

## Roanoke Island - First English Colonies <sup>[1]</sup>


### First English Colonies

#### Roanoke Island: The Lost Colony

by Matt Stokes

Research Branch, Office of Archives & History, 2007

[NC Highway Historical Marker Program](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

 [Listen to this entry](#)

[Download MP3 audio](#) <sup>[3]</sup>



"The carte of all the coast of Virginia," by Theodor de Bry, 1590. The map is a depiction of the North Carolina coast, then known as "Virginia", in 1585. Call no. FVCC970.1 H28w, North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill. Presented online at [NCMaps](#).

<sup>[4]</sup>[Related entry: Lost Colony play](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

The Roanoke colonies, the result of three attempts at colonization on the eastern shores of what would become North Carolina, laid the foundation for later English colonization initiatives. In April of 1584, explorers [Phillip Amadas](#) and [Arthur Barlowe](#) <sup>[6]</sup> set out from England to survey the coast near [Cape Hatteras](#) <sup>[7]</sup>. In the course of their expedition, they encountered few obstacles and their positive report prompted [Sir Walter Raleigh](#) <sup>[8]</sup> to establish a colony in the New World. In 1585, [Sir Richard Grenville](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, Raleigh's cousin, sent seven ships loaded with colonists and provisions to establish a colony on Roanoke Island. Although the settlement survived, poor relations with the natives and food shortages constantly plagued the colony.

After English supply ships failed to reach [Roanoke Island](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, the colonists returned to England, and in the process missed the arrival of a re-supply ship. The ship's crew found the colony deserted and left fifteen men at the site to await their return. They never did, and eventually the men returned to England. Two years later, Grenville sent another colonial expedition of 150 men, led by artist [John White](#) <sup>[11]</sup>. The third colony, choosing the same location their predecessors had abandoned, saw improved relations with natives and the 1587 birth of [Virginia Dare](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, the first child born to English parents in the New World. Soon after Dare's birth, White returned to London to secure more provisions for his fledgling colony, only to return three years later to find the colony abandoned, with no trace of inhabitants and most structures destroyed. The vanquished settlement is often referred to as the "Lost Colony," a story retold each summer on [Roanoke Island in Paul Green's outdoor drama](#) <sup>[13]</sup>.

Although the first English colonies were unsuccessful, the attempts brought attention to the dangers inherent in creating a new society in a foreign world, and laid a course for future colonists.

#### Audio:



[Show help](#)

#### References and additional resources:

Klingelhoper, Eric. "Captain Edward Stafford of the Roanoke Colonies." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (2017): 283–98. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45184853> [14].

Lost Colony & Jamestown Droughts (NOAA): <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/products/paleoclimatology> [15]

Powell, William Stevens, and Jay Mazzocchi. 2006. *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* [16]. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. p. 982-983.

*Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter*. [17] Online in the NC Department of Cultural Resources Digital Collections.

Quinn, David B. 1974. *England and the discovery of America, 1481-1620, from the Bristol voyages of the fifteenth century to the Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth: the exploration, exploitation, and trial-and-error colonization of North America by the English*. [18] New York: Knopf.

Quinn, David B. 1955. *The Roanoke voyages, 1584-1590; documents to illustrate the English voyages to North America under the patent granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584* [19]. Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2d ser., no. 104. London: Hakluyt Society.

Quinn, David B. 1985. *Set fair for Roanoke: voyages and colonies, 1584-1606* [20]. Chapel Hill: Published for America's Four Hundredth Anniversary Committee by the University of North Carolina Press.

### Image Credit:

Bry, Theodor de. "The carte of all the coast of Virginia". Frankfort: 1590. Call number FVCC970.1 H28w, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/117> [4] (accessed May 31, 2016).

### Subjects:

[Audio](#) [21]

[Colonial period \(1600-1763\)](#) [22]

[Precolonial period \(pre-1600\)](#) [23]

### Authors:

[Stokes, Matt](#) [24]

### Origin - location:

[Dare County](#) [25]

[Roanoke Island](#) [26]

### From:

[Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History](#). [27]

### User Tags:

[Lost Colony](#) [28]

1 January 2007 | Stokes, Matt

---

**Source URL:** <https://ncpedia.org/roanoke-island-first-english>

### Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/roanoke-island-first-english> [2] <https://www.dncr.nc.gov/about-us/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program> [3] [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B\\_x0CcarngwuYzRiNGRjMGltZTRiMi00Zjg0LWFkODktZml1YzJkZDdlMDU3/edit?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_x0CcarngwuYzRiNGRjMGltZTRiMi00Zjg0LWFkODktZml1YzJkZDdlMDU3/edit?usp=sharing) [4] <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/117> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/culture/performing-arts/lost-colony-play> [6] <https://www.nps.gov/fora/learn/education/amadas-and-barlowe.htm> [7] <https://www.nps.gov/caha/index.htm> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/raleigh-sir-walter> [9] [http://www.chroniclesofamerica.com/sea-dogs/sir\\_richard\\_grenville.htm](http://www.chroniclesofamerica.com/sea-dogs/sir_richard_grenville.htm) [10] <https://www.roanokeisland.com/> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/white-john-research-branch-nc-oah> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/culture/legends/virginia-dare> [13] <https://www.thelostcolony.org/> [14] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45184853> [15] <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/products/paleoclimatology> [16] <https://search.worldcat.org/title/67727572> [17] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/roanoke-colonies-research-newsletter-2002-2003-v.8/23463639893> [18] <https://search.worldcat.org/title/627770> [19] <https://search.worldcat.org/title/504576> [20] <https://search.worldcat.org/title/10404483> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/audio> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/colonial-period> [23] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/prehistory> [24] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/stokes-matt> [25] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-25> [26] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/roanoke> [27] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/research-bran> [28] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/lost-colony>