



James Gray Percy Fawcett David Grann

The Lost City Of Z

In 1925, renowned explorer Percy Fawcett ventured into the Amazon in search of a lost civilization and vanished. Over the intervening decades, hundreds of would-be rescuers, Fawcett obsessives, and glory-seekers set out to track him, many meeting a similar fate. But in 2005, a New York-based writer, David Grann, picked up his trail afresh and followed a series of clues to an incredible new discovery. Now, Fawcett's story is a major motion picture, shot partly in the Amazon by intrepid screenwriter and director James Gray. Even in the forest's adverse conditions, Gray insisted on using 35mm film—a rare choice in today's digital age. Thousands of years of civilization. Hundreds of miles of rainforest. Three visionaries. Discover "The Lost City of Z."

HOVER TO READ

FOLLOW THE VINES to explore a timeline one hundred years in the making.

Percy Fawcett THE EXPLORER



A quintessential Edwardian explorer, Lieutenant Colonel Percival Harrison Fawcett was a decorated hero of the First World War as well as a renowned geographer, archaeologist, and cartographer whose work redefined the map of South America.

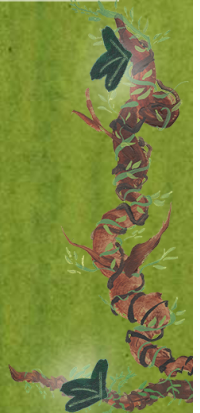
In 1886, he received his commission as an officer of the Royal Artillery, serving in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where he met and married Nina Agnes Paterson. The independent, strong-willed daughter of a colonial judge, Nina advocated for women's rights and would become Fawcett's staunchest supporter. The couple had three children: Jack (born 1903), Brian (born 1906), and Joan (born 1910).

In 1901, Fawcett graduated from the Royal Geographical Society's training program as an explorer skilled in surveying, navigation, first aid, and a variety of survival skills like foraging for food. Five years later, the Society recruited Fawcett to map the uncharted territory on the borders of Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil. This successful expedition led to several more. Fawcett became renowned for his dedication, endurance, and dauntless courage, and newspapers across the globe followed his adventures.

Fawcett was an outspoken opponent of the destruction of native cultures through colonization. He became fascinated by the rich legends and traditions of local tribes,

"My experience is

AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN
 > Virtually immune to yellow fever, malaria, and other tropical diseases
 > Able to trek up to 12 hours a day
 > Completed one expedition nearly a year ahead of schedule



that few of these savages are naturally 'bad,' unless contact with 'savages' from the outside world has made them so."

-PERCY FAWCETT

by the shards of delicate ancient pottery he'd seen along the mouth of the Amazon, and by the mysterious raised mounds of earth scattered through the rainforest.

In 1911, Fawcett once again left his home and family to return to the Amazon and chart hundreds of miles of unexplored jungle, accompanied by his trusted, longtime exploring companion, Henry Costin and biologist and polar explorer James Murray. He also developed a theory that the ruins of an ancient city, which he named "Z," lay hidden in the jungle.

Fawcett was actively mapping out a route to find Z when the First World War began. Though nearly 50 years old, he volunteered for the front in Flanders, and was ultimately awarded the Distinguished Service Order medal. In 1920, he resumed his search for Z, embarking on an expedition that ended in 1921 at what he called Dead Horse Camp where, delirious with fever, he shot his ailing horse and retreated in defeat.



Fawcett (foreground right) and his men during their search for the source of the Rio Verde in 1908.

COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

In 1925, Fawcett set out from Dead Horse Camp again on another expedition to find Z, accompanied by his son Jack and Jack's best friend, Raleigh Rimell. After short stays at a government outpost and a native village, they entered the dense rainforest and disappeared into myth.

Over the remainder of the twentieth century, dozens of expeditions tried and failed to discover what had become of Fawcett and his party.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

100

people, at least, have disappeared following Fawcett's trail.

