

# VANISHED

TRUE TALES OF MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

ELIZABETH MACLEOD



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The background of the image shows a misty, atmospheric scene. In the lower half, dark silhouettes of trees are visible through a thick layer of fog or low-hanging clouds. Above this, the sky is filled with large, billowing white and grey clouds against a blue backdrop.

With much love and admiration for Cathi,  
*eine ausgezeichnete Freundin* and someone  
who I hope never vanishes from my life!

# WITHOUT A TRACE ...

All over the world and all through history, people—individuals and entire groups—large amounts of money, famous artworks, and even whole ships have vanished. Some leave tantalizing clues, while others leave not a trace. The tales behind some of the world's most mystifying disappearances have captivated historians and other experts for centuries.

*Why* did the person or object disappear? *What* clues exist about where it is? *Who* knows or knew about the case? *How* can new technologies and techniques help to finally solve the mystery?

Disappearances happen for many reasons. In times of war, rebellion, and political or religious uprisings, people hide money and valuable objects so well, they're never found again. Of course someone once knew where the treasure was hidden, but the story is lost if that person dies without revealing the secret.

People may disappear because someone wants them out of the way in a competition for the throne or another position of power. Brutal political regimes or fanatical groups have “disappeared” whole communities that disagree with them. Or people vanish because they take on a new identity to avoid being found by the police or their families. Natural disasters and accidents can also make things disappear, especially in remote

places like barely inhabited islands or the middle of the ocean.

Today, electronic banking records, security cameras, cell phone triangulation, DNA matching, robotics, sonar equipment, and Internet activity make it much easier to locate people and objects. Even so, some intriguing cases of disappearances remain unsolved. As technology continues to develop, perhaps experts will be able to track down more evidence of the location of vanished objects and may finally discover what happened to people long gone. That hope turns many stories into legends shrouded in mystery.

Why do we keep searching? Maybe we just can't admit that something might be gone forever. Maybe it's like an especially challenging game we want to win. Or maybe we feel we'll understand an event or person or time period better if we can just uncover that secret.

In this book you'll meet mysteries that have not been solved. However, every day, scientists and historians are finding new ways to explore the past and make what is missing visible again. These technologies weren't available at the time of the events but might help solve the mysteries now, because perhaps what people love even more than a mystery is finally solving it—locating something or someone the world thought had disappeared ... without a trace.

# **LOST COLONY**

THE SETTLERS WHO  
DISAPPEARED

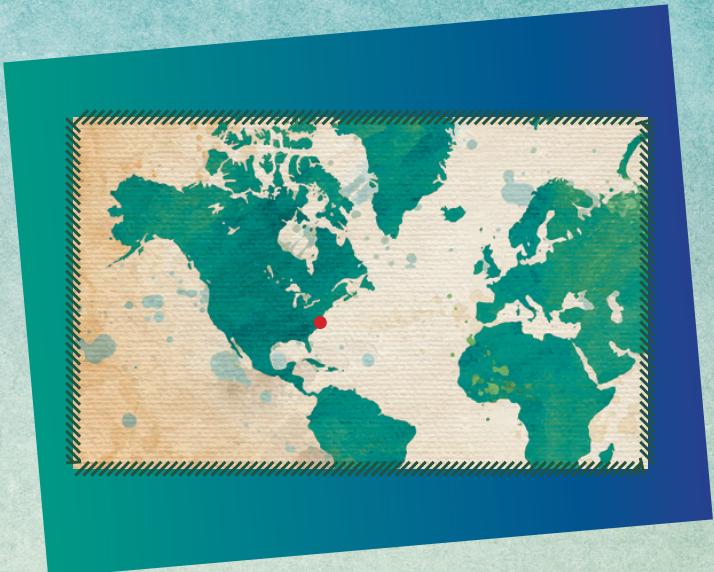
## ROANOKE ISLAND, NORTH CAROLINA, 1590

Governor John White struggled through the tall grasses. Did he have the wrong place? No, he was sure the colony had been right here when he'd had to leave three years ago. But he could find no trace of the homes or other buildings—or of the settlers.

Where the settlement had stood, small trees now stretched up toward the sun and thick grasses covered the area.

"Spread out and search for any sign of them," White commanded his men. "They must be here somewhere. More than a hundred people cannot simply vanish. It staggers the imagination."

But as the moments ticked by and the crew examined the area, it seemed Governor White was wrong. There was no sign of the colonists, no matter how carefully they searched. White called out the names of his daughter, his son-in-law, and his granddaughter until he was hoarse, but there was no answer. His voice echoed sadly around the site.





Governor John White and his men were relieved to at least find a trace of the settlers from the Lost Colony. But where had they gone?

"Sir, look," cried one of White's crew suddenly, pointing to a nearby tree trunk. The searchers rushed over and looked up. There, carved into the bark, were the letters CRO. On a post close by was the word CROATOAN. Finally, a sign that White had the right place.

"But what can be the meaning of this?" asked White perplexed. "Where are my family and all the other colonists? How can they have disappeared, every one of them?"



