son, Thomas, who was born in 1615. The family left Virginia aboard the "Treasurer" in 1616 to return to

England accompanied by nearly a dozen other Powhatan Indians.

The arrival of Pocahontas in London was well publicized. At the time John Smith did not go to see Pocahontas. He did however, write a letter to Queen Anne asking that Pocahontas be treated with respect as a royal visitor. Pocahontas, as Lady Rebecca, was brought before, and presented to, King James at Whitehall Palace during a performance of Ben Johnson's masque 'The Vision of Delight'.

Pocahontas and John Rolfe lived in Brentford for several months. In early 1617, John Smith went to visit them at a social gathering. It is reported that Pocahontas was overcome by the sight of John Smith whom she thought was dead. She was left alone for two to three hours and then spoke with him. This was their last meeting.

In March 1617, John Rolfe, Pocahontas and their son Thomas were returning to Virginia when she fell so ill they had to be put ashore in Kent. It is not known what caused Pocahontas' death, but pneumonia, tuberculosis and small pox are all possible causes. Pocahontas was buried at St. George Church in Gravesend, Kent on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1617. Her son Thomas was also ill and was left in England under the guardianship of Sir Lewis Stuckley until John's younger brother, Henry, could take over care. Thomas did not return to Virginia until 1640.

John Rolfe returned to Virginia in 1617 to be the Secretary/ Treasurer of Virginia.