The first English attempts to colonize North America were controlled by individuals rather than companies.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert was the first Englishman to send colonists to the New World.

His initial expedition, which sailed in 1578 with a patent granted by Queen Elizabeth was defeated by the Spanish.

A second attempt ended in disaster in 1583, when Gilbert and his ship were lost in a storm.

In the following year, Gilbert's half brother, Sir Water Raleigh, having obtained a renewal of the patent, sponsored an expedition that explored the coast of the region that he named "Virginia.

" Under Raleigh's direction efforts were then made to establish a colony on Roanoke island in 1585 an6 1587.

The survivors of the first settlement on Roanoke returned to England in 1586, but the second group of colonists disappeared without leaving a trace.

The failure of the Gilbert and Raleigh ventures made it clear that the tasks they had undertaken were too big for any one colonizer.

Within a short time the trading company had supplanted the individual promoter of colonization.