

## The Colony at Roanoke

Ralph Lane, 1586

*The following is a report Ralph Lane prepared for Sir Walter Raleigh in 1586. Lane was a leader of Roanoke Island, the first attempted English settlement in America. He led an expedition of one hundred colonists Raleigh sent with seven ships Sir Richard Grenville commanded. The colonists left England in April 1585. The group landed on Roanoke in August but returned to England with Sir Francis Drake in the summer of 1586. Lane's account of the settlement appeared in Richard Hakluyt's The Principal Navigations of the English Nation.*

To the Northwest the farthest place of our discovery was to Chawanook distant from Roanoak about 130 miles. Our passage thither lies through a broad sound, but all fresh water, and the channel of a great depth, navigable for good shipping, but out of the channel full of shoals...

Chawanook itself is the greatest province and Seigniorie lying upon that river, and that the town itself is able to put 700 fighting men into the field, besides the force of the province itself.

The king of the said province is called Menatonon, a man impotent in his limbs, but otherwise for a savage, a very grave and wise man, and of a very singular good discourse in matters concerning the state, not only of his own country, and the disposition of his own men, but also of his neighbors round about him as well far as near, and of the commodities that each country yields.

When I had him prisoner with me, for two days that we were together, he gave me more understanding and light of the country than I had received by all the searches and savages that before I or any of my company had had conference with: it was in March last past 1586. Among other things he told me, that going three days' journey in a canoe up his river of Chawanook, and then descending to the land, you are within four days' journey to pass over land Northeast to a certain king's country, whose province lies upon the Sea, but his place of greatest strength is an island situated, as he described unto me, in a bay, the water round about the island very deep.

Out of this bay he signified unto me, that this King had so great quantity of pearls, and does so ordinarily take the same, as that not only his own skins that he wears, and the better sort of his gentlemen and followers are full set with the said pearls,

but also his beds, and houses are garnished with them, and that he has such quantity of them, that it is a wonder to see...

The king of Chawanook promised to give me guides to go overland into that king's country whensoever I would: but he advised me to take good store of men with me, and good store of victual, for he said, that king would be loth to suffer any strangers to enter into his country, and especially to meddle with the fishing for any pearls there, and that he was able to make a great many of men in to the field, which he said would fight very well...

And for that not only Menatonon, but also the savages of Moratoc themselves do report strange things of the head of that river, it is thirty days, as some of them say, and some say forty days' voyage to the head thereof, which head they say springs out of a main rock in that abundance, that forthwith it makes a most violent stream: and further, that this huge rock stands so near unto a Sea, that many times in storms (the wind coming outwardly from the sea) the waves thereof are beaten into the said fresh stream, so that the fresh water for a certain space, grows salt and brackish: I took a resolution with myself, having dismissed Menatonon upon a ransom agreed for, and sent his son into the pinnace to Roanoak, to enter presently so far into that river with two double whirries, and forty persons one or other, as I could have victual to carry us, until we could meet with more either of the Moraroks, or of the Mangoaks, which is another kind of savages, dwelling more to the westward of the said river: but the hope of recovering more victual from the savages made me and my company as narrowly to escape starving in that discovery before our return, as ever men did, that missed the same...

And that which made me most desirous to have some doings with the Mangoaks either in friendship or otherwise to have had one or two of them prisoners, was, for that it is a thing most notorious to all the country, that there is a province to the which the said Mangoaks have resource and traffic up that river of Moratoc, which has a marvelous and most strange mineral. This mine is so notorious among them, as not only to the savages dwelling up the said river, and also to the savages of Chawanook, and all them to the westward, but also to all them of the main: the country's name is of fame, and is called Chaunis Temoatan.

The mineral they say is Wassador, which is copper, but they call by the name of Wassador every metal whatsoever: they say it is of the color of our copper, but our copper is better than theirs: and the reason is for that it is redder and harder, whereas that of Chaunis Temoatan is very soft, and pale: they say that they take the

said metal out of a river that falls very swift from high rocks and hills, and they take it in shallow water: the manner is this.

They take a great bowl by their description as great as one of our targets, and wrap a skin over the hollow part thereof, leaving one part open to receive in the mineral: that done, they watch the coming down of the current, and the change of the color of the water, and then suddenly chop down the said bowl with the skin, and receive into the same as much ore as will come in, which is ever as much as their bowl will hold, which presently they cast into a fire, and forthwith it melts, and does yield in five parts at the first melting, two parts of metal for three parts of ore.

Of this metal the Mangoaks have so great store, by report of all the savages adjoining, that they beautify their houses with great plates of the same: and this to be true, I received by report of all the country, and particularly by young Skiko, the King of Chawanooks son of my prisoner, who also himself had been prisoner with the Mangoaks, and set down all the particulars to me before mentioned: but he had not been at Chaunis Temoatan himself: for he said it was twenty days' journey overland from the Mangoaks, to the said mineral country, and that they passed through certain other territories between them and the Mangoaks, before they came to the said country.

Upon report of the premises, which I was very inquisitive in all places where I came to take very particular information of by all the savages that dwelt towards these parts, and especially of Menatonon himself, who in everything did very particularly inform me, and promised me guides of his own men, who should pass over with me, even to the said country of Chaunis Temoatan, for overland from Chawanook to the Mangoaks is but one day's journey from sun rising to sun setting, whereas by water it is seven days with the soonest: These things, I say, made me very desirous by all means possible to recover the Mangoaks, and to get some of that their copper for an assay, and therefore I willingly yielded to their resolution: But it fell out very contrary to all expectation, and likelihood: for after two days' travel, and our whole victual spent, lying on shore all night, we could never see man, only fires we might perceive made along the shore where we were to pass, and up into the country, until the very last day.

