

The Lost Colony

Whatever happened to Virginia Dare?

More than four hundred years ago, Europeans wanted to set up colonies in the New World. For them, the New World meant the present-day continents of North and South America. What challenging times those must have been! Sir Walter Raleigh, an adventurous English gentleman, sent a group of men to explore the New World. A later expedition established a settlement on Roanoke Island, on the North Carolina coast. In 1586, after enduring winter hardships, lack of food, and disagreements with the Indians, survivors of this colony returned home to England with Sir Francis Drake. Then Raleigh decided to send a second group of colonists. On April 26, 1587, a small fleet set sail from England, hoping to establish the first permanent English settlement in the New World.

This second group of colonists differed from the first because it included not only men but also women and children. It would be a permanent colony. The little fleet consisted of the ship Lyon, a flyboat (a fast, flat-bottomed boat capable of maneuvering in shallow water), and a pinnace (a small sailing ship used to carry supplies). These vessels carried more than 150 men, women, and children. Also aboard were two Indians, Manteo and Wanchese, who had gone to England with Raleigh's previous expedition and were returning to their home. The pilot was a Spaniard, Simon Fernando, and the governor of the new colony was John White. Among the colonists were Governor White's daughter, Eleanor, and her husband, Ananias Dare. The voyage took longer than the usual six weeks, and the ships finally anchored off Roanoke Island on July 22, 1587.

Once the colonists landed, they began repairing the houses already there and started building new homes. Eleanor Dare gave birth to a baby girl on August 18 and named her Virginia. Virginia Dare became the first English child born in the New World.

The colonists begged Governor White to return to England for supplies. He was very reluctant to leave the colony but finally agreed. On August 27, nine days after his granddaughter's birth, he set sail. He planned to get relief supplies and more colonists in England and then return to Roanoke Island as soon as possible. However, his plans did not work out. Soon after White returned to England, King Philip II of Spain and his armada (fleet of warships) attacked the British. Because of this attack and for other reasons, White could not return to Roanoke until three years later.

He finally reached Roanoke Island on August 18, 1590, his granddaughter's third birthday. The colony was abandoned. What had happened? The only clues are found in a log book kept by Governor White. He found the letters CRO carved on a tree near the water's edge. The settlement had been enclosed by a palisade (a tall fence of stakes pointed at the tops and set close together) to make a fort. At the right side of the entrance, the word CROATOAN had been carved on a post "without any cross or sign of distress" near it. White and his men continued to search but never found a trace of the colony. White hoped that the colonists were safe with Manteo and his friendly Croatoan tribesmen at their home on Hatteras Island.

What happened to these "Lost Colonists"? No one knows for sure.

Name _____ Pd. _____

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Reading Guide

Directions: After reading about "The Lost Colony," answer the questions below.

1. What adventurous English gentleman sent a group of men to explore the New World and eventually build a colony there?

2. What island was the settlement on? _____

3. How was the second group of colonists different from the first?

4. What was the name of the governor of the second colony?

5. Who was the first English child to be born in the New World?

6. What clue did John White find to the disappearance of the colonists?

Name _____

THE FIRST ENGLISH COLONIES

_____ Colony

Who paid for the colony?	
Where was the colony?	
What happened to the colony?	

What do you think happened to the colonists?

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Joint-Stock Company	
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