

Early English Settlements

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, you read about eight European explorers who claimed land in the Americas for their own countries. In this chapter, you will learn about three groups that came to America from England. These people made the dangerous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in order to create small communities, or **settlements**. You will learn about the challenges and hardships they faced.

The first English settlement was at **Roanoke**. Roanoke is an island off the coast of North Carolina. No one knows what happened to the people who settled there. That is why today Roanoke is called the “lost colony.”

Shortly after Roanoke, 105 Englishmen arrived in present-day Virginia. They hoped to make money by finding gold and other natural riches. This group started a settlement they called **Jamestown**. Despite many hardships, Jamestown became the first successful English settlement in America.

A few years after Jamestown was settled, 102 Englishmen arrived in the area known now as New England. They built a town called **Plymouth** in present-day Massachusetts. Most of these people left England seeking freedom of religion. They became known as Pilgrims. (Pilgrims are people who go on a religious journey.)

Look at the three English settlers to the right. As you read this chapter, think about the hardships they faced. Why did some settlements in this strange new world survive while others did not?



John Gadsby Chapman, *Good Times in the New World (The Hope of Jamestown)*, 1941. Oil on panel, 7 7/8" H x 11 3/8" W. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. The Paul Mellon Collection. © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



Why do you think this man has come to the New World?



What is this man doing?



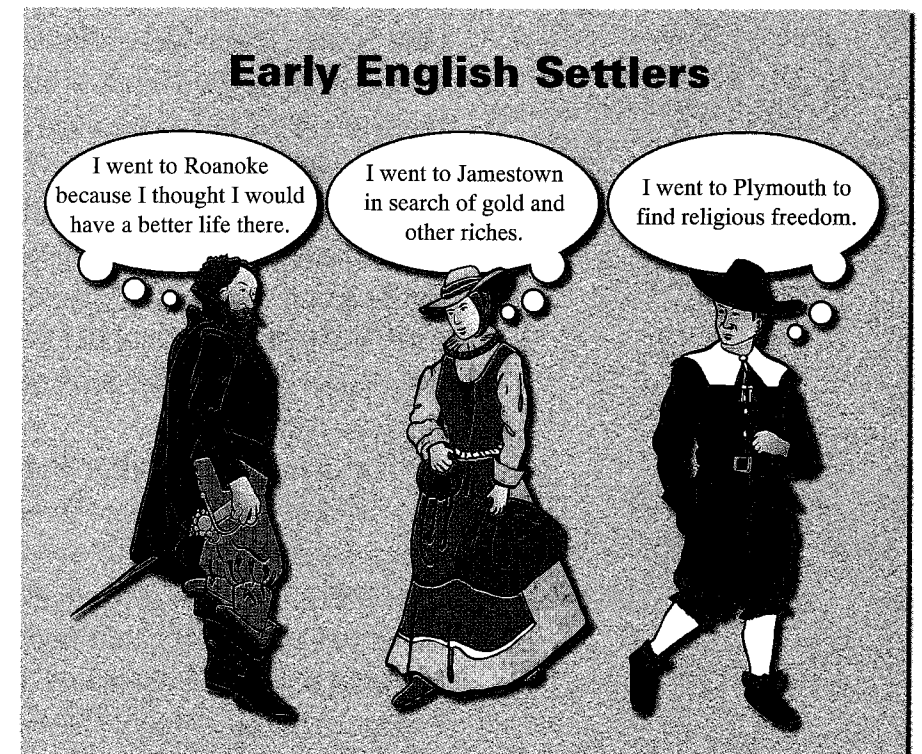
How do you think these Native Americans feel about the new visitors to their country?

