

## U.S. HISTORY PLAY



Four hundred years ago, 117 settlers arrived to start the first English colony in America. Three years later, they had disappeared without a trace. What happened to them?

# Mystery of the Lost Colony

The Bettmann Archive

### CAST

#### Narrators A-D

**John White**, governor of the colony

**Simon Ferdinando**, fleet captain

**Captain Spicer**, ship's captain

**Elinor Dare**, White's daughter

**Ananias Dare**, her husband

**Hugh Taylor**

**George Howe**

**Harold Archard**

**Joyce Archard**

**Rose Payne**

} Roanoke settlers

**Manteo**, Roanoke area Indian

**Captain Cooke**, ship's captain



The word CROATOAN carved on a tree was all White found upon his return to Roanoke.

### ABOUT THIS PLAY

Where was the first English colony in America? Most people would say Jamestown, Virginia, founded in 1607.

But there was another English colony, founded 20 years before. Many textbooks do not even mention it. Why? The colony, at Roanoke Island in North Carolina, vanished without a trace. Its disappearance remains one of the great mysteries of American history.

The story begins in 1584. Queen Elizabeth of England was anxious

to start colonies in America. Spain, England's arch rival, was growing rich from its colonies in the New World. Ships laden with gold and silver sailed regularly to Spain. England wanted its own share of the New World's riches.

Queen Elizabeth asked an English aristocrat, Sir Walter Raleigh, to start a colony in America. In April, 1585, he sent 108 men, mostly soldiers, to settle on Roanoke Island. The island was then part of a huge tract of land called Virginia.

The settlers found the Indians on

Roanoke to be friendly at first. But fighting later broke out, and several Indian leaders were killed. The colonists, low on supplies and worried that the Indians might retaliate, sailed home in 1586.

A ship bringing supplies and more colonists arrived at Roanoke just a few weeks later. The ship sailed back to England after leaving 15 men on the island to hold England's claim to the colony.

In 1587, Raleigh decided to make another try at sending settlers to Roanoke. Here our play begins.

The Bettmann Archive

## SCENE ONE

**Narrator A:** July, 1587. A ship carrying 117 colonists — including 17 women and 9 children — nears the shore. John White, governor of Virginia, is on board. His plan is to pick up the 15 men on Roanoke and then sail north to start a new colony at Chesapeake Bay.

**Spicer:** The men will be glad to see us. I hope there's no trouble.

**Howe:** What do you mean?

**Spicer:** Indians aren't friendly.

**Taylor:** They're not *all* dangerous.

**Payne:** Perhaps. But how can you tell which ones are friendly?

**Howe:** If they start shooting arrows at you, they're probably unfriendly.

**Spicer:** Very funny, Howe. You've a good sense of humor for a farmer!

**Howe:** Seriously, though, I'm happy that young Indian, Manteo, is with us. He knows who is friendly and who isn't.

**Narrator A:** On another part of the ship, White and Ferdinando argue.

**Ferdinando:** No, I will not take you north to Chesapeake Bay! The stormy season is coming. I must return to England.

**White:** Listen, Ferdinando! You were hired by Sir Walter Raleigh himself! You must do as I say!

**Ferdinando:** You may be in charge of the settlers. But *I* am in charge of the ships! I'm leaving all of you on Roanoke Island.

**White:** You lying dog! I was warned not to trust you!

**Ferdinando:** Watch your tongue or you won't even make it to shore! I give you a choice. Either we sail now to Chesapeake Bay, or we land on Roanoke — and there you stay.

**White:** I can't leave those 15 men stranded on Roanoke. We will stay, then, until we can sail to the Chesapeake next spring.

## SCENE TWO

**Narrator B:** The settlers start to build their colony. One day, Ananais Dare comes running into the village.

**Ananais Dare:** To arms! To arms!

**Harold Archard:** What's the matter?

**Ananais Dare:** It's George Howe! I think he's dead! We were catching crabs. Suddenly a bunch of Indians

came up to him, and . . .

**White:** This is terrible! Where is Manteo? We need his help, badly.

**Narrator B:** White goes to see Manteo about the murder.

**Manteo:** Your friend probably was killed by the followers of Chief Wingina. They are still bitter because the first group of settlers killed the chief.

