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Editorial

History through biography has the power to make the past come alive in concrete and captivating ways. At its core, biography is about people – their stories, their triumphs, their tragedies. Biographical approaches allow the reader to be caught up in the lived experiences of historical characters – to be transported through time and space and imagine what it might have been like to walk in their shoes. The authors of the two articles and research note published in this issue of *The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord* all engage in some degree of biographical study and they do a great job recreating for the reader what life may have been like for their historical subjects: to navigate the economic ups and downs of the sometimes turbulent years before and after Canadian Confederation; to command a Porte-class gate vessel in the 1970s as it plied Canada's subarctic waters and experienced multiple mechanical breakdowns; to attend France's *École de guerre navale* in the years between the First and Second World Wars.

In “George Henry Wyatt (1828-1883): Agent, Shipowner, Entrepreneur, and One-Man Naval Department,” Walter Lewis and Roger Sarty explore the life and times of a fascinating early Canadian entrepreneur. This article marks the first systematic effort to examine the career of George Henry Wyatt, previously known only for his efforts to procure and administer the gunboats that served during the Fenian crisis of 1866-1871. Lewis and Sarty examine Wyatt's significant involvement in the business community in Toronto, his experiences as shipowner, his role as an agent for various steamship and railway lines, and his efforts to promote immigration to the Canadian west, amongst other ventures. Through their biographical study of Wyatt, the authors provide a “case study of the opportunities open to an ambitious British immigrant to Canada West, how Toronto became a transportation hub with the rise of steam shipping and railways, and the risks of doing business in the emerging national economy

following Confederation.”

In “‘The Gates’ at Our Gates: F.R. (Hamish) Berchem and the Role of the Eastern Based Porte-class Gate Vessels after Canadian Armed Forces Unification,” George L. Zimmerman and Duff W. Crerar relay the story and assess the impact of this critical Canadian Naval Reserve officer. Between 1971 and 1975, Commander Berchem served as the senior officer “for three antiquated and poorly maintained Porte-class gate vessels.” The authors chart Berchem’s vital role in the sea going training and operations of these vessels, during which he proved that the Naval Reserve could accomplish important taskings and “that, with the right leadership, these ships could provide a desperately needed platform for junior officer watch-keeping training and qualification.” They argue that Berchem and other “like-minded reserve commanders and their crews in the gate vessels were vital in preserving the sea-going capability of the citizen sailors of Canada” during the difficult decade after the unification of the Canadian Armed Forces, when the need for the Naval Reserve was under attack from several quarters. In 2023, the Naval Reserve is celebrating 100 years of service to Canada – I am very happy to publish this important historical article to mark this anniversary and to highlight how Berchem, and others like him, kept this proud institution afloat in turbulent times.

In his research note, “Coursework During Officer Attendance at the *École de guerre navale* in Paris 1920-1939,” Chris Madsen adds another excellent contribution to the body of work on professional military education (PME) that he has recently published in *The Northern Mariner*. This note provides key contextual information on the mandate and organization of the *École de guerre navale*, which delivered PME at a level comparable to other leading navies during the interwar years. Madsen focuses on the French and foreign naval officers who attended the school and the nature of their studies. He supplies a list of the officers who attended, based on class year (promotion), and, interestingly, the titles of the papers (translated into English) they wrote that are still available in French military libraries or digitally through the French National Library (Bibliothèque nationale de France) Gallica website. In so doing, Madsen offers a rare window into the academic world inhabited by these officers and the PME they received.

I hope you find this issue interesting and engaging. I wanted to thank the authors for their patience through a slower than usual publication process. As usual, I would also like to thank editorial board members Roger Sarty and Rich Gimblett, book review editor Faye Kert, and production editor Walter Lewis for their patient and fulsome assistance. *The Northern Mariner* is a team effort and I am very grateful for these excellent partners.

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