

## Coates' Canons Blog: America's "First" July 4th

By Norma Houston

Article: <https://canons.sog.unc.edu/americas-first-july-4th/>

This entry was posted on July 03, 2013 and is filed under **General Local Government (Miscellaneous), Miscellaneous**



Tomorrow we celebrate the 237<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of

Independence and the beginning of our journey as an independent nation. But, did you know that July 4<sup>th</sup> also marks another beginning for our nation, one that happened right here in North Carolina? No, not the opening of the **first Krispy Kreme doughnut store** in Winston-Salem. That happened on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1937. The beginning described in this post is arguably America's "first" July 4<sup>th</sup>. And it happened here, in North Carolina, 429 years ago.

In the spring of 1584, Captains **Philip Amadas** and **Arthur Barlowe** left England in "two barks [ships] well



furnished with men and victuals," to explore the North American coast at the behest of **Sir**

**Walter Raleigh** in preparation for permanent colonization of the new world. While the English had previously landed on the coast of the North American continent (Newfoundland was well-known as a trading and fishing port as early as 1504[1]), no attempts at colonization had been made. The French and Spanish, on the other hand, had been colonizing parts of Canada and Florida for decades. With patents from Queen Elizabeth for the "discovering and planting of new lands and countries" in hand, Sir Walter eagerly financed the expedition to the new world, convinced that its already legendary abundance of natural resources would bring his Queen (and himself) great wealth.

After two and a half months at sea, **Amadas and Barlowe** encountered shallow waters and "smelled so strong a smell as if we had been in the midst of some delicate garden," signaling their imminent arrival to land. Then, on July 4, 1584, they beheld their first sight of land the new world. Entering the Pamlico Sound through Wococon Inlet (present day **Ocracoke Inlet**), the expedition landed on shore, possibly somewhere in present-day **Nags Head**. The Englishmen soon established

friendly relations with the local **Secotan tribe of the Algonquian Indians** who populated the islands



along

---

the North Carolina coast. Amadas and Barlowe earned the favor of Wingina, the tribe's leader, and became regular visitors to **Roanoke Island**.

Amadas and Barlowe's party returned to England a few months later with many products from the new world, including strange commodities like potatoes and tobacco. They also brought two Indians, **Manteo and Wanchese** (described by Captain Barlowe as "lusty men"). The captains filed a report with Sir Walter Raleigh describing their expedition. Barlowe's description of his first view of the Outer Banks on that first July 4<sup>th</sup> was poetically exuberant:

*"We viewed the land about us, being where we first landed very sandie and low towards the waters side, but so full of grapes (**scuppernong**) as the very beating and surge of the Sea overflowed them, of which we found such plentie, as well there as in all places else, both on the sand and on the greene soile on the hils, as in the plaines, as well on every little shrubbe, as also climbing towards the tops of high Cedars, that I thinke in all the world the like abundance is not to be found: and my selfe having seene those parts of Europe that most abound, find such difference as were incredible to be written."*[2]



Encouraged by

Barlowe's report, Sir Walter dispatched a second expedition in 1585 to

"Virginia," the lands having been so named by Queen Elizabeth in honor of her virgin status. This expedition established a settlement on Roanoke Island under the governorship of **Ralph Lane**. Lane's party explored the mainland of North Carolina which he described that area as the "goodliest soile under the Cope of Heaven." Over the centuries the phrase has morphed into the "goodliest *land* under the cope of heaven." [3] North Carolinians still believe this to be true.

The Roanoke Voyages (as Raleigh's expeditions came to be known) climaxed with the 1587 expedition, a party of **117 men, women, and children** who attempted to establish a permanent settlement on Roanoke Island. On August 18, 1587, Eleanor Dare gave birth to a daughter she named **Virginia**, the first English child born on American soil. The birth of a child inspired hope of permanent success for the fledgling settlement, but the colony famously **vanished without a trace** at some point during the next three years. Its fate has yet to be **conclusively determined**.

While permanent English settlement was not successfully achieved until twenty years later with Capt. John Smith's colony at Jamestown (the pilgrim's landing at Plymouth Rock was over thirty years later), Raleigh's Roanoke Voyages and the attempted settlement on Roanoke Island laid the foundation for eventual English colonization and, ultimately, the evolution of our nation as an English-speaking people. Had the French or Spanish gained the upper hand in those early years, the history of our country would have been written in a much different way, most likely even in a different language.

