

KINGDOM OF ROME — ERA SUMMARY

753 TO 510 B.C.

FOUNDING OF ROME TO EXILE OF TARQUINS

The stories surrounding the earliest years of the kingdom of Rome are steeped in legend, but they add much romance and interest to the history of the city that grew to be the capital of the western world. According to legend, the founder of Rome was [Romulus](#), son of Mars and descended from Venus on his mother's side. After a dramatic childhood, during which they were raised by humble shepherds, Romulus and his twin brother Remus discovered they were of royal descent and decided to found a city on the hill on which they spent their youth.

In order to attract citizens to come and live in his city, Romulus declared Rome a sanctuary. Men in debt; slaves ill-treated by their masters, criminals on the lam, all were granted citizenship and protected from their enemies. In this manner, Rome grew quickly. Romulus solved the problem of a severe shortage of women by kidnapping maidens from the surrounding villages. This unsurprisingly caused wars with many of Rome's neighbors, most importantly the Sabines. The happy outcome of the [War with the Sabines](#), however, proved to be the joining of the two nations into one. The Sabines were given one of the hills of Rome to settle, and after the rule of Romulus the well-respected Sabine philosopher, [Numa Pompilius](#), became king.

Numa's reign was long and prosperous for Rome. The city had already established itself as a warlike nation, always ready to defend and expand its territory. Numa, however, sought peace with Rome's neighbors and improved general piety and morals. He was responsible for creating the calendar, declaring early Roman holidays, and establishing worship customs, including the roles of priests and the vestal virgins. However, the king who followed Numa was the warlike [Tullus Hostilius](#), who declared war on Alba and established Rome's predominance over Alba as the foremost city in Latium. Hostilius was followed by [Ancus Marcius](#), son of the peaceful Numa Pompilius, who like his father sought peace with the surrounding kingdoms.

Ancus died in 616 B.C., and for the following century, the throne was held by the Tarquin family, who were not native Romans but rather of Greek and Etruscan heritage. The first two Tarquin kings, [Tarquin the Elder](#), and [Servius Tullius](#) were worthy kings who did much good for



TARQUIN AND THE SIBYLLINE BOOKS

the city. Under their reigns the swamp in the center of Rome was drained and the Forum was built. They constructed many public building surrounding the Forum, which became the market-place and seat of city government. The Tarquins also built the Circus Maximus for chariot racing and sporting events, and Servius built the Servian wall, which encompassed all Seven Hills of Rome. Servius was known for passing laws that favored the poor, which made him unpopular with many of the wealthier citizens. He was ultimately murdered by his own daughter and her husband, a son of the Elder Tarquin. This younger Tarquin, known as [Tarquin Superbus](#), or Tarquin the Proud, then seized the throne. After an oppressive reign of twenty-five years, he was exiled by a group of outraged citizens after his son was accused of assaulting [Lucretia](#), a Roman noblewoman.

[Junius Brutus](#) and [Publicola](#) led the effort to oust the Tarquins, and were early consuls and heroes of the republic. Their courageous leadership helped foster unity during the first rocky years, and both made great personal sacrifices for the good of the state. During these first critical years, Rome's enemies allied themselves with the exiled Tarquin Superbus and marched against Rome, with the object of restoring him to the throne. [Horatius](#) and [Mucius Scaevola](#) were both heroes of the war against [Lars Porsena](#), an Etruscan general who was allied with Tarquin. The first phase of the [War against the Tarquii](#) was brought to a quick close, leaving the government of Rome securely in the hands of the Senate. But the Tarquin family continued to make alliances with other enemies of Rome, and it was not until the *Battle of Lake Regillus*, nearly ten years later, that the last of Tarquins were finally defeated.