

Island, after having waited two years for a relief vessel. As Lotz highlights in his book, Greely was ambitious but also “a rigid authoritarian, widely disliked by all the men of his expedition” (1). In fact, the US had tried to send the *Neptune* to Fort Conger in the summer of 1882, but the ice forced the members of the expedition to leave 250 rations at Cape Sabine, before heading back to civilization.

After two years, the men of the Franklin Bay Expedition left Fort Conger and started their last, dramatic journey towards the south, in the hope of meeting a relief vessel.

The US sent out the *Proteus* again, but its sinking drastically reduced the hope of rescuing Greely’s party. In February 1884, the first two members of the expedition died, quickly followed by other men. Rice’s turn came on 9 April, in a courageous attempt to retrieve some rations left at Baird Inlet by previous expeditions.

On 22 June, the *Bear* and the *The-tis* reached Cape Sabine, saving Greely and the last five men who remained and consigning them to history, while the life of people such as George Rice had to wait more than a century to be unearthed.

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R. Bruce McDonald. *Sisters of the Ice. The True Story of How St. Roch and North Star of Herschel Island Protected Canadian Arctic Sovereignty*. St. John’s, NL: Harbour Publishing, www.harbourpublishing.com, 2021. xiii+146 pp., illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. CDN \$19.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-55017-928-6.

Sisters of the Ice is an unusual book for a number of reasons: first of all, it

is a biography of not one ship but two; second, both of these vessels played an important role in Canadian and Arctic history; third, both ships are still extant—one as a museum ship, and the other as a still-active sailing vessel; and finally, because the author is unashamedly biased when it comes to the subject of the book as he is the owner of one of the ships. The two ships are the *St. Roch*, the famous British Columbian Arctic patrol vessel, today presented at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, and the lesser-known but equally interesting *North Star of Herschel Island*.

Given the numerous publications already available on the *St. Roch*, a patrol vessel owned by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that made the first circumnavigation of North America, and the fact that the author himself owns the *North Star of Herschel Island*, it is no wonder that there is a certain focus on the latter vessel. What is much more interesting than the portraits of the two ships is the way the author frames their biographies by focusing on their respective contributions to securing Canadian sovereignty over the area today known as Arctic Canada.

Consequently, the book does not begin with the construction history of the ships, but with a broad introduction to the Canadian Arctic, in particular Herschel Island, and the issue of Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic Archipelago. While some of the topics are oversimplified, for example the discussion of the end of Arctic whaling does not even mention the rapid development of Antarctic whaling, they provide a good introduction to a complex topic and most important the role of individual traders and their interactions with the Indigenous population in this context.

In the following sections it becomes obvious how a very small number of ships could secure sovereignty over

an extreme vast area and how even the RCMP's role in the context of securing sovereignty was often more the effort of a few individuals than the effort of the institution at large.

The discussion of the design and construction of the *North Star of Herschel Island* clearly shows that building the "ultimate" Arctic vessel was not something that could be achieved at the drawing board. Rather, it was an evolutionary process with the experiences of the *St. Roch* serving as a solid base for the new ship, even if it were built for a different purpose (private trading ship instead of government patrol vessel).

When the *St. Roch* left the Arctic for the last time in 1948, the question of sovereignty over the Canadian Arctic was effectively no longer an issue, but with the beginning of the Cold War, it could have become an issue again as both the US and the Soviet Union were eyeing the region. Now it was *North Star of Herschel Island's* turn to secure sovereignty at least indirectly by continuing to trade with the local population and more importantly, by returning to Banks Island to establish a permanent settlement on the island, thus supporting the Canadian claim for sovereignty over the whole area. While other parts of the book might be interesting, this section is probably the most important for any historian with an interest in Arctic regions, as it clearly showcases that sovereignty in the high latitudes was often much more an issue of small scale civilian settlements and trading activities, than the application of formal power and the establishment of official institutions. In such remote areas, non-government players have often been much more influential in this context than official government activities.