Early English Settlers

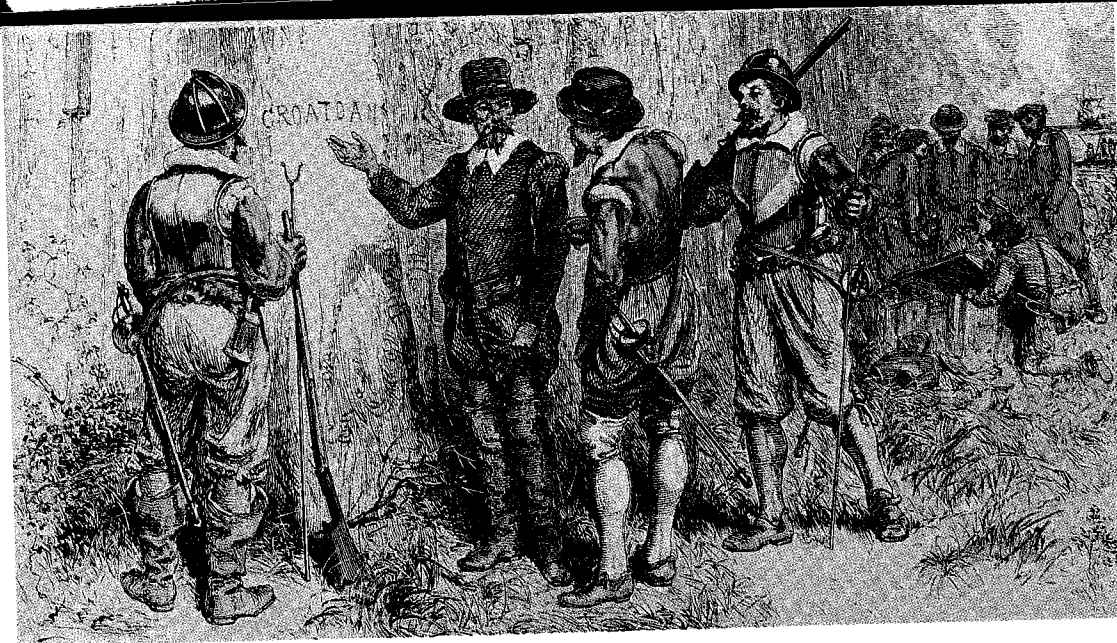
I went to Roanoke because I thought I would have a better life there.

I went to Jamestown in search of gold and other riches.

I went to Plymouth to find religious freedom.



The only clue about what happened to the settlers at Roanoke was the word CROATOAN carved into a gatepost.



6.2 The Lost Settlement of Roanoke

In the 1500s, Spain was one of the world's most powerful nations. Spanish ships ruled the ocean and brought gold and silver from Spain's colonies in the Americas.

In England, Sir Walter Raleigh believed that colonies in North America could make his country richer and more powerful, too. In 1584, he sent two ships to explore the coast of North America.

The ships landed on an island near present-day North Carolina. The sailors named the island Roanoke after the Native Americans who lived there, the Roanokes. When they returned to England, they told Raleigh that the island had fish, animals, fruits and vegetables, and friendly people.

The next year, Raleigh sent a group of men to start a colony. Few of the settlers were farmers. Supplies ran short because they were unable to raise food. When fighting broke out between the English and the Roanokes, the settlers gave up and returned to England.

In 1587, Raleigh sent about 115 new settlers to Roanoke, including farmers and skilled workers. The settlers realized that the Roanokes would not give them food. So, they sent Captain John White back to England for supplies. Unfortunately, England was fighting a war with Spain, and White's ships could not leave England again.

Three years later, White finally returned to Roanoke. There was no sign of the settlers. Even their houses were gone. The letters CROATOAN were carved on the gatepost of a ruined fort. White thought that the settlers had moved to the island of Croatoan. Before he could find out, the weather turned bad, and he could not search the area. No one has ever discovered what happened to the colony.

6.3 Jamestown Colony

In 1606, King James gave permission to a group of wealthy men to start a colony in North America. The group sent settlers to Virginia, hoping to make money from the colony.

In April 1607, 105 settlers arrived in Virginia. Most of them hoped to become wealthy by finding natural riches like gold. They picked a spot near a wide river and built a settlement. In honor of King James, they called it *Jamestown*.

Unfortunately, the settlers built Jamestown on a marsh. A marsh is a low area of wet land that is sometimes unhealthy for people. The water around Jamestown was dirty and salty. The land was not good for farming. And mosquitoes carried a deadly disease, malaria.

Within eight months, disease killed most of the settlers. By January 1608, only 38 of them were still alive.

