

Section 4

The Story of the Lost Colonists

This section will help you meet the following objectives:

8.1.01 Assess the impact of geography on the settlement and developing economy of the Carolina colony.

8.1.02 Identify American Indians who inhabited Carolina and assess their impact on the colony.

As you read, look for:

- the first English attempts to settle North Carolina
- the Lost Colony
- vocabulary terms **colony**, **Lost Colony**



Above: Queen Elizabeth I granted patents first to Sir Humphrey Gilbert and then to Walter Raleigh to discover “remote” lands for colonization.

July 13, 1584, might easily be considered the birthday of North Carolina. On that day, Englishmen first spied the shore they would call “the goodliest land under the cope of heaven.” The commanders of the two small ships sent by Raleigh—Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe—held a ceremony to claim the land in the name of Queen Elizabeth. They found an inlet across the Outer Banks and dropped anchor in the sound that “the Indians call Roanoak.”

The Englishmen rowed their small boats across the sounds and walked up and down the coast for more than six weeks, taking notes about how suitable the land was for settlement. They returned to England by autumn with notebooks, samples of plants, and two Indians named Manteo and Wanchese.

So happy was Queen Elizabeth about the expedition that she quickly made Raleigh a knight and allowed him to call the area “Virginia,” after her title as the Virgin Queen. Raleigh moved to set up a permanent English presence on the coastline.

