



The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke

Andrew Lawler

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A sweeping account of a four-hundred-year-old mystery, the archeologists racing to unearth the answer, and what the Lost Colony reveals about America--from colonial days to today

In 1587, 115 men, women, and children arrived on Roanoke, an island off the coast of North Carolina. Chartered by Queen Elizabeth I, their colony was to establish a foothold for England in the New World. But by the time the colony's leader, John White, returned to Roanoke from a resupply mission in England, his settlers were nowhere to be found. They had vanished into the wilderness, leaving behind only a single clue--the word "Croatoan" carved into a tree.

The disappearance of the Lost Colony became an enduring American mystery. For four centuries, it has gone unsolved, obsessing countless historians, archeologists, and amateur sleuths. Today, after centuries of searching in vain, new clues have begun to surface. In *The Secret Token*, Andrew Lawler offers a beguiling history of the Lost Colony, and of the relentless quest to bring its fate to light. He accompanies competing archeologists as they seek out evidence, each team hoping to be the first to solve the riddle. In the course of his journey, Lawler explores how the Lost Colony came to haunt our national consciousness, working its way into literature, popular culture, and politics.

Incisive and absorbing, *The Secret Token* offers a new understanding not just of the Lost Colony, but of how its absence continues to define--and divide--America.

The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke Details

Date : Published June 5th 2018 by Doubleday

ISBN :

Author : Andrew Lawler

Format : Kindle Edition 448 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History, Mystery, Historical, Archaeology

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From Reader Review The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke for online ebook

Geoffrey says

(Note: I received an advanced electronic copy of this book courtesy of NetGalley)

Due to my being born and raised a New Englander, my education on the "founding" of America focused quite heavily on Pilgrims and Puritans. The Roanoke Colony was nothing more than the briefest of mentions in textbooks about Sir Walter Raleigh, a few folks vanishing, and a strange place name carved onto a tree. So to put it bluntly, until now I had absolutely no idea - no idea about the history of the short-lived colony, no idea about the obsession that has so fiercely gripped many a person and driven them to strive so hard to try and discover what happened to a particular band of English settlers in the Outer Banks, no idea about the myriad and often directly opposing meanings that the attempted colony has held for people both past and present, just no idea whatsoever.

Thankfully, Andrew Lawler turned out to be the absolute perfect guide to the Lost Colony and its incredibly rich mix of history, mystery, and controversy. He leaves no stone unturned as goes on a voyage of discovery that is exhaustive in its coverage of all matters of the Lost Colony, but never to the point where it inundates or confuses. Although he travels everywhere from Tudor-era London to a room filled with forged stone carvings and he covers topics ranging from racial identity to early American feminism, his clarity of writing ensures that the reader sticks right by his side from start to finish.

This is an absolutely captivating read that does its subject matter full justice with a passionate thoroughness. There's little doubt in this reader mind that that author's very own "Lost Colony Syndrome" will infect no small amount of people with a newfound fascination with the missing settlers of Roanoke Island.

Ionia says

When I first saw this book, I thought..."Oh. Another Roanoke book." To my surprise and delight, this is anything but 'just another Roanoke book.'

The incredible amount of research and detail that went into this book is obvious from the moment you begin reading it. Rather than just diving straight into the mystery of the missing colony as so many authors have done before, this author carefully examines what happened, how it all started and explains for the reader the how and why that generally gets lost in the more sensational accounts of these events.

I was greatly impressed by all the information this book clarifies for the audience and how the author handled the various theories on what happened so long ago and why it may have happened. The book is written sensibly and logically, but also in a manner that is truly engaging and makes the reader want to know more about the subject.

Fascinating and absorbing, this is a book that I would recommend to scholars and the general public alike. A great starting point for anyone wanting to know more about early American colonisation.

This review based on a complimentary copy from the publisher, provided through Netgalley. All opinions

are my own.

KC says

This is the telling of the colonists of Roanoke Island who in 1587 sailed from England to the coast of North Carolina but mystery surrounds this story. All 115 men, women and children were never to be seen or heard from again. A through account divided up into three sections, author Andrew Lawler dives deep into the history of his childhood fascination that surrounds the Lost Colony. An extremely interesting topic that is still very relevant today.

