



## Part C

# ENGLISH COLONISTS FIND FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY

## THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST COLONY

You will soon read that the first successful English colony in the New World was Jamestown, in Virginia, started in 1607. There was, however, another colony—an earlier one—that the English had built in the New World. This was the colony of Roanoke. Roanoke was located on an island near the coast of what is now North Carolina. This colony disappeared. What became of the colonists at Roanoke remains a mystery. There is only one clue to the mystery: the word *Croatoan* had been carved on the gateposts of the fort. What became of the Roanoke colony? We know some of the story; the rest remains unknown.

The story began in 1585. Almost a hundred years earlier, Columbus had discovered the New World and claimed it for Spain. Now England, too, wanted to gain land in America. Many English sea captains wanted to explore and trade there. Queen Elizabeth I of England gave to Sir Walter Raleigh the right to build a colony in North America.

In the spring of 1585, Raleigh sent out two ships with a hundred men to start a colony. The colonists landed on Roanoke

Island and began a settlement there. A year later, these colonists left Roanoke and returned to England. A few days after they had left, a second group of colonists arrived. At the end of the summer, this group, too, returned to England, after leaving 15 men to spend the winter in their fort at Roanoke.

The next year, 1587, a new group of colonists arrived at Roanoke. These people—men, women, and children—had come to settle in the colony. What did they find at Roanoke? Only the remains of the fort, covered with weeds and vines, and a single skeleton. There was no sign of the other 14 men left there the year before. Perhaps this should have been a warning to the new settlers.

The colonists began the long, hard task of building a settlement. There was much to do to be ready for winter. One of the greatest problems was food. They had arrived too late in the year to plant crops. They knew that they would need food and supplies for the winter ahead. To get these, the colonists decided that their leader, Governor John White, should return to England. White did not want to

leave the new colony. His daughter Eleanor and her husband, Ananias Dare, were among the settlers. That summer a baby girl, Virginia, was born to the Dares—the first English child born in the New World.

John White set sail with hopes of an early return. However, that became impossible. England and Spain were almost at war. Spain was building a great fleet of ships to attack England. Every ship and every sailor in England were needed to meet the Spanish attack. None could be spared to sail with supplies for Roanoke.

In August of 1588 a great Spanish fleet, the Armada, sailed for England. Many of the Spanish ships were sunk or burned. Some were destroyed in a great storm. England won one of the most important sea battles in history.

If John White thought this was the end of his wait, he was mistaken. He sailed for America on the first ship he could find. The ship's captain told White that they would sail to Roanoke. But on the way,

the captain spent time hunting for Spanish treasure ships. At last, in 1590, the ship reached Roanoke.

John White must have been excited as he hurried off the ship. How were his friends? His daughter? His dear granddaughter? John and the other men hurried toward the fort. What they found was shocking. The fort was empty. Weeds and grass covered the broken-down buildings. Where were the colonists?

Then White saw the single word *Croatoan* carved on the gatepost of the fort. This was the name of a group of friendly Indians. The men searched further, but they found nothing. All traces of the colonists were gone.

What could have happened? Had they starved? Had they died in the forest? Had angry Indians killed them? To this day we do not know. We probably never will know what happened to the lost colony of Roanoke and to Virginia Dare, the first English child born in America.

#### Looking back (to the story)

1. How do you think the colonists at Roanoke felt when they were left on their own?
2. What do you think became of the colonists at Roanoke?
3. Have you ever moved to a new place and found it hard to get used to?

#### Looking ahead (to the reading)

How was an English colony finally started in America?

**VOCABULARY STUDY** The meanings and sentences below will help you with the reading that follows.

1. **charter** (char' ter) a paper giving someone the right to do something  
The king gave them a *charter* to start a colony in the New World.
2. **problems** (prob' lems) things to be worked out; hard questions to be answered  
The colonists had many *problems*.
3. **supplies** (sup plies') things needed to do something  
Among your school *supplies* are a notebook, paper, and pencils.
4. **indentured** (in den' tured) working without pay for a certain number of years  
An *indentured* servant worked for someone who paid the cost of his trip to the colony.
5. **legislature** (leg' is la ture) part of a government; a group of people who make laws  
The *legislature* was chosen to make the laws for the colony.
6. **self-government** (self - gov' ern ment) ruling ourselves  
With *self-government* the people control their own government.
7. **opportunity** (op por tu' ni ty) a chance to better yourself or get ahead  
Judy has an *opportunity* to get a better paying job by learning to type.