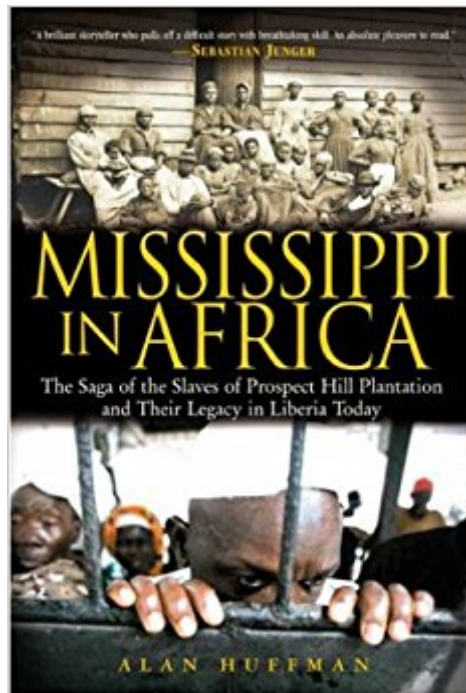


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Mississippi In Africa: The Saga Of The Slaves Of Prospect Hill Plantation And Their Legacy In Liberia



Synopsis

The gripping story of two hundred freed Mississippi slaves who sailed to Liberia to build a new colony where the colonists' repression of the native tribes would beget a tragic cycle of violence. When a wealthy Mississippi cotton planter named Isaac Ross died in 1836, his will decreed that his plantation, Prospect Hill, should be liquidated and the proceeds from the sale be used to pay for his slaves' passage to the newly established colony of Liberia in western Africa. Ross's heirs contested the will for more than a decade in the state courts and legislature, prompting a deadly revolt in which a group of slaves burned Ross's mansion to the ground; but the will was ultimately upheld. The slaves then emigrated to their new home, where they battled the local tribes and built vast plantations with Greek Revival mansions in a region the Americo-Africans renamed "Mississippi in Africa." The seeds of resentment sown over a century of cultural conflict between the colonists and tribal peoples would explode in the late twentieth century, begetting a civil war that rages in Liberia to this day. In the award-winning tradition of *Slaves in the Family*, this enthralling work traces an epic legacy that sweeps from the slave quarters of the antebellum South to the war-ravaged streets of modern-day Monrovia. Tracking down Prospect Hill's living descendants, deciphering a history ruled by rumor, and delivering the complete chronicle in riveting prose, journalist Alan Huffman has rescued a lost chapter of American history whose aftermath is far from over.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Alan Huffman's book on the history of a group of freed slaves, their journey back to Africa and the

modern story of Liberia is important and very interesting. Huffman gives us (1) a view of life and history that formed our society and culture in Mississippi, (2) provides an overview of Liberia's history and our connection to it (a chapter of US history that is seldom mentioned ... I never heard of Liberia and the US role in its founding before arriving in West Africa in 1978), and (3) shows that Faulkner was right in saying that the past continues to impact us. In 1978 I went to Guinea Bissau, West Africa, to work on a USAID (foreign aid) program in the country's rice growing region. It was there that I heard, for the first time, of a group of freed slaves returning to Africa and establishing a country, Liberia, in 1821 with its capital named after the fifth US president James Monroe. By 1838, 20,000 American blacks (ex-slaves and freed men --- including the slave group from Jefferson County that was the subject of his research) made up the population of the Colonization Society and Liberia. Today the descendants of these settlers make up about 5 percent of Liberia's population. This elite group dominated the political and economic sectors for more than 150 years. A backlash against this group in 1980 by descendants of local tribesmen caused the chaos that grips modern day Liberia. It's important to me and you today because of the potential links that states in chaos have to terrorist groups (Huffman talks of the potential laundering of Al Qaeda money through diamond sales in Liberia and the attempt to use the country as a conduit for the purchase of illegal arms --- including stinger missiles).

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