



# A Kingdom Strange: The Brief and Tragic History of the Lost Colony of Roanoke

By James Horn

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In 1587, John White led 117 English men, women, and children to Roanoke Island, off the coast of North Carolina. They hoped to establish a British foothold in North America, but soon found themselves struggling to survive. White returned to England for help, but when he returned to Roanoke in 1590, the colonists were nowhere to be found: White never saw his friends or family again. But as James Horn reveals in *A Kingdom Strange*, some from the party survived; their descendants were discovered a century later, a living testament to America's remarkable origins.

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*By James Horn*

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. A leading historian of early Virginia, Horn (*A Land as God Made It*) relates the convoluted, fascinating story of the failed 1598 venture on Roanoke Island: a British settlement whose 100 men, women, and children disappeared without a trace. Horn teases from the record as no one before the Lost Colony of 1587, which had not even been intended to settle on the island. Horn recounts its travails, hostilities with the Indians, requests to England for support that failed to arrive for three years, by which time the settlers were gone. Based on the available evidence, Horn finds that the colonists did not die but intermarried with local Indians. Over a century later, a North Carolina settler, venturing to Roanoke Island, found Indians who claimed Englishmen among their ancestors (and some gray-eyed tribesmen seemed to support the claim). He places it all in the context of the political and economic tumult of the time for an outstanding historical mystery/adventure tale with an ending perhaps less tragic than historians have long believed. Illus. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Review

#### ***Kirkus Reviews***

“[Horn] creates an engaging, you-are-there feel to the narrative, with rich descriptions of European politics, colonists’ daily struggles and the vagaries of relations between Native American tribes.... A satisfying recounting of some of the earliest American history.”

#### **Daniel B. Smith, co-author of *The Shipwreck That Saved Jamestown: The Sea Venture Castaways and the Fate of America***

“With impressive research and nuanced understanding of early Virginia, James Horn has crafted a vivid and lucid account of the mysterious history of the lost colony of Roanoke. *A Kingdom Strange* delivers the definitive treatment of a fascinating story from England’s earliest explorations in the New World—a story long on speculation and intrigue, but until now, short on evidence and historical truth.”

#### **Peter C. Mancall, author of *The Fatal Journey: The Final Expedition of Henry Hudson***

“With deep research and precise prose, James Horn has come closer to finding the “lost” English colonists of Roanoke than any previous historian. *A Kingdom Strange*, a superb reconstruction of grand dreams and dashed hopes, overflows with new insights about the very real human consequences of the encounter between Europeans and Native Americans.”

#### ***Washington Post***

“The fate of the Lost Colony is a mystery at the heart of the nation’s founding, chock full of odd characters, conspiracy theories, strange turns of events – even enigmatic carvings left behind on trees. James Horn resists the temptation to sensationalize any of that in his new book, *A Kingdom Strange*. Instead [he] has written a lucid and readable account of the Roanoke colony and the forces that created it. He makes a persuasive case for what must have happened to the settlers.”

#### ***Christian Science Monitor***

“Horn has done a magnificent job of researching the mystery of England’s ‘lost’ colony, crafting a compelling narrative that places the luckless settlers in the middle of a global, imperial struggle between Spain and England.... Horn’s winning account is a gripping adventure story about global ambition,

individual hardship, and an unsolved historical mystery.”

### ***The Weekly Standard***

“The strength of [Horn’s] approach to his subject lies in his mastery of sources. He shuns the layers of secondary works that, after four centuries, have piled up rumors and half-truths on top of one another. Instead, he prizes only documents written close to the events he relates. Even without the embellishments of popular writers, this is still a story of overweening ambition, heartbreak, greed, and repeated failure that only much later, and in ways unimagined by the original advocates, stamped Britain’s culture and power on North America.”

### ***Chicago Sun-Times***

“Horn’s book can be approached in one of two primary ways: As a saga of the indomitable human will attempting to conquer sometimes balky nature, or as a saga of poorly prepared dreamers about to place themselves in the path of death.... For already existing enthusiasts of colonial history, Horn’s research is quite likely to fascinate. For readers who have never [paid] close attention to colonial history, Horn’s narrative might result in converts.”

### ***Seattle Times***

### ***Richmond Times Dispatch***

“[A] fascinating new book.... Horn’s theory is well researched and compelling, but *A Kingdom Strange* isn’t a narrowly focused work aimed solely at specialists. He has done yeoman’s work describing the political and economic reasons for creating an English colony in the New World, as well as exploring the Indian communities into which the colonists stepped.... Forget toting James Patterson’s thrillers to the Outer Banks this summer. Pack a copy of *A Kingdom Strange* instead. It’s far more enthralling than what passes for standard beach-reading material.”

### ***Roanoke Times***

“Horn’s skill as a historian is amplified by his ability to craft a story.... By the time you finish the prologue, you will not want to stop reading, and as you read, you will discover some of the cultural roots that gave birth to a quirky nation. You will also become aware of the challenges of expanding an economy on a global scale without the support of satellite communication and instant messaging.”

### ***Associated Press***

“Exhaustively researched, Horn’s book sheds new light on the colony’s purpose and the social backgrounds of the settlers and offers a new theory or two about where they went.... [I]t’s worth getting lost in.”

### About the Author

**James Horn** is Colonial Williamsburg's vice president for research and historical interpretation and the Abby and George O'Neill Director of the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library. Author or editor of four books on colonial and early American history, he lives in Williamsburg, Virginia.

### **Users Review**

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#### **Carmen Jensen:**

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