In late 1607, one of the settlers, Captain John Smith, was captured by some Native Americans. They took Smith to their chief, a man named Powhatan (pow-uh-TAN). Powhatan ordered Smith to kneel and lay his head between two stones. Several men raised their clubs in the air. Smith believed that he was about to be killed.

At that moment, Powhatan's young daughter, Pocahontas, laid her head on Smith's. Smith believed that she saved his life. Historians, though, think that Smith may have misunderstood a Native American ceremony.

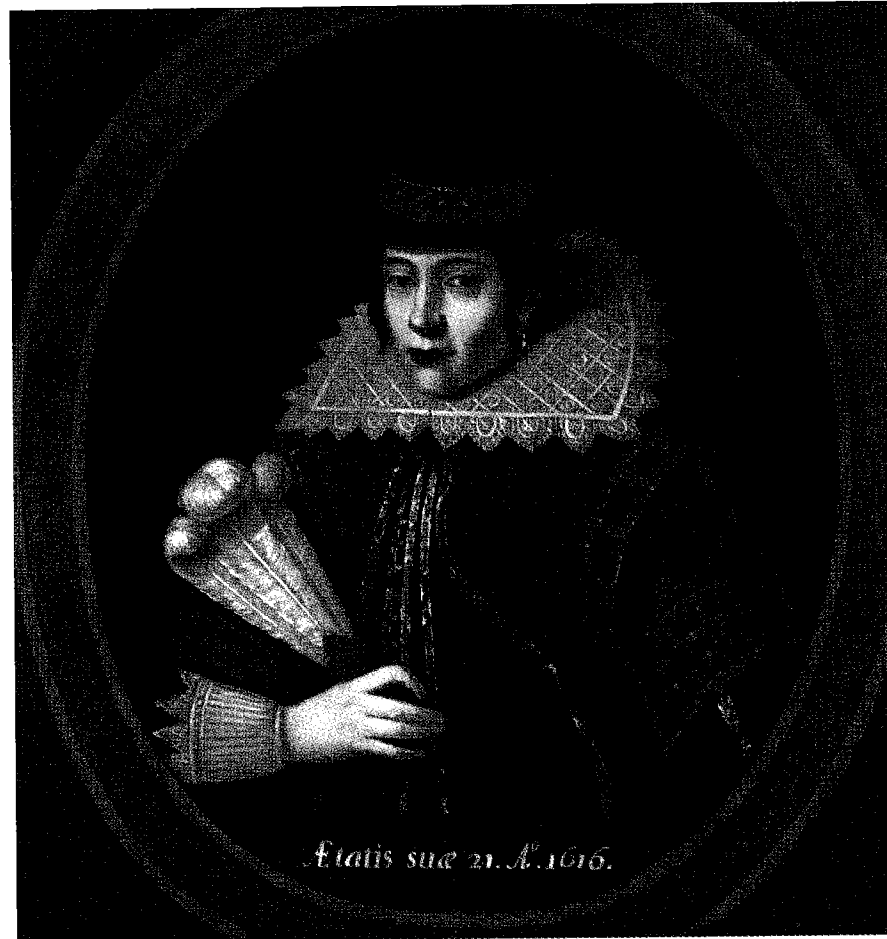
Later, Pocahontas visited Jamestown several times, bringing food to the settlers. Powhatan's people also taught the settlers to hunt, plant crops, and fish.

Meanwhile, more settlers kept arriving from England. In 1608, John Smith was elected president of the colony. Many of the settlers were "gentlemen" who were used to having servants do all the work. Smith knew that the settlement needed everyone's help in order to survive. He said firmly that any man who would not work would not eat. Smith's leadership helped to save the colony. That winter, only 18 **colonists** died.



In order to survive, the early settlers at Jamestown quickly learned that everyone had to work, even "gentlemen" who were used to having servants.

colonists: people who settle in colonies



Pocahontas is the Native American woman who helped the Jamestown settlers survive. Pocahontas eventually traveled to England, where she met King James. She is shown in this portrait dressed as an Englishwoman.

tobacco: a plant whose leaves are dried and turned into material for smoking, sniffing, or chewing

The next year, Smith returned to England after being badly burned by an explosion of gunpowder. The colonists had lost a strong leader, and Powhatan was no longer helping them. The winter of 1609–1610 was known as the “Starving Time.” Many settlers had to eat horses and dogs. Hundreds of them died. Only about 60 settlers survived.

