

Fort Raleigh

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



NORTH CAROLINA



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United States Department of the Interior, Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*
National Park Service, Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*

Scene of earliest English colonizing attempt within the limits of continental United States and birthplace of the first English child born in the New World

FORT RALEIGH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, on the north end of Roanoke Island, North Carolina, the scene of Sir Walter Raleigh's ill-fated attempts to establish an English colony in America, is our connecting link with the Court of Queen Elizabeth and with the golden age of the English Renaissance. Among the men of action figuring in the history of the settlements are two of the great "sea dogs" of Elizabethan England, Sir Richard Grenville (later to be immortalized as the hero of the *Revenge*), and Sir Francis Drake, first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. Here, the agents of Sir Walter Raleigh and the subjects of Queen Elizabeth suffered or died in the effort to begin the conquest of the greater part of the North American Continent by the slow process of agriculture, trade, and natural increase. The hardships of the first colony, 1585-86, and the tragic disappearance of the "Lost Colony" of 1587 caused the English to grow in colonial wisdom. Thus the birth of Virginia Dare, in the "Citie of Raleigh in Virginia," August 18, 1587, first child of English parentage to be born in the New World, was a prophetic symbol of the future rise of a new English-speaking nation beyond the seas.

Exploration of Roanoke Island

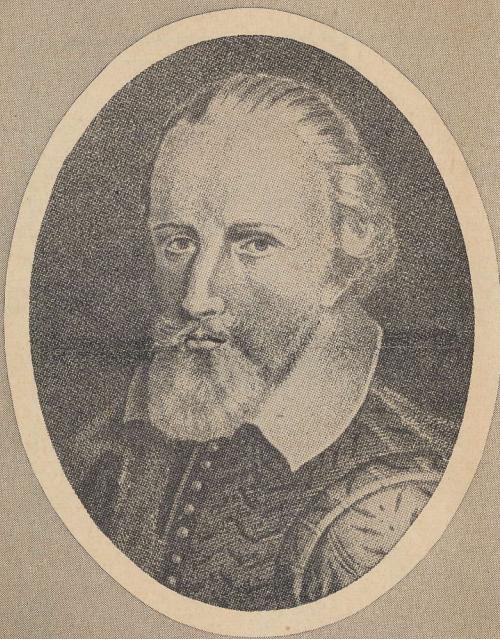
In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, half brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, staked all that he had in an attempt to found a colony in the northern part of North America, but the venture was not successful and he himself was drowned on the return voyage to England. The next year, Sir Walter Raleigh, favorite

of Queen Elizabeth, received from the Queen a charter for western discovery and colonization.

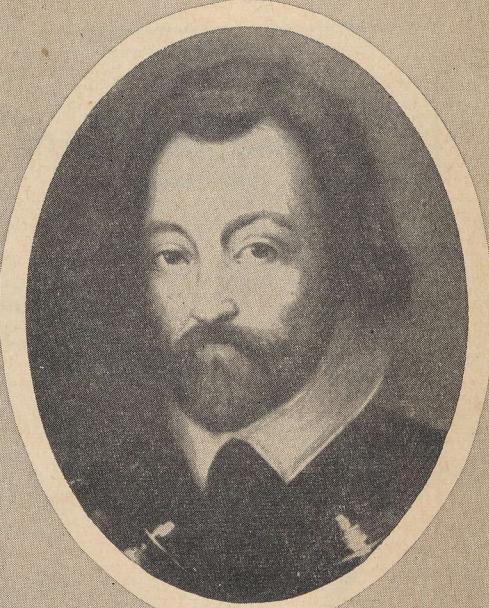
Imbued with a desire to realize his brother's dream of an English Empire in America, Raleigh sent Captains Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe to America in 1584 to select a site for a colony. They explored the North Carolina coast, including Roanoke Island, and returned with a favorable report on the latter-named place, which they described as "a most pleasant and fertile ground." In honor of Queen Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, the whole country was named Virginia.

