

The Bride Ship 1620

In 1619, the number of people in Virginia was dwindling. Many of the adventurers who had come from England seeking gold soon grew tired of the search and went home. Others became homesick and lonesome, and went back to their relatives and friends across the sea.

About this time, Sir Edwin Sandys was made treasurer of the colony. He had worked in Virginia for years and loved it. He knew it was a rich and fertile country, and he wanted it to become a prosperous and thickly settled colony. He came to the conclusion that many of the men were young and wanted wives and homes.

Sir Edwin Sandys began to advertise in the papers of England. He described the rich country, what grew in Virginia, and the great opportunity to make homes and fortunes. He specifically advertised for women to come to Virginia to make homes for the men that were already there. Many of the women were willing to work but could not find work in England. In 1620 a ship carrying 90 young women arrived in the Virginia colony.

After the women arrived, some were chosen to be brides by a colonist, who then had to give the Virginia Company 120 pounds of tobacco to pay for the woman's trip in order to marry her. Those who did not meet a husband became indentured servants for a period of seven years to repay the Virginia Company for their passage, and then they were free. The women helped with the cooking, sewing, and housework. As the families began to grow, a real sense of community began to develop.

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1. Write a letter as if you were one of the 90 women on the Bride Ship and tell your family back in England what it is like in the Virginia Colony. (Although most women in the early 1600s were not educated and could not write, we will pretend for this exercise.)
 2. Make an advertisement for a newspaper in England to entice women to come to the new colony. Include at least three details.
 3. Make a schedule showing your daily activities if you had become an indentured servant in 1620.
 4. Research the life of Anne Burras, one of the women on the Bride Ship. What can you find out about her?