

1994

# Admirals and Empire: The United States Navy and the Caribbean, 1898-1945

John B. Hattendorf

Donald A. Yerxa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Hattendorf, John B. and Yerxa, Donald A. (1994) "Admirals and Empire: The United States Navy and the Caribbean, 1898-1945," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 47 : No. 4 , Article 23.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol47/iss4/23>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## 136 Naval War College Review

understand the RAN would be well advised to read this work carefully.

THOMAS-DURELL YOUNG  
U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

---

Yerxa, Donald A. *Admirals and Empire: The United States Navy and the Caribbean, 1898–1945*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1991. 202pp. \$34.95

A century ago, Alfred T. Mahan repeatedly reminded Americans that the Caribbean was a vital area for the United States. He envisioned it as an “American Lake.” While not rejecting Mahan’s view overtly, Donald Yerxa uses another maritime concept as the basis for his investigation. Interpreting American interests in the region as imperial ones, he focuses on two of them: protection of the area from external threats, and the removal of threats within the area to imperial stability.

Yerxa has dug deeply into archival sources to describe fifty years of U.S. naval activity that ranges from gunboat diplomacy and support of armed intervention to goodwill visits and wartime operations against German threats in the region during 1917–1918 and 1941–1945. His conceptual structure provides a strong focus and an explicit argument around which he skillfully organizes his narrative. In doing this, he has written a valuable narrative that will be useful for all who work in the history of American naval strategy. Nevertheless, Yerxa does not answer every question regarding the U.S. Navy’s activities in the region. Because of the structure of

his thesis, the author was forced to omit a range of naval activities in the Caribbean that do not fall into his dual categories. Notwithstanding, and although the volume makes no pretense of being definitive, it is the closest yet to such a work. With that in mind, and with no other sources to which one can readily turn, it would have been convenient to have had a list of the various commanders of the naval forces in that region along with their dates of command, as well as lists or graphs showing the forces’ changing strengths and character. A deeper understanding of the administrative structures of the naval commands is needed.

Readers of the *Naval War College Review* will readily recognize one of the chapters of this book, which appeared earlier as an article in these pages (Autumn 1986, pp. 60–72).

This is an important book. Although not a full history of the U.S. Navy’s activities in the Caribbean, it is a strong work in its focus at the level of broad grand strategy and foreign policy.

JOHN B. HATTENDORF  
Naval War College

---

Grover, David H. *American Merchant Ships on the Yangtze, 1920–1941*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992. 234pp. \$47.95

This book focuses on American mariners in China between the two world wars. It illuminates the lives of individual crew members, the organizations of which they were a part, and the turbulent environment in which they