Queen Elizabeth





Sir Richard Grenville



Sir Francis Drake

The First Colony, 1585-86

Raleigh's first colony, consisting of 108 persons, departed from Plymouth, England, April 9, 1585, under the command of his cousin, Sir Richard Grenville. A settlement was made on the north end of Roanoke Island. Ralph Lane, a connection of the English Royal family, was made Governor, while Grenville returned to England for supplies. Lane built Fort Raleigh, calling it simply "the new Fort in Virginia." Dwelling houses were built near the fort and, with the assistance of the Indians, crops were planted and fish traps made. The country was explored for a distance of about 80 miles to the south and 130 miles to the north. Thomas Hariot, the geographer, collected data for his *New Found Land of Virginia*. Likewise, for the benefit of those back home, John White, the artist, made watercolor drawings of the Indians and of the animal and plant life of the country. In short, the English occupation of "Virginia" was begun.

But Grenville's supply was late in returning to Roanoke. Open war with the Indians ensued, and food became scarce. When on

June 10, 1586, Sir Francis Drake, en route from the West Indies, anchored off the coast near Roanoke Island with a mighty fleet of 23 ships, many of the settlers were dissatisfied with colonial life and wished to return home. Drake's purpose was to assist the colony. He came ashore and offered the disgruntled, or wavering, colonists substantial inducements, ships as well as supplies, if they would remain in America. But discouragement prevailed, and Drake took the surviving members of the colony back to England.

Shortly afterward, Sir Richard Grenville arrived at Roanoke. He found the colony had gone. After searching for it elsewhere on the coast in vain, he left 15 men on Roanoke Island, with provisions for 2 years, to hold the country for Queen Elizabeth, and returned to England.

The Lost Colony, 1587

Raleigh's second colony, consisting of 150 men, women, and children, arrived at Roanoke Island in the latter part of July 1587, under the government of John White and 12 assistants, incorporated as the "Governor and Assistants of the Citie of Raleigh in

Virginia." They found only the bones of one of Grenville's men. The fort had been razed, but the houses were standing. Otherwise, all was desolation.

The old houses were repaired and new cottages built. On August 13, pursuant to Sir Walter Raleigh's orders, the friendly Indian chief, Manteo, was baptized and created Lord of Roanoke. On the 18th, Eleanor, daughter of Governor White and wife of Assistant Ananias Dare, gave birth to a daughter who was christened Virginia, because she was the first English child born in "Virginia."

After some wrangling among the assistants, it was decided that Governor White should return to England for supplies. He found England in imminent danger of invasion by Spain and could not return to Roanoke as soon as he had expected. In a sense, the colony of 1587 was sacrificed to insure English victory over Spanish sea power in the battle with the Armada. The danger to England was so great the Queen felt that no large ships could be spared for the relief of the colony. Two small pinnaces allowed to leave England never reached Roanoke.

When Governor John White returned to Roanoke Island in August 1590, he found that the colony had disappeared. The

