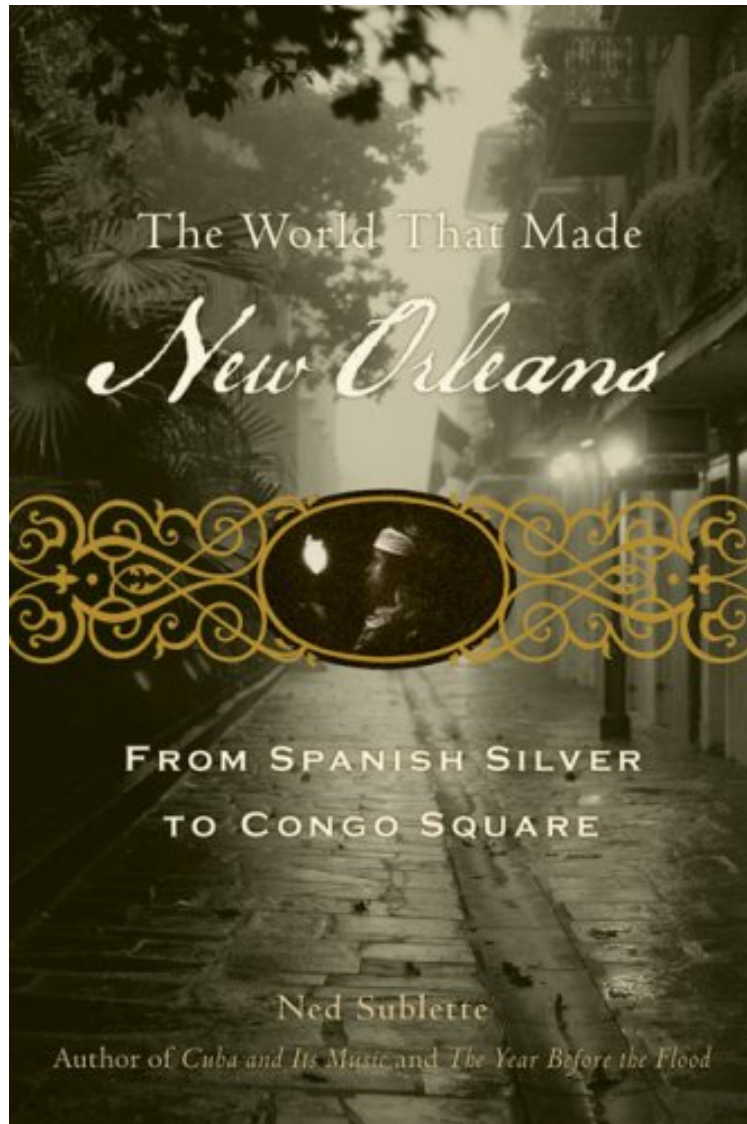


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The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square

Ned Sublette

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Named one of the Top 10 Books of 2008 by The Times-Picayune.

From Publishers WeeklyIn this thoughtful, well-researched history, Sublette (Cuba and Its Music) charts the development of New Orleans, from European colonization through the Haitian revolution (which was crucial to French and American negotiations over Louisiana) to the Louisiana Purchase. Central to his account are the African slaves, who began arriving in New Orleans in 1719, and their contributions to the city's musical life. He considers, for example, how musical influences from different parts of Africa—Kongo drumming and Senegambian banjo playing—combined to forge a distinctive musical culture. Sublette also lucidly discusses New Orleans' important role in the domestic slave trade, arguing persuasively that the culture of slavery in New Orleans was different from that in Virginia or South Carolina. In New Orleans, there was a large population of free blacks, and slaves there had greater relative freedom than elsewhere. Furthermore, by the early 19th century, Louisiana was home to more African-born slaves than the Upper South. Those factors, which helped perpetuate African religion and dance, combined to offer an alternative path of development for African American culture. As our nation continues to ponder the future of the Big Easy, Sublette offers an informative accounting of that great city's past. 20 bw photos. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From School Library JournalAdult/High School—This book explores the economic and cultural roots of New Orleans. With the exception of a brief coda that reflects on recent Mardi Gras celebrations, Sublette focuses on the pre-20th-century history that shaped the modern city. The author traces its origins across the Atlantic to 18th-century monarchs and the French Revolution. He follows the city's development chronologically, noting that Spanish explorers and a thriving slave trade with the west coast of Africa also left their mark. These influences are evident in the music and dance whose legacy reaches far beyond the Mississippi Delta. Sublette's style is delightfully readable, avoiding stilted academic prose while maintaining a scholarly approach that is peppered with fascinating details. Filled with period maps, this volume will appeal to history buffs and readers interested in the musical heritage of New Orleans.—Heidi Dolamore, San Mateo County Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From Booklist*Starred * In the rush to analyze New Orleans after Katrina, this articulate and intensely researched history provides not only an impressive look at its subject but also should serve as a model for any future works on great American cities. As he tracks discovery by the French, colonization by the Spanish, and eventual possession by the Americans, Sublette reveals how each nation implanted its character on the Crescent City's development. Most startling will be his discussion of the deep Cuban and Haitian connections and the cultural and economic effect these Caribbean islands have on present day society and industry. As the author of Cuba and Its Music (2007), Sublette gives the city's musical legacy its due and investigates Congo Square with its tradition of late night celebrations rooted in distant African life, which provided a permanent link between the two continents. He finishes with an insightful discussion on the Mardi Gras Indians, significant groups who are keeping New Orleans' history of slavery and hard-fought freedom alive. Cultural studies and history do not get much better than this, a must read for anyone who wonders why this city must be saved. --Colleen Mondor