

CHAPTER FIVE

LOST, FOUND COLONIES

Explorers were looking for many things. Some were looking for a better route to Asia. Some were searching for gold. However, they weren't looking to create permanent places for people from their countries to live (known as colonies). That happened later.

Once European nations did begin creating colonies, Spain and Portugal created theirs in Central America and South America. France colonized present-day Canada. England settled its colonies along the east coast of the present-day United States.

This is why many people in South America speak the Spanish and Portuguese language today, and why many people in Canada speak French today. And this, you see, is why most Americans speak English!

The people who settled the first colonies in America faced great danger. They had to create shelter, find food and survive diseases. They had to try to get along with the American Indians who were already here.

Many of them died.

The first attempt to start an English-speaking colony in the New World was in 1587, when a group of 115 English settlers arrived on Roanoke Island, in North Carolina. A few months after the colony was settled, the governor of the colony sailed back to England to get supplies. Because of a war with Spain, he was unable to return for three years. When he did come back, in 1590, he found no trace of the colony or its inhabitants (except the word "Croatoan" carved on a wooden post).

To this day, we do not know what happened to the Lost Colony of Roanoke. Some people believe the colonists were killed by Indians, or by the Spanish. Another theory holds that they boarded their ship and set sail for England but got lost along the way.

Only a few years later, another group of English settlers started a colony just north of Roanoke. They were organized by a business called the Virginia Company, which named the settlement Jamestown, after King James I of England. Its leader was John Smith.

Unlike Roanoke, Jamestown survived and became the first permanent English settlement on the North American continent. However, the settlers at Jamestown went through terrible times. The winter of 1609-1610 was known as the "starving time," since more than three-fourths of the colonists died because they didn't have enough to eat.

A few years later, another colony was created northeast of Jamestown, in an area known as New England. It was started for different reasons than Jamestown. While Jamestown was begun by a company which intended to make money, the Plymouth Colony was started by people who were looking to worship God in a different manner than the Church of England required. These settlers were known as Puritans, and their colony was located in the present-day state of Massachusetts.

The first ship that took colonists to Plymouth was the Mayflower, which is very famous. The colony is believed to have been settled near a rock known as Plymouth Rock that people still visit today.

Also, it is believed that the colony survived because of the help of Native Americans, who taught the colonists better ways to fish and fertilize the soil. In 1621, about 50 of the Pilgrims and 100 Indians celebrated a harvest festival together. This started the holiday known as Thanksgiving. 🍂