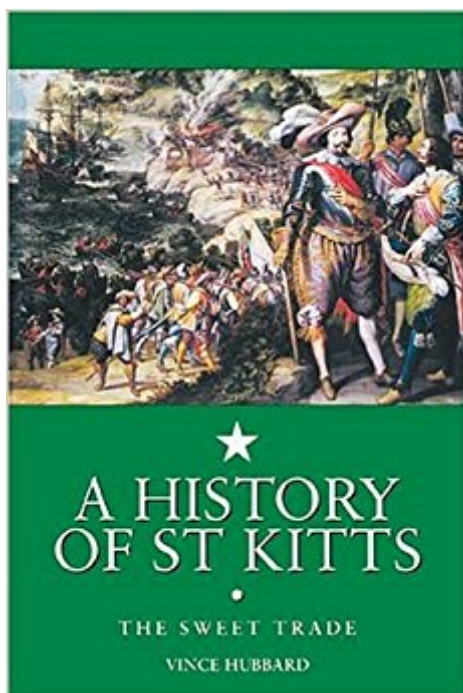


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A History Of St. Kitts: The Sweet Trade



Synopsis

History of the first British colony in the West Indies.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Vincent K. Hubbard moved to the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis in 1985 where he started an offshore financial services company and became active in the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society. He was President for a total of six years. Swords, Ships and Sugar (his history of Nevis) was first published in 1991 and is now in its seventh edition. He retired from day to day business activity in 1995 and has been writing, traveling and researching local history ever since.

I got this book because we planned to go to St. Kitts for vacation and I wanted something more interesting than "Sandy Beaches of Caribbean's" or "Where to Eat on St. Kitts" kind of books. This is what I looked for and it fulfilled my curiosity for history of this small island. Most of the people don't want to spend time learning about people and places before they go for vacation - so you see people from New Jersey with skies on their cars while visiting Montreal in July or Texans asking Parisian waiter about French salad dressings or expecting to see cheering people on the streets of Baghdad. Anyway, it is interesting to see how lives of people were influenced on this very exotic place. This book tells a lot about last 400 years history of this place. It's written in easy and interesting manner. It talks about pirates and rich sugar plantations, German U-boats and first president who was a socialist. I would only prefer to have a bit more about last 30-40 years of island history. We just changed our plans and we will go to St. Lucia instead, and it's really bad there is no another Vincent Hubbard living there to learn more about that island. I might consider moving there,

open scuba diving place and start writing books about St. Lucia history - just as Vincent Hubbard did at St. Kitts and Nevis.

Epigram from Vince Hubbard's Foreword by Captain Southey: "The history of the West Indies presents little more than a melancholy series of calamities and crimes." Chronological History of the West Indies, Vol. III. I had hoped to meet Mr. Hubbard during my last trip to Nevis in 2004, having loved his first book, *Swords, Ships, and Sugar*, and wanting to find out genealogical information from this gent who was described to me as "a walking encyclopedia" by an innkeeper on Nevis. The office of the inn, which 200 years ago concerned itself with administrative/accounting tasks related to sugar cane sales/production, contained this book for sale which was published during the intervening years of my first trip to Nevis in 2001. (St. Kitts and Nevis are separated by only two miles of water.) In the foreword of this book, Hubbard explains that the first Europeans came in 1623, sugar cane came to St. Kitts in 1643, the first Caribbean island to receive it. I enjoyed this book as much as Hubbard's *History of Nevis*. Found myself laughing out loud on the airplane reading about some unruly pirates who wooed and wed some 'timid orphans' from Paris whose previous occupation was prostitution. The scheme was masterminded by the French hoping that the troublesome pirates would settle down. In Hubbard's retelling he includes the marriage oaths: "I take thee without knowing or caring to know, whom thou art.....I do not desire thee to give me an account of thy past conduct.....I acquit thee of what is past [then striking his hand on the barrel of his pistol] This will revenge me of thy breach of faith...]!!! Colorful history-telling as always from Vince Hubbard. (Michener's *Caribbean* is equally good but covers the history every island in the region; Michener's novel, of course, is grander in scale and colorful in the sense the Caribbean inherently generates given the very diverse languages, geologies, ecologies, cultures etc. that are displayed in that region of the globe.) What I enjoyed most from his book, surprisingly, were the final chapters on the twentieth century making me ponder at the curious evolution of government on these islands. Independence was procured from Great Britain in 1983 which seems to me, if I may use the term, reverse colonialism in that self-government was ordained yet membership in the British Commonwealth continued. (Maybe, that's wise given that piracy of a different sort abounds in those straits today: drug smuggling/money laundering. The Caribbean islands being the intermediary focal point of this modern, slaveless triangle trade between South America (substituting for Africa as the third link) and North America.) It's interesting to see the failures of the federations as well as the tenuous one remaining between St. Kitts and Nevis today. Will the individual islands be like colonial states, will they or won't they have some form of federal government governing them all? Is that at

all possible, given the geographical separation of them by miles upon miles of sometimes hurricane tossed waters? Could their economic situation improve as a result? Could the American Revolutionary experiment of 300 plus years ago be a paradigm/godsend for them. Or am I dreaming an impossible dream? I love these islands, these peoples. The natives of St Kitts and Nevis are some of the sweetest people I've ever met; they are ingenuous but are also clever. Their lives are very simple. Distancewise, these isles are the same distance from Florida as D.C., but in so many ways, I feel always like I'm living in an entirely different world. Is it paradise, perhaps???

Well I must say that this book first interested me on my honeymoon to St. Kitts last year. The people of both St. Kitts and of Nevis were so kind and accomodating. Being there led me to want to know more about the island nation of St. Kitts-Nevis. I was fortunate that my new wife purchased this book for me while visiting Alexander Hamilton's birthplace on Nevis. This book was great for giving me an understanding of the life and history of St. Kitts. I am only sorry that we did not also get the book Mr. Hubbard wrote on Nevis. The book consists of 182 pages and also contains a number of pictures and illustrations of the island. Mr. Hubbard has the ability to breathe life into the history and people of this sugar producing island (which he does magnificently). By chapter, this book covers the: 1) Natural History 2) Indians 3) European Settlement 4) The Spanish Attack 5) The Coming of "King Sugar" 6) The Birth of the French Caribbean Empire 7) The Birth of the British Caribbean Empire 8) Imperial Conflicts 9) Pirates and Privateers 10) The Eighteenth Century - The Best of Times and the Worst of Times 11) The Nineteenth Century - the Decline Sets In 12) The Twentieth Century Mr. Hubbard has a talent for writing that goes beyond the usual historic writer. He keeps you moving along on this rollercoaster of island life. Before reading this book, I would have never guessed the huge importance of these two small islands in the Caribbean. I most heartily recommend this book to the reader interested in the politics and history of the Caribbean region. Enjoy.

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