



Melungeons: The Last Lost Tribe in America

Elizabeth Hirschman

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Most of us probably think of America as being settled by British Protestant colonists who fought the Indians tamed the wilderness, and brought democracy--or at least a representative republic--to North America. To the contrary, Elizabeth Caldwell Hirschman's research indicates the earliest settlers were of Mediterranean extraction, and of a Jewish or Muslim religious persuasion. Sometimes called Melungeons, these early settlers were among the earliest nonnative Americans to live in the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. For fear of discrimination--since Muslims, Jews, Indians, and other persons of color were often disenfranchised and abused--the Melungeons were reticent regarding their heritage. In fact over time, many of the Melungeons themselves forgot where they came from. Hence, today the Melungeons remain the last lost tribe in America, even to themselves. Yet, Hirschman, supported by DNA testing, genealogies; and a variety of historical documents, suggests that the Melungeons included such notable early Americans as Daniel Boone, John Sevier, Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, and Andrew Jackson. Once lost, but now forgotten more.

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