**Roanoke – The First Attempt to Establish a British Colony in North America**

(1) Sir Walter Raleigh was a soldier, explorer, poet, and courtier. A courtier is someone who is part of a group of people who interact with the king or queen of a nation. Raleigh was more than just a courtier, though; his love for the unmarried Queen Elizabeth was legendary. To impress the queen and the nation and possibly become king, Sir Walter Raleigh wanted to establish England's first permanent North American settlement. Raleigh used his own money to finance a colony on Roanoke Island.

(2) The first men who traveled on the first voyage financed by Raleigh landed on the Outer Bank islands of present-day North Carolina in 1584. The purpose of this first voyage was only to discover the characteristics of the region. These men made mostly friendly contact with the Native people. Two Natives returned to England with the men. Due to their positive description of the area, Queen Elizabeth gave Raleigh a “charter" to settle a new colony. A charter is a document that grants royal permission. The colony would be called “Virginia” because Queen Elizabeth, who was unmarried, was known as “The Virgin Queen.”

(3) On the second voyage, in 1585, colonists were sent to gather information needed to plan the colony. The colonists set up a fortified camp on Roanoke Island, in the line of islands just off the coast known as The Outer Banks. One of the colonists, John White, was was given the task of making paintings of the Natives, the plants, and the animals.  A scientist and mathematician, Thomas Harriot, was to make detailed maps of the region. Their observations, paintings and maps were later published in a book *A Briefe And True Report Of The New Found Land Of Virginia*, (1590).

(4) These first colonists struggled to survive. They lost many of the supplies they had brought when one of their ships ran aground and sank before they had even landed. There was a drought that year. After a disagreement with the Natives, the leader of the colonists decided to attack the local Native town. During the attack some of the colonists beheaded a Native chief! Finally, a second group of supply ships were unable to arrive due to a hurricane. So the colonists returned to England after less than a year.

(5) A second group of colonists arrived on Roanoke Island the very next year, in 1586. These colonists hoped to start a colony that could support itself, not rely on supplies from England. They were not explorers; they were laborers, craftsmen, and farmers who came with their families. They had intended to settle on the mainland off Chesapeake Bay so ships wouldn’t run aground off the sandy outer islands, but the captain of the group of ships carrying the colonists refused to go into the bay. The colonists couldn’t change the captain’s mind, so they were stuck on the island again.

(6) The colonists immediately decided that someone needed to return to England. They thought they should inform Raleigh of the change in location, get more supplies, and bring more colonists, especially women. John White, the leader of the group, himself decided to make the trip back. He left behind his own daughter, her husband and his newborn granddaughter, who was named Virginia, after Queen Elizabeth. She was the first baby born to colonists in North America.

(7) While White was working to accomplish his goals in England, a war started between England and Spain. Spain sent 130 ships to invade England. England defeated these ships, but the war continued. The naval battles of the two sides stopped White’s ships from returning to the colony at Roanoke for three years.

(8) When White got back to the colony in 1590, no colonists met his ships. Upon disembarking and walking to the site of the colony he had left, White found that the houses built by the colonists had been torn down, and a small fort had been built instead. The colonists were no where to be seen; they had mysteriously disappeared. The colonists had agreed that if there was any problem the sign of a cross would be left as a signal, but White did not find the sign of a cross anywhere. Instead, he found the word “CROATOAN” carved into the main post of the fort, and he found the letters “CRO” carved into a tree.

(9) Croatoan was the name of another island that was the home of friendly Natives, so White thought the colonists had gone there.  He intended to go to Croatoan Island the next day. That night, a storm caused one of the three ships that had come with White to lose anchor and run aground. The captain insisted it was unsafe to stay, so White had to leave. The war again delayed any return, and White died three years later, never having found the colonists.