

Betts' discussion on the use of watertight bulkheads offers early insights into something commonplace in modern ship design. Illumination, heating and cooking, and pumping systems are given detailed consideration with a particularly entertaining addition of a bread oven to Fraser's Patent Stove. Use of terminology such as "ice-worthiness," speaks to a design requirement of the time which remains as relevant today. It is these capabilities which Betts alludes to as contributing to the loss of the crew. While the ships were made to withstand the harsh arctic environment and entrapment in pack ice, there was only so much contingency for the crew. Provisions to sustain them beyond the nineteen months they were beset, were not anticipated.

Betts' writing style is easy to follow, even for a novice to maritime language. Notes to the text and the bibliography demonstrate Betts' range of research from historical to contemporary, primary and secondary sources. Additionally, any unfamiliar terminology may be researched, with an index available for easy return. The book is also logically structured, with each part building on the one before.

Potential buyers for a book like this may be wide-ranging. During review, it was shared with children, teenagers, and retirees alike, all of whom remarked on how fascinating it was. Such a book has a place in the reference library and on the coffee table of a modeling enthusiast as well as in the reference section of a library or museum. It offers a fascinating insight to marine engineering and wooden shipbuilding of the 1800s, from increase in size of the moulded orlop and lower deck beams, as well as strengthening of the transoms and deadwood to perform Arctic service. This book also offers insight into social and political history topics, such as why Sir John Franklin was chosen as expedition commander, why finding a navigable Northwest Passage was so important to Great Britain, and why the crew ultimately abandoned their ships.

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Stephen R. Bown. *Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World, 1600-1900*. Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, www.douglas-mcintyre.com, 2021. 314 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, timeline, index. CDN \$28.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77162-331-5.

Contemporary critics lament the extent of corporate power, but author Stephen Bown recalls the day when there truly were *Merchant Kings*. This book chronicles the lives of six men who, in the course of building their commercial kingdoms on foreign continents, made their own fame and fortune, and expanded the empires of their home nations. They organized enterprises, raised armies, assembled fleets, conquered peoples, encouraged migrations,

and sought confirmation of their monopolies from their home governments. This book meshes economic, political, and demographic developments.

Bown first shines his light on Jan Pieterszoon Coen and the Dutch East Indian Company. Living during the Dutch Golden Age, Coen spearheaded the effort of his company to corner the nutmeg supply emanating from the Spice Islands of the Moluccas, now Indonesia. Arriving in the Spice Islands in 1609 with 13 ships and 1000 soldiers plus Japanese mercenaries, Coen began his campaign to divert trade from British to Dutch interests. His efforts would continue until his death on 20 September 1629, but the Dutch East Indian company would not go bankrupt until 1799 and Dutch rule over its East Indies territory would persist until 1949.

The next figure from the twilight of the Dutch Golden Age is Peter Stuyvesant of the Dutch West India Company. Familiar to many as the purchaser of Manhattan Island, Stuyvesant is presented as a lifetime employee of the West India Company whose silver banded wooden right pegleg evidenced his sacrifice for the company. In 1644, he led a fleet of twelve battleships against Spain in the Caribbean before assuming the director generalship of New Netherland in 1647. In that position he established municipal services for New Amsterdam (modern New York) and a monetary system, before being forced to surrender to the British under the Duke of York in 1665. Though its best days were behind it, the Dutch West India Company survived for another century.

Rather than leaving the Dutch alone in the East, the tale of Sir Robert Clive of the English East India Company may have more enduring significance than the preceding characters. Lured to the Indian subcontinent by the abundance of saltpetre, a crucial ingredient of eighteenth-century explosives, Clive directed armies and navies, made treaties with local rulers and waged war against colonial powers and corporations. From his arrival at Madras in 1744 until his suicide in London in 1774, Clive was a leading architect of British domination in India. English East India's authority would wane as that of the British government waxed, and the company was dissolved in 1874.

Turning to the northwest of the American continent, the tale of Aleksandr Baranov and the Russian American Company is the next subject. Sailing to Alaska in 1790, Baranov's tasks were different from those of other Merchant Kings. Not drawn by high value minerals or competition against other powers, the "Lord of Alaska" drudgingly built his kingdom on islands inhabited by First Nations, settled by Russian emigrés and financed by the export of furs. Officially founded in 1799, the Russian American Company's reign would extend until Baranov's death in 1819, followed by naval administration until Alaska's sale to the United States in 1867.

Of perhaps most interest to *Northern Mariner* readers is the fifth chapter,

“Empire of the Beaver: Sir George Simpson and The Hudson’s Bay Company.” A merger of the North West Company and Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821 created the vehicle with which the Scottish Simpson competed (until his death in 1860) with American interests for the fur trade and sovereignty of a continent from Hudson Bay to the Pacific. Though its territory became part of the Dominion of Canada in 1870, its influence endured. The Company’s Fort Garry became Winnipeg, Manitoba, Fort Edmonton became Edmonton, Alberta, and Fort Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia. The Canadian-American border reflects the Hudson Bay Company’s shadow.

The final Merchant King is Cecil John Rhodes of the British South Africa Company. From his arrival in southern Africa in 1879, Rhodes consolidated diamond and gold mines, encouraged settlements and served as prime minister of Cape Province. His mineral enterprises fuel and racial policies plague a subcontinent to this day. His Rhodes Scholarships remain a prestigious award and supporter of academic excellence.

Bown’s text captures and holds the reader’s attention. Most chapters commence with a quote from their principal personalities. An index facilitates reference and the bibliography encourages further study. Pictures add faces and scenes to the text and the maps and “Timeline For The Age Of Heroic Commerce” are valuable supplements.

I find *Merchant Kings* to be a very interesting work. It teaches us that for three centuries, 1600-1900, policy and development was often led, not by politicians and generals, but by businessmen who assumed many of the powers normally associated with governments. The “Kings” featured were flawed men of accomplishment. Industries and nations are built on foundations they laid. Some of their means are no longer acceptable, but, as Bown posits, were even controversial in their own days and not necessarily inevitable. This is an excellent read for anyone interested in history of commercial and colonial development or pondering how so much of our world came to be.

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Rinker Buck. *Life on the Mississippi. An Epic American Adventure.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, www.simonandschuster.com, 2022. 416 pp., illustrations, maps, index. US \$32.50, cloth; ISBN 978-1-50110-637-8. (E-book available.)

If one wanted to invent a name for the author of a book about navigating a replica frontier flatboat down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, one could hardly do better than Rinker Buck. As it turns out, there is a real Rinker Buck,