Shellie Taylor says

I have always had a soft spot when it comes to the mystery of the Lost Colony of Roanoke. I mean, who doesn't like a good mystery?? Historically the oldest unsolved mystery in American history, the Roanoke colony of English settlers that arrived off the North Carolina coast in 1587 disappeared and was never heard from again. When Governor John White went back on a resupply mission in 1590 his family and fellow countrymen were nowhere to be found. Centuries later, the legendary Dare Stone would be found by a mysterious traveler allegedly inscribed by Eleanor Dare, John White's daughter, recounting a harrowing survival from a hostile native tribe. By the time the stone was found, the legend of Eleanor Dare and her daughter Virginia, the first European child born in the Americas, had already swept through the country.

Andrew Lawler brings to life not only the story, but the tales that have emerged since the sixteenth century. He brings together indisputable facts and archaeological evidence, questionable artifacts, professional and conspiracy theories, as well as DNA and scientific studies to put together a vivid picture of Elizabethan life and projects a firm and highly potential idea about what actually happened to the colonists. However, he does much more than that. Lawler draws together all these elements and ties it in to today's world. He makes this story relevant. He makes us care (as if we don't already) about this part of American history. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a good mystery, fiction or nonfiction, and anyone who has a fascination with the Roanoke colony. Pick it up and you won't want to put it down.

Now I'm ready for someone to make a blockbuster movie about Virginia Dare based on this book's research.....

Caitie says

The Lost Colony of Roanoke has always fascinated me. It's amazing how a group of people could just vanish off the face of the earth. Obviously there are theories about what actually happened to them, they were either killed or assimilated with the local Indians (in recent years there have even been speculation that they were abducted by aliens). However there is no real evidence to prove any of these things. The colony has become a slightly bizarre historical footnote. John White, the leader of the colony venture, didn't seem terribly concerned about the colonists even though his daughter and granddaughter were among the missing. It literally started raining and he decided to call off the search. For a guy who was supposedly responsible for these people he didn't care very much, and didn't come back for three years (which wasn't entirely his fault, but still). Anyway, the author points out that we'll probably never truly know what happened because it's

been too long.

Nancy Oakes says

As much as I enjoyed this book, it needs a home. If you're in the US and you want it, it's yours and I'll pay postage. Just let me know.

<http://www.nonfictionrealstuff.com/20...>

I am fascinated by mystery stories, and they don't have to be fictional to capture my interest. This goes back to my childhood when I would read anything and everything, fiction and nonfiction alike. Fictional mysteries are the heart and soul of my reading life, but "real" mysteries are equally as fascinating-- I'm talking about the kind of mysteries that may not be answered in my lifetime but are still embedded somewhere in my brain. For me, the fate of the "lost colony" of Roanoke was another such real mystery stemming from childhood, and I joined the ranks of lost colony obsessives. But while I may be obsessed, I'm still picky about what I read and even more so about what I think is plausible, so when I saw that Andrew Lawler (an author I trust whose work I've read many times in *The Smithsonian*) had published a book about it, I couldn't push that buy button quickly enough. It is an informative, thought provoking and downright captivating book that any Roanoke obsessive must read, unless, of course, you're of the alien abduction or yes, even zombie crowd who thrive on more out-there sort of theories.

At one point I had to laugh when the author describes how his work had gone "beyond professional diligence and into very obsession" that he'd seen in others. As he says,

"The real power exerted by the lost Colonists was not in archives or archaeological trenches but in the stories they spawned,"

so there will continue to be people who, despite the facts presented here, will continue to spin their own ideas or who will further the myths behind one of the most intriguing mysteries in our history.

Bottom line: it's fascinating stuff and Lawler is the right person to put it all together. Very highly recommended.

Casey Wheeler says

I received a free Kindle copy of *The Secret Token* by Andrew Lawler courtesy of Net Galley and Doubleday Books, the publisher. It was with the understanding that I would post a review on Net Galley, Goodreads, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and my fiction book review blog. I also posted it to my Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google Plus pages.

I requested this book as all I really know about the lost colony of Roanoke is antidotal and I have never read anything about the details. This is the first book by Andrew Lawler that I have read.

The subtitle "Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke" is an accurate description of the book. Lawler has done a very good job of researching the subject and presenting the many potential outcomes without pushing hard for one of the theories of what happened to the colony. Although he did indicate his belief in the final chapter of the book which I happen to agree with.

