

36 Utopia in America



When "Sir" appears before a man's name it tells you he was knighted by an English king or queen. Thomas More was a great man who was both knighted and killed by a king. It's an interesting story, but you'll have to find out about it on your own.

Barbarous (BAR-ba-russ) means "wild," "primitive," "harsh," or "cruel."

The Latin motto on Raleigh's coat of arms says "with love and courage."

gold where one could become wealthy.

And there was *the dream of a new world*, of an ideal place where the mistakes of Europe could be avoided, where people could pursue happiness. Sometimes those dreams pulled in opposite directions; sometimes they worked in harmony.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert may have held both dreams. He was the first Englishman to hold a royal charter to "have, hold, occupy and enjoy...remote heathen and barbarous lands." Those barbarous lands were America; Sir Humphrey meant to settle English people here. His charter said that all settlers

Picture a long, stout rope. On each end of the rope, strong teams pull hard. Sometimes the rope is pulled in one direction, sometimes in the other. Mostly, however, the teams are even. They balance each other in a kind of tension. And so it was, and is, and always has been in North America. From the beginning, the Europeans who came to America had two dreams:

There was *the dream of riches*, of America as a land of



Raleigh and his son. How would you like to play in those clothes?

should "enjoy all the privileges of free... persons native of England" and that all laws should be as close to English law as possible.

Now that was unusual. English men and women would lose no rights when they moved to the new land. They would be entitled to trial by jury and other English rights. The head of the colony (sometimes called the *proprietor*, which means "owner") could not be a dictator.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert never got a chance to use his charter: he was lost at sea. His small ship, the *Squirrel*, was swallowed by a huge wave. Just before he went under, Gilbert was seen reading a book called *Utopia*, written by Sir Thomas More.

More's book was written as a kind of joke—with a serious thought behind it. *Utopia* was about an island. Sir Thomas described its people, its government, and its way of life as being close to perfect. English people who could read Greek knew that the word *utopia* actually meant "no place," and that Utopia didn't exist. But only a few of More's readers understood Greek. Those who could read Greek also knew that the name of the book's sailor hero, Raphael Hytholadaeus (ra-fee-YEL hy-thuh-la-DAY-uss), meant "skilled in talking nonsense."

But many people who read More's *Utopia* thought it a description of a real place. One missionary made plans to go there to convert the inhabitants to Christianity.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert could read Greek, and he knew there was no real Utopia. But he liked Sir Thomas More's ideas. We think he hoped to set up a utopia in America—a close-to-perfect place to live—and perhaps find gold, too.

Remember those two dreams: gold and a good society—that was what many Englishmen hoped for in America, especially Sir Walter Raleigh.

Sir Walter was Sir Humphrey's half brother. After Sir Humphrey Gilbert drowned, Sir Walter Raleigh decided to take over his charter and dream. The queen was happy to have him do it. Raleigh was not



Sir Walter Raleigh brought no gold or silver home from the New World. But he did introduce a new fashion, copied from the Indians: tobacco smoking. He told his countrymen: "The Floridians have a kind of herb dried, who with a cane and an earthen cup on the end, with fire, do suck through the cane the smoke thereof, which smoke satisfies their hunger." Europeans learned the new habit very quickly.



This map of More's Utopia was drawn to illustrate his book in 1518, when people were fascinated by reports of the New World.

only chivalrous, he was handsome, and Queen Elizabeth liked him—a lot.

Sir Walter Raleigh sent three expeditions to the New World.

The first one went to look the place over and pick out a good spot for a colony. The ships' captains came back with a report of a wonderful land and of Indians who were "most gentle, loving and faithful...and live after the manner of the golden age." The captains were describing the coastal area that would someday become North Carolina. Raleigh named the whole land Virginia, after Elizabeth, who was called the Virgin Queen. (Queen Elizabeth never married, and an unmarried woman is sometimes called a virgin. That's how the name Virginia came about.)

Raleigh's second expedition was a big one: in 1585 seven ships sailed with 100 men. They planned to start a colony. The men included John White, an artist; Thomas Harriot, a famous mathematician, poet, and astronomer; Thomas Cavendish, a navigator who later became the third man to sail a ship around the world; and a Jewish mineral expert from Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) named Joachim Ganz, who was to search for gold and silver.

Ganz found copper but no precious minerals; White drew pictures; and Harriot wrote a story of their adventure. We have the story and pictures today.

The men found that colonizing was a lot harder than they had expected. They were homesick and hungry when an English ship commanded by Sir Francis Drake came by to check on them. All climbed aboard and went home.

Raleigh tried once more. In 1587 he sent out a new colony. Its mission was to establish the city of Raleigh in Virginia.