

*The Secretariat of the Fifteenth Annual
Virginia International Crisis
Simulation Presents:*

1587 Roanoke: The Lost Colony

Chaired by Zenubia Madhani

VICS XV

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to 1587 and Roanoke Colony! My name is Zenubia Madhani and I am a second-year student majoring in Foreign Affairs. Having been a part of the Model United Nations Club since my being a little freshman in high school, foreign affairs have always been of interest to me. This committee will hopefully add a unique twist to the typical array of topics and issues confronted at a conventional conference. This is no average conference, and hopefully your experience in this committee and at VICS will be more kickass than your experiences at other places.

While I am sure Wikipedia can tell you a lot about the founding of Roanoke Colony, Sir Walter Raleigh and his unfortunate end, and our good queen, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I, you might notice that your positions seems very unfamiliar. Do not bother trying to research and dig for information about your positions, because you will not (or at least should not) find anything as all the names are artificially created. As such, no position papers are necessary (though strongly encouraged) but make sure you research the situation at hand very thoroughly to be prepared.

More generally, you are a group of the Queen's subjects: Englishmen, some soldiers, other scholars, and others still craftsmen, sent by Her Majesty to discern the reason for the failure of Roanoke Colony. At the beginning of the first committee session, you should receive dossiers giving you a little more information about who you are.

Freshly landed in the general vicinity of Roanoke Colony, you must deal with many of the same issues the two original groups of settlers faced: complications with Native American tribes, conflicts with bandits and Spanish settlers, and pressure from Her Majesty. Keep in mind that you are not here to establish a colony; you are here to fathom what happened and bring closure to this situation, without facing the same fate as the settlers who disappeared. Let your instincts guide you and be ready for anything. Beware because nobody knows the true story of what happened in Roanoke Colony, but you are soon about to find out!

Lastly, let me welcome you to the University of Virginia and VICS XV! I hope you are as excited as I am to see where this committee takes us. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to email me at zam4q@virginia.edu.

Sincerely,

Zenubia Madhani

1587: THE LOST COLONY OF ROANOKE

Historical Background

This history of Roanoke Colony and how it became known as the “Lost Colony” began in 1585. The establishment of the colony can largely be attributed to the work of Sir Walter Raleigh. Raleigh, born to a family of farmers, became a landlord turned colonizer in the late sixteenth century. He looked for a way to convince Queen Elizabeth I to allow him to send a group of settlers to the New World in hopes of amassing land and riches.



Figure 1: Sir Walter Raleigh

In 1585, two explorers by the name of Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe returned to England with stories of an island on the eastern coast of the New World. From their reports, it was clear to Sir Walter Raleigh that this island would serve as the ideal location for a colony.¹ Bringing with them two natives from the area, the two explorers helped Raleigh’s case to Queen

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<http://www.coastalguide.com/packet/lostcolony-croatan.shtml>

Elizabeth to create a new settlement in the New World.



Figure 2: Queen Elizabeth I

Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth created a charter: Raleigh had ten years to establish a colony in the New World Elizabeth named “Virginia” (in honor of herself as the “Virgin Queen” of course).² In exchange, Raleigh and the Queen would benefit from the hoard of riches the New World was rumored to hold. Moreover, Amadas and Barlowe, the two explorers, had explained that the island could serve as a strategic base to raid the Spanish who had begun to establish colonies in South America. Lastly, the arrival of the two natives with the explorers proved that it would be possible to create relations with the local Native American tribes, also for the monetary benefit of the Queen and England. It was not long until the expedition was underway and the first group of men and women were sent to establish “Virginia.”

The First Group of Settlers

In the spring of 1586, the first group of settlers disembarked from England to sail for the New World. The group was composed of mainly veteran soldiers but also some scholars, craftsmen, and those of

² Ibid.

other trades along with a handful of women and children. The hundred person group was lead by Sir Richard Grenville, also a veteran soldier, sailor, and now admiral of the seven-ship fleet moving towards the West. Though the expedition began in high spirits and with high aspirations, everything quickly took a turn for the worst.

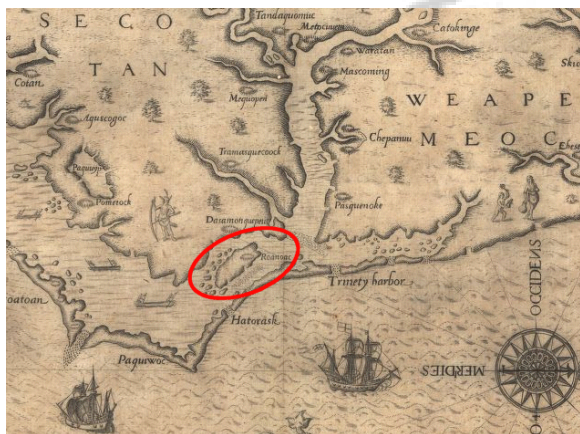


Figure 3: Map from the 1600s showing Roanoke in relation to North Carolina. It shows the bodies of waters and basic geographic layout.

