

# This Day in History... July 13, 1584

## First of the Roanoke Voyages

On July 13, 1584, the first of three Roanoke voyages arrived in present-day North Carolina.

Sir Walter Raleigh, who had quickly earned the favor of Queen Elizabeth I, funded the voyages. On March 25, 1584, the queen issued Raleigh a royal charter to “discover, search, find out, and view such remote heathen and barbarous Lands, Countries, and territories ... to have, hold, occupy, and enjoy” in exchange for one-fifth of all the gold and silver mined there. The charter also stated that Raleigh must establish a settlement within seven years or lose the right to do so.

Raleigh didn't personally lead any of his expeditions, but he funded and authorized them. The first expedition, under the command of Philip Amada and Arthur Barlowe, departed England on April 27, 1584. Less than three months later it arrived on the coast of North Carolina on July 13. Upon their landing, they were the first people to wave the English flag above the New World's shores.

The British colonists didn't have enough supplies to set up a permanent settlement, and their relationship with the local Native Americans was poor, so they returned to England. Raleigh was then knighted for the expedition that claimed the land in the name of the queen.

A second voyage departed England in 1585. Its members returned in 1586 due to food shortages and hostilities with the Natives. The third voyage brought 91 men, 17 women, and nine children to Roanoke Island in 1587.

Among those that made the voyage were Governor John White, his daughter Eleanor, and her husband Ananias Dare. Pregnant during the journey, Eleanor gave birth to a baby girl on August 18, and named her Virginia. She was the first of two children known to be born in the colony.

As the colonists struggled to establish their settlement, they begged Governor White to return to England for supplies. He reluctantly left on August 27, and planned to return in one year. However, England's war with Spain delayed White's trip back by three years. By the time he returned to Roanoke, all of the colonists had disappeared from the area.

*Stamp honors Virginia Dare, the first English child born in Roanoke.*



Some buildings were collapsed and others were taken down, which led White to believe they didn't leave in a hurry. Before he left, White instructed the colonists to carve a Maltese cross on a nearby tree if they had to leave by force. Since he didn't find one, he believed they left of their own will. The only clues they left behind were the word “Croatoan” carved on a post and “Cro” on a nearby tree. White took this to mean

that they had relocated to the Croatoan Island (present-day Hatteras Island) but he was never able to search there.

One of the most popular theories about the fate of the Lost Colony of Roanoke is that the settlers left the island and joined the nearby Croatoan people, who lived on Hatteras Island near the Hatteras Inlet. Archaeologists have found clues in recent years that support this idea. Excavations on Hatteras Island have uncovered English artifacts like a sword hilt, writing slate, and parts of guns, which suggest that English settlers may have lived there. These items date back to the late 1500s, the same time the Roanoke colonists vanished. This evidence has led some historians to believe that the colonists likely moved south and gradually became part of the Croatoan tribe.

Although integration with the Native Americans is seen as the most likely answer, other theories have been suggested. Some believe the colonists tried to sail back to England and were lost at sea. Others think they may have been attacked by hostile tribes or Spanish forces, who were also in the region. There's even a theory that they moved inland and tried to start a new settlement but died from starvation or disease. Despite centuries of research, the mystery remains unsolved, but new archaeological finds continue to give hope that the truth will eventually be uncovered.



*Issued on the 400th anniversary of the first Roanoke voyage.*



*Stamps issued for the 100th anniversary of America's first national park.*

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