

including photographs. Images of the troops and officers who manned the fortification add to the biographical information of those who served there during the Civil War. Contemporary drawings bolster the written descriptions. In comparison, photographs of the current state of the castle and the island are shocking.

The book begins with a glossary of terms and a list of short biographies of many of the people noted within the text. This is a novel placement of this material, which is usually found at the end. There are 18 appendices, including lists of names of those who served in the castle, prisoner lists, and the short 1895 memoir of Jane Chichester, whose husband served in the fort during the Civil War.

The book will appeal to those examining coastal defence systems. For those studying the American Civil War, Roberts and Locke provide a solid description of the defence of Charleston, South Carolina, and Castle Pinckney's place in those events.

Thomas Malcomson
Toronto, Ontario

Sellitti, Jennifer N. *The Adriatic Affair: A Maritime Hit-and-Run off the Coast of Nantucket*

Schiffer Military History, 2025

408 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index

ISBN 9780764367953 (hardcover) US\$34.99

In this exciting and ambitious book, we learn about seafaring risk, business, and shipbuilding in Maine and France, the transition from sail to steam, different propulsion systems, law, custom, cold-water survival, and much more. The trans-Atlantic passenger trade in the 1850s was competitive to the point of being deadly. Author Jennifer Sellitti is a mariner, diver, lawyer, and writer who provides a vivid, relatable, and informative backstory when it comes to two vessels, both on their maiden voyages. Both were built within a year and collided some 200 nautical miles east of Nantucket. One was the 400-ton, three-masted American barque *Adriatic* from Belfast, Maine. The other was *Le Lyonnais*, which was built in 1855 for Compagnie Franco-Américaine for mail and passenger service. Sellitti and her colleagues spent years locating and identifying the wreck, which finally happened late in 2024.

To recite the plot would risk giving away a tautly suspenseful narrative. More than 130 people died because of the collision. One vessel left an

identifiable trace of itself on the deck of the other ship, then sailed away. The cry for justice reverberated in the media and courts for years. There are 35 color images, maps of Marseille and Belfast, Maine, and 40 images in black and white, with portraits of key players, ports, vessels, and diagrams, including of various lifeboats.

Events, action, geography, navigation, and the vessels themselves are described in great detail. For instance, we are told *Adriatic* was under sail between Belfast, Maine, and Savannah, Georgia, at the time of the collision (2 November 1856) and that *Le Lyonnais* was going east from New York to Le Havre, France when they collided. However, the illustrations (69) and text all show a collision impact on the *starboard* side of *Le Lyonnais* (“the watchman shouted. ‘Ship to starboard...,’” and “ship’s bow making full contact with the steamer’s starboard side followed” (68)) Although it is possible the wind forced *Adriatic* to sail in the wrong direction (north), why the vessel going east was hit on the *wrong* (starboard) side is not fully explained. The index has none of the main protagonists: Jonathan Barnet Durham, Jean-Marie-Louis Choupault, *Adriatic* or *Le Lyonnais* (or *Big Engine Steamer*), though Captain Devaulx is present.

A chart of the *Adriatic*’s movements in the Mediterranean would help allay confusion if readers assume the Sardinia referenced is an island rather than the Kingdom of Sardinia. Errata such as Toulain (258), conflation of Genoese with Sardinian (260), “knots per hour,” and perhaps a bias in favor of the captains who “were built for the sea” (261) are understandable. Almost no book is free of them. One triumph is clarity about the 132 overall persons on *Le Lyonnaise*: 114 dead and 18 survivors, with 16 named (151). Sellitti’s hand at the helm is excellent.

The Adriatic Affair is an exceptionally well-told and informative real-life adventure story in which the reader learns diverse personal histories at sea, when men and women lived and died not only by their reputation but their survival instinct. We see how a dollop of determination, charm, and tenacity benefited captains Ward Smith and Jonathan Barnet Durham. The body of the book concerns survival, rescue, blame, and both saints and scoundrels. We learn of at least five noble ships which rescued victims and others who searched: *Neptune*, *Elise*, a second *Elise*, *Beauty*, and *Essex*. Then there was the cruel ship which turned their tail on a full lifeboat and covered their nameboard while doing so.

We are treated to treatises on collisions and consequences, including what remains on the sea floor. The epilogue describes divers finding the wreck and is a blend of technology backstory. Sellitti credits her inspirational

father, mentors, dive teammates, and the caretaker of D/V *Tenacious* in New Bedford. The Sea Rovers Boston team gave the privilege of the first dive on *Le Lyonnais* to their newest member. As for their quest, she ruminates that “there are times you can drop the rest of your life to go wreck hunting, and times you cannot” (338). “What moves us is the hunt. The truth is that we are addicts – addicted to the pursuit, ...the rush, ...the feeling we get when we find the thing for which we have been searching. The problem is how quickly the moment fades... The search never ends” (350).

Sellitti concludes by reminding us how “*Le Lyonnais* is more than a twisted pile of metal and wood on the ocean floor: she is a revenant. She connects us to a bygone era and to unresolved mysteries. More than a mere ghost, what remains of her has a story to tell. It is up to us to give that story voice” (350). Sellitti has certainly given this story a voice. Her team plans to create a program educating us about wrecks and repercussions. Readers will be glad they boarded this book and sailed it to its rich and surprising foreign ports.

Eric Wiberg
Boston, Massachusetts

**Snyder, Thomas L. *Mare Island Naval Hospital: 1864–1957*
McFarland & Company, 2025**

241 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index

ISBN 9781476697383 (softcover); 9781476655260 (e-book) US\$39.95

Naval history usually focuses upon clashes at sea, legendary vessels, illustrious commanders, and brave sailors. After the smoke clears, the spray dissipates, and silence again prevails, however, many of the participants must deal with the suffering from the battle’s aftermath, often in a naval hospital. This book by Thomas Snyder is a very well-documented account of one of these storied facilities.

A northern peninsula on San Francisco Bay is named after Mexican General Mariano Vallejo’s favorite mare that was thought to be drowned in the inlet but fortunately swam safely to the flat land’s shore. Elated, the general named it *Isla de la Yegua* or, in English, Mare Island. Mexico controlled California from 1821 through the late 1840s, but several battles between US and Mexican troops stationed there led Congress to declare war against Mexico in the spring of 1846. This developed into the Mexican-American War, and the bulk of the forces available to the United States in