

The Declaration of Independents



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT AUTHORS GUILD

NOVEMBER 2007

John White: Wilderness Painter, Governor of the Lost Colony of Roanoke by Deborah Homsher

The first British illustrations of America returned to these shores in October 2007, more than four hundred years after their creation. These exact watercolors were painted by John White, and are the sole surviving visual records of the native Algonkian Indians during early contact with the Europeans. They show the Algonkians dancing, cooking, scraping out dugout canoes, eating, and spear fishing. They capture the postures of Native American women with their children and record the structure of fortified Algonkian villages.

John White participated in two of England's earliest ventures to the New World and fell in love with America. A year later, he would return to the Outer Banks as the governor of a new expedition. But the record suggests that John White was better fit to be an illustrator than a governor. He had trouble controlling his own sea pilot, and as a result the colonists were forced to disembark in an area where previous English exploring parties had outraged the mainland Algonkians. In retaliation for the murder of an Englishman, White mounted a dawn attack that accidentally killed some of his own allies, members of the Croatoan tribe. Yet his watercolors, and his close association with a Croatoan named Manteo, suggest that White preferred diplomacy over attack. Hard circumstances, long distances, weather, insurrections, and financial constraints defeated him, as they would most men.

Perhaps John White is most famous for his granddaughter, Virginia Dare, the first English child born in North America on August 18, 1587. Later that year, White left his family and followers to seek support

in England. When he returned to Roanoke Island in 1590 the fort was abandoned. He found no people, no boats, no signs of violence, and few clues to explain what had happened. Virginia, her mother Elenor, and all other members of that company had vanished; the band of men and women were doomed to become known as the "Lost Colony" of North Carolina.



The mystery of their disappearance has never been solved. White wrote of a high palisade of trees with the word *Croatoan* carved in one of the posts. This was the name of a nearby island and its resident Indian tribe. White also listed the bars of iron, pigs of lead, four iron guns, and sacker-shot discovered overgrown with weeds inside the palisade, and he complained that three of his own chests, buried in a trench, had been dug up and despoiled. He concluded that this

was evidence they had safely gone to Croatoan. However, bad weather and impatient sailors prevented him from searching Croatoan Island (modern Hatteras Island) for his lost colonists.

The exhibit of John White's watercolors, entitled "Mysteries of the Lost Colony—A New World: England's First View of America," will be at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, NC from October 2007 through January 2008. This is the first time in forty years that these fragile paintings, on loan from the British Museum, were exhibited outside England.

Deborah Homsher is the author of The Rising Shore—Roanoke, a novel about North Carolina's Lost Colony as told through the voices of two pioneering women, including John White's daughter, Elenor Dare. Additional historical information regarding John White and the early colonists, as well as on her book, can be found at www.risingshoreroanoke.com.

The National Orphan Train Complex Celebrates Its Grand Opening

by Donna Nordmark-Aviles

On Saturday, September 15, 2007, the Orphan Train Historical Society of America (OTHTSA) marked the completion of a 20-year dream with the Grand Opening of the National Orphan Train Complex & Research Center in Concordia, Kansas. Honored guests included three Nebraska Orphan Train Riders: Anne Harrison, Lela Newcombe and Lois Gillett.

The Orphan Train Movement is a little known era in American history that began in 1854 and lasted until 1929—a full 75 years. The Reverend Charles Loring Brace is credited with beginning the movement when he established the Children's Aid Society in New York City. His original goal was to cleanse the city of over 30,000 homeless and neglected children. Initially he established orphanages to house and educate these "street urchins," as the children came to be called, as well as teach them a trade. Quickly the orphanages became overcrowded and a more long-term solution was sought: transporting orphans out of the city by train.

The trains would stop at small towns along the railroad line and the children would be placed on the stage of the local Opera House. Farmers and merchants were encouraged to come and inspect the children, hopefully choosing one or more to take into their homes to help with the labors of farm life.

The children were instructed not to talk about where they came from, in an effort to help them fit in with their new communities. It wasn't until the early 1960s that many came to realize that theirs was not the only train but, in fact, that they were part of an historic time now known as the Orphan Train Movement. In all, over 200,000 children would be placed with Midwestern farming families in hopes of a better future.

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The newly-opened National Orphan Train Complex & Research Center.

