

Pocahontas - The real story



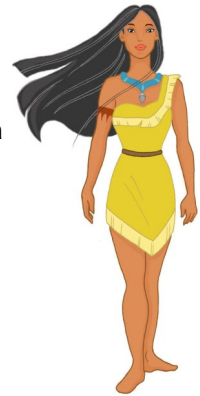
Matoaka was the beautiful and lively daughter of Powhatan, ruler of the land that the English named Virginia. "Pocahontas" was her nickname.

Pocahontas is known for saving the life of the Jamestown colonist John Smith and falling in love with him. Disney's Pocahontas was an attempt to rewrite history. It resembled the original story enough to confuse everyone.

The chief Powhatan of the Indians in Tidewater Virginia had many wives. He kept a wife until she had a child and sent her back to her own people. When the child was old enough to return, 8 - 10 years of age, the mother could remarry. Dozens of children were born including Pocahontas. She became Powhatan's favourite.

Pocahontas's first saw an Englishman about 8 months after the founding of Jamestown. The Indians wanted to find out why the English had come to stay in Virginia. They captured John Smith who was brought to Powhatan. Pocahontas was only 11 years old, Smith was 28. Not, the young couple Disney want to portray them as.

A year later Pocahontas is said to have travelled to Jamestown to negotiate the release of Indian captives. They were released but even the daughter of a chief would have left military matters to her male relatives not a 12 year old girl.. When she visited Jamestown, she probably tagged along with adults to look at the English. Relations between the English and Powhatan became strained and ended up in the First Anglo-Powhatan War. Smith left Virginia in October 1609.



Pocahontas married the Indian warrior, Kocoum. The English expanded their settlements beyond the Jamestown fort. They traded with the Potomac River tribes. Captain Samuel Argall heard that Pocahontas was visiting one of his trading partners. He pressured the sub chief to help him take her prisoner. They lured Pocahontas aboard a ship and sent her to Jamestown. A ransom demand was sent to her father.

The minister trained Pocahontas in the ways of the Anglican Church. She was baptized and given the Christian name Rebecca. When the English got the ransom she and John Rolfe, a man who had made a fortune in tobacco, had fallen in love and got married. A son, Thomas, was born. As for Pocahontas's first marriage, by Powhatan custom it ended when she was captured.

Pocahontas sailed to England in 1616 with her husband John and the priest Uttamatomakkin, her brother-in-law sent by the chief as an observer. Once in London, she was lodged, clothed and an engraving was made of her. Pocahontas caused a sensation among the English upper class. They were always in search of amusement and she was considered to be something of a curiosity. Pocahontas also met King James I and were invited to attend a costume ball.



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John Smith waited several months before visiting her. Pocahontas was so angry with him. She taunted him about his shabby treatment of her father and telling him that “*your countrymen will lie much.*”

Pocahontas and her family moved to Brentford, outside of London. Her novelty among the upper classes had faded and her rich sponsors left. They family planned to return to Virginia.

After a two-month delay the Rolfs and Uttamatomakkin left for Virginia 1617. But, Pocahontas got sick and was taken ashore before leaving England. She died only 21 years old. Her memory is honoured with a life-size bronze statue at St. George's Church, Gravesend, Kent, England.

Her son, Thomas was also too sick to travel so he remained in England until he was older. When he finally came back to Virginia his father had died thirteen years later.



Pocahontas is one of the iconic figures in American history. She did not become a celebrity until the 1820s, during the Romantic era. Romantic literature is characterized on emotion, passion, and the natural world. Authors turned to folk tales and native mythologies as source material. Themes could be the beauty of nature and man's identity as a natural being. Romanticism dominated English literature throughout the 19th century

Pocahontas life fitted perfectly in to this era. Smith's book “*Generall Historie*” was used as background material. Smith wrote the book in the middle of the Second Anglo-Powhatan War (1622–1632) between the English and the Indians. He writes about the treacherous natives, a heroic Smith, and the one “good” Indian, “Princess Pocahontas.”

Two books “*Travels in the United States of America*”, by John Davis and “*The Gentle Savage*” by John Brougham was published during the Romantic both used Pocahontas as the main character.



“*The Baptism of Pocahontas*” (1840) by John Gadsby Chapman