WALTER RALEIGH

In addition to being an explorer, Sir Walter Raleigh was a writer, soldier, politician, and spy. He was very important in England's colonization of North America.

## VOYAGE TO THE NEW WORLD

Three years ago, on May 8, 1587, Governor John White had set sail from England with 116 men, women, and children, including his daughter and son-in-law. White was filled with excitement and hope because it was his job to set up the first British colony in what is known today as North America.

European countries called this territory (as well as Central and South America) the New World, and they all wanted to stake a claim to it and set up colonies there. They believed more land meant more power. The fact that Native Americans were already living there didn't slow them down.

The famous British explorer Sir Walter Raleigh was behind the effort, as he had been for previous attempts to colonize the east coast of North America. But none had been successful, mostly because the earlier settlers and soldiers had made enemies of some of the Native people.

But this time, the colonists were determined to make the settlement work despite the dangers. They were proud to be representing such a

## THE AGE OF DISCOVERY

England's desire to establish a colony in what is now North America was part of the Age of Discovery. Beginning in the early 1400s, Europeans began to explore the rest of the world.

Spain focused on the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Other countries, such as England, France, and Portugal, heard stories of treasures and riches in the New World (North, South, and Central America) and wanted their share. Later, explorers would discover such countries as Australia, in 1606, and New Zealand, in 1642.

The Age of Discovery led to a vast transfer of animals, cultures, and diseases between Europe and the New World. Europeans created maps of the areas they traveled, and distant civilizations came in contact with each other. The cultures had to change the way they thought about each other—and themselves.

well-known man as Raleigh in the New World. Little did they know that his fame and fortune may have already decided their fates.

White's pilot, Simon Fernandez, was Portuguese and had once been a pirate. However, just before he was to die for his crimes, an important British official had decided he should live. Soon after, Fernandez began navigating ships for England. One of the ships he navigated carried this group of colonists headed for Chesapeake Bay on the northeast coast of the land now known as the United States. The soil in that area was said to be rich and fertile, and the bay provided a safe harbor.



But in July 1587, Fernandez dropped the settlers at the island of Roanoke instead of at Chesapeake Bay. The island got its name from the tribe of Native people living there—*roanoke* is an Algonquian word meaning “shell money.” Fernandez explained that the voyage to the New World had taken too long (two and a half months) and that it was already too late in the year for him to carry them on to Chesapeake Bay. As the bay was actually only a few days’ sail away, it’s more likely Fernandez wanted to hurry off to join other pirates attacking Spanish ships.

## A GRISLY DISCOVERY

Roanoke Island was not a location White would have chosen for the colony. An earlier English colony had failed there because the soldiers who settled on the land treated the Native people brutally and the Native people retaliated. Supply ships from England wouldn’t have known about the last-minute change of location, and so wouldn’t land there; no one would even know the settlers were on that island.



When White and his colonists arrived on Roanoke, among the first things they saw were bones—human bones. The buildings had been burned to the ground and the settlers never discovered exactly what had happened to the soldiers. It was unlikely the neighboring tribes would be helpful to another group of English settlers, which was why White had planned to establish his colony on the safer banks of Chesapeake Bay.

But White decided to make the best of the situation. With the help of Chief Manteo, head of a local tribe, White made contact with friendly Native people.



Historians have identified this as an illustration of Chief Manteo (front and back), with his hunting bow and arrows.

## CHIEF MANTEO

Chief Manteo was a Croatan Native American who became friendly with the English. In 1584, he sailed with them to England, one of the first Native Americans to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Manteo returned to Roanoke Island in 1585 and helped the settlers survive the winter by teaching them what plants to eat and how to build warm homes. He sailed back to England in 1586, and in 1587 was on the ship that carried the settlers whose fate would become a mystery.

Manteo was christened on Roanoke Island—the first Native American to be baptized into the Church of England. Because he was a guide and translator for the English, some Native people felt he was a traitor. Like the settlers of the Lost Colony, the fate of this chief is unknown. The town of Manteo, near where experts believe the Lost Colony was founded, is named after him.

There was no time for the colonists to think about what had happened to the soldiers—they needed to get to work building their homes.

Soon after landing, White's daughter, Eleanor Dare, gave birth to a little girl, named Virginia Dare. She was the first person born to English parents in the New World. The colonists took this as a symbol of hope: perhaps their settlement would succeed after all.

## DESPERATE TIMES

However, the colonists soon realized that they would run out of food. All they had to get them through the harsh winter was dried meat and fish, as well as the vegetables and grains they had brought with them—and it wasn't enough. They had arrived too late in the year to plant crops and harvest them before winter.

The settlers decided that White should head back to England for supplies, then return to Roanoke as quickly as he could. The governor didn't want to leave his family and the other colonists because he feared people back in England would think badly of him for abandoning them. But the settlers insisted that he go back to get help. So in August 1587, White set off across the ocean, promising to return with food and supplies as fast as possible. After all, his family and more than 100 other people were depending on him to return before winter set in.

Dried fish were an important food for people in the Roanoke Colony because the fish could be stored for a long time. The fish were dried in the open air using sun and wind.

