

# Why Some New World Colonies Succeeded and Others Failed

## An Online Professional Development Seminar

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Fort Caroline, 1564

Sponsored by the Library of Congress  
Teaching with Primary Sources  
Eastern Region Program,  
coordinated by Waynesburg University.

**AMERICA** *in* **CLASS**<sup>®</sup>

*from the* National Humanities Center

## GOALS

- To use the successes and failures of various colonies to show that the European colonization of North America was not inevitable
- To provide fresh primary resources for use with students
- To introduce material from online collections of the Library of Congress and National Humanities Center
- To offer discussion strategies that promote close textual analysis

## FRAMING QUESTIONS

- What made colonies fail?
- What allowed some to succeed?
- How did colonists define success?

## FROM THE FORUM

- What is the definition of a successful colony?
- To what extent did a colony's survival depend on environmental factors, including the resources colonists found in the new land?
- What were the varying philosophies and mindsets of colonizers regarding interaction with indigenous inhabitants?
- To what extent did relations with indigenous peoples determine the success or failure of a colony?
- Why did colonists feel that they had the moral authority to set up a colony without treaty agreements or permission from indigenous inhabitants?

## FROM THE FORUM

- Could some failed colonies have been saved? Were others “allowed to fail” by the mother country?
- What people were key to the survival of a colony?
- Did the presence of women increase or decrease a colony’s chances of survival?
- What role did planning play in the success or failure of a colony?

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Early America, particularly cross-cultural relations  
on North American borderlands

*The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in  
the Heart of the Continent*  
(2006)

*Interpreting a Continent:  
Voices from Colonial America* (ed.)  
(2009)



## Failed Colonies

- Background on 1492-1565
- Ft. Caroline, 1565
- Luis de Velasco & Philip II
- Ajacán, 1570
- Spanish Failures & English Ambitions
- Roanoke, 1590
- Successes
- Natchez, 1729
- Why did colonies fail?