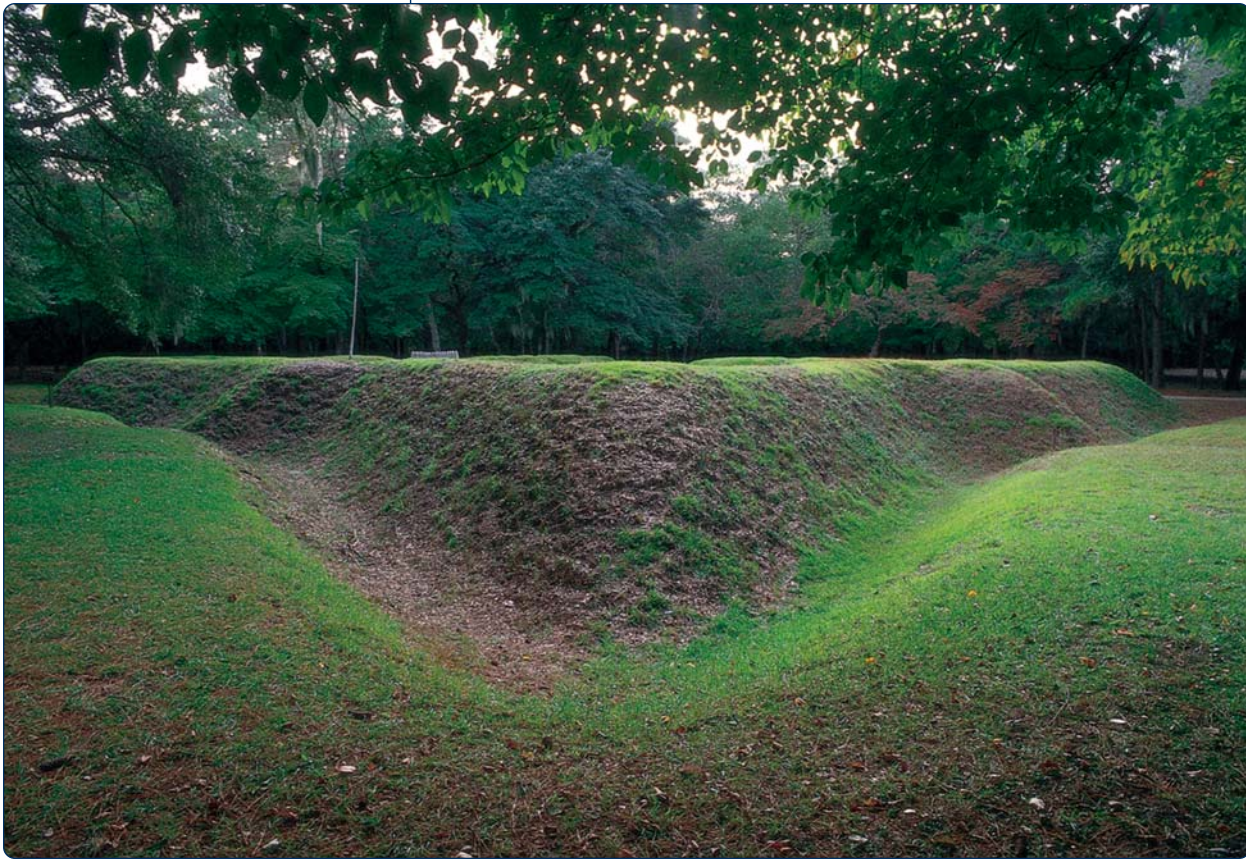
The Lane Colony

In the spring of 1585, Raleigh sent a second expedition to Roanoke. Richard Grenville commanded the ships, and Ralph Lane was sent to erect a fort for protection and settlement. In addition, two very talented men went along to learn more about the New World. Thomas Harriot was noted as a poet, a mathematician, and a scientist. He helped develop algebra and experimented with an early version of the telescope. Harriot spent almost a year on Roanoke



Top: Sir Richard Grenville, who led an expedition from England to Roanoke Island in 1585, fought the Spanish Armada in 1588 and died in a naval engagement with Spain.

Above: Thomas Harriot was a brilliant scientist who published his observations of the New World in 1588. **Left:** John White's map of "Raleigh's Virginia," probably drawn in 1585-1586, appears remarkably accurate even today.



Above: The 1585 colony commanded by Ralph Lane built a fort on Roanoke Island. The site, now called Fort Raleigh, was excavated and reconstructed between 1947 and 1950.

Did You Know?

The Sea Dogs were English sea captains who attacked Spanish treasure ships (with the Queen's approval) and stole their cargo.

recording his impressions and collecting plant specimens. Accompanying him was John White, an artist. White's watercolors of natives and their village life became some of the most significant pieces of art in early American history. Between Harriot and White, the Lane expedition became one of the most important scientific journeys ever made. Much of their information is still stored and studied in British museums.

While Harriot and White explored the sounds and the Outer Banks, Ralph Lane and about one hundred soldiers built a base, which they called Fort Raleigh. Unfortunately, they caught a dose of the Spanish fever for gold and wasted a lot of time digging and searching for it, without luck. They also fought among themselves and, soon after, antagonized the nearby natives. Eventually, lack of success and shortages of food pushed the English soldiers to violence. They murdered the local chief and killed a number of inhabitants in nearby villages. A year after its arrival, the Lane colony was in peril, as the natives turned against them and the food supplies dwindled. (A **colony** is a group of people who settle in a distant land but who are still under the rule of their native land.)

In summer 1586, Francis Drake, the most famous of the so-called English Sea Dogs, arrived with a small fleet of ships. Drake, the most notorious foe of the Spanish in the Caribbean, had just completed a successful raid on Spanish ports, taking away plunder and prisoners. Drake put in at Roanoke Inlet to replenish the Fort Raleigh soldiers. When a hurricane threatened, all the Englishmen decided to abandon Roanoke and head

home. To make room for the Lane company, Drake left behind a number of his prisoners, a mix of slaves and Europeans who had worked for the Spanish. (What exactly happened to them has gone unrecorded. John Lawson later wrote that their descendants were the Hatteras Indians.)

Soon after Lane left, Richard Grenville arrived from England to resupply Fort Raleigh. Finding no one around (perhaps the Spanish prisoners were hiding), Grenville decided to sail to the Caribbean and, like Drake, plunder and pillage. He left fifteen soldiers to guard Fort Raleigh. They too were never seen again.

