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Guide to the microfilm edition of

The papers of Samuel Martin, 1694/5-1776, relating to Antigua

from the collections of the British Library

introduced by Dr. Natalie Zacek, University of Manchester
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1. Extract from Oxford Dictionary of national biography

Martin, Samuel (1694/5-1776), plantation owner, was born in Antigua, the eldest son of Captain Samuel Martin (d.1697) and his wife, Lydia, daughter of Colonel Thomas of Antigua, sugar plantation owners based in what was later known as Greencastle, in New Division, Antigua. He claimed descent from a general serving under William the Conqueror, and from an ancestor who had participated in the conquest of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth I. His grandfather, a royalist, had moved to the West Indies, following the confiscation of his land in Ireland by Cromwell's army. Martin's father, it is believed, had moved to Antigua from Surinam in 1667. By 1697, when his slaves murdered him, the plantation consisted of more than 500 acres.

Details of Martin's early life are very sketchy. Following the death of his father he was sent to live with relatives in Ireland, the estate in Antigua being managed by members of his family and friends. He was educated at Mr. Biby's school in Caddington, Hertfordshire. At the age of sixteen he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was admitted on 17 April 1711, but he does not appear to have taken a degree. Shortly afterwards he married Frances Yeamans, daughter of John Yeamans, attorney-general of the Leeward Islands; their son, Samuel, was born in Antigua on 1 September 1714. During the next thirty years the family lived mainly in Antigua, interspersed with spells in England between 1716 and 1718. Martin returned to England in 1728 but very little is known about his activities over the next twenty years, with the exception that, following the death of his first wife, he married Sarah (d.1747/8), widow of William Irish of Montserrat and daughter of Edward Wyke, lieutenant-governor of Montserrat. Their first son, Henry, was born in 1733 at Shroton, Dorset. It is probable that they lived, at least for part of the time, on Martin's family's estates in Ireland, while the plantation was looked after by a series of managers, aided by his brother Josiah, who was a member of the island's privy council.

On his return to Antigua, to remedy the deterioration in the fortunes of the plantation, Martin embarked on a rigorous policy of reconstruction. This rapidly established his reputation as a leading member of the island's community. He was speaker of the island's assembly from 1750 to 1763 and colonel of its militia; the diarist Janet Schaw described him as the 'loved and revered father of Antigua' (Sheridan, ‘West Indian antecedents’, 258), a title won as much for his economic as his political activity. Although he helped to pioneer improvements at most of the key stages in sugar-making and rum distillation his interests focused mainly on the non-manufacturing side of production. He was a firm advocate of crop rotation followed by marling, in order to improve soil fertility. He was also instrumental in developing more effective systems of drainage and utilizing windmills rather than animals for crushing the cane.

By the standards of his contemporaries Martin was an enlightened slave owner. He advocated the provision of adequate supplies of food, clothing, shelter, and medical facilities for slaves, and ground for the cultivation of their own food. This was not simply an altruistic response but motivated by mercenary considerations, since he appreciated the financial benefits to be derived from a healthy, well-trained, and productive labour force that was able to reproduce itself. In order to maximize the profitability of the undertaking his programme focused mainly on the training and direction of black slaves. Unlike his compatriots he was also prepared to work alongside his slaves in the fields, clearly illustrating that he ‘did not conform to the stereotyped image of the planter as a leisured gentleman who sipped Madeira and rum punch amidst a harem of Mulatto concubines’ (Sheridan, ‘Samuel Martin’, 137). Nevertheless he still defended the principles of slavery.

Martin's progressive methods were detailed in his 'An Essay upon Plantership'. It is not clear when it was first issued but the third, extensively revised edition was published in 1756 and was followed by a fourth edition, published in London in 1765. The fifth edition, of 1773, contained a preface, 'On the management of negroes'; further reprints followed. Martin also issued diplomas
to the substantial numbers of young Englishmen and Scotsmen who sought their fortunes in the West Indies and had received training from him in plantation administration.

Martin might be regarded as Antigua's leading and most progressive planter in the 1730s. The improvements that he advocated were adopted primarily in Antigua, where the industry was already beginning to experience long-term secular decline due to a multitude of factors that included soil exhaustion, the spread of crop diseases, severe drought, and the growing tendency towards absentee ownership. As a result production costs in Antigua were considerably higher than in other parts of the British empire, such as the Ceded Islands and Jamaica. During his own lifetime he had succeeded in making sugar production a moderately profitable enterprise on his own estates. Martin died in 1776, probably on his estate of Greencastle, Antigua. His legacy was rather short-lived since his innovations were not immediately adopted outside Antigua and his descendants continued as absentee owners for several generations before the estate was sold in the nineteenth century.

