**The Mysterious Lost Colony of Roanoke Island Vanished, Leaving Behind a Strange Message**

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The early English settlers of Roanoke Island in the New World established homes and lives alongside indigenous populations, but then they vanished completely, leaving behind a coded message for other colonists. If there were survivors of the mysterious events of their disappearance, where did they go? What was the fate of the vanished English colony on Roanoke Island?

In 1584, the English attempted to set up a colony in the New World on Roanoke Island, North Carolina. The following year, the colony was abandoned due to the harsh weather, lack of supplies and poor relations with the indigenous people. Three years later, a second attempt at colonization was undertaken. As the struggles to survive and thrive continued, one of the settlers, Captain John White, was forced to return to England to obtain supplies.

n 1587, White’s daughter gave birth to Virginia Dare, who was said to be the first English child born in the New World.

Leaving behind friends and family, against his will White sailed to England, only to remain there three years, as the Queen had disallowed all shipping due to Spanish Armada attacks on England.

When he finally returned to Roanoke Island in 1590, the English colony had vanished, and it is said that White found only the words ‘CRO’ and ‘CROATOAN’ carved on two trees.

When White saw these words, he inferred that the settlers had sought the help of the Croatan Indians on the nearby Hatteras Island. It had previously been decided by the settlers that should they move due to disaster or attack, a Maltese Cross image would be left behind. No such symbol was found by White.

The Croatans had been friendly towards the settlers, as the English were able to establish good relations with them when they founded their colony in 1587. Thus, it was reasonable to speculate that the colonists had gone to Hatteras Island during White’s absence. Dogged by terrible weather and a dangerously reluctant sailing crew, White was unable investigate the matter further. He went back to England instead, leaving behind the mysterious disappearance of the colony, his daughter and granddaughter, and never returned to the New World. Consequently, no one is certain of the fate that befell the English settlers of Roanoke Island.

One of the theories regarding the disappearance of the English settlers of Roanoke Island is that they managed to integrate themselves with the Croatan people. For instance, it has been claimed that subsequent English historians mentioned a tribe of North Carolina Indians who spoke English fluently, practiced Christianity, and called themselves Croatan Indians. Additionally, there were between 20 and 30 English surnames from the Roanoke settlers were found in the Croatan tribe, suggesting that integration between the two peoples had happened.

More recently, the Lost Colony Center for Science and Research has initiated the ‘Lost Colony DNA Project’ to investigate whether the Roanoke settlers did assimilate themselves with the Croatans.

Archaeological excavations on the remains of an Indian village at Cape Creek and Pamlico Sound near Cape Hatteras recovered not only artifacts produced by the Indians, but also European trade goods. While this demonstrates that the Croatans were likely to have had contact with the Roanoke settlers, it is not enough to say that the two peoples were assimilated.

Even though many believe that the colonists joined the Croatans and eventually became the Lumbees, some believe that a darker fate befell the settlers. The Dare Stone, discovered in the 20th century, records that the number of settlers dwindled to 24 as a result of illness and war with hostile natives. In the end, only seven of the original settlers were left. One of them was Eleanor White Dare, the daughter of Captain John White, and the alleged maker of the stone. It has been claimed, however, that the Dare Stone is a hoax. Moreover, archaeological evidence has yet to prove that the settlers slowly perished, as no burials have been found so far.

Other theories suggest cannibalism by local tribes to account for the lack of human remains, or that the settlers perished at sea while trying to return to England.

History may never reveal what actually happened to the settlers who vanished on Roanoke Island, and for the time being it remains a mystery.

1. Why was the colony on Roanoke Island first abandoned just one year after it was first established in 1854?

2. When Captain John White returned to Roanoke Island in 1590, what did he find?

3. After reading this article, what do you think happened at Roanoke Island?

4. After several failed attempts to colonize the New World, people still desired to seek a new life in the New World. What reasons do you think motivated them?