

on strategy and naval tactics” while the US has “thrown them to the winds and have borrowed others from God knows where—and they are not so hot.” Candidly, he told his wife, “I felt like vomiting when I read the press reports from Batavia and London as to the situation in Java. I know, for I fought there. ... [G]et rid of the smoothies and routine boys, dig in and fight” (259). While recovering from his wounds, Eccles was relieved of command of the *John D. Edwards* and sent back to the States. The book concludes on 27 March 1942, with a final brief line to his wife while he was still in Australia: “A fine golf game. All relaxed – moral high. Good luck!” (265)

As Professor Hattendorf states in his introduction, “The three-year span between 1940 and 1942 was critical in Henry Eccles’s life and career” (xxii). *To the Java Sea* fills the gap in the historical record for Eccles and provides new insights not only into his subsequent career focusing on logistics and strategic thinking, but also this essential period where command of an old warship taught him the importance of those topics during war. The volume should prove an essential addition to the naval history of the early ABDA command in Southeast Asia, American successes and failures in the early months of the war in the Pacific, as well as the life of the man for which the library at the Naval War College is named.

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Magne Haugseng. *The SS City of Flint: An American Freighter at War, 1939–1943*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2021. 254 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$39.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8536-6. (E-book available.)

The SS *City of Flint* was just one of the many American ocean-going freighters that regularly plied the North Atlantic trade routes in the late 1930s calling on ports in Europe. It was not a particularly large or otherwise noteworthy ship, being rated at less than 5000 gross register tons (GRT). It had been ordered in May 1918 in the aftermath of the United States’ entry into the First World War, the vessel’s name commemorating the contributions of the residents of her namesake city toward the US Liberty Loans campaign. In fact, until 1939, *City of Flint*’s career was almost as unremarkable as the ship itself. It was, however, destined to become one of the most famous merchantmen of the early days of the Second World War.

First catapulted into international fame as a rescue ship, *City of Flint* was next a short-lived German prize vessel. Upon her release, it went on to sail in North Atlantic and Arctic convoys, as well as in the Persian Gulf before

being lost in 1943. Magne Haugseng, a political scientist and historian with an interest in the naval history of the Second World War, tells its story in his first major publication in naval history. It should be noted that the book's publisher, McFarland & Company Inc., is not a mainstream publishing house; but it does enjoy a solid reputation among professional librarians. Its eclectic and extensive catalogue seems to be filled with a large number of "direct to paperback" editions similar to this volume. In keeping with this heritage, it should be mentioned that despite being a paperback, it is a very sturdy volume and is well-suited for a library collection.

The author tells the story of this ill-starred vessel in sixteen chapters of disparate lengths that are presented in five main sections. The well-written text covers all the major aspects of *City of Flint*'s main wartime voyages, from its rescue of the passengers of the SS *Athenia* in September 1939 to its sinking in January 1943. Unfortunately, *Flint*'s role in rescuing the passengers of the ill-fated liner *Athenia* receives only cursory coverage in this volume. Not unsurprisingly, the vessel's odyssey as a German prize vessel, which began when she was seized by the German "pocket battleship" *Deutschland* in October 1939, forms the bulk of the volume. It is interesting to note that once *City of Flint* was returned to American control, the German Navy was ordered in no uncertain terms to refrain from any further action against the vessel by Adolf Hitler himself. The vessel's subsequent experiences on the Murmansk run, in the Persian Gulf, and its eventual sinking in the Atlantic by a German submarine are covered adequately, but again in a more fleeting fashion than that of her Norwegian adventure. The author maintains that his inspiration for writing *City of Flint*'s story was his meeting with a survivor of the *Flint*'s sinking in 1943, so it should come as no surprise that this topic is well-covered and forms one of the most poignant sections of this work.

Overall, the strong text is ably buttressed by a brief but more than adequate introduction and several tables and appendices. It is ably supported by detailed endnotes and a very comprehensive bibliography. There are a number of well-drawn and useful maps detailing *City of Flint*'s odyssey as a German prize vessel, but unfortunately, they are not summarized in a table. Overall, the photographs have been well-chosen and are quite clear given that they have not been reproduced on photo-quality paper. In general, this decision allowed the publisher to better intersperse them within the text, but as with the maps, a cumulative listing is lacking. Also missing are any images of the Norwegian vessels that seized the *Flint* from the Germans, or photos of it as a German prize. Even more striking, however, is that this volume does not include any schematic drawings or even a table outlining the more technical details of *City of Flint*'s specifications. It also strikes one as odd that there are no photos or drawings of *Deutschland* included in this work. It is intriguing that German

images depicting the vessel's sinking were quickly "censured" through the removal of its name.

Haugsgeng's treatment of the many personalities who were directly involved in the story of *City of Flint* is one of the highlights of this work. From the vessel's captains and crews, the German prize crew and that of the submarine that sunk it, as well the diplomats of the nations that became entangled in its story, all of his portrayals are very informative and useful. The author's critical depiction of Norway's Foreign Minister Halvdan Koht's role in *City of Flint*'s Norwegian odyssey is particularly unflattering. Haugsgeng's representation of Lieutenant zur See Hans Pusback, the commander of the German prize crew aboard *Flint*, is very intriguing. His speculation that Pusback had a wartime exit strategy is certainly correct and deserves more study. One of the strengths of this account is that it provides us with a real and very rare glimpse into the world of German prize crews during this conflict.

In summary, Haugsgeng's coverage of *Flint*'s adventures during the Second World War is well-written but, at best, uneven. The story is worthy of further research and the author has certainly provided us with a much better starting point than the vessel's former captain's now dated and perhaps deliberately limited 1940 autobiography. Few Second World War merchantmen could boast of such a varied war experience as *City of Flint*, and the author and publisher should be complimented for reminding us of the many roles the vessel played in this epic struggle. This study is definitely a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the naval history of the Second World War, especially from the perspective of the merchant marine.

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Brian Lane Herder. *US Navy Gunboats 1885-1945*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2021. 48 pp., illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. UK £11.99, US \$19.00, CDN \$25.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-4470-5.

This work is the 293rd entry in Osprey Publishing's New Vanguard Series and author Brian Lane Herder's eighth work for various Osprey series. It can be viewed as a foil to his two earlier New Vanguard entries, which covered US Navy battleships from 1886-1908. Instead of focusing on the most famous and imposing ships of the era, Herder offers an examination of the evolution and service lives of the most diminutive of armed vessels, the humble gunboat. By means of a chronological study of the designs and deployment of steel-hulled gunboats in armed conflicts from the Spanish-American War of 1898 through