Three of his sons, however, became prominent in public life. Samuel (1714-1788), educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple, became M.P. for Camelford (1747-1768) and for Hastings (1768-1774); he is probably best remembered for the duel that he fought with Wilkes in 1763, having called him a 'cowardly scoundrel' (Valentine, 585). Henry (1733-1794) succeeded his half-brother in Antigua; he became comptroller of the navy and MP for Southampton, in 1790, and was created baronet in 1791. Martin's third son, Josiah Martin (1737-1786), pursued a career in the army before becoming governor of North Carolina at the outbreak of the American War of Independence.

Sources


Archives

BL, papers, Add. Mss. 41346-41353, 41474; BL, Josiah Martin papers.

Wealth at death

See will, TNA: PRO, PROB 11/1031, sig. 227, mentioned in Venn, *Alum. Cant.*, 152.

Dr. John Martin

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2. Introduction

The Martin Papers detail the commercial, political, and personal lives of the Martin family of Antigua and co. Berkshire from the mid-eighteenth through the late nineteenth centuries, and comprise volumes 41346 through 41475 of the Additional Manuscripts (Add. Mss.) collections of the British Library, London. The volumes included in this microfilm edition are the letter books of Samuel Martin (1694/5-1776), planter of Antigua, and related documents. The core of this collection are the six volumes of Martin's outgoing correspondence, beginning with his return to Antigua in 1750, after many years' residence in England, and ending with his death in 1776. These volumes include over twelve hundred folios, and are numbered as follows:

Vol. I Add. Ms. 41346 1750-1758
Vol. II Add. Ms. 41347 1760-1768
Vol. III Add. Ms. 41348 1768-1776
Vol. IV Add. Ms. 41349 1756-1762
Vol. V Add. Ms. 41350 1765-1770
Vol. VI Add. Ms. 41351 1774-1776

Also included in this edition is Vol. VIII (Add. Mss. 41353), which specifically contains a 1768 “Estimate of Samuel Martin's Plantation in New Division in Antigua, according to the general rule of Appraisement” and Martin's 1773 will.

By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the sugar planters of the West Indian islands, such as Jamaica, Barbados, and Antigua, numbered among the wealthiest of Britain's colonial subjects; in the words of the economic historian Richard Pares, they were some of “the most conspicuous rich men of their age”.¹ Many of these men had attained such financial success that they felt themselves able to turn the day-to-day operations of their estates over to attorneys, managers, and overseers, and to spend long periods of time in the metropole, where their extravagant way of life was rivalled only by that of the “nabobs” of the emerging East India Company. As these planters enriched themselves, they simultaneously increased the wealth and power of their mother country, to such an extent that it has become an article of faith among historians that the outbreak of rebellion in the American colonies would have been far more alarming to King and Parliament had the West Indian settlers joined the efforts of the North Americans to wrest their independence from Britain. But despite the riches which these West Indian planters reaped both for themselves and for Britain, they were rarely praised by metropolitan commentators. Although public opinion regarding these white “creoles” had not yet hardened into the antipathy generated by the rise of anti-slavery sentiment at the beginning of the nineteenth century, critics in the mother country claimed that West Indian planters failed to live up to their paternalistic responsibilities to their families, to their bondspeople, and to the interests of their colony and, by extension, to Britain itself. As John Gilmore has observed, “the stereotypical view of the ‘West Indian’ was…of the planter, as a colonial exotic, whose ability to command his slaves’ obedience o his every whim gave him autocratic ideas and habits which were supposedly un-British, and whose excessive wealth was potentially a corrupting force” to him and to all around him.² Such men might have built great fortunes, but on the whole they were viewed by metropolitan Englishmen as moral failures who over-indulged or tyrannized their children, viciously abused their slaves, and contributed nothing to their communities.

This highly negative evaluation of West Indian plantation owners has been remarkably persistent over several centuries. Although recent scholarship by, among others, Trevor Burnard and B.W. Higman has presented a more sympathetic evaluation of this group of colonists, particularly in relation to their strategies of estate management, historiographic opinion has on the whole continued to characterise these men as failures in every sphere other than that of short-term

¹ Pares, A West India fortune (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950), 108.
financial gain. This negative image of the West Indian planter contributed significantly to the rise of popular opposition to slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as slaveholders failed to convince metropolitan Britons that their treatment of their slaves was fatherly rather than despotic. Although historians such as Higman, Pares, Richard Sheridan, and Richard Dunn have provided their readers with a detailed understanding of the agricultural and commercial practices and philosophies of West Indian planters, only recently, through the works of scholars such as Burnard and Sarah Pearsall, have these men begun to be understood as individuals with their own ideas and ideals about their relationships to their families, slaves, and communities.

A major obstacle to scholarly investigation of the nature of white society in the English West Indian colonies, and of the experiences of individuals within that society, lies in the available primary sources, or lack thereof: far more collections of personal and business papers have survived for settlers in the North American colonies than for the sugar islands. The letter books of Samuel Martin represent, in terms both of their bulk and their contents, an exception to this rule, and as such constitute an important source for the study of eighteenth-century West Indian planters, and of the island societies which they shaped and were shaped by at the height of the era of sugar and slavery.

