

THE VIRGINIA GAZETTE

Colonist to be remembered for helping thwart uprising 400 years ago

**By Wilford Kale
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Four hundred years ago, a Virginia colonist named Richard Pace became notable when he warned the Jamestown settlement of a pending uprising led by Chief Opechancanough, brother of the powerful Chief Powhatan.

Pace's act would not have been possible, however, if he had not been warned by a young Native American he had befriended. Down through the centuries and amid folklore of the years, the Native American has come to be known as Chanco.

Tuesday, Pace and Chanco's efforts will be remembered by descendants of Pace at "A Time for Remembrance," a program planned by Jamestown Rediscovery at 12 p.m. in the Memorial Church on Jamestown Island. Later that day, the family plans to travel to Surry to dedicate and place a memorial wreath at the monument to Chanco on the courthouse lawn.

March 22 marks the 400th anniversary of the day in 1622 that led to a turning point in Powhatan and English relations.

"We're interested ... in letting people know of Richard and Chanco's heroism," said Randy Pace, who is traveling from Houston, Texas, for the event.



This drawing of Chanco warning Richard Pace of the pending Powhatan uprising comes from the program of a drama produced in Richmond in 1922 about the early years of Jamestown Colony. Courtesy of Randy Pace (HANDOUT)

Richard Pace's arrival at Jamestown in the early 17th century is not known. His name and that of his wife, Isabella, are not found on any manifest of ships bringing colonists to Virginia in the years prior to 1616, when they would have met their obligation to the Virginia Company and earned the right to receive 200 acres of their own.

Randy Pace has a theory about his 11th great-grandfather's arrival. It would put him on the Sea Venture, one of the ships of the Third Supply Mission, which was marooned on Bermuda for a year after a shipwreck in 1609. "But that's another story," Randy said.

The Pace Plantation was located on the south side of the James River in current Surry County and was named Pace's Paines. Located near Swann's Point, the land is now called Mount Pleasant. In 1618, when Pace received his land, he was referred to as an "Ancient Planter."



A highway marker on Virginia Route 10 west of Surry Courthouse, noting the location of Richard Pace's 1622 plantation. Courtesy of Randy Pace (HANDOUT)

Shortly afterwards, the Paces returned to England briefly to encourage others to come to Jamestown. They returned to Virginia in the summer of 1621 with six people and received an additional 300 acres to be added to their plantation. The Virginia Company's plan gave colonists 50 acres per person brought to the colony.

By 1622, English settlements had grown to number several dozen along both banks of the James River from the coast to the falls at what is now Richmond. "To the English, there was a league of 'peace and amity' between themselves and the native peoples of Virginia, a peace that Chief Opechancanough claimed would hold as the 'sky should sooner fall,'" said Mark Summers of the Jamestown Rediscovery project in an e-mail to Randy Pace.

On the morning of March 22, however, the sky fell on the colonists as "Opechancanough had instructed bands of Powhatan warriors from among the core tribes to strike" the English settlements, Summers added. "Historians have stressed that this attack was the final attempt by the Powhatans to drive the English from their lands — which ultimately threatened their very existence."

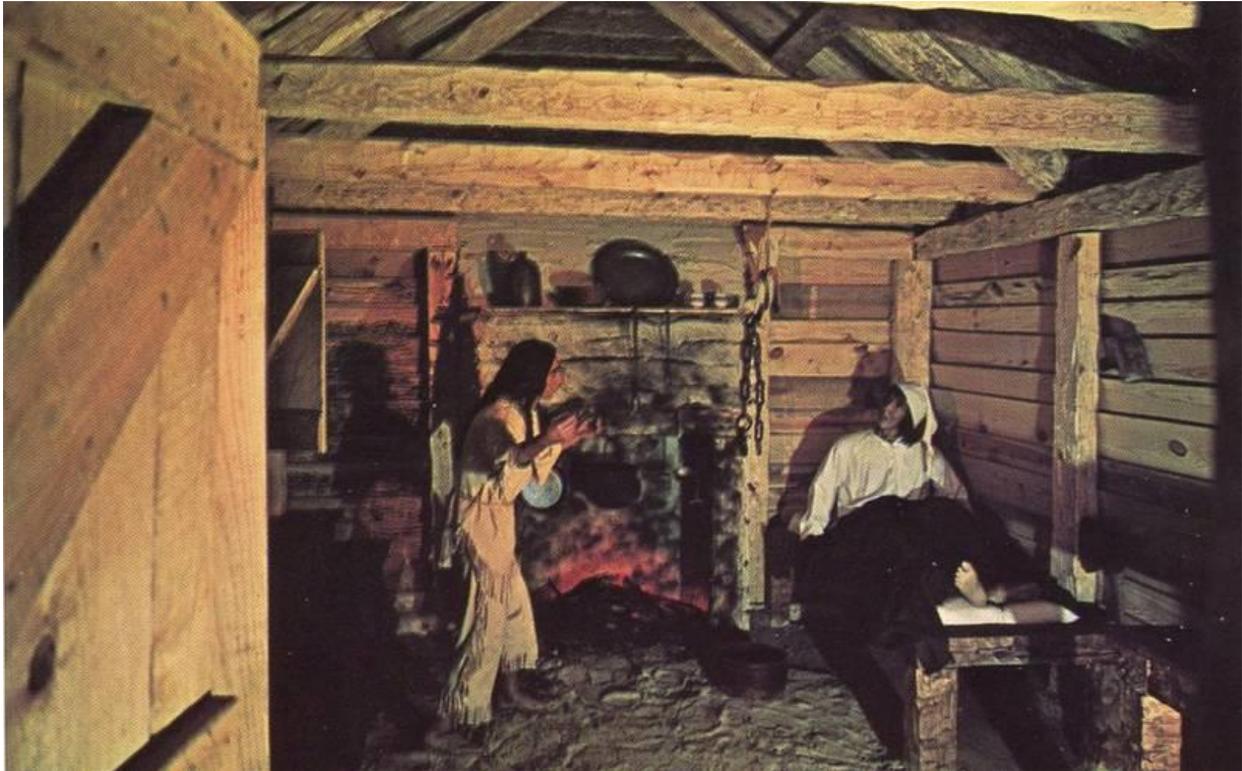
Apparently, Chanco was one of the tribesmen given assignments to kill colonists at settlements up and down the James, and was to kill Pace and his family at their home in Surry.

