

2006

The Sea Rover's Practice: Pirate Tactics and Techniques, 1630–1730

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Recommended Citation

Gottschalk, Jack A. and Little, Benerson (2006) "The Sea Rover's Practice: Pirate Tactics and Techniques, 1630–1730," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 59 : No. 4 , Article 22.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol59/iss4/22>

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In a nutshell, this work is a disappointment. It fails to serve as either a balanced introduction to the Spanish-American War or a useful addition to our knowledge of the imperial era or the impact of colonialism. Its shortcomings may be due more to structure than scholarship, but they are still severe enough to warrant bypassing it in favor of more comprehensive and balanced works.

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Little, Benerson. *The Sea Rover's Practice: Pirate Tactics and Techniques, 1630–1730*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac, 2005. 253pp. \$27.50

There is a fascination about pirates of old. Most of us as children first learned about them from Peter Pan in the figure of Captain Hook or from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

This work provides a detailed historical examination of sea rovers (an umbrella term used to cover pirates, privateers, and others with the same essential motivation of greed), how they lived, what they did, and how they did it. It will be of high interest to the maritime spectrum, from armchair sailors to admirals.

Little, a former naval officer and SEAL, details where many pirates came from and their motivation, which was primarily a desire for treasure. He notes how the Hollywood image of a pirate attack on the high seas was far different from the real thing, and he discusses

attack planning and execution for both at-sea and land assaults.

Within the book's well documented twenty-three chapters, Little provides fascinating material on pirate personalities and their lives both ashore and at sea. Rovers, of course, all had different personalities, some more savage than others. It is easy to see how one would not choose to be at the mercy of L'Ollonois, who cut out one man's heart and ate it.

The ships are also described, along with the weapons of choice. Line drawings are numerous and include a wide variety of personal weapons, such as muskets, pistols, swords, and pikes, as well as cannons of various types.

Another value of this book lies in its seven appendixes, which include a sea rover's lexicon, weapons and ranges, and, for those with a desire to dine like a pirate, a description of what they ate and drank. These appendixes are excellent, with definitions provided for all reasonably relevant (and generally unknown) items, such as kilderkins and demiculverins. There are many footnotes, a complete bibliography, and a good index.

This is a really good book. Be prepared—after reading only a few pages—to feel the wind in your face and taste the salt air. The only downside for ever-optimistic adventurers is that no treasure maps are provided for some sandy beach. The pirates never buried their treasure.

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