

The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord

Volume 32, Number 2

(Summer / Été 2022)

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Editorial

The two articles, research note, and review essay published in this issue explore a wide array of topics, but they are united by at least one overarching theme: to varying degrees, they all explore the challenges, hardships, dangers, and opportunities of life and work at sea. Each of the authors offers a window into the diverse lived experiences of their subjects: a Canadian naval officer during the Second World War, Great Lakes sailors throughout the transition to steam, Royal Navy nurses during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and a range of people navigating the maritime dimensions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in various settings.

The first article, David Niddam-Dent's, "'The Best VR in the Whole Flaming Navy': The Life and Career of Lieutenant Commander Clifton R. 'Tony' Coughlin," examines the experiences of "one of the most successful Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) officers of the Second World War." Based on over 800 letters that Coughlin wrote to his wife through peace and war, the article offers an "eyewitness view of unique precision and intensity" into the officer's life. Through his focus on Lt. Commander Coughlin's service, Niddam-Dent contributes to our broader understanding of how the RCNVR functioned during the Second World War and offers an examination of the training, technical skills, and leadership qualities required by its officers. Tragically, Lt. Commander Coughlin died on 19 October 1944 from injuries sustained during an accident at sea, a great loss to the navy and his country. As one of his close friends remarked: "He possessed everything that is finest in life. He was a born leader and had the highest ideals and principles and lived up to them." I am honored that *The Northern Mariner* can play a part in sharing Tony's remarkable story.

In "Before a Failing Breeze: Sailing Labor in the Final Years of Sail on the Great Lakes," Benjamin Ioset examines the decline of sailing commerce on the Great

Lakes from the mid-1870s to its final disappearance in 1931. The article explores how economic marginalization, falling profit margins, and marine technological innovation irrevocably changed the lives of sailors, with impacts ranging from lost employment opportunities to an increased level of risk while operating on the lakes. In examining these developments, Ioset also charts the separation of the steam and sail labour sectors, with one “traditionally characterized by apprenticeship-based labor, a shared skill set, high social mobility, and independent ownership and operations under sail, the other by increasing corporate consolidation of ownership, limited social mobility, skills specialization, and operations under the oversight of corporate shore management.”

In her research note, “Women’s Labour, British Naval Hospital Ships, and a System of Medical Care, 1775-1815,” Erin Elizabeth Spinney outlines her innovative work exploring the gendered labour of thousands of women serving as nurses and washerwomen within the British naval medical system during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Spinney explains how the study of hospital ship musters, pay lists, logbooks, correspondence, and new methodologies, such as historical geographic information system mapping, can “uncover hidden realities and challenge our previous assumptions concerning medical care and British naval hospital ships.” She conceives of “naval medicine as a system of care,” which “showcases each stage of medical care delivery – re-integrating hospital ships, hospitals, and convalescent ships into the naval medicine narrative – and highlights the importance of women to this medical network.” Spinney’s contribution describes the medical care provided at these installations, demonstrates the importance of hospital ships to British naval medicine, and considers the “impact of women civilian labour in supporting eighteenth-century British imperial and naval ascendancy.”

In his review essay, “Navigating Dangers (Real and Imagined) in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Worlds,” Evan C. Rothera examines *Eastward of Good Hope* by Dane A. Morrison, *Blood Waters* by Nicholas Rogers, *The Black Joke* by A.E. Rooks, and *Sailing to Freedom* by Timothy D. Walker. While these books each cover a fascinating topic, they are united in their exploration of threats in the maritime sphere, “how people understood them, and, ultimately, how some defied dangers.” Rothera’s essay tracks these themes across the four volumes, illustrating dangers, but also how people mitigated them and seized available opportunities when and where they could, navigating adversity in a complex world.

I hope you enjoy the issue. I wanted to issue a special thanks to the authors, who have been exceedingly patient as multiple delays slowed the production process to a crawl. I very much appreciate your understanding. I would also like to thank editorial board members Roger Sarty and Rich Gimblett, book review editor Faye Kert, and production editor Walter Lewis who continue to go above and beyond the call of duty in assisting with all aspects of production and publication.

All the best,
Peter Kikkert
Editor, *The Northern Mariner*