**Samuel Martin**

Samuel Martin (1694/5-1776) was born at Green Castle, his father’s plantation in the New Division district of Antigua, high in the Shekerley Hills. His grandfather, George Martin, the “Colonel Martin” mentioned in Aphra Behn’s Oroonoko, had in the 1650s settled in the English colony of Surinam, and when that settlement fell under Dutch control in 1667 he relocated to Antigua, where he and other refugees from Surinam hoped to “hew a new fortune out of the wild woods” of this as yet barely cultivated island. George’s son, the first Samuel Martin, was described by Christopher Codrington, a fellow Antigua planter and later governor of the Leeward Islands colony, as a man who was “willing to take the most pains in public busnes; and was best fitted for it of any Man in the 4 Islands”; he served as colonel of the Antiguan militia and as speaker of the island’s House of Assembly. One might assume that the younger Samuel had acquired his dedication to enlightened plantership and public service from the example of his father, but the senior Martin died when his son was only seven. His life ended in a sudden and shocking moment of violence which, according to David Barry Gaspar, represented the first recorded slave rebellion in the island’s history: on Christmas Day 1701 he was murdered by several of his own slaves who, apparently angered by his refusal to grant them an expected holiday, “at the dead hour of night…broke open the doors of his mansion…fell upon him, and actually hacked him to death, with the hoes they had been using in the cultivation of his sugar-canies”. Shortly thereafter, Samuel was sent to live with relatives in Ireland until he went up to Cambridge University in 1708. By 1714, he had married Frances Yeamans, the daughter of Antigua’s lieutenant governor, and had...

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5 Dunn, *Sugar*, 130.


returned to his native island, but although he made a number of visits to Antigua over the next three decades, and resided there continuously between 1714 and 1716 and 1718 and 1728, he would not settle there permanently until 1750, opting to live and to raise his children primarily in England. He and Frances were the parents of Samuel and Henrietta; by 1728 Frances had died and Martin had taken as his second wife Sarah Wyke, the daughter of a former lieutenant governor of Montserrat, with whom he returned to England and began a second family. When Martin, again a widower, returned to Antigua in 1750, he “met with a dismal prospect; his gang of Negroes reduced in numbers, his sugar works in a state of disrepair, and the fertility of his soil greatly diminished”, misfortunes commonly associated with the “evils of absenteeism”. This prospect of physical and financial decay prompted him to begin an ambitious programme of rebuilding his dilapidated and outdated sugar works and increasing his stock of mules and cattle. But his most significant investment in Green Castle’s future was the purchase over the course of the 1750s of approximately fifty slaves, mostly in their teens and evenly balanced between males and females, whom he valued not only for their labour power but for their reproductive potential. Martin’s experiences in rehabilitating his plantation encouraged him to become an ardent advocate of proprietary management and agricultural improvement. As he wrote in June 1751 to his eldest son, Samuel, in London, “tho my Estate by ye blessings of Providence upon my industry, will in a few years be restored to its former fertility and produce; yet when I am gone to ye other world it may probably fall back again to ruin, by ye mismanagement of people who have no conscience nor any other but their own interest in view; but if one of my family, interested in ye good of the whole, is ye superintendent, you may expect a good produce” (S[amuel] M[artin] to S[amuel] M[artin] Jr., 25 June, 1751, M[artin] P[apers] [vol.] I, 22). But although Martin could impart to his own sons the skills of plantation management, such transmission of knowledge was unavailable to men whose fathers, like Martin’s own, had died prematurely, or who lacked experience in this field. To fill this gap, Martin composed ‘An Essay upon Plantership’, which appeared in six editions in Antigua, Jamaica, and London between 1750 and 1802. In this small volume, he laid out his scheme of excellence in every aspect of plantership, which he defined as “the art of managing a sugar-plantation to the best advantage; so as to make it produce the most, both in quantity and quality”. In the Essay (ix-xix), Martin emphasised that there was much more to successful plantership than raising canes. In his conception, a planter’s responsibilities did not stop at the boundaries of his estate, but extended throughout his colony of residence and across the ocean to Britain. These commitments also stretched across the colour line: he urged slaveholders to treat their bondspeople with “tenderness and generosity”, in order that “they may be induced to love and obey him, out of mere gratitude; and become real good human beings by the imitation of his benevolence, justice, temperance, and chastity”. Martin’s letters in the years between his return to Antigua in 1750 and his death in 1776 depict him as determined to fulfil his paternalist responsibilities in every sphere. His letters to his children display both warm affection and a desire to manage every aspect of their lives. His ideal of paternal responsibility was extensive as well as intensive, moving beyond his immediate family to other kin and family friends. He also became a surrogate father to a stream of young men, mostly Scots, who served informal apprenticeships in the course of which Martin instructed them in “all the arts of plantership”, and if a man served him diligently and honestly, he would “prefer him at the End of his time as is his custom to all good Servants”. Even in the final months of his long life, he offered the benefits of his experience to younger planters. In one of the last letters he wrote before his death, he instructed Christopher Baldwin that “the profits of a Plantation consist not so much in great works as in the fertility of soil. & strength of Negroes, Cattle, & Mules…supposing it ever so good, & well Stock’d, the profits of a Plantation cannot rise to anything considerable