The Jamestown settlers never found any gold. They needed a way to support their colony in order to stay in America. Then, a man named John Rolfe found a way to grow a sweet-tasting kind of **tobacco**. People in England loved the new Virginia tobacco. Now the settlers had

something that they could trade for money and supplies. Tobacco became Virginia’s “gold.”

By 1619, Jamestown was growing. Each settler was given 50 acres of land to farm. A ship brought about 200 women to Virginia so that settlers could marry and raise families. That year, settlers also elected representatives to make laws for the colony. They called this group the *House of Burgesses*. (*Burgesses* was an English word for elected representatives.) Only wealthy men could be elected to this group. Even so, Virginia now had a more democratic government than England.

Meanwhile, Powhatan’s people worried about so many settlers coming to their land. In 1614, John Rolfe married Pocahontas, and for a time the settlers and Native Americans were at peace. Pocahontas even went to England and met King James. But in 1617, she became ill and died before she could return home.

Soon after, Powhatan died, and his brother became chief. In 1622, the new chief and his followers attacked Jamestown and killed 347 colonists. But Jamestown survived and became the first successful English settlement in North America.

6.4 The Settlement of Plymouth

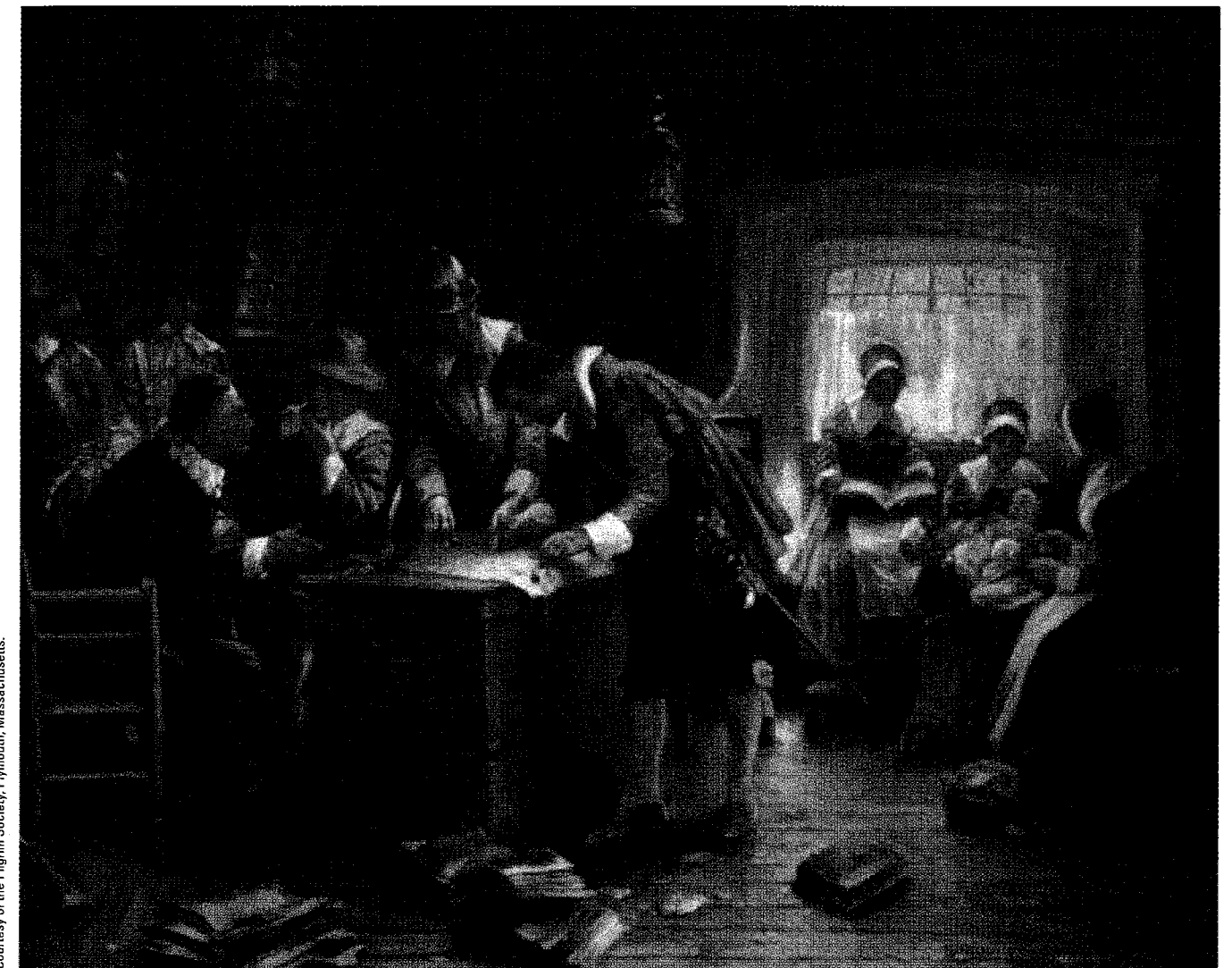
The third English settlement in North America was started by people who were looking for religious freedom.

