

John Thibeault

Mr. Jordan

EH 102

October 11, 2009

Word Count: 1,269

### Where are They Now?

When you think of the name Roanoke Island, or Lost Colony, you might feel a sense of mystery or magic. However, there is no such thing as magic. The lost colony is merely a group of British settlers that are missing from historical documents. Ironically, historical documents shed new light on the subject. It's evident that the Roanoke Island colonists integrated with a local Native American tribe within the Algonquin tribe called the "Croatoans." The mystery of the Lost Colony still remains only because of people's need for something mystical.

Sir Walter Raleigh's attempt to colonize Virginia for Queen Elizabeth in 1585 and 1587 fell short. He left a colony behind on Roanoke Island, located off the coast of modern-day North Carolina, with the promise of supplies when he returned. However, he was not able to return until much later than he anticipated. Charles Porter, a historian specializing in that era noted that when Raleigh did return, the colony was never found, there were no bodies, and the cottages were dismantled (26). Only a carving on a tree that said "CROATOAN" at the entrance of the fort was left behind. What happened while Raleigh was absent? In the following, I'll discuss how the colonists became dependent on and integrated with the natives. Next, the details that led to their integration will be

explained. And finally, the evidence about the integration of the colonies with the tribe will be presented.

Bennie C. Keel, associate professor of anthropology at Wright State University in Dayton, found that In June 1585, Sir Richard Grenville (Sir Walter Raleigh's cousin) established the first colony with Ralph Lane as Governor (119). The colony was left at Roanoke Island with too few provisions because Sir Walter Raleigh left England with two fewer ships than planned. Michael Olberg, professor at Syracuse University mentioned that the colonists would have used the supplies on the two ships to live. Additionally, their flagship, *Tyger*, ran aground, ruining the provisions on board, and leaving the colonists with only twenty days of food (85). This group of settlers was not farmers, but tradesmen. Even if they had been farmers, they arrived after planting season, so they were unable to harvest new crops anyway. The colonists almost starved waiting for provisions to arrive. If you were starving, you too would turn to your neighbor for help. And that's what they did in the meantime. They built a rapport with a neighboring, Native American tribe, "the Croatoans" (more commonly spelled "Croatan") (Hodge 365).

A Croatan man named Manteo learned the English language and was able to act as an interpreter between the other Native Americans and British colonists. Manteo was the son of the Croatan tribe's leader and was trusted by the colonists (Olberg 83). His good standing in the tribe allowed the colonists to be welcomed and fed. In the beginning of the new relationship, both parties were cordial. During the dry season, food was less abundant, and it was hard for the colonists to grow or hunt food of their own. Henceforth,

the colonists became more dependent on the tribe, which began the inevitable integration of the cultures.

Near the end of August 1585, Raleigh left for England with Manteo, promising to return soon with more men and supplies (Olberg 83). Almost a year had passed before anyone would return, but it was too late. Most of the colonists had already died; the remaining few were starving to death. They lacked the skills needed to survive in the New World, so they relied on the natives for many basic essentials. However, without Manteo to interpret or the support of the English, they could not commingle with the Croatans.

In June 1586, Sir Francis Drake, an English explorer, arrived at the island. Seeing the desperate situation the settlers were in, he offered them return passage to England. Drake sailed with all of the remaining colonists a few days later. Soon thereafter, Sir Walter Raleigh arrived at a nearby island, and searched for the colonists but did not find any, so he returned to England. About two weeks later, Richard Grenville, chief financial support for the Roanoke Island Project, landed and also looked for the colonists but turned up empty-handed. Unwilling to lose possession of the area they claimed for England, Grenville left fifteen of his ship's crew at the island with two years of supplies. His intention was for the men to hold the land for their queen while he went to England again (Porter 15-18).

In 1587, Raleigh organized a new group of people to settle at Roanoke. This time, there would be one-hundred and fifty people. Raleigh promised the settlers willing to go to America five-hundred acres per man. They were skilled farmers with families. Raleigh appointed John White to be governor and selected twelve assistants. Included in this

venture was Manteo, to continue to be a liaison between the English and the Natives (Porter 18-21).

