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**Finding Worth in the Wilderness: The Abandonment of France and England's Earliest North
American Colonies, 1534-1590**

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Finding Worth in the Wilderness: The Abandonment of France and England's Earliest
North American Colonies, 1534-1590

by

Tabitha Renaud

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree in History

University of Ottawa

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ABSTRACT*Finding Worth in the Wilderness: The Abandonment of France and England's Earliest North American Colonies, 1534-1590**Tabitha Renaud**Supervisor: Professor Jan Grabowski**Year of Submission: 2010*

The earliest attempts of France and England to colonize North America were disappointments. The sixteenth century saw French attempts to colonize the St. Lawrence Valley (1541-3) and Northern Florida (1562-5) and English attempts to colonize Roanoke Island (1585-7). In all three cases, the venture's hopes of finding valuable resources or the Northwest Passage were not realized and colonization was not achieved. This dissertation will examine four major types of difficulties the French and English faced in Canada, Virginia and Florida in the sixteenth century. They are challenges of environment and adaptation; internal conflicts such as rivalry and mutiny; challenges of Amerindian relations and, finally, challenges of transportation and communication. The struggles of these abandoned colonies will be compared with those of permanent colonies such as Jamestown, Quebec, Port Royal, Hispaniola and New Spain. Particular emphasis will be placed on the early struggles of Samuel de Champlain in Canada and John Smith in Virginia. It will be demonstrated that these were standard challenges of colonization for successful and unsuccessful colonies alike and that they could be overcome eventually with enough effort, experimentation, men and materials. France and England did not stop their earliest North American colonization projects because the task was too difficult. Rather, there appeared to be no worthwhile reason to waste resources or to battle rival powers such as Spain to hold these territories at this time.

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INTRODUCTION

The earliest attempts of France and England to colonize North America were disappointments. The sixteenth century saw French attempts to colonize the St. Lawrence Valley (1541-3) and Northern Florida (1562-5) and English attempts to colonize Roanoke Island (1585-7). In all three cases, the venture's hopes of finding valuable resources and the Northwest Passage were not realized and colonization was not achieved.

The French expeditions have received little historical scrutiny. The St. Lawrence Valley attempts of Jacques Cartier and Lord Roberval have not been properly revisited since the 1970s and even these were overviews appearing as chapters in larger, more general works by Samuel Morison, David Quinn and Marcel Trudel.¹ This is surprising considering the Roberval-Cartier site was discovered in October 2005.² Aside from the actual archeological reports little has been published to complement or commemorate this discovery. In fact, minimal attention has been paid to this milestone in North American archeology.

Fortunately there is a fair amount of primary material available in print. The Roberval-Cartier expedition narratives have been published many times in French and English.³ An edition of the original English printing of 1545 survives and photographic

¹ Samuel Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages A.D. 500-1600*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

David Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Marcel Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*. Patricia Claxton, tr. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

² Richard Fiset and Gilles Samson. "Charlesbourg-Royal and France-Roy (1541-43): France's first Colonization Attempt in the Americas," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43:1 (2009), 48-70.

³ The entirety of what exists of the four Roberval-Cartier expedition narratives was included in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589-1600). Hakluyt, a sixteenth century exploration enthusiast, collected many contemporary explorer narratives and published the collection in English. In fact,

reproductions are published.⁴ Archivist H.P. Biggar put together a highly respected version of the four narratives in 1924 with the French and English text presented in parallel for comparison.⁵ Biggar also published *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval* in 1930.⁶ This 577 page source offers the vast majority of documents pertaining to Cartier and Roberval that have been discovered in archives – though many are not relevant to the Canadian expeditions. Spanish reports about the expeditions are also included and are translated into English. Additionally, David Quinn has compiled some relevant excerpts in his document collection of 1971 entitled *North America Discovery circa 1000 – 1612*.⁷ While the third narrative of Cartier (1541-2) and the only narrative of Roberval (1542-3) are incomplete, the archeological findings of the recent Roberval-Cartier dig near Quebec City shed considerable light here. Four archeological reports on the dig have been published in French and English to date discussing the burned buildings, stone walls, 2680 artifacts and 401 ecofacts.⁸

accounts from all three colonization ventures - Canada, Florida and Roanoke Island - were preserved by Hakluyt. Historians owe much to him as he sensed the significance of exploration narratives and his efforts have preserved many. (Hakluyt, Richard. *Principal Navigations*. Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927).

⁴ The original is at the British Museum. An example of a reproduction is: Cartier, Jacques. *Navigations to Newe Fraunce*. John Florio, tr. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966.

⁵ Jacques Cartier, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*. H.P. Biggar, tr. Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1924.

⁶ *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval*. Biggar, H.P, ed. Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1930.

⁷ *North American Discovery circa 1000-1612*. David Quinn, ed. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1971.

⁸ Richard Fiset, Hélène Côté et Gilles Samson, "Projet archéologique Cartier-Roberval: recherches 2006-2007, *Archéologiques*, 21 (2008): 21-43.

Richard Fiset and Gilles Samson, "Charlesbourg-Royal and France-Roy (1541-43): France's first colonization attempt in the Americas," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43, 1 (2009): 48-70.

Hélène Côté, "The archaeological collection from the Cartier-Roberval site (1541-43): a remarkable testimony to French colonization efforts in the Americas," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43,1 (2009): 71-86.

Julie-Anne Bouchard-Perron and Allison Bain, "From myth to reality: archaeobotany at the Cartier-Roberval Upper Fort site," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43,1 (2009): 87-105.

There is considerably less scholarship regarding the French colonization attempts in Northern Florida under Jean Ribault and René de Laudonnière (1562-5). In fact, there are only two major works. Charles Bennett published an overview of the events entitled *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline* in 1964 which returned to print in 2001 as little else exists on the subject.⁹ The only other monograph is *The French in Early Florida: In the Eye of the Hurricane* written by John McGrath in 2000.¹⁰ Aside from a few journal articles, little else has been published and information on these events has not been widely distributed.

As for primary sources, the expedition narratives of Ribault and Laudonnière are both available in print.¹¹ Additionally, over one hundred pages of primary material accompany Bennett's work – archival documents he considered more obscure such as the correspondence of colonists, petitions and Spanish reports. Quinn's *North American Discovery circa 1000-1612* also provides some excerpts of French and Spanish documents describing the expeditions and the fall of the French in Florida.

Conversely, a great deal has been published on the Roanoke colonies of North Carolina (1585-7) under Sir Richard Grenville, Ralph Lane and John White. Several factors are likely responsible for the topic proving more popular. Firstly, the Roanoke venture is considered the beginning of English America, stirring feelings of American patriotism. Secondly, there were several significant commemorative publications to mark the 400th anniversary of these expeditions. Lastly, the unsolved mystery of the Lost

⁹ Charles E. Bennett, *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001.

¹⁰ John McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: In the Eye of the Hurricane*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.

¹¹ Jean Ribault, "The Ribault Expedition, 1562," *North American Discovery circa 1000-1612*, David Quinn, ed. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1971.
René de Laudonnière, "Voyages to Florida, 1562-5," *The Principal Navigations*, Richard Hakluyt, ed. Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927.

Colonists of Roanoke has captured the imagination of historians and laymen alike, drawing attention to the overall colonization attempt.

David Quinn is considered the foremost authority on the Roanoke expeditions. The bulk of his research is represented in *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* (1985) and *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (1977).¹² Karen Kupperman and David Stick have published monographs outlining the Roanoke story, entitled *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony* (1984 and 2007) and *Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America* (1983) respectively.¹³ M.L. Oleg recently published *The Head in Edward Nugent's Hand: Roanoke's Forgotten Indians* (2008) and journal articles focusing on the perspective of indigenous peoples.¹⁴ An entire book could be written historiographically charting the debate on the fate of the Lost Colonists over the past century. In addition, several journal articles and scientific studies on the Roanoke terrain have also been published in recent years.

Several primary sources, including the accounts of Arthur Barlowe, Sir Richard Grenville, Ralph Lane, and John White were preserved by Richard Hakluyt in his *Principal Navigations* (1589). As a participant in the Roanoke venture, Hakluyt also wrote a report now known as “A Discourse on Western Planting” in the hopes of

¹² David Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606*. London: University of North Carolina, 1985.

David Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

¹³ Karen Kupperman, *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

David Stick, *Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1983.

¹⁴ M.L. Oberg, *The Head in Edward Nugent's Hand: Roanoke's Forgotten Indians*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

encouraging investment.¹⁵ Fellow participant and scientist, Thomas Harriot, also wrote a report in 1590 entitled “A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia.”¹⁶ Pertinent correspondence, planning notes, legal documents, news articles and Raleigh’s patent and parliamentary bill are printed in the third volume of *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*.¹⁷ Additional documents appear in David Quinn’s *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America Under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584* (1955) and the aforementioned *North American Discovery circa 1000-1612* (1971).¹⁸ Archeological reports have also been published from digs over the past century at the Roanoke site.¹⁹ Unfortunately, archeological findings have been greatly compromised by coastal erosion, looting and vandalism by early visitors and the primitive, inadvertently destructive methods of the initial archeological and restoration projects.²⁰

Four centuries have passed and yet the approach to presenting these expeditions has not changed. Historians provide a straightforward, chronological retelling of expedition events as we know them and as they have been known for some time. Yet the sources have not been tapped dry and the discovery of the Bristol letter and the Roberval-

¹⁵ Actually entitled: “A Particular Discourse Concerning the Great Necessity and Manifold Commodities That Are Like to Grow to this Realm of England by the Western Discoveries Lately Attempting.” (Hakluyt, Richard. “A Discourse on Western Planting,” *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*. Volume 3. David Quinn, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1979.)

¹⁶ Thomas Harriot, “A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia,” *The Principal Navigations*. Richard Hakluyt, ed. Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927.

¹⁷ *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*. David Quinn, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1979.

¹⁸ *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America Under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584*. Vol 1 and 2. David Quinn, ed. London, Hakluyt Society, 1955.

¹⁹ J.C. Harrington, “Archaeological Explorations at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, *North Carolina Review* 26 (1949), 127-49.

David Quinn, “An Archaeological Resurrection?” *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 379-412.

²⁰ David Quinn, “An Archaeological Resurrection?” *Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606*, 380; 392.

Cartier site prove that more can always be uncovered.²¹ Moreover, there are many new ways to work with this material. No monographs take these expeditions and compare them to one another directly as a focal point, nor do any centre on a comparison of these expeditions and their successors, such as an extensive comparison of the Roanoke and Jamestown projects.

It is surprising revisionist historians have not taken greater interest in revisiting these events. With the minority rights revolution of the twentieth century, traditional interpretations were called into question and emphasis is now placed on indigenous peoples in a manner that allows for a great deal of new research and reinterpretation. Explorers such as Columbus and Cartier can be presented in innumerable ways – for example, as heroic figures of Europe’s Age of Discovery, as villains who began an invasion that saw Amerindians destroyed or displaced, as symbols of immigration to the Americas or as average men in a cautionary tale about cultural exchange. The field is wide open for revisionist theory.

Colonization expeditions must be analyzed with care as the main sources, the expedition narratives themselves, are written from the perspective of party leadership. Documents indicating the perspectives of colonists, soldiers and sailors are rare and often fragmentary. Full accounts such as the Florida narrative of carpenter Nicholas La Challeux are unusual.²² Thus it must always be kept in mind that a leader’s presentation of his own leadership will be very biased and may contain exaggerations or even

²¹ University of Bristol Press Release: “The lost voyage: First English-led expedition to North America,” August 27, 2009.

Evan Jones, “Henry VII and the Bristol expeditions to North America: the Condon documents,” *Historical Research*. August 2009.

²² Nicolas Le Challeux, “Discours de l’histoire de la Floride, 1566,” *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*. Volume 3. David Quinn, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1979.

untruths. Similarly, the perspectives of aboriginals were not recorded and one must rely heavily on European accounts to analyze native relations. This is problematic as Europeans often did not understand aboriginals and cultural differences, misunderstandings and miscommunications were prevalent. Inferring the Amerindian perspective from European text must be done with careful scrutiny and acknowledged as an imperfect art. It is also important to avoid interpreting sixteenth century actions with a twenty-first century mindset. Historians such as Samuel Morison and John McGrath are quick to find fault in expedition leaders, yet one should avoid the temptation to blame. It is all too easy to judge the decisions of leaders with hindsight as painfully unnecessary mistakes. One must be mindful of these challenges when interpreting events and exercise supposition where necessary with vigilance.

Historians are also faced with many challenges when presenting these New World ventures. One must be sure to present the interactions of Europeans and Amerindians in a balanced manner that is fair to both unique perspectives. The existence of Columbus Day is protested more and more each year.²³ The Smithsonian “leaned over backwards” to present its Quincentenary exhibit on Columbus’ expeditions in a non-offensive manner.²⁴ Encyclopedias, text books and museum exhibits must be written with extreme care to avoid offending any particular group. The outcry against the Smithsonian’s *Enola Gay* exhibit in 1994 and the Canadian War Museum’s Second World War “Strategic Bombing” panel in 2007 are strong examples of how carefully history must now be presented.²⁵ The cancellation of a historical re-enactment of the Battle of the Plains of

²³ Howard Schuman et al. “Elite Revisionists and Popular Beliefs: Christopher Columbus, Hero or Villain?” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69, no 1 (2005): 8.

²⁴ Schuman, 7.

²⁵ Otto Mayr, “The *Enola Gay* fiasco: History, politics, and the museum,” *Technology & Culture*, 9: 3

Abraham in Quebec due to offended French Canadian groups is an unfortunate case of censorship.²⁶ The presentation of history can become so political that it compromises education and sterilizes the known facts.

Historians have traditionally considered the sixteenth century expeditions of France and England failures and dissected their specifics to determine precisely what went wrong and if it was avoidable. The mistakes of individuals and the challenges of colonization are repeatedly cited as reasons that ventures failed. The character, decisions and actions of expedition leaders are given too much weight and often analyzed in a way reminiscent of the Great Man theory. Too much emphasis has also been placed on the role that New World difficulties such as native relations or the harsh environment played in these disappointments. There is a notion in the literature that had colonization efforts unfolded differently settlement could have been successful in the sixteenth century.

Yet such mistakes and difficulties were not ultimately responsible for the failure of early French and English colonization projects. The successful permanent North American colonies of the seventeenth century, such as Quebec, Port Royal and Jamestown struggled with similar problems and eventually prevailed. Fifteenth century Spanish colonies such as Hispaniola and New Spain also had to overcome these same hurdles to get a foothold in the Americas. These were standard challenges of colonization and were battled by successful and unsuccessful colonies alike. Early colonization ventures were extremely experimental and difficulties were worked out gradually over many phases. If one phase fared poorly another expedition could be sent to resume the effort until stability was achieved. France and England abandoned their sixteenth century

(1998), 462-74.

“War museum should change display that riled vets: senators.” *CBC News*. June 13, 2007.

²⁶ “Plains of Abraham Re-enactment Cancelled.” *The Ottawa Citizen*. February 18, 2009.

projects after only two phases, determining that it was not worthwhile to invest men and materials into overcoming the on-site difficulties or fighting rival nations, such as Spain, to hold the territory.

The real issue was incentive. Sixteenth century expedition parties did not find any valuable resources or promising trade routes in North America that justified colonization. The North American commodities identified at this time, such as fish and Amerindian goods, could be obtained more safely and profitably by visiting fishermen at the coast. The inability of early colonists to discover precious metals or the Northwest Passage caused organizers and investors to deem the experimental ventures unviable. There were far more lucrative uses of sailors and ships at this time, such as fishing, whaling, privateering and trade as well as far more pressing political concerns such as the French Wars of Religion (1562-98) and the Spanish Armada (1588). Without incentive, colonizing these northern territories was just not a priority in Europe in the sixteenth century. The development of the fur and tobacco trades in Canada and Virginia, respectively, would introduce the necessary incentive and the seventeenth century would see France and England work steadily towards permanent settlements in order to capitalize on this.

This dissertation will examine four major types of difficulties the French and English faced in Canada, Virginia and Florida in the sixteenth century. They are challenges of environment and adaptation, internal conflicts such as rivalry and mutiny, challenges of Amerindian relations and, finally, challenges of transportation and communication. The struggles of these abandoned colonies will be compared with those of permanent colonies such as Jamestown, Quebec, Port Royal, Hispaniola and New

Spain. Particular emphasis will be placed on the early struggles of Samuel de Champlain in Canada and John Smith in Virginia as they are the most relevant comparisons. It will be demonstrated that these were standard challenges of colonization for successful and unsuccessful colonies alike and that they could be overcome eventually with enough effort, experimentation, men and materials. France and England did not stop their earliest North American colonization projects because the task was too difficult. Rather, there simply appeared to be no worthwhile reason to waste resources holding these territories at this time.

CHAPTER ONE

ENVIRONMENT AND ADAPTATION

French and English planners of colonization projects considered North America a challenging foreign environment. Reconnaissance missions were sent ahead to explore the east coast of the continent, gathering information in order to determine if occupation was feasible. Scouts provided expedition organizers with detailed reports on their explorations, describing the physical terrain, waterways, climate, vegetation, wildlife, potential resources and indigenous peoples. They also identified promising sites for future colonization. It was crucial for a reconnaissance mission to identify areas where Europeans could survive. Colony planners desired a place with a temperate climate, an abundance of food and water and peaceful indigenous peoples. When such an environment was identified, colonization attempts began and men and materials were transported to the site.

Jacques Cartier's reconnaissance missions of 1534 and 1535 explored Canada's maritime coast and the St. Lawrence Valley. He had no illusions about the environment and plainly identified habitable and uninhabitable areas. While he described the rocky, barren coast of Labrador as the "land God gave Cain," he praised Prince Edward Island and Brion Island as being temperate environments with much wildlife and vegetation.²⁷ The site chosen was the large, natural harbour at present-day Quebec City alongside the friendly Amerindians of Stadacona. This was the best place along the St. Lawrence River to leave ocean vessels in order to explore deeper into the Canadian interior.

²⁷ Cartier, "The First Voyage, 1534," 22; 33-4; 43.

Similarly, Jean Ribault and René de Laudonnière determined Northern Florida, by the large St. Johns River, was an ideal place to plant a colony. Ribault's journal describes a beautifully forested area with meadows and several navigable rivers for inland exploration.²⁸ The local people showed "great humanity" and there was an abundance of fish, berries and timber.²⁹ Laudonnière's account concurs, adding that the land was fertile and could sustain European agriculture. Moreover, the site was close to the Atlantic and he considered it highly defensible.³⁰ Lastly, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe reported to Walter Raleigh in 1584 that Roanoke Island was an ideal site for English colonization. The island's inhabitants were extremely friendly and showered their guests with food and gifts.³¹ Once again, the climate was considered pleasant, the earth arable and there appeared to be an abundance of food.

Admittedly, these reports were written with a purpose. They sought to encourage investment and thus tended to gloss over the less-appealing aspects of a potential site.³² Arthur Barlowe's narrative, revised by Walter Raleigh, failed to mention an Amerindian attack at Chesapeake Bay.³³ An excess of superlatives and idyllic language reveals the vested interest an author had in his project appearing in a favourable light. Yet while an element of bias and exaggeration is undeniable, it is important to keep in mind that these men also had a vested interest in picking a truly promising spot for colonization. As participants in the project, they would soon return to live in the chosen space. Naturally, they would search out the best sites along the coast to ensure their own survival.

²⁸ Ribault, "The Ribault Expedition, 1562," 146.

²⁹ Ribault, "The Ribault Expedition, 1562," 144; 146.

³⁰ Bennett, 19.

³¹ Barlowe, 190.

³² Quinn, *North America*, 327.

³³ Stephan Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 80.

Exaggeration would have been within reason as outright lying about a site would have risked their personal safety.

The search for a safe, hospitable site shows that organizers were not ignorant of the potential difficulties. They factored in many of the challenges the environment could present and tried from the start to avoid them. Scouts understood the criteria and tried to select appropriate sites. Unfortunately for the newcomers, their initial impressions were not always well-founded and the resulting cost would be high.

Issues of Accessibility

Accessibility to the chosen site proved extremely important. The Canada, Roanoke and Florida colonies each lacked direct ocean access, hindering ships from approaching or leaving them directly. The trek from Newfoundland to the St. Lawrence Valley site was treacherous and took several weeks.³⁴ While the natural harbour selected for colonization provided excellent anchorage for ocean vessels, the Canadian winter posed a serious setback. The harbor was frozen six to seven months of the year.³⁵ Ships could only access the site seasonally – a serious hindrance to shipments of men, materials and instructions from France.

Larger ocean vessels could not approach the Florida site at all. While sandbars and shallow waters protected Fort Caroline from enemy ships, friendly vessels were equally hindered.³⁶ The very traits that made the site a defensible position interfered with the transfer of supplies from ocean vessels to the colony. When Ribault's fleet arrived to

³⁴ Kenneth Banks, *Chasing Empire Across The Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1783*, (Kingston: McGill-Queens University, 2006), 70.

³⁵ Banks, 75.

³⁶ McGrath, 133.

resupply the colony in September 1565, the process proved tedious and took days.³⁷ Though the fort was close to the Atlantic, smaller boats had to be loaded to actually approach it. The colony had to keep its larger vessels anchored in the Atlantic where they were exposed to enemy attack and revealed the colony's position – as Ribault discovered when Spanish ships arrived for battle.³⁸

Similarly, Roanoke Island could not be approached by ocean vessels lest they run aground. The small island was nestled between the shore of North Carolina and the Outer Banks. These waters were extremely shallow and only pinnaces and longboats could safely enter them via treacherous inlets in the Outer Banks. The flagship of the first expedition of 1585 unwisely braved one of these inlets, only to run aground.³⁹ Thereafter, ocean vessels were anchored at the Outer Banks and smaller boats were loaded to approach Roanoke Island. Anchoring at the Outer Banks was still risky, however, and ships needed to take to the open ocean during adverse weather to avoid shipwreck.⁴⁰ Sir Francis Drake lost ships that were anchored at these banks, while attempting to assist the Roanoke colonists in the summer of 1586.⁴¹ Additionally, like at Fort Caroline, ocean vessels were isolated from the colony and left in plain sight, vulnerable to enemy attack.