## 1492 - 1565

- Columbus
- Treaty of Tordesillas
- Mexico & Peru
- Looking for More



# New World Colonies



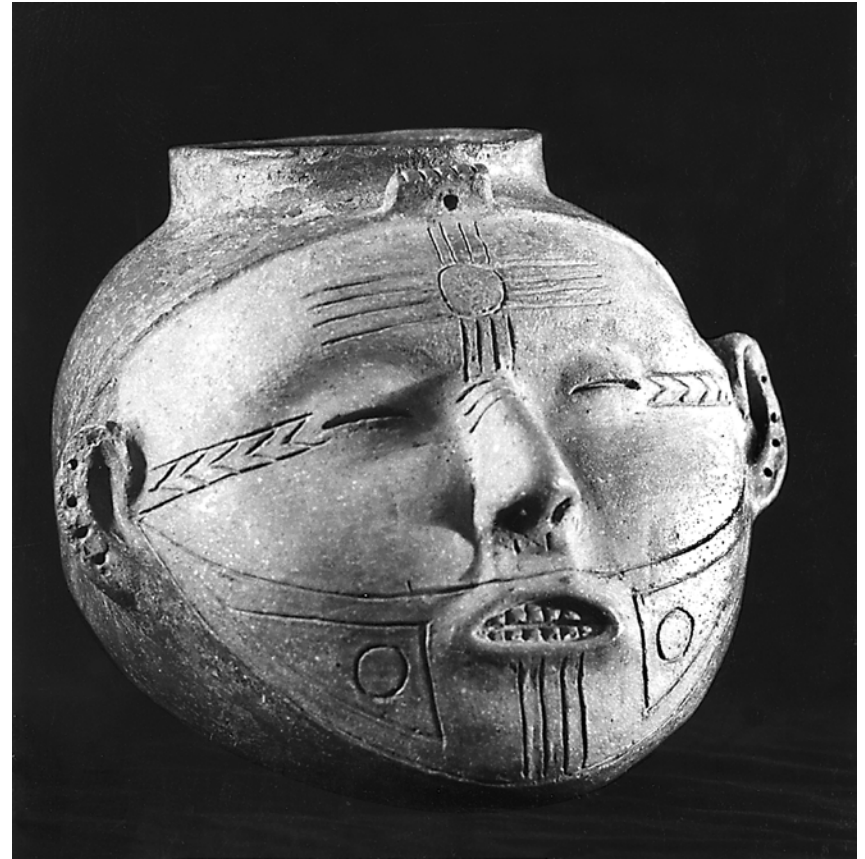
1492 – 1565: Columbus



1492 – 1565: Treaty of Tordesillas



1492 – 1565: Mexico & Peru



1492 – 1565: Looking for More



## Discussion: Fort Caroline

- Why Fort Caroline?
- What happened?

## Discussion: Fort Caroline

### Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales, Chaplain of the Spanish Expedition:

“Finding they were all Lutherans, the captain-general ordered them all to be put to death; but as I was a priest, and had bowels of mercy, I begged him to grant me the favor of sparing those whom we might find to be Christians. He granted it; and I made investigations, and found ten or twelve of the men Roman Catholics, whom we brought back. All the others were executed, because they were Lutherans and enemies of our Holy Catholic faith.”

## Discussion: Fort Caroline

### **Jacques le Moyne de Morgues, Artist of the French Expedition:**

“those few who were able to bear arms were that same night on guard; for, out of about a hundred and fifty persons remaining in the fort, there were scarcely twenty in a serviceable condition since Ribaud . . . had carried off with him all the able soldiers except fourteen or fifteen who were sick or mutilated, or wounded in the campaign against [Indian chief] Outina.”

## Discussion: Fort Caroline

### Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales, Chaplain of the Spanish Expedition:

- “our brave captain-general set out [from St. Augustine] on the 17th of September with five hundred arque-busiers and pikemen [men armed with muzzle-loading firearms and with spears], under the guidance of two Indian chiefs who showed them the route to the enemy’s fort.”
- “some Indians came to the camp, and made us understand, by signs, that on the coast towards the south there was a French vessel which had been wrecked. Immediately our general . . . said there should be in all twelve men to go in the boat, and two of them Indians, who would serve as guides.”





Luis de Velasco & Philip II

## Discussion: Ajacán

- How did relations go at first?
- What went wrong?

## Discussion: Ajacán

### Quirós and Segura to Hinistrosa, Sept. 12, 1570:

- “They seemed to think that don Luis had risen from the dead.”
- “They have recovered their courage and hope that God may seek to favor them, saying that they want to be like don Luis, begging us to remain in this land with them.”
- “Thus we have felt the good will which this tribe is showing. On the other hand, as I have said, they are so famished, that all believe they will perish of hunger and cold this winter.”

## Discussion: Ajacán

### Quirós and Segura to Hinistrosa, Sept. 12, 1570:

➤ “Seeing then the good will that this tribe has shown, great hope is had of its conversion and of the service of Our Lord and His Majesty and of an entrance into the mountains and to China, etc. Therefore, it has seemed best to Father to risk remaining despite such scanty stores.”

➤ “it is imperative that some provisions arrive some time during March or at the beginning of April so that we can give seeds to the tribe for planting. At this time the planting is done here, and thus many of the tribes will come here after being scattered over the region in search of food and there will be a good opportunity for the Holy Gospel. The chief has sought this very thing especially.”

## Discussion: Ajacán

### Quirós and Segura to Hinistrosa, Sept. 12, 1570:

“By a bit of blundering (I don't know who on the ship did it) someone made some sort of a poor trade in food. I see now the misfortune which followed, in that while up till now the Indians whom we met on the way would give to us from their poverty, now they are reluctant when they see they receive no trinkets for their ears of corn. They have brought the ears of corn and other foods and asked that they be given something when they handed them over. They say that they have done that with the others. Since Father had forbidden that they be given something, so that they would not be accustomed to receiving it and then afterwards not want to bargain with us, the Indians took the food away with them.”

