

service information in an easy-to-access English-language source, furthering the historiography of the subject, and expanding access to data that is otherwise difficult to find. Combined with the other two volumes in this series, *Warships of the Soviet Fleets* is a fine technical database for those studying the various naval assets deployed both on the Eastern Front and in the final days of the war in the Pacific Theater.

Charles Ross Patterson II
Metairie, Louisiana

Theodore Corbett. *A Maritime History of the American Revolutionary War: An Atlantic-wide Conflict Over Independence and Empire*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2023. 224 pp., illustrations, maps, index, etc. UK £25.00, US \$34.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39904-041-9.

The American Navy during the Revolution was not very effective as a fighting force, but it did its job by existing. In contrast to Britain, a lack of naval infrastructure and industry, as well as martial tradition and discipline, hampered the nascent nation's ability to effectively contest the seas. Theodore Corbett's monograph *A Maritime History of the American Revolutionary War* provides thirty-four short chapters divided among ten chronological and thematic sections that present a cogent, although cursory, representation of the maritime conflict along the shores of North America and beyond.

The first two thematic groupings are a worthwhile comparison and contrast of general naval and maritime development of the two antagonists, the American Colonies and Britain. After reading of the deep disparity between the British naval experience, traditions and capacity, versus the vastly underdeveloped state of American shipbuilding and their lack of naval experience, one would not be surprised by the comment of Samuel Chase of Maryland, who thought that forming a Continental navy to fight the most powerful maritime force of the day was "The maddest idea in the world."

While a blue-water navy was being considered and developed by the colonial government, there were other maritime concerns. Not all British North American colonies, such as Quebec, were eager to split from their mother county. Part 3 of the text relates the contest for the control of Lake Champlain that necessitated the development of lacustrine navies for both belligerents. The next two parts are again a great contrast between the British and American strategies during the war. With overwhelming superiority, the British enacted a blockade on North America that was at times effective

and brutal. In contrast, the anemic colonial navy could not go broadside to broadside with their adversary with any chance of success. It was a numbers game that the Americans would surely lose. As necessity is the mother of invention, the colonists turned to raiding along the British Isles. The limited success of these operations was overblown by the propaganda value and the numerous chapters devoted to John Paul Jones exemplify this.

The following two parts acknowledge the French entry into the war and the potential threat their fleet offered. However, until the Battle of the Capes in 1781, the British, for the most part, could sail along the southern and New England coasts with little naval interference. In fact, they destroyed American squadrons at both Charleston and the Penobscot, which was then part of Massachusetts, all the while defending their base in Halifax from Rebel incursions. Spain too comes in for examination in the next part of the text, with Gibraltar as their goal in the conflict. The British defended Gibraltar better than its other trans-Atlantic colonies.

The final parts of the text concern the conclusion of the conflict. After the debacle at the Penobscot and the Siege of Charleston, the American navy was severely limited in its numbers. American privateering, both Patriot and Loyalist, were the main maritime activities for the duration of the war. Unfortunately for the Rebels, the Loyalists had support and cover from the British. In contrast, the French fleet's exploits during the autumn of 1781 assisted in bringing the war to an ultimate close. This denouement was a long time in being realized and the British had revenge on the French and Dutch for their support, tacit or explicit, of the rebelling colonists.

A limited number of black-and-white maps are contained within the text with an additional mid-book insert of other black-and-white images, mostly of historic figures and a limited number of battles. End notes for each of the short chapters are helpful for a deeper dive into the sources. An index rounds out the research tools. However, in such a survey of the conflict, the provided information may not be enlightening for a serious student of the subject.

The American Revolution was a worldwide conflict. Focusing on the maritime aspects of the Atlantic theater, Corbett does a credible job of introducing the uninitiated to this aspect of the war. A broad survey of such a contest in only 200-plus pages is necessarily limited in the information that can be transmitted. The book may be fine for those interested in the Atlantic aspects of the war or the general reader in naval or eighteenth-century history. It may even be useful as a college text for an introductory survey of the Revolution. However, those familiar with the conflict, especially its maritime dimensions, may not find the volume as useful.

That said, it is a fine introduction to the topic.

Michael Tuttle
Pensacola, Florida

Christopher Deakes. *A Postcard History of the Passenger Liner*. Essex, CT: Lyons Press, www.lyonspress.com, 2023. 160 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4930-7761-8. (E-book available.)

Originally published in 2005, and again in 2012, this is an unaltered republication of Christopher Deakes' exploration of the history of passenger liners through the postcards created to advertise and immortalize the ships of the various shipping companies. Heavily illustrated (bordering on overwhelmingly so), this book takes the reader through the developments within the passenger liner mode of travel from the 1880s to 1980s. Evolution of ship design, changes in size, routes, and passenger numbers, the role the ships played in colonization and troop transport during wartime, and the effects of international air transportation are laid out in six short, detail-packed chapters. It is a marvelous use of postcards as a research tool and creates an aesthetically pleasing volume.

The use of postcards as artefacts of the past has picked up significantly since the first publication of this book. They have been employed in the study of institutions, such as asylums, orphanages, and hospitals. Postcards sent between soldiers and their families in the First World War are used to provide insight into war's personal impacts. They have even appeared in research on anthropology and colonialism, urban histories, and West Yorkshire canals. The first picture postcard appeared in 1870, in France. The early cards had a picture on one side, with a boarder for any message the sender might like to include. The reverse side was for the address only. Between 1902 and 1907 various countries passed postal legislation allowing for the address side to be divided in two, with one half for the address and the other for the message. The image on the front then consumed the entire side.

The postcards in this volume are from Deakes' personal collection of cards depicting artists' paintings of ships, destinations, and onboard activity. There are no photographs or hand-painted photograph postcards. Some of the cards were created from company advertising posters or artwork commissioned by the companies, while others were specifically painted for the postcard market. A few were done by individuals who later arranged to have postcards made, with or without the shipping company's involvement.