In August of 1590, three years later, White returned. The search for the colonists came up empty-handed again. White had ordered the colonists to leave a mark in the tree if they moved inland with the Croatans. White noticed the colony homes were taken apart carefully, as if the colonists took the building materials to a new site. There was no sign of distress at the original settlement. According to the 1906 *Handbook of American Indians*:

It is thought that the lost colony of [Governor] Lane, on Roanoke Island joined them [Croatan Indians] and that traces of the mixture were discernible in the later Hatteras Indians (365). They [Hatteras Indians] showed traces of white blood and claimed that some of their ancestors were white. They may have been identical with the Croatan Indians with whom Raleigh's colonists at Roanoke Island are supposed to have taken refuge. (Hodge 537)

It could be perceived that the settlers could have been killed by disease. However, there were no bodies to be found, and I could find no mention of that in any historical documents. One could also assume that there was a hurricane that wiped the colonists out. On the other hand, records of storms were kept, and none of them led to belief that there was a strong enough storm to do so (Blanton 173-74). The fence that was built around the fort was still standing. The houses inside the fence were dismantled. There were no solidly residential artifacts (Ewen 179). Therefore, the colonists must have packed them before leaving. Another popular belief is that the local Native Americans

killed the colonists. Although there was some tension between the colonists and natives, the descendants of the natives claim to have white ancestors, and they display characteristics of the English, such as light skin and light-colored eyes.

It's apparent that the settlers willingly left Roanoke Island and blended in with the Native Americans. Nobody knows how, but their houses were taken apart carefully. No bodies could be found. Furthermore, the settlers carved a clue to their destination in the tree at the fort entrance. The Roanoke colonists had no choice but to rely on the natives. With Manteo present, this group of settlers did what the first group could not and successfully combine with natives. This series of events led to the inevitable integration of the settlers with the tribe. From the alliance of the two groups sprang the Hatteras tribe. It's apparent that the settlers did not disappear as if by magic, but relocated where they needed to in order to survive. The natives gave more support than the English, and it became the logical choice to make.

## Works Cited

- Blanton, Dennis B., "If It's Not One Thing It's Another: The Added Challenges of Weather and Climate for the Roanoke Colony." *Searching for the Roanoke Colonies*. Eds. E. Thomson Shields and Charles R. Ewen. Raleigh, N.C.: Office of Archives and History. 173-74. 2003. Print.
- Ewen, Charles R. "Strangers in a Strange Land: Patterns of European Colonization in the New World." *Searching for the Roanoke Colonies*. Eds. E. Thomson Shields and Charles R. Ewen. Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History. 179. 2003. Print.
- Hodge, Frederick Webb. *Handbook of American Indians: North of Mexico*. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1907. Volume 1. Print.
- Keel, Bennie C. "Talcott Williams, 'Pinky' Harrington, and Other Searchers for the 'Lost Colony'." *Searching for the Roanoke Colonies*. Eds. E. Thomson Shields and Charles R. Ewen. Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History. 119. 2003. Print.
- Olberg, Michael Leroy. "Manteo and Wanchese in Two Worlds." *Searching for the Roanoke Colonies*. Eds. E. Thomson Shields and Charles R. Ewen. Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History. 83-90. Print.
- Porter, Charles, III. *Fort Raleigh: National Historic Site*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952. (Revised 1956). Print.

Where are they now?

- I. Introduction
  - A. Opening: Colony of Roanoke, brief history – General Knowledge
  - B. Timeline of incidents.
  - C. State Thesis – Roanoke Colony integrated into Croatan tribe in order to live.
  - D. “Hatteras” tribe are derived from Croatans mixed with English.
  - E. Detail proof – 1<sup>st</sup> we’ll discuss this, then that, leading to final outcome.
  
- II. Body
  - A. Background and Context: Raleigh’s colonies were unprepared - doomed.
  - B. Arguments supporting my position
    - 1. Sir Walter Raleigh’s poorly executed plan.
      - a. Colony was set up to fail, leaving them with little supplies.
      - b. First group of men was not agrarians, but tradesmen.
    - 2. Sir Francis Drake.
      - a. State that all colonists left on supply ship in 1586.
      - b. 15 Men were left to fend for themselves.
      - c. No interpreter.
    - 3. 1587 – Raleigh’s new group.
      - a. Promised large plots of land.
      - b. More people, men, women and children.
      - c. More organized government
      - d. Manteo – interpreter
  - C. Counter-Arguments
    - 1. Disease could have killed them all. However there were no bodies.
    - 2. Hurricane could have wiped them out. Although, there was still the fence around the fort, which wasn’t destroyed.
    - 3. Native Americans killed the colonists. There are Native Americans from the area that claim to have white-blooded ancestors, and the natives show characteristics of English descent.
  
- III. Conclusion
  - A. Hatteras Indians were the result of the Croatans mixed with English colonists.