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9 Sheridan, Sugar, 201.
10 Sheridan, Sugar, 380.
unless it be managed with great skill, attention, & industry” (SM to Baldwin, 23 May 1776, MP VI, 87).

The letter books depict Martin as serving for three decades as real or surrogate father to a throng of people, kin and non-kin alike. But his concept of his paternalist responsibilities was not limited to the white community; he considered himself to be responsible for the physical and spiritual welfare of his slaves as well. In the Essay, he wrote at length about how best to direct the slaves’ labours and to feed, house, and clothe them. In his letters to Samuel Jr. and others, he explained that the ideal master looked out for the health of his bondspeople’s bodies and souls alike. As Stuart Schwartz has noted, “attitudes of paternalism toward slaves and dependents undercut the purely economic considerations of sugar planting. The relationship with labour, in fact, became an overriding concern…and the conflicts between property and paternalism inherent in slavery penetrated deeply into [the planters’] lives and psyches”.11 The rationale behind Martin’s practices seems to have been his belief that by doing good in a moral sense he could also do well in economic terms, uniting virtue and profit. When the Scots traveller Janet Schaw visited Green Castle in 1774, she painted a sentimental picture of Martin’s slaves, describing them as “a large troop of healthy Negroes, who cheerfully perform the labour imposed on them by a kind and beneficent Master, not a harsh and unreasonable Tyrant”. In her opinion, the slaves were “well fed, well supported”, and “they appear the subjects of a good prince, not the slaves of a planter”.12

Martin’s care of his slaves and their resultant health and high fertility not only increased their productivity and reduced their owner’s losses through rebellion, escape, or suicide, but also allowed him to avoid expending funds on the purchase of new slaves to sustain his labour force. Martin also refused to tolerate any behaviour on the part of managers or overseers which he considered inimical to his slaves’ health and usefulness. In 1766, for instance, he dismissed an overseer whom he claimed “lay in Bed every Morning till 9 a Clock with a negro whore”, a moral lapse made more serious by the fact that the man “used my poor Negroes with moroseness and severity, & neglected them when sick, by which means I lost 14 Negroes, & many of them valuable” (SM to Mr. Pooley, 6 March 1766, MP V, 23). Of course, no planter would have been happy to lose such a number of slaves, particularly when he considered an overseer’s negligence to blame. But Martin’s concern for is slaves’ well-being appears to have extended beyond a desire to maximize productivity and profit, and he claimed to “have a kind of paternal tenderness” for his bondspeople, a Christian paternalism which allowed him to reconcile morality and slaveholding.13 In his opinion, slaves of African birth or descent were innately intellectually inferior to whites, and thus he considered that emancipation would do them no favours, as they could only live happy and healthy lives when “subject to such correction as children are to parents”.14 To Martin, this “paternal tenderness” was best expressed by converting them to Christianity, both by encouraging Moravian missionaries to preach to them and by himself reading them the Gospels, “& then explaining to them the true & genuine sense of Christianity, after which we have a Hymn of Hallelujah, & I conclude with a Prayer invoking the Divine Blessing & protection for the future” (SM to “Daughter”, 9 June 1774).

To Martin, active participation in public affairs was another central element of paternalist practice, both for its own sake and to set a good example to other planters. When he resettled in Antigua in 1750, he was immediately “invited into ye Assembly [and] upon Coll. Blizard’s resignation they have suspended chusing a Speaker in his room with design to confer that honour upon me”, a position he held until 1763 (SM to SM2, 18 October 1750, MP I, 12). Between 1750 and 1776,

Martin applied himself to improving the governance and society of Antigua with a degree of
industry which matched his endeavours to manage the lives of his kin and his slaves. At the most
local level, he attempted to raise the standard of sacred musical practice; in 1770 he asked Samuel
Jr. to find him “a good young man…if he has a good voice, and knows how to sing by note, he
might teach the white children of St. John, psalmody” (SM to SM2, 12 April 1770, MP III, 110). As
colonel of the island’s militia, he took it upon himself in 1756, at the outbreak of the Seven Years’
War, to ascertain the health and readiness of the British regimen stationed therein, and was
pleased to find it under the command of an officer of a similar paternalist bent, a Colonel
Duroure, “who looks upon his soldiers as his family, & has taken a paternal care of their food &
health, as well as to train them up to a perfect good discipline”, with the result that “there is not a
better corps in the Kings service” (SM to SM2, 22 July 1756, MP I, 173).