The White Colony

Despite the failure of the Lane colony, Walter Raleigh was determined to continue English settlement. But this next time, Raleigh sent women and children with the soldiers, in an attempt to make the natives think that better relations would follow. Since John White had been to Roanoke, he led the group of 110 settlers. Since Roanoke had proven to be unsuitable for settlement, the expedition aimed to land at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, where the deeper water allowed ships to go and come more safely. However, the pilot, Simon Fernandez, got his own bout of gold fever. He left White and the others at Roanoke and sailed toward the Caribbean.

The settlement quickly ran into many of the same difficulties experienced previously. Despite the help of Manteo, the colony ran short of



Above: In 1588, Sir Francis Drake was too busy defending England and helping defeat the Armada to worry about the Roanoke colony.
Below: This painting imagines the baptism of Virginia Dare.





Above: A visit to the *Elizabeth II* in Manteo gives an idea of what shipboard life was like in the sixteenth century.

supplies. White left to return to England to bring back needed supplies. He left behind a new granddaughter, Virginia Dare, born August 18, 1587. Virginia Dare was the first baby born to English settlers in the New World and, in a sense, the very first native white North Carolinian.

John White did not return for three years. England was desperately defending itself from a major Spanish invasion. The Spanish Armada—one of the largest fleets ever assembled in Europe—was intended to end for all time any English threat to Spanish control of the New World. The Spanish, however, met disaster as leaders like Raleigh and Drake helped scatter the Spanish ships all over the seas surrounding the British Isles. White was finally able to return to Roanoke, and he arrived one day after Virginia's third birthday in 1590.

No one was at Roanoke. White blew a trumpet to alert the settlers of his approach. He then sang silly English songs to show he was not a disguised Spaniard. Still, as he later reported, "we had no answer." He was not immediately alarmed. Since Roanoke was such a bad location, the settlers had often talked of moving elsewhere. But

they had promised that if they did move they would carve their destination on a tree, so White could find them.

The settlers also promised to carve a cross above the name of their destination if they were in danger. White found two clues at Roanoke, both of which suggested the destination of the colonists. On one tree near the shore were the letters *CRO*; on a post near the gate was the word *CROATOAN*. The letters referred to the village on Ocracoke Island where Manteo lived, so White assumed the Roanoke colonists had gone there for safety. Neither had a cross above it.

White wanted to go immediately to Croatoan, where he thought the refugees likely were. But the other members of his party had other ideas. Then a storm damaged their ship, and the season for hurricanes was approaching. White was forced to sail back to England without going the fifty miles to Hatteras to find his colony. No Englishman ever saw the Roanoke colony again.



The Fate of the “Lost Colony”

The missing Roanoke residents became known in North Carolina history as the **Lost Colony**. No one can pinpoint their exact fate. One early speculation was that the Spanish had raided the settlement, but no records ever appeared to prove this. It is possible that the nearby natives, who were still angry about the Lane colony, killed the colonists. White, however, found no evidence of violence. So, the likely story is that the colonists did what they promised to do. They went to live with the Croatoans,

just as the message on the tree said. They may well have been alive when White left for England.

A century later, the natives who lived at Cape Hatteras told John Lawson that their ancestors “could talk from a book.” Some later moved inland to escape white settlements. They likely settled near the Cape Fear region on the Lumber River. In the 1700s, white settlers were startled to find that Indians living on the Lumber had blue eyes, built houses, and had

English names. At one time, these Indians called themselves Croatoans and claimed the Lost Colony as their ancestors. In the twentieth century,

Above: North Carolina’s most famous outdoor drama tells the story of the mysterious disappearance of the Lost Colony.

Did You Know?

Today, visitors to Roanoke Island can see the story of *The Lost Colony* on summer nights. *The Lost Colony* is the oldest and longest-running outdoor drama in the country.



Above: The internationally famous actress Lynn Redgrave played Queen Elizabeth in the 2006 production of the outdoor drama *The Lost Colony*. In this scene, John White is presenting one of his paintings to the Queen. The play is put on each summer on the actual site of the Roanoke settlement.

to the Chesapeake and lived among the Indians there. They had died of various causes. Some were caught in the middle of tribal wars. Others were murdered at the approach of the whites because the Indians expected to be punished for holding them in captivity. According to a record found in the British record office in London, Powhatan (most famous for being the father of Pocahontas) “miserably slaughtered . . . men, women, and children of the first plantation at Roanoke.” There was also a story told that some were taken to Occaneechi to work in the Uwharrie mines there, but no one could prove that was true.