First, the settlers faced issues with food. Their suppliers were diminished from their trip which had taken too long. As a result, it was very late in the season to actually begin planting and start to replenish the already dwindled food supplied. More of the food stores were ruined with the destruction of part of a ship. Thus, the colonists became dependent on the Native Americans for food and supplies. It did not help, however, when relations with the Native Americans turned sour quickly. A close by village of natives by the name of Aquascognos was blamed for stilling a cup. This caused retaliation by Ralph Lane, who burned the village and executed the chief of those natives, Wingina.³ Things were not looking great for the settlers. In fact, it was

³ Ibid.

not long before Sir Richard Grenville left behind Ralph Lane as leader of a large group of men. On August 17, 1585, he disembarked to get more supplies and help. It was not until June 18th of the following year that he finally returned to an abandoned settlement.⁴

By that point, the settlers in Roanoke had already left. In June of 1586, Sir Francis Drake stopped by the newly established settlement after an expedition. He had been raiding in the Caribbean and after seeing the horrible conditions of the settlers, offered them a way back to England. Unfortunately, they left only a week before the relief fleet arrived with food and reinforcements. After Grenville saw that the colony was abandoned, he returned to England, leaving a handful of men behind to protect the colony and maintain English presence.



Figure 4: Relation of colony to the Island

Second Group of Settlers

Although Sir Walter Raleigh was angry with Ralph Lane for abandoning the colony, he was quick in recruiting a group of 117 colonists made up of men, women, and children in 1587. This time, John White led the group as appointed governor of a city called "Raleigh" to be located farther north of Roanoke Island in the Chesapeake Bay

⁴ <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/lane/menu.html>

area. The colonists were to return with one of the natives originally brought over by the explorers in 1585. Simon Fernandes, a Portuguese pilot, was to lead the fleet back to the new area for settlement. In July of 1587, the fleet landed back on Roanoke Island. Raleigh had ordered that the new group of settlers find the fifteen men that had Grenville had left behind.

At first, there was no trace of those fifteen men. The colonists found the bones of only one man and looked towards the Native Americans for answers. One tribe, the Croatans, reported that other Native Americans had attacked the men and only a few had survived. Those few men had sailed away in their boat. A few days after this news, a colonist was attacked and murdered by natives while fishing. The news of the attack frightened the colonists, causing them to urge John White to return to England with Fernandes to get help and reinforcements. Before leaving, White managed to reestablish good relations with the Croatans but failed to do so with other Native American tribes.



Figure: The colony's defensive perimeter

White managed to barely make it back to England before winter began. As a result, he was forced to stay in England

throughout the winter until people were willing to sail across the Atlantic Ocean. By the time sea conditions improved, however, the Spanish Armada prevented White from finding a ship to return to Roanoke as every eligible ship was forced to defend England. In 1588, White found two smaller ships that were ineligible to fight and who had captains willing to sail. In the end, the two vessels were too small and the captains caused the failure of the expedition when their cargo was taken by Spanish ships.

In 1589, White finally was able to reorganize an expedition to Roanoke Island after the defeat of the Armada. He landed in Roanoke on August 18, 1590, to a deserted establishment that bore no evidence of the group of people that had been there three years when White had left. Though it seemed that a fort-like structure had been erected, there were no signs of struggle or signs of a Maltese cross that the colonists had been instructed to carve if they had been forced to leave the island. The only hints of where the colonists may have gone were the word "CROATOAN" carved into the fort and the letters "CRO" carved into a tree. White, guessing that the colonists may have sought refuge with the Croatoan tribe nearby, wanted to move towards the tribe to conduct a search, but was unable due to a hurricane that forced him to return to England before his ships were destroyed. After that expedition, he never was able to return to Roanoke to find his family due to lack of resources.

Hypotheses

There are three main divisions in theories about what happened to the colonists: they abandoned the settlement and left, they were killed, or they assimilated into another Native American tribe. The first hypothesis claims that the colonists decided to settle in the Chesapeake Bay as they had

originally planned to do so. They probably took down their houses to use as materials for a boat or rafts to sail north. When John Smith and his group of settlers landed in Jamestown, they were told by the chief of the natives in that area (Chief Powhatan) that colonists had been found and killed in the Chesapeake Bay area, giving evidence towards this theory. Also, those natives had English-made objects that they claimed they had gotten from the colonists such as a brass mortar and pieces of iron. Others argue that the colonists did indeed leave, not for another settlement, but to return to England. Along the way, they might have faced violent weather or unfriendly vessels that may explain their death.

