BOEKBESPREKING


Apthorp's letter, dated November, 1790, was published in the rare first volume of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1792. This volume was reprinted in 1806 and again in 1859, but even so is not common. The typography of the reprints is not quite the same as that of the original, so that the arrangement on the pages is slightly different in the three editions.

The article seems to be unknown to bibliographers of Surinam. It is one of the few accounts pertaining to that country, written in English and published before the appearance of Stedman's well-known "Narrative" (1796). For that reason a résumé of its contents may be of interest to those who may not have access to the original or to either of the reprints.

An introductory note gives the author's reason for writing the letter:

"As you desire me to give you some particulars concerning the country in which I live; and as I am now perfectly at leisure, I shall do it in as satisfactory a manner as I am able, hoping that I shall not by being too lengthy, be tiresome to you."

After locating Paramaribo, he launches into description of the Surinam river:

"This is by far the finest river I have ever seen, pretty uniformly near three quarters of an English mile broad, on each side thickly skirted to the water's edge with mangrove trees, which like all other herbage here never lose their agreeable verdure. In some places are seen openings, where the wood has been cleared to make room either for the cane or coffee, or for the buildings of the different plantations. The depth of the water in this river is like that of the whole of this coast, not great, but sufficient to admit