

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST  
TRANSCRIPTS**

**EPISODE 180:  
ENGLISH ON THE MOVE**

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## **EPISODE 180: ENGLISH ON THE MOVE**

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 180: English on the Move. This time, as we continue the chronological story of English, we’re going to look at the spread of English around the world in the first decade of the 1600s. During this period, England was laying the groundwork for the British Empire that was soon to come, and English speakers were no longer just traveling to distant places around the world. They were starting to make permanent homes there. And they carried their language with them. But they not only took the English language, they also took their specific local dialects. So this time, we’ll also explore how regional dialects in England shaped the various forms of English that were being planted around the world.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is [historyofenglishpodcast.com](http://historyofenglishpodcast.com). And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at [Patreon.com/historyofenglish](https://Patreon.com/historyofenglish).

Also, one other quick note. A long-time listener of the podcast recently started a podcast of her own, and I thought I would mention it here. Those of you who listened to the early episodes about Anglo-Saxon England will remember Bede as an important writer during that period. And, in this new podcast, Gretel le Maitre presents an introspective podcast about grief, which is based in part around the writings of Bede. The podcast is called Gretel’s Grief with Bede. So check that out if it sounds interesting to you.

Now this time, we are going to explore the expansion of English into North America and Ireland in the early 1600s. This represents the early stages of what became known as the British Empire. Of course, much has been said and written about the British Empire over the years – the way it shaped the modern world and the human suffering that was produced along the way. I’ll touch on those developments as we move forward, but as always, my focus is going to be on the language and how the spread of the British Empire shaped the way the English language is spoken today. So with that caveat, let’s pick up where we left off last time – with the aftermath of the failed Gunpowder Plot.

At the time of the conspiracy to blow up Parliament in 1605, King James had only been in London for a couple of years, so he was still getting his bearings as the King of England. Of course, he was also the King of Scotland. He had been crowned in Scotland as an infant, so he had been the monarch there for nearly 40 years.

Since the early Middle Ages, people had thought of the island of Britain as three separate countries – England in the south, Scotland in the north, and Wales in the far West. People might have spoken of ancient ‘Britain’ in the distant past before the Anglo-Saxons arrived, but that more of a historical term. At the time, no one really spoke of ‘Britain’ in the way we do today to refer to a common political or cultural entity. But all of that started to change when James became the King of England. He became the monarch of all three regions – England, Scotland and Wales. So he sought to unify them, and he started to promote the idea of a unified Britain

and a sense of common ‘Britishness.’ It’s really at this point that the modern sense of the word **British** as the collective people of England, Scotland and Wales started to emerge.

To promote his idea of British unity, James even had a new coin minted in which he was identified, not as the King of England or Scotland, but as the ‘King of Great Britain.’ The coin contained a Latin inscription. When translated into English, the inscription read “I will make them one nation.” [SOURCE: *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*, James Shapiro, p. 34]

He also authorized a new flag to show the unity of England and Scotland. The national flag of England is St. George’s Flag – a red vertical and horizontal cross on a white background. The national flag of Scotland – known as the Saltire or St. Andrew’s Cross – is a white diagonal cross on a blue background. So James authorized a new flag that combined those two. It featured the English flag superimposed on top of the Scottish flag. In the early 1600s, flags were sometimes called **jacks**. And by the late 1600s, this particular flag had become known as the **Union Jack**. And of course, it is still the flag that most people associate with Great Britain.

Even though James promoted the idea of a common Britishness, England and Scotland had been rivals for centuries and had often been at war with each other. So the English Parliament was slow to recognize any formal union. In fact, the formal union would have to wait almost another century. But it really has its roots here in the early reign of James I.

James governed an island in which most of the people spoke a language inherited from the Anglo-Saxons. In England, that language was called English, and of course, it had many different varieties. In Scotland, it was Scots – the native language of James himself. As we’ve seen before, Scots and English were quite different from each other, but they shared a common Old English root and were mutually intelligible. James and his Scottish courtiers could be understood in London – at least with a little effort.

Of course, communication problems often existed within England itself. The people of northern England spoke with a dialect that very different from that of London. In many respects, the northern dialects were closer to Scots than the standard English of London. Similarly, the people in the West Country in the western part of England also had a unique dialect. In fact, in this same year – 1605 – an English writer and translator named Richard Verstegan published a book that highlighted those regional differences. The book was essentially a history of the English language, and its full title was ‘A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities concerning the most noble and renowned English Nation.’

Verstegan traced the history of the language from its Germanic origins, which he held in high regard. He noted that just as the original Germanic speakers became separated over time and developed unique ways of speaking, the same thing had happened within England itself. He noted that people in the north and west of England spoke differently than the people in London. He even gave an example, which I’ll read as he wrote it with the specific phonetic spellings that he used. Here is the passage:

"... we see that in some several parts of England itself, both the names of things and pronunciations of words are somewhat different, and that among the country people that never borrow any words out of the Latin or French, and of this different pronunciation one example instead of many shall suffice, as this: for pronouncing according as one would say at London "I would eat more cheese if I had it," the northern man sayeth "Ay sud eat mare cheese gin ay hadet," and the Western man sayeth "Chud eat more cheese an chad it." Lo here three different pronunciations in our own country in one thing . . ."

Now, let's look a little closer at the way Verstegan rendered those dialects. For the northern dialect, he used *sud* for *should*. The 'sh' sound at the beginning of words was often pronounced as a simple 's' sound in the north, so *should* became *sud*. The vowel in the word *more* was rendered with the letter A indicating a less rounded sound, so from *more* to *mare*. And the word *if* was replaced with the northern dialect word *gin* (g-i-n). So once again, we get "Ay sud eat mare cheese gin ay hadet."

For the Western dialect, he tapped into a feature that was prominent there. It was common to replace the first person pronoun *I* with a 'ch' sound in parts of the West Country. So "I will" became "chill," and "I was" became "chwas." The reason that feature existed can be traced back to the original pronunciation of the pronoun *I*. You might remember from earlier episodes that it was originally pronounced /ich/ in Old English, usually spelled [ic] or [ich]. In much of England, that 'ch' sound was lost at the end in Middle English. So the word evolved from /ich/ to /ee/. And then, thanks to the Great Vowel Shift, the pronunciation shifted again from /ee/ to /ai/ in early Modern English. So again, Old English *ic* (/ich/), Middle English *I* (/ee/) and Modern English *I* (/ai/). But some parts of England held onto that original form into the early Modern period. So sometimes, they still said *ic* (/ich/) instead of *I*. They would therefore say "ich will" instead of "I will," and over time, those two distinct words were contracted from "ich will" to "chill." So these words acquired a 'ch' sound at the front to represent the pronoun *I*. And that's the feature that Verstegan used when he wrote "chud" for "I would" and "chad" for "I had." So once again, "I would eat more cheese if I had it" became "Chud eat more cheese an chad it."

