

# Challenges to living by the sea

A supplement to the serial story, *Where is The Lost Colony?* written by Sandy Semans, editor, *Outer Banks Sentinel*



The thin ribbon of sand that forms the chain of islands known as the Outer Banks is bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by the sounds. The shapes of the islands and the inlets that run between them continue to be altered by hurricanes, nor'easters and other weather events.

Inlets that often proved to be moving targets created access to the ocean and the sounds. Inlets were formed and then later filled with sand and disappeared. Maps of the coastline show many places named "New Inlet," although currently there is no inlet there.

The one exception has been Ocracoke Inlet between Ocracoke and Portsmouth islands. Marine geologists estimate that the existing inlet — with some minor changes — has been in place for at least 2500 years.

During the English exploration of the 1500's, most likely the ships came through this inlet, making it a long sail to Roanoke Island. At that time, there was a small shallow inlet between Hatteras and Ocracoke islands, but the shallow inlet probably was avoided for fear of going aground.

By the early 1700s, this inlet had filled in, and the two became just one long island.

But in 1846, a hurricane created two major inlets. One, now called Oregon Inlet, sliced through the sand, leaving today's Pea Island to the south and Bodie Island to the north. And a second inlet, now known as Hatteras Inlet, once again separated Hatteras Island from Ocracoke Island. Vessels use both inlets, but sometimes shoaling makes passage treacherous.

The creation of inlets is not just a yesteryear phenomenon. In 2003, Hurricane Isabel created an inlet between the villages of Buxton and Hatteras that was filled in by the North Carolina Department of Transportation so that services and access could be restored to Hatteras village.

In August 2011, Hurricane Irene created two inlets — one on Pea Island and another at Mirlo Beach, just north of the village of Rodanthe on Hatteras Island. The latter was promptly filled in, but North Carolina Route 12, the only

road access to the island, also was cut through on Pea Island. The road was closed for about two months while a temporary bridge was installed. Plans are to erect a permanent bridge over the area within the next couple of years.

Nearby, according to maps, is one of those places named New Inlet but whatever was there has come and gone — because that is how life goes on the Outer Banks.

**About the Map:** The 'Virginea Pars' map — often referred to as the John White 1585 map — was painted by John White based on explorations by members of Sir Walter Raleigh's Roanoke Colony of 1584-1590. It is amazingly accurate given the very basic surveying tools that existed at that time. The original, now housed in the British Museum in London, has patches on it that have been painted over. Questions about the patches raised by UNC professor Brent Lane prompted museum officials to find safe means to view under them. That's when it was discovered that the northernmost patch covered a symbol of a fort on an area of relatively high ground that lies between the Albemarle Sound entrances of the Roanoke and Chowan rivers, and another similar symbol, smaller but more elaborate. The faint top symbol is perhaps a later elaboration upon the hidden fort, denoting a settlement — such as the planned 'Cittie of Raleigh.' This discovery has created excitement in the history and archaeology worlds and theories that the location might be where the colonists, now known as The Lost Colony, moved after leaving Roanoke Island. The map depicts the coastal area from Chesapeake Bay to Cape Lookout, including the location of many Native American villages visited by the colonists. However, until now, the map provided little information about the location of Raleigh's planned 'Cittie of Raleigh.'

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