

1990

The American Naval Heritage

Sam J. Tangredi

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

Recommended Citation

Tangredi, Sam J. (1990) "The American Naval Heritage," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 43 : No. 3 , Article 29.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol43/iss3/29>

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.

Chronologically the book is divided into five parts: early years through the Barbary Wars; the transitional period from the War of 1812 through the Civil War, on into the obsolescence of the 1870s; the period of a "New Navy" from 1884 until the beginning of World War I; the rise to the most powerful navy during the period of the two World Wars, concluding with the nuclear age from 1945 to the present. Each section contains a discussion that compares naval capabilities with the improvements in weaponry and propulsion, also showing how the Navy was used, often in support of the major land campaigns. Organizational charts are included to show the chain of command in the Navy Department, demonstrating clearly that with improved technology comes an evermore complicated and bureaucratic organization. Period-piece drawings and photographs remind the reader of ships and personalities of years gone by. A final chapter, entitled "The Past is Prologue" summarizes the book and the author's emphasis that despite many predictions after the first atomic bomb, there is need for a navy. The traditional role of the Navy remains vital in national defense, and the basic principals of the use of naval power in the past remain valid in the world of today.

United States Naval Power in a Changing World logically and systematically expands on its title. It should serve college-level and graduate students an excellent introduction to the role of our Navy in national and

world history. Recent emphasis in the Department of Defense on "Joint" planning and operations make this a most readable textbook for officers of the other services as they study today's Navy. The bibliography and footnotes provide a greater depth of information.

Written by a historian who worked in and with the Navy for the last half-century, Edwin Hooper's book is a lasting contribution to our history and requirements for the future.

JOHN R. WADLEIGH
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Newport, Rhode Island

Coletta, Paolo E. *The American Naval Heritage*. 3rd ed. Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 1987. \$29

It would be an understatement to say that the third edition of Professor Coletta's brief overview of American naval history suffers from a severe lack of proofreading. Quite frankly, the book as printed is not worthy of its author. This is particularly unfortunate since it was obviously intended to be a one-semester introductory undergraduate text about a subject rarely taught at civilian universities. The third edition will not inspire deans to authorize the course.

During his long term as professor of history at the U.S. Naval Academy, Dr. Coletta never would have accepted a paper containing such typographical and editorial errors: words are hyphenated for no apparent reason, underlines extend

through margins, the Navy's proud new destroyer class is referred to as the "Arkeugh Burke" [sic] and missing words have reversed the meaning of some paragraphs. Strange word constructions and spellings abound. Our thirty-ninth President is continuously cited as "Jimmie Carter" despite the fact that President Carter has always called himself "Jimmy." There is probably no other reference to "President Jimmie Carter" in existence.

All of these criticisms echo a recent review of Dr. Coletta's *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*, also from the same publisher. A pattern may be developing.

Theoretically, one should be able to appreciate the scholarly merits of the work despite such mere surface blemishes. However, the text is much too cursory for the naval historian or any "naval buff," and the general reader cannot help being disenchanted by the entire package.

The book's scholarly merits (i.e., factual information contained therein) are also hindered by its confusing organization. The author's intent is unclear; the all-too-brief introduction discusses continuing themes within America's naval heritage, yet the text plods through chronologically without extensive development of these themes. The introduction ends by posing the sort of rote final exam question that midshipmen have written thousands of blue books on: "Given the current international situation and knowledge of the military forces available to the West and to the Soviet Bloc, a rewarding exercise is to

determine what kind of Navy the United States should have in order to carry out its functions." Unfortunately, the book neither answers this question nor provides the tools to do so.

This third edition includes chapters on the Carter and Reagan naval and arms control policies, including Secretary Lehman's push for the 600-ship navy. However, the Maritime Strategy, presumably a vital element in current naval policy, is treated with the significance of a footnote. Better treatment of these topics may be found elsewhere.

Speaking of footnotes, there are none, giving further indication that the book was intended as an elementary text. Despite my respect for Professor Coletta, I would advise readers—especially those with no knowledge of naval history—to wait for a proofed and corrected fourth edition.

SAM J. TANGREDI
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy
Coronado, California

Cogar, William B. *Naval History: The Seventh Symposium of the U.S. Naval Academy*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1988. 302pp. \$50

This is a typical conference volume, a mixed bag. The collection includes examples of minor pedantry. But there are also a dozen that propose fresh interpretations of the naval past and these are of lasting value. Three papers discuss the design and engineering challenges of reconstructing a Greek trireme, and its accomplish-