Now Verstegan revered the regional varieties of English, and he also revered its Germanic roots. I should note that he was of Dutch descent, and he spoke Dutch fluently and translated Dutch works, so that may have shaped his views and led him to favor the Germanic element in the language. He was critical of the continued adoption of French and Latin loanwords. He felt that the English vocabulary was large enough to express whatever needed to be said without adding any more French and Latin words to it. He also noted that a word borrowed in one region wasn't necessarily borrowed in another region, and that contributed to communication problems in different parts of the country.

To illustrate his point, he provided an anecdote about a London courtier who wrote to an English official in the north. The letter had to do with war preparations, and in the letter, the London courtier told the northern official to 'equip' his horses. Well, *equip* is a French loanword, and apparently, at the time, it was only common in the south. So the northern official didn't know what it meant to 'equip' his horses. He consulted with his colleagues, and none of them

understood the word either. They eventually had to send a messenger down to London to determine what the word *equip* meant and what they were being directed to do.

Again, Verstegan included this anecdote to illustrate the problems caused by the ongoing addition of French and Latin loanwords.

Well, a short time later, a Cornish writer and scholar named Richard Carew responded to Verstegan with an essay that praised the state of English at the time, including the many loanwords that had come into the language. The essay was called the ‘Excellencie of the English Tongue,’ and it promoted the idea that those loanwords had made English more expressive and had given it the ability to convey subtle differences in meaning and emotion that had not been possible previously.

Carew’s essay is notable because it reflects how the popular perception of English has changed over the prior century. Way back in Episode 147, I told you about a English writer named John Skelton who described the English language as ‘rude’ and ‘rustic,’ and inferior to other languages like French and Latin. The comment came in a poem written in 1504 – almost exactly a century earlier. And Skelton’s comment about English was the common sentiment at the time. But a lot had changed over the following century. As the language grew and expanded with more loanwords, and as writers like Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare refined the use of the language in poetry and drama, the perception of English had changed. And Richard Carew’s essay in praise of English is strong evidence of that change in perception.

Carew praised the different varieties of English spoken around the country. He wrote, “. . . the Copiousnes of our Languadge appeareth in the diuersitye of our dialectes, for wee haue court, and wee haue countrye Englishe, wee haue Northern and Southerne, grosse and ordinary, which differ ech from other, not only in the terminacions, but alsoe in many wordes, termes, and phrases, and expresse the same thinges in diuers sortes, yeat all right Englishe alike; neither cann any tongue (as I am perswaded) deliuer a matter with more varietye then ours, both plainely and by prouerbes and Metaphors.”

So for Carew, the regional varieties of English and the large percentage of loanwords were strengths, not weaknesses. And that sentiment was increasingly common among his contemporaries. From this point on, English writers tended to take pride in their language, and they stopped putting it down and apologizing for it.

As Carew noted, English was especially expressive in its use of proverbs and metaphors. And there didn’t seem to be an end to them. New proverbs and idioms were appearing in the language all the time. And in fact, we can identify several new ones recorded from this very time period in the first decade or so of the 1600s

It was around this time that we find the first recorded use of the phrase ‘fit as a fiddle.’ A writer like Carew might have described the state of the language at the time as being ‘fit as a fiddle.’ The phrase is first recorded in a play from this time period called ‘Englishmen for My Money, or A Woman Will Have Her Will.’ It was composed by a playwright named William Haughton.

And speaking of fiddles, the term *fiddlesticks* meaning ‘nonsense’ also appeared around the same time in another play. It was a play by Thomas Nashe called ‘Summer's Last Will and Testament.’ No one really knows had the bow of a violin – or a ‘fiddlestick’ – came to be associated with nonsense. The best guess is that it was just a funny-sounding word, and it was the perfect type of word to convey that idea of nonsense.

In addition to those ‘fiddle’ terms, this time period also saw the first recorded use of the proverb ‘Honesty is the best policy.’ The term appeared in a work called ‘Relation of State of Religion’ composed by an English politician and entrepreneur named Sir Edwin Sandys. It appeared in 1605.

And it was in that same year that another important work was published that also produced several new idioms and proverbs. In fact, the work was so popular that many proverbs are wrongly attributed to it. And interestingly, the work wasn’t even composed in English. It was composed Spanish. That particular work was a novel called Don Quixote. It was the masterwork of a Spanish writer named Miguel de Cervantes – commonly known simply as ‘Cervantes.’ Even though the story was written and published in Spanish, it is important to our story for several reasons.

First, it marks an important sea-change in Western literature. It was one of the first modern novels, and many scholars consider it to be THE first modern novel. Whether or not it was the first, it was certainly the first novel to become an international best-seller.

In order to understand why this particular book stands out in history, we have to consider what popular literature was like prior to this point. For the most part, long extended works of literature tended to be chivalric romances. That means that they were stories about knights and chivalry. They usually involved a knight who was on a journey or a quest. The knight embraced the code of chivalry, and performed good deeds, and protected the poor and weak. He often fought against giants, and monsters, and evil witches. And of course, there was often a damsel in distress, which is how the word *romance* slowly started to acquire its more modern sense as ‘a love story.’ But originally, romances were more about chivalry and the medieval code of the knights.

But by the late 1500s and early 1600s, people were tired of that well-worn format, and they were looking for something different. And Cervantes gave it to them with Don Quixote. In many respects, it is a parody of chivalric romances. The title character embraces the code of chivalry, but he lives in a time when that code has largely disappeared.

Of course, the main character is Don Quixote, an aging man from La Mancha in Spain. In the story, he loves to read the classic romances about knights and chivalry. And he seeks to imitate the stories he has read, so he takes his poor old nag of a horse as his steed, and he takes a peasant laborer named Sancho Panza as his squire, and he goes in search of adventure. The problem is that he is a bit mad, and he doesn’t really encounter the adventures he read about in books.

The most well-known episode from the book is Don Quixote’s encounter with windmills. As he rides, he sees several large windmills in the distance, and he believes them to be giants. In his

delusion, he attacks them with his lance, but the lance gets stuck in one of the arms of a windmill, so it lifts him in the air and then drops him to the ground. The episode is so well-known that it gave us the phrase ‘tilting at windmills’ referring to a misguided effort or an attempt to battle an imaginary wrong. The book also gave us the word *quixotic* based on the name *Quixote*. *Quixotic* means ‘naively idealistic’ or ‘unrealistic.’