Tomorrow, as you celebrate the birth of our nation's independence, cast your imagination back four hundred years to that "first" July 4<sup>th</sup>. The sky is a cloudless Carolina blue. A warm wind gently billows the sails of two English ships that, after over two months at sea, are finally drawing near to land. As the ships navigate through the shallow shoals of an inlet, the officers and crew crowd the decks to get their first glimpse of the strange new world to which they have come. The sight is breathtaking. Wild vines are laden with ripe grapes. Waves gently lap on soft sandy beaches so very different from the rocky English coast. Cranes and gulls dot the skies. Schools of fish swim in abundance in the clear water. In the distance, majestic stands of tall trees promise wide acreage and rich soil. Did any of those early explorers imagine that this "goodliest soile [land] under the cope of heaven" would one day become a state in the mightiest nation on earth? Probably not, but their early efforts at colonization along North Carolina's coast planted the seeds that grew into our United States of America.



Note: Picture sources: <http://ncpedia.org/amadas-and-barlowe-expedition>, <http://thelostcolony.org/roanoke-voyages/#lightbox/1/>; <http://news.ncdcr.gov/2012/10/02/elizabeth-ii-sails-to-washington-n-c-for-smoke-on-the-water-event/>; [http://encyclopediavirginia.org/White\\_John\\_d\\_1593](http://encyclopediavirginia.org/White_John_d_1593)

[1] Sanders, W.O., *The First English Settlements on Roanoke Island 1584-1587*. Published for the Roanoke Colony Memorial Association, Manteo, N.C. 1937, p. 1-2.

[2] Barlowe, Arthur, "The First Voyage Made to the Coasts of America," a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh. *Explorations, Descriptions, and Attempted Settlements of Carolina, 1584-1590*. Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History. 1948. p.14. <http://archive.org/stream/explorationsdesc00corb#page/12/mode/2up/search/Barlowe>

[3] Lane, Ralph, "An Extract of Master Ralph Lane's Letter to M. Richard Hakluyt, Esquire, and Another Gentleman of the Middle Temple, from Virginia." *Explorations, Descriptions, and Attempted Settlements of Carolina, 1584-1590*. Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History. 1948. p.33.  
<http://archive.org/stream/explorationsdesc00corb#page/32/mode/2up>

## Links

- [canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/New-World-map1.jpg](http://canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/New-World-map1.jpg)
- [www.krispykreme.com/about-us/history](http://www.krispykreme.com/about-us/history)
- [ncpedia.org/biography/amadas-philip](http://ncpedia.org/biography/amadas-philip)
- [docsouth.unc.edu/nc/barlowe/bio.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/barlowe/bio.html)
- [canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/ElizabethIISailing.jpg](http://canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/ElizabethIISailing.jpg)
- [ncpedia.org/biography/raleigh-walter](http://ncpedia.org/biography/raleigh-walter)
- [www.nps.gov/fora/forteachers/amadas-and-barlowe.htm](http://www.nps.gov/fora/forteachers/amadas-and-barlowe.htm)
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocracoke\\_Inlet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocracoke_Inlet)
- [www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-twoworlds/1846#comment-486](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-twoworlds/1846#comment-486)
- [www.ncalgonquians.com/](http://www.ncalgonquians.com/)
- [canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/New-world-indian1.jpg](http://canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/New-world-indian1.jpg)
- [ncpedia.org/history/colonial/roanoke-island](http://ncpedia.org/history/colonial/roanoke-island)



- 
- [homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jmack/algonqin/oberg1.htm](http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jmack/algonqin/oberg1.htm)
  - [www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/404/entry/](http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/404/entry/)
  - [canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/New-World-map2.jpg](http://canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/New-World-map2.jpg)
  - [docsouth.unc.edu/nc/lane/bio.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/lane/bio.html)
  - [thelostcolony.org/education/colony-roster/](http://thelostcolony.org/education/colony-roster/)
  - [ncpedia.org/culture/legends/virginia-dare](http://ncpedia.org/culture/legends/virginia-dare)
  - [thelostcolony.org/roanoke-voyages/](http://thelostcolony.org/roanoke-voyages/)
  - [history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/roanoke-colony.htm](http://history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/roanoke-colony.htm)
  - [canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/OBX11.jpeg](http://canons.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/OBX11.jpeg)
  - [ncpedia.org/amadas-and-barlowe-expedition](http://ncpedia.org/amadas-and-barlowe-expedition)
  - [thelostcolony.org/roanoke-voyages/#lightbox/1/](http://thelostcolony.org/roanoke-voyages/#lightbox/1/)
  - [archive.org/stream/explorationsdesc00corb#page/12/mode/2up/search/Barlowe](http://archive.org/stream/explorationsdesc00corb#page/12/mode/2up/search/Barlowe)
  - [archive.org/stream/explorationsdesc00corb#page/32/mode/2up](http://archive.org/stream/explorationsdesc00corb#page/32/mode/2up)