I found this book to be interesting and an easy read. The author did not get bogged down in presenting the history surrounding the colony since its disappearance.

I recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in the early settlement of North America and in the lost colony of Roanoke in particular.

Daniel Greear says

America's oldest mystery is the Roanoke Colony disappearance. For a long time, many have been entranced by what happened to 115 odd English settlers in the Outer Banks of North Carolina in the 1580s. I became obsessed with the disappearance after I saw the outdoor drama when I was a kid. The Lost Colony has long sat in the back of my mind but this book, along with the recent revelation that the Dare Stone may be authentic, has reignited my interest.

I won't spoil too much of this book as I would highly recommend anyone to read it, but I will say that Lawler hits the story and the evidence from all angles. From personal accounts of the failed colony, to DNA, and to archaeology, Lawler plants a pretty good seed in one's mind as to what happened, but he leaves you with your own thoughts at the end.

This is a frustrating mystery because we just don't know what happened and we just can't seem to find the big kahuna of clues. Hopefully the Dare Stone and subsequent archaeology will finally find graves of the settlers or other clues, until then we are left to wonder. I found Lawler's book to be well-written and informative. As stated above, he covers all bases.

Amanda Roa says

A historical page turner.

Looking back at the complex story of The Lost Colony was riveting. I was only vaguely aware of the story until this book. Well written, well researched and thoroughly reviewed from all angles, I would recommend this account of early American history to anyone interested in how those early days shaped our American society. The chapter on Virginia Dare and how various groups have romanticized her and used her as an iconic symbol to represent their particular views was especially insightful.

Buck Edwards says

In 'The Secret Token', Andrew Lawler takes us on the scenic route--no short cuts, just every dead end in the search for concrete evidence, but oh, what a ride. Four centuries of characters appearing and reappearing, with theories, hunches, and swamps of trinkets left as a trail. But a trail to what? To Lawler's five

possibilities.

More, it is the refreshing realization, that after science has been exhausted, our imaginative hunches are not far off target. Virginia Dare may or may not have lived a full life, but she lives still in a landscape of hypostasis. She is the Anastasia of Roanoke, or the Elvis at the gas station. She lives in our imaginations. And Lawler has helped keep her there.

If there is a 'secret token' to this book, it is that we are all pretty much the same. We've come too far, around too many genealogical bends to find ourselves a pure race. We are all races, at least in the DNA of this country.

Patrick Pope says

Excellent discussion of the search for the Lost Colony from 1500's to present with a discussion of how our ideas have changed, concluding with a logical explanation. A short article by the author based on the book was in National Geographic Magazine June 2018.

Eric says

If you like true mysteries, conspiracy theories, or adventures, this book will hit your buttons. It's a real page turner, and it's well enough researched and thought out to give some interesting and thought provoking insights into American attitudes concerning racial integration, mixing & melding, and how they have changed over the centuries. I'll recommend this book to many friends.

Graham says

I admit to knowing nothing about the subject matter before I read this, but then sometimes that's the best way. THE SECRET TOKEN is a non-fiction documentation of the 'Lost Colony' legend of Roanoke; namely a group of Elizabethan settlers who vanished from Roanoke island in the three-year period it took British explorers to return to the area. The book is very much set up as providing answers to this enduring mystery, but I found it disappointingly vague and superficial.

The first half of the book recounts the well-known historical adventure, repeating it twice for some reason, but nonetheless this is the most interesting, academic-feeling part of the story. Later on, Lawler travels around interviewing local people and seeking archaeological evidence, as well as exploring museum documents and the like. He never finds anything concrete, only sharing some increasingly bizarre explanations, seeming to attract kooks and discredited figures wherever he goes. I found an inordinate amount of pages given over to open fakery and charlatans, perhaps done to pad out the book a little. It doesn't add up to very much come the end, and I admit to feeling rather let down as a result.

Susan (the other Susan) says

Fascinating product of determined journalism. The so-called "Lost Colony" is a romantic legend that enabled

white supremacists - as early as the mid-1800s - to deny the likelihood that survivors among the abandoned Roanoke colonists intermingled with Native Americans and later with Africans who took refuge among the coastal tribes. They weren't lost; they just chose to survive in a way that was ideologically unacceptable.
