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The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History, Volume II

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but the readings, arranged chronologically within sections and reflecting nuances of opinion on each side of each issue, provide plenty of evidence as to what it might be.

One rewarding kind of analysis the editor leaves for the reader is the collecting of common threads. Such threads might be the importance of party politics (see Silbey, Boucher, and Benton); the Civil War—vice, presumably, the War of 1812—as the “second American Revolution” (the Beards, and others); and the fragility (Allan Nevens, cf. David Donald) of “an atmosphere in which every episode became a crisis.” There are curiosities in this entertaining book (like Hamilton J. Eckenrode’s view of Southerners as “Tropic Nordics”), and some memorable grotesqueries (Richard H. Shryock, in 1933, dismissing “Platonic abstractions like Union and Freedom” as matters for “sentimentalists”).

The Causes of the Civil War remains in this third edition an indispensable tool. It is a must-read for students of the period and a must-use for its teachers. The book is itself evidence of the urgency of the need, unabated for over 130 years, to revisit continually the sources and attempt to illuminate this crisis that could be resolved, in John Quincy Adams’s words, “only at the cannon’s mouth.”

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Dudley, William S. *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, Vol. II. Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1992. 770pp. (No price given)

This second volume of William S. Dudley’s *The Naval War of 1812* continues his project of reviving an area of history long neglected by American scholars: the compilation of a reliable and comprehensive documentary naval history of that conflict. The standard collection of materials pertaining to the American side of the conflict was assembled less than a decade after the Treaty of Ghent by John Brannan, who edited *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States, during the War with Great Britain in the Years 1812, 13, 14, & 15*, published in 1823. Unfortunately, little has emerged since in this genre. On the other hand, British and Canadian historians have literally blown the Americans out of the water with the publication of significant documentary collections. Earnest Cruikshank, and later William Wood, set the standard with their multi-volumed collection of material relating to British and Canadian activities during the war, which may someday be utilized for a similar effort focusing on American documents.

Fortunately, American scholarship has begun to catch up, at least regarding the naval aspects of the war. Dudley and his colleagues at the Naval Historical Center have engaged in the long-needed project to produce a three-volume set of material relating

to the naval war in 1812. The first volume of *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History* was published in 1985 and contained a selection of documents relating to the causes of the war and its naval aspects during the first six months. In this second volume, published in 1992, Dudley continues by earmarking over five hundred documents pertaining to the naval campaign of 1813, both at sea and on the inland waters. As he explains in the preface, he wished to provide a more comprehensive look at the fledgling U.S. Navy than would be possible with a mere "recounting of battles from eyewitness reports." Additionally, he has included documents that reflect the "concerns of policy makers as well as commanding officers, of ordinary sailors and marines, and of common citizens who had opinions about the course of the war." The result is a rich mixture of material that goes beyond a dreary listing of official state documents and reports. Through it all, Dudley provides a terse but informative narrative that weaves together the contents of each section. This narrative "resin" offers the necessary background perspective to a work that should be of great value to the interested layman as well as to the practicing scholar, who may already be familiar with much of the material.

Dudley approached this formidable task by organizing the documents into chapters that correspond to the five theaters of operation: the Atlantic, the Chesapeake Bay, the Northern Lakes, the Gulf Coast, and the Pacific. He

initiates each chapter with a short introductory essay that examines the area of operations in 1813 and establishes the context of the documents that follow. Within each chapter, the documents are arranged chronologically by topics, each topic introduced with an explanatory heading. This mix of narrative and documents is properly balanced so that the former does not intrude into the main purpose of the work yet is sufficient to give meaning and perspective to the materials.

This is a richly illustrated and well indexed study and contains a useful though far from complete list of short titles. It is not, nor was it intended to be, a complete documentary record of the naval war of 1812. It is important for its representation of significant and (what might appear at first blush) not-so-significant topics and issues regarding the naval establishment in this country. It serves as a manageable overview of a rich variety of topics.

Dudley's work is certainly not without fault, however. One in particular lies in the arrangement of topics within the chapters. There seems to be an unresolved conflict in the editor's mind about whether the material should be arranged topically or chronologically. The result is a mix of the two. For example, in the third chapter, dealing with the Northern Lakes theater, a more logical flow of material would have resulted had Dudley organized his documents around each of the areas of operations within that theater rather than mixing them together in a rough chronological

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flow. If the reader is primarily interested in the activities on Lake Erie, for example, he or she must scan the table of contents carefully to mark out the material relating to that subject. This is inconvenient at best and downright annoying at worst.

However, Dudley must be complimented for assembling a collection of sources that provide a valuable look at the early years of our naval establishment as it faced its first real test. He has certainly made a significant contribution to the historical record of this period, and it is hoped that the project will continue with the timely publication of the third and final volume in this series.

In conclusion, documentary histories are often difficult to assemble and even more difficult to read, but Dudley has succeeded in overcoming these barriers so well that his work deserves a place in every university and public library.

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Whipple, A.B.C. *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*. New York: William Morrow, 1991. 357pp. \$23

Whipple is a former editor and writer of Time-Life Books and the author of numerous maritime titles. He has produced a history that is fast-paced and well written.

Whipple's narrative does not disappoint. The images of newly inde-

pendent Americans clashing on the seas with the corsairs of the Barbary coast, engaging in hand-to-hand combat in the approaches to Tripoli harbor, bombarding the city itself, or leading a hodgepodge army of mercenaries across the Western Desert to Derna are the stuff of Hollywood. (Although I would not advise anyone to waste their time watching *Tripoli*, with John Wayne.)

Unfortunately, while the author may be a master of the sea tale, he clearly is not an expert on the history of the early U.S. Navy. He suggests that the navalist-antinavalist debate in the United States was purely sectional. It was not. He terms the British 4th-rate *Leopard* a frigate. He incorrectly writes that "fleet maneuvers and coordinated support of army troops" characterized the American naval experience during the Revolution. He writes of broadsides being fired Hollywood style, *en masse*, whereas in the American service the guns were fired in rotation as they bore. He has even misspelled the name of one of the U.S. Navy's early heroes—Captain Thomas "Truxton" (Truxtun).

Whipple's major failing is his determination to portray the Tripolitan War as the conflict that shaped the American sea services. Such a claim is both unoriginal and inaccurate. Glenn Tucker made the same argument in his similarly titled *Dawn Like Thunder: The Barbary Wars and the Birth of the U.S. Navy* (1963). Statements such as that the Tripolitan War was the United States' "first foreign war," and one that witnessed the operation of