## Spanish Failures & English Ambitions



## Discussion: Roanoke

### **John White:**

“In all this way we saw in the sand the print of the savages’ feet of 2 or 3 sorts trodden the night, and as we entered up the sandy bank upon a tree, in the very brow thereof were curiously carved these fair Roman letters C R O which letters presently we knew to signify the place, where I should find the planters seated, according to a secret token agreed upon between them & me at my last departure from them, which was, that in any ways they should not fail to write or carve on the trees or posts of the doors the name of the place where they should be seated; for at my coming always they were prepared to remove from Roanoak 50 miles into the mainland. Therefore at my departure from them in An[no Domini] 1587 I willed them, that if they should happen to be distressed in any of those places, that then they should carve over the letters or name, a Cross in this form, but we found no such sign of distress.”

## Discussion: Roanoke

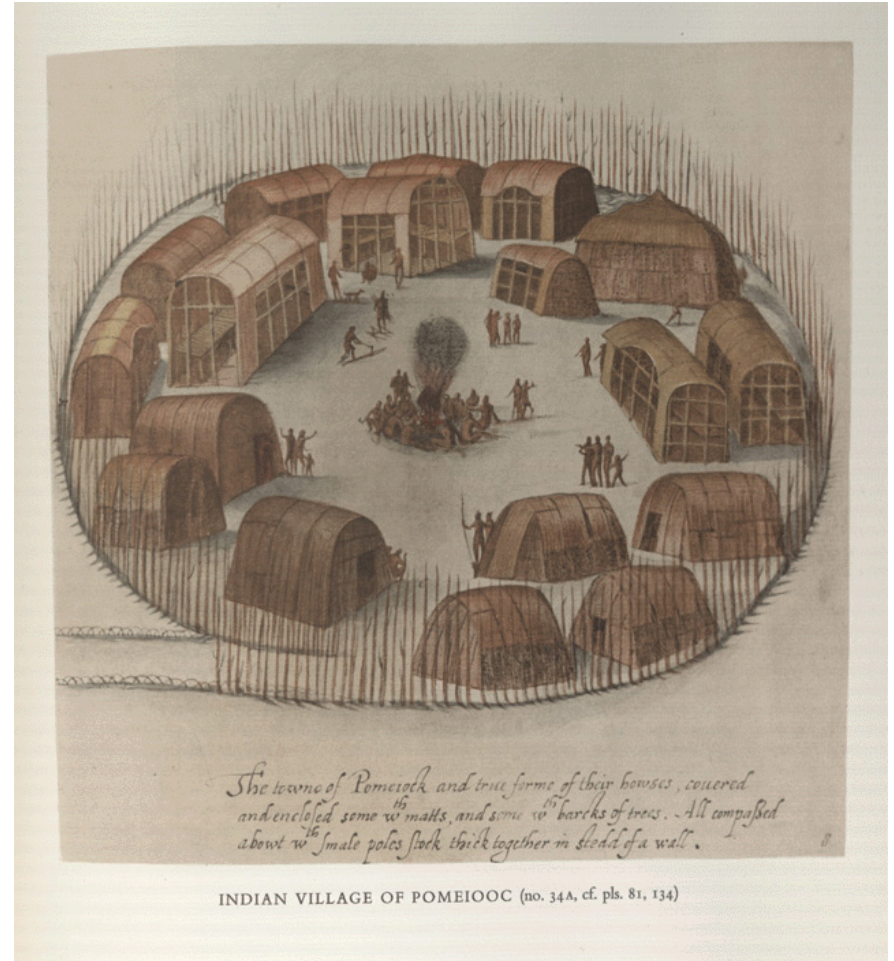
### John White:

“we found five chests, that had been carefully hidden of the Planters, and of the same chests three were my own, and about the place many of my things spoiled and broken, and my books torn from the covers, the frames of some of my pictures and maps rotten and spoiled with rain, and my armor almost eaten through with rust; this could be no other but the deed of the savages our enemies at Dasamongwepeuk, who had watched the departure of our men to Croatoan.”



