

rican littoral where mixtures of lime, earth, gravel, and rock were employed in buildings, walls, gates, aqueducts, and fortifications. From there, craftsmen took the technique into southern Spain, whence it eventually spread into the Caribbean and southeastern margins of North America. There are accounts of tabby as early as 1493 in Santo Domingo, where Christopher Columbus's house was made of it. A century later it appeared at Spanish Santa Elena (now Parris Island, S.C.), and St. Augustine, Florida. By the eighteenth century it was ubiquitous in the Sea Islands, where deep shell deposits provided handy quarries. In 1766, the naturalist William Bartram wrote that "ye people comes and rakes up what they please brings them in a boat heaves them on shore to dry after which they burn them to lime." (50) If the shells were not washed before burning they produced a hideous smell that offended neighbours and proved inferior for construction. The generally accepted formula for good tabby was three parts clean shell, three parts lime, and three parts sand, but wise builders adjusted the sand to match the quality of their lime.

Once they had a good supply of tabby, workmen poured it into pegged wooden box forms, typically many feet long and one- to two-feet high. After each pour dried, the form was broken apart and reset atop for the next pour. Skilled artisans could raise a wall quickly, and they also excelled at making tabby floors, roofs, and just about any other construction element required or the human mind could conceive.

Beaufort, S.C., established by royal charter in 1711, preserves a delightful collection of tabby buildings, and Brooker details them carefully. Beaufort was occupied by Union forces early in the Civil War but, happily, was not burned, and is today one of the pretti-

est towns in the United States. Outlying plantations did not always fare so well. After their owners abandoned them, looting and decay were often their fate. The use of tabby declined during the late nineteenth century when efficient railroad connections facilitated rapid delivery of building materials from commercial hubs. It is, therefore, fortunate that so many examples still survive, especially in Beaufort, but Brooker worries about ongoing threats to isolated remnants, including rampant coastal development and "irresponsible zoning." (14)

*The Shell Builders* will primarily be of interest to architectural historians, but maritime historians, and scholars more generally, should also take note, given that tabby is, in Brooker's apt phrase, "a quintessential product of the Atlantic world."

John S. Sledge  
Fairhope, Alabama

Margaret Conrad. *At the Ocean's Edge: A History of Nova Scotia to Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, www.utorontopress.com, 2020. 456 pp. illustrations, maps, tables, index. CDN \$29.96, paper ISBN 978-1-4875-2395-4. (E-book available.)

Lying as it does, in the author's words, "a great lobster stuck off the northeastern coast of North America," Nova Scotia is the most maritime of Canada's Maritime Provinces, prevented from being an island by only a narrow isthmus. The title of this new history, the first scholarly treatment in several generations, references the relationship the area has with the sea and the reader with a nautical bent might expect the title to set a major theme for the work. It is with a slight disappointment that we find that the author, although standing

at the ocean's edge, does so with a view facing the shore and with only the occasional glance back towards the sea.

Nevertheless, this is an impressive and long-needed volume. A general history must draw on the research work of other scholars as well as the specialization and interests of the author, and the scope of this volume, testified to by the range of sources cited in the notes, shows how much examination and thought the region has supported for the last thirty years. In many respects, *At the Ocean's Edge* can serve as a reader's guide to Nova Scotia historiography. In addition to dozens of articles in journals such as *Acadiensis*, the *Canadian Historical Association Journal* and the *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, the volume makes extensive and effective use of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and an extremely large number of monographs and thesis from the full range of academic research. If the nautical side of Nova Scotia's story has been slighted, the problem lies more on the dearth of relevant scholarship in the field than on the book's author. While several nautical themes and events receive coverage, there is no overall sense of the role of the sea in Nova Scotia's history. That being said, Dr. Conrad does draw on a broad range of the available nautical sources including, but certainly not limited to, the important work of the several scholars associated with the Maritime History Group at Memorial University, Greg Marquis' study of the maritime role in the American Civil War, Julian Gwyn's analysis of the colonial economy and Faye Kert's treatment of privateering in the early nineteenth century. The reliance on the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* for information about prominent individuals exposes the extent to which the entries in that series have, until the more recent volumes,

downplayed economic and social activities and emphasised politics in the lives and contributions of those selected for entries. The work of the shipbuilders and merchants, and fishers and sailors who created and maintained a maritime economy is often ignored in preference to their political involvements.

