

their effectiveness. Additionally, the use of footnotes or endnotes in the text related to upgrades and modifications would make the work more effective as a research tool. As a final note, the work does state in a few places that the ship is currently restored to her September 1945 appearance, while the museum itself and commemorative plaques at the ship's berth state that she has been restored to her August 1945 appearance (7). These do not diminish the effectiveness of Dramiński's work and such alterations would only improve upon future editions.

All in all, *The Destroyer USS Kidd* is an excellent addition to the *Anatomy of the Ship* series, providing truly detailed insights into the construction and modifications of an important class of destroyers which saw service in fifteen navies across much of the latter half of the twentieth century. Dramiński's renderings of the *Kidd* at various points during her service life make this a solid tool for examining the evolution of the Fletcher class through World War II and into the postwar period through the use of the *Kidd* as a representative example, a fact bolstered by the use of records from the *USS Cassin Young* aiding in the digital reconstruction of some of the typical rooms present on the *Kidd*. As such, this work is an excellent resource and reference for those studying 1940s American warship construction, vessel modifications in wartime and from postwar lessons, those interested in the *USS Kidd* specifically, and modelers seeking to best represent Fletcher-class destroyers.

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William F. Fowler Jr. *Commanding Old Ironsides: The Life of Captain Silas Talbot*. Latham, MD: Lyons Press and Mystic Seaport Museum, www.lyonspress.com, 2024. xxi+231 pp., illustrations, notes, index. US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4930-7788-5.

[Note: Book is a republishing of the 1995 book titled *Silas Talbot: Captain of Old Ironsides*, cloth covered, 1995, ISBN 0-913372-73-0. The new edition has a different cover and an added forward by Anne Grimes of the *USS Constitution* Museum.]

Silas Talbot was an extraordinary man whose biography parallels many of the historic steps that led to the Revolutionary War. He was heavily involved in the war's aftermath, the disquieting politics of building a nascent federal government, the genesis and early stages of the American navy, and, finally, the hardships involved in the nation's westward expansion. Rising from obscurity as an orphan apprenticed to a brick layer, Talbot became an army officer, a navy captain, a politician, a landed pioneer/farmer, and an entrepreneur partly

engaged in the slave trade. His life was one of a series of heroic deeds, recovery from personal injury, and overcoming self-doubts and frustrations by proving himself while facing multiple challenges in disparate endeavors.

Talbot was born in Dighton, Massachusetts, in 1751 as part of a large rural household. Leaving the family farm, he became a seafarer at twelve years old as cabin boy onboard a coasting vessel. Later he returned to land to become a stone mason's apprentice. By age twenty-one, Talbot had saved up enough money to buy a modest property in Providence, Rhode Island, and as a skilled mason built a stone home and set out on a quest for social and financial advancement.

His first foray into the community's society was his election as an officer in the local militia. Although he had little formal education, Talbot's peers recognized his natural leadership qualities, and in the early days of the American Revolution he became an officer with the Second Rhode Island Regiment, later serving as the commander of troops in Boston under General Washington. Under Lafayette's Continental Army's command at Newport, the young Rhode Islander captured the British schooner *Pigot* and employed it to help free Narragansett Bay for American shipping and commerce. As a sort-of hybrid soldier/sailor Talbot continued to volunteer for hazardous missions. He later took command of a fire ship on the Hudson River whose mission was to set ablaze and destroy a British warship. He failed in this attempt but, with his clothes afire, was the last to abandon the ill-fated ship. Talbot suffered serious burns but recovered enough to resume command of his Continental troops. He also had the misfortune of spending time as a prisoner of war, first on the infamous prison hulk *Jersey* and later at the Old Mill Prison near Plymouth in Britain, before being released in a prisoner exchange.

On the negative side, Talbot was both a slaveholder and a slave trader as a partial owner of two slave ships engaged in transporting human cargo from the Guinea region to Charleston, South Carolina. Rhode Island was a major center for the slave trade. In 1786, one of his vessels lost almost half of its bondage cargo, thus producing a severe financial loss to its owners. This evidently contributed to Talbot's abandonment of investing in the slave trade.

After serving in the Revolutionary War, Talbot purchased an estate in Johnstown, New York, and later became a New York State assemblyman. In 1793, Talbot was elected as a Federalist New York Congressman in the third United States Congress, serving from 1793 to 1794. His political career ended when President George Washington chose him as third in a list of six captains of the newly established United States Navy in 1794.

He was tasked with supervising the construction of the 44-gun frigate *President*, but it was not completed because of funding issues. Although pugnacious at times, Talbot did manage to tactfully avoid a duel, but went on

to make enemies of two distinguished fellow naval officers, Joshua Barney and Thomas Truxtun. (Ironically, Talbot's eldest son Theodore went on to marry Truxtun's daughter, much to Talbot's displeasure.) Finally achieving his greatest claim to fame, he was named the second captain of the frigate *Constitution* in 1799. His primary mission was to patrol the Caribbean to protect American trade interests. One time he spent 347 days at sea and underwent a supply replenishment at sea to keep his vessel on station, a novel idea at the time but one that has since been widely accepted in most of the world's major naval services.

Talbot served during the quasi-war against France but essentially saw no naval action and ended his naval career. He then decided to take advantage of land offered to veterans of the Revolution in the newly opened lands largely in Kentucky. Traveling there and then back to his family residing in the east was often a harrowing trip. The beauty of the wilderness and accompanying hardships of life there led to the closing chapters of his life back on the East Coast. Even in death, Talbot managed to climb a small notch in his quest for social acceptance. The final resting place of this complex Presbyterian patriot is in the more voguish burial ground of New York City's Trinity Church,

Talbot had many virtues arguably but offset by many vices. His three marriages (the last extremely trying) and successfully providing for a diverse and widespread family were to his credit. The Revolution made him a hero and his subsequent service merited him communal rewards as well as reasonable financial stability. In post-Revolutionary War America, he took risks and sensed opportunity. He pretended to be landed gentry, but those investments waned. Talbot's claim to fame was as a seaman and a naval officer and Fowler argues that, as a seaman, he was best remembered as a skilled and effective privateersman.

The author brings to life a biography of a flawed yet heroic man in an engrossing literary style. Although this is a re-issue of a 1995 book, it is very worthwhile to read about a complex figure who faced hardships, achieved triumphs and inevitable disappointments, largely in a maritime history context, in pre- and post-Revolutionary War America. I highly recommend *Commanding Old Ironsides*, an excellent book by Bill Fowler, who this reviewer feels is among the best scholars and gifted storytellers in the field of maritime history.

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