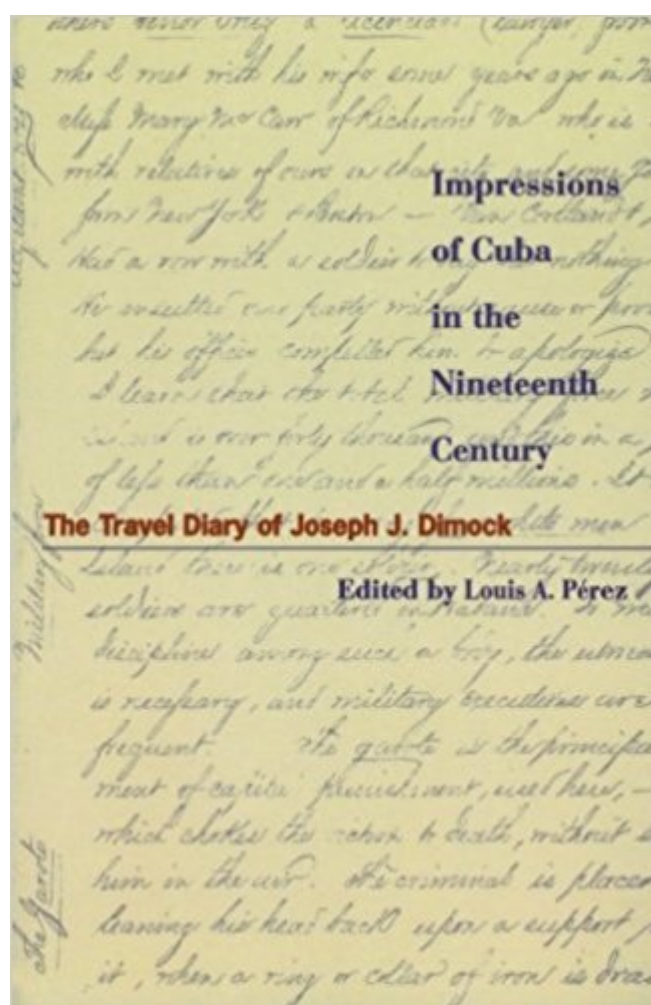


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# Impressions Of Cuba In The Nineteenth Century: The Travel Diary Of Joseph J. Dimock (Latin American Silhouettes)



## Synopsis

Joseph J. Dimock's descriptions of Cuba in his travel diary provide a remarkable firsthand view of a fascinating period in the island's history. In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States was pursuing manifest destiny. The war with Mexico had resulted in a vast increase of national territory, and many north Americans wanted Cuba as the next acquisition. In addition to annexationist plots, Cuban life was marked by slave conspiracies, colonial insurrections, economic expansion, and political intrigue. *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century* describes the social, economic and political conditions in the 1850s. Dimock's entries of his travels and observations as an American reveal details of Cuban agriculture, plant life, and natural resources. The diary also provides elaborate accounts of the sugar industry, extensive commentary on the daily life of slaves, Spaniards, and Cubans. Dimock's curiosity led him around the island, into prisons, salons, and other unusual places, resulting in a wide-ranging account of Cuban life. *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century* provides a highly accessible, entertaining, and insightful look at Cuba.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Eminently readable. Little escapes Dimock's penetrating gaze, and political prejudice, class and racial divisions, the sugar economy, role of the Catholic Church, and slavery are all viewed through the optique of a Yankee superiority complex. (John M. Kirk) A fascinating look at mid-19th-century Cuba. Dimock makes many interesting observations on the people, fauna, and culture of Cuba, but perhaps more revealing are the racist and jingoistic attitudes he reveals when arguing that the

United States could make Cuba a vibrant, rich economy instead of the disaster he felt the Spanish and Cubans had made of it. (Library Journal)

Joseph J. Dimock's perceptions of Cuba in his travel diary offer a remarkable firsthand view of a fascinating period in the island's history. *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century* describes the social, economic, and political conditions in the 1850s. Dimock's entries of his travels and observations as an American reveal details of Cuban agriculture, plant life, and natural resources. The diary gives elaborate accounts of the sugar industry as well as extensive commentary on the daily life of slaves, Spaniards, and Cubans. Transportation, housing, and culture are also explored. Dimock's curiosity led him around the island, into prisons, salons, and other unusual places.

This diary is valuable as a record of the assumptions and, frankly, prejudices of a New England Yankee looking at Cuba in the age of manifest destiny. Dimock assumes that Cuba belongs in the expanding domain of the United States. He speaks of the characteristics of the various racial groups on the island, all of which, he is quite clear, are inferior to his own Anglo-Saxon stock. He enjoys himself in Cuba, but is not a well behaved guest, occasionally staging little confrontations. His attempt to transcribe Spanish words is ludicrous (e.g., "jorchata" becomes "orcharda"). All in all, it's a candid record made without self-consciousness, but it is most useful to someone who already knows a good deal about Cuba. I would give the book a higher grade if it had included some background material, or at least some notes correcting Dimock's bad Spanish.

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