Believers of the second hypothesis argue that the colonists died while waiting for John White to return with resources. Again, there are many variations on this hypothesis, though the majority agree that local Native Americans had killed the colonists due to the evidence of previous conflicts and violence. Out of the fifteen men left behind by Grenville to be found by the settlers, several had been killed by Native Americans. This would explain why some of the homes were also taken apart as the natives had sufficient time in the three year span of White's absence to tear down the buildings and use the supplies for themselves. Still others believe that a disease or unruly weather could have killed the colonists, but this does not explain the disappearance of the bodies.

Lastly, one of the most researched hypotheses is one that explains that the colonists actually moved to the Croatoan Island and assimilated into the Native American tribe. It was found that several Native American tribes spoke English, had an Anglo bone structure, light hair, gray or fair eyes, and had the last names of those of the lost colonists. One hypothesis melds this

hypothesis with another stating that the group of colonists split into two divisions: one to travel north to settle in the Chesapeake Bay area and another to wait for the arrival of White and reinforcements. This may be a plausible explanation as well as it combines evidence from several hypotheses.

People to Be Familiar With

Since you do not have actual positions, it would be a good idea to be familiar with the following people and how they may impact your decisions and journey:

Queen Elizabeth I: She was born to Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn in 1533 and reigned as Queen of England from November 1558 to March 1603. Queen Elizabeth is known to be pragmatic and diplomatic, but beware of her temper.

Sir Walter Raleigh: Though Raleigh's plan, "Colony and Dominion in Virginia" ended in a failure with Roanoke Island, he was involved in other projects such as the suppression of the Desmond Rebellions in Ireland. He was a favorite of the Queen but after her death, was held in the Tower of London and beheaded in 1618.

Sir Richard Grenville: Led the first expedition. In England, he acted as a sailor and explorer and helped Sir Walter Raleigh suppress the Desmond Rebellions.

John White: Led the second expedition. Little is known about his life besides his expedition to Roanoke Colony. He may have found work by making maps of land for Raleigh.

Committee Expectations and Structure

It is not necessary to be completely familiar with parliamentary procedure given the ad hoc style of this committee. The

committee will function in form of moderated caucus to keep some order to discussions. Most of the debate will stem from the various factors and crises at play.

Due to the manner of this topic, the events and the committee may not align exactly with those of real life (though nobody knows what the real story is). You must find balance in representing your character based on the time period and the different surprises and turn of events the crises will bring.

You are not required to have position or policy papers. Since there is less information readily available on this topic, you are expected to be well versed in the information that *is available*. Being familiar with the different political positions in Parliament and figures that are directly related to this expedition will be beneficial. Also, researching the theories will allow you to be able to think out-of-the-box when handling sudden issues.

Things to Think About:

1. Be familiar with the social structure in England in this time period. This will impact how you and your characters act. More information about your characters' backgrounds will be included in your dossier, but you need to understand the society to understand your characters' motives.
2. Know the different groups of people in the area surrounding the Roanoke Colony. What Native American groups are present, how do you act with the settlers, and what motives would they have as well? How would you interact or negotiate with them if need be?
3. Understand the political climate in England. Remember, you are responsible to the Parliament and the monarch. Respond in the way your character

would, but understand the penalties of opposing Her Highness and her followers.

Conclusion

There you have it – a brief introduction to the Lost Colony of Roanoke. As members of a group of Englishmen determined to discern facts from fiction, you are entitled with the responsibility of bringing justice and closure to the story of the lost colonists. The committee will start in the year 1591, after John White returns to England once he learns that the settlers are missing.

Keep in mind the different factors at play and the various groups of people that may influence your decisions. If I were you, I would get to know the possible threats a little better. As Sun Tzu said, “Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster.” Take this to heart, because disaster and the unknown are definitely the biggest threats we face in this committee. Good luck!

Places to Start Researching

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/hh/16/hh16toc.htm - Provides a complete history of Roanoke

<http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/nc/ncsites/English1.htm> - Another credible source that provides a good history from the State Library of North Carolina

<http://www.theshadowlands.net/roanoke.htm> - Outlines a few theories of what happened to the colonists

<http://www.courtlylives.com/Roanoke.html> - Provides a good timeline of events

<http://thelostcolony.org/education/Students/History/TheRoanokeVoyages.htm> - Not as

in depth but provides maps of the area and a summary of the history

<<http://www.nationalcenter.org/ColonyofRoanoke.html>>.

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