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Early Colonies Have Mixed Success

One American Story

In 1587 John White was the governor of the English colony at Roanoke, an island off North Carolina. It was here that White's daughter Eleanor gave birth to Virginia Dare—the first English child born in North America.

White went back to England and did not see Roanoke again until 1590. He was shocked by what he found on his return.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“We found the houses taken down, and the place very strongly enclosed with a high [fence] of great trees, and one of the chief trees. . . had bark taken off, and five foot from the ground in fair capital letters was [carved] CROATOAN, without any cross or sign of distress.”

—from John White's *Journals* (1590)

Croatoan was the name of a local tribe and a nearby island. However, White never discovered the fate of the colonists or his family. Although Roanoke failed, later English settlements in America were successful.



One of John White's drawings of Native Americans

The First English Colonies

KEY QUESTION What were the benefits and risks of colonizing America?

In the late 1500s, the English government was envious of the wealth that Spain had taken from its American colonies. The English people, faced with few job opportunities at home, hoped to find riches in America. Most were unaware of the dangers waiting for them on America's eastern shores.

Early Colonies Fail Queen Elizabeth I gave **Sir Walter Raleigh** (RAW•lee) permission to sponsor England's first American colony. Raleigh, a soldier and adventurer, established the colony in 1585 on Roanoke Island. He named the colony Virginia after the unmarried, or virgin, queen. But troubles with