Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1670–1776

Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1670–1776, is the first study of the history of the federated colony of the Leeward Islands – Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts – that covers all four islands in the period from their independence from Barbados in 1670 to the outbreak of the American Revolution, which reshaped the Caribbean as well as the mainland American colonies. Natalie A. Zacek emphasizes the extent to which the planters of these islands attempted to establish recognizably English societies in tropical islands based on plantation agriculture and African slavery. By examining conflicts relating to ethnicity and religion, controversies regarding sex and social order, and a series of virulent battles over the limits of local and imperial authority, she depicts these West Indian colonists as skilled improvisers who adapted themselves to an unfamiliar environment and who were as committed as other American colonists to the norms and values of English society, politics, and culture.

Natalie A. Zacek is a lecturer in history and American studies at the University of Manchester. Her papers have been published in journals such as Slavery and Abolition, Journal of Peasant Studies, History Compass, and Wadabagei: A Journal of the Caribbean and Its Diaspora, as well as in several edited volumes. She is a founder of the H-Atlantic listserv and has served as its book review editor for its first decade.
Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgments

Introduction

1 The Challenges of English Settlement in the Leewards

2 Irish, Scots, and English

3 Managing Religious Diversity

4 Sex, Sexuality, and Social Control

5 Political Culture, Cooperation, and Conflict

Conclusion

Bibliography

Index
Tables

1.1. Population of the Leeward Islands, 1678  page 48
1.2. St. Kitts White Population, by Division, 1678  51
1.3. Montserrat Census Returns, by Division, 1678  54
1.4. Slaveholding Households, Montserrat, by Division, 1678  55
1.5. Slaveholding in Nevis, by Division, 1678  58
1.6. Poverty in Nevis, by Division, 1678  59
1.7. Slave Ownership in Antigua, by Division, 1678  62
1.8. Children in White Population, by Island, 1678  63
2.1. Classification of Gentry Families of Antigua, 1707–75  111
Like so many academic monographs, this book has been a long time in its gestation, and in common with so many authors, I have amassed a host of debts of gratitude along the way. This book began as a doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins University, which was the ideal place for a novice graduate student to begin work in the fields of Caribbean and Atlantic history. There, the wise mentorship of Jack Greene, Sidney Mintz, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, and Michael Johnson, and later of Philip Morgan, was of immeasurable benefit, as were the comradeship and inspiration of the “Greene Team” of Jack’s many Ph.D. students, particularly my fellow 1992 entrants James Baird, Nuran Cinlar, Carla Gerona, and April Hatfield. I was lucky enough to number among my friends at Hopkins Bill MacLehose, Lara Kriegel, Christine Johnson, Elaine Parsons, Phil Vogt, Ernst Pijning, Jeri McIntosh Cobb, Max Edelson, and Julia Holderness, all of whom helped to keep me (relatively) sane and happy over the long term in Baltimore, as did longer-distance friends such as Al Goyburu, Lina de Montigny, Bret Empie, Eric Trachtenberg, Joe Morgan, Andre O’Neil, Sharon Tulchinsky, Carol Sharma, and Maura Gallagher.

In the material world, the research that produced this book was initially supported by a graduate fellowship from the History Department at Johns Hopkins, supplemented by funding from the John Carter Brown Library, the Huntington Library, and the Folger Institute. A visiting position at St. Louis University came along just in time to fund me to the completion of the dissertation, and just as the final product was submitted to the Eisenhower Library at Johns Hopkins I was lucky enough to be hired by the University of Manchester. There, I benefited enormously not only from the university’s financial support, including a well-timed research
Acknowledgments

leave that allowed me to complete my revisions to the manuscript, but from the friendship and intellectual support of many colleagues, particularly Julie Gottlieb, Glyn Redworth, Norris Nash, Brian Ward, David Brown, Elizabeth Toon, and the members of our World Histories work-in-progress reading group: Laurence Brown, Paulo Drinot, Till Geiger, Anindita Ghosh, Steven Pierce, Bidisha Ray, and Yangwen Zheng.

My thanks also go to the many librarians and archivists who have been so helpful to me in a wide-ranging and long-drawn-out program of research. I am especially grateful to the library staff at my two “home” institutions, the Milton S. Eisenhower Library at Johns Hopkins and the John Rylands University Library at the University of Manchester, as well as to those at the British Library, the National Archives of Great Britain, Lambeth Palace Library, the University of London’s Senate House Library, the Institute of Historical Research, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Oxford’s Bodleian Library, the Scottish Record Office, the National Library of Scotland, the Archives of Antigua, the Archives of St. Kitts, the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society, the John Carter Brown Library, the Huntington Library, and the Boston Public Library.

Some material from Chapter 3 appeared in Caroline Williams, ed., Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World (Ashgate, 2009); from Chapter 4 in Merrill D. Smith, ed., Sex and Sexuality in Early America (New York University Press, 1998); and from Chapter 5 in Robert Olwell and Alan Tully, eds., Cultures and Identities in Colonial British America (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). I thank these presses for allowing the inclusion of this material.

Working with Cambridge University Press has been a pleasure. Early on, Frank Smith expressed enthusiasm for this project, and closer to the finish line it was expertly aided by the efforts of Eric Crahan and Jason Przybylski. Three anonymous outside readers offered thoughtful and substantive comments, which resulted in a greatly improved final product – but all responsibility for remaining errors lies entirely with me.

Several friends went the extra mile, and more, helping me revise my dissertation into book form. Michal Rozbicki not only shared a series of enjoyable Tex-Mex lunches with me in St. Louis, but offered much-needed encouragement at a crucial juncture. Patience Schell more than lived up to her name as she plowed through a rather unpromising early version of the monograph, and her insightful comments were of great help. Norris Nash did the same yeoman service and even volunteered for a second go-around, truly earning his title as the Smartest Chap in the School. Christine Johnson provided months’ worth of much-needed encouragement at a
crucial juncture, and I can’t imagine having been able to complete my revisions without her help. Nicholas Canny gave wise counsel about an earlier version of Chapter 2, and my fellow British Caribbeanists Trevor Burnard, Kenneth Morgan, Simon Smith, Mary Turner, James Walvin, Betty Wood, and Nuala Zahedieh all cheer-led along the way. But much of the credit undoubtedly belongs to Jack Greene, who believed in this project and its author in even the least promising circumstances, and who has provided me and his many, many other students with a model of intellectual rigor, creativity, and generosity of spirit to which we all aspire. Jack, I truly could not have done it without you.

Familial debts are of the longest standing and the greatest depth. My grandmother, Sophye Bernstein Cohen, taught me so much about how to live a good life and to have a lot of fun along the way. My mother, Judith Cohen Zacek, is sui generis, and it is to her that I dedicate this book.
Map 1. Leeward Islands
Map 2. Eastern Carribean