**White:** Manteo, we must try to make peace with all the Indians in this area. Maybe your people can help.

**Narrator B:** The next day, Manteo takes White and 20 others to talk to his tribe, the Croatoan.\*

**Manteo:** My people want to be friendly. But they have no reason to trust you.

**White:** Tell them we are sorry for what happened before. We want to live in peace with them.

**Manteo:** That is what they want, too. They say they will try. But they have a special request.

**White:** What is their request?

**Manteo:** Give them a strip of white cloth to wear. Then, when you meet them in the woods, you will know that they are friends.

**White:** It will be done.

## SCENE THREE

**Narrator C:** On August 18, 1587, a daughter is born to Elinor and Ananais Dare. She is the first child born of English parents in America. They name her Virginia, after the name of the colony.

A few days later, the ships are ready to return to England. Two settlers must go back with the ships to raise money for food and supplies. One man agrees to go. But no one else will volunteer.

**Joyce Archard:** Governor White, you should go. You have more contacts and rich friends in England than anyone else here. You should be able to raise money for supplies, if anyone can.

**White:** Yes, but I think I should stay here. I would have to leave my family and new granddaughter behind. Above all, I am the governor of the colony, and I have responsibilities

to the people.

**Payne:** That is why you should go!

**Elinor Dare:** Don't worry about us, Father. We will be all right.

**Narrator C:** Finally, White agrees to sail for England. Another agreement is made.

**White:** If you leave here, carve the name of where you are going on

\* The Indians pronounced the name CROY-tuh-WAN.



Roanoke Indian, painted by John White.

London, British Museum

some posts and trees. That way I will know where to find you.

**Harold Archard:** Right. And if we leave because of trouble, we will carve a cross over the letters.

**Elinor Dare:** Don't worry, we will not go anywhere. We will be right here waiting for you.

#### SCENE FOUR

**Narrator D:** White is not able to return to Roanoke for three years. England is at war with Spain and needs all its ships for fighting. The Spanish are defeated, but White has to collect funds for Roanoke all over again. He finally returns in 1590 with supplies and men. The ship arrives at Roanoke after dark on August 17.

**Spicer:** Look, over there!

**Cooke:** Light from a fire!

**White:** Thank goodness! I was afraid they all might have died. Three years without supplies or even a word from England. Sound a trumpet call!