King James said that everyone in England had to belong to the Church of England. Some people refused. Among them were people called *Separatists*. The Separatists wanted to have a separate, or different, church.

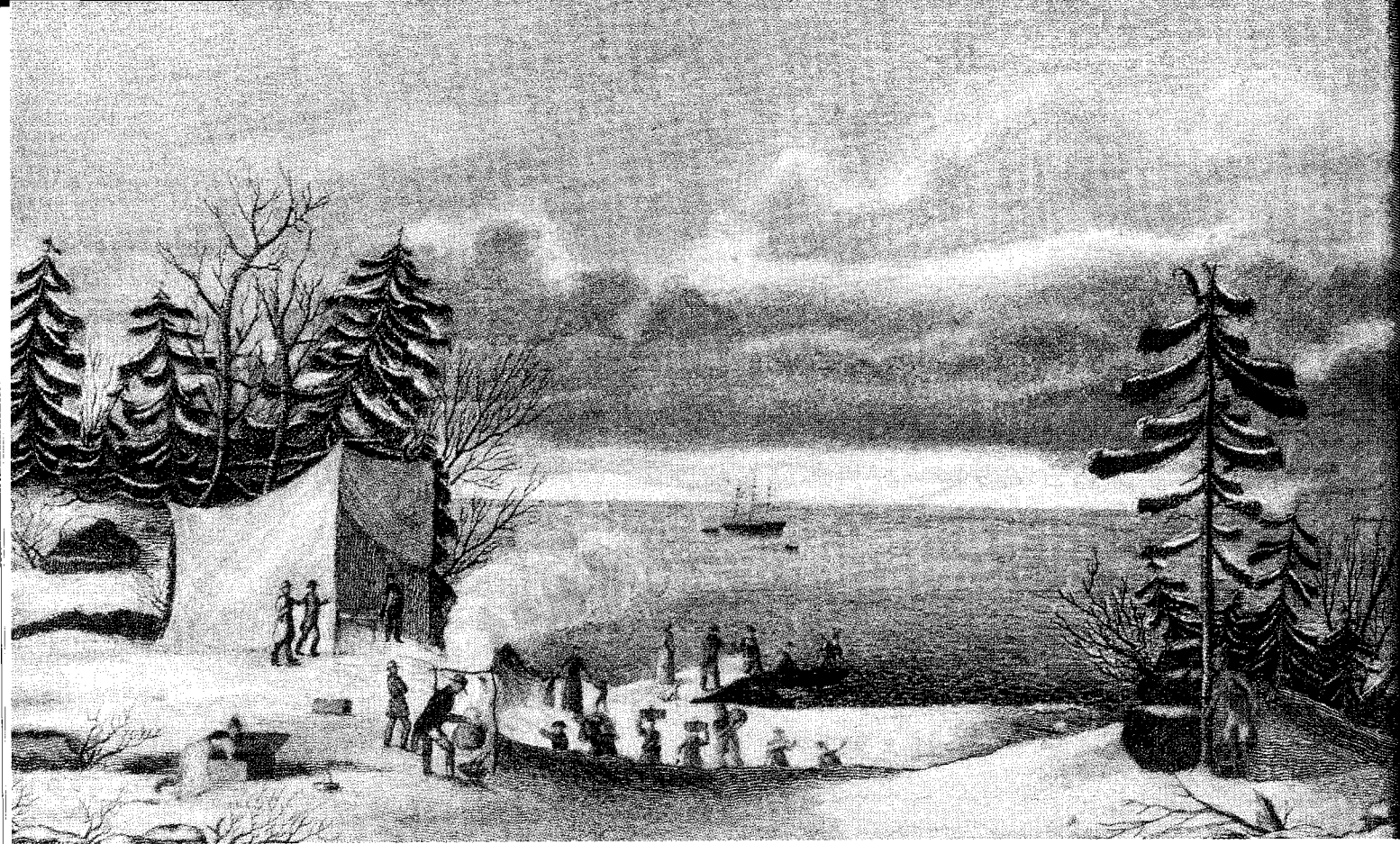
The Separatists decided to move to a place where they could be free to have their own religion. In time, they came to be known as the Pilgrims.

