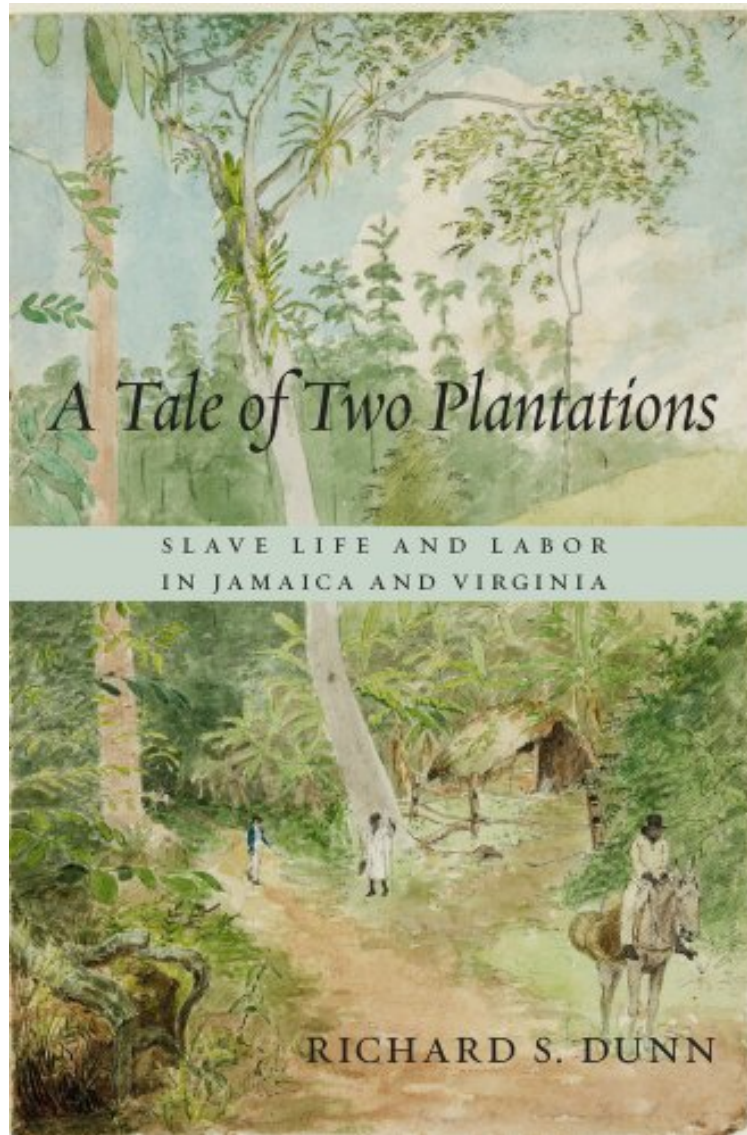


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A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life and Labor in Jamaica and Virginia

Richard S. Dunn

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Richard S. Dunn : A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life and Labor in Jamaica and Virginia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life and Labor in Jamaica and Virginia:

30 of 32 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant historian, who reminds us why he is brilliant. By

George Boudreau One of those rare moments when one examines a book and says "Wow. He's still got it." Richard Dunn has been an icon of historical scholarship since most of us were barely imagining a productive career as professional students of the historical past. Yet more than half a century into his career, he produces a work that is fresh, reasoned, brilliant, current. We're lucky to live in a moment when this magisterial work arrives. Dunn's study, based on painstaking research and a brilliant, analytical mind reminds us of the importance of archival research, of digging beyond the easy into the possible. It is an important work that should be on the shelves, on the desk, of anyone who wants to gain a comprehension of the roots of our racial past. A tour de force. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A life's work thoughtfully done, but muddled in details By Atlas Interesting and overly thorough, Dunn's work is appreciated but not as useful as it could be if he had analyzed rather than exhaustively recounted every detail. The reader can't help but get lost in the over abundance of names and numbers, unfortunately hampering what Dunn set out to do. Rather than give life to the sorties of the Mount Aire and Mesopotamian slaves, Dunn's inability to cut or compress drowns out their stories in a sea of details. Still, it is clear this is a work of passion from a man determined to tell the story of these slaves. One will learn quite a bit about slave life in bothering regions if one is able to wade through all the "extra" material. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Couldn't put it down By Virginia guy This is a very well written and researched book on a tough topic. The cold bare facts of slavery are revealed in both Jamaica and Virginia and their voices come alive.

Forty years ago, after publication of his pathbreaking book *Sugar and Slaves*, Richard Dunn began an intensive investigation of two thousand slaves living on two plantations, one in North America and one in the Caribbean. Digging deeply into the archives, he has reconstructed the individual lives and collective experiences of three generations of slaves on the Mesopotamia sugar estate in Jamaica and the Mount Airy plantation in tidewater Virginia, to understand the starkly different forms slavery could take. Dunns stunning achievement is a rich and compelling history of bondage in two very different Atlantic world settings. From the mid-eighteenth century to emancipation in 1834, life in Mesopotamia was shaped and stunted by deadly work regimens, rampant disease, and dependence on the slave trade for new laborers. At Mount Airy, where the population continually expanded until emancipation in 1865, the surplus slaves were sold or moved to distant work sites, and families were routinely broken up. Over two hundred of these Virginia slaves were sent eight hundred miles to the Cotton South. In the genealogies that Dunn has painstakingly assembled, we can trace a Mesopotamia fieldhand through every stage of her bondage, and contrast her harsh treatment with the fortunes of her rebellious mulatto son and clever quadroon granddaughter. We track a Mount Airy craftworker through a stormy life of interracial sex, escape, and family breakup. The details of individuals lives enable us to grasp the full experience of both slave communities as they labored and loved, and ultimately became free.

A remarkable achievement. By tracking the enslaved populations on Jamaicas Mesopotamia estate and Virginias Mount Airy plantation in minute detail, Dunn explores major themes in the history of slavery through the experiences of particular people and their social networks. His meticulous research, considered analysis, and unparalleled authority on the subject have set a new benchmark for histories of Anglo-American slavery. (Vincent Brown, author of *The Reapers Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*) *A Tale of Two Plantations* is the first book to describe with vivid detail the lived realities of the radically different slave societies of the Caribbean and North America. Based on deep research in plantation records, Dunns comparison explains how the lives of slaves in different parts of the Anglo-Atlantic world could be so different. By illuminating the family lives of enslaved people like Sarah Affir and Winney Grimshaw, he has breathed life into the old account books that listed people as nothing but property. (Edward Rugemer, author of *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War*) *A Tale of Two Plantations* reads beautifully, is argued persuasively and provides a wealth of insights into a world that flourished until little more than a century ago and which, thankfully, is lost forever. (Nicholas Canny *Irish Times* 2015-05-02) About the Author Richard S. Dunn is Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor Emeritus of American History at the University of Pennsylvania. Among his publications are *Sugar and Slaves* in 1972; *The Papers of William Penn*, edited with Mary Maples Dunn, in four volumes published in 1981 1987; and *The Journal of John Winthrop*, edited with Laetitia Yeandle, published in 1996. He also designed the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and was its founding director.