Approaching Roanoke Island via small boat had to be done with the utmost care. Verrazano had mistaken Pamlico Sound, the water between the Outer Banks and the coast, as a separate ocean.⁴² While the waters were too shallow for large ships, they were

³⁷ McGrath, 139.

³⁸ McGrath, 144.

³⁹ Grenville, "Voyage of 1585," 137.

⁴⁰ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 54.

⁴¹ Quinn, *North America*, 335.

⁴² Quinn, *North America*, 155.

risky for small boats. Optimal weather was needed as a windy crossing generally meant capsizing. John White's journal describes the following incident:

The Admirals boat first passed the breach, but not without some danger of sinking, for we had a sea brake into our boat which filled us halfe full of water, but by the will of God and careful styrage of Captain Cooke we came safe ashore, saving onely that our furniture, victuals, match and powder were much wet and spoyled.⁴³

Though the boat very nearly submerged and the supplies were ruined, there were no casualties. A second boat, following behind, was not as fortunate:

...a very dangerous sea brake into their boate and overset them quite, the men kept the boat some in it, and some hanging on it, but the next sea set the boat on ground, where it beat so, that some of them were forced to let go their hold, hoping to wade ashore; but the sea still beat them downe, so that they could neither stand nor swimme, and the boat twice or thrise was turned the keel upward, whereon Captain Spicer and Skinner hung until they sunk, & were seene no more.⁴⁴

Seven of eleven men aboard drowned while the other four managed to keep afloat long enough to be rescued by White's group. The accident disconcerted the party so much that they almost abandoned their trek to the Roanoke site altogether.⁴⁵

The inability of ocean vessels to reach these sites also meant they could not serve as military or privateer bases. Only with further exploration of the terrain did Europeans eventually determine more practical sites. The English identified Chesapeake Bay as having superior accessibility.⁴⁶ Unlike Fort Caroline and Roanoke Island, Chesapeake Bay was deep enough to permit ocean vessels direct access to its colony's shore. The site was later used for the successful Jamestown colony.

Trekking deeper into the interior was also difficult. North American forests and rivers were largely uncharted territory and presented Europeans with a unique set of challenges. Europeans lacked the necessary knowledge and technology to progress safely

⁴³ White, "Voyage of 1590," 220.

⁴⁴ White, "Voyage of 1590," 220-1.

⁴⁵ White, "Voyage of 1590," 221.

⁴⁶ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 656.

or efficiently. Planning expeditions was problematic as they could not accurately predict the length of any given route or how much food and supplies were needed. Leaving their fortified outposts was a great risk as explorers were isolated and vulnerable. Thus, the newcomers tread cautiously by generally sticking to clear-cut waterways and areas that friendly Amerindians had briefed them on. Roberval and Cartier each stopped at the perilous Lachine Rapids near present-day Montreal. Uncertain how to bypass this obstacle overland, each turned back for the safety of their fort.

Explorers relied heavily on Amerindians for information, which often proved a problem as cases of miscommunication, sabotage or general uncooperativeness were not infrequent. For instance, when Cartier asked Amerindians what lay beyond the Lachine Rapids, to gauge whether it was worthwhile to push onward, they drew a map and warned him of the Long Sault Rapids. Morison finds it strange that they did not tell Cartier of the Ottawa River.⁴⁷ A genuine miscommunication may have occurred or these Amerindians may have deliberately withheld information to prevent the French from exploring that area. Champlain, never able to reach Hudson Bay, complained: "I have often wished to make this discovery, but have not been able to without the savages, who have been unwilling to have me or any other of our men go with them."⁴⁸ Similarly, the Timucuan refused to guide Laudonnière in Florida.⁴⁹ When indigenous communities refused to provide Lane's desperate exploration party with guides and supplies in the Virginian interior he took hostages to force cooperation and ensure his survival.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Samuel Morison, *The Great Explorers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 259.

⁴⁸ Champlain, Vol 1, 170.

⁴⁹ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 88.

⁵⁰ Ralph Lane, "Ralph Lane and the Scope of the Activities of the 1585-6 Colony," *North American Discovery circa 1000-1612*. David Quinn, ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1971), 196.

The Stadaconans tried vehemently to prevent the French from travelling further down the St. Lawrence River. Three of their men, dressed as devils, came to warn Jacques Cartier that if he proceeded down the river “there would be so much ice and snow that they would all perish.”⁵¹ Chief Donnaconna also withdrew his sons’ services as guides. Cartier dismissed this all as an attempt to deter French advancement and it very well may have been. Historians have long hypothesized that Donnaconna feared Cartier would ally himself with other aboriginal groups in the interior, such as the people of Hochelaga.⁵² Yet Cartier was always extremely suspicious of indigenous people and constantly accused them of deception in his narratives. The Stadaconans may have sincerely believed their god, Cudouagny, had prophesized peril. Similar Amerindian warnings proved truthful in other instances. A native named Mosco warned John Smith not to travel into the territory of the hostile Rappahannock, but Smith was suspicious and dismissed the warning as a ruse to block European advancement.⁵³ He would regret this distrust as Mosco had been truthful and the English were, in fact, attacked by the Rappahannock.

European boats could not navigate narrow stretches of river with rocks, rapids and waterfalls as they were too large and offered limited maneuverability; they could easily crash or capsize. Eight men were killed as Roberval’s party worked its way down the St. Lawrence River in the summer of 1543.⁵⁴ The Jamestown colony lost much of its leadership in a similar boating accident in 1609.⁵⁵ Champlain initially struggled in shallops with oars and was repeatedly stopped by impassable features of the natural

⁵¹ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 139.

⁵² Morison. *The Great Explorers*, 231.

⁵³ Smith, *Journals*, 67.

⁵⁴ Roberval, 270.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 112.

landscape.⁵⁶ He eventually took to riding with Amerindians in their canoes as canoeing and portaging was clearly the only efficient way to travel over such terrain. Florida's swampy landscape was also difficult to navigate.⁵⁷

To travel on foot in this wilderness was a brutal experience for newcomers. The Spanish, under Pedro Menéndez, lost one hundred men in their overland march on Fort Caroline.⁵⁸ The four day trek through bush and swamps with little food during a torrential downpour nearly drove the men to mutiny.⁵⁹ Simultaneously, hundreds of shipwrecked Frenchmen also struggled through the wilds to reach Fort Caroline on foot.⁶⁰ The landscape would eventually trap them, however, and their northward march ended at the Matanzas inlet. The deadly inlet, deep with a fast current, barred their crossing and they could make no further progress.⁶¹ Trapped in the wilderness these castaways found themselves at the mercy of the Spanish and, despite their pleas, most were coldly slaughtered.

Issues of Sustenance

Surviving on the actual site was no easier. Europeans relied heavily upon victuals shipped from the motherland. Over 2000 plant remains were identified at the Roberval-Cartier site in 2006-7 and aside from a few exceptions – such as corn, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds – the vast majority of ecofacts were of European descent. The study concludes,

⁵⁶ Champlain, Vol 1, 196-7.

⁵⁷ Robert Meleneche, "Deposition of Robert Meleneche," *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline*. Charles Bennett, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 93.

⁵⁸ McGrath, 145.

⁵⁹ McGrath, 144-5.

⁶⁰ McGrath, 148; 151.

⁶¹ Bennett, 41.

The small amount of indigenous and Amerindian plant remains shows that settlers made little effort to incorporate new elements into their regular fare and thus testifies to their desire to maintain a European diet.⁶²

Yet European food did not always keep as living in the wilderness meant an inability to control storage conditions. Rain and humidity caused rations to mold. Infestation was also a problem as worms, rodents and other pests could eat and contaminate stores.⁶³ Jamestown colonists accidentally brought rats from England in their ships and found their limited victuals threatened.⁶⁴ In isolation, dependent on shipments that were few and far between, common European problems became very serious matters of life and death.

When European stores were depleted, colonists turned to Amerindians for food. The Atlantic sailing season did not coincide with the planting of crops.⁶⁵ There were a few exceptions such as fall rye, which Champlain planted in October 1608, but overall colonists arrived too late in the season to plant the majority of their food.⁶⁶ Though archeologists discovered two sickles at the Roanoke site, there is little indication in the narratives that crops were actually attempted.⁶⁷ There is currently no archeological evidence of crop cultivation at the Roberval-Cartier site.⁶⁸ Either way, sixteenth century expeditions did not stay multiple seasons in order to properly launch the agricultural process. In addition, hunting and fishing required time and skill and settlers appear to have preferred easier types of foraging. Hungry colonists in Florida and Roanoke

⁶² Bouchard-Perron, 100-1.

⁶³ Smith, *Journals*, 98; 135.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Journals*, 135.

⁶⁵ Stick, 121.

⁶⁶ Champlain, Vol 1, 180.

⁶⁷ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 405.

⁶⁸ Bouchard-Perron, 100.

typically caught crabs with sticks along the shoreline. This required little skill and children likely participated.⁶⁹

Whatever the circumstances, food was scarce and rationing was necessary. The Roberval colonists realized that their food would not last the winter and rationed strictly from the start. Roberval's journal describes the precise rations given per day of the week.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, malnutrition and starvation set in. Lane's colonists were starving when Sir Francis Drake rescued them in 1565.⁷¹ They had eaten their own dogs.⁷² When the English explorer, John Hawkins, visited Fort Caroline in 1565, he recorded the French only had ten day's worth of food left.⁷³ Colonist Nicholas Le Challeux composed an octet about his Florida experience, emphasizing this starvation:

*Who wants to go to Florida?
Let him go where I have been,
Returning gaunt and empty,
Collapsing from weakness,
The only benefit I have brought back,
Is one good white stick in my hand,
But I am safe and sound, not disheartened,
Let's eat: I'm starving.*⁷⁴

In utter desperation, Ralph Lane, René de Laudonnière and John Smith threatened Amerindians for food in order to survive. Lane took an elderly chief named Menatonon prisoner until he was paid a ransom of food and supplies.⁷⁵ Similarly, Laudonnière took a leader, Utina, hostage in exchange for corn.⁷⁶ Florida colonists were violent with any Amerindians they encountered to acquire food and, when they did finally eat, it made

⁶⁹ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 661.

⁷⁰ Roberval, 267.

⁷¹ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 648-9.

⁷² Stick, 127.

⁷³ McGrath, 109.

⁷⁴ Le Challeux, Nicolas. "Poems of Le Challeux," *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline*. Charles Bennett, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 164.

⁷⁵ Lane, "Activities of the 1585-6 Colony," 196.

⁷⁶ McGrath, 108.

them physically ill.⁷⁷ Smith, an aggressive negotiator, also bullied Amerindians for assistance. The Starving Time at Jamestown (1609-10) was so intense that colonists had to eat their clothing, horse skins and eventually resorted to cannibalism.⁷⁸

Similarly, the tiny colony that Ribault and Laudonnière left in Florida in 1562 began starving to death. Absolutely desperate, they constructed a boat out of local materials such as moss for chalking and shirts for sails.⁷⁹ Though they hoped to return to France before dying of starvation, they did not have enough victuals for an Atlantic crossing. As at Jamestown, they ate their clothing and resorted to cannibalism.⁸⁰

Finding safe water in the wilderness could also prove challenging. While flowing rivers could be drunk from, Europeans generally had to dig for fresh water.⁸¹ Standing water was often dangerous, as John White's party learned in 1587 when they could only find "a standing ponde." He explains,

... the water whereof was so evill, that many of our company fell sicke with drinking thereof: and as many as did but wash their faces with that water, in the morning before the Sunne had drawen away the corruption, their faces so burne and swell, that their eyes were shut up, and could not see in five or sixe days, or longer.⁸²

John Smith, after digging for water for two days, was forced to survive on "puddle water."⁸³ In Florida, Le Challeux complained of having to drink "old pools of muddy water" covered in "scum" to survive.⁸⁴ In the brutal heat of the southern colonies hydration was especially important. The Jamestown site, situated beside a swamp, had

⁷⁷ McGrath, 107. Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 96.

⁷⁸ John Smith, "Captain John Smith Analyzes the Human Scene, both English and Indian..." *Major Problems in American Colonial History*, Karen Kupperman, ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 62-3.

⁷⁹ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 38.

⁸⁰ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 39-40.

⁸¹ White, "Voyage of 1590," 220.

⁸² White, "Voyage of 1587," 197.

⁸³ Smith, *Journals*, 53, 45.

⁸⁴ Le Challeux, "Discours de l'histoire de la Floride," 378.

contaminated drinking water.⁸⁵ This briny, tainted water weakened the toiling colonists and made them increasingly ill. Within six weeks, almost all 144 colonists were ill. Over the next month, a hot August, the death toll rose astronomically. Fifty percent of the colony died – approximately 72 people in four weeks. Fort Caroline’s drinking water turned putrid when a forest fire apparently killed all the fish within it, leading to disease and noxious fumes.⁸⁶

Malnutrition led to disease, the leading cause of death in fledgling colonies. The harsh Canadian winter offered a poor diet and the French were plagued with scurvy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the St. Lawrence Valley. Caused by a deficiency in Vitamin C, the disease was ghastly to behold and fatal if left untreated. Jacques Cartier first encountered scurvy in the winter of 1535-6 and, being unfamiliar with the disease, assumed it contagious and attempted quarantine. This, of course, failed and within a few months the French were nearly wiped out. Cartier writes,

The disease spread among the three ships to such an extent, that in the middle of February [1536], of the 110 men forming our company, there were not ten in good health so that no one could aid the other...⁸⁷

At the height of the outbreak “there were not three men in good health.”⁸⁸ Though Cartier conducted an autopsy to learn what he could of the mysterious malady, he was at a complete loss.⁸⁹ Around 25 men died before a cure was discovered. The Amerindians drank a tea made from the boiled bark of a tree called *Annedda* in order to combat the disease. Once the dying Frenchmen began drinking this tea they recovered rapidly.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Journals*, xv.

⁸⁶ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 63.

⁸⁷ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 205.

⁸⁸ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 208.

⁸⁹ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 206-7.

Within eight days the remaining colonists were well again, yet had a cure not been discovered the death toll would have been much higher.⁹⁰

Scurvy would remain a major hurdle to colonization in the region for some time. Cartier's successor, Lord Roberval, lost 50 colonists to the disease in the winter of 1542-3.⁹¹ Samuel de Champlain similarly witnessed this "land sickness" repeatedly ravage the French colonies of the early seventeenth century. During the winter of 1603-4, the settlement at Ile Sainte Croix lost nearly fifty percent of its colonists (35 of 79) and the following winter Port Royal lost a quarter of its colonists (12 of 45).⁹² The most devastating blow came at Quebec in 1608-9 when seventy-one percent (20 of 28) colonists were killed.⁹³ Though Port Royal and Quebec survived as permanent settlements, the harsh environment produced great hardship during their formation.

Issues of Climate

Adverse weather was a constant threat. It was not only dangerous, but it damaged crops and forced colonists into inactivity. High winds, heavy rain and lightning bound men to their shelters when working hard outdoors building, hunting, fishing and foraging was crucial to their survival. Hurricane season was a great challenge for European powers who wished to settle southern regions. John White's search for the Roanoke colonists in

⁹⁰ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 215.

⁹¹ Roberval, 267.

⁹² Eric Thierry, "A Creation of Champlain's: The Order of Good Cheer," *Champlain: The Birth of French America*, R. Litalien and D. Vaugeois, eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2004), 135; 137-8.

John Dickinson, "Champlain Administrator," *Champlain: The Birth of French America*, R. Litalien and D. Vaugeois, eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2004), 214.

⁹³ Jean-Yves Grenon, "Pierre Dugua de Mons: Lieutenant General of New France," *Champlain: The Birth of French America*, R. Litalien and D. Vaugeois, eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2004), 146.

1590 was called off due to a dangerous storm.⁹⁴ A Florida hurricane ended the second Ribault-Laudonnière colony. French forces had the upper hand in the 1565 battle against Spain for Florida until Ribault's entire fleet was destroyed by a hurricane.⁹⁵ The Spanish then ambushed Fort Caroline overland. The French had permitted their guards to stand down during the miserable weather, allowing the Spanish to defeat them quickly.⁹⁶ Heavy rains also made flooding a concern. John Smith reported the flooding of fortifications at Jamestown.⁹⁷

Conversely, a tree-ring study by David Stahle and his associates, published in 1998, illustrates that "extreme drought afflicted the first English attempts to colonize the new world at Roanoke and Jamestown."⁹⁸ Analysis of tree rings for 800 year old bald cypress trees from the region allows for precise dating of periods of wetness and dryness as precipitation affects the formation of these rings. The study determined that the most extreme drought in that 800 year period occurred during 1587 to 1589 – the years of John White's Roanoke colony. The "Lost Colonists" were last seen in 1587, the driest year recorded overall. The testimony of one colonist, Captain Edward Stafford, supports this data. Stafford said the Croatoan people were anxious about their corn and had very little that year.⁹⁹ He also described the Croatoan pilfering corn from the neighbouring Roanoke people due to these shortages.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the "driest seven-year episode in 770 years" was 1606 to 1612, the beginnings of the Jamestown colony.¹⁰¹ Spanish Jesuits described

⁹⁴ White, "Voyage of 1590", 223-4.

⁹⁵ McGrath, 142; 144.

⁹⁶ McGrath, 145.

⁹⁷ Smith, *Journals*, 137.

⁹⁸ David Stahle et al. "The Lost Colony and Jamestown Droughts." *Science*. Vol. 280, No. 5363 (1998): 564.

⁹⁹ White, "Voyage of 1587," 202.

¹⁰⁰ White, "Voyage of 1587," 204-5.

¹⁰¹ Stahle, 564.

the Chesapeake Bay region in the 1570s as having “parched soil” and a shortage of vegetation.¹⁰² The death toll in early Jamestown was very high and John Smith described unbearably hot summers. With such dryness wild fires were a danger. When John White returned to Roanoke Island in 1590, he described several bushfires ablaze.¹⁰³ These could also be confused with manmade fire: White wasted an entire day traveling towards smoke he thought indicated a human presence, only to find grass burning in the wilderness.¹⁰⁴

Extreme temperatures caused colonists to die of exposure. Winter brought frostbite and hypothermia to northern and southern colonies alike.¹⁰⁵ In Canada, temperatures dipped below -30 degrees Celsius and the French struggled in deep snow.¹⁰⁶ Snowshoes were necessary for stepping about camp, let alone entering the forest.¹⁰⁷ Travel was limited as bodies of water could become impassable barriers. Flowing ice made rivers hazardous to cross and lake ice often did not hold the weight of men and supplies.¹⁰⁸ Champlain noted that even May was chilly and that frost jeopardized wild and cultivated food sources.¹⁰⁹ Summer was equally dangerous, particularly in the south, as scorching heat hastened dehydration and made labouring a nightmare. John Smith lost men to heatstroke due to prolonged exertion in intense heat and humidity.¹¹⁰

Issues of Adaptation

¹⁰² Stahle, 565.

¹⁰³ White, “Voyage of 1590,” 219-21.

¹⁰⁴ White, “Voyage of 1590,” 220.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 29; 39.

¹⁰⁶ Grenon, 145.

¹⁰⁷ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 450.

¹⁰⁸ Champlain, Vol 1, 98; 181.

¹⁰⁹ Champlain, Vol 1, 181; 186.

¹¹⁰ Smith, *Journals*, 68; 81; 89.

Early French and English colonists did not adapt quickly enough to their new environment to be self-sufficient in the early years. They relied heavily on food, supplies, technology and methods from Europe and, when these failed, they turned to aboriginals for assistance. Yet colonists were slow in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to survive and generally preferred food and services to be provided for them. Some colonists were disappointed by the reality of North America and approached the situation with unhelpful attitudes.

Europeans lacked basic survival knowledge for their immediate environment. Without Amerindian tutors, they were forced to learn through trial and error and this could prove deadly. Europeans did not recognize dangerous animals or poisonous vegetation. John Smith, spearing fish in a river, was intrigued by a bizarre, flat fish. Attacking the foreign creature, he was shocked when it fought back and stung him brutally.¹¹¹ It was a poisonous stingray and Smith would have died had nearby Amerindians not administered local medicines. Similarly, John White's colonists were thrilled to happen upon trees bearing small fruit "like greene apples."¹¹² All who ate these fruits experienced "a sudden burning in their mouths and a swelling of their tongues so bigge that some of them could not speake." While the effects wore off within 24 hours, it was a painful lesson. The colonists, however, were fortunate as the consequences of eating unknown flora and fauna could be far more serious. Champlain was surely grateful the Algonquin warned him of the five foot garpike's "very sharp and dangerous teeth."¹¹³ Florida colonists were alarmed by the existence of deadly alligators which proved very

¹¹¹ Smith, *Journals*, 49; 59-60.

¹¹² White, "Voyage of 1587," 197.

¹¹³ Champlain, Vol 1, 206.

difficult to kill.¹¹⁴ Europeans lacked knowledge of the natural dangers around them as well as the local practices and remedies used to counter them.

While some colonists could undoubtedly hunt, fish and forage, it required time and skill to be successful at it. Humans need to create “micro-environments” for themselves, through the invention of clothing, housing and tools, to overcome their biological limitations in order to flourish in non-tropical environments.¹¹⁵ Yet early colonists were slow to adopt appropriate technologies for their new environment despite Amerindian examples. They preferred to test European inventions instead of learning how to make weapons, shields, tools, boats and other necessities by local means. The Virginia Company sent Jamestown a barge that disassembled for portaging in the hopes colonists could trek deeper into the Virginian interior.¹¹⁶ The experimental barge, however, proved too heavy to be practical. Europeans witnessed the effectiveness of canoes, camouflage and winter sleds in forests and yet did not incorporate it into their hunting and travel techniques.¹¹⁷ Amerindians introduced Ralph Lane’s colony to shallow water fish traps called weirs. The English desired the traps, but expected the locals to build and maintain them.¹¹⁸ They showed no desire to learn the technology for themselves. An adoption of some native practices and materials would have lessened reliance on deliveries from the motherland which were rare and insufficient. An innate sense of superiority, however, may have deterred many Europeans from sincerely accepting aboriginals as mentors.

¹¹⁴ “Copy of a Letter Coming from Florida...” *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline*. Charles Bennett, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 70.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Smith, *Journals*, 90.

¹¹⁷ Smith, *Journals*, 67.

¹¹⁸ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 648.

