



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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The baptism of Mateo as seen in the 1921 Silent Film produced and written by Mabel Evans Jones and directed by Elizabeth Grimball will be shown as part of the Kick Off Event of the 75th Anniversary Season of *The Lost Colony*.

The Lost Colony 75th Anniversary Celebration

As *The Lost Colony* starts to celebrate its 75th Anniversary Season, it is a celebration of community and the countless individuals who had a vision and a story to tell. The story is one that belongs to each of us; it is the story of America's beginnings and the story of the treasured land that we call home. This story has been told for generations on Roanoke Island. While the telling of the story has continued for centuries, there are still people living on this island and

throughout our state that do not know what it is about. It is our mission to make the story known and to honor the pioneers in storytelling, cinema and theatre who have made *The Lost Colony* a permanent part of our culture.

What celebration could start without a tribute to Mable Evans and Bradford Fearing? Long before *The Lost Colony* Symphonic Outdoor Drama first appeared at the Waterside Theatre located in the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, there was a silent movie. In 1921 a five-reel silent movie depicting the story of the English settlement on Roanoke Island was written and produced by Mable Evens who also played Eleanor Dare. The production was cast almost completely of local residents who also built scenery and sewed the costumes. Funding came from the School Extension Division of the State Board of Education. This “grass-roots” effort soon became known statewide and school children throughout North Carolina knew the story of the Roanoke Colony and its mysterious fate. Because of Mable Evans and her devoted followers, the story of the Roanoke Colony became a part of the North Carolina history curriculum. A whole new generation learned about Sir Walter Raleigh’s dream for a colony in the New World. Mable’s efforts did not stop with the 1921 silent film.

The excitement of the film through the community encouraged its creator to consider other ways to tell the story. She wrote, produced and directed a series of local pageants based on the movie. They were performed on August 18th as part of the Virginia Dare Birthday celebration. On this official holiday in the town of Manteo, stores closed and families came to Fort Raleigh to celebrate their heritage and their community. It was, after all, their story and they had brought it to life.

While Bradford Fearing was not born in Manteo, he did move here at the age of five and lost no time in making it his home. He grew up knowing the story of the colony, and its magic and mystery stayed with him for a lifetime. In time he became Dare County’s political leader and was determined to make his home a tourist destination for history lovers while fostering economic and cultural growth. Under his guidance roads were improved on the beaches, bridges were built and tourists started to visit the almost unreachable part of North Carolina. In 1937 Fearing picked up the project that had been started by W.O. Saunders, secured the necessary funds and started to build what would soon become *The Lost Colony*. Just as Mable Evans had done before him, he turned to the local residents and businesses for his support. Once again the community joined together and brought their story to the stage in the form of Paul Green’s *The Lost Colony*. On July 4th, 1937 the entire island celebrated as their story was presented in a new theatre built with funds from the WPA Programs. On August 18th the celebration continued as President Franklin D. Roosevelt attended the performance on the 350th Anniversary of Virginia Dare’s birth. In his New York Times revue, Brooks Atkinson writes, “*The Lost Colony* is a beautiful beginning. It is informed with pride in and admiration for those

who stood on their own feet, alone, in the presence of danger and privation. Being chiefly a community enterprise, it overflows with sincerity.”

Many local residents have contributed their time, talent, energy and finances to keep the dream of Mabel Evans and Bradford Fearing alive. What started as a “grass roots” effort is still one today. While the show has grown and changed with time, the mission is the same. *The Lost Colony* belongs to each of us, and the 75th Anniversary is an excellent opportunity to rekindle our dedication to the continuation of this historic Outer Banks tradition.

A special showing of Mable Evans’ 1921 film will be held on Sunday, January 29th at 5:00 pm at the Pioneer Theatre in downtown Manteo. The invited audience will include decedents and friends of the people who created the original film as well as members and supporters of *The Lost Colony*. A reception will follow at 108 Budleigh. There will be a showing for the community on Sunday, February 5th at 3:00 pm at the Pioneer Theatre as well. There is no cost for this viewing and parents are encouraged to bring school age children to see this important part of our history. Due to the size of the theatre reservations are strongly recommended. Call Terry Fowler at 252.473.4224 for reservations. This special celebration and viewing of the 1921 Silent Film is sponsored by Ace Hardware. Thanks to Susan and Malcolm Fearing, Lib Fearing, John Wilson and Herbert A. and Elizabeth Creef for their support. For further information regarding the 75th Anniversary please visit www.thelostcolony.org.

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About *The Lost Colony*

First staged in 1937, *The Lost Colony* is the nation’s premier and longest-running outdoor symphonic drama. Written by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paul Green, *The Lost Colony’s* 75th anniversary season plays June 01 through August 23, 2012 at Manteo’s Waterside Theatre, on North Carolina’s Outer Banks. For tickets and information, go to www.thelostcolony.org or call (252) 473-2127.