Cervantes’s book proved to be very popular. As I noted, it was a best-seller throughout Europe, and was translated into many different languages. It was distinct from the old romances in the way it approached the subject matter. It was more realistic and less idealistic. The story wasn’t based on a traditional formula. The book was also designed for a mass audience, not just the scholarly class. That was reinforced by the fact that it was written in a local vernacular like Spanish rather than Latin. Those were some of the defining features of this new type of literature, which soon became known as a *novel*. And it became the dominant literary form during the modern period. [SOURCE: *The Written World*, Martin Puchner, p. 209-10] So Don Quixote marks the beginning of that transition from chivalric romances to the modern novel.

The book was soon translated into English, with a version appearing just fifteen years later in 1620. That version is notable because it contains an early version of the phrase ‘the pot calling the kettle black’ to refer to hypocrisy. Of course, the proverb was based on an original Spanish version that was common in Spain. Some scholars have traced the proverb back to Arabic, and specifically the Arabic-speaking invaders who claimed much of Spain in the Middle Ages. Regardless of its ultimate origins, it appears that that early translation of Don Quixote introduced it to English.

That translation also included a version of the well-known proverb ‘A man is known or judged by the company he keeps.’ The first use of that proverb is also often attributed to this translation, but variations of the same phrase had been around in English for about a decade prior to that point.

And that’s really the important point here. There are a lot of books that claim to list the origin of common proverbs and idioms, and if you peruse some of those books, you will see that the various translations of Don Quixote are often listed at the source of many phrases in English. That’s partly because the characters in the book often use proverbs, especially the title character’s squire, Sancho Panza. Phrases often attributed to the book include ‘It takes all kinds of people to make a world’ and ‘a man’s word is as good as his bond.’ [SOURCE: *America’s Popular Proverbs and Sayings*, Gregory Titelman, p. 170 and p. 223.] But again, some of those proverbs were already common throughout Europe, and English already a version of them. So for example, you might be told ‘Don’t put all of your eggs in one basket.’ A form of that phrase appears in Don Quixote, and also in a 1701 English translation. So it’s another phrase often attributed to the book. But a version of the phrase had actually appeared in English a few decades before that English translation. That earlier version was don’t ‘put all ones eggs in a paniard.’ A *paniard* – or *pannier* – was a French word for a basket. So again, the idea was already out there.

But the fact that so many proverbs have been attributed to Don Quixote over the years is really a reflection of the book’s popularity. And it is a landmark work of Western literature.

Now speaking of stories about a knight on an expedition, this same year – 1605 – also gave us the first performance on a play that features a modern knight who attempts to mount an expedition to the New World. The play was called *Eastward Ho*, and it was co-written by Ben Jonson and a couple of other playwrights. Jonson was emerging as one of England's most successful playwrights during this period, and *Eastward Ho* was largely a response to a play produced the prior year called *Westward Ho*.

*Eastward Ho* features a fraudulent knight named Sir Petronel Flash who purchases his knighthood. That was a common and much criticized practice at the time. King James sold a lot of knighthoods to his supporters to raise money, and the play seemed to mock that practice. Part of the storyline involves Sir Petronel's attempt to arrange an expedition to Virginia in the New World.

In terms of the history of English, the play is notable because it features the first recorded instance of someone saying 'save your breath' meaning 'to be quiet.'

But the play is also notable because it ran afoul of the authorities. Not only did the play contain passages that appeared to mock the king's practice of selling knighthoods for money, it also contained passages that appeared to mock the Scots. In a passage, where Sir Petronel persuades several other characters to go to Virginia, he expresses his disdain for the Scots, and he says that he wishes that more of them would leave Britain for the New World. He says of Virginia:

"And you shall live freely there ... with only a few industrious Scots, perhaps, who indeed are dispers'd over the face of the whole earth. . . . And, for my part, I would a hundred thousand of 'em were there, for we are all one countrymen now, ye know; and we should find ten times more comfort of them there than we do here."

The new king apparently didn't like that anti-Scottish sentiment and the implied criticism of his sale of knighthoods. So Ben Jonson and the other writers were promptly arrested. They remained in prison for a few months. Fortunately, they had friends in high places who were eventually able to secure their release.

Around the time that Jonson and his co-writers were released from confinement in November of 1605, we have another important development in our story. In that same month, a Dutch sailor named Willem Janszoon was sailing on an expedition exploring the southern portions of the East Indies. That's the region from modern-day Indonesia down to New Guinea. Then he sailed further southward around New Guinea, and he found another land mass. In February of 1606, he made landfall there and recorded his discoveries. What he found was the northern part of the continent we know today as Australia. And in doing so, he became the first known European to set foot on the continent.

Now, over the next few decades, further exploration would reveal the size and scope of the continent, but it wasn't called *Australia* at the time. A few decades later, the Dutch started calling it *New Holland*, and that was really the first common name for the continent in Europe. But since the 1500s, it had been common for map makers to use the Latin term *Terra Australis*



to refer to any land mass in the southern hemisphere. *Terra Australis* literally meant ‘Southern land.’ So it was just used a collective term for the various land masses there. During the 1700s, some writers and map makers occasionally referred to this newly discovered island of New Holland as *Terra Austalis*, but it wasn’t until the early 1800s that the term *Australia* started to emerge as the preferred name. The credit for the name change is usually given to a British explorer named Matthew Flinders. He had explored the continent, and he recommended the name *Australia* because he said that it was ‘more pleasing to the ear’ than *Terra Australis*. And by the 1830s, *Australia* had become the official name of the continent. So it took a couple of centuries to acquire the name it has today, but European contact with the landmass began at the current point in our story – early in the year 1606. And of course, it would eventually become an English colony and another place where the English language would take root.

Around the same time that Willem Janszoon was setting foot in Australia, a group of merchants and investors in England were setting their sights on North America. They wanted to launch their own expedition to Virginia in North America, and they sought the king’s approval.

As I noted a moment ago, that controversial play called *Eastward Hoe* contained a storyline about an expedition to Virginia. The play described Virginia as a paradise, and it was part of a renewed interest in the region during this period. Shortly after James had become king, he negotiated a truce with Spain which brought an end to the conflict between the two countries, at least for a couple of decades. The agreement stipulated that England and Spain would stop attacking each other’s ships. That opened the way for English investors to establish trading posts in North America without the fear of Spanish attack. Memories of Sir Walter Raleigh’s failed settlement at Roanoke had started to fade. And with the Spanish threat reduced, it seemed like a good time to try to put another English settlement in the region.

Merchants and investors were also inspired by the formation of the new English East India Company, which I talked about last time. So a group of merchants decided to form a similar company to fund expeditions to Virginia. And in April of 1606, King James approved the formation of a company to plant new settlements in North America.