In September 1620, the Pilgrims sailed from England on a ship called the *Mayflower*. After more than two months at sea, they landed on the tip of Cape Cod in what is now Massachusetts. Before going ashore, the Pilgrims drew up a plan of government to help them live together peacefully. Most of the men signed the agreement, which is known as the Mayflower

Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, they signed the Mayflower Compact. This agreement described the way the Pilgrims planned to govern themselves in the New World.



Courtesy of the Pilgrim Society, Plymouth, Massachusetts.



The Pilgrims, searching for a place where they could practice their religion, landed at Plymouth in winter. Almost half of the new settlers died during this first, terrible season.

Compact. (*Compact* means “agreement.”) Then they elected a governor.

After exploring the area, the Pilgrims decided to sail the *Mayflower* across the bay and land at a place they named Plymouth. In late December, they started building houses and a meeting hall, called the *Common House*.

The first winter was very hard. The Pilgrims had landed too late in the year to plant crops. The climate was cold and harsh. Nearly half of the 102 Pilgrims died before spring. Only six or seven of them were strong enough to help care for the others.

In March 1621, a Native American named Squanto from the nearby Wampanoags (wam-puh-NO-ags) visited the Pilgrims. Sailors had taken Squanto to England, where he learned English. Squanto stayed with the Pilgrims and taught them how to plant corn, catch fish, and get sweet syrup from maple trees. The Pilgrims were so grateful that they thought Squanto had been sent by God.

Squanto also told the Pilgrims about the many Native Americans who had died from a disease that they caught from English and French fishermen. Squanto’s entire tribe had died while he was overseas in England.

Another Native American who visited the Pilgrims was Massasoit (MAS-uh-soit), the chief of the Wampanoag people. Squanto helped to arrange a peace treaty, or agreement, between Massasoit and the Pilgrims. The Wampanoags and the Pilgrims promised not to attack each other. They also said that they would help protect each other against attacks by other Native Americans.

The Pilgrims’ corn ripened during the summer. In the fall, they decided to celebrate the harvest (the food they collected from the plants they had grown). They invited Massasoit to come to a feast of thanksgiving. The Wampanoags brought deer to cook and eat. The Pilgrims had goose, wild turkey, lobster, and corn bread. The feast of thanksgiving lasted three days. Today, Americans still celebrate Thanksgiving Day.

In 1621, William Bradford was elected governor of the colony. He served as governor for more than 30 years.

In the next few years, ships brought more and more settlers to Plymouth. In time, other groups would join the Pilgrims in the area we now call New England.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the first English settlements in North America. You used three figures of early English settlers to think about the problems of these settlers and why some settlements survived while others did not.

The early settlers faced many challenges and hardships. One settlement, on the island of Roanoke, disappeared. A second settlement, Jamestown, survived only after many difficult times. Settlers often did not have enough food, and they became sick from unhealthy surroundings. At times, local Native Americans helped them. At other times, the settlers and Native Americans fought with each other.

While earlier settlers came to America looking for riches, the Pilgrims were looking for religious freedom. Their settlement at Plymouth survived with the help of Native Americans.

These early settlements were the start of 13 English colonies in North America. Why did more people keep coming to America? Who were they, and where did they settle? You will find out in the next chapter.