Adaptation was also hindered by the mindset some Europeans approached colonization with. There is evidence of a variety of unhelpful attitudes which hindered productivity such as unhappiness, boredom, restlessness and homesickness. Some colonists were also disillusioned. Roanoke scientist Thomas Harriot wrote:

Some also were of a nice bringing up, only in cities or towns, or such as never (as I may say) had seen the world before. Because there were not to be found any English cities, nor such fair houses, nor at their own wish any of their old accustomed dainty food, nor any soft beds of down or feathers, the country was to them miserable.¹¹⁹

A group of adventurers who had paid for “a glamorous and profitable experience” were deeply disappointed and reverted to total inactivity.¹²⁰ Harriot complained, “Once gold and silver had not been found” these adventurers “had little care for any other thing but pampering their bellies.”¹²¹ The actions of some colonists conveyed an expectant attitude. These individuals expected the motherland to supply the colony and, when it did not, they expected the Amerindians to.¹²² This sense of entitlement will be explored more fully in the third chapter.

North America was a mysterious new environment with unknown flora and fauna and Europeans did not know what to expect. Fear of the unknown would only have exacerbated an already stressful and precarious situation. In Florida, frightening rumours circulated amongst the colonists of man-eating “flying lizards.”¹²³ Captain Giles de Pysière wrote of such a monster devouring colonists, periodically leaving mangled remains in the forest.¹²⁴ Similarly, Champlain wrote of an enormous man-eating monster

¹¹⁹ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 89.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 88.

¹²² Bennett, 22.

¹²³ Le Challeux, “Discours de l’histoire de la Floride,” 373.

¹²⁴ Pysière, Captain Giles. “Letter of Captain Giles Pysière from Florida,” *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline*. Charles Bennett, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 71; 74-5.

the aboriginals called Gougou.¹²⁵ As colonists struggled to survive in an unknown wilderness, stress and anxiety were surely prevalent. There is evidence a few colonists were pushed to their breaking point. John Smith wrote of one raving colonist who wished to be buried alive so his bones would turn to gold.¹²⁶

Long-term success in this new environment required the right attitude. Colonists needed to be willing to work hard, learn from locals and aim for self-sufficiency. Minimally, they had to be willing to hunt, fish, forage, chop firewood and build tools, shelters and fortifications. With so much to do to ensure survival, laziness and inactivity was unacceptable. Yet too many colonists were unwilling to hunt and fish for themselves.¹²⁷ When English explorer John Hawkins visited the French in Florida in 1565 he noted that there was food available in the region, the French just seemed disinclined to work for it.¹²⁸ Some Florida colonists had their priorities confused, disregarding Laudonnière's orders and abandoning construction of the fort to search for gold. The fort walls were left unsupported.¹²⁹ Similarly, when Champlain returned to Quebec in 1608, he was dismayed to discover the healthy vines he had been cultivating had died of neglect during his absence.¹³⁰

Conclusion

Colony planners recognized many challenges posed by the physical environment and tried to select appropriate sites to avoid them. Yet the first impressions of

¹²⁵ Champlain, Vol 2, 227-8.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Journals*, 39-40.

¹²⁷ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 648.

¹²⁸ McGrath, 109.

¹²⁹ Bennett, 20.

¹³⁰ Champlain, Vol 1, 181.

reconnaissance missions often proved false. Survival in North America was more difficult than Europeans initially anticipated. The coast and interior were full of natural obstacles that hindered accessibility. Starvation, dehydration, contaminated food and water, adverse weather and extreme temperatures were all serious concerns. Moreover, the French and English were slow to adapt. They lacked the necessary knowledge and skill for self-sufficiency in their new environment and yet were slow or unwilling to acquire it. A variety of unhelpful attitudes deterred learning and diminished productivity. Yet for even the most hardworking colonist, adaptation took time – something which the environment did not always allow for.

However, problems of environment and adaptation were not the reason France and England ceased their colonization projects in these territories. Successful ventures of the seventeenth century, such as Jamestown and Quebec, faced the exact same difficulties. North America was just as harsh decades later and Europeans could overcome such challenges if they committed enough men and materials over an extended period of time. These were standard issues for any North American colony and with effort settlers could adapt to their environment as they had in Europe.

Two expeditions to each territory were enough to convince organizers and investors that this was not a worthwhile use of men and materials. There were much less costly and experimental projects to commit resources to. In the sixteenth century, North America appeared to have nothing to offer. After a few decades of voluntary pause, France and England resumed their efforts as incentives were found and colonization began in earnest. Europeans were not driven from these territories by the hellish

wilderness. When wealth was obtainable, there were always men willing to battle the elements.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNAL CONFLICT

Historians have focused to a great extent on the issue of European-Amerindian relations. Less attention has been paid to the internal struggles that crippled expedition parties. Isolated without oversight and under great stress, colonists were as likely to fight amongst themselves as they were against indigenous peoples. Rivalry between expedition leaders was a constant difficulty and the miserable and dangerous conditions colonists often lived in encouraged mutiny and other forms of insubordination. Such power struggles and disobedience destabilized colonies, hindering teamwork and, by extension, progress. Without solidarity, settlements were far more vulnerable to the many other challenges of colonization. Yet infighting was present in successful and unsuccessful ventures alike. Permanent settlements such as Jamestown, Quebec, Hispaniola and New Spain faced as much discord during their formation as sixteenth century disappointments. Thus, internal struggles such as rivalry and mutiny were standard challenges of colonization.

Strife Amongst Leaders

Power struggles amongst early expedition leaders were common and occurred for a variety of reasons. New World discoveries offered a chance at fame, fortune and royal favour. Such rewards encouraged competitive and self-interested behaviour. Moreover, the opportunity was open and in flux – monarchs could entertain proposals, commission leaders and finance colonial projects as they pleased. They could also renege on previous

arrangements. This only heightened the competition to produce results and secure patronage.

Despite Spain's successes in Hispaniola and New Spain, Christopher Columbus and Hernán Cortés both struggled against internal dissension, eventually falling to their political rivals and being forced from power. Columbus' letters to the Spanish crown try very hard to combat the attacks of rival officials, such as Alonso Ojeda.¹³¹ Columbus also considered the expeditions of rival explorers, such as Peralonso Niño and Cristobal Guerro, to be an infringement of his rights.¹³² He complained bitterly, "Now all, down to the very tailors, seek permission to make discoveries."¹³³ Eventually Columbus was ousted by his rivals and forced back to Spain. Cortés was exiled and sent back to Spain by Alonso de Estrada in 1528, stripped similarly of his position as Governor.¹³⁴

In the early seventeenth century, Pierre Dugua de Monts had a monopoly over the French fur trade and a commission to colonize North America until the influence of his opponents at court had his privileges annulled.¹³⁵ Samuel de Champlain observed his peer's fall from royal favour:

Petitions were sent in regard to this, but the envy and the wrangling did not cease. There was no lack in court of persons who promised that for a sum of money Sieur de Monts' commission would be annulled. The affair was so conducted that Sieur de Monts did not know how to prevent estrangement of the King toward him by certain personages of favour...¹³⁶

¹³¹ Christopher Columbus, "Letter of Columbus to the Nurse," *The Four Voyages of Columbus: A History in Eight Documents*. Cecil Jane, tr. (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 52.

¹³² Columbus, "Letter to the Nurse," 53.

¹³³ Christopher Columbus, "Letter of Columbus to their Majesties," *The Four Voyages of Columbus: A History in Eight Documents*. Cecil Jane, tr. (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 108.

¹³⁴ Francisco Lopez de Gomara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by his Secretary*, L.B. Simpson, tr. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1964), 383-6.

¹³⁵ Champlain, Vol 1, 61-4; 163-4.

¹³⁶ Champlain, Vol 1, 61.

Champlain accused those who undermined de Monts' projects at court of speaking "only from envy or for their own interest," making use of "false reports."¹³⁷ Further south, John Smith and John Ratcliffe bitterly fought for control of the Jamestown colony under the Virginia Company. Smith eventually succeeded in ousting Ratcliffe from presidency in 1608, only to be ousted from the position himself in 1609.¹³⁸ Smith's arrogant, aggressive attitude caused friction with even his oldest allies such as Christopher Newport.¹³⁹ Though Smith's knowledge of the Algonkian language was invaluable, his constant conflict with the colony's gentry caused him to be sentenced to death twice during his time in Virginia.¹⁴⁰ Though he evaded execution both times, such intense dysfunction was detrimental to the fledgling colony. Thus, even the most successful colonies had to weather the power struggles of divided leadership.

After seven years of leading France's Canada project, Jacques Cartier became the subordinate of Jean-François de la Rocque, Lord of Roberval. An experienced sailor and explorer, Cartier had been to Canada in 1534 and 1535-6 and had arranged for a third commission which he finally received on October 17, 1540.¹⁴¹ Though it is unclear when or how Roberval became involved, by January 15, 1541 he too had a commission from François I.¹⁴² Whatever the circumstances, Cartier now officially had to share the power and spoils of his venture. Roberval's contract was much longer and gave the nobleman vice regal power over this new territory, making Cartier technically his subordinate. Yet

¹³⁷ Champlain, Vol 1, 64.

¹³⁸ Smith, *Journals*, 2; 7; 32; 35; 43; 61; 71; 88; 137.

¹³⁹ Smith, *Journals*, 31; 90.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *Journals*, xiii; 29.

¹⁴¹ "Carter's Commission for his Third Voyage," *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval*. H.P. Biggar, ed. (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1930), 128-31.

¹⁴² "Roberval's Commission," *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval*. H.P. Biggar, 178-85.

neither commission mentions the other man – the division of power and their working relationship is not clearly defined. Cartier's narrative defines it as such:

...yet [the king] resolved to send the sayd Cartier his Pilot thither againe, with John Francis de la Roche, Knight, Lord of Roberval, whome hee appointed his Lieutenant and Governor in the Countreys of Canada and Hochelaga, and the sayd Cartier Captain Generall and leader of the shippes, that they might discover more than was done before in the former voyages...¹⁴³

Cartier presents Roberval and himself as equal expedition leaders working together, the division being land and sea. He still saw himself as having partial authority. Roberval's narrative, however, makes it unmistakable that he considered himself Cartier's superior.¹⁴⁴ This precarious power balance between Roberval and Cartier would cripple Roberval's expedition in 1542.

Historians have argued that Cartier resented the inexperienced Roberval's infringement upon his established project. However, we do not know what Cartier's expectations were, nor what impressions he was given about France's future in the St. Lawrence Valley and his role therein. He may never have expected to be made viceroy should true colonization begin. However, there was precedent for explorers of lower birth to be granted power over the lands they discovered. Christopher Columbus had been made Governor of Hispaniola, the island he had claimed for Spain, and Cartier may have expected a similar arrangement.¹⁴⁵ If so, the appointment of Roberval would have been most unwelcome. We do not know if the King sought Roberval or if the nobleman maneuvered his way into the venture. Whatever the aspirations of either man, Cartier had

¹⁴³ Cartier, "The Third Voyage, 1541," 249-50.

¹⁴⁴ Roberval, 264-5.

¹⁴⁵ "Mandate Ordering the People in the Indies to Obey the Admirable as Viceroy and Governor," *The Book of Privileges Issued to Christopher Columbus by King Fernando and Queen Isabel*. G. Symcox, ed. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1996), 87.

become accustomed to controlling the Canada project and now had to step down and accept the inexperienced Roberval as his superior.

The threat of Roberval would have only intensified Cartier's natural desire to present himself in a flattering light in his narrative. The captain ostensibly communicates collaboration between he and the viceroy. Expedition preparations were "performed by the sayd Monsieur Roberval and Cartier" and "they agreed together" to set out from Saint-Malo.¹⁴⁶ However, Cartier goes on to delicately depict himself as more diligent, organized and punctual than his superior. His text states,

And the said Monsieur Roberval sent Cartier thither for the same purpose [preparations]. And after that Cartier had caused the five ships to bee built and furnished and set in good order, Monsieur Roberval came downe to S. Malo and found the ships... ready to depart and set saile, staying for nothing else but the comming of the Generall [Roberval]...¹⁴⁷

At which point Roberval announced his own preparations were delayed and Cartier must depart without him. Cartier's text makes no excuse for Roberval, nor provides any context for this development. Cartier had been waiting to make this voyage for four years and naturally would have been more advanced in his planning. Moreover, David Quinn argues that Roberval's military preparations could not be done quickly.¹⁴⁸ Cartier also does not explain the nobleman's contributions to the expedition prep. One has to infer that Cartier, the experienced sailor, was to prepare the ships whereas Roberval, the experienced soldier, was to prepare a garrison. Whether it was the captain's intention or not, it was in his best interest to present Roberval as absent, uninvolved and then significantly behind schedule.

Roberval's fleet was not ready for the 1541 sailing season and was forced to wait until the spring of 1542 to make the Atlantic crossing. Meanwhile, in Canada, Cartier had

¹⁴⁶ Cartier, "The Third Voyage, 1541," 250.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Quinn, *North America*, 185.

discovered what he thought was gold and diamonds.¹⁴⁹ Filling barrels for testing in France, the Cartier expedition left the St. Lawrence Valley for home, despite the understanding that Roberval was coming. Cartier likely deemed his superior dead or too late. The captain's expedition was too small to meet its objectives with any safety and one can see the sailor's perspective. Why wait unproductively alongside hostile Amerindians on the chance the viceroy might arrive to reap the rewards of the discovered treasure?

Cartier's fleet encountered Roberval's at Newfoundland.¹⁵⁰ Roberval, possessing the military might to make occupation successful, expected to combine fleets and proceed to the St. Lawrence Valley. The two groups would combine efforts, now possessing the necessary skills and the numbers to make a much better attempt. Yet Cartier had no intention of returning to Canada. The Roberval narrative explains,

But when our Generall being furnished with sufficient forces, commaunded him [Cartier] to goe backe againe with him, hee [Cartier] and his company, mooved as it seemeth with ambition, because they would have all the glory of the discoverie of those partes themselves, stole privily away the next night from us, and without taking their leaves, departed home for [Brittany].¹⁵¹

Disregarding a direct order, Cartier snuck away under a cover of darkness, literally abandoning the inexperienced Roberval group. The sailor may have been frustrated with Roberval's overall intrusion or lateness or attitude. Whether the Roberval accusation of self-interest is true or false, this attack on Cartier's character conveys resentment. Though it is unclear when this animosity began, it was firmly established by the defection of June 1542. Despite this setback, the Roberval expedition continued on to Canada.¹⁵² Yet as

¹⁴⁹ Cartier, "The Third Voyage, 1541" 255.

¹⁵⁰ Roberval, 264.

¹⁵¹ Roberval, 265.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Marcel Trudel stresses, the inability of these leaders to collaborate would have “disastrous consequences.”¹⁵³

The absence of the experienced Cartier group meant a great deal of unnecessary repetition for the newcomers. Instead of building on previous efforts, they were forced to learn for themselves by trial and error as Cartier had. The absence of Cartier’s men would have slowed the settling in of the Roberval group for there was much work to do. The construction of additional buildings and fortifications, the improvement of existing structures, the planting of vegetables, tending to livestock and preparing for a harsh winter would have been easier with over one hundred additional labourers. This foreign environment had to be learned anew. Roberval’s renaming of the French settlement and the St. Lawrence River – *France-roi* and *France Prime* respectively – illustrates his independent exploration of this territory and how separate this expedition became.¹⁵⁴

During the winter months, Roberval’s party was struck by scurvy.¹⁵⁵ Cartier had dealt with the disease twice and had acquired an antidote from local Amerindians.¹⁵⁶ A tea boiled from the bark of the *anneda* – likely the white cedar – provided the necessary Vitamin C for prevention or recovery.¹⁵⁷ Disastrously, this cure was not shared with Roberval and fifty of his party succumbed to the deadly disease during the inadequate winter diet of *France-roi*. His narrative relates,

In the ende many of our people fell sicke of a certain disease in the legs, reynes [loins], and stomache, so that they seemed to be deprived of all their lymmes [limbs], and there dyed thereof about fiftie.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Marcel Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*, Patricia Claxton, tr. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 50.

¹⁵⁴ Roberval, 266.

¹⁵⁵ Roberval, 267.

¹⁵⁶ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 212-5.

¹⁵⁷ J. Rousseau, “The Annedda Mystery,” *Jacque Cartier et la grosse maladie*, Jean L. Launay, tr. (Montréal: XIXe Congrès international de physiologie, 1953), 117-29.

¹⁵⁸ Roberval, 267.

The symptoms indicate scurvy, the same disease Cartier had encountered and learned to cure. These deaths could have been prevented with ease had there been cooperation, or at least communication, between Roberval and Cartier.

Between establishing a settlement and battling winter and scurvy, it took Roberval the better part of a year to find his feet in the foreign environment. When the viceroy began his search for Saguenay the following June, he apparently retraced Cartier's route down the St. Lawrence River and through Hochelaga (now Montreal).¹⁵⁹ Like his predecessor, he could not pass the Lachine Rapids in French boats. Yet had there been continuity between these two expeditions, Roberval could have built on Cartier's experience, rather than repeating it. Alternatives went untried. Furthermore, a boat capsized during this redundant trek, costing eight lives.¹⁶⁰ Approximately 60 soldiers and colonists died needlessly during the Roberval expedition, caught in the crossfire of the Roberval-Cartier split.

The disunity amongst the leaders of the Roanoke expeditions was far more explicit. Sir Richard Grenville, Ralph Lane and John White all spoke freely in their narratives and correspondence, openly criticizing their opponents. During the 1585 voyage through Spanish territory to Roanoke Island, fighting broke out which tore the company into factions.¹⁶¹ The party was divided between those who supported Governor Ralph Lane and the pilot Simon Fernandes and those who supported Sir Richard Grenville. Grenville was in charge of overseeing the overall transportation and planting of the colony and was to return the following year with supplies, whereas Lane was

¹⁵⁹ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 451.

¹⁶⁰ Roberval, 269-70.

¹⁶¹ Ralph Lane, "Letter to Sir Francis Walsingham, September 8, 1585," *New American World*, David Quinn, ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 291-2.

Governor of the colony and had command over the colonists. As the two chief authorities of the enterprise, teamwork on their part was vital to effective operations. Instead an intense animosity formed, creating instability that was a poor start for a colony.

As with Roberval and Cartier, it is impossible to determine precisely when or how conflict began. The first sign of trouble in the surviving documentation, however, was when Grenville had Lane take men ashore to gather salt in Spanish territory.¹⁶² This was naturally dangerous and Spanish troops arrived before Lane had completed his protective fortifications. Fortunately for the English, the Spaniards left for reinforcements, allowing Lane and his men to escape. Lane went on to bitterly accuse Grenville of recklessly endangering their lives.¹⁶³ Samuel Morison feels the Governor lacked courage and made too much of the matter. Yet Lane, as an experienced soldier, likely deemed the move a foolhardy gamble and did not appreciate Grenville giving such orders while remaining safely behind.

Hostility peaked when their flagship, *The Tiger*, ran aground while trying to pass through the shallow Outer Banks of the Carolinas to approach Roanoke Island. A great deal of food and supplies were destroyed by water and the ship had to be repaired. Grenville's journal describes the event as follows:

“29 [June]. Wee waighed anker to bring the Tyger into the harbour, where through the unskilfulnesse of the Master whose name was Fernando, the Admirall strooke on ground and sunk.”¹⁶⁴

While Grenville blamed their pilot, Fernandes, Lane defended him. Their frustration with the crash, the damaged ship and the loss of necessary provisions would only have intensified a disagreement over who was culpable. Lane, writing to a prestigious project

¹⁶² Grenville, “Voyage of 1585,” 134-5.

¹⁶³ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 636.

¹⁶⁴ Grenville, “Voyage of 1585,” 137.

organizer, Sir Francis Walsingham, complained that Grenville had “intolerable pride and insatiable ambition” and was adamant that he never wanted to work with the man again.¹⁶⁵ Morison notes that when the party camped at Puerto Rico to build another ship Grenville and Lane’s quarters in the fort were placed as far apart as possible.¹⁶⁶ In fact, Grenville apparently threatened to have Lane put on trial for his life.¹⁶⁷ Lane and Fernandes, however, were not the only leaders in conflict with Grenville. Other colony leaders such as the judicial officer Thomas Cavendish, the treasurer Francis Brooke, Captain John Clarke of *Roebuck* and other gentleman – Edward Gorges, Master Russell and Master Atkinson – were all criticized by Grenville.¹⁶⁸ Thus, when the colonists arrived at Roanoke Island to plant their settlement they were extremely divided. Lane was distracted by the need to write to England attacking Grenville and defending himself from any possible punishments. Moreover, two Englishmen had been discovered ashore. Captain Raymond of *The Red Lion* had arrived much earlier and had decided not to wait for the rest of the fleet.¹⁶⁹ Instead, he put thirty men ashore to partially fulfill his obligation and departed. This desertion would have heightened feelings of frustration and division. Amidst all their other work, castaways now had to be rounded up. Overall, the necessary solidarity was lacking, hindering the establishment of the colony.

The second attempt to plant a Roanoke colony in 1587 began similarly. A power struggle ensued between the new Governor, John White, and the same pilot, Simon Fernandes. Fernandes, having power over the ships and sailors, dictated where and when the fleet stopped and for what purposes. Frustrated by his lack of authority, White speaks

¹⁶⁵ Lane, “Letter to Sir Francis Walsingham, September 8, 1585,” 291.

¹⁶⁶ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 635.

¹⁶⁷ Lane, “Letter to Sir Francis Walsingham, September 8, 1585,” 291.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Grenville, “Voyage of 1585,” 137.

very poorly of the pilot throughout his narrative and finds fault with him wherever possible. The personal dislike is unmistakable and White's maligning of Fernandes overpowers all else in his narrative. It is unfortunate he was too distracted by infighting to provide more information about the actual expedition events.

