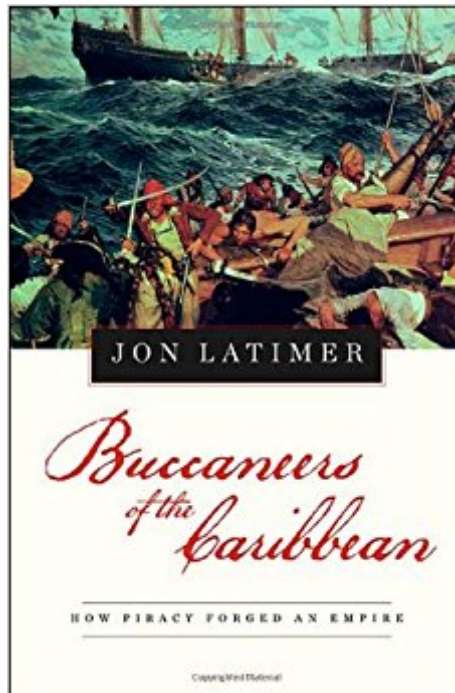




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Buccaneers Of The Caribbean: How Piracy Forged An Empire



Synopsis

During the seventeenth century, sea raiders known as buccaneers controlled the Caribbean. Buccaneers were not pirates but privateers, licensed to attack the Spanish by the governments of England, France, and Holland. Jon Latimer charts the exploits of these men who followed few rules as they forged new empires. Lacking effective naval power, the English, French, and Dutch developed privateering as the means of protecting their young New World colonies. They developed a form of semi-legal private warfare, often carried out regardless of political developments on the other side of the Atlantic, but usually with tacit approval from London, Paris, and Amsterdam. Drawing on letters, diaries, and memoirs of such figures as William Dampier, Sieur Raveneau de Lussan, Alexander Oliver Exquemelin, and Basil Ringrose, Jon Latimer portrays a world of madcap adventurers, daredevil seafarers, and dangerous rogues. Piet Hein of the Dutch West India Company captured, off the coast of Cuba, the Spanish treasure fleet, laden with American silver, and funded the Dutch for eight months in their fight against Spain. The switch from tobacco to sugar transformed the Caribbean, and everyone scrambled for a quick profit in the slave trade. Oliver Cromwell's ludicrous Western Design "a grand scheme to conquer Central America" fizzled spectacularly, while the surprising prosperity of Jamaica set England solidly on the road to empire. The infamous Henry Morgan conducted a dramatic raid through the tropical jungle of Panama that ended in the burning of Panama City. From the crash of gunfire to the billowing sail on the horizon, Latimer brilliantly evokes the dramatic age of the buccaneers.

Book Information

Hardcover: 368 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (June 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674034031

ISBN-13: 978-0674034037

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.2 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #728,838 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #109 in Books > History > Europe > Netherlands #709 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies #1245 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Colonial Period

Customer Reviews

In the 17th century the legalities of privateering were ever in flux. A pirate one day might receive a royal commission the next, becoming a "privateer" fighting for the crown; it is these privateers-or in England, buccaneers-that are Latimer's focus. Spain was the juggernaut of the era, but swashbuckling seafarers (as well as continental wars and poor colonial management) contributed to the slow diminishment of its power. Recounted here are numerous tales of sieges and nautical battles, daring escapes and surprising disasters, vicious raids, piratical infighting, violent religious tensions, and the political jockeying of European powers struggling for dominance in the New World. Latimer (Alamein) employs clear, spare prose with an eye for the potent detail to accentuate a story. Readers new to the period may struggle to keep track of the players in this detailed account, preferring a more accessible introduction. However, those familiar with the era or seeking an in-depth treatment will delight in this rich history, drawing on remarkable primary sources to make a readable narrative on the exciting age of the buccaneers. 17 pages of color and b&w illus.; 6 maps. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The late Latimer's last book is an excellent short history of maritime conflict in the Western Hemisphere in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and of the European politics from which it sprang. He details the growth of the intricate web of exploration, trade, colonialism, and naval warfare attendant on the decline of Spain and the rise as imperial powers of Britain and the Netherlands...Anyone seriously interested in pirates will treasure this book. (Frieda Murray Booklist 2009-06-01)A richly detailed work. A worthy addition to maritime history scholarship. (Douglas King Library Journal 2009-06-15)Recounted here are numerous tales of sieges and nautical battles, daring escapes and surprising disasters, vicious raids, piratical infighting, violent religious tensions, and the political jockeying of European powers struggling for dominance in the New World. Latimer employs clear, spare prose with an eye for the potent detail to accentuate a story...Those familiar with the era or seeking an in-depth treatment will delight in this rich history, drawing on remarkable primary sources to make a readable narrative on the exciting age of the buccaneers. (Publishers Weekly 2009-08-17)

Great content and detail, especially for before the Golden Age of Piracy. The only difficulty was the unconventional grammar in some cases. It often lead to misunderstandings that required re-reading (occasionally multiple times). But a great, informative book.

excellent

The subtitle "How Piracy forged an Empire" immediately conveys Jon Latimer's intended purpose unambiguously, leaving no question as to the author's intent. It also hints at a possible bias towards British Imperialism and one would not be surprised to learn that Latimer was born in England and served for several years in the English Army. However, Latimer seems to lose his way amidst the myriad of forces at work in the Caribbean during these turbulent years, his attempt at a clear purpose being his first casualty. Another major distraction from his purpose lies in his insistence on highlighting Spanish mismanagement of their New World Empire. Latimer gives the appearance of being anti-Spanish at times and the subtitle could easily be renamed "How Spanish Incompetence Cost an Empire". Latimer's research is extensive and blends referencing previous works as well as inquiry into primary sources of information, such as governmental archives. Such balance enables Latimer to both draw his own conclusions as well as synthesizing the large collection of works used. His descriptions outlining the tit for tat action between the major powers through their buccaneer proxies exhausts the reader and it's not until late in the book do we see Latimer show his strength as a writer. It is in describing British privateer Henry Morgan and his exploits (in great detail) that Latimer is clearly at his best. Narrating his various raids, the reader is taken on an incredible journey, having the feeling of bearing individual witness to Morgan's cunning genius. In doing so however, Latimer makes painfully evident his personal bias towards Morgan, and to dear mother England. Such perceived bias does not undo Latimer however, and throughout his work he is able to clearly demonstrate how the Spanish mismanagement of the American colonies (simply draining precious metals instead of building real, enduring wealth) helped lead to the decline of the Spanish Empire with the help of Caribbean buccaneering. His ability to do so in a narrative, storytelling fashion heightens the reader's enjoyment of what could have easily been a dry description of facts and instances. Latimer also understands the complex political forces in Europe driving the situation in the Caribbean and explains them well enough, assuming the reader has some knowledge on Western European history. In all, Latimer's work gives the reader a great wealth of knowledge of Caribbean history, both in the describing the political context as well as the daily lives of buccaneers. His describing the macro and micro elements can be frustrating for the reader at times, and the sheer number of individuals mentioned in his work has a tendency to overwhelm the reader. "Buccaneers of the Caribbean" could easily have been broken up into two pieces of work, one being a general history of Buccaneering in the Caribbean and the other focusing on the exploits of Henry Morgan and the British colony at Jamaica, which is clearly his true love of this

work.

This book is clearly written in a style that is easy to follow and enjoyable to read. Jon Latimer brings his subjects to life in a way that harkens to the romantic and exciting side of pirates while maintaining historical accuracy and revealing the actual people behind the legends. This is an enjoyable read for anyone interested in the subject, whether they be a casual reader or a student of history.

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