

Introduction—Explorers Are You: Tar Heel Junior Historians, Pigs, and Sir Walter Raleigh

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Tar Heel Junior Historians are explorers. You explore whenever you visit people and places. You explore the past at the North Carolina Museum of History. You explore when you take a trip. A journey to your grandparents' home can turn into an expedition to the mysterious realm of adults.

To explore means that you travel or study in search of new knowledge. A long time ago, in the 1400s, the Portuguese and the Spanish explored the dangerous Atlantic Ocean and the land that lay beyond it. Such exploration would be like going on a NASA mission to outer space today.



In the early 1900s a man digging in his garden in the Wachese area, on Roanoke Island, found this 1583 English sixpence. The coin bears the likeness of Queen Elizabeth I. Several residents in that area have found Algonquian Indian artifacts over the years. Perhaps a member of the Roanoke voyages traded this coin to an American Indian. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Like all explorers, those early men were adventuresome and courageous, and they journeyed into the unknown. Many died of disease, starvation, wounds, and accidents. They had no computer or Global Positioning System (GPS) to help find the way. Explorers had to excel at geometry in order to use the sun and the stars as guides. The men may have laughed at people today who think math is useless, because their very lives depended upon being good students. These travelers explored because Europeans wanted to find a way to sail to India and other lands to the east. India had many precious things like spices, silks, and perfumes that the Europeans wanted to sell at home.

In 1492 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain sent Italian Christopher Columbus west to explore the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus set sail in three small ships named *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*. He had a crew of 87 men. After a risky trip, Columbus discovered the Western Hemisphere and claimed the New World for Spain. Europeans called it the New World because it

was new to them. North Carolina is in the New World.

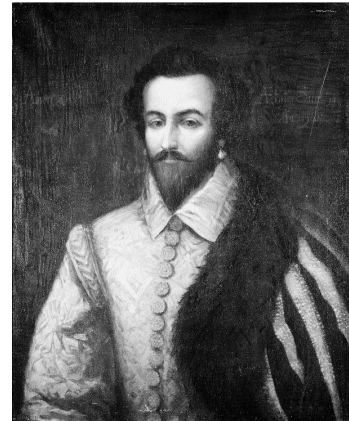
Columbus was trying to sail to India, but the New World was in the way. So he reached islands in the Caribbean Ocean. At first, Columbus thought that he was near India, so he called the people *Los Indios*, or the Indians. In the New World, Europeans took food and

other things from the Indians, and sometimes they made them into slaves. The Indians began to fight back, and some of them battled back for four hundred years.

Over the next decades, the Spaniards sent expeditions (called *entradas*) into the present-day United States to look for gold, silver, and other precious items. In 1540 a *conquistador* named Hernando de Soto and his men spent nearly four weeks in what we know as North Carolina. De Soto had brought horses and pigs with him. Some ran away, creating wild herds of pigs and horses in the South. When de Soto cooked pigs for lunch, was he the first to enjoy barbecue in North Carolina? The Spanish horses were some of the finest in the world. Today when you see a horse, it may be a descendant of those wonderful animals.

Another Spaniard, Captain Juan Pardo, built a fort in North Carolina in the 1560s. Pardo's men (like de Soto's had earlier) began fighting the American Indians. The Spaniards took women and food, infuriating the tribes. After Indians got rid of Captain Pardo's men, Spaniards did not come to North Carolina anymore to explore or try to settle. In 1565 they had, however, created a colony in Florida—Saint Augustine. You can still visit the old Spanish fort there. A *colony* was the name for European settlements in the New World. In a colony, people live in a new territory but remain under the laws and rules of their home country.

In 1558 Queen Elizabeth I became the monarch of England. She was a brilliant and determined ruler who wanted England to become as powerful as Spain. Her advisers, including Sir Walter Raleigh, told her that having colonies would make England great and wealthy. Raleigh is a very important man in the history of exploration, in the history of England, and in the history of North Carolina. The state capital is named after him. He convinced Queen Elizabeth to authorize the creation of an English colony in the New World. Raleigh called this place “Virginia” in honor of the queen, who had no boyfriends or husbands.



An oil painting of Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618) by Albert Holden (1870-1920). The Lost Colony lost Raleigh a lot of money. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Raleigh was an adventurer, poet, soldier, and intellectual. He devoted his entire life to studying, and late in his life, he wrote a history of the world. Raleigh never came to North America, but he might be called the “father of North Carolina” and the “father of English North America.” If you become a space explorer, perhaps you can become the “father” or “mother” of a planet or a moon.

Because of Raleigh, groups of English explorers journeyed to the New World beginning in 1584, landing at Roanoke Island. Artist John White was one of the explorers who came to Roanoke. In 1585 he painted detailed pictures of the first Tar Heels—the Indians—as well as their homes, villages, and crops. He painted pictures of plants and animals. Today



This postage stamp was issued in 1937 in observation of the 350th anniversary of the birth of the Lost Colony's Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the New World. Image courtesy of the State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History.

you can look at White's paintings and get an idea of how North Carolina looked so long ago.

White returned to Roanoke in 1587 with settlers, as their governor. These colonists soon were starving, and Governor White returned to England for supplies. While he was gone, the colony disappeared. People still try to solve this mystery, but they can't. If you study history and science, perhaps you can discover what happened to the Lost Colony. If you do, you might become as famous as Sir Walter Raleigh.

**At the time of this article's publication, Dr. Joseph C. Porter worked as the chief curator at the North Carolina Museum of History.*