The mention of children begs the question: What was the fate of Virginia Dare? Did she grow up to be a successful adult? Did she adopt the ways of the natives? Did she get to have a family of her own? No one knows. However, North Carolinians have never forgotten the story of the first European baby born in their state. One story that residents of the Coastal Plain told for years was the occasional sighting of a white doe, a perfectly formed deer that could be seen on moonlit nights. A legend grew that the deer was the spirit of Virginia Dare, still present in “the goodliest land.”

The disaster at Roanoke kept the English away from what became North Carolina for more than fifty years. Only after the second attempt to create “Virginia” was successful did whites return to the area along the Outer Banks.

they took the name Lumbee, derived from the swampy river that is their homeland.

There is one other known story about the fate of the Roanoke settlers. When the English came back to the New World in 1607 and established Jamestown on the Chesapeake Bay, their leader, John Smith, and others searched for the Lost Colony. Smith thought that the Roanoke residents attempted to move to the original destination, the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Smith was told by several Indians that some white people had come

It's Your Turn

1. What name was given to the land explored by Amadas and Barlowe?
2. What caused Lane to abandon his colony at Roanoke?
3. Why did it take John White so long to return to his colony at Roanoke?

CAROLINA CELEBRITIES

Sir Walter Raleigh

Although the state capital is named for Sir Walter Raleigh, that English aristocrat never set foot on our soil. Raleigh was responsible for the three attempts to establish an English colony at Roanoke, and he was eager to find out about the fate of the Lost Colony. But he never came to look himself. In fact, Raleigh only crossed the Atlantic once, to lead a military expedition to South America. Although it is possible he spied the shore of Cape Hatteras from out in the Gulf Stream, no record suggests it.

Raleigh rose to fame and temporary fortune by being part of the group of Englishmen who helped keep Elizabeth I on the throne in the 1570s. Raleigh and a number of his friends came from the “West Country,” to the west of London. They worked together to further their aims and those of the “Virgin Queen.” Elizabeth never married, but she and Raleigh were said to have flirted a lot. One famous story is that, early in her monarchy, the Queen was walking down a street and Raleigh spread his cloak over a mud hole to keep her dress clean. Raleigh later had the cloak drawn on his coat of arms, to commemorate the incident. Elizabeth clearly cared about him. When he later fell in love with one of the Queen’s ladies-in-waiting, she jealously threw him in jail.

Raleigh helped Elizabeth conquer Ireland. She rewarded him with a huge plantation there. Raleigh is said to have introduced the potato, a plant native to South America, to

Ireland while he was living there. The white-fleshed tuber is known to this day as the “Irish potato.”

Raleigh’s fortunes changed drastically when Elizabeth died in 1603. The new king, James (of King James Bible fame) distrusted Raleigh and accused him of treason. He imprisoned Raleigh in the Tower of London. While there, Raleigh wrote *The History of the World*, a very ambitious work that was incomplete when he was beheaded in 1618. On the way to his execution, Raleigh, one of the best wits in England, looked at the axe held by the henchman and remarked, “This is sharp medicine, but it is a cure for all diseases.” After his execution, Raleigh’s head was embalmed and given to his wife, the former lady-in-waiting. She carried it almost everywhere she went for the rest of her life.

Raleigh was regarded as one of the best poets of his day, as good at times as his contemporary, William Shakespeare. As was the custom of that day, there was a variety of spellings for words, including Raleigh’s name. In fact, he never once is known to have spelled it the way North Carolinians do. He often preferred “Rawley.”

Raleigh’s last act was to create a custom that lasted a long time in England and America. Since he had been one of the first Englishmen to popularize tobacco, he asked to delay his execution until he had a last smoke. In this way, he helped establish the popularity for one of North Carolina’s best-known products.

