Clarion Review

History

Willi Gets a History Lesson in Virginia's Historic Triangle
Ellen K. Rudolph
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Three Stars (out of Five)

This is where America as we know it started.

A dog named Willi has a person, Mr. V, who leaves her in a car on a hot day in Jamestowne Settlement. She escapes to check out Powhatan Village and an archeological dig. Canine and primary human don't locate each other, so Willi acts on a tip from new avian friend Mr. Gull, and follows the parkway from there to nearby Williamsburg. There she asks a statue of early governor Lord Botecort, "'…can you help me please?' Willi queried in her most persuasive voice. 'I am lost in history.'" Help is offered in this instance, and also later as Mr. Gull, who knows the local byways well, returns when more guidance is needed.

The author produced all images, many of them full-size. A layout varies position as well as the quantity of text between pages. The images are composed of colonial-era buildings or monuments as backdrop, with Willi added in, either reacting or conversing. The dog appears easy going, and if a lolling tongue is an indication, often warm.

Notices on the bottoms of pages direct readers to appendix notes for more about visitor attractions and the species of animals Willi meets as her journey wends toward a conclusion in the city of Yorktown. Stops include the replica ship of the Susan Constant, and the colorfully described Public Hospital for Persons of Insane & Disordered Minds, which was named before tact was invented. The fact that Willi is able to learn much of the time she seeks her owner makes the predicament less distressing. This book reminds us that an incredible amount of historically important events took place within a concentrated sector of the Tidewater.

A Glossary of Unusual Words highlights terms spread through the story which stick out as high school roadblocks in a generally fourth grade text. The twelve-page appendices contain fantastic information about history and the natural world for adults to share with their children.

Willi is expected to have another outing to the Kennedy Space Center, where she will learn about NASA's space program.

Dr. Ellen K Rudolph has established careers in photojournalism, counseling psychology and community mental health in the Williamsburg, Virginia area. In addition, she serves as adjunct faculty at several Virginia universities, including the College of William and Mary. She's found time to serve as President for her area's chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for fourteen years.