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The Sea Chart: An Illustrated History of Nautical Maps and Navigational Charts

Lawrence Phillips

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With Hobbs's expert help, Brown's intended purpose of offering a clear picture of every carrier and air action of World War II has been achieved.

DOUGLAS SMITH
Naval War College



Blake, John. *The Sea Chart: An Illustrated History of Nautical Maps and Navigational Charts*. Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2009. 160pp. \$39.95

Only on occasion will an author and publisher produce a work of remarkable beauty and excellence. John Blake's illustrated history of nautical maps and navigational charts, now available in paperback, is one such delight.

Commander Blake is a former Royal Navy officer and a fellow of the Royal Institute of Navigation. He not only knows what sea charts are about but has had privileged access to the treasure trove of British charting housed in the Hydrographic Office, which in journalistic terms is a veritable scoop.

Blake relates the development of the sea chart from the days when manuscripts were drawn on sheep skins, such as the portolan charts that survived from the thirteenth century, through the maritime ascendancy of the Spanish and Portuguese, then the Dutch, French, and British through the eighteenth century, when the discovery and charting of the coasts and the oceans of the globe had become a strategic naval and commercial requirement, to the modern Admiralty charts of today.

In doing so Blake brings together an outstanding collection of charts, some never before reproduced, culled from British, Spanish, French, Netherlands,

and American origins, with a look also at Chinese, Japanese, and Indian charts. Other sources include some of the most important maritime archives of the world, including the Library of Congress and the Hispanic Society of America in the United States, as well as the National Maritime Museum, Admiralty Library, and Hydrographic Office. The quality of reproduction is outstanding.

The foreword by HRH the Duke of York leads in to the opening chapters, which look at how navigation and navigational tools (including the development of the chronometer to allow determination of longitude at sea), celestial navigation, and surveying developed. Other chapters look at the chart as the key to exploration geographically through each theater of the globe, then chronologically within each chapter. There is also a multiplicity of significant and interesting historical charts and maritime documents, such as the personal tide tables of Sir Francis Drake, the taking of a slave-trade ship off Africa, and charts of the early-twentieth-century Antarctic explorers such as Captain Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton.

Unusual historical insights are included as stand-alone vignettes, such as how the immense curiosity of Benjamin Franklin, both on his first transatlantic crossing from London to Philadelphia in 1726, and as deputy postmaster general for the American colonies in the 1760s, caused him to investigate the disparity between east-west and west-east crossing times. His understanding of the Gulf Stream led to his Atlantic charts that showed how best to exploit it and so speeded the mail between Europe and the Americas.

A comprehensive bibliography curiously omits any reference to the British Library in London, which holds the second-largest collection of manuscript sea charts in the world.

The Sea Chart's appeal is to a wider readership than just mariners, leisured or professional. It is a must for all whose interest is in grasping how Earth's continents and oceans were charted and our world was shaped.

LAWRENCE PHILLIPS

Editor, *The Royal Navy Day by Day*
Middlesex, United Kingdom



Norton, Louis Arthur. *Captains Contentious: The Dysfunctional Sons of the Brine*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2009. 185pp. \$29.95

“Honor,” as Douglass Adair explains in *Fame and Founding Fathers* (1974), “is an ethic of competition, of struggle for eminence and distinction.” “In a particular culture,” he writes, “a sense of honor—a sense of due self-esteem, of proper pride, of dignity appropriate to his station—acts like conscience for a practicing Christian.” Adair argues that “the lust for the psychic reward of fame, honor, and glory, after 1776 becomes a key ingredient in the behavior of Washington and his greatest contemporaries.” Gregory D. Massey observes in *John Laurens and the American Revolutions* (2000), “Like his fellow officers, [Continental Army colonel John] Laurens valued his honor or reputation above all else. Honor, more than anything, defined a man.” What Christopher McKee says about the U.S. Navy officer corps of 1794–1815 in *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creations of the U.S. Naval Officer*

Corps, 1794–1815 (1991) applies equally well to naval officers of the Revolution: “Unless this search for fame . . . is recognized as a primary element in the ethical air breathed by the naval officers . . . , a true understanding of that corps is . . . impossible.”

Lacking this essential understanding of the place of honor in the value system of the late eighteenth century, Louis Arthur Norton, professor emeritus at the University of Connecticut and author of several works on nautical themes, has built a wrongheaded argument about the character of the Continental navy officer corps.

Norton's title encapsulates his thesis—that captains of the fledgling American navy were excessively concerned with their honor, making them unusually contentious, which in turn impeded their effectiveness and harmed the Continental navy. Norton believes these captains' preoccupation with personal honor and rank was indicative of dysfunctional personalities dominated by narcissism, ambition, obsession with order, and aggression, rather than indicative of the shared values of their time, the same values that motivated Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Madison.

The heart of *Captains Contentious* comprises five chapters, devoted respectively to the Continental navy careers of John Manley, Silas Talbot, Dudley Saltonstall, Joshua Barney, and John Paul Jones. The choice of these five is somewhat arbitrary, for one—Talbot never even held a Continental navy command. None of these biographies makes a convincing case that these men were more contentious or touchy about rank than their contemporaries in other armed services. Anyone familiar with