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West-Indian Antique Furniture Of The Lesser Antilles: 1740-1940



Synopsis

This work is intended to give the reader an insight into the furniture of the Lesser Antilles, and its place in the changing politics and history of these Caribbean islands. The inspiration for this book came initially from the collection formed by the author's mother, Dorothy Sturm, in Trinidad, during the years between 1939 and 1981. As Philip Sturm became increasingly involved with the responsibilities of caring for the family collection as well as being a keen collector himself, he discovered there were no books on the subject. He was obliged to rely on his own general knowledge, local information, an art and history background and many hours spent in the libraries and archives of Trinidad, Barbados, St. Kitts, and the Virgin Islands. Even this produced very little information, the only references coming from advertisements of furniture on packets arriving in the harbours, or from house auction sales. Accordingly, he resolved to draw upon his own experience and conduct his own detailed and leng

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Customer Reviews

Philip Sturm was born and brought up in Trinidad, West Indies. He later moved to London and New York to further his education. He lived and worked for ten years in New York, joining the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art. His studies included European furniture, as a background to furthering his own knowledge of West Indian furniture which he had grown up with in Trinidad. He moved back to the Antilles, settling on St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands, where he bought an historic property. He has published articles about West Indian antique furniture in several art magazines and has given lectures and slide shows on the subject. Over the years he has steadily put together a most comprehensive collection of Lesser Antilles furniture, adding to the

pieces he inherited from his family, to form one of the largest known collections in existence. Philip has been a Board Member and President of the St. Thomas Historic Trust, Commissioner on the governmental Historic Preservation Commission, and several other boards dealing with preservation, West Indian furniture and the arts. He is also the curator and adviser on several museum boards in the Antilles.

Review by Toni Forsyth 10/24/09 Phillip Sturm's compilation of photographic images is an exciting find. It clearly stands as a colorful, historical record of a place and time both past and present that is too often overlooked. I dare say that the conventional contemporary contemplation of the islands of the Caribbean is more typically limited to an exuberance of appreciation for their white sand beaches, Bob Marley and reggae music -- distinctive treasures in themselves true enough but, relatively speaking, only the most recent symbols of what the West Indies represent. In Sturm's *West Indian Antique Furniture of the Lesser Antilles: 1740-1940*, we can see how the peoples and cultures of the Americas, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, China and India separately, distinctly, individually yet simultaneously blend into a mulatto/mestizo pastiche that exists nowhere else in the world. European styles and woods that were originally brought by masted sailing ships to the islands were gently modified over the years as they became more expressive of the native flora and fauna as reflected through the artistry and master craftsmanship of African slaves and their freed descendants. Georgian sensibilities yielded to tropical passion and functionality in elaborate carvings on four-poster beds while chair seats and backs made of woven cane allowed for a cooling flow of air in the hot, humid climate. I've been told how my grandfather, born in Nassau in the last quarter of the 19th century but having moved to Jamaica as a young man eager to establish himself, at the end of the day would sit on his front verandah in his plantation chair with first one leg then the other draped over its extended arm so that someone from the household staff could more easily remove each of his riding boots. And lest this image conjure up scenes of unrelenting oppression, it was a world without the soul-destroying racism that so pervaded the lives African descendants in the United States. All of these images played out in myriad parlors, dining rooms, sitting rooms, bedrooms and verandahs against the backdrop of dark, warm, mahogany, cedar and mango wood colonial furnishings serenely ensconced in the presence of white, lighter than air curtains gently billowing in the cool evening breeze.

Nice book, nice pictures but could have included more earlier furniture and from more Caribbean islands.

This book was a gift and was loved by the person who received it. I am an international customer and the fact that I was able to have this book shipped straight to my door a few days before Christmas for very little extra cost was an added bonus. Beautifully laid out and very inspiring.

Exceptional Job to Philip Sturm for his continued dedication and wisdom on such a broad spectrum. Nicely written, informative and truly written by an aristocrat of this subject.

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