The opening of the National Orphan Train Complex Museum is a celebration of history as well as a means of preserving that history for future generations. For more information on the museum and the OTHSA please visit www.orphantraindepot.com. ■

Donna Nordmark-Aviles is the author of *Fly, Little Bird, Fly!*, *The True Story of Oliver Nordmark & America's Orphan Trains*, and *Beyond The Orphan Train*, based on tape recordings her grandfather made telling the story of his life as an orphan train rider. Visit www.orphantrainbook.bravehost.com for more information.



A Celebration Of Franco-American Teamwork

by Charles L. Lunsford

In 1967, the American Air Bases in France were turned over to the French Air Force. On July 8th, 2007, I was privileged to be invited to Normandie for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of this event.

We Americans went to France in the 1950s as part of NATO. From 1950 to 1967, the United States maintained a very large presence in France with a total of seventy-seven installations, nine tactical air bases, four dispersed operating bases, a major logistics depot at Chateauroux, eight off-base weapons sites, forty-nine radio relay sites, eleven radio navigation beacons, fourteen dependent schools, and twenty-seven hundred family housing units. We endured difficult peacetime living and working conditions and, as Jerry McAuliffe says in his book *U.S. Air Force in France, 1950-67*, received little

or no recognition for the job we performed. Even so, it is a time remembered fondly for the friendships and camaraderie among those of us who served there. It is also gratifying to remember that the peace was maintained during our watch.

The Anniversary Ceremony took place at French Arienne Base

105, formerly called Evreux/Fauville Air Base when the Americans were there, and the French put on a fabulous Air Show which was attended by thousands. There were many flight demonstrations and lots of good French food and drink. But everything came to a standstill when the USAF Thunderbirds, in France for the first time since 1965, began their aerobatics. With their F-16s, they were the only team flying first-line fighters, and when they lit the afterburners the French crowd was nothing short of awestruck. There was no question they stole the show—and certainly no question about who has air superiority. The Thunderbirds performed just before the closing act, France's flight demonstration team, The French Patrolle. While the French flyers' trademark red, white and blue Tricolor smoke was a nice touch, their flying was rather anti-climactic.



France's flight demonstration team, The French Patrolle.

The show was attended by many American Cold War veterans who had served in France fifty or so years ago. There was a very definite atmosphere about the place that suggested the French were very glad to see us back, even if for only one day. Many whom I talked to, and who used to work for the

Americans all those years ago, wish we had never left.

I felt very proud to be an American that day in France. I was a very young man when I lived in France so long ago and on July 8th, 2007, I got a little of that youth back. ■

Charles L. Lunsford served in the Air Force as an Airborne Radio Operator during the 1950s. He is the author of several books, including the non-fiction *Departure Message* and the fictional *Boxcar Down: The Albanian Incident*.



The Pictish Side of the Story

by Jack Dixon

In history, the truth is often elusive. Historical accounts are given in accordance with the views and ambitions of the scribes and their compatriots. While the fact that something happened may be well beyond dispute, the manner in which it happened may be open to debate by all who did not witness the actual event.

The story of the Picts of ancient northern Britain is among the most open to imaginative interpretation. The Picts were autonomous, reclusive, and uncommunicative. They desired little contact with the world outside their realm, and they were disinclined to document their existence for posterity. Absent the invasion of the Roman Empire into their lands, the Picts would likely have remained a scattering of small, independent, and loosely affiliated tribes. Rome's disruption of Pictish society, however, reshaped the Picts much as it reshaped the rest of the known world.

The Romans reached the shores of Britannia in the first century A.D. with the goal of extending their domain to include all of Britannia and Hibernia (Britain and Ireland). For the most part, the Romans had little difficulty subduing the southern Britannic tribes. The only notable resistance they encountered was an uprising in 60 A.D. led by the fierce and vengeful Icenic Queen Boudicca, who refused to relinquish her dead husband's crown to the Roman emperor. Her defiance incurred speedy Roman wrath and the Boudiccan rebellion was summarily crushed.

In 78 A.D., after eighteen years of relative calm, the emperor Vespasian sent Gnaeus Julius Agricola to Britannia to once and for all extend Roman rule to the farthest reaches of Britannia and Hibernia. Agricola spent two years reestablishing control over Wales and the island of Mona, and led an uneventful “invasion” to subdue Ireland. Agricola accomplished little in his Irish campaign, and then he turned his attention to the north. He sent the Ninth and Twentieth Legions against the reclusive and mysterious Picts, leading the Twentieth himself.



Ruins found at the Rock of Cashel, which was a royal seat of Ireland in ancient times.

Agricola’s son-in-law, Tacitus, recorded the only contemporary account of Agricola’s “complete and decisive victory” over the Pictish tribes, concluded in a massive battle at a fabled—and yet to be located—place called Mons Graupius.