The Governor's first accusation is: "Simon Ferdinando, Master of our Admirall, lewdly forsooke our Fly-boate, leaving her distressed in the Bay of Portugal."¹⁷⁰ He goes on to point out each and every time Fernandes was incorrect in their search for supplies. For instance, the pilot said there were no Amerindians at Santa Cruz when there were and said there were sheep at Baque when there were not.¹⁷¹ He refused White's request to stop and gather fruit, claiming he needed to acquire cattle from a French ally. When this meeting never occurred, White judged it to be a ruse to allow the pilot to have his way.¹⁷²

White next writes,

...we came to the island of Caycos, wherein Ferdinando sayd there were two salt pondes, assuring us if they were drie we might find salt to sift with, until the next supply: but it proved as true as finding sheepe at Baque."¹⁷³

While the others searched for salt, Fernandes went ashore only to relax.¹⁷⁴ White also reports the sailor was unskilled, over and undershooting destinations. The pilot thought the fleet had reached Croatoan Island days before it actual had, wasting time.¹⁷⁵ At Cape Fear their ship nearly ran aground if it was not for the intervention of Captain Edmund Stafford. Though the ship was saved, two cables were lost. White naturally attributed this

¹⁷⁰ White, "The Fourth Voyage, 1587," *Early English and French Voyages Chiefly From Hakluyt, 1534-1608*, J.F. Jameson, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 282-3.

¹⁷¹ White, "The Fourth Voyage, 1587," 284.

¹⁷² White, "The Fourth Voyage, 1587," 286.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ White, "The Fourth Voyage, 1587," 289.

¹⁷⁵ White, "The Fourth Voyage, 1587," 287.

calamity to “the carelesnes and ignorance” of Fernandes.¹⁷⁶ David Quinn notes that White avoids referring to Port Fernando throughout his maps and writing, opting to use the Amerindian name Hatarask instead.¹⁷⁷ The inlet had been named after Fernandes in 1584 and the governor probably disliked the association. Furthermore, when the lost fly-boat met the fleet at the Outer Banks, White’s journal accuses the pilot of being disappointed that his ploy to abandon the fly-boat had failed. He is pleased that providence foiled Fernandes’ “wicked pretenses.”¹⁷⁸

At the Outer Banks, White and forty colonists boarded a smaller ship to go to Roanoke Island to rescue fifteen men Grenville had left there the previous summer.¹⁷⁹ Walter Raleigh’s instructions were to retrieve these men and go to Chesapeake Bay to establish a colony as the bay had ocean access and was thought to be a superior location for settlement. The Roanoke Island colony of 1585-6 had fared poorly and organizers and investors were not interested in repeating this mistake. However, when White was departing for shore, Fernandes ordered his men to leave the colonists on the island. It was later in the year than they had anticipated and he now refused to go to Chesapeake Bay. Roanoke Island would be the only stop. White submitted and the colonists were forced to try again at the Lane settlement, despite orders to the contrary.

There were many possible motivations for the pilot’s decision. Perhaps this was the final outcome of the hostility between he and White. Conversely, Fernandes may have sincerely wished to return to England before the safe sailing season ended. After all, he needed to remain during the initial phase of colonization and it was already August. He

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 277.

¹⁷⁸ White, “The Fourth Voyage, 1587,” 288.

¹⁷⁹ White, “The Fourth Voyage, 1587,” 287-8.

also may have wanted time to privateer.¹⁸⁰ His controlling behaviour during the trek to the Outer Banks could be explained by an interest in taking prizes. Whatever the pilot's reasons, the poor relationship between he and White would have blocked any possible compromise.

White and his men do not appear to have offered strong opposition. White, dominated by Fernandes the entire voyage, likely knew it was futile. The pilot controlled the ships and the sailors were loyal to him. White may have even feared violence.¹⁸¹ It has been proposed by several historians that the artist loved Roanoke Island and may have used this excuse to try living there again. However, White would have recalled the great danger the local Amerindians posed. He had been present for the war Lane commenced with the Roanoke people. The colonists had been rescued by Sir Francis Drake just in time to avoid the ramifications of assassinating the Roanoke chief.¹⁸² Unless White had been warned that the Powhatan people of Chesapeake Bay were also very dangerous, why would he willingly risk living on the island again? He was not a soldier and he was responsible for the safety of women and children. Roanoke Island also lacked ocean access.

Either way, Roanoke was known to be a poor location for their project and someone would have to answer for the decision to return there. Therefore, White's strong villainization of Fernandes was likely meant to present the pilot as the problem, absolving himself of all guilt for disobeying orders and compromising their mission. White, having been present, also knew that Grenville had lodged complaints against Fernandes during

¹⁸⁰ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 659.

¹⁸¹ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 279.

¹⁸² Ralph Lane, "Account of the Particularities of the Employments of the Englishmen Left in Virginia," *Early English and French Voyages Chiefly From Hakluyt, 1534-1608*, J.F. Jameson, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 268-71.

the previous expedition. The sailor was a good scapegoat for any mishaps during the 1587 attempt. That is not to say that Fernandes was without guilt. It is simply acknowledging White's excessive slander and the bias that existed therein. It is unfortunate we do not have any inkling of Fernandes' perspective.

The relationship between Jean Ribault and René de Laudonnière, commanders of the Florida expedition, was more respectful. Ribault, a pilot, was leader of the 1562 expedition and Laudonnière, a seafaring nobleman, was his second in command.¹⁸³ However, when the English arrested Ribault, Laudonnière replaced him as leader and attempted a second expedition in 1564. The nobleman, likely due to a combination of illness, weak command and a difficult party, lost control of his men. Several troublemakers were sent back to France with a supply run where they lodged complaints against Laudonnière as a leader.¹⁸⁴ Thus, when Ribault was released from prison he was instructed to resume command.¹⁸⁵ When he brought a fleet to the settlement, Ribault initially concealed its identity in order to interrogate settlers and establish the truth of the allegations against Laudonnière.¹⁸⁶ Satisfied with the reports, the Ribault party indentified itself and joined the Laudonnière party.

Ribault informed Laudonnière that he was taking command. Laudonnière claims in his narrative that Ribault offered to keep him on as second in command, disregarding the order to send him back to France.¹⁸⁷ The truth of this statement we do not know. Laudonnière does not express any reaction to his demotion, though he surely had one. His narrative, written after the fact to defend his actions in Florida, was written very

¹⁸³ Bennett, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 70-1.

¹⁸⁵ McGrath, 138.

¹⁸⁶ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1565," 108.

¹⁸⁷ McGrath, 139.

carefully. The nobleman explains that his testimony will clear him of all accusations and that his “adversaries shall find themselves so discovered in their false reports that they shall have no place of refuge.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, Laudonnière shows Ribault the proper respect in text and does not record any negativity that may have surrounded his demotion. It is hinted later, however, that the nobleman was dissatisfied, having negotiated with Ribault for leadership. Laudonnière agreed to Ribault’s battle plan against the Spanish on the condition that he be made leader of Fort Caroline again with Ribault building a sister fort to command.¹⁸⁹

When the Spanish arrived to attack Fort Caroline they were storm-beaten and unable to access the French fort by sea. They headed south and started building fortifications at present-day St. Augustine and Ribault, having more ships and soldiers, wished to strike before they had time to establish themselves. Laudonnière disagreed vehemently with this plan as he did not want to leave Fort Caroline vulnerable.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, it was hurricane season and taking the majority of French forces along the dangerous coast of Florida was a risk. Agreement was only reached when Ribault promised to remedy Laudonnière’s demotion.

Victory, however, did not come and Laudonnière’s fears were all realized. Admittedly, Ribault’s plan very nearly worked. Just as the French fleet trapped the unprepared Spaniards at St. Augustine and prepared to attack, a hurricane struck and destroyed every French ship.¹⁹¹ The Spanish seized this opportunity to ambush the vulnerable Fort Caroline overland during the storm. Their victory was swift, but

¹⁸⁸ McGrath, 68.

¹⁸⁹ Bennett, 36.

¹⁹⁰ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1565,” 114.

¹⁹¹ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1565,” 123.

Laudonnière and a few others managed to escape back to France in two remaining ships. Ribault and hundreds of other Frenchmen survived their perilous shipwrecks and tried to return to Fort Caroline on foot, only to be discovered and massacred by the Spanish.

Laudonnière was quick to blame the catastrophe on the dead Ribault. His account of the disastrous loss concludes,

I will plainly say one thing, that the long delay Captaine John Ribault used in his embarking & the fifteen daies that he spent in roving along the coast of Florida before he came to our Fort Caroline, were the cause of the losse that we sustained. For he discovered the coast the fourteenth of August & spent the time going from river to river, which has been sufficient for him to have discharged his ships in, & for me to have embarked my selfe to returne into France.¹⁹²

Ribault, having died in Florida, was unable to refute these accusations or explain himself. Laudonnière goes on to politely criticize Ribault,

I wrote well that all he did was upon a good intent: yet in mine opinion he should have had more regard unto his charge, then to the devises of his own braine, which sometimes be printed in his head so deeply that it was very hard to put them out: which also turned to his utter undoing...¹⁹³

Laudonnière was carefully stating that Ribault was careless, distracted and stubborn. He also worked into his narrative nonchalantly that Ribault had wronged colonists.¹⁹⁴

Yet to blame France's loss of Florida solely on poor leadership or even bad weather is a fallacy. Though the Ribault-Laudonnière phases of colonization ended in failure there was opportunity to reclaim the territory had it been worthwhile to do so. A French fleet under the command of Dominique de Gourgues returned to Florida in 1567 and annihilated the three Spanish settlements there in retribution.¹⁹⁵ At this time France had the opportunity to reclaim the territory, yet instead opted to leave it in Spanish hands. The efforts of the expeditions of 1562 and 1564 had demonstrated that Florida lacked the

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Laudonnière, *Voyage of 1565*, 123.

¹⁹⁴ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1562," 41.

¹⁹⁵ Dominique de Gourgues, "The Voyage of Dominique Gourgues to Florida in 1567..." *The Principal Navigations*, Richard Hakluyt, ed. (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), 123-33.

necessary incentives to justify further conflict with Spain. Nothing the region had to offer was worth the difficulties of colonization or the political ramifications. In fact, the French monarchy would feign disapproval of the vengeful attack, though Dominique de Gourges, a military captain, was never punished.¹⁹⁶

Though Laudonnière was far more cautious and courteous in his narrative than White, Lane or Roberval, his objective was the same – to fault a rival leader for costly mistakes. Expedition leaders were quick to take credit for glories and to shift blame for disappointments. Whether seeking reward or evading punishment, they tended to conflict rather than cooperate.

Insubordination Amongst the Men

There was also strife between leaders and their men. Disobedience was a common difficulty as conditions were harsh. When colonists were starving and miserable amidst the elements they were more likely to act out. Discipline during such stressful missions was a high stakes balancing act and had to be implemented very carefully. It could not be deemed too lax or too severe lest the commander lose respect.

Roberval and Lane were military officers who commanded parties with a solid component of soldiers. Accustomed to commanding, they both used strict military discipline and kept peace within their settlements. Their authority went unquestioned. Quinn argues that military discipline left “little opportunity for individual enterprise and certainly no opportunity for mutiny”¹⁹⁷ – unlike the Laudonnière colony, as shall be demonstrated shortly.

¹⁹⁶ McGrath, 163.

¹⁹⁷ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 88

Lane's men were certainly unhappy with New World conditions, but there was no danger in their grumbling. Despite his proud temper, the Governor maintained complete control and argued that his strict discipline kept the mortality rate low.¹⁹⁸ Roberval, conversely, dealt with true hardships. Scurvy, strict rations and the brutality of the Canadian winter led to some insubordination amongst his company. The expedition narrative relates,

Monsieur Roberval used very good justice and punished every man according to his offence. One whose name was Michael Gaillon, was hanged for his theft. John of Nantes was laid in irons and kept prisoner for his offence, and others also were put in irons, and divers were whipped, as well men as women: by which means they lived quietly.¹⁹⁹

If this account is truthful, Roberval dealt with disobedience effectively and kept the peace. Such methods were standard and were used by Christopher Columbus and John Smith in their successful colonies.²⁰⁰ Additionally, Roberval pardoned a man named Paul d'Aussillon of murdering one of the sailors.²⁰¹ The viceroy's willingness to pardon, determining the killing an act of self-defense, may support the statement that he was reasonable in his discipline.

Roberval is believed to have marooned three of his company on an island in the Atlantic on route to the St. Lawrence Valley as a disciplinary measure.²⁰² Two separate versions of the ordeal have been preserved – one appears in the *Heptaméron des nouvelles* by Queen Marguerite of Navarre and the other in the *Cosmographie universelle* of André Thevet.²⁰³ The second version identifies the woman as an actual relative of

¹⁹⁸ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 88.

¹⁹⁹ Roberval, 268.

²⁰⁰ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 450.

²⁰¹ "Roberval's Pardon to D'Aussillon," *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval*. H.P. Biggar, ed. (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1930), 445. The original is held at Library and Archives Canada.

²⁰² Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 446.

²⁰³ Robert McGhee, *Ancient Canada*, (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), 134.

Roberval's – Marguerite de la Roche – and states that she and her lover were abandoned as punishment for their lack of chastity, along with a maid who aided their affair. The map and narrative of Roberval's pilot, Jean Alfonse, also refers to the "Isles de la Damoiselle," possibly indicating where the woman was rescued two years later.²⁰⁴ Roberval's expedition narrative does not mention this event at all. Though this act may seem alarming today, Roberval needed to set a striking precedent early on as many of his colonists were convicts.²⁰⁵ If the woman was indeed his relative her conduct would have humiliated him before his colonists. If he could not control his own family he would not be respected as viceroy. With regal powers and a garrison at Roberval's command, the decree likely went unchallenged.

French leaders in Florida did not strike the proper disciplinary balance and consequently lost control of their men. Ribault and Laudonnière left a small colony in Florida in 1562 under Captain Albert.²⁰⁶ These men, hungry and miserable, found Albert's discipline too severe. He executed a drummer named Guernache for what they deemed a minor offence.²⁰⁷ Albert continually threatened their lives to deter insubordination. The captain next banished a man named La Chere to a nearby islet without supplies.²⁰⁸ Albert initially promised his colonists supplies would be sent, but after a week it became clear he had no intention of sending aide and was enjoying the man's suffering. At this point the colonists mutinied. They chased down Captain Albert,

²⁰⁴ Jean Alfonse, "Extracts from the *Cosmographie* of Jean Alfonse, 1544," *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*. H.P. Biggar, tr. (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1924), 286.

²⁰⁵ Many relevant documents have survived, including: "Order of Delivery of Prisoners to Roberval," "Prisoners to be delivered to Roberval," "Grant of Prisoners to Roberval" and "A Prisoner for Roberval." *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval*. H.P. Biggar, ed. (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1930), 199; 212; 228; 267.

²⁰⁶ The account of Captain Albert's colony is recorded in Laudonnière's narrative.

²⁰⁷ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1562," 37.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

killed him and rescued La Chere. They defended their actions by arguing that their superior was going mad and that they had feared for their lives.²⁰⁹

Albert lacked Roberval's power to enforce and apparently acted unpredictably and unreasonably. Roberval was willing to pardon offenders and his castaways, if they existed, were given supplies.²¹⁰ The viceroy was strict but predictable and his colonists could obey his rule and live in peace. Contrastingly, Albert was impulsive and governed with unnecessary malice. Yet in fairness to the captain, his killers had every reason to exaggerate – they could have been executed for mutiny. It is unlikely, however, that they were utterly lying. Much simpler, safer tales could be fabricated – the New World was a place of sickness, starvation, war and accidents. Whether Captain Albert was mad, wicked or unjustly murdered, we will never know.

If Albert was too harsh, Laudonnière was too lax. Many of his colonists did as they pleased – for example, searching for gold instead of building the fort as they were instructed.²¹¹ When the nobleman tried to rein in troublemakers, conspiracies against him began. He learned that several men wished “to have me killed and my Lieutenant also, if by chance I had given them any hard speeches.”²¹² One colonist plotted to poison Laudonnière's medicine and was only stopped by the refusal of the apothecary and the fireworks master to assist him. A few men plotted to put gunpowder under Laudonnière's bed and set it ablaze as he slept. The nobleman sent several of these men back to France with a supply ship. At this time Laudonnière realized a book of grievances against him

²⁰⁹ Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1562,” 37.

²¹⁰ McGhee, 134.

²¹¹ McGrath, 105.

²¹² Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1564,” 70.

was also being sent back to France. He seized the book and read it aloud to the colonists to illustrate its untruths, only exacerbating the situation.²¹³

Shortly thereafter mutineers took Laudonnière from his sickbed by force and held him prisoner for fifteen days on one of the colony's two barks.²¹⁴ They threatened to slit his throat if he did not sign a passport for them to sail in Spanish territory. It seems they hoped "to gain very much in the Isles of the Antilles and make an exceeding profitable voyage."²¹⁵ The mutineers stole both vessels and went to sea, leaving the colony in a dangerous position. Laudonnière writes, "I remained without either barke or boate, which fell out as unluckily for me as was possible."²¹⁶ The mutineers eventually returned to the colony and Laudonnière had them captured. The four ringleaders were put to death, while the others were pardoned. Here the nobleman demonstrates the necessary balance. In executing only the leaders, he appeared reasonable to his colonists.

Laudonnière compares his troubles to those of Columbus in Hispaniola, Cortés in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru and this is a fair comparison.²¹⁷ Columbus' colonists rebelled under men such as Francisco Roldan, Adrian de Moxica and Vincente Yanez.²¹⁸ He too was surrounded by plotters.²¹⁹ Cortés lost control of his soldiers when infighting broke out over seniority.²²⁰ Two factions emerged amongst the Spanish and it was not unlike a civil war. In 1613, Samuel de Champlain was led astray by his deceitful guide, Nicolas de Vignau, who claimed to have discovered the Northwest Passage during his stay with the

²¹³ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 70-1.

²¹⁴ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 74-5.

²¹⁵ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 71.

²¹⁶ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 72.

²¹⁷ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 79.

²¹⁸ Columbus, "Letter to the Nurse," 52.

²¹⁹ Columbus, "Letter to the Nurse," 51.

²²⁰ Gomara, 339.

Algonquin at Allumette Island.²²¹ Vignau's treachery disrupted French exploration and sparked friction between the French and the Algonquin until his lies were exposed. At Jamestown, President Edward Wingfield was overthrown and imprisoned by disgruntled colonists in September 1607.²²² Wingfield was the first of several Jamestown presidents to be deposed. His peer, Captain John Smith, eventually wrote:

If any deem it a shame to our nation to have any mention made of these enormities [internal struggles], let them peruse the histories of the Spaniard's discoveries and plantations where they may see many mutinies, disorders and dissensions have accompanied them and crossed their attempts."²²³

Insubordination was a common problem that existed within successful colonies and unsuccessful colonies alike.

Conclusion

Dissent was very common in early colonization and exploration parties and the examples covered in this chapter are only a few of many. The following decades would see Henry Hudson marooned, Robert de La Salle murdered, Captain Bligh set adrift and several mutinies at Louisbourg. Without oversight or assistance, isolated Europeans needed to govern themselves independently in the moment and, in unfamiliar high stress situations, the laws of the motherland could easily be set aside. Whether out of sheer desperation or calculated ambition, men deserted and mutinied knowing there were few witnesses and plenty of time to agree on a solid justification. Leaders were very much alone and sometimes resorted to extreme measures to maintain control.

Though infighting could cripple or end a specific expedition phase, it was never responsible for a nation abandoning a colonization venture altogether. If incentive existed

²²¹ Champlain, Vol 2, 19; 28-35; 36; 41.

²²² Smith, *Journals*, 11.

²²³ Smith, *Journals*, 33-4.

further expeditions could be sent and, with enough trial and error, group cohesion could be obtained and the project carried on. Early colonization attempts were highly experimental and often occurred over several phases. Ideally, had incentive been discovered, more effective leaders would have been found and more compatible teams would have eventually been formed. Colonizing ventures which are traditionally deemed successes such as Jamestown, Quebec, Hispaniola and New Spain faced as much internal strife during their formation as any that are deemed unsuccessful. The removal of ineffective leaders and the continuous changeover of participants was a necessary process. The internal struggles of expedition parties could be overcome if need be and were not a deciding factor in whether overall undertakings ceased. Colonizing efforts ended when projects proved fruitless, not when a specific phase imploded.

CHAPTER THREE

NATIVE RELATIONS

Colonizers understood the importance of good Amerindian relations and strived to forge strong links in order to carry out their objectives in North America. Walter Raleigh and Richard Hakluyt made it clear that their colonists would be punished if they harmed Amerindians, forced them to labour or trespassed in their villages.²²⁴ Bridging the communication gap was crucial and Raleigh began a program in 1584 to train Amerindian interpreters, sponsoring the language and cultural training of at least twenty aboriginals in England by 1618.²²⁵ Thomas Harriot, a scientist, and John White, an artist, were sent with the Roanoke expeditions to study local language and culture, documenting their findings for learning purposes. John Smith, preparing himself for the Jamestown expedition of 1607, diligently studied this material and learned the Algonkian words Harriot had recorded.²²⁶ Smith's ability to communicate with his settlement's Powhatan neighbours repeatedly diffused hostile situations and made him a natural colony leader. Jacques Cartier recorded the Iroquoian language when he encountered the Stadaconans of the St. Lawrence Valley in 1534 and 1535-6.²²⁷ Cartier also exchanged children with natives to establish trust and develop proper translators.²²⁸ The French and English also

²²⁴ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 65.

²²⁵ Alden T. Vaughan. "Sir Walter Raleigh's Indian Interpreters, 1584-1618." *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no2 (2002): 341.

²²⁶ Smith, *Journals*, xv.

²²⁷ Cartier, "The First Voyage, 1534," 80-81.

Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 241-6.

²²⁸ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 407; 440.

used gift giving to foster amity.²²⁹ Jean Ribault and René de Laudonnière gave the Timucuan of Northern Florida “pretty tin bracelets, a cutting hook, a looking glass [mirror] and certain knives” to show good will and also tried to learn their language.²³⁰ Leaders sometimes attempted to strengthen relations by agreeing to help Amerindians battle their enemies. René de Laudonnière and Samuel de Champlain both promised their new allies military assistance against other aboriginal groups in the hopes of lasting friendship.²³¹

In most instances, peace was possible and relations began well. There was certainly a precedent for friendship as many Amerindian communities had shown great interest in trading with visiting European fishermen.²³² Jacques Cartier was welcomed with great celebration by the people of Stadacona and Hochelaga.²³³ The Stadaconans shared the cure for scurvy with Cartier in the winter of 1535-6 and his extensive list of Iroquoian vocabulary indicates a period of close and peaceful interaction.²³⁴ His successor, Roberval, records peaceful trade relations and his report on Stadaconan culture indicates another period of close interaction.²³⁵ Moreover, the recent findings of the Roberval-Cartier archeological dig (2006-8) confirm the existence of close contacts as Amerindian foods and pottery have been identified within the French buildings.²³⁶ The pottery was likely used to transport Amerindian food for trade.

