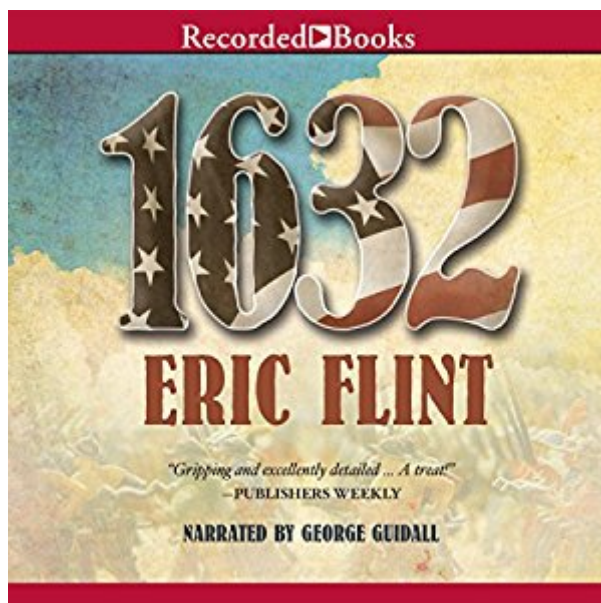


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1632: Ring Of Fire, Book 1



Synopsis

New York Times best-selling author Eric Flint has received glowing critical praise for his Ring of Fire alternate history series. In this first installment, a West Virginia town is transported from the year 2000 to 1631 Germany at the height of the Thirty Years' War. Thrust into conflict, the town residents must also contend with moral issues, such as who should be considered a citizen.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Imagine scooping a 6 mile diameter ball out of the earth somewhere in West Virginia such that the top hemisphere is air and the bottom hemisphere is a 6 mile across circle at ground level, scooped out with a cosmic scooper by an alien race. It is then swapped with another Earth where the calendar is ca. 1632. The instance of the swap spawns a parallel universe so anything the 21st century Americans end up doing in their new home in 15th century Germany will have no impact on the world of the birth. This a very clever concept because it avoids all sorts of time paradox issues. I will say the American chauvinism comes across hot and heavy. But by the end of the story has been pounded into a compromise that will offer I hope the best of both worlds - Monarchy and Democracy. If I get around to reading the other books in the series, I suppose I'll find out.

I noticed that this novel was available on the Baen Free Library and downloaded it to my Nook. Although originally written as a stand-alone novel, it became the first book in a series of over 50 novels, short story anthologies, and issues of an on-line semi-prozine (The Grantville Gazette) by

Flint and a series of co-authors including David Weber and Mercedes Lackey. Known as the 1632-verse, the Ring of Fire series, or the Assiti Shards series, there is also a role-playing game. It was originally published in 2000 about the same time as another book with a similar premise, *Island in the Sea of Time* by S.M. Stirling, which is why I had never gotten around to reading Flint's book. In Stirling's novel, the entire island of Nantucket is transported to 1250 BC. In Flint's novel, he creates the fictional coal mining town of Grantville, West Virginia (population about 3,500), based on the hometown of Flint's mother, and transports it and the surrounding countryside, including the town's power plant, in time and space to Germany in 1631 AD, right smack in the middle of the Thirty Years War. Historical characters include King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden and Cardinal Richelieu (one of the most popular historical characters in fiction going back at least as far as *The Three Musketeers*). The main character in this book is Mike Stearns, a native of Grantville who left the town first to pursue a professional boxing career and then joined the army. When he returned to Grantville, he went to work in the local coal mine and became the head of the local chapter of the United Mine Workers. After the people in the town figure out what has happened to them, they elect him head of their community. He quickly meets and falls in love with a Sephardic Jewess. Because of the violence and the emphasis on military action, you could group this with military science fiction as well as time travel fiction. One of the characters, an army veteran, just happened to abscond with an M-60 machine gun when he left the service. Another character, a cheerleader, is also an expert marksman. I enjoyed the book and may read one of the others in the series one day but don't feel an overwhelming urge to do so.

Science fiction has never been one of my preferred reading genres, nevertheless, I decided to give this a try based on my husband's enthusiasm for it. The story line hooked my attention right off the bat and held my attention through the last page. What I noticed most (and with amusement) about the author's writing style is how different it is from the style of women's fiction written by women that I usually read. First of all, the boy-meets-girl scenarios did not go through the typical attraction / misunderstanding / conflict / drama / drama / drama / kiss that make up most of the story in many novels written for women by other women. In 1632, boys meet girls and the romances are in almost immediately in full swing. In one case, the couple was married 3 pages after they met! Although the wedding gown is described as "borrowed", the author gives none of the details that would have taken up several paragraphs in a book written by a woman. Likewise, this couple's wedding night scene got the point across without delving into the flowery and/or passionate language frequently

found in women's fiction. More time and lengthy detail are given to the mechanics and logistics of the newbies settling into the year 1632 and configuring the technology they brought with them to continue working some 400 years before such things were actually invented. Since Grantville, VA was time and geographically shifted into 17th century Europe during the Thirty Years War, descriptions of battles (both actual and imagined) are especially detail oriented. As interactions take place between the the Middle Ages European inhabitants of 1632 and the North American newbies, the Europeans seemed quite comfortable with the clothing, speech, lifestyle, and possessions of the Americans once it was firmly established that no witchcraft was involved. According to my husband, some place names, battles, and historical characters are real. I take his word on that. There is some graphic violence which takes place in the context of battle engagements and raiding parties. The book is also lengthy, nearly 600 pages. It's a good book to settle into when the reader has a long stretch of uninterrupted time. For me it was a rainy weekend on the couch. I can also imagine this as a good book during a long airplane flight. The next book in the series seemed focused on military history, which is a particular interest of my husband's, not mine, and I'm not likely to continue reading, but I enjoyed this one.

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