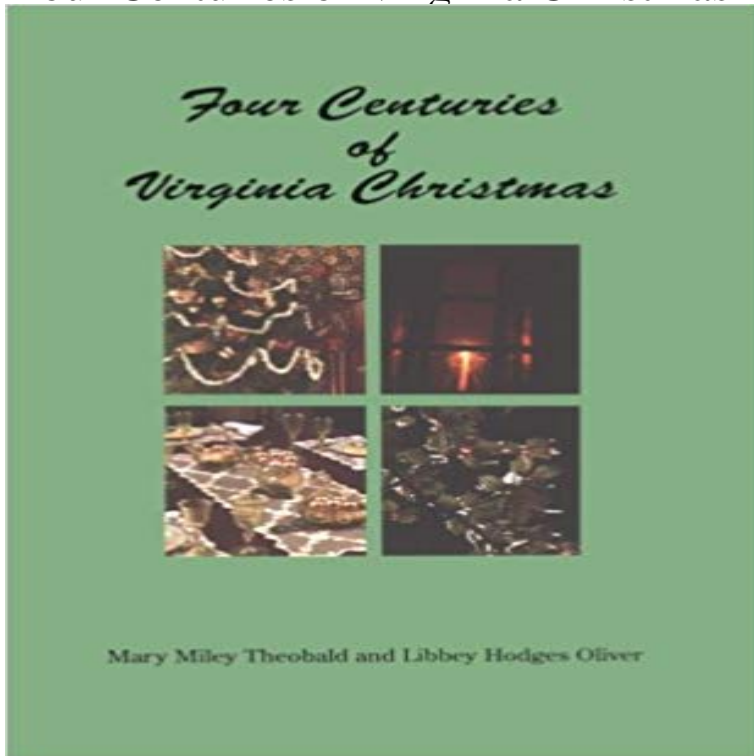


Four Centuries of Virginia Christmas



On the edge of the vast continent the English called Virginia, in a forelorn settlement named Jamestown, Americas Christmas celebration began to take shape. For two centuries, Christmas was largely a Virginia phenomenon. The holiday did not even exist in England but in colonial Virginia, Christmas meant a fortnight of festivities; lavish feasts, prodigious drinking, fox hunts, dancing, games, music and decorated churches and homes. In the 19th century, Virginians were among the first to adopt the German tradition of the decorated tree and in the 20th century, Virginians pioneered the naturalistic Christmas with its candlelit windows and Williamsburg decorations. As Virginians moved west, they carried their Christmas traditions, old and new, with them into Kentucky, the Louisiana Purchase, Texas, and California. Four Centuries of Virginia Christmas tells how these customs evolved from Pagan, Roman, English, Dutch and German precedents and how Virginias unique homegrown traditions developed. In a larger sense, this is the story of Americas Christmas, for our American celebration is rooted in Virginias past. America began in Virginia-so did its Christmas.

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