²²⁹ Ribault, “The Ribault Expedition, 1562,” 143; 145.

Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1562,” 17.

²³⁰ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1562,” 17; 23.

²³¹ Champlain, Vol 2, 198-214.

Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 58.

²³² Ralph Pastore, “The Sixteenth Century: Aboriginal Peoples and European Contact,” *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, P. Buckner and J. Reid, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 27.

²³³ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 125; 152.

²³⁴ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 213; 241-6.

²³⁵ Roberval, 267; 268-9.

²³⁶ Richard Fiset et al. “Charlesbourg-Royal et France-Roy (1541-3): le site de la première tentative de

According to English accounts, the Roanoke of the Outer Banks of North Carolina greeted Arthur Barlowe's party with great joy and hospitality in 1584. He described his hosts as "very handsome and goodly people and in behavior as mannerly and civil as any in Europe."²³⁷ His successor, Ralph Lane, was also welcomed by the Roanoke who invited him to a corn festival with 700 aboriginals where he was taught to grow corn and make corn syrup.²³⁸ The work of Harriot and White also indicates a period of peace and cultural exchange. The Croatoan of Hatarask Island were extremely friendly to the English and one of theirs, Manteo, would prove to be the colonists' greatest ally. In Northern Florida, Ribault and Laudonnière were welcomed by the Timucuan, whom they considered to be "very generous, courteous and of a good nature."²³⁹ Laudonnière received another friendly welcome in 1564 and the French were shown great reverence.²⁴⁰

Why did such promising relations sour? Chalking the problem up to Amerindians disliking the European transition from trading visitors to permanent neighbours is an over simplification. Yet it is difficult to place this deterioration in its proper context as we lack the Amerindian perspective. Historians often approach ethnohistorical analysis via the practice of "upstreaming," consulting existing Amerindian communities for oral histories and traditions. In this instance such methods are not possible as the affected Amerindian groups are extinct. The St. Lawrence Iroquois, the Roanoke, the Croatoan and the Timucuan all no longer exist. Thus, we can only infer what aboriginals thought and felt by carefully scrutinizing European accounts. The analysis is further complicated by the

colonization française en Marquée," *Archéologiques*. (Vol 22, 2009), 43-4.

²³⁷ Barlowe, 124.

²³⁸ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 647.

²³⁹ Ribault, "The Ribault Expedition, 1562," 144.

²⁴⁰ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1564," 45; 47-8.

fact Amerindian communities were not always unified in their reaction to colonies. Roanoke leader, Pemisapan, advocated aggression towards the Lane colonists, whereas his father, Ensenore, insisted on peace and cooperation.²⁴¹ In Canada, the Stadaconans were divided into two factions under Chief Donnacona and his rival, Agona.²⁴² Colonists generally did not record the intricacies of Amerindian politics and we are left with an imperfect understanding of the entire community's reaction to colonization. Colonies also each dealt with several different aboriginal groups and did not generally understand the relationships between them. For instance, it is unclear what the relationship between Stadacona and Hochelaga was in the St. Lawrence Valley. Settlers often could not identify Amerindians or distinguish between different groups. The Croatoan of Virginia recognized this difficulty and suggested an identification badge for themselves, having been accidentally attacked twice by their English allies.²⁴³ Expedition leaders did not always properly identify Amerindians or interpret situations correctly and their narratives surely contain mistakes and inaccuracies. One must also keep in mind that expedition leaders may have lied or exaggerated in some instances as well. Such hindrances highlight how much supposition goes into any discussion of European-Amerindian relations and the caution required in such analysis.

One of the foremost reasons which fostered good relations between Amerindians and Europeans was the hope of good trade and an advantageous military alliance. With time, however, it became clear to aboriginals that the disadvantages of close proximity to the French and the English could quickly outweigh any possible profits stemming from

²⁴¹ Ralph Lane, "An Account of the Particular Employments of the Englishmen Left in Virginia..." *The Principal Navigations*, Richard Hakluyt, ed. (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), 152.

²⁴² Cartier, "The Third Voyage, 1541-2," 252.

²⁴³ White, "Voyage of 1587," 202; 204.

the presence of the European newcomers. Colonists quickly started to seize the territory, draining resources and disrupting Amerindian life. The French and the English settlers were frightened of Amerindians and inadvertently conducted themselves with aggressively and with distrust. Their inability to trust aboriginals and their refusal to take risks in good faith marred any chance of a true bond. Dependent on native food, skill and knowledge, the needy newcomers made constant demands and rarely showed their neighbours the necessary appreciation. Deeming Amerindian religion, culture and civilization to be inherently inferior to that of Europe, colonists inadvertently communicated arrogance, disrespect and a sense of entitlement. Whenever Amerindians refused to cooperate willingly, desperate colonists resorted to intimidation, bullying and physical force to ensure their survival. This show of force often escalated into hatred and bloodshed.

Distrust and Disrespect

Colonists may have intended to establish peaceful coexistence, but their fortifications and weaponry communicated something else. Fearing native aggression, expeditions were prepared to fight and arrived in North America displaying their military might to deter potential attack. Colonists preemptively built fortifications and carried weapons, lest they should be ambushed. Yet such displays of military might could offend and intimidate indigenous people. Cartier recorded that “Chief Donnacona was vexed that the Captain and his people carried so many weapons when they on their side carried

none.”²⁴⁴ When Barlowe’s party dined with the Roanoke, they took their weapons and were not comfortable with the sight of any native weaponry. Barlowe wrote,

While we were at meat, there came in at the gates two or three men with bows and arrows from hunting, whom when we espied, we began to look one towards another, and offered reaching our weapons: but as soon as she [hostess] espied our mistrust, she was very much moved and caused some of her men to run out and take away their bows and arrows and break them...²⁴⁵

Colonists were unwilling to take leave of their weapons, yet natives were repeatedly unarmed as a show of good faith. Barlowe, meeting the Roanoke leader, Granganimeo, noted his willingness to trust: “When we came to shore with our weapons, he never moved from his place, nor any of the other four, nor mistrusted any harm to be offered from us.”²⁴⁶ Cartier wrote that aboriginals “came to meet our boats without fear or alarm and in as familiar a manner as if they had seen us all their lives.”²⁴⁷ Yet colonists cautiously insisted on only interacting with Amerindians from a position of strength. For instance, Cartier preferred to meet the Stadaconans from the safety of his ship. When the French were dying of scurvy, he was terrified the aboriginals would discover this vulnerability and went to great lengths to disguise it.²⁴⁸ This unwillingness to take risks as a sign of trust prevented any true goodwill from forming between the natives and the newcomers.

The French and English, realizing Amerindians feared the loud sound of gunfire, fired their weapons in order to intimidate their opponents. John Smith fired warning shots to ensure Amerindians took him seriously.²⁴⁹ When aboriginals happened upon a

²⁴⁴ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 129.

²⁴⁵ Barlowe, 128-9.

²⁴⁶ Barlowe, 124.

²⁴⁷ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 147.

²⁴⁸ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 209; 213.

²⁴⁹ Smith, *Journals*, 13.

vulnerable Cartier with furs to trade, the explorer was frightened and fired shots to force them away. He explained,

All came after our long boat, dancing and showing many signs of joy and of their desire to be friends... but for the reason already stated, that we had only one of our longboats, we did not care to trust their signs and waved them to go back, which they would not do but paddled so hard that they soon surrounded our longboat with seven canoes. And seeing that no matter how much we signed to them, they would not go back, we shot off over their heads two small cannon... we shot off two fire-lances that scattered among them and frightened them so much that they began to paddle off in very great haste and did not follow us anymore.²⁵⁰

Outnumbered and exposed in a longboat, Cartier was unwilling to interact with any traders, no matter how friendly or unarmed they appeared. Even cordial demonstrations alarmed aboriginals who were unaccustomed to such thunderous and destructive attacks. When Smith and Champlain educationally displayed their fire power during friendly encounters, Amerindians were astounded and likely very intimidated.²⁵¹ Cartier describes a similar incident with the Stadaconans:

[Donnacona] begged the Captain to have a piece of artillery discharged because Taignoagny and Dom Agaya had given him great accounts of it and neither he nor his people had ever seen or heard of artillery. The Captain answered that he would do so and ordered a dozen canons to be fired with their bullets into the wood that stood opposite to the ships and the Indians. These were all so much astonished as if the heavens had fallen upon them and began to howl and to shriek in such a very loud manner that one would have thought hell emptied itself there.²⁵²

Laudonnière deceived and intimidated the Timucuans, claiming a lightening strike that destroyed 500 acres of forest had actually been his artillery.²⁵³ Colonists hoped such show of strength would deter attack and encourage cooperation. In fearing aggression, they communicated aggression and created an atmosphere that was incompatible with trust and friendship. In expecting to fight, the French and English likely created a self-fulfilling prophecy.

²⁵⁰ Cartier, "The First Voyage, 1534," 50-1.

²⁵¹ Smith, *Journals*, 4; 27. Champlain, Vol 2, 90.

²⁵² Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 135.

²⁵³ Bennett, 29.

Admittedly, some caution on the part of colonists was understandable. Some indigenous groups in the Americas were said to have attacked Europeans on sight without provocation. Barlowe himself may have been attacked by the Powhatans while trying to land at Chesapeake Bay in 1584.²⁵⁴ When Jamestown was first settled, leaders worried an imposing fort would send the wrong message to their aboriginal neighbours and foster distrust and, thus, forwent a palisade. They soon regretted their decision when Powhatan snipers took to shooting any colonists who exited the fort. Seventeen men and a boy were killed before a palisade was added.²⁵⁵ Yet many indigenous groups were welcoming and peaceful until increasingly provoked. Entering every Amerindian relationship expecting the worst with premature signs of aggression destroyed relations which may have otherwise been amicable. Moreover, the fear and distrust most colonists displayed was groundless and stemmed from prejudicial preconceived notions.

Expedition leaders were extremely suspicious of aboriginals and repeatedly accused them of lying, stealing and trickery. Planters rarely gave Amerindians the benefit of the doubt and generally did not allow for miscommunications, cultural differences or honest mistakes. The language barrier surely led to misunderstandings, particularly in the interior where more languages were introduced and chains of translation might have truly confused matters.²⁵⁶ Cartier considered the Stadaconans “rogues” who “steal everything they can carry off.”²⁵⁷ He did not trust his native guides that the St. Lawrence River was the only massive opening into the continent and proceeded to waste time checking the

²⁵⁴ Adams, 80.

²⁵⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 8-9.

²⁵⁶ Smith, *Journals*, 65; 75.

²⁵⁷ Cartier, “The First Voyage, 1534,” 63.

rest of the Gulf of the St. Lawrence personally to be certain.²⁵⁸ When Cartier was told Donnacona was ill he immediately considered it a ruse and when the native girl Cartier was given ran away, he accused the Stadaconans of coaxing her into the act.²⁵⁹ When Donnacona returned from a hunt with a group of unknown Amerindians, Cartier automatically suspected treachery was brewing.²⁶⁰ Champlain displayed a similar attitude:

There is an evil tendency among them to be revengeful and to be great liars, and one cannot rely upon them, except with caution and when one is armed. They make promises enough, but keep few of them.²⁶¹

Archeological evidence indicates that Roberval burned down his own fort before abandoning it in 1542, likely wishing to prevent aboriginals from seizing the site and using it to their advantage.²⁶² Ralph Lane did not perceive the burden his demands of food placed on aboriginals and repeatedly suspected the Roanoke of deception, disbelieving their excuses when they said they could not spare food or would trade at a later date.²⁶³ Similarly, Laudonnière distrusted the Timucuans, stating, "I knew them to be subtle and crafty to enterprise and execute anything to our disadvantage."²⁶⁴ John Smith, despite the cooperation of his aboriginal guides, chained them together to discourage escape.²⁶⁵ Smith also accused the natives who visited his fort of stealing tools and harassing colonists.²⁶⁶ Lastly, Sir Richard Grenville, accused the people of

²⁵⁸ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 107.

²⁵⁹ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 220; 216.

²⁶⁰ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 216-7.

²⁶¹ Champlain, Vol 1, 177.

²⁶² Richard Fiset et al. "Projet archeologique Cartier-Roberval: recherches: 2006-2007," *Archeologiques*. (Vol 21. 2008), 46-7.

²⁶³ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 83. Lane, "Account of the Particular Employments," 156.

²⁶⁴ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 98-9.

²⁶⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 49.

²⁶⁶ Smith, *Journals*, 32; 41-2.

Aquascogok of stealing a silver cup and ordered them to return it. When the cup was not returned, he violently had their town burnt and their crops destroyed.²⁶⁷

Whether Amerindians were innocent or guilty in each instance, colonists generally just assumed the worst, often without evidence. They failed to give aboriginals the benefit of the doubt and allow for miscommunications and cultural differences. They rarely considered the native perspective and lacked the necessary leniency. More patience, understanding and willingness to compromise and forgive would likely have helped relations immensely. Though leaders considered themselves patient, fair and generous, their inflexibility led to unnecessary conflict and resentment.

Though it was not always intentional, colonists also communicated a lack of respect. Europeans rarely gave the Amerindians who assisted them the credit they deserved. When the Stadaconans saved the French from scurvy, Cartier's description of the event does not convey any recognition of their medicinal skill or even appreciation for the life saving information.²⁶⁸ It does not occur to the sailor that he is indebted to the Stadaconans and all his thankful praise goes to God. Expedition narratives rarely acknowledge the strengths of Amerindian peoples, inherently considering Europeans to be superior. Europeans like Thomas Harriot and John White, who sympathized with aboriginals and saw the merits in their ways, were rare.²⁶⁹ Most, like Cartier and Lane, were unable to see past their preconceived notions and acknowledge when native methods assisted or impressed them. When leaders benefited from Amerindian support they typically did not convey the necessary gratitude or regard. A colony's failure to respect the Amerindian goods, innovations, skills and knowledge that they clearly

²⁶⁷ Grenville, "Voyage of 1585," 137-8.

²⁶⁸ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 212-5.

²⁶⁹ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 56-7.

needed, while simultaneously expressing their own might and superiority would have been disrespectful and offensive. This frustrating combination of arrogance and dependence would have worn very thin. Like trust, respect is crucial for forging sincere and lasting bonds.

Europeans generally considered themselves, as Christians of the “civilized” world, to be a superior race, whereas aboriginals were deemed primitive and unlearned forest people. Narratives often do not focus on Amerindian strengths or ingenuity, but rather ways in which they are foreign, ignorant and primordial. Texts repeatedly stress what Europeans considered paganism, sexual deviance and ineffective, archaic practices. Even colonists who liked natives felt they needed tutoring and should adopt European practices in order to improve themselves. Champlain felt the aboriginals of the St. Lawrence Valley lived in “poverty” and were “without law” and “full of false beliefs.”²⁷⁰ He states,

I asked them what ceremonies they employed in praying to their god; they told me that they made use of none, except that each prayed in his heart as he wished. This is why they have no law, and do not know what it is to worship God and pray to Him, but live like brute beasts; but I think they would soon be converted to Christianity if some people would settle amongst them and cultivate their soil... They believe also, that all dreams that they have are true... These are diabolical visions that deceive them and lead them astray. This is all that I have been able to learn about their brutish belief.”²⁷¹

Champlain considered his neighbours “gluttons” who did not “keep anything in reserve” and needlessly starved during the winter.²⁷² He claimed they ate rancid meat, ignorant of the adverse health affects, and needed tutoring in guarding against enemies.²⁷³ Cartier belittled the Stadaconan god, Cudouagny, and criticized native styles of dress and

²⁷⁰ Champlain, Vol 1, 177. Vol 2, 125.

²⁷¹ Champlain, Vol 1, 177-8.

²⁷² Champlain, Vol 1, 183.

²⁷³ Champlain, Vol 1, 180; 182-3.

marriage practices.²⁷⁴ He also considered the Stadaconans to be unproductive, gluttonous and “niggardly with their provisions.”²⁷⁵ Cartier states,

They have another very bad custom connected with their daughters who as soon as they reach the age of puberty are all placed in a brothel open to every one, until the girls have made a match. We saw this with our own eyes; for we discovered wigwams as full of these girls as is a boys’ school with boys in France.²⁷⁶

Laudonnière would not feed Amerindians due to their “inordinate appetites” and noted that they almost never set battles, but instead used sneaky tactics such as ambush.²⁷⁷ Even Harriot, who considered the Roanoke intelligent and showed much sympathy and understanding towards them, innately thought them to be “a people poor” of superstition who needed to be reformed and “brought to civility and the embracing of true religion” by means of “good government.”²⁷⁸

Conversely, Amerindians were naturally convinced of their own superiority. While they admired and adopted some European innovations, aboriginals generally preferred their own culture and society to that of Europe.²⁷⁹ Amerindians generally considered Europeans to be physically inferior, less attractive and less intelligent.²⁸⁰ Unaccustomed to wilderness survival and long treks into the interior, colonists were considered “soft” and weak.²⁸¹ Some natives who traveled to Europe returned with tales of coddling luxury and effeminacy.²⁸² It is important to debunk the notion that Amerindians were completely in awe of an advanced civilization.

²⁷⁴ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 179-86.

²⁷⁵ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 182; 186.

²⁷⁶ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 182.

²⁷⁷ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 69.

²⁷⁸ Harriot, 187.

²⁷⁹ Cornelius Jaenen, “Amerindian Views of French Culture in the Seventeenth Century,” *American Encounters*, Peter Mancall and James Merrell, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 92.

²⁸⁰ Jaenen, 76.

²⁸¹ Jaenen, 76-7.

²⁸² Jaenen, 77,

The French and English sometimes considered Amerindians cruel and barbaric. Champlain described his Algonquin allies torturing an Iroquois prisoner, systematically burning, cutting and piercing him and tearing out his fingernails. The explorer refused to take part when asked, writing,

I explained to them that we did not use such cruelties at all and that we killed them at once, and that if they wished me to fire a musket shot at him I would gladly do it. They said “no”... I went away from them, distressed seeing such cruelty as they were practicing upon this body. When they saw that I was not pleased at it, they called me and told me to fire a musket shot at him, which I did...²⁸³

After Champlain ended the captive’s suffering, the Algonquin next scalped and disemboweled the body, throwing the entrails in a nearby lake. They finished with decapitation and dismemberment, slicing up the heart and placing it in their mouths a moment. Champlain was horrified by their “wickedness.” John Smith, taken prisoner by the Powhatans, witnessed similar torture to one of his countrymen.²⁸⁴ Smith also prevented his native ally, Mosco, from violently bashing in the brains of an enemy aboriginal after a skirmish.²⁸⁵ Laudonnière noted that the Timucuans practiced scalping and displayed bloodlust and a general lack of clemency.²⁸⁶

Planters, failing to see Amerindians as equals, often did not realize how intelligent and perceptive they could be. The language barrier and cultural differences perhaps led Europeans to assume aboriginals were oblivious of their subtle misdeeds. Expedition leaders were repeatedly deceptive, expecting aboriginals to be fooled as though they were naive or unobservant. Both times Cartier deceived the Stadaconans in order to take captives his victims sensed the danger beforehand and were extremely hesitant to approach the French. Before the first capture of 1534, Donnacona and his sons “did not

²⁸³ Champlain, Vol 1, 214-215.

²⁸⁴ Smith, *Journals*, 17.

²⁸⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 68.

²⁸⁶ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 63.

come so close to the ship as they had usually done,” approaching “little by little” in hesitation until the French reached out and grabbed their canoe.²⁸⁷ The second incident of 1536 is far more explicit. Cartier invited Donnacona to his fort, secretly plotting to capture him:

The captain went and greeted Donnacona, who likewise was friendly enough but kept his eyes on the wood and was wonderfully uneasy. Soon after Taignoagny came up and told Chief Donnacona that on no account he should go inside our fort... Our Captain had been warned by Dom Agaya that Taignoagny had spoken adversely and had told Chief Donnacona by no means to go aboard the ships. And our captain... saw that at Taignoagny's warning the squaws were hurrying away...²⁸⁸

All Cartier's captives, save one little girl, died in France. Yet when the captain returned to Canada in 1541 he told the Stadaconans their friends were “great lords and were married and would not return into their country.”²⁸⁹ Though the Stadaconans did not openly question this story, Cartier sensed his claim altered relations adversely and was no longer comfortable settling alongside them, moving further down the St. Lawrence River instead. The Virginia Company sent a crown in 1608 to coronate Chief Powhatan under King James I, assuming the native would not understand what the ceremony signified and would simply agree. Powhatan repeatedly refused the ceremony and when he finally agreed to accept the crown, he refused to kneel and had to be physically forced.²⁹⁰ When Laudonnière broke his oath to aide Chief Satourioua's men in battle, he ignorantly assumed he could still demand war captives after their victory. Satourioua flatly refused, explaining the French were not entitled as they had not assisted in the battle as promised.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Cartier, “The First Voyage, 1534,” 65-6.

²⁸⁸ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 226-7.

²⁸⁹ Cartier, “The Third Voyage, 1541,” 252.

²⁹⁰ Smith, *Journals*, 90.

²⁹¹ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 64.

Europeans often traded Amerindians trinkets of little value, such as bells and bracelets, taking advantage of the fact aboriginals had little knowledge of European merchandise or its worth. Champlain, Cartier, Ribault, Laudonnière and their many successors quickly figured out how to use the native custom of gift giving to their advantage and as long as Europeans were consistent in their dealings Amerindians had no grounds to suspect trickery.²⁹² Smith apparently once tricked Chief Powhatan into accepting a few pounds of beads for hundreds of bushels of corn, claiming they were rare gems worn by royalty.²⁹³ When Donnaconna's son returned from France, they immediately warned their peers that the French were withholding and that the trinkets they peddled were worthless compared to the great wealth they actually possessed. Cartier wrote,

We perceived the two rogues we brought with us were telling them and giving them to understand that what we bartered to them was of no value and that for what they brought us they could as easily get hatchets as knives...²⁹⁴

Thus, for a time, trade stopped and there was a "coldness" from the Stadaconans. Europeans generally disliked when Amerindians tried to control the terms of exchange. At Jamestown, Smith was livid when Newport allowed Powhatan the upper hand in trade as a sign of goodwill.²⁹⁵ This pattern of unequal exchange continued into the seventeenth century, disrupting traditional native life and giving Europeans an advantage that contributed to the massive "transformation-disintegration" of Amerindian society.²⁹⁶ Denys Delâge identifies a fundamental problem in Europeans sharing goods but

²⁹² Denys Delâge, "The question of unequal exchange," *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in northern North America, 1600-1664*. Jane Brierley, tr. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1993), 98; 103.

