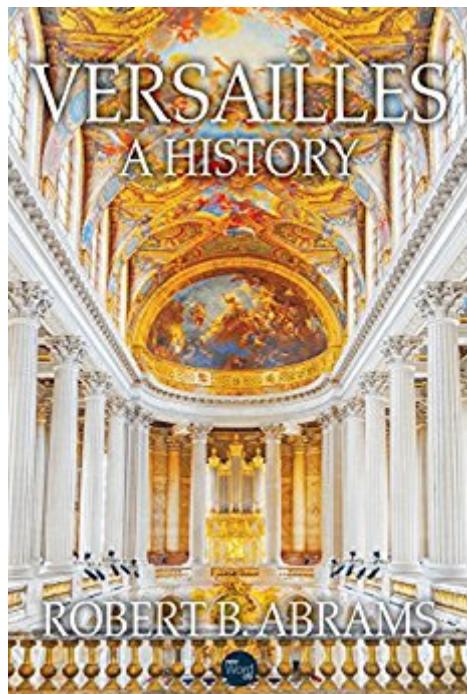


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Versailles: A History



Synopsis

King Louis XIV had many loves, but none as compelling as Versailles, the modest country estate he transformed into one of the world's most spectacular palaces. Here is the dramatic - and tragic - story of Versailles and the men and women who made it their home.

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Customer Reviews

If you've been to Versailles, you know there's nothing like it in the world. This book recounts the fascinating history of the building of the palace, especially its transformation from a hunting lodge (and what a hunting lodge) under Louis XIV. If you've seen the television series Versailles, you'll really enjoy this book to see what's fact and what's fiction. The book is fast-paced and filled with little-known detail and stories about the people who lived at Versailles, which was more than a palace but an entire community.

This book gives more historical background than most French histories, but leaves some of the well

known fact out. I really enjoyed reading it and recommend it

Wish I would have read this prior to my visit to Versailles to know and understand the rich history of this beautiful palace and the surrounding grounds.

Very interesting

This book is a history not only of Versailles but also of the people who built and rebuilt it over the years - and rightly so. For what is a palace but a reflection of the men and women who lived there? "The Sun King" Louis XIV was as grandiose as his magnificent structure. He is to be admired for his determination in constructing it against all advice and nature's stubbornness. He is also to be lauded for his energy (if that is the word) in pursuing women. Even arrogant Louis possessed some self-knowledge by the end, telling his grandson, the king-to-be, on his deathbed: "You are going to be a great king. Do not copy me in my love of building or my love of warfare. . . . Remember your duty and your obligations to God; see that your subjects honor Him. Take good advice and follow it, try to improve the lot of your people, as I, unfortunately, have never been able to do. . . . My dear child, I give you my blessing with all my heart." It's too bad the young man didn't follow his advice. Highly recommended.

In 1667, a grandiose king, Louis XIV, decided to build the world's most grandiose palace. He succeeded beyond all expectations. Today, Versailles stands as one of the world's greatest palaces and most-visited museums. This well-written, page-turner tells the story of the construction of Versailles and its surrounding gardens and structures. Historian Robert B. Abrams has an eye for detail. Abrams' flesh-and-blood portrait of Louis XIV is captivating, but what surprised me was the sympathy I felt for his grandson, Louis XVI, and his wife, Marie Antoinette. Their departure from Versailles is especially moving.

"Outside," writes Abrams, "the mob was fighting and plundering, parading the severed heads of two guards around the courtyards on pikes. The Marquis de Lafayette arrived with his troops and attempted to quell the riot and told the king and queen that order could only be restored if they showed themselves to the crowd before accompanying him back to Paris. Louis went out onto the balcony first. A few people cheered, while others shouted, 'The king to Paris! The king to Paris!' Then the queen came out

holding the dauphin by one hand and his sister by the other. "No children! No children!" the mob shouted. "The queen alone!" She ushered the children back into the room and stood there alone, looking down at the upturned faces in the Cour Royale. Several of the marchers pointed muskets at her. She stood quite still, her head erect, apparently unmoved by the scene. Her calm, defiant bravery was impressive and strangely moving. Slowly the men lowered their muskets. She turned and walked back into the room and then across to her Petits Cabinets. At last, she sat down and began to cry.

Highly recommended.

Historian Robert B. Abrams tells a captivating tale in his history of the building of Louis XIV's magnificent Palace of Versailles. The book is well-written and easy to read - not too long and not too short, just enough for most readers, but academics may want more. The best parts of the book, in my opinion, are not about the construction of the palace - although those sections are interesting, too - but the stories of the men and women who occupied Versailles over the centuries. Louis XIV casts a long, unforgettable shadow, of course, and readers will feel pity for some royals, including Marie Antoinette. Writes Abrams of the approaching revolution, "Antoinette grew increasingly disconsolate. Her mother had died in 1780; her daughter Sophie, in 1787. Two years later, in June 1789, the dauphin died. On October 5, the queen was still mourning the loss of her elder son when news came to her as she sat in the grotto at the Petit Trianon that the Paris mob, three months after storming the Bastille, was now marching on Versailles." We all know how the story ends. This book is recommended for anyone who has visited Versailles or admired it and also those who enjoy reading about royalty or French history.

I enjoyed reading this book. Having spent many years in Europe and enjoying many trips to Paris and Versailles it was most interesting to learn of the building and history of this magnificent Palace/Castle. Reading this book I felt I was back in the hallways and rooms once again. Very enjoyable read.

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