

Michael W. Nagle. *The Forgotten Iron King of the Great Lakes: Eber Brock Ward, 1811–1875*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, www.wsupress.wayne.edu, 2022. xxii+339 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$26.99, cloth; ISBN 978-0-81434-993-9. (E-book available.)

While the title of Nagle’s biography of Eber Brock Ward emphasizes his role in the mid-nineteenth century iron industry, in a review for a journal focused on maritime history the focus here will be on Ward’s role in shipping on the Great Lakes, a role that dominates two chapters, and is in the background in others.

In broad strokes, Eber Brock Ward (or E.B. as Nagle and some contemporaries called him, to distinguish him from the father, son and cousin who shared his first name), was raised in “modest” circumstances, but at 21 was taken into his uncle’s thriving shipping business, becoming the principal heir of what was reaching towards a million dollar business. From this foundation, E.B. invested in some of the earliest iron making businesses in the Great Lakes region, along with acquiring railroad, mining and lumber properties. A late venture into glass-making rounded out his portfolio. The connections between the resource extraction, transportation and industrial production leads Nagle on more than one occasion to argue that Ward should be considered among the pioneers of vertical integration in the United States. Ward, he claims, had his “finger firmly on the pulse” of the range of businesses which he controlled by the early 1870s. A businessman first and always, Ward had supported the Whigs early (he had commanded his uncle Samuel’s schooner *General Harrison*, named for the prominent Whig who was briefly president of the US) and by the 1850s was a committed Republican. Among his closest friends politically was Republican Senator, B. F. Wade (the namesake of a Ward steamboat). When Senator Wade was in line to succeed President Andrew Johnson had he been impeached, Ward was rumoured to be a candidate for Secretary of the Treasury (148). Among the things that united the two men was their unwavering opposition to slavery, which included orders to Ward’s captains to assist escaping slaves across the border to Canada.

While E. B. Ward is quoted as reviling Washington as the “seat of corruption” (82), he certainly spent time there as president of the American Iron and Steel Association during and in the years immediately following the American Civil War. Other lobbying included a successful effort to prevent legislation requiring twelve or more additional lifeboats to be carried by larger passenger vessels, like his *Atlantic*, running in co-operation with the Michigan Central Rail Road.

The loss of the *Atlantic* provides some valuable insights into how Ward conducted business in the years following his uncle’s death. While Nagle

supplies a narrative focused on the newspaper reporting of the incident, the case law reports make interesting on their own. The initial trial between Ward and the owners of the *Ogdensburgh* placed all the blame and liability on Ward's vessel. He fought that decision all the way to the US Supreme Court, to ensure that liability was divided evenly. Given the disparity in the value of the two vessels, the owners of the much less valuable *Ogdensburgh* were then required to pay Ward over \$40,000 for the loss of the *Atlantic*. Efforts to collect this brought Ward back to the US Supreme Court two more times to extract the maximum recompense from his soon bankrupted rivals. Cross Ward and suffer the consequences.

Of this character trait Nagle does, however, provide other instances. One is inclined to suspect that Ward had fewer friends than simply people with whom he had not yet quarreled. Certainly, he would not have numbered James Ludington among them. Negotiations having stalled over a mill site near Pere Marquette (now named for James Ludington), Ward had Ludington thrown in a Detroit jail charged with stealing Ward's timber and trespassing on lands controlled by the Flint & Pere Marquette Railway (of which Ward was president). Shortly after his release from jail, Ludington signed over what Ward wanted and then disposed of his lumbering operations to other parties (178). There are a number of references to Ward as a Robber Baron in the volume. The label is a good fit.

There are a wide range of references to Ward's extended family, although the volume desperately needs one or more family trees to keep them all straight. The most useful connections came via his Uncle Samuel Ward's wife, Elizabeth. Her nephews included William Gallagher and Jacob Wolverton, who ran the shipyard where most of the steamboats were built (74). His brothers-in-law, B. F. Owen and Stephen Clement, served as captains, and the latter with some of Ward's ventures in the iron and steel industry. Beyond these few, Ward seems to have despised most of his and the next generation of his family. In some instances their sanity (or at least their mental competence) is questioned; in others it is their intemperance. Most were cut out of the major share of his uncle Samuel Ward's will. At best most of them got an allowance from E.B. Ward's estate.

Nagle questions why Ward is not well remembered as an industrialist and then provides the answer. Ward's investments were in individual, albeit complementary, enterprises and his will largely required those investments to be liquidated. Whatever vertical integration there was quickly disintegrated. His timber holdings were passed intact and free of debt to his young, second wife, whose brothers made another fortune buying up Ward's debts at a discount. A few years later, she married a Canadian and moved to Toronto. While the last chapter is "A will and a princess," the less scandalous of Ward's

descendants are quickly pushed from the stage by the “dollar princess,” her Hungarian lover and some risqué photographs. Any discussion of the Ward legacy moved from the business pages to the gossip columns.

As with most volumes which demand this much original research (the footnotes run 61 pages), the author is occasionally let down by his sources. The source that claimed Ward was born in “New Hamborough” near Toronto (6) probably was unaware that New Hamburg is closer to half way between Toronto and Detroit. The steamboat *London* is noted among the vessels built and operated by Samuel and EB Ward in the mid-1840s (75). It was not. *London* was built in Upper Canada, but seized by US Customs agents in Detroit on grounds subsequently protested by the Canadian government and then quickly sold to Ward. *Canada*, which appears a couple of pages later, was seized on equally specious grounds and as quickly acquired by Ward.

Nagle’s volume depends on a dispersed collection of Ward papers, along with a wide range of primary printed sources to bring this narrative together. If there is more to be said, especially regarding Samuel Ward’s efforts to actually create the fortune to which E. B. contributed and succeeded, this remains a foundational work on one of the key figures in the history of nineteenth-century business in the Great Lakes region. Eber Brock Ward *may* be the Forgotten Iron King, but in the history of Great Lakes shipping his name certainly had not been forgotten, and will be even more prominent in the studies that build on Nagle’s work.

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Chris O’Flaherty. *Torpedoes, Tea, and Medals, The Gallant Life of Commander D. G. H. ‘Jake’ Wright DSC, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.* Oxford, UK: Casemate, www.casematepublishers.com, 2022. xvii+190 pp., illustrations, bibliography, notes. US \$34.95, UK £17.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-63624-140-1.**

A niche field of study in the Second World War’s broader maritime struggle is that of the coastal forces that contested the narrow waters of the English Channel and the southern half of the North Sea. That there was a struggle is perhaps known, but the details are vague, particularly after the Dunkirk evacuation in May-June 1940, with attention of most tending to the U-boat war in the broad Atlantic, or to more momentous strategic questions dominating the counsels of the Admiralty and its political masters. There is no doubt, however, that denying the free passage of the Channel to enemy coastal convoys, dominating that crucial waterway, and defending similar British convoys was of crucial