²⁹³ Smith, *Journals*, 31.

²⁹⁴ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1534," 187.

²⁹⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 31.

²⁹⁶ Delâge, 78; 123.

withholding knowledge.²⁹⁷ Colonists were given canoes and taught canoe making, whereas aboriginals were given metal tools, but not taught metal working. This led to a dependency as Amerindians desired European goods but could not reproduce them.

Failing to realize Amerindians could be as intelligent and perceptive as themselves, Europeans continued to underestimate aboriginals and behave in ways that would have been highly offensive. Upon first meeting the Powhatans, Smith pretended his colleague, Christopher Newport, was his father in order to simplify things for the natives.²⁹⁸ Similarly, Laudonnière claimed that the visiting Englishman, John Hawkins, was his brother.²⁹⁹ When Harriot shared European technology with the Roanoke he felt it “far exceeded their capacities to comprehend.”³⁰⁰ When Smith’s party burned an Amerindian village he left trinkets at the site as a peace offering, assuming the devastated people would be pacified in this manner.³⁰¹ Overall, signs of distrust and disrespect would have made Amerindians less receptive and less cooperative. They would have been less likely to trust and respect in turn and these elements are absolutely crucial to forging strong and lasting bonds.

A Great Imposition

Many aboriginal groups welcomed French and English explorers, hoping to benefit from impressive foreign goods and military might. Even as visitors showed signs of occupation, relations typically remained peaceful as aboriginals hoped their presence would be beneficial. Yet as colonists built fortifications to hold territory and began

²⁹⁷ Delâge, 133.

²⁹⁸ Smith, *Journals*, 25.

²⁹⁹ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 104.

³⁰⁰ Harriot, 189.

³⁰¹ Smith, *Journals*, 54-5.

reaping food and lumber, they were simultaneously misappropriating native land and resources. The notion of an endless untamed wilderness may have given colonists the impression they were not encroaching as much as they were. Yet transplanting one hundred or more individuals into native territory and draining the surrounding resources to provide for them was definitely an infringement. Natural resources in any given area were not unlimited and Europeans were not entitled to share in the offerings of native lands.

Amerindians were not oblivious when reconnaissance missions claimed territory for the motherland. In July 1534, before returning to France, Cartier's party raised a thirty foot wooden cross, telling the Stadaconans it was merely a "landmark" or "guide post" for approaching vessels.³⁰² Yet the large engraving "Long Live the King of France" and the reverent ceremony performed at this marker indicate a double meaning – the territory was also being claimed for France. Chief Donnacona perceived this to be an infringement of his rights and was incredibly vexed, confronting the French immediately:

When we returned to our ships, the chief, dressed in an old black bear-skin, arrived in a canoe ... And pointing to the cross he made us a long harangue [berate], making the sign of the cross with two of his fingers; and then he pointed to the land all about as if he wished to say that all this region belonged to him and that we ought not to have set up this cross without his permission.³⁰³

Whether Donnacona understood the particular significance of the foreign ritual is irrelevant. He clearly understood the French were building on his land without permission and tried to communicate that such trespasses were unacceptable. Similarly, Jean Ribault had two stone pillars erected on the coast of Florida in 1562 to mark the northern and southern borders of what he now considered French territory. The

³⁰² Cartier, "The First Voyage, 1534," 66.

³⁰³ Cartier, "The First Voyage, 1534," 66.

Timucuans, watching the placing of one of these markers, were visibly displeased.³⁰⁴ Laudonnière acknowledged building his fort on Chief Satourioua's land, indicating a strange disconnect.³⁰⁵ Leaders such as Cartier and Laudonnière did not perceive themselves as invaders and yet simultaneously understood the land they were appropriating belonged to aboriginals.

Colonists preferred to settle alongside indigenous communities, counting on Amerindian assistance to survive. Laudonnière decided to settle beside the Timucuans because he incorrectly assumed they had an abundance of food to share.³⁰⁶ Similarly, Lane's colony settled half a mile from the Roanoke and expected assistance.³⁰⁷ During a period of intense drought, the English lived on native food all but twenty days of the year, draining Roanoke reserves.³⁰⁸ When the Roanoke built fishing weirs for the colonists, Lane expected the aboriginals to operate and repair them thereafter.³⁰⁹ The French and English simply expected locals to provide food, supplies and guides for their inland explorations. They often conducted themselves with an air of entitlement, making incessant demands and taking assistance for granted. Products of a very hierarchical society, expedition leaders considered their actions justified in exploiting natives as they practiced similar exploitation of lower class Europeans.³¹⁰ This expectant attitude, sometimes coupled with arrogance and ingratitude, would have frustrated aboriginals, who had to focus on their own needs.

³⁰⁴ Ribault, "The Ribault Expedition, 1562," 146. Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1562," 18.

³⁰⁵ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 53.

³⁰⁶ McGrath, 103.

³⁰⁷ Quinn, *Set Fair For Roanoke*, 407.

³⁰⁸ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 76.

³⁰⁹ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 648.

³¹⁰ Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians*, 4.

Anxious and vulnerable, some colonists grew frustrated with their dependence and came to resent Amerindians, perceiving them to have control over the colony's survival. Laudonnière recorded that some Timucuan traders flaunted this power:

Thither they brought their fish in their little boats, to which our poor soldiers were constrained to go, and oftentimes (as I have seen) to give away the very shirts from their backs to get one fish. If at any time they shewed unto the Savages the excessive price which they took, these villains would answer them roughly and churlishly: if though make so great account of thy merchandise, eat it, and we will eat our fish: then fell they out a laughing and mocked us with open throat. Whereupon our soldiers, utterly impatient, were oftentimes ready to cut them to pieces, and to make them pay the price for their foolish arrogance.³¹¹

Daniel Murphee argues,

Rather than mourn the true environmentally-based origins of their starvation, the colonists blamed Indians for their grim circumstances. Native desires to profit from the colonists' misfortune antagonized Frenchmen already unhappy with their situation in the Floridas and led to further erosion of the Indians' standing among the Europeans.³¹²

Europeans were quick to vent their frustrations on aboriginals and expedition leaders were quick to blame them for difficulties in an attempt to justify failing projects.

The planting of French and English colonists would have been a great disruption to native life. Having unpredictable newcomers to worry about – whether assisting them, monitoring them or attacking them – would have interrupted typical native routines and practices. Life would have changed for the Amerindian groups most directly affected by the presence of Europeans and some would have felt it a disturbance. The colonies would have to be factored into native operations and be planned around. Exposure to European culture and trade goods would have also changed Amerindian lives. Champlain noted the readiness in which aboriginals adopted European materials and practices – for instance,

³¹¹ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1654," 91.

³¹² Daniel Murphee, "Construction Indians in the Colonial Floridas: Origins of European-Floridian Identity, 1513-1573." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (October 2002), 149-50.

quickly adding peas brought by settlers to their vegetable gardens.³¹³ While some viewed this incorporation as progress, others likely viewed it as a disruption of tradition and an unwelcome change. Some indigenous groups, such as the Stadaconans and the Algonquins, diplomatically decided to downplay their own beliefs and customs in order to appease judgmental Europeans.³¹⁴

The newcomers permanently altered the Amerindian world with new plants, animals and diseases. Ecofacts from the Roberval-Cartier dig confirm that the introduction of many European plants, including weeds, occurred even during brief, early colonization attempts.³¹⁵ By the seventeenth century at least twenty European weeds had been introduced to North America.³¹⁶ Aggressive species, such as the dandelion and Englishman's Foot, choked out indigenous species, altering the Amerindian landscape. The abandonment of a mule by Roanoke settlers also indicates that the earliest colonies introduced new animals.³¹⁷ Amerindians distastefully referred to the European honey bee as the "English fly", recognizing such things as symbols of European advancement.³¹⁸

European diseases also drastically disrupted Amerindian life and there is evidence of their introduction in the sixteenth century. Cartier's narrative states:

In the month of December [1535] we received warning that the pestilence had broken out among the people of Stadacona to such an extent, that already, by their own confession, more than fifty persons were dead. Upon this we forbade them to come either to the fort or about us.³¹⁹

³¹³ Champlain, Vol 2, 27.

³¹⁴ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 139-40; 180-81. Champlain, Vol 1, 177.

³¹⁵ Bouchard-Perron, 98.

³¹⁶ Alfred Crosby, "Colonization as Swamping," *Major Problems in American Colonial History*. Karen Kupperman, ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 62-3.

³¹⁷ De Araña, Pedro. "July, 1588. Pedro de Araña to Juan de Ibarra," *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*. Volume 3. David Quinn, ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 326.

³¹⁸ Crosby, 60.

³¹⁹ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 204.

While it is possible this outbreak was scurvy, the Stadaconans possessed the *anneda* cure and such a death toll seems strange. In Virginia, Harriot recorded more conclusive evidence:

...within a few days after our departure from every such Towne, the people began to die fast, and many in short space, in some Townes about twentie, in some fourtie, and in one sixe score... This happened in no place that we could learne, but where we had bin, where they used practise against us, & after such time. The disease also was so strange, that they neither knewe what it was, nor how to cure it...³²⁰

Though precise mortality rates are unknown, small pox, measles and influenza devastated Amerindian societies, permanently altering tradition and culture and allowing Europeans to advance in North America with less resistance.

Politically, European presence had the potential to disrupt the balance of power between indigenous groups. Communities who allied with colonists and received their goods and assistance might have an advantage over those who did not. We see this concern in Donnacona's attempts to prevent Cartier from visiting the neighbouring village of Hochelaga.³²¹ Donnacona would not have wanted Cartier assisting a rival group or allying with them against him. Decades later, Champlain would assist the Algonquin against the Iroquois.³²² The French in Florida found themselves caught between two rival Timucuan chiefs, Satourioua and Utina. When Laudonnière kidnapped Utina in 1564, it inadvertently advantaged Satourioua and disturbed the balance of power.³²³ Similarly, Chief Donnacona wished the French to remove his rival, Agona.³²⁴ When Cartier kidnapped Donnacona and his sons instead, the Agona faction seized

³²⁰ Harriot, 191.

³²¹ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 136-9.

³²² Champlain, Vol 1, 210.

³²³ McGrath, 108.

³²⁴ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 223.

control of Stadacona and Agona was made Chief.³²⁵ In Virginia, the Croatoan were likely so welcoming of an English alliance because they were weaker than their competition, the Roanoke, Chanoists and Mangoaks. European interference in Amerindian affairs would not have been appreciated by those it disadvantaged.

Aboriginal peoples who had initially hoped to benefit from European contact via trade and military alliance were repeatedly burdened and provoked by European infringements and attitudes. Eventually, Amerindians realized that colonists were more hindrance than help and that the disadvantages of their presence far outweighed any advantages. Moreover, aboriginals sensed the frightening long-term objectives of these intruders. Thomas Harriot recorded that some of the Roanoke did “prophecies that there were more of our generation yet to come to kill theirs and take their places, as some thought the purpose was.”³²⁶ A native prisoner that John Smith captured in the Virginian interior confessed, “They heard we were a people come to take their world.”³²⁷ Threatened by European advancement, Amerindians eventually ceased cooperation and assistance. This breakdown in relations led Europeans to use force and, in some instances, bloodshed ensued.

The Use of Force

Amerindian refusal to cooperate left the French and English in dire straights. While in some instances aboriginals could sincerely not spare aid, in others food and assistance were deliberately withheld in the hopes that starvation would drive the invaders from the continent. Ralph Lane felt Chief Pemisapan of the Roanoke was

³²⁵ Cartier, “The Third Voyage, 1541,” 252.

³²⁶ Harriot, 192.

³²⁷ Smith, *Journals*, 82.

deliberately avoiding his food requests and that the Chanoists and Mangoaks of the interior had tried to starve him out of their territories.³²⁸ In 1609, the Powhatans began a starvation policy towards Jamestown that plunged the settlement into a period of great misery and cannibalism known thereafter as “The Starving Time.”³²⁹ In Florida, aboriginals deliberately blocked rivers with trees to limit French movement.³³⁰ Desperate Europeans repeatedly resorted to bullying and intimidation tactics to coerce Amerindians into cooperating. John Smith threatened aboriginals by burning their houses and canoes.³³¹ When Laudonnière was denied native war captives by Satourioua he took twenty soldiers to the chief’s home to intimidate him into submission. Laudonnière describes,

I commanded my Sergeant to provide me twenty soldiers to go with me to the house of Satourioua: Where after I was come and entered into the hall without any manner of salutation, I went and sat me down by him and stayed a long while without speaking any word unto him or showing any sign of friendship, which thing put him deeply in the dumps: besides that certain soldiers remained at the gate, to whom I had given the express commandment to suffer no Indian to go forth...³³²

After thirty minutes of threatening silence, Laudonnière began aggressively demanding war captives until Satourioua submitted and had them brought forward.

When Amerindians would not assist colonists voluntarily they were taken by force. Cartier kidnapped Donnacona’s sons in 1534, taking them back to France as evidence and for information.³³³ In 1536, Cartier repeated the transgression, kidnapping Donnacona himself and several other aboriginals as well.³³⁴ In both instances, Cartier took the natives by force, convincing them afterwards it was in their best interest to

³²⁸ Lane, “Account of the Particular Employments,” 153; 6.

³²⁹ Smith, *Journals*, 99.

³³⁰ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 100.

³³¹ Smith, *Journals*, 87-8; 91; 99; 105; 109.

³³² Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 64.

³³³ Cartier, “The First Voyage, 1534,” 66-7.

³³⁴ Cartier, “The Second Voyage, 1535-6,” 227.

cooperate and promising to bring them home again in a year. Yet realistically, once captured, what choice did Amerindians have? Completely vulnerable in French hands, they had no choice but to cooperate to ensure their safety. Cartier presented Donnacona on deck to his frightened people, instructing the chief to reassure them he was an enthusiastic volunteer who would return soon.³³⁵ Jean Ribault attempted to take two very unwilling Timucuan men back to France as requested by the monarchy. These captives had to be guarded very closely, else they would jump overboard and escape into the forest. Laudonnière explained,

Nevertheless, being acquainted with their humour, we watched them narrowly and sought by all means to appease them: which we could not by means do for that time, though we offered them things which they much esteemed, which things they disdained to take and gave back again whatsoever was given them, thinking that such gifts should have altogether bound them, and that in restoring them they should be restored unto their liberty.³³⁶

Miserable, the captives sang at all hours and refused to eat.³³⁷ Changing tactics, they began to cooperate and earn trust until they were able to escape in the middle of the night.³³⁸

Colonists also took hostages to acquire ransoms of food and supplies. Isolated from his Roanoke Island settlement, Ralph Lane captured Chief Menatonon of the Chowanoacs to obtain food, supplies and geographical information about the Virginia interior in order to survive his explorations.³³⁹ Afterwards, Lane captured Menatonon's son, Skiko, shackling the captive closely to him in order to ensure safe passage all the way back to his fort.³⁴⁰ Though offered pearls, Lane refused to return the boy, realizing

³³⁵ Cartier, "The Second Voyage, 1535-6," 229.

³³⁶ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1562," 22-23.

³³⁷ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1562," 23.

³³⁸ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1562," 25.

³³⁹ Lane, "Account of the Particular Employments," 143; 145; 153.

³⁴⁰ Lane, "Account of the Particular Employments," 148; 153.

how crucial a hostage was to his safety.³⁴¹ John Smith also took hostages to acquire food, information or safe passage.³⁴² Lastly, Laudonnière captured Chief Utina and ransomed him back to his people for corn.³⁴³ French and English colonists made it clear that if Amerindians did not assist them by choice, they would by means of force. This attitude exacerbated an already deteriorating situation and led to outright violence.

Most indigenous communities, no strangers to combat and accustomed to holding their own against enemy nations, were not going to simply submit to European intruders. Leaving the St. Lawrence Valley in 1542, Cartier warned Roberval at Newfoundland that the Stadaconans had turned hostile.³⁴⁴ Though Cartier's account of the winter months of 1541-2 has not survived, the Stadaconans told French fishermen in 1542 that they had killed more than 35 of Cartier's men.³⁴⁵ At Roanoke Island, Lane was warned that Chief Pemisapan was planning to smoke the English from their beds in the night to surprise and kill them all.³⁴⁶ Lane, already suspicious of the Roanoke, launched a preemptive strike. Though Pemisapan escaped the initial ambush he was hunted down and beheaded gruesomely.³⁴⁷ Though Lane's colony escaped any reprisal for this assassination by returning to England, the two succeeding English groups would pay in their stead. A few weeks later, Sir Richard Grenville left fifteen men to hold Lane's abandoned fort.³⁴⁸ It is no surprise that they were soon ambushed and the survivors driven from the island to die

³⁴¹ Lane, "Account of the Particular Employments," 154.

³⁴² Smith, *Journals*, 97; 111.

³⁴³ Bennett, 29.

³⁴⁴ Roberval, 264.

³⁴⁵ Pastore, 28.

³⁴⁶ Lane, 155.

³⁴⁷ Lane, 157-9.

³⁴⁸ "The Third Voyage to Virginia Made by a Ship in 1586..." *The Principal Navigations*, Richard Hakluyt, ed. (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), 164.

by other means.³⁴⁹ John White actually found the bones of one of these ill-fated men at the burned English fort.³⁵⁰

One of White's own colonists, George Howe, was shortly thereafter ambushed by the Roanoke while he hunted crab in shallow water in his undergarments, clearly unarmed. Howe's attackers "gave him sixteen wounds with their arrows: and after they had slaine him with their wooden swords, they beat his head to pieces."³⁵¹ White sent a party under Captain Stafford to retaliate, but the mission failed disastrously as the English accidentally attacked their Croatoan allies instead.³⁵² Lastly, Smith and Laudonnière also reported skirmishes with aboriginals which resulted in casualties.³⁵³ In fact, one battle between the French and the Timucuans lasted a full day.³⁵⁴ Despite promising beginnings, Amerindian relations ended dreadfully in violence and bloodshed.

Conclusion

Though the French and English understood the importance of good Amerindian relations and made some effort to forge them, good will deteriorated and hostility ensued. Analyzing the breakdown of relations is difficult as records of these early interactions have only survived through European sources and the aboriginal position must be carefully inferred through the European perspective. Amerindian societies were also not unified in their response to French and English occupation and how they were politically organized was not always communicated in accounts. Some of the information expedition leaders recorded is likely incorrect as they had difficulty properly identifying aboriginals

³⁴⁹ White, "Voyage of 1587," 203.

³⁵⁰ White, "Voyage of 1587," 201.

³⁵¹ White, "Voyage of 1587," 201-2.

³⁵² White, "Voyage of 1587," 204.

³⁵³ Smith, *Journals*, 9. Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 100-1.

³⁵⁴ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1564," 101.

and interpreting situations. Aside from mistaken statements, one must also keep in mind leaders could be purposefully lying or exaggerating in their accounts as well.

Appropriating Amerindian land and resources, colonists made incessant demands for food and assistance and generally did not acknowledge what an imposition they were. Their arrival was a total disruption of aboriginal life and their settlements quickly began to drain native reserves as most communities were not prepared to feed an additional one hundred people over the long-term no matter what European materials they were offered. Though colonists considered themselves to be generous, patient and fair with natives, this was not always the case. They consistently did not show the level of good will, flexibility, understanding and patience necessary to maintain such delicate alliances. Europeans generally did not allow for miscommunications, cultural differences and honest mistakes and could be extremely stubborn and unforgiving once angered. Colonists were needy and often conducted themselves with a distrustful, disrespectful and expectant attitude. The combination of stubborn arrogance and dependency would have been frustrating for aboriginals. Colonists likely did not realize how they were presenting themselves as they often did not sense how perceptive or intelligent Amerindians were. Much of their behaviour stemmed from fear, desperation and an innate sense of superiority as a technologically advanced and Christian race.

Amerindians, having initially tolerated European intrusion in the hopes of beneficial trade and military alliance, soon realized any advantages were outweighed by disadvantages. Cooperation and assistance slowed or stopped altogether, possibly to force colonists to return to Europe. Desperate, colonists resorted to the use of force and began threatening, bullying and intimidating aboriginal groups to continue obtaining food,

supplies and assistance. In Canada, Virginia and Florida expedition leaders began capturing aboriginal leaders and forcing compliance. In some instances hostility escalated into all out warfare and casualties followed.

While poor Amerindian relations were a key setback for colonizers, it is important to recognize colonization ventures could succeed in spite of this difficulty. Jamestown, Quebec, Hispaniola and New Spain all succeeded as permanent settlements, despite the resistance of indigenous peoples. The abandoned projects of France and England in the sixteenth century were not due to conflict with aboriginals, but rather an inability to justify facing such conflict. After a few experimental attempts, organizers, investors and colonists decided there was no worthwhile reason to hold the land and battle indigenous peoples. The peaceful trading of fisherman had proven a much safer and more profitable way of obtaining Amerindian goods. With no promising resources to harvest or explorations to conduct there was no need to sink men and materials into holding territory against hostile aboriginals in the sixteenth century

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The difficulties in shipping men, materials and information across the Atlantic exacerbated all other North American challenges. The crossings were seasonal, took months and delays were inevitable, making deliveries infrequent – generally one large shipment per year. Left in complete isolation without assistance, colonists had to attain self-sufficiency whilst living a makeshift existence of trial and error. Without communication, participants on both sides of the Atlantic had to make decisions independently with extremely limited information. The inability to communicate changing circumstances lead to unsuitable actions and expeditions repeatedly failed to connect with colonists for resupply.