Martin’s paternalist philosophy encouraged him to challenge the status quo in relation to traditional
practices of plantation agriculture. Reiterating in ‘An Essay upon Plantership’ arguments he had
posed in a previous pamphlet, he attempted to convince his fellow planters to forswear
engrossment of all of Antigua’s arable lands into vast sugar estates, and instead to improve the
island’s military security and social stability by allotting “a small portion of [their] lands” for the use
of “poor settlers”, who if given small plots would remain and “render the country populous”, with
the benefit that “a numerous body of white men interested in the soil, and well disciplined…are
able and ready to repel and invasion”.15 Realising the inevitability of war with France in the early
1750s, Martin advocated the adoption of new methods of taxation which he hoped would
simultaneously raise revenues needed to build up Antigua’s defences and rationalise the island’s
fiscal structure, urging the Assembly to levy taxes on the planters in relation to their estates’
produce rather than the numbers of their slaves.16 After the Seven Years’ War, he tried to
increase the commerce of Antigua and other British West Indian colonies by urging Samuel Jr., a
rising young London politician, to circulate within the appropriate circles a letter “with a
proposition for making Barbados, and all the Leeward Islands free ports, in the same manner as
Jamaica”, which he believed would be “much for the public good, and supported by good reasons”
(SM to SM2, 28 June 1768, MP III, 20).

Martin’s efforts to reform and enrich Antigua attracted the favourable attention of his peers
throughout the British Atlantic world. In the course of a 1768 tour of North America, he was
entertained in Philadelphia by Governor John Penn and Mayor William Allen, and in New York by
Governor Sir Henry Moore and by General Gage, commander of British forces in North America.
In a letter to Sir Robert Monckton, the previous governor, John Watts, a prominent merchant and
member of the Council of New York, mentioned the visit of “Old Col’ Martin”, whom he
described as “a clever veteran as can be”.17 In 1763, when Martin stepped down from the
speakership of the Assembly after thirteen years, his colleagues paid him tribute in florid terms,
praising his “long and faithful Services”, his “Zeal…for [Antigua’s] Welfare & Prosperity”, and his
“close Attention & unwearied Application” to public business. They stated that he was “a
Gentleman, who wisely considers the Good of the Subject” and “the real interests of the Crown”,
a man whose loyalty and commitment to Antigua and to Britain was an inspiration to all who
encountered him (MP IV, 73). When Martin died in 1776 at the age of eighty-three, it would have
been difficult for even the most censorious metropolitan observer to conceive of him as anything
other than a success in every aspect of his life. He died possessed of a vast fortune, owning six
hundred acres of prime sugar land and more than two hundred slaves, including such skilled
workers as “% good boylers”, “7 coopers…able to make tight Casks”, “as good a mason as any in
this country”, and a carpenter who “is able to build a wind-mill from top to bottom, [and] is also a

15 Martin, Essay, x-xi; Martin, A plan for establishing & disciplining a national militia in Great Britain, Ireland, & in all of the
British dominions of America (London: A. Millar, 1745), 78.
16 Gaspar, Bondmen, 108.
17 Aspinwall Papers, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society 10 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society,
1871), 601.
good house carpenter, weelright, and joyner, worth at least 200 [pounds] sterling” (MP VIII, 85). His sons were established in distinguished careers: Samuel Jr. was a Member of Parliament and had served as joint secretary of the Treasury and as treasurer to the Prince of Wales (the future George IV); Henry was a naval captain; Josiah was the royal governor of North Carolina; and William Byam was employed by the East India Company. He had given Antigua decades of loyal service, and had received glowing praise from his fellow assemblymen. In a 1774 letter to the wife of his son Henry, he described how “with the help of Spencers shoulder & my Stick, I walked down this steep Hill, visited my Boiling house & Cureing house, & then walked round my Orange Walk…from thence I walked up the Hill again…expecting to see my Lame Leg Swoln to a Mill Post, but it was as fine as that of a St. James’s Beaux…in short I eat, drink, sleep, & am so well that it is not impossible I shall look out for a wife” (SM to “Daughter”, 9 June 1774, MP IV, 91). In the final years of his long life, Martin depicted himself as a physically frail but spiritually and intellectually vital old man who enjoyed the physical and emotional support of a trusted slave, engaged in affectionate jests with his devoted children, and observed with pride the fruits of his long and arduous programme of improvement to his sprawling estate. Nothing in this picture suggested that its subject was a creole grandee of the sort who “found it difficult not to be tyrants in all their relationships”, or whose lives were notable for their “lack of public spirit”. Martin prided himself on the many ways in which he differed from the average West Indian planter, real or imagined: his desire to command his slaves’ obedience through bonds of affection rather than force; his willingness to take on onerous public responsibilities; and his commitment to long-term agricultural improvement over quick profit. It would be difficult to pin upon him the labels which contemporary metropolitan opinion and, to a large extent, modern scholarship has allotted to West Indian planters: brute; dullard; spendthrift; voluptuary; or gambler.

