



**Roanoke Island** - Researchers believe they may be able to use DNA to uncover the fate of the Lost Colony, which vanished shortly after more than 100 people settled on Roanoke Island in 1587.

Using genealogy, deeds and historical narratives, researchers have compiled 168 surnames that could be connected to settlers in what is considered the first attempt by the English to colonize the New World. The team will try to trace the roots of individuals related to the colonists, to the area's 16th century American Indians or to both.

"The Lost Colony story is the biggest unsolved mystery in the history of America," said Roberta Estes, owner of DNA Explain, a private DNA analysis company based in Brighton, Mich.

The company is working with the Lost Colony Center for Science and Research, an independent research group based in Washington, N.C., that is working to figure out what happened to the colony settled 20 years before Jamestown.

"I don't know what we'll find in the end," Estes said. "Part of the big question for me is, did the Lost Colony survive? Who is their family today? And where did they go?"

Fred Willard, director of the Lost Colony center, said some colonists may have migrated inland to what are now East Lake, Chocowinity and Gum Neck.

Researchers plan to use cheek swabs taken from possible ancestors to test the paternal and maternal DNA lines.

"In our case, with the Lost Colony, the only way we're going to trace who was who and if they survived is to use DNA." Estes said.

While DNA will not make any immediate connections beyond living relatives, the samples can provide clues to an individual's country of origin and other shared family traits, Estes said.

Genealogy will have to fill in the blanks.

Researchers may also try to test American Indian remains or known relatives of the colonists in England.

More than 100 people settled on Roanoke Island in 1587, but the colonists vanished sometime between August of that year and 1590, when their governor returned to the island from a trip to England.