Concerns of Distance and Communication

Atlantic crossings were generally undertaken during the spring and summer months as they offered the safest sailing weather. French expeditions to Canada sailed directly across the northern Atlantic to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland (3400 km) and then proceeded south into the Gulf of the St Lawrence to access the Canadian interior via the St. Lawrence River.³⁵⁵ The voyage from Newfoundland to Quebec (1450 km) was only a third of the total distance, yet took three to six weeks to navigate. Kenneth Banks likens the cautious crawl to “walking blindfolded and barefoot in a room of jagged glass”

³⁵⁵ Kenneth Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2006), 70.

as there were many uncharted rocks and sandbars hidden amidst thick fog whilst the iron-rich Canadian Shield interfered with compass readings.³⁵⁶ The total trek from France to Quebec (approximately 4850 km) took an average of six to twelve weeks.³⁵⁷ The expeditions of Jacques Cartier and Lord Roberval are in accordance with this finding as Cartier took twelve weeks (May 23rd to August 23rd, 1541) and Roberval took ten weeks (April 16th to late July, 1542) to reach their St. Lawrence Valley site.³⁵⁸

The earliest French and English expeditions heading further south to Virginia and Florida dipped far south to the Canary Islands off the coast of northwest Africa, crossed the Atlantic to the Spanish West Indies and then worked their way north up the coast of the southern United States. This island hopping allowed for stopovers to resupply and followed trusted current and wind patterns, whereas cutting directly across the ocean was less safe and certain. Though Barlowe was incredibly vague about his 1584 route to Virginia, it is clear he went to the Canaries and West Indies, going as far west as Havana before turning northward.³⁵⁹ Grenville and White were far more precise in their recordings of 1585 and 1587, naming most islands specifically. Both expeditions angled north earlier, however, through the many tiny islands north of Hispaniola until they reached the coast of Florida.³⁶⁰ Though the first Jamestown expeditions followed this route, they altered it from 1609 onward, completely bypassing the West Indies and crossing directly west from the Canaries to Bermuda.³⁶¹

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Banks, 71.

³⁵⁸ Cartier, "The Third Voyage, 1541," 251; Roberval, 264-5.

³⁵⁹ Barlowe, "The First Voyage, 1584," 121.

³⁶⁰ Grenville, "The Second Voyage, 1585," 196-200.

³⁶¹ Ian Steele. *The English Atlantic: 1675-1740*, (New York: Oxford University, 1986), 47.

Ian Steele's analysis of the Tobacco Routes from England to Virginia concludes that an 11.5 week journey was average, whereas seven or eight week passages were uncommon and four to five week passages were extremely rare.³⁶² The Roanoke voyages fit within these parameters. The reconnaissance mission of Arthur Barlowe and Philip Amadas took eight weeks (April 27 to July 2, 1584) and the first crossing of Sir Richard Grenville took twelve weeks (April 9 to July 3, 1585).³⁶³ John White's first crossing took twelve weeks (April 26 to July 22, 1587) as well.³⁶⁴

In the early 1560s, French expeditions were able to reach Florida in eight weeks. Jean Ribault, in a daring bid for secrecy, avoided familiar routes and cut directly across the Atlantic Ocean, avoiding any islands.³⁶⁵ He was the first to attempt this route for it was incredibly risky as ships could be becalmed (trapped stagnant) when they strayed from predictable current and wind patterns.³⁶⁶ His colleague, René de Laudonnière, approached Florida via the traditional Canary and Spanish West Indies route, also taking eight weeks – April 22 to June 22, 1564.³⁶⁷

Passage times would remain similar for centuries as distance and weather were unchanging variables. Steele explains, "Technology helped a little, but there were not revolutions in passage time."³⁶⁸ In fact, the Virginia Company expedition of 1607 took a staggering sixteen weeks to reach Chesapeake Bay to plant the Jamestown colony.³⁶⁹ Samuel de Champlain took ten weeks (April 13 to June 3) to reach the mouth of the St.

³⁶² Steele, 50.

³⁶³ Barlowe, 121-2. Grenville, 132; 137.

³⁶⁴ White, "The Voyage of 1587," 196; 200.

³⁶⁵ Laudonnière, "The Voyage 1562," 16.

³⁶⁶ McGrath, 78.

³⁶⁷ Laudonnière, "The Voyage of 1562," 41; 44.

³⁶⁸ Steele, 50.

³⁶⁹ Smith, *The Journals*, xii.

Lawrence in 1608.³⁷⁰ Thus, the successful voyages of the following century faced identical difficulties in transportation and, consequently, communication and resupply. The survival of Jamestown and Quebec as permanent settlements demonstrates that colonies could overcome such setbacks.

Seasonal crossings meant a limited window for departure from either side of the ocean. It was best for ships to leave in the spring to ensure they arrived before autumn brought more dangerous sailing weather. If a supply ship missed sailing season, it generally postponed assisting colonists until the following year. Each year, before supply runs had a chance to even arrive, colonists had to determine if they were remaining in North America another year or if they were going to sail for home while they could. Without communication, colonists could only guess at the best course of action. Laudonnière's colony, though starving, refused to risk returning to Europe with an English fleet in the summer of 1565, having no knowledge of current relations between France and England.³⁷¹ Colonists could not know the status of motherland supply ships. If a colony chose to remain and resupply did not arrive that year, they faced great hardship and possibly death. Cartier (1542), Roberval (1543), the Florida mutineers (1563) and Lane (1586) each decided to abandon their settlements, unwilling to gamble their lives on supply ships that might not arrive. If supplies did eventually arrive they were often perplexed by abandoned sites. Thus, it was often mere chance if supply runs actually connected with colonists.

³⁷⁰ Champlain, Vol 1, 166.

³⁷¹ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1565," 105.

The French expeditions barely managed to haphazardly meet. The Roberval fleet, delayed a year, met the Cartier fleet at Newfoundland, having abandoned their colony.³⁷² Roberval had not kept their rendezvous the summer prior at Newfoundland and Cartier had been forced to proceed to the St. Lawrence Valley alone.³⁷³ A year passed, sailing season returned and Cartier had no way of knowing Roberval's intentions or fate. His narrative states, "Monsieur de Roberval was not yet come, and that hee [Cartier] feared that by occasion of contrary winds and tempests he [Roberval] was driven back againe into France."³⁷⁴ Not willing to suffer another miserable Canadian winter alongside hostile natives, the Cartier group abandoned their settlement much to the displeasure of Roberval when he met them by chance weeks later with fresh men and materials. In Florida, Laudonnière's ships were literally departing just as Ribault's fleet arrived.³⁷⁵ The very day sailing conditions were safe for embarking, Ribault's sails were seen on the horizon. Similarly, despite the Virginia Company's long-term success at Jamestown, John Smith was considering abandoning the site in early 1608 when two supply ships arrived.³⁷⁶

The Roanoke expeditions were not so fortunate. Supply fleets repeatedly failed to connect with colonists, arriving shortly after they had abandoned for England. When ships arrived to find settlements desolate they were uncertain as to the fate of the settlers or how they should proceed. In the summer of 1586, a supply ship arrived at Roanoke Island, narrowly missing Ralph Lane's colony who had unexpectedly returned to England with Sir Francis Drake's passing fleet. An anonymous record reads,

Immediately after the departing of our English Colony out of this paradise of the world, the ship abovementioned sent and set forth at the charges of Sir Walter Raleigh and his

³⁷² Roberval, 264.

³⁷³ Cartier, "The Third Voyage of 1541," 251.

³⁷⁴ Cartier, "The Third Voyage of 1541," 253.

³⁷⁵ Laudonnière, "Voyage of 1565," 108.

³⁷⁶ Smith, *Journals*, 34.

direction, arrived at Hatorask; who after some time spent in seeking our Colony up in the country, and not finding them, returned with all the aforesayd provision into England.³⁷⁷

Two weeks later, Sir Richard Grenville arrived with a large fleet and found neither the supply ship nor the colonists.³⁷⁸ He also searched the region and “not hearing any newes of them, and finding the places which they inhabited desolate” he too returned to England unproductively.³⁷⁹ Though his narrative does not state so, it is believed Grenville captured and tortured an Amerindian for information, determining the fate of the English before making his decision to return home.³⁸⁰

Lacking instructions for such a scenario, Grenville was uncertain how to proceed. He had the men and materials to plant another colony but was uncertain if he should. Compromising, the commander left fifteen men with two years of supplies at Roanoke Island to temporarily hold the English position whilst he returned to England for new instructions.³⁸¹ Forced to act without guidance on very limited information, Grenville unknowingly doomed these men. He likely did not know that Lane’s colony had started a bloody war with the Roanoke people. When John White’s colony arrived in 1587, they found the settlement abandoned again, the missing men unable to communicate their fate. White later heard that they had been attacked and driven from the island by Amerindians and were presumed dead.³⁸²

White’s own colonists disappeared next. When his 1587 colony began poorly, White was forced to return to England with the planting fleet for assistance. To the governor’s dismay, he was unable to return to the island until 1590. Unable to

³⁷⁷ “The Third Voyage Made By a Ship Sent in Year 1586,” *The Principal Navigations*, Richard Hakluyt, ed (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), 163.

³⁷⁸ “The Third Voyage Made By A Ship Sent in the Year 1586,” 163-4.

³⁷⁹ “The Third Voyage Made By A Ship Sent in the Year 1586,” 164

³⁸⁰ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 650.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² “The Third Voyage Made By A Ship Sent in the Year 1586,” 203

communicate with the colony for three years, White could not inform them of the Spanish Armada of 1588 or of the privateers that blocked his first attempt to reach them that same year.³⁸³ Nor could the isolates communicate their progress to him. White, likely learning from the mishaps of 1586 and 1587, had instructed his colony to leave him a message at the site as to their status should their circumstances change. When the governor returned to the settlement in August 1590, he found it abandoned, but a message left as requested. His account is as follows:

... as we entered up the sandy banke upon a tree, in the very browe thereof were curiously carved these faire Romane letters C R O : which letters presently were knew to signify the place, where I should find the planters seated, according to a secret token agreed upon betweene them & me at my last departure from them, which was that in any wayes they should not faile to write or carve on the trees or posts or the dores, the name of the place where they should be seated... 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 crosse + in this forme, but we found no such sign of distresse...³⁸⁴

White next found the full word CROATOAN carved at eye level on a fort wall, confirming his theory that the colonists had relocated to Croatoan Island, home of the friendly Amerindians of that name. Yet stormy weather prevented him from determining their state and he returned to England instead of seeking them out. The fate of these colonists was never determined. Cut off from the motherland for three years, they could only leave a cryptic message and wait for ships that would never come.

Causes of Delay

Organizing colonization fleets and supply runs required time and capital and delays were prevalent. Colonization ventures were not deemed a priority as they were experimental and there were far more profitable uses of ships and sailors at this time such as trade, privateering, whaling and fishing. English ships were typically sent to the West

³⁸³ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 670.

³⁸⁴ White, "Voyage of 1590," 221-2

Indies, Brazil and the Far East, whereas French ships were sent to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.³⁸⁵ North American commodities, such as fish and Amerindian goods, could be tapped without the toil and expense of colonization. No precious metals or Northwest Passage were discovered in order to encourage investment in colonization and competing projects proved safer and more profitable. Other matters, such as the Spanish Armada (1588) and the French Religious Wars (1562-98), were far more pressing and severely hindered the Roanoke and Florida ventures.

The supply fleet John White and Walter Raleigh prepared to set sail for Roanoke in the spring of 1588 under Sir Richard Grenville was commandeered by order of the Privy Council to fight the Spanish Armada.³⁸⁶ England needed every possible ship to defend itself against Spain and few were granted permission to sail for other purposes. Yet the desperation of the stranded colonists was understood and Raleigh was eventually permitted to prepare two small ships with some emergency provisions. In the bedlam that was the wartime sea, however, these ships were attacked, looted and forced to turn back to England.³⁸⁷ Despite efforts, White was unable to sail to Roanoke Island until 1590 – three years later. By this time, the 117 men, women and children left behind in 1587 had disappeared. Whatever their fate, the war with Spain directly prevented the isolates from being rescued in 1588.

Similarly, when Jean Ribault and René de Laudonnière left a small colony in Florida in 1562 whilst they returned to France for supplies, they were shocked to land in the midst of a French civil war between Catholics and Protestants. Laudonnière's narrative states,

³⁸⁵ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 671.

³⁸⁶ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 669.

³⁸⁷ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 670-1.

After our arrival at Dieppe, at our coming home, from our first voyage (which was the twentieth of July 1562) we found the civil war begun, which was in part the cause of why our men were not succored.³⁸⁸

Ribault, realizing France was in no position to help his stranded men, went to England to arrange for resupply there.³⁸⁹ Yet England was soon drawn into the French conflict and Ribault, a foreign Frenchman, was consequently jailed.³⁹⁰ The civil war delayed Laudonnière from returning to Florida until 1564 and Ribault until 1565. Meanwhile, their trapped and starving colonists had mutinied and attempted to return to France in a small ship made crudely from local materials.³⁹¹ In desperation, lost at sea, they resorted to cannibalism.³⁹² The survivors were eventually rescued by an English fleet and Laudonnière would return in 1564 only to find the colonization site abandoned.

Human error naturally also caused delays. Laudonnière accused Ribault of spending fifteen days “roving along the coast of Florida” instead of directly coming to their settlement, Fort Caroline, with supplies and defenses.³⁹³ If this is true, the captain erred grievously. Ribault knew a Spanish fleet was coming to conquer his colony and yet he apparently charted rivers instead of ensuring that he arrived at the fort first.³⁹⁴ Even had Ribault not known of the Spanish attack, he ought to have realized his colonists needed to be resupplied promptly. In fact, Laudonnière’s party was starving and in the process of abandoning the site to return to France.³⁹⁵ Similarly, Walter Raleigh lost interest in his Roanoke colony, literally abandoning the colonists he had planted on the

³⁸⁸ Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1562,” 40-1.

³⁸⁹ McGrath, 88.

³⁹⁰ McGrath, 91.

³⁹¹ Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1562,” 37-8.

³⁹² Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1562,” 39-40.

³⁹³ Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1565,” 123.

³⁹⁴ McGrath, 137.

³⁹⁵ Laudonnière, “The Voyage of 1565,” 108.

island.³⁹⁶ He became distracted by other projects and his personal life.³⁹⁷ Interested in a new land, Guiana, he went on to publish *The Discovery of Guiana* in 1596.³⁹⁸ It was not until 1603 that Raleigh sent ships to investigate the fate of his Roanoke colony, though the results were inconclusive as the colonists were not found.³⁹⁹ The search parties from Jamestown were also unsuccessful.⁴⁰⁰ Raleigh's failure to promptly follow up on White's 1590 report in order to rescue the stranded individuals is most unfortunate. The neighbouring Powhatan of Chesapeake Bay may have actually slaughtered the abandoned colonists in the interim.⁴⁰¹

Other delays were beyond control. An expedition could not set out until the proper sailing weather occurred and ships sometimes waited weeks to depart or were forced to return home if a storm arose. Roberval's narrative describes such a scenario:

The wind served us notably for a time: but within a few days it came quite contrary, which hindered our journey for a long space: For wee were suddenly enforced to turne backe, and to seek [shelter] in Belle Isle, on the coast of [Brittany], where we stayed so long, and had such contrary weather by way, that wee could not reach Newfound lande, untill the seventh of June.⁴⁰²

Carpenter Nicolas Le Challeux recorded that Laudonnère's expedition of 1564 was also delayed by poor sailing conditions.⁴⁰³ France had particularly poor ocean access due to a combination of the westerlies and the Gulf Stream.⁴⁰⁴ Yet ships leaving England could also be severely delayed. The first Jamestown expedition of 1607 was kept within sight of the English coast for six weeks by adverse winds.⁴⁰⁵ Ships returning from the New

³⁹⁶ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 671.

³⁹⁷ Stick, 196.

³⁹⁸ Walter Raleigh. *The Discovery of Guiana*. Boston: Bedford, 2008.

³⁹⁹ Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 355-6.

⁴⁰⁰ Smith, *Journals*, 136.

⁴⁰¹ Stick, 222; Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 362-6.

⁴⁰² Roberval, 264.

⁴⁰³ Le Challeux, 371-2.

⁴⁰⁴ Banks, 68.

⁴⁰⁵ Smith, *Journals*, 5-6.

World were hindered just as often – Laudonnière’s fleet delayed departure for France in 1565 waiting for safe winds.⁴⁰⁶

The eastern coast of Canada could be incredibly foggy, making navigation near impossible as pilots relied on visuals such as the sun, stars and familiar landmarks to negotiate the route. In April 1603 Champlain was delayed by fog, hearing the waves crash against the shore, but unable to approach until there was visibility.⁴⁰⁷ Banks explains, “Captains could either drop anchor and wait until visibility returned or proceed slowly, taking soundings every few minutes and presumably praying as often.”⁴⁰⁸ Icebergs could also be a danger in this region. On the same voyage Champlain wrote,

We met with a very high Mountain of Ice. The morrow after we descried a bank of ice, which continued about eight leagues in length, with an infinite number of smaller pieces of ice, which hindered our passage.⁴⁰⁹

Waiting for fog to lift or seeking shelter from squalls could delay an expedition days or weeks. There was always the threat a ship could be lost at sea altogether. Sir Humphrey Gilbert was killed in a storm while trying to found an English colony at Newfoundland in 1583.⁴¹⁰ The fate of such vessels was often never known as they were unable to notify either side of the ocean of their calamity. John Cabot’s fleet disappeared without a trace in 1498 and historians can only assume it succumbed by one of the many dangers of the Atlantic.⁴¹¹

Attack by pirates or privateers could also prevent a ship from reaching its destination, looting its supplies and harming or capturing its passengers. Governor John

⁴⁰⁶ Laudonnière, “Voyage of 1564,” 107.

⁴⁰⁷ Champlain, Vol 2, 153.

⁴⁰⁸ Banks, 70.

⁴⁰⁹ Champlain, Vol 2, 152.

⁴¹⁰ Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians*, 10.

⁴¹¹ Morison, *The Northern Voyages*, 192.

White, setting out for Roanoke Island with supplies in 1588, learned this firsthand. White wrote:

... it was in vaine to seeke by flight, but rather by fight to helpe ourselves. The same day about 2 o'clock in the afternoone they were come with us. We hayled them, but they would not answe... fitting their sailes to clappe us aboard... Being by this time grappled and aboard each other the fight continued without ceasing for one houre and a halfe. In which fight were hurt & slaine on both sides 23 of the chiefest men, having most of them 6 or 8 wounds... Our Master and mate were deadly wounded... I myself was wounded twice in the head, once with a sword, another time with a pike, and hurt also in the buttoke with a shot...⁴¹²

The attackers were victorious, leaving no supplies for the Roanoke colony. In fact, there was scarcely enough food to survive a defeated return to England: "Being thus hurt and spoiled they robbed us of all our victuals, powder, weapons and provisions, saving a small quantity of biscuit to serve us scarce for England."⁴¹³ According to the correspondence of an anonymous French colonist, the Laudonnière expedition narrowly evaded attack while crossing to Florida in 1564.⁴¹⁴ Such unpredictable disruptions made colony planting all the more precarious.

Conclusion

The inability to transport men, materials and information across the Atlantic with any speed or frequency was a serious problem. The trek from England and France to North America was seasonal and often took several months. Realistically, colonists could expect one shipment per year. Delays were typical and shrunk the already limited window ships had to make an ocean crossing. While some delays, such as weather and enemy attack, were beyond control, other delays were due to organizational difficulties

⁴¹² White, John. "Account of the attempted Virginia voyage of 1588," *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*. Volume 3. David Quinn, ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 324.

⁴¹³ White, "Voyage of 1588," 324.

⁴¹⁴ "Copy of a Letter Coming from Florida..." *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline*. Charles Bennett, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 66.

and errors. It took time to put together colonization fleets and occasionally – as with Roberval in 1542 – the safe sailing weather was missed and the mission put on hold until the following year.

Delays and changes in circumstance could not be communicated to countrymen across the ocean and project leaders in Europe and North America had to make decisions independently with minimal information. The shipping of supplies was a haphazard process and repeatedly supply ships and colonists did not connect. French reinforcements barely managed to meet with abandoning colonists in June 1542 and September 1565. English ships narrowly missed Roanoke colonists, who unexpectedly returned to England with Sir Francis Drake, thus shipments crossed and re-crossed the ocean needlessly. Colonists left on the island in 1586 and 1587, isolated and vulnerable, disappeared altogether, unable to request assistance or communicate their circumstances. Thus, the inability to exchange information hindered proper planning and decision making.

Historians such as David Stick lament the failure of supply ships and colonists to connect and argue that such disorganization and poor decision making made all the difference.⁴¹⁵ Yet the successful colonies of the seventeenth century faced similar setbacks. These massive ocean crossings would remain a difficulty for centuries as the distance, passage times and weather did not improve. The studies of Kenneth Banks and Ian Steele confirm that reaching Canada and Virginia was virtually no easier in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than it had been in the sixteenth century. Long term successes such as Jamestown and Quebec would send wave after wave of reinforcements over a long period of time, encouraged by the profits of the fur and tobacco trades, whereas sixteenth century colonization projects were abandoned after a mere two trials

⁴¹⁵ Stick, 247-8.

each. Two costly learning experiences were enough to deter organizers and investors from sending further expeditions, conveying that North America offered no benefits that justified colonization. Thus, the difficulties of transportation and communication did not prevent the French and English from colonizing these territories. Such problems could be worked around if enough incentive existed to justify such effort and expense.

CONCLUSION

A comparison of French and English expedition narratives from the sixteenth century reveals a pattern of difficulties that hindered colonization. It is fortunate that the accounts of leaders from all three ventures – Canada, Virginia and Florida – were recognized as significant by contemporaries and preserved. Historians have a fairly clear understanding of the events that unfolded, augmented by additional reports, records and correspondence. The only exceptions are the unfinished narratives of Roberval-Cartier which are supplemented by recent archeological findings at the Quebec City site.

Though the surviving narratives are valuable, they must be interpreted with care as the vantage point from which they are written poses a challenge. Written from the perspective of party leadership, these accounts are not necessarily a proper representation of the experiences of soldiers, colonists or indigenous people. Laudonnière's account of the mutineers' account of Captain Albert's tyranny must be acknowledged as a problematic source. European interpretations of Amerindian intentions or actions must also be scrutinized with the utmost caution, particularly in the case of distrustful men such as Cartier and fiery men such as Lane. Moreover, in some instances the assertions of leaders cannot be corroborated by other documents and archeological findings. Naturally Roberval would present himself as a just and reasonable ruler, though this opinion may not have been shared by all of his party. In short, one must acknowledge the limitations of the sources and factor them into their analysis, making the most of the surviving material.