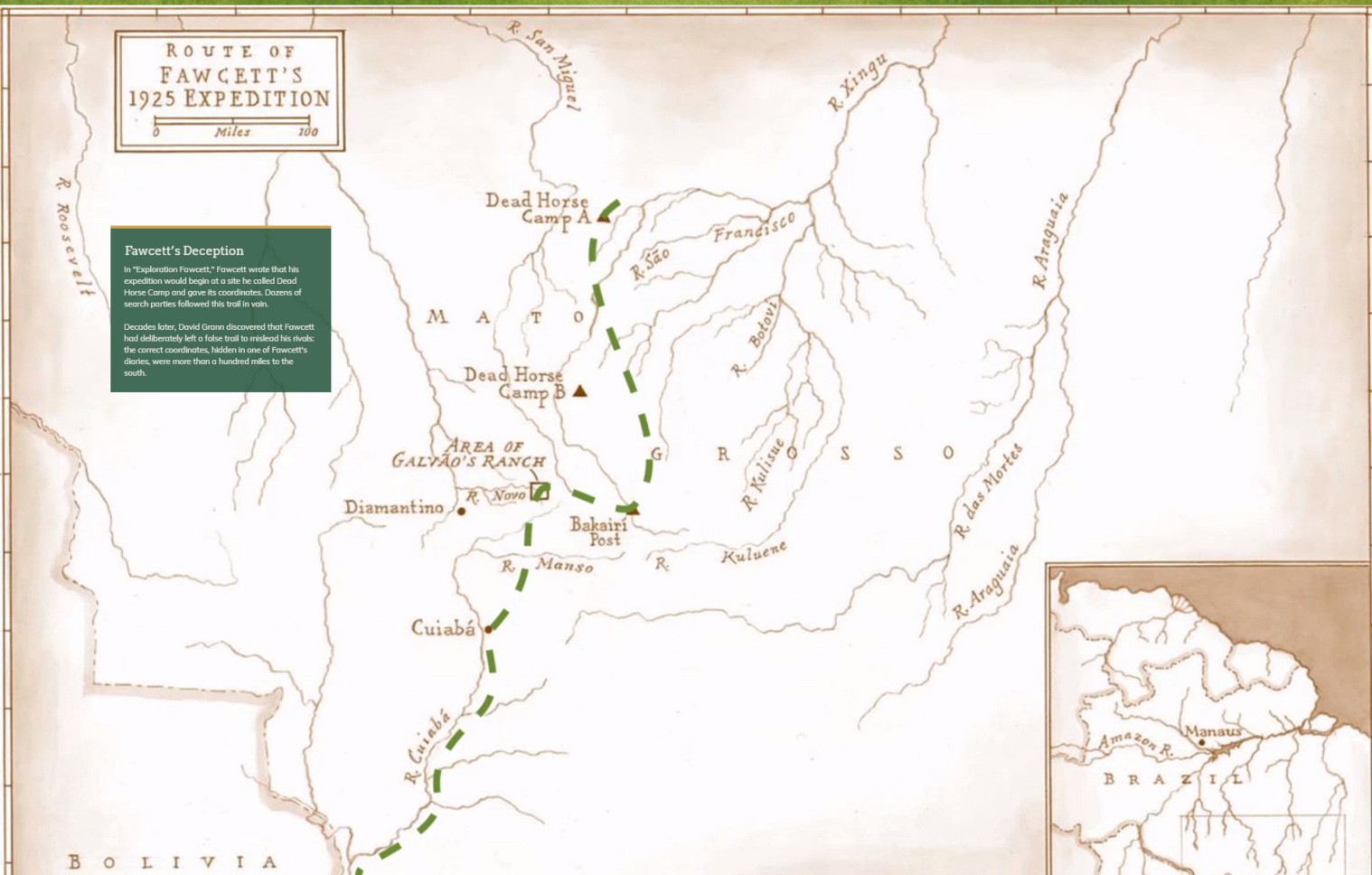
ROUTE OF FAWCETT'S 1925 EXPEDITION

0 Miles 100

Fawcett's Deception

In "Exploration Fawcett," Fawcett wrote that his expedition would begin at a site he called Dead Horse Camp and gave its coordinates. Dozens of search parties followed this trail in vain.

Decades later, David Grinn discovered that Fawcett had deliberately left a false trail to mislead his rivals: the correct coordinates, hidden in one of Fawcett's diaries, were more than a hundred miles to the south.





— Coordinates from "Exploration Fawcett"
 — Coordinates from Fawcett's Diary



David Grann THE AUTHOR



Best-selling author and *New Yorker* staff writer David Grann is not an adventurer. He doesn't even like camping. Yet, in 2005, he found himself taking out a second life insurance policy and travelling to the Amazon on a hunt for Fawcett and Z.

Grann's quest began when, while researching a story on the strange death of a Sherlock Holmes expert, he came across a reference to Fawcett and his role in inspiring Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Lost World." The more he read about Fawcett, the more intrigued he became by the explorer and by the idea that an ancient, sophisticated civilization could have existed in the pre-Columbian Amazon basin. Grann has always been drawn to stories about ordinary people who, in single-minded pursuit of a goal, have accomplished extraordinary things. He had to know what had happened to the explorer.

Grann looked for clues in articles, letters, diaries, maps, and books, including "Exploration Fawcett," a collection of Percy's writings published by his son Brian in 1953 which included the coordinates for Dead Horse Camp, the starting point for almost every search party that had followed Fawcett.

With an obsession now equal to his subject's, the writer travelled to London to visit the Royal Geographical Society's archives. Here he found confidential correspondence from Fawcett indicating that the coordinates he'd shared may have been falsified to throw rival explorers off his trail. Grann also met with Fawcett's granddaughter, Rolette de Montet-Guerin, persuading her to give him access to her grandfather's private papers. Buried within them, he found a log from 1921 containing the true coordinates for Dead Horse Camp. With this, Grann realized he needed to make his own journey to the Amazon—and he knew where to start, using directions that others had never seen.

