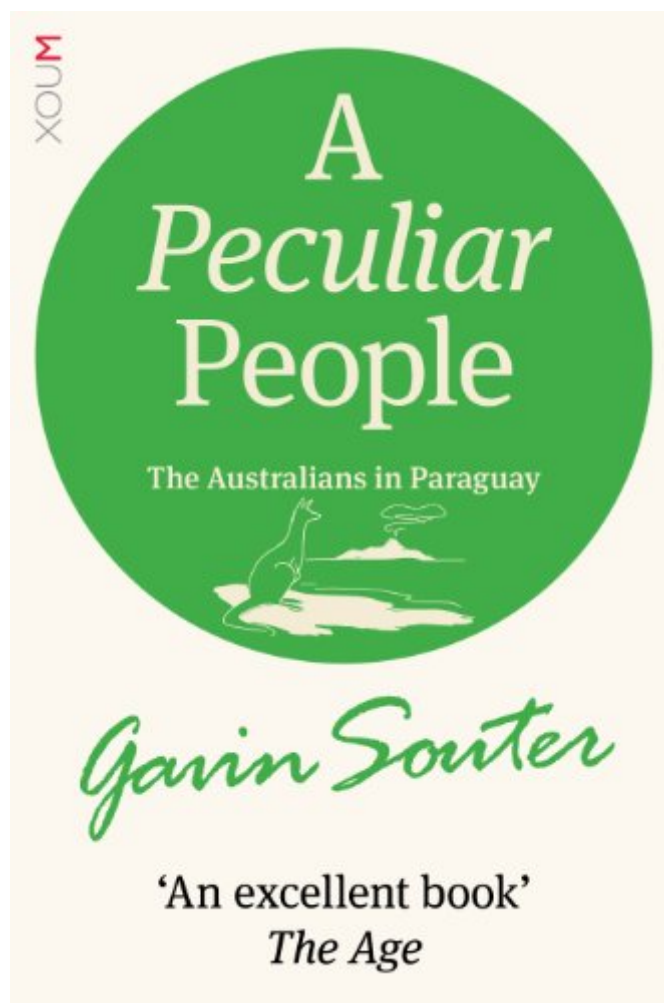




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A PECULIAR PEOPLE: THE AUSTRALIANS IN PARAGUAY



Synopsis

In 1893 almost 500 Australians set out by ship to carve a communist utopia from the heart of Paraguay. Led by socialist journalist and activist, William Lane, their aim was to realise the cherished Australian principles of equality and mateship. Expulsions and secessions began early; in mid-1894 Lane himself seceded with a loyal minority and founded Cosme, some forty-five miles south, but two years later the new colony had deteriorated and dwindled. Despite this, the story lives on in legendary proportions to this day and has never been related so fully as in this evocative exposition by Gavin Souter. Souter unravels the history of the New Australia movement, exploring the motivations and motives of its members, its organisation, the conflicts and dissension and the final disillusionment. He suggests a number of factors contributing to the venture's failure, not the least being Lane's contradictory personality. Meticulously researched and based on countless interviews with descendants of the original settlers, *A Peculiar People* is a work of literary as well as historical value. Winner of the Foundation of Australian Literary Studies award, it brings the fascinating story of idealism, courage and human fallibility to vivid life. The most complete, objective and altogether satisfying account of the movement by turns ironic, sardonic, compassionate, frequently evocative and finally haunting. Australian Book Review. An excellent book, lively in its narrative and judicious in its interpretations. The Age. Souter ... writes with admirable clarity and can make a story, period and cast of people come alive. Exciting, absurd and gallant by turns. The Bulletin

Book Information

File Size: 9270 KB

Print Length: 360 pages

Publisher: Xoum (September 1, 2012)

Publication Date: September 1, 2012

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B009F7K5NQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,801,895 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #58

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Customer Reviews

I first read this book when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay. I worked with a man who was a direct descendant of one of the Australian immigrants to Paraguay. The first part of the book is overly dedicated to the union movement in Australia, and it isn't until the latter half of the book that the story of those people in Paraguay gets interesting, at least to someone who's been to the places they settled. I've given the book four stars because the author did a tremendous amount of research and puts it together coherently and in organized fashion. The photographs are worth the price of the book.

Well researched and a great narrative still!

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