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Sapelo's People: A Long Walk into Freedom

William S. McFeely

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William S. McFeely : Sapelo's People: A Long Walk into Freedom before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sapelo's People: A Long Walk into Freedom:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Much needed perspective.By glojomojoA much needed perspective on a vanishing culture. Thank you Mr. McFeely for telling this story.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The PeopleBy CustomerIf interested in island folks and cultures read this book. I have waited until my retirement days to become interested in the geographics that surrounds my homeland. Georgia is full of history, but Savannah is current day by day history. The surrounding coastal islands are so interesting and the people who lived there are even more interesting. I am starting a libray of literature on Georgia histroy I will never be bored. Try It.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... written book on Sapelo's people - history that reads like a novelBy N. LeffingwellWell written book on Sapelo's people - history that reads like a novel. Very well done.

Historian William McFeely, Pulitzer Prize winner in 1982 for "Grant: A Biography" explores America's history of slavery and reconstruction by recreating the rich but troubled past of the people of Sapelo, a low-lying barrier island off the coast of Georgia. The 67 people living there are all descendants of slaves who once worked its huge cotton plantation, slaves who made the brutal Middle Passage from Africa. Based on family records and interviews with the inhabitants, this text traces the lives of their forebears: among them Bilali, the Muslim slave who left a manuscript written in Arabic when he died; his daughters and grandchildren who were forcibly evacuated by the plantation owner

and marched into the interior of Georgia when the Union Navy threatened the coast during the Civil War; and March Carter and James Lemon, who ran away to join the Union army and fight for freedom.

From Publishers Weekly At the start of the Civil War, several thousand slaves worked the vast plantation on the barrier island of Sapelo, which lies off the southern coast of Georgia. When the island became part of the plan to blockade Savannah, some slaves escaped to join the Union army; hundreds more were moved inland by their owner. Freed in 1863, many returned to the only home they knew and, with government land grants, resettled Sapelo. By 1865 they had a school; in 1866, a church; in 1867 the men voted. Today, 67 of their remaining descendants still own the land. War historian McFeely (Grant and Frederick Douglass) uses scraps of oral history from these offspring and his own research to trace their origin back to Africa. He reconstructs their forebears' capture, delivery to the Bahamas and sale to the Sapelo plantation owner, and re-creates the character of their male progenitor, a powerful, literate African Muslim who became virtual manager of the plantation. McFeely identifies some puzzling language patterns with Arabic and retells Sherman's March to the sea by tracing its impact on the lives of Sapelo's slaves and present-day descendants. An enthralling account. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Civil War historian McFeely has long been drawn to Sapelo Island, Georgia, whose residents are descended from slaves brought there in the 19th century. Though he has written acclaimed works on great men (e.g., the Pulitzer Prize-winning Grant, LJ 2/15/81; Frederick Douglass, LJ 2/1/91), he yearned "to know the slaves and freed people-and their descendants-with whom I share an American history." McFeely blends creative writing, oral tradition, and historiography to do more than narrate a saga of residents on a sea island. He offers a meditation on race as he looks at the lives of an island's people. With McFeely's introduction, we come to know the people and the ancestors of this distinct community. Recommended for all collections.--Kathleen E. Bethel, Northwestern Univ. Lib., Evanston, Ill. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Sapelo, one of the barrier islands along the southeast coast of the U.S., is inhabited by only 67 people, all descended from enslaved black Africans. Their forebears worked a plantation on the island, a situation ripe for an inquiry into the mystic chords of memory linking the antebellum South with the present, and McFeely, the definitive biographer of Ulysses S. Grant and Frederick Douglass, rises to the occasion. He returns us to 1802, when a man named Bilali was taken from Guinea and bought by Thomas Spalding, Sapelo's slaveholding baron. McFeely sorts the records, including Bilali's memoirs, and encapsulates the local upheavals wrought by war, emancipation, reconstruction, the reassertion of white control by Spalding's widow--and, not least, hurricanes. No boring sociological tract, this warm visit with the people who now live there, who assemble in Sunday best at the First African Baptist Church (a paradox since Bilali was a Muslim), is a special addition to the painful saga of race relations in this country. Gilbert Taylor