

England's First Economic Ventures in North America

By the late 1500's England began to try and establish colonies in North America. These colonies were established for religious and economic reasons. Some people were leaving England so that they could practice their own religion freely, and some were leaving to try to make it rich. Whatever the reason, thousands of people left England and established the original thirteen colonies.

England's first attempt at a colony was Roanoke Island, which was off the coast of present day North Carolina. Queen Elizabeth I offered the job to Sir Walter Raleigh. Raleigh soon raised enough money to send seven English ships to America in 1585. The first winter was very difficult so they returned to England. In 1587 a second attempt was made to establish a colony at Roanoke Island. This time John White brought over more than 100 men, women, and children to the island. White also had a difficult time. When the colony ran out of supplies White returned to England to restock. When he returned to England, he found his country at war with Spain and was not able to return to Roanoke Island right away. White finally returned to Roanoke Island in 1590. When he returned all the colonists had disappeared, and the only clue he found was the word "CROATOAN" carved into a tree. Croatoan was a Native American tribe that lived nearby. No one knows what happened to the colonists of the "Lost Colony." The mystery remains today.

England's first attempt at a colony was very unsuccessful, but they did not give up. They tried once again in 1607. This time they were heading to Jamestown, Virginia. In 1606 the Virginia Company of London received a charter from King James I. A charter gave the Virginia Company the right to colonize the land between the Potomac River and North Carolina. The charter also gave the people living in this area the same rights as people in England. The Virginia Company of London was a joint stock company where people invested their money into the company to send colonists to settle in Virginia. The investors then hoped the colonists would find gold in Virginia to make them a profit.

In 1607, three English ships landed in Jamestown. The problems began as soon as they landed. The area they picked to settle in was very swampy, it had thousands of disease-carrying mosquitoes, and the water was unsafe to drink. The men that came to Virginia came for gold. Instead of planting crops and building shelter they

spent their days looking for gold. Men began dying of starvation, and by the end of their first year only 38 out of 100 were still alive. Captain John Smith stepped in and became the leader of the Jamestown Colony. He issued a law that said that you would only get food if you worked. The colony under Smith's leadership began to thrive. Crops were planted, houses were built, and they began trading with Chief Powhatan.

Jamestown began to thrive, but the investors of the Virginia Company of London were soon becoming unhappy with the colonists and were ready to pull out their investments. The colonists were not making them profits with gold. In 1612, John Rolfe saved the day by planting tobacco. Rolfe realized that the crop grew well in Virginia's soil and it soon became Virginia's first cash crop (crop sold for profit).

Even though Jamestown started off rocky and it looked like it was destined for failure, it continued to steadily grow and become England's first permanent colony in North America in 1607. Although they never found the gold they were looking for, they soon realized that Virginia's gold was found in tobacco plants. The Virginia Company of London continued to try to attract more settlers to Jamestown. They also decided the colony needed its own form of government. The colony established the House of Burgesses. The colonists who owned land would elect representatives and the Governor and elected representatives would make laws for the colony. The House of Burgesses was the first form of self-government for the English colonies. How would the rest of the colonies develop? Will they have just as much trouble as Roanoke Island and Jamestown? Only time will tell.

Roanoke Island
Jamestown
Review

Name _____
Date _____
Block _____ Entry _____

Directions: You are to use your “England’s First Economic Ventures in North America” story to answer the following questions.

1. What were two reasons the English established colonies in North America?

A. _____

B. _____

2. Where was England’s first attempt at setting up a colony?

3. Who did Queen Elizabeth I send to set up this colony?

4. Who attempted to set up Roanoke Island the second time?

5. Who was England at war with that prevented John White from returning to Roanoke Island quickly?

6. Why was Roanoke Island called the “Lost Colony”?

7. What was the name of England’s first permanent colony in North America?

8. Who gave money to the colonists to settle in Jamestown?

9. Who gave the colonists a charter to settle in Virginia?

10. What is a charter?

11. What is a joint stock company?

12. What were the colonists trying to find in Virginia to make money for the Virginia Company of London?

13. What three problems did the colonists face with the location they picked to settle?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

14. Who became the leader of the Jamestown Colony and helped it survive?

15. What law did John Smith issue that turned the colony around?

16. What did the colonists start growing for profit?

17. Who brought this crop to Jamestown?

18. What is a cash crop? _____

19. What was the name of the first form of self-government for the English colonies?

20. Who was allowed to vote for representatives and the governor?
