

## The Roanoke Voyages

More than four hundred years ago a baby girl was born in a tiny settlement on Roanoke Island, off what is now the coast of North Carolina between the barrier islands and the mainland. Her name was Virginia Dare. She was the first child of English parents ever born in what Europeans

called the New World of America. Within a year Virginia and her parents, along with more than one hundred other English people living in the settlement, disappeared. Even today, nobody knows what really happened to them. Virginia's parents, Eleanor and Ananias Dare, were members of a brave band of people sent to the New World to build homes for themselves and others like them. They wanted to make a better life than they had in England.

Life in England 400 years ago could be very difficult for people who did not own land, but there was plenty of land in America. In fact, Queen Elizabeth I of England

had given thousands of acres in the New World to one of her gentlemen, Sir Walter Raleigh. She allowed Sir Walter to name the new land for her. He called it 'Virginia' in honor of Elizabeth, who was nicknamed the 'Virgin Queen' because she never married.

Sir Walter in turn offered plots of this land to individuals and to

families who would sail across the ocean and build homes and live there. If enough people settled the land it would become a "new" England, with enough good land for farms and

animals for anyone who was willing to work hard.