## Discussion: Roanoke

What happened?



## Successes



Quebec, ca. 1686

## **Other Witnesses to Jamestown Between Founding and the First Supply: Observation by George Percy, 1607**

“Our men were destroyed with cruel diseases--as swellings, fluxes, burning fevers--and by wars, and some departed suddenly; but, for the most part, they died of mere famine. There were never Englishmen left in a foreign country in such misery as we were in this new-discovered Virginia.”

## Virginia's Early Relations with Native Americans: John Smith and Powhatan Exchange Views, 1608

“The 12 of January we arrived at Werowocomoco [Powhatan’s main town] . . . we sent to Powhatan for provision, who sent us plenty of bread, Turkies, and Venison; the next day having feasted us after his ordinary manner, he began to ask us when we would be gone: saying he sent not for us, neither had he any corn; and his people much less: yet for forty swords he would procure us forty Baskets.”

## Virginia's Early Relations with Native Americans: John Smith and Powhatan Exchange Views, 1608

John Smith to Powhatan: Powhatan you must know, as I have but one God, I honor but one King; and I live not here as your subject, but as your friend to pleasure you with what I can. By the gifts you bestow on me, you gain more than by trade. . . . I call you father indeed, and as a father you shall see I will love you: but the small care you have of such a child caused my men persuade me to look to myself.

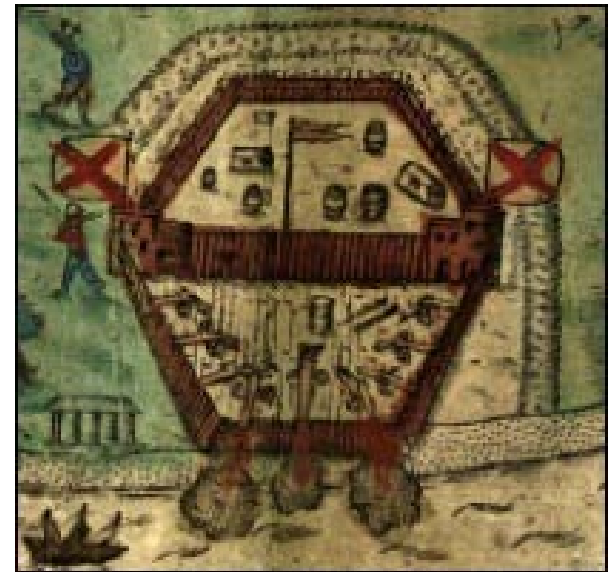
## Virginia's Early Relations with Native Americans: How the Massacre Was Good for the Plantation, 1622

“Secondly, Because our hands which before were tied with gentleness and fair usage, are now set at liberty by the treacherous violence of the Sausages, no untying the knot, but cutting it: So that we, who hitherto have had possession of no more ground then their waste, and our purchase at a valuable consideration to their own contentment, gained; may now by right of War, and law of Nations, invade their Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy us; whereby wee shall enjoy their cultivated places . . . and possessing the fruits of others’ labors. Now their cleared grounds in all their villages (which are situated in the fruitfulest places of the land) shall be inhabited by us.”

	<b>1607</b>	<b>1608</b>	<b>1644</b>	<b>1670</b>
Powhatans	24,000	23,000	9,000	2,000
English	104	38	10,000	41,000

## Why Did Colonies Fail?

- What made colonies fail?
- What allowed some to succeed?
- How did colonists define success?



Fort of St. Augustine, 1589



Final slide.

Thank You

This seminar is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.