With the king’s permission in writing, plans were soon underway to gather volunteers and supplies to mount another expedition to Virginia. And speaking of expeditions in far away places, a few weeks later a ship returned to England after a nearly two-year voyage to the East Indies. It was a trading ship, and it had been a devastating voyage for the crew. The ship was called the *Tiger*, and it had been attacked by Japanese pirates, resulting in the death of the ship’s captain and much of the crew. The ship and its surviving crew limped back into England in July of 1606, and the story of the ship’s expedition caused quite a stir at the time.

Now, you’re probably wondering why I am telling about the *Tiger*’s troubled voyage, but it’s important to our story because Shakespeare mentioned it in a play that he was working on at the time. That play was called *Macbeth*, and the reference to the voyage of the *Tiger* is one of the few pieces of information that help modern scholars to date the play. There isn’t much other information to establish a firm date for it. We also know that another Shakespeare play called *King Lear* was composed around this time because we have a reference to it being performed at

Christmastime in this same year – 1606. That’s the first reference to the play, so it appears that Macbeth and King Lear were composed around this time. [*SOURCE: Shakespeare: The Evidence, Ian Wilson, p. 314.*]

Now, in order to move our story forward, I’m not going to do a deep dive into those two plays – even though they are two of Shakespeare’s most well-known dramas. But there are a few things that you should know about those plays before we move on.

First of all, those two plays represent an interesting shift in Shakespeare’s subject matter from English plays to British plays. Prior to this point, he had written a lot of history plays about English kings. But Macbeth is set in Scotland and concerns the Scottish monarchy. Meanwhile, King Lear is about a legendary king from the early history of Britain before the Anglo-Saxons arrived, so before England and Scotland and Wales existed as distinct countries. So neither play concerns England itself. And many scholars note that this shift in focus occurred at the same time that James was trying to unify England and Scotland, and was appealing to a common sense of ‘Britishness.’ And of course, James was now the patron of Shakespeare’s acting company. So all of this may not be a coincidence.

In fact, prior to this point, Shakespeare had never used the word *British* in any of his plays, but he used it for the first time in King Lear. And even the word *Britain* had only appeared a couple of times in his earlier plays, but now, it started to appear much more regularly – nearly 30 times in the plays composed during James’s reign. [*SOURCE: The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606, James Shapiro, p. 41*]

The plot of King Lear should also be viewed in light of this focus on regional unity. The plot involves the aging King Lear who divides his kingdom between his two eldest daughters, who betray him and cause him to abandon the throne. He is driven mad, and the country descends into conflict and war when the two older sisters face off against their youngest sister who is married to the French king. French forces invade Britain, and in the end, as with any good Shakespearean tragedy, most of the main characters die, including the king and his three daughters.

But again, the plot is based on that fateful decision of the king to divide his kingdom and all the conflict and suffering that followed. So the plot can be seen as another example of this focus on regional unity in the wake of James becoming the king of England.

In terms of the play’s specific influence on English, it contains a passage where one character insults another by calling him “the son and heir of a mongrel bitch.” It’s a bit wordy, but it is considered to be the earliest known version of the more modern term ‘son of a bitch.’

In another passage, a character named Edmund has schemed against his half-brother Edgar, which leads to a battle in which Edmund is mortally wounded. As he lay dying, he says “the wheel has come full circle.” That is apparently a phrase that Shakespeare coined. At the very least, he is the first known writer to use it, and thanks to the popularity of this play, people today still say that the wheel or some other situation ‘has come full circle.’

So that's King Lear. Now let me make a couple of quick notes about Macbeth before we move on. Obviously, Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's more popular plays. The plot concerns the titular Macbeth's murder of the Scots king, and how his ensuring guilt and paranoia turns him into a tyrant before he is eventually overthrown. The Scots king that succeeds him was supposedly a distant ancestor of King James, so the story would have had an obvious appeal to the new king. The play also begins with a well-known scene featuring three witches who prophesize that Macbeth will one day be the king. It's a prophesy that comes true when Macbeth murders the king, but the inclusion of the witches might have been tailored to James's interests because he was somewhat obsessed with witches and had even written a book about the dangers of witchcraft.

The witches give us the well-known phrase 'double, double toil and trouble.' The play also either introduced or popularized a lot of other phrases that are still in common use in English. Among them are 'come what may,' 'a charmed life,' 'the be-all and the end-all,' 'the milk of human kindness,' 'one fell swoop,' 'lily-livered,' 'out damned spot,' 'the sound and fury,' 'as pure as the driven snow,' 'something wicked this way comes,' 'a sorry sight,' and 'what's done is done.'

Now as I noted, King Lear and Macbeth are generally dated to the year 1606. As that year came to an end, the preparations for a settlement in Virginia were underway. With a royal charter in hand, the London Company investors were preparing the ships for the expedition and gathering the men who would serve as the first settlers. They were all men at this point. Women would come a few years later. By March of the following year, they were ready to go.

Three ships left England to take the settlers to Virginia. The plan was to find a suitable site in the Chesapeake Bay region. A couple of decades earlier, the area had been surveyed by men from the Roanoke settlement on the Outer Banks south of the Chesapeake. The Roanoke settlement didn't have a natural harbor, and the shifting shoals along the coast of the Outer Banks were dangerous hazards. Of course, the Roanoke settlement failed, so for this second effort to colonize the region, it was thought that the Chesapeake Bay region would be more suitable.

The ships carrying 120 settlers arrived at the bay in April of 1607. The English explored the lower part of a river which emptied into the bay. And they soon identified a location where they could erect some tents. The local people called the river the Powhatan. But the English renamed it the James River in honor of King James. And they decided to name their new settlement after him as well. They called it Jamestown. It was little more than a cleared piece of land where they could erect some tents, but Jamestown became the first permanent English settlement in North America. And for the first time, the English language had a permanent footing on a new continent.

As a quick aside, I should note that the English were not the first Europeans to establish a settlement in North America. The Spanish has built forts along the Gulf Coast and in Florida. And three years earlier, the French had erected a small trading post along the eastern coast of what is today Nova Scotia in Canada. It was founded by the French explorer Samuel de Champlain. The settlement was called Port Royal, and the region around it became known as Acadia. Now I mention this slightly earlier French settlement because control of the region

passed between the French, the Scots and the English over the following century. Again, the region was called *Acadia*, and the people who lived there were mostly French-speaking and were called *Acadians*. Well in the 1700s, when the British finally secured permanent control over the region, they kicked out many of the French-speaking Acadians. Since they needed to find somewhere else to live, many of them decided to relocate to the French territory of Louisiana. So they traveled down the eastern seaboard of North America, around Florida, and along the Gulf Coast until they reached the French territory there. And that's where they settled. Again, they were called *Acadians*, but over time, the word *Acadian* was slurred and reduced down to *Cajun*. And that is how the Cajun culture of south Louisiana originated. It's directly tied back to this original French settlement at Acadia in eastern Canada. And again, it has its roots here in the first decade of the 1600s.