In the evening whereof, about three of the clock we heard certain savages call as we thought, Manteo, who was also at that time with me in the boat, whereof we all being very glad, hoping of some friendly conference with them, and making him to answer them, they presently began a song, as we thought, in token of our welcome to them: but Manteo presently betook him to his piece, and told me that they meant

to fight with us: which word was not so soon spoken by him, and the light horseman ready to put to shore, but there lighted a volley of their arrows among them in the boat, but did no hurt to any man...

Choosing a convenient ground in safety to lodge in for the night, making a strong corps of guard, and putting out good sentinels, I determined the next morning before the rising of the sun to be going back again, if possibly we might recover the mouth of the river, into the broad sound, which at my first motion I found my whole company ready to assent unto: for they were now come to their dog's porridge, that they had bespoken for themselves if that befell them which did, and I before did mistrust we should hardly escape.

The end was, we came the next day by night to the river's mouth within four or five miles of the same, having rowed in one day down the current, much as in four days we had done against the same: we lodged upon an island, where we had nothing in the world to eat but pottage of sassafras leaves, the like whereof for a meat was never used before as I think. The broad sound we had to pass the next day all fresh and fasting: that day the wind blew so strongly and the billow so great, that there was no possibility of passage without sinking of our boats. This was upon Easter eve, which was fasted very truly. Upon Easter day in the morning the wind coming very calm, we entered the sound, and by four of the clock we were at Chipanum, whence all the savages that we had left there were left, but their wares did yield us some fish, as God was pleased not utterly to suffer us to be lost: for some of our company of the light horsemen were far spent. The next morning we arrived at our home Roanoak...

This fell out the first of June 1586, and the eight of the same came advertisement to me from captain Stafford, lying at my lord Admiral's Island, that he had discovered a great fleet of three and twenty sails: but whether they were friends or foes, he could not yet discern. He advised me to stand upon as good guard as I could.

The ninth of the said month he himself came unto me, having that night before, and that same day traveled by land twenty miles: and I must truly report of him from the first to the last; he was the gentleman that never spared labor or peril either by land or water, fair weather or foul, to perform any service committed unto him.

He brought me a letter from the General Sir Francis Drake, with a most bountiful and honorable offer for the supply of our necessities to the performance of the action we were entered into; and that not only of victuals, munition, and clothing,

but also of barks, pinnaces, and boats; they also by him to be victualed, manned and furnished to my contentation.

The tenth day he arrived in the road of our bad harbor: and coming there to an anchor, the eleventh day I came to him, whom I found in deeds most honorably to perform that which in writing and message he had most courteously offered, he having aforehand propounded the matter to all the captains of his fleet, and got their liking and consent thereto.

With such thanks unto him and his captains for his care both of us and of our action, not as the matter deserved, but as I could both for my company and myself, I (being aforehand prepared what I would desire) craved at his hands that it would please him to take with him into England a number of weak and unfit men for any good action, which I would deliver to him; and in place of them to supply me of his company with oar-men, artificers, and others.

That he would leave us so much shipping and victual, as about August then next following would carry me and all my company into England, when we had discovered somewhat, that for lack of needful provision in time left with us as yet remained undone.

That it would please him withal to leave some sufficient Masters not only to carry us into England, when time should be, but also to search the coast for some better harbor, if there were any, and especially to help us to some small boats and oar-men...

While these things were in hand, the provision aforesaid being brought, and in bringing aboard, my said masters being also gone aboard, my said barks having accepted of their charge, and my own officers, with others in like sort of my company with them (all which was dispatched by the said general the 12 of the said month) the 13 of the same there arose such an unwonted storm, and continued four days...

This storm having continued from the 13 to the 16 of the month, and thus my bark put away as aforesaid, the general coming ashore made a new proffer unto me; which was a ship of 170 tons, called the bark Bonner, with a sufficient master and guide to tarry with me the time appointed, and victualed sufficiently to carry me and my company into England, with all provisions as before: but he told me that he would not for anything undertake to have her brought into our harbor, and therefore he was to leave her in the road, and to leave the care of the rest unto myself, and advised me to consider with my company of our case, and to deliver

presently unto him in writing what I would require him to do for us; which being within his power, he did assure me as well for his captains as for himself, should be most willingly performed.

Hereupon calling such captains and gentlemen of my company as then were at hand, who were all as privy as myself to the general's offer; their whole request was to me, that considering the case that we stood in, the weakness of our company, the small number of the same, the carrying away of our first appointed bark, with those two special masters, with our principal provisions in the same, by the very hand of God as it seemed, stretched out to take us from thence; considering also, that his second offer, though most honorable of his part, yet of ours not to be taken, insomuch as there was no possibility for her with any safety to be brought into the harbor: seeing furthermore, our hope for supply with Sir Richard Grenville, so undoubtedly promised us before Easter, not yet come, neither then likely to come this year, considering the doings in England for Flanders, and also for America, that therefore I would resolve myself with my company to go into England in that fleet, and accordingly to make request to the general in all our names, that he would be pleased to give us present passage with him...

From whence the general in the name of the Almighty, weighing his anchors (having bestowed us among his fleet) for the relief of whom he had in that storm sustained more peril of wreck than in all his former most honorable actions against the Spaniards, with praises unto God for all, set sail the nineteenth of June 1596, and arrived in Portsmouth the seven and twentieth of July the same year.