**Spicer:** There is no answer.

**White:** I don't like this! Why don't they answer?

**Narrator D:** The next morning, White and his crew set out in small boats for shore.

**Spicer:** This is strange. There is no one here to greet us.

**Cooke:** I expected to find the whole colony here, cheering and asking for news from home.

**White:** Let's head for that cloud of smoke. Maybe they are showing us where they are now. Let's go!

**Narrator D:** The smoke turns out to be only a brush fire. Nothing remains of the colony.

**Cooke:** What has happened to them?

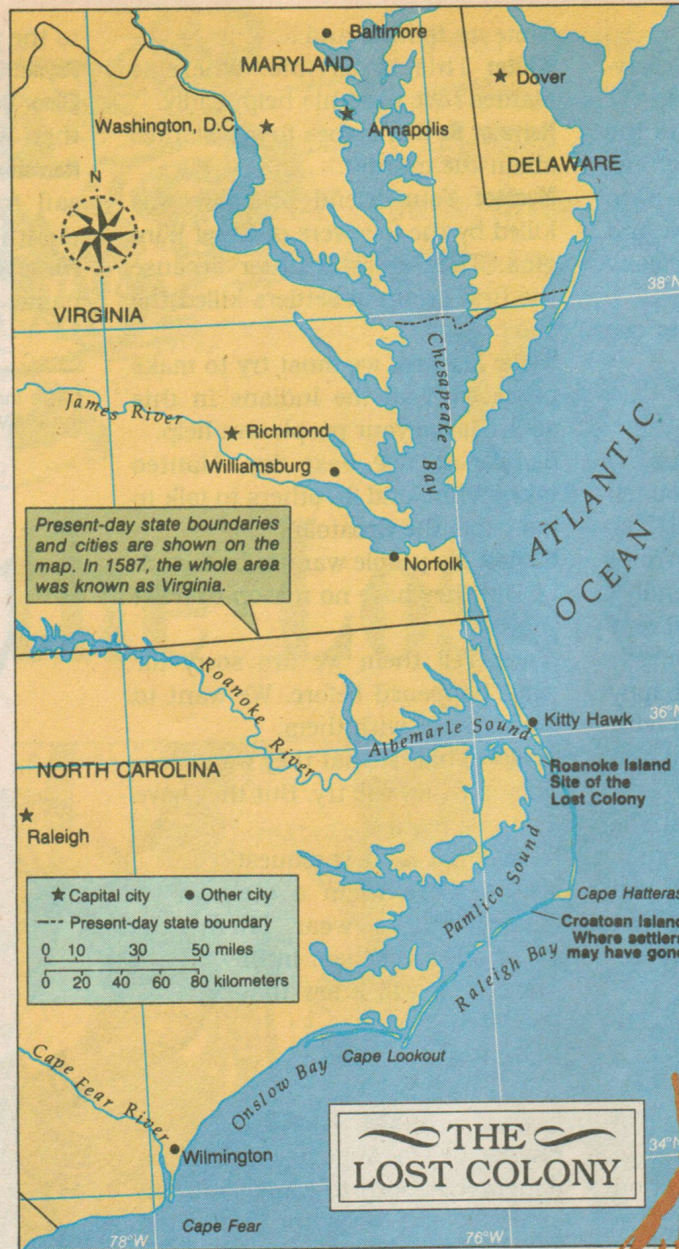
**White:** Look! Over here! A carving on a tree. But it makes no sense.

**Cooke:** What does it say?

**White:** It says "C-R-O." Nothing else.

**Cooke:** What could that mean?

**White:** I'm not sure. We must keep

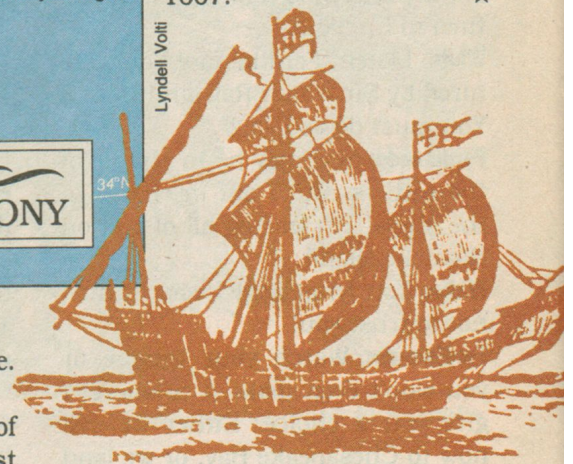


gland, leaving behind his daughter and grandchild, whom he believed still lived.

What happened to the Lost Colony? Did the settlers move to Croatoan Island when their food ran out? Did they try to sail north to Chesapeake Bay, and become lost at sea? (They had only a small boat.) Did unfriendly Indians from the mainland kidnap or kill them? Or were they killed by the Spanish, who also claimed the area?

Many years later, visitors to the area told about fair-haired, gray-eyed "Indians" who could speak English. Were these the children of the Roanoke settlers?

The answer probably will never be known. Although the colony at Roanoke failed, it paved the way for the first successful English colony at Jamestown in 1607. ☆



#### YOUR TURN

1. Why did the English want to start a colony in the New World?
2. Why was it so difficult to start a colony in those days?

#### Can You Solve the Mystery?

What do you think happened to the Lost Colony? Write your own ending to the story, and send it to us. We will print some of the most interesting endings in a later issue. Mail to: "Mystery," Dept. H, *Junior Scholastic*, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.

#### AFTERWORD

White and his men tried to sail to Croatoan Island, but a fierce storm damaged their ship and drove them back. White sadly returned to En-

looking for another clue.

**Cooke:** Wait! Carved on this tree. "C-R-O-A-T-O-A-N."

**White:** They've carved the name of the island Croatoan! They must have gone there. They said they would carve the name of where they went on a tree or post. And if they left because of trouble, they would carve a cross over the name.

**Cooke:** But there is no cross.

**White:** That's a hopeful sign. We must find them! A whole colony doesn't just disappear!