*At the Ocean's Edge* attempts to situate the region in an expansion of Europe with the attendant damages from settler colonialism and impacts on the environment (335), yet there is relatively little discussion on the latter, especially as regards the nautical aspects. The land-based perspective results in the sea being generally treated as a barrier, with Northumberland Strait, Cabot Strait, the Bay of Fundy, and the Gulf of Maine separating Nova Scotia from the rest of the area, instead of being an easily negotiated communications corridor for trade, commerce, people and ideas within the region and connecting it to the world beyond.

As the volume progresses, there seems to be a reduction in the treatment of the marine aspects of the history. From recognition that in the sixteenth century the value of the area's cod fishery "eclipsed all other economic activities in the Americas." (41) The narrative concludes with greatly reduced reference to the role maritime issues played in the psyche of the colony. There is reference to Louisbourg as a major port in the early 1700s exceeded in ship visits only by Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. (105) The establishment and growth of Halifax is positioned as a military consequence of empire with trade as a secondary consideration. Although the author does recognize that "greater Nova Scotia" could be an important regional approach, once New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are carved out of the territory, there is relatively little discussion of how the colony, and

especially Halifax, still operated as the financial, industrial, commercial and cultural leader for the region.

Where this volume really differs from earlier general histories is the extent to which the activities and role of formerly unrecognized groups and individuals is recognized. Before there was a Nova Scotia, there was Mi'kmai, and Conrad, rather than starting the story with European settlement opens with the First Peoples, unlike some earlier histories which ignored the original inhabitants after the arrival of the French and English. She treats them, and other later minority populations as a full part of the human story on a continuing basis. This is an area where the recent scholarship of writers such as John Reid, Stephen Davis and Ruth Holmes Whitehead comes to the fore. It is a testament to Conrad's writing skill that this inclusion is not an intrusion or an add-on but an integral and essential element in the story. *At the Ocean's Edge* is a very human story with individuals being allowed to tell their own stories — not simply the stories of the great and the good, but also the lesser saints and scoundrels, of which there are a good number, especially in the early European settlement period.

Originally planned as a history of Nova Scotia to the present, the volume leaves the post-Confederation story to another historian. That person will face an immense challenge matching the quality of documentation, analysis, and writing that Margaret Conrad exhibits in *At the Ocean's Edge*.

H.T. Holman  
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Lt. Cmdr. Robert Crosby, USN. *Inspiring Innovation. The John A. van Beuren Studies in Leadership and Ethics. No. 1.* Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College

Press, [www.usnwc.edu/press](http://www.usnwc.edu/press), 2018. v+197 pp., illustrations, acronyms, tables, notes. US \$37.50, paper; ISBN 978-1-9353552-46-4.

I must admit that when I volunteered to review this book I had no idea of its contents, but thought if the Naval War College Press had produced it then it "Can't be too bad." When the book arrived "down under" I discovered it was the history of African-Americans, both male and female, who had been commissioned as United States Navy officers, between 1944 and 1988, and subsequently reached star rank; Rear-Admiral Lower Half (or Commodores in Commonwealth navies) through to full (four-star) Admirals.

While the book, on the surface, might appear to be simply a collection of short biographies of these men and women, the true insight (and its value) is that it is a history of how segregation in the US Navy was gradually but permanently removed; and that the ability to rise to the highest ranks in the service was opened to all. It was not an easy path but those described in the book were more than equal to the task.

In early 1942 Black men, then described as Negroes, could serve in the US Navy but only as cooks or messmen. In April 1942 the rules were relaxed to allow men to enlist in other specialisations and by early 1944, the first African-American naval officers were commissioned. Their service was not easy and then-Lieutenant Samuel Gravely, who later rose to the rank of Vice Admiral, recalls being arrested in Miami, Florida, "for impersonating an officer."

There are several constant themes throughout the various biographies which point to why the three women (and female officers had it even harder than their male counterparts) and 57