"While most of my articles seem unrelated, they typically have one common thread: obsession. They are about ordinary people driven to do extraordinary things—things that most of us would never dare—who get some germ of an idea in their heads that metastasizes until it consumes them."

—DAVID GRANN

With the help of a guide, Grann retraced the party's footsteps and emerged with a story, published in *The New Yorker* in September 2005. Writing the article only deepened Grann's obsession with Fawcett's story and in 2009 he published his first book, "The Lost City of Z," which became a national best-seller.

The following year, Grann published a follow-up piece in *The New Yorker* on subsequent discoveries in the Amazon made possible by clear-cutting of the rainforest and advanced satellite imagery. Just over a century after Fawcett became convinced that the City of Z existed, the lost city had finally been found.

The iconoclastic explorer—and the equally obsessive writer who followed his trail—had been proven right.

A DEEPENING OBSESSION
 "Something interesting happened. Every time I'd ever finished a *New Yorker* story before, I didn't want to look at the subject again; I didn't want to think about it again. This was the first time I finished a piece that only deepened my obsession instead of satisfying it. I still had questions. There were places I still wanted to go. Doors just kept opening and that's when I thought, 'I have to do this as a book.'"

FROM THE NEW YORKER

David Grann uncovers the story of "Z"

SEPTEMBER 19, 2005

"THE LOST CITY OF Z"

The story that started it all.

JANUARY 7, 2010

"UNDER THE JUNGLE"

New discoveries shine a light on Fawcett's theories.

FEBRUARY 26, 2009

"THE EXCHANGE: DAVID GRANN"

A Q&A with Grann about his book

THE VANISHING CANOPY

In Portuguese, Mato Grosso means "thick bushes." But over the last 50 years, the site of Fawcett's last expedition has lost nearly 20% of its forest.

769,311 SQUARE
KILOMETERS
OF RAINFOREST LOST
TO DATE, A LARGER
AREA THAN THE
STATE OF TEXAS

James Gray

THE SCREENWRITER +
DIRECTOR



Known as a classical storyteller and director, James Gray likes a challenge. Adapting and filming Fawcett's story—encompassing Edwardian England, the First World War, and the Amazon rainforest—was certainly that.

As a filmmaker, Gray has always been interested in how people find their place in society and in the world at large. In Fawcett, Gray saw a remarkably tenacious man who devoted himself to a cause and sacrificed everything for it. Fawcett was also deeply conflicted, torn between the demands of family and exploration—an internal struggle that Gray found inherently dramatic. To Gray, Fawcett and his fellow explorers were the superheroes of their day, their feats of endurance and daring as astonishing then as those of the astronauts Gray grew up watching in the 1960s.

Telling Fawcett's story would require a broad canvas stretching from the United Kingdom to the Amazonian rainforest, so the director set out on an expedition of his own.



Gray and his crew brave the Colombian jungle for a six-week shoot.

COURTESY OF AMAZON STUDIOS AND BLEECKER STREET.

To make the movie feel as authentic as possible, Gray insisted on shooting on location and with 35mm film. These emphatic choices created significant challenges for the filmmaker, his cast, and crew. By 2015, much of the rainforest Fawcett trekked through in Brazil was long gone, depleted by logging or replaced by farmland. So Gray and his crew recreated the explorer's last journey by filming in dense rainforest in Colombia.

It was a taxing six-week shoot. Without Internet access, the production had to rely on satellite phones. Shooting on 35mm film also meant that Gray had to wait for each day's takes to make their way from Colombia to the United Kingdom to be processed before he could review the footage. A consummate creative, Gray set up an elaborate routine to ship, process, and review the film in production. In the end, his use of film saved the movie. The intense humidity of the jungle eventually rendered his computers useless, so a digital process would not have survived in the "green hell" that Gray, his cast, and crew barely survived themselves.

The challenges they all endured aptly reflect the story the film tells of a man driven to sacrifice everything to discover

the truth. For Gray, the goal was to both discover and reveal larger human truths, beyond the existence or location of the lost city itself, touching on what motivates us to persevere and proceed, sometimes against all odds. "I hope 'The Lost City of Z' becomes an emotional experience that moves audiences and suggests, in the end, some kind of transcendence," he said.

"I try to forget about what's in the current discussion and think about what it is that is pretty basic to being a person... Mortality is what we grapple with, what's really at the core of our struggle is our awareness that we're going to die. Every work of art has that as a key component."

-JAMES GRAY

A TRUE MARRIAGE OF MINDS
As is often the case in my films, 'The Lost City of Z' examines the dynamics of family. I was particularly drawn to the affable bond between Percy and his dedicated wife, Nina.

WATCH THE EXCLUSIVE FEATURETTE

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THE
LOST
CITY
OF
Z

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#TheLostCityofZ



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