

There are so many good things about this book it is hard to wrap it up. Earle weaves together a history of numerous and complex moving parts that include diplomats and statesmen alongside naval officers and fishermen while also bringing in natural scientist and industry leaders, all while bridging the Atlantic borderlands with Americans, Canadians, and British actors. It's not an economic history of the fisheries (thankfully) nor a labour history. It has fair foundations in environmental history, but its greatest contribution is to diplomatic history and the history of American national identity in the Early Republic. It would be an excellent addition to any reading list for courses on US foreign policy before the American Civil War. It is, I think, the best answer we've seen to why historians need to pay more attention to fisheries history.

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Alan Easton (Michael Whitby, ed.). *50 North: An Atlantic Battleground. Lewin of Greenwich, 2021. (Originally published 1963). Illustrations, endnotes, index, appendices. CDN \$114.89, paper; ISBN 978-0-77010-132-9. (E-book available.)*

A long out-of-print memoir of a Canadian naval officer has been recently republished in electronic format, with a rather substantial twist. The author, Alan Easton, commanded several ships throughout the Battle of the Atlantic and his memoirs, first published in 1963, reflect an honest and forthright account of command at sea over the course of the longest single conflict of the Second World War. A true classic in its original form, however, because the author decided to not refer to ships and individuals by their real names, nor specific dates, the editor, Michael Whitby, has painstakingly researched the facts associated with the narrative that make a huge difference to the original.

A Master Mariner in the merchant navy before the war, as well as a naval reservist, Easton offered the tiny, but burgeoning, Royal Canadian Navy a rarity in an experienced mariner who could quickly be trusted with command at sea. A scarcity the navy quickly exploited, seeing him serve over four years of continuous service at sea, which underscores the reason his narrative is compelling. The stories are not just a true reflection of the events he witnessed but are vividly underpinned by the arduous demands of wartime seagoing command in the North Atlantic, north of 50 degrees latitude—hence the title.

The author tells his story through the lens of the four ships he commanded between May 1941 and August 1944, using a simple playing card analogy. The first ship, HMCS *Baddeck*, was a mechanically troublesome corvette (the Knave), followed by HMCS *Sackville*, a trustworthy corvette (the Queen),

followed by HMCS *Matane*, a new frigate (the King) and finally, HMCS *Saskatchewan* (ex-HMS *Fortune*) a River-class destroyer (the Ace).

A gripping narrative, not only because of his first-rate recounting of life in Canadian warships, in dare-I-say very challenging times, rather it is his leadership experiences that are the most captivating to the reader. His style of writing comes across very well in his recollection of events to different situations and he is brutally honest about his perceived shortcomings as strain and lack of sleep take their toll over the course of the war. He is constantly questioning himself as to whether he can physically make another trip, yet he perseveres with a medical condition that would have surely caused him a shore appointment had he wished. His narrative also vividly illustrates the growing pains of a navy that was rapidly expanding whilst coping with a profound lack of equipment, training and at sea experience of the predominantly Volunteer Reserve crews. That said, he was very proud of the ships' companies he led and was conscious they were making Canada's naval traditions that would eventually overtake those inherited from the British Royal Navy.

This alone would make the re-issue of *50 North* welcome to those interested the Battle of the Atlantic, where most international accounts concentrate on the Royal Navy and the United States Navy but inevitably fail to mention Canada's enormous contribution. Enter Michael Whitby, Canada's official naval historian at the Department of National Defence's Directorate of History and Heritage. In the printed version (eBook) he has painstakingly cross-referenced facts and anecdotes, including names of individuals, of the events described by the author and uses a detailed set of endnotes, at the end of each section, to greatly enhance this history. He has also included a heretofore unpublished chapter.

Moreover, unlike the original, this edition is liberally interspaced with historically correct photographs that are appropriately placed with the narrative, instead of the usual grouping at the centre of the book. In addition to photographs, there are appendices that include Easton's actual wartime reports of proceedings while in command. Finally, the reprint is further enhanced with a new foreword by Marc Milner, an accomplished Canadian naval historian, and the moving eulogy by retired Canadian Vice-Admiral Hugh MacNeil at Eaton's funeral in 2001. My only criticism of the printed eBook (it is also available in electronic format) is with the typesetting that, at times, can be most annoying as sentences are split and incomplete paragraphs are formed.

This book is a fascinating account of a Canadian naval officer who commanded several front-line escorts during the Battle of the Atlantic. But it is much more than just a great memoir of an individual naval officer; it is also a superb reference as to the challenges of command at sea. This latter point is important, because as the Commanding Officer he has a unique ability

to look back at events to see how they developed, a perspective that is vitally important. I would recommend this book, without hesitation, to anyone with an interest in the Battle of the Atlantic, because first and foremost it was written by a Canadian, commanding Canadians, who was continuously at sea throughout the conflict – this makes it refreshingly different from almost all other accounts.

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Mary K. Bercaw Edwards. *Sailor Talk. Labor, Utterance, and Meaning in the Works of Melville, Conrad, and London*. Liverpool University Press, Studies in Port and Maritime History, www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk, 2021. xii+283 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £90.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-80085-965-4.

Sailor Talk: Labor, Utterance, and Meaning in the Works of Melville, Conrad, and London (hereafter *Sailor Talk*) by Mary K. Bercaw Edwards is an academic literary analysis written for others within that field and makes use of its theory, much of which may be unfamiliar to most maritime historians and archaeologists.

Bercaw Edwards prefaces her work with an introduction of the character of the sailor as storyteller in history and literature. She specifically focuses on the language of sailors as a medium of cultural exchange, including examples of words that have entered the general lexicon and have persisted to the present, often divorced in memory from their origin.

The fundamental goal of the book is stated in Chapter 1: to determine the identity of nineteenth-century British and American sailors and what defined them, to examine the origins, nature, and peculiar functions of the language they spoke. There are few archival records of sailor talk, so literary sources may provide some of the best contemporary analogs to analyze. Bercaw Edwards chose to focus on the language of sailors in the works of Melville, Conrad, and London because all three were sailors before they were storytellers.

The author also dives into the “Are sailors serving aboard ships exceptional?” debate. As sailor is both a type of labour and a social identity in the nineteenth century, I believe the author is on the NO side [as am I]. Chapter 1 also discusses the juxtaposition between the ephemeral nature of sailor talk with the necessary precision of nautical language and terminology; slang, swearing, and cursing; and work songs.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the concept of orality as independent of literacy (something I would say can lead to fluidity in language, thus supporting the author’s argument of the ephemerality of sailor talk). Bercaw Edwards cites Walter J. Ong: “Written words are residue. Oral tradition has no such residue or