Now again, the English arrived in Jamestown a few years after the French had settled in Nova Scotia. These first English settlers were adventurers looking to make a quick fortune. They didn't really have any experience working the land, and most didn't have any carpentry skills. They also weren't familiar with the local crops and vegetation, and on top of that, they missed the planting season. So they soon started to run out of food. They also had a problem finding fresh water since most of the water in the region was brackish and not drinkable. Add in the diseases carried by mosquitos, and everything soon turned into a disaster. Of the original 120 settlers, more than two-thirds of them died within the first nine months. Over the next few years, the Virginia Company sent over a thousand more settlers to the colony, and more than half of them died as well. [*SOURCE: America: A Concise History, James A. Henretta, et al, p. 46 and The Wild Shores: America's Beginnings, Tee Loftin Snell, p. 83*]

The settlers also encountered the local indigenous people, who called the Englishmen *Otasantasuwak*. The name literally meant 'the people who wear leg-coverings.' [*SOURCE: Savage Kingdom, Benjamin Woolley, p. 50.*] The native people in the region were divided into many different tribes – some at war with each other. So that also became a challenge. If the settlers befriended one tribe, they risked becoming the enemies of a rival tribe. And some of the native people were not happy at the prospect of a permanent European settlement in the region. Over the following weeks and months, several settlers were attacked and killed by members of the various tribes in the region.

By the end of that first summer in 1607, Jamestown was rapidly running out of men as someone died almost every day. The men who had been put in charge of the settlement started to turn to one of their fellow settlers named John Smith for help. He seemed to possess the leadership skills that the others lacked, and under his guidance, several simple buildings were constructed, including a storehouse and several huts. He also made excursions to trade with the local indigenous tribes. They were able to provide some food supplies. [*SOURCE: The Wild Shores: America's Beginnings, Tee Loftin Snell, p. 83*] Through these efforts, Smith quickly emerged as the de facto leader of Jamestown during this early period.

Smith traveled extensively throughout the region, surveying the land and meeting with the native people who lived in the area. Of course, there were no highways, so both the settlers and the indigenous people used the rivers and waterways for transportation. The English were also eager

to determine if any of the rivers provided a convenient way to reach the Pacific Ocean on the other side of the continent. Of course, at the time, they didn't really know how wide the continent was, and they didn't know that there was no such water route.

During this period, Smith kept notes, and he eventually prepared an account of his first year at Jamestown. The account is commonly referred to as 'A True Relation of Virginia,' and it was published the following year in 1608.

The work is important to language historians because it contains the first recorded use of many words associated with North America during this period. For example, he referred to an animal in the region which the native people called a 'Rahaughcum' (r-a-h-a-u-g-h-c-u-m). That was his attempt to spell the word the way the local people pronounced it. The pronunciation and spelling quickly evolved within English, and it soon became known a *raccoon*. And Smith was the first person to record the name of the animal in English.

He also gave us some of the earliest uses of words like *cornfield* and *knapsack*. Since Smith explored the waterways along the Chesapeake, he included words related to those features as well. He is the first known English writer to use the word *fall* as a noun in its plural form to describe the falling water found along some waterways. The result was the word *falls*, as in *waterfalls* or *Niagra Falls*.

And speaking of waterways, Smith's account included a reference to creeks. He wrote, "The Bay where he dwelleth hath in it 3 cricks." And it is worth noting that he referred to them as *cricks* (c-r-i-c-k-s), not *creeks*. *Crick* actually became a common pronunciation of *creek* in the many parts of colonial America, and it still survives in some rural dialects, though *creek* has largely replaced that older pronunciation. The interesting thing is that John Smith was using *crick* from the outset in the early 1600s.

By the way, the word *creek* was in common use at the time, but it usually referred to an inlet or harbor along a coastline. It was people like John Smith who applied the term to small streams while exploring the coastal regions of North America. Notice that the quote where he used the word *crick* referred to several 'cricks' in a bay. How could a crick or creek be in a bay? Well again, at the time, the word referred to a coastal inlet. So as settlers like Smith explored large bodies of water like the Chesapeake Bay, they would come across these inlets – which were really the mouths of rivers that emptied into the bay. So the word *creek* was applied to those inlets in much the same way the word was normally applied to a coastal inlet or harbor. And then as they traveled up those waterways, the word was extended to the waterways themselves. And then gradually it became restricted to the small streams that fed those larger rivers or waterways. So that sense of the word *creek* evolved within early American English and was related to the early exploration of the region.

John Smith also gave us another word to refer to a stream or creek. In a later work about the region, he used the word *branch* for the first time in the sense of a small stream. *Branch* is French word that had been around for several centuries, but it was traditionally used in its botanical sense to refer to part of a plant like a 'tree branch.' But on a map, a stream feeding into

a river resembled a branch attached to a limb. So the word **branch** was extended to these smaller streams and creeks. That extended sense may have been in use prior to this point, but Smith's use of the word in that way is the first recorded example found in a surviving document.

English also had the word **brook** to refer to the same type of stream or water feature. That was an Old English word, and while it was used throughout the later American colonies, it was especially common in the northeast in New England.

So early American English had the words **stream**, **creek**, **branch** and **brook** at its disposal to describe the same basic type of water feature. But those rivers and streams were so important and essential to life in the region that other words also came into use.

Around this same time, there was a separate expedition to North America to find a northern passage to the Pacific. An account of the voyage contained a reference to a small stream as a **run**. It is the first documented use of the word **run** in that way. It's another term that took root in early American English, and it led to many small streams being referred to as **runs** like **Bull Run** in Virginia – the site of a famous battle in the American Civil War. This sense of the word **run** was apparently derived from the sense of the word as 'running water.' **Run** is an old Germanic word, and different parts of England had variations of the word to refer to a stream or similar flow of water. In Wales and some parts of England, it was a **rean** (r-e-a-n). In northern England and Scotland, it was sometimes called a **rindle** (r-i-n-d-l-e). In Southwestern England, it was sometimes called a **rhine** (r-h-i-n-e). In fact, the name of River Rhine in Europe is probably cognate with these English words. Other variations found around England include **runnel**, **rundle**, **runlet** and **rill**. And there is something very interesting about those words. They all have an 'r' sound and an 'l' sound. And as I noted in an earlier episode of the podcast about those sounds, linguists call them liquids. The sound flows over and along the tongue in the same way that water flows over a smooth stone in a river. And that connection between the liquid nature of those sounds and the water in streams may not be a coincidence. Some linguists think that people naturally associated the sounds in words like **rindle**, **rundle**, **runlet** and **rill** with flowing water. [SOURCE: *Home Ground: Language for an American landscape*, Barry Lopez, Ed., p. 306] Regardless, England had a lot of related words for those small streams.