According to information supplied by Tacitus, twenty thousand Romans faced thirty thousand Picts. Despite the disproportion of force, Tacitus tells us that three hundred sixty Romans were killed, while ten thousand Picts—a third of the Pictish army—were destroyed. Once their numbers were brought to even, the Picts inexplicably fled the scene in despair and disappeared into the Highland mists—destroying their women, their children, and their homes in their hurried retreat.

I wonder about the veracity of Tacitus’s account. I wonder at his tale of a Pictish army, composed of men and women alike, that fought fiercely and with tactical guile, but then inexplicably destroyed its women and children as it fled an even field. I wonder how the “decimated” Picts were able to subsequently sustain a prolonged and effective resistance against the Romans from their burned-out camps and villages. I wonder at the absence of archeological evidence of so monumental a battle as Mons Graupius was supposed to have been. I’ve wondered since the seventh grade why the map of the Roman Empire at its zenith didn’t include either Scotland or Ireland. It seemed clear to me

even then that the Romans would have assimilated both if they could have.

What an intriguing group of people, and what a spectacular time and place that must have been! The monumental actions of a mysterious people, about whom too little has been learned or written, carved a border that has stood unchanged for almost two thousand years, while the island it bisects has been repeatedly reshaped and redefined. Imagine the indomitable spirit that must have brought it to pass. ■

Jack Dixon is the author of The Pict, a richly detailed historical novel that tells of the Pictish tribes of first century Scotland, who united under the indomitable spirit of one man to stand firm in the face of Roman aggression. Learn more about the author and his writing at www.jdixon.net.



A Spirited Historical Hoax

by Dianne K. Salerni

Uncle Albert, are you with us? Knock twice for yes....

It’s a recurring theme in popular media. Whether Patricia Arquette is solving crimes in the NBC show *Medium*, or wide-eyed Haley Joel Osment is whispering, “I see dead people,” America’s fascination with contacting the dead is undeniable. Even someone who has never attended a séance can certainly envision one: solemn

people seated around a table, holding hands in the dark, waiting for the curtains to billow mysteriously and the spirit of Uncle Albert to tell them where his will is hidden. Although the mystery of spirit communication is embedded in our popular culture, few people know that the entire concept originated with two adolescent girls in the mid-19th century—and that it all began as a high-spirited prank.

In 1848 Maggie and Kate Fox, aged fourteen and eleven, were the youngest daughters of working class parents. When life in the rural town of Hydesville, New York, became too dull, Maggie and Kate invented a game that convinced their parents—and then the neighbors—that their house was haunted. By means of a knocking code, the girls communicated with the ghost of a supposedly murdered man buried in the basement. When the girls’ parents and neighbors searched the house from top to bottom but could find no earthly explanation for the rapping noises, they commenced to dig up the basement. Results were inconclusive—some hair and bone fragments were actually discovered—but this was enough to convince the residents of Hydesville that supernatural events were afoot.

Word of the ghostly occurrences spread, and people from the surrounding towns came to hear the knocking spirit. A newspaper reporter published a pamphlet on the mystery. Apparently thrilled by all the excitement, the Fox girls revealed that it was not the house which was haunted, but themselves! No matter where the girls were located, ghosts and spirits knocked in response to their questions, and soon

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Maggie and Kate Fox, considered to be the first modern-day mediums.

Hydesville residents discovered that Maggie and Kate Fox were “mediums” through which they could communicate with their own dead relatives!

Interestingly enough, the Fox sisters were spotted as frauds early on by many people who guessed their method for creating the rapping sounds. However, those who had been deceived by the scam steadfastly refused to believe that the seemingly angelic girls could be liars or that the cherished spirit communications were

fake. Even after Maggie Fox confessed—forty years later—that she and her sister created the famous rapping sounds by popping the joints in their knees and ankles and snapping their toes, belief in spirit-rapping continued unabated.

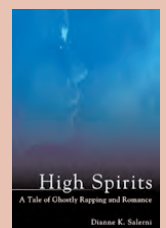
Nevertheless, it is doubtful that the Fox girls’ notoriety would have lasted if it had not been for the intervention of their oldest sister, Mrs. Leah Fish. Seeing through her sisters’ charade, this woman shrewdly recognized the money-making

potential in the scam and relocated the family to Rochester, New York. There, she set up a profitable business conducting “spirit circles” at a dollar a head.

