



The Lost Colony, 1409 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27954 www.thelostcolony.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Morrison, 100, Leaves Legacy as Leader of 'The Lost Colony'

(Manteo, N.C., December 8, 2008) – Queen Elizabeth I made it possible for Sir Walter Raleigh to send 117 men, women and children to found the colony in what would become the state of North Carolina. Eleanor Dare, one of the principal characters in the play written by Paul Green, held the colony together as it struggled and eventually failed at establishing a foothold in the “new world.” Virginia Dare, whose birth is dramatized in the play, was the first English child born in North America.

Add another lady to the list of women to have played a major role preserving and celebrating this significant part of North Carolina’s storied history: Emma Neal Morrison, a native of Scotland County, who passed away in her home in Laurinburg, N.C., on Sunday, Dec. 7. She was 100.

Among her many credits, Morrison is best known for more than 50 years of service to “The Lost Colony,” including 20 years as the drama’s producer and a 12-year stint as chairman of the Roanoke Island Historical Association (RIHA), the history play’s parent organization. Her support of the storied drama includes securing the land and building five apartment buildings used to house more than 90 employees of “The Lost Colony,” as well as establishing and seeding the drama’s endowment fund.

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A longtime friend and colleague, William C. Friday, President Emeritus of the University of North Carolina, said, "This gracious lady was one of North Carolina's premiere forces for the quality of performing arts in our state. She and her husband, through their many benefactions to "The Lost Colony," the UNC Press, UNC-G Financial Aid, UNC Television and other educational and public forces have made possible a much higher quality of life for hundreds of North Carolinians. We shall greatly miss this noble spirit."

Added Ina Evans, former chairman of RIHA and a Dare County native, "Emma Neal Morrison was a consummate leader – brilliant strategist, insightful administrator, the most genuinely gracious person imaginable, judicious and wise, respected and beloved. Her contribution to the economic, cultural and historical enrichment of the Outer Banks has been immeasurable."

Carl Curnutte, producer and executive director of "The Lost Colony," said, "It was her devotion and determination that kept the dream alive, ensuring that the story of America's spiritual birthplace would have its place in history."

For many years, Morrison was also a fixture on the political scene of Washington, D.C., serving as president of the Women's National Democratic Club, president of the North Carolina Society of Washington, chairman of the Invitation Committee of the Inaugural Ball for President Kennedy, and as a national trustee of the Harry S. Truman Library.

In North Carolina, she and her late husband Fred. W. Morrison, endowed a series of 25 books about the South published by the University of North Carolina Press, of which more than nine have won significant prizes from learned societies across the nation.

Morrison was also the recipient of numerous North Carolina awards, including the designation as an honorary Dare County citizen. The State Magazine named her "The North Carolinian of 1967." She received the Charles A. Cannon Award from the N.C. Society for the Preservation of Antiquities; the Frederick H. Koch Award for distinguished service in theatre arts from the Carolina Dramatic Association; the U.S. Department of Interior Conservation Service Award; the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award from St. Andrews Presbyterian College; and the North Carolina Distinguished Service Award for Women from Chi Omega at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In 1989, she received the prestigious North Caroliniana Society Award for public service and contributions to the cultural life of her fellow North Carolinians.

In 1967, the Roanoke Island Historical Association established its highest award in her honor: the Morrison Award. In 1969, the award was presented to another N.C. native, famed actor Andy Griffith, who got his professional start when he played Sir Walter Raleigh in "The Lost Colony."

The daughter of Laurin and Emma Wilkes McQueen, Emma Neal was preceded in death by her husband Dr. Fred W. Morrison, and siblings Laurin McQueen Jr., Ruth Bullard and Sally Toomey. She was the proud mother of daughter Myra Neal Morrison of Rockwell, N.C.; grandmother of Patricia Webb, Dandy Clark, Shirley Maxwell; and great-grandmother of Morgan Webb, Owen Webb, Dane Clark, Alexander Clark, Nicholas Clark, Jaden Maxwell, and Mayah Maxwell.

Funeral services will be held at Powles Funeral Home in Rockwell on Dec. 13, at 1 p.m. with Dr. Darryl Maxwell of Tryon officiating. A graveside service will follow at Chestnut Hill Cemetery in Salisbury. The family will receive friends following the graveside service at the home of Myra Neal Morrison, Morrison Farm, Rockwell.

Memorials may be made to the North Carolina Division of the Nature Conservancy or the Roanoke Island Historical Association, or any organization of choice.

Deleted: (Manteo, N.C., December 5, 2008) – (Manteo, N.C., November 20, 2008) – The Roanoke Island Historical Association’s *The Lost Colony* has received a \$20,000 “Access to Artistic Excellence” grant award from the National Endowment for the Arts. This grant program is designed to encourage and support artistic excellence, preserve our cultural heritage, and provide access to the arts for all Americans. Support is available for a wide range of projects including the creation, performance, and exhibition of work, the preservation of significant works of art or cultural traditions. ¶
The National Endowment of the Arts, an independent federal agency located in Washington DC, is a leading pillar of support for the arts. It is the largest annual arts funder in the United States and the official arts organization of the United States government. According to their mission statement, the NEA is “dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education.” ¶
The Lost Colony is dedicated to preserving our cultural heritage in the birth of our nation’s history, and to continue to achieve artistic excellence in its production. For nearly three quarters of a century, thousands of actors have performed in the show, educating and entertaining more than 4 million people from around the world. Many actors who honed their skills at *The Lost Colony* went on to esteemed careers in Broadway, theatre, film and television. The grant from the National Endowment for the Arts will assist in funding the salaries for the 2009 production staff and cast members for the presentation of the 72nd season of Pulitzer-prize winning Paul Green’s *The Lost Colony*. ¶
Earlier this year, the National Endowment of the Arts awarded *The Lost Colony* a \$20,000 grant to assist the drama’s rebuilding efforts following the September fire that destroyed three buildings and their contents—including 80% of the current production’s costumes. This was the first grant awarded by the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) to an outdoor drama. Ch... [1]

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About *The Lost Colony*

The Lost Colony, presented where the real-life events occurred more than 400 years ago, uses song, dance, comedy, and special effects to tell the story and mysterious disappearance of America's first English colony (1584-87). First staged in 1937, it is the nation's premier and longest-running symphonic drama. Written by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paul Green, *The Lost Colony's* 71st anniversary season opens May 30 and plays through August 20.

PHOTO CUTLINES: