

rates. The author has also toiled through musty Admiralty dispatches from two centuries ago in order to find and share kernels of colour and truth revealed in tattered shreds of paper. These naval officers and men stemmed the tides of rivers to stand like sieves against slavery. Their adversary was an extremely profitable, multinational industry which put sugar in Britain's omnipresent teacups: the pro-slavery lobby had allies at the highest levels. Rooks' dramatic storytelling is anchored by seventy-five pages of references, making this a rare and rich jewel of a book.

Eric Wiberg
Boston, Massachusetts

Gene Eric Salecker. *Destruction of the Steamboat Sultana: The Worst Maritime Disaster in American History*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2022. xii+497 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$39.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-68247-743-4. (E-book available.)

In his book, Gene Eric Salecker paints a picture of the events before, during, and after the destruction of the steamboat *Sultana*. His comprehensive work provides something useful to both students of maritime history, as well as readers interested in other aspects of history, and their interaction with the events discussed.

The author opens with a brief history of previous steamboats named *Sultana*, and the situation regarding the use of steamboats at the end of the American Civil War. He then proceeds to explore the conditions that prisoners of war, the bulk of the passengers on the ship, found themselves in as the conflict ended. Next follows a discussion of the financial motivations that influenced the contracts which were used to pay operators to repatriate prisoners after the war. Students of economic and financial history will find something of interest in Salecker's in-depth explanation of how the contracts were written, as well as how all parties involved were paid. He also explores the nature of corruption that often surrounded these contracts, as operators were driven by operating costs and profit motives, rather than a desire to get prisoners back to their homes.

Salecker vividly traces the entire length of the *Sultana*'s final trip down the river, from her loading to her fiery destruction, and the aftermath. He paints a harrowing picture of passengers confronted by a ship on fire and the days and nights that followed. Readers will find a thorough and comprehensive exploration of these events both before and after the sinking, including follow-up investigations, trials, scapegoating and blame sharing. One of the author's expressed reasons for writing the book was to fill in gaps in his previous work

on the subject, as well as to help explain and/or suppress some myths that have emerged in the more than 150 years since the disaster (ix). In re-examining primary source materials, he provides a new perspective on the sinking; for example, how newspapers approached the event, the investigations, and the hearings and influenced subsequent attitudes about it.

Despite his extensive research into *Sultana*'s fate, Salecker does not offer his own theory on what happened or indulge in speculation and mythmaking. Instead, he lays out the available evidence and allows readers to draw their own conclusions. The author's extensive use of first-hand accounts, secondary sources, newspaper reports, trial transcripts, and numerous other sources, means those interested in pursuing additional research for academic study will find much to offer. The emphasis on the human element of the *Sultana* tragedy reminds readers at all levels that this is a very human story. Any references to technical aspects of steamboat construction or operations, or the dynamic conditions that influenced travel on the Mississippi River appear within the context of their role in the disaster.

Destruction of the Steamboat Sultana the Worst Maritime Disaster in American History, provides an accessible and comprehensive account of the events surrounding the loss of the *Sultana*, and the events that followed. It is both a gripping introduction to the subject and a thorough, well-researched, account, accompanied by enough source material to inspire future investigations. While exploring the sinking and its aftermath, he touches on other historical influences at the time and debunks decades worth of speculation and mythmaking that have grown up around the *Sultana* disaster.

Michael Razer
Ward, Arkansas

Anna Sergi, Alexandria Reid, Luca Storti, and Marleen Easton. *Ports, Crime and Security: Governing and Policing Seaports in a Changing World*. Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press, bristoluniversitypress.co.uk, 2021. x+188, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index. US \$75.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-5292-1771-1. (E-book available.)

Commercial ports and industrial waterfronts have always attracted criminality that demanded a policing response. Whether the opportunism of sailors and longshore workers stealing from cargoes and smuggling prohibited goods and narcotics, or the organized variety practiced by criminal groups corrupting lower-level and higher-level port officials and infiltrating memberships of waterfront unions, ports are places offering considerable opportunities for criminal elements. Measuring the full extent of criminal activity proves difficult