Scope and significance of the manuscripts
Richard B. Sheridan wrote of the Samuel Martin letter books that they “encompass the broad range of interests of a leader of some prominence in colonial society” and “include a wealth of material on plantation affairs”, and that “it would be an oversimplification to merely classify them under such headings as family, politics, military, agriculture, slavery, trade, and finance”. The bulk of the letters are addressed to Martin’s children, particularly Samuel Jr., and as the four Martin sons were intimately involved in the worlds of politics, trade and finance, and the military, many combine discussions of family matters with disquisitions upon imperial and domestic policy, national and colonial security, and plantation management. For example, a letter to Samuel Jr. of 24 September 1750 expresses Martin’s anxiety over the health of his youngest son, William Byam, “my poor dear Byrey!” who was experiencing “Dreadfull Convulsions”, and also his concerns over the quality of sugar produced at Green Castle; Martin informed his son that he was “refitting my works for claying, and shall want Burton from Yorkshire who is bred to that skill in a refining house at Hull”. In a similar vein, a letter to Samuel Jr. of 28 June 1768 calls the latter’s attention to an article his father has composed “with a proposition for making Barbados, and all the Leeward Islands free ports, in the same manner as Jamaica”, then proceeds to warn the younger man of the perils of chewing tobacco, “which I really believe was the cause of your leanness, by throwing away that saliva which was necessary to your good digestion”; he closes with some thoughts on marital happiness, encouraging his son to “induce a very good woman of a suitable age, to take you as her companion for life”, as “a single state in old age, is one of the most melancholy conditions of human life”.

Martin’s letters to his kin, and particularly to his children, represent an excellent source for a study of transatlantic family relationships, one which might build upon Richard Dunn’s study of the Winthrops in New England and the West Indies, on Jacob Price’s work on the mercantile family of Perry, and on more recent scholarship by, among others, T.A. Milford and Sarah Pearsall. The letters give a strong flavour of the challenge of maintaining close relationships between kin living at great distances from one another, and particularly of the difficulty of upholding parental authority at transatlantic remove. Shortly after Martin’s return to Antigua, his daughter Henrietta, or Rilla, who had remained in London, became infatuated with a Captain Fitzgerald, an Irish Catholic officer in the Dutch army. In a letter to Samuel Jr. of 4 March 1753, Martin thundered that he “would rather hear of her death, than of her marriage with a Soldier of fortune, & a Papist”, and claimed that Fitzgerald sought Henrietta’s love not for her own charms but because of her father’s wealth.

In subsequent letters, Martin stated that “if she marries foolishly as she lately proposed, I will not give her one penny” (12 May 1753), and he informed Samuel Jr. that the fact “that a woman of Rilla’s age (she was in her thirties), modesty, & understanding should thus worship an Irish Thief, is to me inconceivable” (22 June 1753). Martin was also deeply troubled by the behaviour of his son Josiah, who appears to have been a typically rebellious adolescent. On 25 June 1751 Martin told Samuel Jr. that “I intend Josiah for a Merchant, and he may be bred to that profession as well here under my eye, as any where in England, he may come over as soon as you judge him of fit age”. Two years later, he wrote that Josiah was “not to be trusted in England; and I know not well what to do with him here, his temper being to my very great mortification, sulky and intractable” (8 December 1753). A month later, he reiterated his concerns about Josiah, describing him as “naturally very indolent”, “mulish in his temper”, and “tend[ing] much to ye Vanity of dress and extravagance”; he was especially disappointed that “nothing but being a soldier will serve his turn, which is a profession which I dislike of all others” (8 January 1754). Martin was also reluctant to allow his son Henry to visit him in Antigua “until he is more perfect in Mathematicks, and particularly in Engineering &c, under our worthy friend Doctor Pemberton” (25 June 1751), and in 1758 gave his youngest son, William Byam, twenty-five guineas with which to purchase a watch “as a Monitor from me to make the best use of his Time and Talents” (20 July 1758). In the end, Rilla was reconciled with her father despite her marriage to Fitzgerald, and all three sons went on to distinguished careers in public service, but these and other letters give a strong sense of the difficulties inherent in transatlantic family relationships.