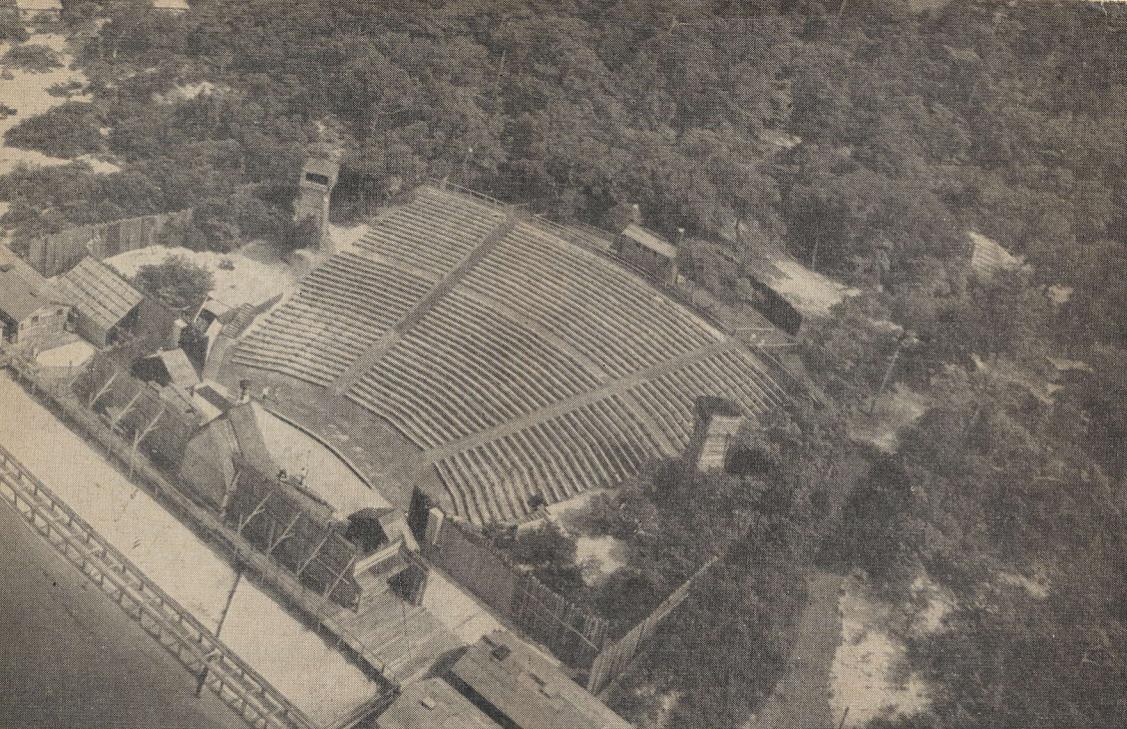
houses had been taken down and the place of settlement enclosed with a high palisade, with curtains and flankers "very fort-like." One prominent tree, or post, at the right side of the entrance to the palisade had the bark peeled off and on it was engraved in capital letters the word CROATOAN, without the crossmark signifying distress that White had agreed should be used in the event of difficulties or enforced departure. White concluded that the colonists, including his granddaughter, Virginia Dare, and another child born in Virginia to Mr. and Mrs. Harvie, would be found on Croatoan Island (now Ocracoke) south of Cape Hatteras, or among the Croatoan Indians farther inland; but the tragic mystery of what became of the "Lost Colony" has never been solved.

The Historic Site

Fort Raleigh was designated a National Historic Site on April 5, 1941. Within its nearly 19-acre area, parts of the settlement sites of 1585 and 1587 are included. Ralph Lane's "new Fort in Virginia," located within the site, was explored archeologically in 1947-48, and restored in 1950. The village site, presumably close to the fort, has not yet been located. Excavated artifacts are displayed in the visitor center.

Aerial View of Restored Fort





Aerial view of Waterside Theater

How To Reach the Site

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site is 3 miles north of Manteo, N. C., on State Route 345. It is 92 miles southeast of Norfolk, Va., and 67 miles southeast of Elizabeth City, N. C. Take Virginia and North Carolina Routes 168 and 34 to junction of U. S. 158, then over U. S. 158 to Manteo. Manteo may be reached also from Elizabeth City, N. C., over U. S. 158.

Traffic from the south and west can reach the site by the route from Elizabeth City, or from Washington, N. C., over U. S. 264, or from Williamston, N. C., over U. S. 64.

About Your Visit

You may visit Fort Raleigh National Historic Site daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. In summer there is an entrance fee of 25 cents for persons more than 12 years of age. Special service for groups is available if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

During the summer, the *Lost Colony*, a pageant-drama by Paul Green, is produced in the Waterside Theater, according to hours and dates fixed by the sponsoring Roanoke Island Historical Association.

Mission 66

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Administration

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Manteo, N. C., is in charge.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

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Map of Fort Raleigh National Historic Site showing the site's layout, including the Waterside Theater, comfort stations, canteen, Elizabethan Garden, and restored fort. It also shows the Boundary Line, Entrance, Stockade, and various cabin locations. A compass rose and a scale bar are included.

Inset map showing the location of Fort Raleigh National Historic Site within the Albemarle Sound area, adjacent to the Wright Brothers National Memorial and Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Major roads like US 17, 58, and 158 are labeled, along with towns like Norfolk, Suffolk, Portsmouth, Elizabeth City, and Manteo. A scale bar shows distances up to 30 miles.

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SCALE IN FEET

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A 44-page historical handbook may be purchased at the area or from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C., for 25 cents.

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