

## HORACE JAMES AND THE ROANOKE ISLAND FREEDMEN'S COLONY

In April 1863, Major General John G. Foster, commander of the Eighteenth Army Corps, appointed the Reverend Horace James, an army chaplain from Worcester, Massachusetts, to be “Superintendent of all the Blacks” in the Department of North Carolina. In May, Foster ordered James to help establish an organized “colony of negroes on Roanoke Island.”

Prior to his appointment, James, an evangelical Congregationalist who had been the minister of the Old South Church of Worcester, was serving in the elected position of regimental chaplain of the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. He was an outspoken supporter of free public schools, temperance, and antislavery. He considered himself a follower of traditional republican (with a small “r”) values, but frequently his ideas seemed as radical as any of the Radical Republicans in Congress at the time. In particular, he believed that slaveholding was a sin, that all people should own their own labor, and that black men should be granted political equality with white men. Like many of his fellow evangelists, he did not, however, believe in the social equality of all people.

### Projects:

1. Research the Second Great Awakening and nineteenth-century benevolence. Discuss the relationship among revivalism, evangelicalism, social reform, and benevolence in the mid-nineteenth century.
2. Read chapters 2 and 3 of *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867* to gather more insight into Horace James. Describe how his ideas reflected evangelical beliefs that were common in New England during the 1840's, 1850's, and 1860's. What did James mean when he wrote about his hopes for the “regeneration” of the South? How did James's beliefs reflect the intersection of abolition, evangelicalism, and republicanism?
3. Read Horace James's Letter to the Public, 27 June 1863. Who were the intended residents of the Roanoke Island colony? What was the relationship of the colony to General Edward A. Wild's African Brigade? Why did the military authorities choose Roanoke Island to be the site of the colony? What do the materials that James requested for the colony suggest about his intentions for the colony? What did James mean by “NEW SOCIAL ORDER IN THE SOUTH”? What else does this letter tell you about James's motivations?
4. Read Horace James's Letter to *The Congregationalist*, 5 September 1863. James wrote this letter after completing an inspection of the Roanoke Island freedmen's colony. Describe the colony and the order that James was creating there, the “African village of grand proportions.” Why was James so enthusiastic about the freedpeople building homes? What does James mean

by “the foundations of new empire”? Discuss James’s use of metaphor in describing the colony and the colonists’ work there. What is James’s overall assessment of the colony’s future? Do you think he was planning for the colony to be permanent?