The Martin letter books are an equally rich source for studies of plantation management. Through them, we learn Martin’s thoughts on topics such as his preference for slaves from the Gold Coast (24 September 1750), his use of the “grubbing hoe” (31 December 1768), his strategies of irrigation (1 June 1767), and the many factors which could render a sugar estate unprofitable (23 May 1766). Such studies could build upon important recent work by economic historians such as B.W. Higman and S.D. Smith. Of special interest are Martin’s many comments regarding what he saw as his paternal responsibilities towards his bondspeople. While it is tempting to attribute self-serving motives to his request that Samuel Jr. send him a musically talented young man who “might teach my little negroes to sing hymns and psalms” (12 April 1770) or to his evening routine of summoning his slaves to his veranda to “explain to them the true & genuine sense of Christianity” (9 June 1774), other letters give evidence of his commitment to improving their physical as well as spiritual well-being by, for example, asking his estate manager to treat sick slaves as needed with expensive Madeira wine (“Agreement and Instructions to David Logan”, c.1767, MP II), and describing to Samuel Jr. his “custom to manumit them as they grow old & infirm. Of these I have


21 Higman, Plantation Jamaica; Smith, Slavery, family, and gentry capitalism : The world of the Lascelles, 1648-1834 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
now 17, whom I feed and cloath as usual” (13 August 1768). In his 1773 will, he expressed his satisfaction with his body servant Spencer by granting him not only his freedom but “the use during his life of the House and ground he used to occupy in my Plantation”. In a codicil added when he and Spencer were in England, Martin requested that his executors “pay for the Passage of my Negroe Man Spencer to Antigua in case he should be minded to go thither”. Although we are unlikely to concur with Martin that, as he wrote in his Short Treatise on the Slavery of Negroes in the British Colonies (1775) that slaves on West Indian plantations were generally healthy and content, that they lived in greater comfort and ease than white labourers in England, and that they were happier than they would have been in Africa because slavery allowed them to benefit from Christian instruction and the examples of benevolent masters, Martin’s letters nonetheless offer valuable insight into an early paternalist variant of pro-slavery ideology, a topic which has fascinated scholars from Ulrich Bonnell Phillips at the beginning of the twentieth century to Eugene Genovese in the 1970s, and more recently to, among others, Jeffrey Robert Young and Christopher Leslie Brown.22

The Martin letters also offer an unparalleled snapshot of life and labour in one of Britain’s most lucrative colonies at the height of its economic success. Through these documents, we see Antigua at the height of “a period of unprecedented prosperity”; in 1707 it was home to 13,000 slaves and in 1774 to 38,000, and whereas in the 1710s it produced an average annual yield of 5000 tons of sugar, by the 1760s that number rose to just over 9000.23 Martin was not only one of the island’s most successful planters, but he was also, in the words of Janet Schaw, its “loved and revered father, to whom it owes a thousand advantages”, and thus a study of his correspondence is of considerable value to scholars interested in the social, economic, and political history of Antigua, the Leeward Islands, and the British West Indies in general at the height of the era of sugar and slavery.24 But Martin’s travels to England and North America, his constant correspondence with far-flung family and friends, and his tremendous interest in political and agricultural developments throughout the British Atlantic world also make his letters an important source for scholars working in the flourishing field of Atlantic history, and could be of value to anyone hoping to introduce a wider Atlantic perspective to the study of Antigua or the Leewards, along the lines followed by April Lee Hatfield’s study of “Atlantic Virginia” or Mark Peterson’s work in progress on Boston.25 Through the eyes of Samuel Martin, we can gain a sense of what it actually meant to live in this British Atlantic imperial world, and of the multiple and overlapping identifications and allegiances experienced by British colonists in the decades prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution.

Bibliographical note

Primary Sources

In addition to the papers included in this microform edition, Martin was the author of a number of printed works, notably the various editions of 'An Essay upon Plantership', as well as his 'A plan for establishing and disciplining a national militia in Great Britain, Ireland, and in all the British dominions of America' (London: A. Millar, 1745) and A short treatise on the slavery of negroes in the

23 Sheridan, "Samuel Martin", 127.
24 Schaw, Journal, 103.
British colonies (Antigua: Robert Mearns, 1775). Both the 'Essay' and the 'Plan' can be accessed through the Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) database. Martin and his plantation are described in some depth by Janet Schaw in her *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, edited by Charles Andrews and Evangeline Walker Andrews (Yale University Press, 1921) and by Thomas Hulton, a Liverpudlian who came to Antigua in the early 1750s to serve as Deputy Collector of Customs, in his “Account of Travels”, a manuscript (Codex Eng. 74) held by the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island. Several scholars have posited that Martin was the model for Montano, the hero of James Grainger’s georgic poem, "The Sugar-Cane", which is also available via ECCO, and is reprinted in Thomas Krise’s *Caribbeana: an anthology of the English literature of the West Indies, 1657-1777* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Secondary Sources

