



MATOAKA (1595? - March 21, 1617)
(Submitted for inclusion to Lesser Feasts and Fasts)

She is better known by her childhood nickname, “Pocahontas,” and she is the first indigenous member of the Anglican Communion. She was baptized in her homeland of Tenacomah (Virginia) by the Rev. Alexander Whittaker sometime after she was taken hostage by the English settlers (1612) and April 5, 1614 when she married John Rolfe, a successful tobacco grower of the colony. Matoaka was 10-12 years old when the English arrived. Her father was Wahunsenacawh, the chief leader of the Powhatan Confederacy. Matoaka visited and befriended the new neighbours and when they were short of food, she and her people brought them supplies. In March of 1614 Matoaka, then known as Rebecca Rolfe, tried to intervene in a serious conflict between the English and Powhatan warriors. She had a son named Thomas who was born on January 30, 1615. In 1615 the entire Rolfe family set sail to England to promote the new colony and were accompanied by a group of Powhatans. In London they were entertained at various events. On January 5, 1617 Matoaka was brought before King James and Queen Anne at Whitehall Palace for an evening’s performance. In March of 1617, the Rolfes boarded a ship to return to Virginia. However, Matoaka had been ill and the ship had only gone as far as Gravesend on the River Thames when she died. Her last words were “all must die, but tis enough that her childe liveth.” She was buried on March 21, 1617 in the parish of Saint George’s, Gravesend. Matoaka has been described by Native American writer Paula Gunn Allen as a “medicine woman, spy, entrepreneur and diplomat.”