



The Lost Colony of Roanoke and Jamestown: The History and Legacy of England's First American Colonies

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures depicting important people, places, and events. *Includes excerpts from firsthand accounts of explorers and colonists associated with Roanoke and Jamestown. *Explains the relationship between John Smith and Pocahontas. *Discusses the theories and evidence about what happened to the lost colony.

*Includes a bibliography for further reading. Nearly 20 years before Jamestown was settled, the English established one of the earliest colonies in North America around the Chesapeake Bay region, until the colony had over 100 inhabitants. Like other early settlements, Roanoke struggled to survive in its infancy, to the extent that the colony's leader, John White, sailed back to England in 1587 in an effort to bring more supplies and help. However, the attempts to bring back supplies were thwarted by the Spanish in the midst of the Anglo-Spanish War going on at the time, and it was not until 1590 that White reached Roanoke again. What White found when he came back to Roanoke led to one of the most enduring mysteries in American history. Despite the fact he had left over 100 people in Roanoke in 1587, White returned to literally nothing, with all traces of the settlement gone and no evidence of fighting or anything else that might have explained the disappearance of the inhabitants. White found the word "Croatoan" carved on a tree nearby, which he figured might mean the colonists moved to a nearby island, but he was unable to conduct a search expedition there. The Spanish also searched for the colony in hopes of wiping it out themselves, but none of the Europeans could find Roanoke's colonists or explain what happened to the "lost" colony. The fate of Roanoke has fascinated people for over 400 years, and there is no shortage of theories regarding the disappearance of the colony. In addition to the possibility that the settlers moved to Croatoan island, most theories speculate that they were either wiped out by nearby Native Americans or assimilated among a tribe; as historian John Lawson put it, "A farther Confirmation of this we have from the Hatteras Indians, who either then lived on Ronoak-Island, or much frequented it. These tell us, that several of their Ancestors were white People, and could talk in a Book, as we do; the Truth of which is confirm'd by gray Eyes being found frequently amongst these Indians, and no others. They value themselves extremely for their Affinity to the English, and are ready to do them all friendly Offices." Regardless, the murky chain of events have ensured that the mystery still lingers. Jamestown is remembered today because the settlement did survive through the hardships and go on to serve as the capital of the English colony for much of the 17th century. At the same time, one of the biggest reasons for its survival and fame today can be attributed to the local Native Americans, particularly Pocahontas, who has added both a human and romanticized, mythological element to Jamestown. She was the daughter of the paramount chief (mamanatowick) Powhatan, leader of an Algonquian-speaking native group in eastern Virginia. It was this group that Smith and the other English settlers came into contact with, and Smith credited her with saving him from being killed by the Native Americans. After that, Smith was able to establish relatively friendly relations and trade with the local inhabitants, ensuring Jamestown's survival.

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