The most important general monographs on the history of the English colonies in the West Indies remain Richard S. Dunn’s *Sugar and Slaves* (University of North Carolina Press, 1972) and Richard B. Sheridan’s *Sugar and Slavery* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); the former focuses on social and cultural factors, and the latter on economic ones, with a few pages centring on Martin. Martin’s ideas about slave management are mentioned in J.R. Ward’s *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834* (Clarendon Press, 1988), and David Barry Gaspar’s *Bondmen and Rebels* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) combined exhaustive archival research with anthropological methodology to explore the nature and meaning of the 1736 Antigua slave conspiracy, in which several of Martin’s slaves were apparently involved. Two journal articles centre on Martin: Sheridan’s “Samuel Martin: Innovating Sugar Planter of Antigua” (*Agricultural History* 34 [1960]: 126-139), which focuses on his strategies of estate management, and Natalie Zacek’s “Cultivating Virtue: Samuel Martin and the Paternal Ideal in the Eighteenth-Century English West Indies” (*Wadabagei* 10 [2007]: in press), which analyses his ideas about paternalism.

Richard Pares’s *A West India Fortune* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1950), which examines several generations of the Pinney family of Nevis and Bristol, provides an interesting comparison with Martin’s contemporaneous endeavours in Antigua, as does S.D. Smith’s *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism: the World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), which explores the business ventures of a leading family in transatlantic commerce. Several recent works on eighteenth-century Jamaica are also likely to be of interest. Trevor Burnard’s *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004) draws upon the voluminous diaries of the overseer Thomas Thistlewood to show how social, cultural, economic, and political forces shaped the “Anglo-Jamaican world” of both black and white islanders, concerns echoed by Sarah M.S. Pearsall in ”The late flagrant instance of depravity in my Family“ (*William and Mary Quarterly* s3: 60 [2003]: 549-582), which addresses issues of family relationships in the Atlantic world. B.W. Higman’s *Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850* (University of the West Indies Press, 2005) studies practices of plantation management, particularly on the estates of absentee owners, and undermines received opinion that absentee owners were invariably disengaged from their plantation affairs, and that attorneys, managers, and overseers were generally corrupt or incompetent. Finally, those interested in Grainger’s poem and Martin’s influence upon it are directed to John Gilmore’s *The Poetics of Empire* (Anthem Press, 2000), a study of the sources, strategies, and meanings of Grainger’s georgic epic.

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26 The *Essay* was published on its own in the following editions: Antigua: T. Smith, 1750; Antigua: S. Jones, 1756; London: A. Millar, 1765; London: T. Cadell, 1773; and Antigua: Robert Mearns, 1785. It was included in *Three Tracts on West-Indian Agriculture*, published by Alexander Aikman, Jamaica, in 1802.
3. Contents of the microfilms

**Add. Ms. 41346, Martin Papers, Vol. I**
Correspondence of Samuel Martin, senior, with his eldest son, Samuel Martin, junior,
(ff. 220), 22 May 1748-1 Oct 1758

**Add. Ms. 41347, Martin Papers, Vol. II**
Correspondence of Samuel Martin, senior, with his eldest son, Samuel Martin, junior,
(ff. 304 + 99*), 15 Jan 1759-5 Dec 1767

**Add. Ms. 41348, Martin Papers, Vol. III**
Correspondence of Samuel Martin, senior, with his eldest son, Samuel Martin, junior,
(ff. 299), 15 Jan 1768-27 Jan 1777

**Add. Ms. 41349, Martin Papers, Vol. IV**
Letter book of Samuel Martin, senior (ff. 134), 20 Feb 1756-20 April 1762

**Add. Ms. 41350, Martin Papers, Vol. V**
Letter book of Samuel Martin, senior (ff. 189), 2 March 1765-29 July 1774
(ff. 181-183 are three receipts to Martin, 1772-1778 and on ff. 184-187b are recipes and,
reversing the volume, rules for the cultivation and preparation of indigo)

**Add. Ms. 41351, Martin Papers, Vol. VI**
Letter book of Samuel Martin, senior (ff. 129), 21 June 1774-4 Nov 1776

**Add. Ms. 41353, Martin Papers, Vol. VIII**
Correspondence and papers of the Martin family specifically containing “Estimate of
Samuel Martin’s Plantation in New Division in Antigua, according to the general rule of
Appraisment”. 1768 and Martin’s 1773 will.
This major series of microfilms, which began in the 1960s, includes over 100 titles and covers many aspects of American history. Material ranges in time from the colonial period to the twentieth century and in place from Quebec to the West Indies. The series includes records relating to trade, industry, plantations, agriculture and ranching, immigration and settlement, the anti-slavery movement, politics and military affairs. There are personal papers and diaries as well as state documents and the records of industrial and commercial concerns. Primary printed material (newspapers, pamphlets, bibliographies, etc.) as well as manuscript collections are included. Each title is accompanied by a printed guide which contains a short introduction to the microfilmed collection along with a contents listing. A digital version of the guide is also available on our website.

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