Academic writings on these ventures have traditionally been chronological rundowns of the events which follow the original narratives closely. Emphasis is placed on the mistakes and difficulties that occurred in an effort to determine why these attempts specifically failed and if failure was avoidable. There is a sense in the work of historians such as Samuel Morison, David Stick and John McGrath that had circumstances been different these expeditions may have actually succeeded. Missed opportunities, needless errors and cruel twists of fate are often lamented. McGrath wonders: What if the French fleet at Florida was not destroyed by hurricane? What if Ribault had gone directly to Fort Caroline to prepare for battle? Similarly, Stick writes of the Roanoke expeditions: "How close they came! How often decisions of seemingly little consequence at the time changed the course of history!"⁴¹⁶ His concluding thoughts on the venture contain many questions such as: "How could Ralph Lane have failed to anticipate the consequences of his decision to attack Dasamonquepeuc, under pretense of friendship, and murder the weroance [Chief Pemisapan]?"⁴¹⁷ There is a temptation to place blame on individuals and make much of very specific decisions and actions. Many historians, including L.B. Creighton, blame Roberval for the failure of the Canada project as his fleet was a full year behind schedule. Yet one could blame Cartier for his defection at Newfoundland in June 1542. If Roberval and Cartier had collaborated in Canada would they have succeeded? Such considerations are fruitless as a distinct lack of incentive made the Canada project unviable in the sixteenth century. There is a tendency in the historiography of these ventures to use hindsight and place too much emphasis on the supposed errors of specific individuals.

⁴¹⁶ Stick, 247.

⁴¹⁷ Stick, 248.

Too much weight is also given to the difficulties expedition parties faced in colonization. North America definitely posed many challenges that could overwhelm any individual expedition. It was an experimental process and issues of transportation, communication, environment, adaptation, internal conflict and Amerindian relations made it costly and ongoing. Yet these were standard challenges for colonization projects in the Americas that were faced by successful and unsuccessful settlements alike. Quebec, Port Royal, Jamestown, Hispaniola, New Spain and many other permanent colonies faced these exact same difficulties during their formative years, proving such setbacks could be overcome with time and effort. Colonization had to be achieved gradually in phases with wave after wave of men and materials sent in experimentation. Obstacles had to be worked through steadily over time. These challenges may have ended individual phases and defeated specific expeditions, but they were not primarily responsible for France and England halting their sixteenth century colonization projects altogether.

The harsh foreign environment posed a wide variety of problems and killed many colonists as Europeans struggled to adapt. Though reconnaissance missions were sent and colony planners tried to pick proper sites with an abundance of food and friendly Amerindians, the first impressions of scouts were misleading and colonists faced many of the perils they had hoped to avoid. Though Europeans carved out a place for themselves and strove to make it as European as possible, the natural environment proved extremely difficult to survive. As rations dwindled and Amerindian assistance slowed, starvation set in for all three colonies. Malnutrition could lead to scurvy and contaminated food and water could lead to other illnesses and dehydration. Adverse weather and extreme

temperatures hindered European activities and caused frostbite, hypothermia, heatstroke and other ailments. Tree ring samples indicate Virginia experienced severe drought during the Roanoke and Jamestown years, compromising the cultivation of fruits, vegetables and cereal crops for settlers and Amerindians alike. This dryness sparked wild fires and diminished the availability of fresh water. Natural obstacles of the landscape hindered accessibility to the chosen site and blocked inland exploration. Having expected supplies from home and trade with Amerindians, many colonists were not prepared for the struggle it was to find sustenance in the wilderness. Attaining self-sufficiency in North America was not an overnight process and it took time to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to hunt, fish and forage – time the harsh new environment often did not allow. The newcomers had to be willing to work very hard in order to survive and yet there is evidence of unhelpful and unproductive attitudes amongst some of the colonists.

Under such miserable circumstances insubordination was prevalent and mutiny a considerable danger. Isolated without assistance or oversight, the laws of Europe could be set aside with few witnesses. Cartier illegally deserted Roberval at Newfoundland and Captain Albert was chased down and killed by his own men. Malcontents in Laudonnière's party repeatedly tried to assassinate him before finally dragging him from his bed, imprisoning him for fifteen days and then deserting the colony to illegally attack Spanish territory.

Leaders, however, were just as likely to create disruptive conflict. Rivalry was a natural product of these ventures as commanders were eager to take credit for glories and shift blame to evade punishment for disappointments. The desire for wealth, power and fame, however, were only one aspect of the competitive attitudes that formed. The

Roanoke voyages demonstrate sincere disagreement and clashes of personality. The fiery Sir Richard Grenville appears to have been at odds with most of his fellow party leaders and the power struggle between White and Fernandes saw the colony of 1587 marooned at the dangerous Roanoke Island against orders. Overall, conflict during such precarious expeditions is understandable as individuals would be very combative about the stressful life and death decisions that were constantly made. Though internal dissension has received less historical scrutiny it was as constant a challenge as any other.

Conflict also arose with indigenous peoples. Though colonists understood the necessity of peaceful cooperation and early interactions were very promising, relations quickly broke down and violence often followed. Most aboriginal communities initially welcomed French and English reconnaissance missions into their territories in the hopes of establishing beneficial alliances for trade and war. Yet as Europeans appropriated land and resources for permanent settlement, natives quickly recognized the many difficulties this intrusion presented and that any advantages were outweighed by serious disadvantages. Expedition leaders considered themselves patient and reasonable and did not acknowledge the imposition they were to existing communities. Their arrival disrupted aboriginal life and their incessant demands for food drained native reserves.

Settlers were frightened of Amerindians and refused to take the risks necessary to forge trust, consistently failing to reciprocate native acts of good will. Constantly expecting to be attacked, they refused to be vulnerable in aboriginal company and their fortifications, weapons and armor would have clearly communicated distrust, if not outright aggression. Europeans were quick to accuse aboriginals of deceit, whilst being fairly deceptive themselves. Colonists likely did not realize Amerindians were as

intelligent or perceptive as they were. In many cases, the air of distrust and disrespect settlers conducted themselves with was likely inadvertent as they did not grasp that aboriginals were their equals and as capable of interpreting and understanding as Europeans were. Planters also do not seem to have allowed for the miscommunications and misunderstandings that surely occurred due to language barriers and cultural differences. They repeatedly failed to show the level of flexibility, forgiveness and understanding necessary for bridging such a divide. When Amerindians began refusing to cooperate, starving colonists became desperate and resorted to force. Bullying, intimidation and kidnapping ensued and often escalated to armed conflict and bloodshed.

All these challenges were exacerbated by the inability to cross the vast Atlantic with any speed or frequency. Crossings were seasonal, took months and were typically delayed. Colonists could realistically expect one shipment of men and materials per year and this was never guaranteed. Roberval's reinforcements did not arrive to assist Cartier's party in 1542 as expected and it took three full years for aid to seek out the stranded Roanoke colonists. Delays were common due to weather, organizational difficulties, political events as well as human error. Storms, fog, ice and other natural occurrences could hold up expeditions unpredictably for an undeterminable amount of time. Organizers could have difficulty putting together supply fleets due to lack of investment or lack of recruits as there were many safer and more profitable ventures available and experimental colonization schemes were not considered a priority. Most French and English ships and sailors were engaged in fishing, privateering, whaling and trade instead. National emergencies, such as warfare, could shift priorities completely and see ports locked down, ships commandeered and soldiers reassigned. The French Wars of

Religion (1562-98) and The Spanish Armada (1588) prevented resupply from reaching Florida and Roanoke respectively. Completely isolated, colonists were vulnerable and dependent on the arrival of ships that could not be predicted and was never guaranteed.

This isolation also meant a lack of communication. Organizers could not inform settlers of delays or send information and instructions in a timely, effective manner. Similarly, colonists could not update their superiors on their progress or inform them of changing circumstances or emergencies. Each side of the Atlantic had to make decisions independently using minimal, outdated information about the other side. This hindered planning and meant organizers and colonists could know if their actions were appropriate. Colonists had a limited window in which to return home each year and had to decide if they were willing to gamble their lives on the arrival of supply ships. In some instances, supply ships arriving late found settlements abandoned, having crossed the Atlantic futilely. In the St. Lawrence Valley, Cartier and Roberval abandoned their sites instead of resupplying. Captain Albert's stranded colonists, having given up on ships arriving, built a makeshift craft using local materials such as moss and their own shirts in order to sail back to France. Lane's colony, on the brink of destruction, escaped with Sir Francis Drake's passing fleet. When supply ships reached abandoned sites they were confused and uncertain how to proceed as it was difficult for them to discern what had happened to their countrymen. Grenville arrived shortly after Lane's abandonment in 1586 lacking instructions for such a dilemma and unaware of Lane's war with the Roanoke. Lacking communication, he inadvertently doomed fifteen men by leaving them to hold England's position. The inability to exchange information hindered proper planning and decision making, resulting in many inappropriate actions.

Historians are quick to blame these pioneers for their disorganization and seemingly obvious mistakes, yet successful colonies struggled against these exact same difficulties. France and England's subsequent North American colonization projects at Jamestown and Quebec would overcome these setbacks and result in permanent, viable colonies. The distance, the weather and the environment did not change and good Amerindian relations were no easier to forge. The journals of Jamestown leader, John Smith, convey just as much starvation, dehydration, frostbite, heatstroke and disease as any sixteenth century account. The Jamestown death toll during the first summer of 1607 was astronomical – fifty percent by September. The first trek from England to Chesapeake Bay had taken four months and shipments were few and far between. Storms, flooding, contaminated food and water, dangerous animals and other hazards disheartened many colonists and within a few months they mutinied and imprisoned their first president, Edward Wingfield. His replacement, John Ratcliffe, was overthrown in 1608 and Smith himself was removed from presidency in 1609. A bitter rivalry formed between Smith and Ratcliffe and the former was sentenced to death twice during his two years in Virginia, though he evaded punishment on both occasions. Relations with the local Powhatan people were hostile and 18 settlers were killed by aboriginal snipers before the fort was even completed.

Samuel de Champlain's narratives reveal similar difficulties. Champlain followed the Roberval-Cartier route to the St. Lawrence Valley, experiencing similar passage times of approximately ten weeks. Like his predecessors, he encountered dangers such as storms, fog and icebergs before reaching Newfoundland. Slowly working his way down the treacherous St. Lawrence River, avoiding the many natural obstacles, Champlain too

settled at present-day Quebec City. Resupply was difficult as the harbour was frozen for six months of the year. A short growing season with harsh frosts deterred the cultivation of crops and freezing temperatures, deep snow, icy waters and malnutrition made winter a nightmare. Like Cartier in 1535-6 and Roberval in 1542-3, Champlain witnessed the ravaging effects of scurvy. The French colonies of Ile Sainte Croix, Port Royal and Quebec experienced death tolls of 44 percent, 27 percent and 71 percent respectively. Amerindian relations were arguably better, though Champlain demonstrated a similar distrustfulness and sense of superiority. Furthermore, while he maintained a relationship with the Algonquin, he made war on the Iroquois. He also did not always get what he wanted from his aboriginal allies – for instance, he was never guided to Hudson Bay as he had deeply hoped.

Comparing the narratives of successful and unsuccessful colonies demonstrates that such difficulties were standard of colonization and could be overcome with time and effort. Establishing permanent settlements was a process of trial and error that had to be worked towards in phases. While difficulties could end a specific phase, they were not the reason nations abandoned their overall colonization projects. If a colony proved rewarding, resources were committed to holding or reclaiming the position.

Thus, the real issue was incentive. The ventures of the sixteenth century did not show the necessary potential in order to justify battling through such difficulties or angering rival nations. Colonists did not discover precious metals that required mining or profitable regions or routes to explore from outposts. These early sites also did not have the proper ocean access to act as military or privateering bases. The only viable resources discovered in North America at this time could be acquired more safely and profitably by

visiting fishermen. A contemporary English observer, Henry Talbot, was correct in his predication that a lack of profit would end sixteenth century colonization in North America.⁴¹⁸ Why commit ships, men and materials to holding a space that appeared to offer no worthwhile return?

Furthermore, one cannot blame specific mistakes and difficulties for the abandonment of these projects. Nations voluntarily decided to stop striving to hold these territories. Disappointed by the poor results Cartier and Roberval produced in the St. Lawrence Valley, it was deemed pointless to continue working in that region. France turned its attention to Brazil in the 1550s and Florida in the 1560s. Florida proved equally unviable. To blame the loss of Florida on a circumstantial military defeat overlooks the fact that the French opted not to reclaim the territory when they had the opportunity. In 1567, a French fleet under Dominique de Gourgues destroyed the three Spanish forts that held Florida, slaughtering Spanish colonists. Yet the expedition chose not to remain and France chose not to follow up on the victory while the territory was still available. Nevertheless, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, leader of Spanish Florida, was concerned about a French return to the region for some time afterwards. Florida had not demonstrated the necessary incentives to justify further conflict with Spain. Like Canada, it was abandoned and considered unviable. Lastly, after the Spanish Armada, Walter Raleigh lost interest in the fruitless Roanoke venture and turned his attention to other projects such as the exploration of Guiana. Colonizing these North American regions was an untried process and all three ventures were abandoned after two attempts confirmed they were not worth the effort or political ramifications.

⁴¹⁸ Henry Talbot, "Henry Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury," *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*. Volume 3. David Quinn, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1979.

These ventures did not stop because it was too difficult, but rather because it was not sensible to continue. The Spanish had discovered gold and silver in the southern territories that justified colonization. In the seventeenth century, the development of the fur and tobacco trades would provide motivation to begin colonization efforts anew. These markets would prove profitable enough to encourage French and English colonists to once again attempt to live in North America all year. The missing incentive was discovered and Europeans would deem it worthwhile to work through the North American challenges until permanent settlement was achieved.

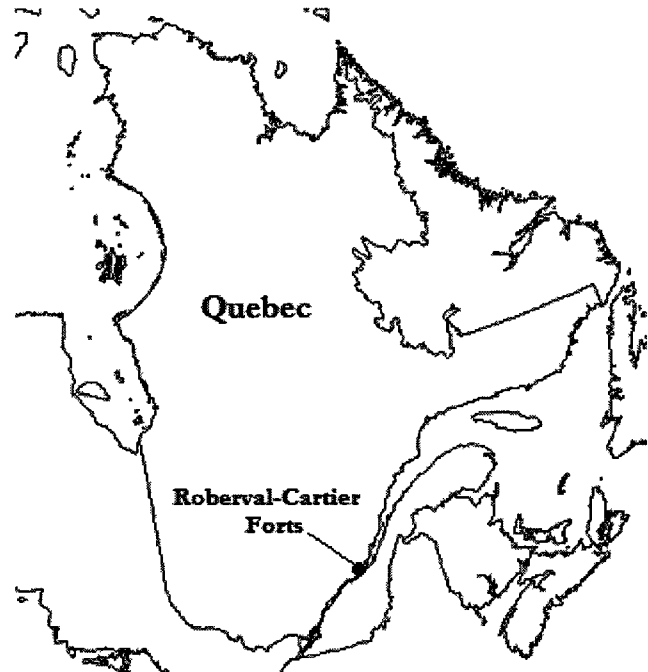
APPENDIX A

Expeditions, Leaders and Colony Sites

French:

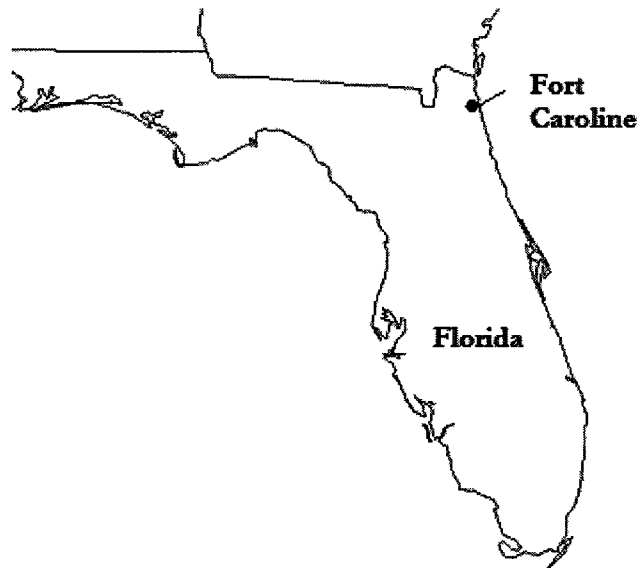
St. Lawrence Valley (1541-3)

- Jacques Cartier
- Lord Roberval



Florida (1562-5)

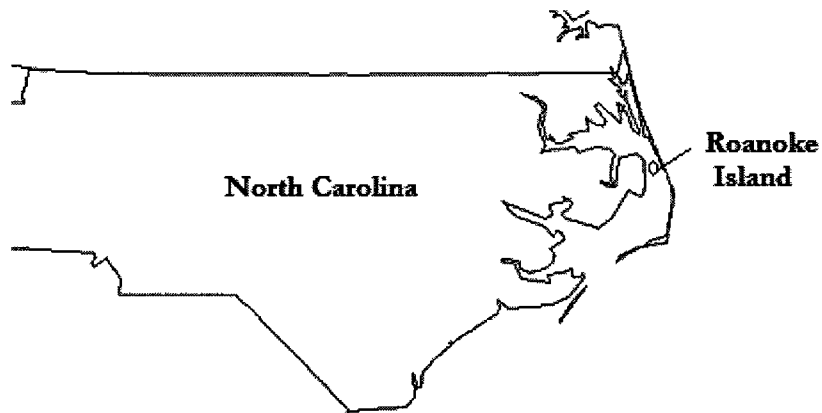
- Jean Ribault
- René de Laudonnière
- Captain Albert



English:

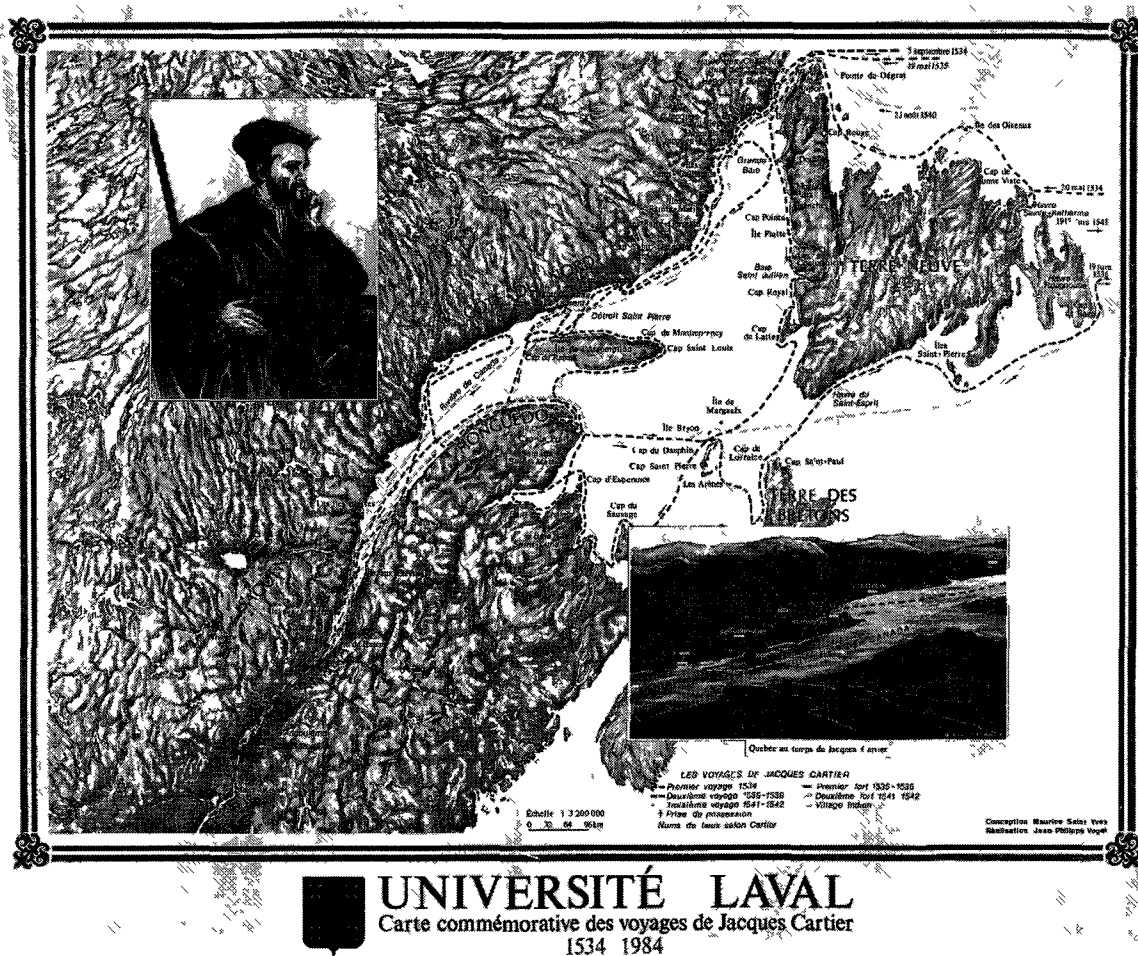
Roanoke Island (1585-7)

- Sir Richard Grenville
- Ralph Lane
- John White
- Simon Fernandes



APPENDIX B

The Explorations of Jacques Cartier 1534-41



Source: Université Laval. Maurice Saint-Yves et Jean Philippe Vogel. "Carte commémorative des voyages de Jacques Cartier," 1534-1984, Library and Archives Canada, H3/1100/1534-1984/1, NMC 53845.

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Library and Archives Canada, Jean-François de la Rocque de Roberval.fonds, R6247-0-2-F, volume 1, 1540-1564, un reçu de solde de lieutenant signé par Roberval, 23 janvier 1540.

Université Laval. Maurice Saint-Yves et Jean Philippe Vogel. "Carte commémorative des voyages de Jacques Cartier," scale 1:3,200,000, Quebec City (Quebec), 1534-1984, 1 map, black and white, 41 cm x 51 cm, Library and Archives Canada, reference number H3/1100/1534-1984/1, NMC 53845.

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