

Changes in shipbuilding and sharpened accuracy in charting allowed capitalism to blossom, and those historically active traders in Venice were ready to take every advantage to prosper – even more than they had when Constantinople was in Orthodox hands. The lay priest Mauro and the other Camaldolese religious (a monastic order of hermits) at the San Michele monastery on an island off Venice who worked for years on the map were cartographers for hire. Mappamundi weren't for the masses; they were commissioned. Mauro's original was for Venice and there were two copies. One of those went to the King of Portugal, eager to grow his trading options in Atlantic Africa.

“The Indian Ocean and its islands and coastlines as drawn by Fra Mauro were important because this is the area of the spice trade from which Venetian merchants had made their wealth.” Outside of Marco Polo and Nicolo de Conte, to whom Small gives great credit, that ocean was “virtually unknown.” (132-33) The map also places Japan off Asia for the first time.

Small's achievement in *Dark Sea* is remarkable since she was working from “vague and little documented” evidence on how the map was built and Mauro's life. With those two challenges as given, her narrative correctly carries a shroud of mystery through the work. Crucial to the telling of this story is Small's recognition from cover to cover of text is the human desire to define a sense of place in their lives. (92)

Dark Sea is directed to the cartographer in us all—academic, layman, sailor, landsman.

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Myron J. Smith, Jr. *After Vicksburg: The Civil War on Western Waters, 1863-1865.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, www.mcfarlandpub.com, 2021. viii+319 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-7220-5. (E-book available.)

American Civil War histories tell similar stories regarding well-known battles, such as Antietam, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg. Myron J. Smith, Jr.'s book, *After Vicksburg: The Civil War on Western Waters, 1863-1865*, mentions Gettysburg and Vicksburg, but challenges the known narrative by focusing on the battles of the Mississippi River and its tributaries, conflicts that have not regularly been researched and reported.

The author, an expert on naval battles, ships, and commanders of the Civil War, has written nearly one hundred books over his career. *After Vicksburg* is a worthy addition to his bibliography, building upon his books dating back to

Le Roy Fitch: The Civil War Career of a Union River Gunboat Commander published in 2007. He builds upon these publications by expanding from specific studies of ships, battles, and commanders to include all major river campaigns after the Union capture of Vicksburg on 4 July 1863.

First, Smith focuses on the Mississippi River and the importance of its tributaries prior to the Civil War. The vast majority of the Union ships were housed and docked at Cairo, Illinois, a city which abuts Missouri and Kentucky at the southernmost point of Illinois. Thoughtfully, he provides readers with the phonetic spelling for Cairo, *Kay'ro* or *Care'o*, to differentiate its pronunciation from that of the capital of Egypt.

Smith illuminates Cairo's immense strategic importance, enabling the Union Navy to defend the upper Mississippi River, while working southward to control the entire waterway, thereby, dividing the Confederacy. This Union advantage emphasized the Confederacy's Navy's disadvantage. As Smith makes clear, the South did not have a naval force on hand to challenge the Union. Even though the Confederacy may have been split, the South was not ready to give up. Instead, they used the Union's control of the Mississippi River as an opening for Confederate troops and guerrilla fighters to attack from the riverbanks. These troops on the Western front viewed themselves as a necessary force to cut the Union supply lines.

Smith correlates the often-overlooked river battles into the larger history of the Civil War. He follows General William Sherman's "March to the Sea" through Georgia and into South Carolina. Allowing the Union Army to cut off the deep South from the mid-Atlantic states, the Army of the Tennessee retreated from the Western front, thus ending the need for the iron-, tin-, and wood-clad ships on the Mississippi River system. The book ends with the dismantling and selling of the redundant Union ships.

This work is laid out chronologically, with each chapter focusing on a single campaign, a format that allows the reader to understand the flow of Western naval battles during the American Civil War. Smith is a masterful writer, offering readers details that allow for an understanding of how each battle and campaign was fought, plus how it contributed to the larger Civil War narrative. The addition of numerous maps, pictures, and paintings helps readers understand the geographical impact and scope of the battle, along with offering a visual of the individual or ship that Smith discusses.

One problem with Smith's comprehensive coverage of each campaign is the danger of getting lost in the details and lists, especially for readers less knowledgeable about the naval aspects of the Civil War, specifically of the Western theatre.

Do not let this possibility interfere with reading *After Vicksburg*. Instead, take a few minutes to do some background research before delving into the

book. This may include gathering some information on Union and Confederate commanders, and filling any knowledge gaps about the distinction between ships clad in iron, tin, and wood. Another option is reading some of Smith's other books to gain that background knowledge.

The sources, both primary and secondary, for *After Vicksburg* are extensive. The use of secondary sources written by other Civil War scholars provides a well-rounded history of the naval battles in the larger Civil War. There are also informative histories of contemporary maritime travel on rivers within the United States. Primary sources incorporate United States Naval reports, Congressional reports, papers of the Confederate States of America, papers and memoirs of Union commanders, and the papers of Andrew Johnson. Additionally, Smith refers to a multitude of newspapers spanning the warring nation.

Though some readers may get bogged down with the details, this should not deter them from reading *After Vicksburg*. It is well worth some advance research to appreciate the conflict of the Western waters. Smith gives these Civil War battles the treatment they deserve.

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Harry Spiller, ed. *Navy Corpsmen in the Vietnam War: 17 Personal Accounts*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2021. 215 pp., illustrations, appendices, index. US \$22.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8569-4. (E-book available.)

This work is a compendium of 17 accounts, 16 firsthand and one posthumous, of United States Navy Corpsmen and their experiences serving with Marine and Mobile Riverine Force units during the Vietnam War. Harry Spiller, himself a Marine Corps veteran who served two tours in Vietnam, was motivated by his wartime experiences to document these crucial, but often overlooked, servicemen who risked their own lives to save as many of the injured as possible. Period photographs, modern images, and award citations are included to introduce the men and to help us understand some of their key experiences. The accounts largely stand by themselves, with appendices of casualties and the Corpsman's Prayer at the end, serving as a conclusion.

Following a brief introduction that covers the history of naval corpsmen, their participation in twentieth-century wars, and a synopsis of the men whose accounts are recorded, the work jumps right into the first story. All of the entries follow the same format, with each chapter titled with the corpsman's name and rank, followed by a bolded information block detailing the man's