As I noted, a new variation was added to the list in the early 1600s when the word **run** appeared to refer to the same type of stream. And that's the version that John Smith used in his early writings, and that version took root in Virginia. Generally speaking, it appears that speakers in the region used the word **river** for the largest body of flowing water, the word **creek** for a slightly smaller and narrower body of water, and the word **run** for the smallest streams they encountered. [SOURCE: *Home Ground: Language for an American landscape*, Barry Lopez, Ed., p. 306]

But that wasn't all, the Dutch soon established a couple of settlements in modern-day New York. And thanks to that Dutch influence, the region around New York adopted the word **kill** from Dutch to refer to a stream or creek. The word **kill** meant 'a river-bed or channel' in Dutch. The word survives in the name of the Schuylkill River that flows through Philadelphia. **Schuylkill** means 'hidden channel,' so the name **Schuylkill River** literally means the 'hidden channel river.' The word **kill** for a stream also survives in the name of the Catskill Mountains in New York.

*Catskill* literally means ‘cat’s creek.’ No one is really sure what the ‘cat’ part of *Catskills* was for, but the best guess is that it is a reference to mountain lions that lived in region. So apparently some of them lived near these creeks, so the mountains became known as ‘Cat’s creek’ or ‘Catskill.’

Now the reason I am giving you these examples is because I want to illustrate how American English developed in own unique regional dialects from the very beginning. For the most part as early American English developed, it was much more uniform than the English spoken in Britain. There was less regional variation, but differences did exist in various parts of North America. What people in Virginia called a *run*, people in New York called a *kill*, and people in New England called it a *brook*. And throughout the region, even into modern Canada, some people called it a *creek* – or *crick* [SOURCE: *Dictionary of Americanisms*, John Russell Bartlett, p. 98.]

As we’ll see, American regionalism was also influenced by settlement patterns from Britain. People from specific parts of the British Isles tended to settle in the same parts of North America. After all, it made sense to relocate near people you already knew or people who you were related to. So specific regional dialects in Britain sometimes took root in North America and shaped regional accents and dialects there as well.

Now as John Smith and his men explored the rivers and streams of eastern Virginia, they encountered more and more indigenous people. And late in the year of 1607, while exploring one particular river in the region, Smith and his men were attacked by a local tribe and taken captive. They were led from one village to another until they were finally brought to the leader of a confederation of tribes in the region. Smith referred to him as ‘Powhatan,’ meaning ‘the leader of the Powhatan people’ who were scattered throughout the region.

After meeting with the leader in an attempt to secure his release, the men that Smith brought with him were executed. And it soon became apparent that Smith himself was about to experience the same fate. A couple of the native men grabbed him and held him down so that a large stone could be smashed against his head. But at the last second, Powhatan’s 12-year old daughter jumped in to stop the killing. She placed her head over Smith’s head so that he couldn’t be killed. At least that’s the story that Smith later recounted. The young girl’s name was Pocahontas – maybe you’ve heard of her. After Pocahontas saved Smith’s life, her father had a change of heart, and decided to let Smith go. And this was an important development because it actually allowed for improved relations between Powhatan’s people and the English settlers, who were barely surviving at the time. Pocahontas and other people from the tribe started to visit the settlement at Jamestown on a regular basis. They brought food to the settlers and help them to survive those early months. [SOURCE: *Savage Kingdom*, Benjamin Woolley, p. 132-3.] In fact, Pocahontas took a liking to Smith and the English, and we’ll hear more about her in an upcoming episode.

Now around this same time, there was another important development back in the British Isles. So let’s turn our attention back there for a moment. This development concerns events in Ireland. A couple of episodes back, we looked at the fate of Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex. He had been sent to Ireland to put down a rebellion there, but he made little progress and ended up agreeing to a truce with the rebel leader. Queen Elizabeth was furious with Essex because she

didn't want a truce. Essex later tried to lead a rebellion against Elizabeth, but he was caught and executed.

Well, after Essex returned to England, a new commander was sent to Ireland to put down the rebellion and to secure English control of the island. He was Lord Mountjoy, and his efforts proved to be much more successful. The English slowly managed to gain the upper hand, and during the first few months of James's reign, the rebellion finally came to an end when the rebel leader, Hugh O'Neill, agreed to terms to end the conflict.

O'Neill was a native Irishman, and he was also an earl in the northern part of Ireland in the region called Ulster. He and his allies effectively ruled that region. Well, after they agreed to terms with the English government, the main conflict came to an end. Four years had passed since then. But now, around the current point in our story in the latter part of 1607, O'Neill and his allies apparently started making plans to renew the conflict, perhaps with Spanish support. The details are murky and shrouded in a bit of mystery, but the English authorities in London apparently got word of the plans, and when they demanded that O'Neill come to London, he and several other prominent lords from the Ulster region fled Ireland and headed to the continent. It is widely believed that they intended to get Spanish support, and then they were going to lead an invasion force to remove the English from Ireland. But that never happened. They never returned to Ireland. This development is known to history as the 'Flight of the Earls.' And it's very important to our story because it left a vacuum of power in Ulster in northern Ireland. That allowed the English authorities to confiscate the lands that had been abandoned. They then doled out the land to prominent British lords who agreed to bring over settlers from Scotland and England to work the land and to establish a permanent British presence in the region.

The settlers came from northern England and King James's home country of Scotland. By the end of the century, over a hundred thousand people from Scotland and England had relocated to Ulster in northern Ireland. Those British settlers eventually became a majority of the population in the region. [*SOURCE: Green English, Loreto Todd, p. 48.*]

Now within these developments, we can find the beginnings of modern-day Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom along with England, Scotland and Wales. This part of Ireland became more and more distinct over time due to the large amount of British settlement in the region. Most of those who came from England and Scotland were Protestants, and that meant that this part of Ireland became increasingly Protestant, while the rest of the island remained staunchly Catholic. The region also retained closer ties to Britain. And of course, the settlement pattern also had linguistic consequences. The settlers spoke Scots and northern dialects of English. And, over time, those forms of speech took root in the northern part of Ireland.

So let's take a moment and consider the linguistic situation in Ireland as this period of immigration was underway in the early to mid-1600s. Most of the people in Ireland spoke Gaelic – the native Celtic language. In fact, Gaelic would continue to be the dominant language in Ireland for the next couple of centuries. But there were now pockets where English and Scots were being spoken.