Chanco, however, was one of several Virginian Native Americans who saved English lives by warning of the attack, according to the Encyclopedia Virginia. Several contemporary accounts mention the uprising but offered few details and never mention a Native American boy.

However, William Waterhouse, secretary of the Virginia Company, wrote in "A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia" in 1622 that an Indian "belonging to" one of the colonists (possibly William Perry) was living in the household of Richard Pace.

"Perries Indian rose out of his bed," Waterhouse wrote, "and reveals [the plans for the attack] to Pace, that used him as a Sonne." It is believed Chanco

had been baptized and possibly found it difficult to kill a friend, even though he was allied to Opechancanough.



A tableau of Native American youth Chanco warning colonist Richard Pace was in the Williamsburg National Wax Museum that opened on April 1, 1968. This post card was for sale at the museum. Courtesy of Randy Pace (Courtesy of Randy Pace)

Immediately, Pace made plans for the defense of his plantation and before daybreak, rowed the three miles across the river to “give notice thereof to the Governor,” Waterhouse said, and thus “the rest of the Colony that had warning give them, by this measure was saved.”

Later, Capt. John Smith, who was at Jamestown from 1607-09, wrote narratives later about Virginia and included Pace and the Native American’s actions, using Waterhouse’s account almost word for word.

“To put it very simply and truthfully, the Native American Great Uprising in Virginia, like the subsequent responses of other Native Americans

throughout our U.S. history,” Randy Pace said, “were only trying to preserve their native habitats, livelihoods, culture and moreover, to just survive.”

Randy Pace got involved in his family’s history in the 9th grade and “got the bug,” doing subsequent years of genealogical research. His Pace family line moved from Virginia to eastern North Carolina, to Montgomery County, Tennessee, to Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma and finally to New Mexico, where he was born.

He had an ancestor who fought in the War of 1812 and a great grandfather, a Confederate from Missouri, who fought in the Civil War, said Pace. Pace served for 17 years as historical preservation officer of the City of Houston and five years as director of preservation programs for the Galveston Historical Foundation.

Since 2002, he has been an active member of the Pace Society of America, which will be holding its annual reunion in Williamsburg/Jamestown this summer. The event, June 16-18, also will focus on the Richard Pace/Chanco story, according to Pace, a trustee and 3rd vice president of the society. More than 100 people connected to the Pace Society could attend.

Williamsburg archaeologist Nicholas Lucchetti will speak to the group on June 18 about archaeology conducted at Mount Pleasant Plantation — Pace’s Paines. Later that evening, the banquet speaker will be historian Joseph Kelly, whose recent book, “Marooned: Jamestown, Shipwreck and a New History of American’s Origin” was about the aforementioned ship, Sea Venture.

One of the principal goals of the society, which has a membership of about 500 members, is “to make sure that Richard Pace is not forgotten in history,” Randy Pace said. “Likewise, none of us at Pace Society hold ill will toward the Native Americans, nor should anyone else, as they were only struggling for their survival.”

The group was formed in 1963 initially with two main lines of Pace families — those descending from Richard Pace and from John Pace of Middlesex County. However, the majority of the known Paces are descendants from Richard.



Several years ago on an earlier visit, Randy Pace stands beside the monument to Chanco on the lawn of the Surry County Courthouse. Courtesy of Randy Pace (HANDOUT)

In addition to researching various Pace lines, the Society also encourages an exchange of information, said Randy Pace. More recently, a DNA project has been established that is now linking various descendants who otherwise would not have known about “lost” ancestors.