Leah Fish’s connection to abolitionists, suffragettes, and religious leaders became a social stepping stone for the sisters, who consorted with people high above their station, such as Horace Greeley, James Fenimore Cooper, and former Wisconsin governor Nathaniel Tallmadge. Hobnobbing with the rich and famous eventually brought them into the social circle of Elisha Kent Kane, a Philadelphia war hero and explorer. Kane immediately saw through the pretense and, developing a romantic interest in Maggie, sought to remove her from the influence of her avaricious sister.

The tale of Maggie’s romance with Kane and her subsequent defection from spiritualism is a story in itself ... but even this breach in the Fox sisters’ ranks could not stop the movement from growing. By 1854, spiritualists numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and across the country enthusiasts were “discovering” their own supernatural talents. Spirits rapped messages, tipped tables, and wrote on slates for a new crop of “mediums” all hoping to capitalize on the notoriety of the Fox sisters. What had begun as a prank perpetrated by two mischievous girls had become a political vehicle, a new religion, and a source of entertainment for the popular media into the next century ... and beyond. ■

Dianne K. Salerni is the author of *High Spirits: A Tale of Ghostly Rapping and Romance*, a novel of historical fiction based on the life of Maggie Fox. Learn more about the Fox sisters and the book *High Spirits* at www.highspiritsbook.com.



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BOOK REVIEWS

In keeping with this issue’s historical theme, we have two books reviewed by Marva Dasef, a prolific author whose most recent publication is *Tales of A Texas Boy*.

Archelaus Hosken’s *Dilemma* by E.J. Warren

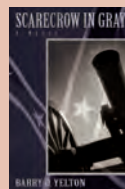


Set in 1807, this story follows the intrepid Archelaus “Archie” Hosken when he is simultaneously saved from the noose and condemned to marriage. A young pickpocket, Archie is caught in the act and finds himself thrown in gaol (that’s jail for those of you not historically inclined). He is bailed out by Miss Patience Polmennor, a young lady who has plans for him that change his life in a dramatic way. Mr. Hosken’s dilemma is how to handle a firebrand wife who controls his every move and (of course) the money. Leave her and he faces being sentenced to life in jail, if not an outright hanging. Stay and he faces being sentenced to life with a harridan. The stage is set for a hilarious tale of marriage and romance, of scheming and subterfuge.

The author creates a number of enchanting characters who have the reader smiling from the very first page. F.J. Warren has a definite Charles Dickens-like style and a knack for writing as if the book were originally published in the 1800s, using local color and antiquated language to transport the reader to another time and place. But despite being a period piece, the book is still written in such a way to enable modern readers to easily follow along. And the author manages to engross the modern reader without resorting to gimmicks, sex, or violence.

The book is a quick read at 109 pages, but it’s also sweet, lovable, readable, and fun. The plot is darling and, despite some typos, the writing is workmanlike. In all, another masterful novel from Ms. Warren, who also wrote the *Trevu* trilogy about two young boys growing to manhood in late 18th century Cornwall.

Scarecrow in Gray by Barry D. Yelton



Barry Yelton’s story is a fictionalized account of his own great-grandfather’s service in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. We first meet Francis Yelton as he’s plowing his fields and thinking what a lucky guy he is: good farm, good wife, two beautiful daughters. He knows the war is going on, but hasn’t felt any urge to join up. He’s not a slaveholder and doesn’t particularly agree with slavery; he just wants to continue with the bucolic life he’s living.

However, local men have taken on the task of conscripting any male of more or less the right age and physical condition. Francis doesn’t want to be thought a shirker, so he decides to enlist rather than be conscripted.

Francis signs up with his neighbor, Whit. They end up spending their entire service together for the last few months of the war. By this time, the Confederate Army is almost a shambles, continuing the fight only through the stubbornness of their generals.

But this isn’t really a story about war; it’s about one man’s experience of it. The fact that Francis did not join the Confederacy until late in the war shows he was a reluctant soldier. Mr. Yelton describes many incidents of Francis showing humanity and sympathy for both his fellow soldiers and even the blacks he’s fighting to keep enslaved (he shares food with a black man and is beaten up by some of his fellow soldiers for doing so). He feels regret at killing, and asks a dying Union soldier to forgive him.

I was very pleased with Mr. Yelton’s writing ability. I’ll warn that some of the fight scenes and the aftermath are fairly graphic, but no more than you might see in PG-13 movies. Descriptions are vivid and on-point, and Mr. Yelton puts in just the right amount to keep you in the scene. I’d recommend this book to anyone interested in Civil War lore.