The remaining chapters of the book reveal how *North Star of Herschel Is-*

land survived until the present day and how its owners are not only devoted to the preservation of the ship, but also devoted to the preservation of the northern environment in which the ship served and ensuring her survival. Whether you are visiting the Vancouver Maritime Museum to view the *St. Roch* or you are lucky enough to see *North Star of Herschel Island* in a port, you may find it hard to believe that these modest craft had been so instrumental in securing Canadian Arctic sovereignty. After reading this book, however, you will immediately understand that in the Arctic, the question of sovereignty is not always decided by a large armed naval vessel, but is much more often an issue of a permanent presence, good relations with local populations, the ability to deal with the hostile conditions of nature in the high latitudes and many other small details. In the end, the story of the two sisters, *St. Roch* and *North Star of Herschel Island*, is evidence for the historical fact that gunboat diplomacy is not and never was the most successful concept for the high latitudes.

Comprising less than 150 pages, the book is a quick read, but this should not distract from its value for those interested in the maritime history of Arctic Canada and the issue of sovereignty over this region, as well as in the history of small ships operating in more or less extreme conditions. Meticulously researched, well referenced and provided with an index as well as a useful bibliography, the book is a welcome addition to the bookshelves of any professional historian with an interest in Arctic Canada. More than 125 black and white illustrations make the book easily accessible to the non-specialist reader. Unfortunately, the reproductions are comparatively poor quality, replacing crisp black and white with various shades of grey. This is perhaps accept-

able for a paperback with a retail price of less than CDN \$20.00. Overall, the book can easily be commended to both casual and professional readers. While McDonald's bias can be felt throughout the entire book, if it is viewed as evidence of his devotion to and love of the subject, it becomes not a weakness but a strength.

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Peter J. Marsh. *Liberty Factory: The Untold Story of Henry Kaiser's Oregon Shipyards*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, (Distributed by Naval Institute Press), 2020. 256 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. US \$59.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-5267-8305-9.

Shipyards on the Pacific coast of North America produced merchant vessels and warships in significant numbers and record times during the Second World War. Shipbuilding there went from very modest levels out of economic depression and limited rearmament to volume delivery under war conditions in short order, in response to operational demands against the Axis powers of Japan, Germany, and Italy. West-Coast-built ships carried vital war supplies across the Atlantic to keep Great Britain in the fight and enabled large fleets on the other side of the Pacific and Indian Ocean to sustain themselves and undertake major amphibious landings on Japanese-held territories. Although numerous West Coast cities, companies, and individuals contributed to this effort, Kaiser's emergency shipyards in Oregon and Washington State received special attention from Larry Barber, marine editor of a local newspaper *The Oregonian*, after 1940. Peter Marsh, who inherited a collection

of photographs, clippings, and jottings after Barber's death, has put together a tribute to those shipyards and the ships constructed in them.

The book is divided into three parts covering the three principal shipyards—Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation, Kaiser Vancouver, and Kaiser Swan Island; production techniques and employment in those shipyards; and descriptions of other related Portland area industrial concerns engaged in wartime production on behalf of the United States Navy, Maritime Commission, and Royal Navy. The numbers and scale were impressive by any measure of industrial achievement, and the Kaiser corporate culture introduced innovations to speed production by applying existing construction and management experience in other fields. Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation constructed the British-inspired Liberty ship, then switched to the faster Victory design and naval auxiliaries; Kaiser Vancouver built a mix of Victory ships, landing ship tank, escort carriers, attack transports, and troop transports; and Kaiser Swan Island exclusively concentrated on T2 tankers. The wartime population of Portland grew by nearly a third, with the influx of shipyard workers from other parts of the United States, which put pressure on housing, transportation, and city planning, the Kaiser corporation being somewhat of an entity unto itself. It paid high wages, brought women and African Americans into the shipyards against the wishes of the dominant American Federation of Labor boilermakers union, offered access to free food in centralized cafeterias, and set up scientifically-based subsidized daycare centres. In spite of the focus on Henry Kaiser, the real architect of success in shipbuilding was his son Edgar Kaiser, who oversaw operations in the Portland and Vancouver shipyards as vice