You might remember from earlier episodes that the English had a presence around Dublin in the eastern part of the Ireland since the late 1100s. Further down the eastern coastline, they also had a small presence around the town of Wexford. There were people in those regions that spoke an older form of English that dated back to the Middle English period when those regions were first settled. That English dialect had incorporated a lot of Gaelic elements, and language historians refer to that old dialect as Yola. It survived until the 1800s, when it finally died out. What little is known about that dialect comes from a few surviving documents that were written in it. [SOURCE: *Accents of English 2: The British Isles*, p. 418.]

Now as I noted a moment ago, English and Scottish settlement in northern Ireland began around this point in the early 1600s. But more widespread settlement in other parts of Ireland took place from the mid-1600s. And that brought a more standard form of English from southern England to those regions. It was essentially the Elizabethan English that we have been exploring in the podcast, but the spread of that form of English to Ireland really began in earnest during the Stuart period of the 1600s. That was really the beginning of the standard form of English spoken throughout much of Ireland today. But after English started to arrive in the 1600s, it remained a minority language for the next two centuries. It wasn't until the latter part of the 1800s that English finally started to emerge as the dominant language on the island and Gaelic became a minority language.

Meanwhile, there was a different manner of speech in the north where those settlers from Scotland and northern England had started to settle after the flight of the earls. Many of them spoke Scots. As I noted earlier, Scots and English were both descended from Old English. The two forms of speech were quite distinct by this point in the early 1600s, though most Scots speakers and English speakers could communicate with each other. And Scots became firmly rooted in northern Ireland during the early 1600s as a result of the significant immigration from Scotland. This Irish version of Scots became known as Ulster Scots, and there are pockets in northern Ireland where this Scots dialect is still spoken to this day. So today, in the northern part of the island, we find both northern varieties of Irish English and Ulster Scots.

Now as those Scots speakers settled in northern Ireland, they brought many words with them that were unique to Scotland. Words like *bairn* for 'a child,' and *greet* meaning 'to cry or grieve,' and *fash* meaning 'to anger or annoy or worry' all passed to these parts of northern Ireland. Earlier I talked about how American English acquired different words for a stream. Well, in Scotland and northern England, people sometimes called a stream a *burn*. And that word was also exported to northern Ireland.

Now this is the point where I can start to tie these various threads together because this Scottish settlement in northern Ireland is actually important to the story of American English as well. About a century later in the 1700s, there was widespread emigration from northern Ireland to colonial America. By that point, much of the land and territory along the coastline of North America had already been claimed by English settlers, so these new settlers tended to settle further west in the region of the Appalachian Mountains. Since many of these people from northern Ireland had Scots ancestry, they became known as the Scots-Irish, and they became an integral part of early Appalachia. And they brought their Scots dialect with them.

So some of those Scots elements passed into early American English generally and Appalachian English more specifically. For example, the word **muley** was a Scots word for ‘a hornless cow.’ It has largely fallen out of use in Scotland and Ireland, so today, it’s mainly found in parts of North America, though it’s not as common as it once was.

Scots also had a word that referred to something that is located in front of you, or across from you, or facing you. The word appeared in various forms like **ferment**, **fernenst**, **fornent** and **fornenst**. It’s another Scots word that passed into Appalachian English. We know it was there because Davy Crockett used it in the early 1800s when he wrote, “I walked with them to a room nearly fornent the old state-house.” [SOURCE: *American Regional Dialects*, Craig M. Carver, p. 167]

Some scholars even think that the Southern American pronoun **y’all** stems from this settlement pattern. The Scots-Irish had a similar plural pronoun form, which was ‘**ye aw**.’ It might have evolved into **y’all** in parts of the South, though the exact history of that pronoun form is unclear. [SOURCE: *English in the Southern United States*, Stephen J. Nagle and Sara L. Sanders, Ed., p. 108]

The word **poke** for a bag also followed this route into Appalachian English. I talked about that word **poke** back in Episode 118. It was once a common word for a bag during the Middle English period, but it gradually fell out of use in much of England. It really only survives in the phrase ‘a pig in a poke.’ See Episode 118 for a discussion about that phrase. But the word **poke** survived in northern England and Scotland, and it passed to northern Ireland in the 1600s. And then, it passed to Appalachian English in the 1700s and 1800s. And today, the word can still be heard in parts of Appalachia, though again, it is not as common as it once was.

Now you if ever hear someone tell another person to ‘scoot over’ or ‘scoot down’ or ‘scoot out of the way,’ that is also likely a product of this same migration pattern. The word **scoot** can sometimes be used in this way to mean ‘to move swiftly’ or ‘to move over.’ If we trace the history of the word, it actually goes back to the Vikings. You might remember from earlier episodes that the Old Norse language of the Vikings and the Old English language of the Anglo-Saxons were very similar to each other. They had a largely shared vocabulary, but many words were pronounced differently in the respective languages. Many words that were pronounced with an ‘s-k’ sound in Old Norse were pronounced with a softer ‘s-h’ sound in Old English. The classic example is Old Norse **skirt** and Old English **shirt**. Those terms once referred to the same kind of tunic. Well, here we have the Old Norse word **scoot** and the Old English word **shoot**. Both words once had a sense of moving quickly. Today, we associate the word **shoot** with firing a projectile like a bullet, but it once referred to the actual movement of the projectile. It’s a sense that still survives in a term like a ‘shooting star.’

Well, Old Norse had the word as **scoot**. Again, it meant ‘to move quickly.’ And as we know, Viking settlement was heavy in Scotland and northern England, so the word **scoot** passed in Scots where it acquired more of a sense of ‘eject.’ But from there, the word passed to northern Ireland in the 1600s, and it eventually made its way to Appalachia where it became common in

early American English. And it can still be heard today. In fact, to the extent that you hear this usage in other parts of the world today, it probably came from the influence of American English.

There are also some Appalachian grammatical forms that some scholars trace back to the Scots-Irish. If you hear someone use the phrase ‘to take up’ meaning ‘to start,’ it may have its origins in Scots-Irish. So you might hear someone say that they recently ‘took up the piano’ or ‘took up crochet.’ It means that they started doing it, and again, it may have roots in this migration pattern that began here in the 1600s.

Also, the use of so-called double modals may have its origin here as well. That when you hear people say things like ‘might could’ or ‘might would.’ Word like *might* and *would* and *could* and *should* and *can* are called modals, and we don’t normally used them together in standard English. But some non-standard forms of English do occasionally put them together. So you might hear someone say, “I might could do that tomorrow.” Again, that unconventional phrasing may have its origins in a similar use of double modals in Scots. [*SOURCE: English in the Southern United States, Stephen J. Nagle and Sara L. Sanders, Ed., p. 10*]

Now so far in this episode, we have explored the early English settlement in Jamestown in North America and the events that led to the migration of people from northern Britain to Ireland. But before we conclude this episode, I have one more piece to add to this puzzle.

