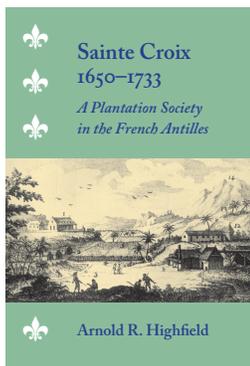


Book review

This review was published in *Dansk Vestindisk Selskab*, March 2014. It was written by Williamsen.



Sainte Croix 1650-1733

A Plantation Society in the French Antilles

by Arnold R. Highfield

(2013), Antilles Press, St. Croix,
illustrated, 670 pages.

Professor emeritus of linguistics and social sciences at University of the Virgin Islands, Dr. Arnold R. Highfield, has published yet another valuable work on the islands' history—this time a voluminous and impressive book about St. Croix in the years 1650 to 1733, when the island was under French rule. That is, the years just before the island was ceded to Denmark by France in 1733. The French period has hitherto only to a very limited extent been possible to access information about for those who have wished to dive into this part of the island's history. With his new publication, Arnold Highfield very much remedies this situation. There are a number of reasons why little has been written on the French period up to this point. The primary sources are obscure and mainly in French, and secondary sources are, as hinted, sparse.

As early as the mid-1970s, Arnold Highfield began to do work on the French period. In the following years, his interest grew to encompass also the preceding centuries, in which a number of different European nations, more or less successfully, and often with heavy losses, attempted to colonize the islands in the Caribbean. In the time following Columbus, these were all subsumed under Spain, albeit often in direct conflict with the original inhabitants, the Indians. Especially the Carib Indians did not conform to the Spanish dominance. Over more than 125 years, this situation resulted in many violent episodes between the Indians and the Spanish.

One of the Spanish strongholds in the Caribbean was Puerto Rico, where large areas of arable land well-suited for plantation agriculture as well as a large work force in the form of peaceful Taíno Indians could be found. Although Santa Cruz (St. Croix), or Ay-Ay, as the Indians called it, does not lie far from Puerto Rico, it was never colonized by the Spanish. Between 1515 and 1630, it was all but uninhabited.