



# **The Virginia Adventure: Roanoke to James Towne: An Archaeological and Historical Odyssey**

*Ivor Noel Hume*

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For thirty-five years, as writer, lecturer, and chief archaeologist at Colonial Williamsburg, Ivor Noel Hume has enlivened for us the material culture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America. After his warmly praised book *Martin's Hundred*, he now turns to the two earliest English outposts in Virginia -- Roanoke and James Towne -- and pieces together revelatory information extrapolated from the shards and postholes of excavations at these sites with contemporary accounts found in journals, letters, and official records of the period. He illuminates narratives that have a mythic status in our early history: the exploits of Sir Walter Raleigh, Captain John Smith, and Powhatan; the life and death of Pocahontas; and the disappearance of the Roanoke colony. He recounts a recent important excavation at Roanoke where he and his colleagues found the work site of a metallurgist named Joachim Gans, whose findings about the mineral wealth of Virginia helped to convince London merchants that America was a worthy risk. This is an account of high and low adventure, of noble efforts and base impulses, and of the inevitably tragic interactions between Indians and Europeans, marked by greed, treachery, and commonplace savagery on both sides. The astonishment of this history is that despite bad luck, bad management, and bad blood, the English presence in America persisted and the Virginia settlements survived as the birthplace of a country founded on English law and language.

With clarity, authority, and elegant wit, Noel Hume has enhanced our understanding of the historical forces and principal players behind England's first perilous ventures into the New World, and proved again that he is without a doubt one of the great interpreters of our early colonial past.

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