Shortly after the Irish earls fled northern Ireland, a group of disaffected Puritans in England made a similar decision to flee their homeland. In the last episode, we saw that the Puritans had proposed a series of changes to be made to the Anglican Church, but King James had rejected almost all of those proposals. Shortly afterwards, James had tried to suppress the private religious gatherings that the Puritans often engaged in. And he required communion in the Anglican Church at least three times a year. The Puritans were a target of some of the new rules because many Puritans didn’t make much of a distinction between the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church, so they didn’t want to be coerced into following the rules of the Anglican Church. [*SOURCE: Preceding the Mayflower, James P. Leynse, p.67.*]

One particular group of these hardline Puritans resided in and around the village of Scrooby in the Midlands of England. And one of their leaders named William Brewster was charged with disobeying the new religious requirements in the latter part of 1607. Faced with growing opposition from the authorities in England, Brewster encouraged his fellow Puritans to relocate across the Channel in the Netherlands. So they began making plans, and in the spring of the following year – 1608 – they left England and moved to Amsterdam. [*SOURCE: Preceding the Mayflower, James P. Leynse, p.77.*] They spent a year there before deciding to move again to the city of Leiden – a little south of Amsterdam. They remained there for the next ten years, but they never really felt at home in the Netherlands. After a decade, they decided to leave Leiden, but rather than returning home to England, they chose instead to relocate to North America. Of course, these are the people that are known in American history as the ‘Pilgrims.’ They arrived at Plymouth Rock in New England on board the Mayflower in 1620.

Now the details of this early Pilgrim settlement in Massachusetts will be discussed in a future episode when we get to the 1620s. But there is one aspect of that early settlement in New England that is important to the theme of this episode, and that is how settlement patterns shaped the dialects of various regions.

The Pilgrims founded the Plymouth Colony, which was followed a short time later by the Massachusetts Bay Colony and other colonial settlements in New England. As people began to migrate there from England, most of the new arrivals came from the counties in the southern and eastern parts of England. And that settlement pattern is notable because, if we combine that pattern with the other settlement patterns that we've explored in this episode, we can explain one of the most distinguishing features of Modern English accents, and that's why some accents are rhotic and some are not. So let me explain what I mean.

Rhoticity is a fancy linguistics term that refers to whether or not a speaker pronounces the 'r' sound after a vowel. I talked about this distinction back in Episode 160, but in case you don't remember that discussion, let me summarize it for you again. If the speakers of an accent pronounce the 'r' sound after a vowel, it is called a rhotic accent, and if the speakers don't pronounce the 'r' in that situation, it is called a non-rhotic accent. So for example if you pronounce words like *birth* and *carpenter* with distinct 'r' sounds as /birth/ or /car-pen-ter/, then you have a rhotic accent. Most Scottish, Irish, Canadian and American accents are rhotic. Not all, but the standard varieties are rhotic. But if you don't pronounce the 'r' sound in those words, or if you barely pronounce it, as /buth/ or /ca-pen-tuh/, then you have a non-rhotic accent. Most accents in England, Australia and New Zealand are non-rhotic. But why does this distinction exist in English, and why does it vary from one region to the next? Well, the answer has to do with migration patterns and some of the specific events discussed in this episode.

At one time, it appears that all English accents were rhotic. After all, words that have a letter [r] after a vowel are spelled that way for a reason. The [r] was once pronounced. The nature of that sound may have varied – so some people may have trilled it, and some people may have tapped it – but it was pronounced in those words. But based on spellings in surviving letters and other documents, it appears that some people in the southeastern counties of England started to drop the 'r' sound after vowels in the 1400s. And by the late 1500s, that non-rhotic pronunciation had become common in the east of England, but it was still largely confined to that region. Even in nearby London, the accent was still rhotic. Most scholars agree that Shakespeare spoke with a rhotic accent, not the non-rhotic accent that is usually used in performances of his plays today.

That means that accents in northern England and Scotland were rhotic. And when settlers from those regions migrated to northern Ireland in the early 1600s, they brought their rhotic accents with them. Later settlers in the southern parts of Ireland also tended to come from parts of England that were rhotic, which was still most of England at the time. So Irish English is firmly rhotic today.

Now when we look across the Atlantic to Jamestown, we know that the early settlers there came from the region around London and other parts of southern and western England. Many of them would have pronounced the 'r' sound after vowels, but there were probably speakers from the

eastern regions that didn't. So there was probably a mixture of rhotic and non-rhotic accents in the early settlements in Virginia and later in Charleston to the south. And accents in that part of the southern US have been mixed ever since, though the rhotic form has become more common with time.

In later decades, a large percentage of the settlers who arrived in the Mid-Atlantic parts of North America and in many places north of there were from the Midlands of England, as well as from the West Country and northern England. They spoke with rhotic accents, so American English and Canadian English had a strong rhotic feature from the beginning.

But the settlement in New England was an exception to that rule. As I noted a moment ago, much of the settlement in New England came from the eastern counties of England where Puritanism was especially strong. That also happened to be the region of England where people didn't tend to pronounce the 'r' sound after a vowel. And that form of speech was exported to New England. The accent that emerged there also tended to be non-rhotic. The classic New England accent that we associate with Boston is famously non-rhotic to this day. To use the classic example that everyone uses, that's why we hear 'paak the caa in Haavaad yaad,' instead of 'park your car in Harvard Yard.'

Now over the course of the 1700s, things started to change within England itself. This non-rhotic feature which had been largely confined to the eastern counties of England started to expand. It gradually spread westward and northward. London speech soon became non-rhotic, and thus standard British English also became non-rhotic. From there it continued to spread throughout England, so that today, only a few regions like parts of the West Country still retain that rhotic feature. Meanwhile, Australia and New Zealand were settled after this change had occurred in places like London and parts of the Midlands. Australian and New Zealand English were heavily influenced by the English spoken in the southeast of England, especially London and the surrounding areas. Since those areas had become non-rhotic by the time Australia and New Zealand were settled, the English spoken in Australia and New Zealand today also tends to be non-rhotic.

So we can trace this defining feature of Modern English accents to specific settlement patterns. And that's an important point as we move forward with the podcast. Regional accents tend to emerge naturally on their own over time, but they also occur when people who speak in a certain way settle together in the same region. So both of those factors contributed to the development of Modern English accents.

Now next time, we're going to look at another important development in history of English. And that's the King James version of the Bible. That translation was completed shortly after the events of this episode. During this same period, we also find the beginning of a new approach to observing and studying the world, and that approach led to the scientific revolution. So next time, we'll see how those important developments in science and religion influenced the English language.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.