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William S. Dudley and Michael J. Crawford, eds., *The Early Republic and the Sea: Essays on the Naval and Maritime History of the Early United States*, (Washington, D.C.: Brasseys Inc., 2001)

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William S. Dudley, president of the North American Society for Oceanic History, and Director of the US Navy's Naval Historical Center, (the two positions merit notice in discussing this book), and Michael J. Crawford, who heads the Early History Branch of the Center, have brought together eleven essays (five of which have previously appeared in *American Neptune*), throwing useful light on some shadowy moments in early American maritime history. For the most part these essays cover the years between the war of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, and the theme is generally non-naval. What these essays tell us about is the pull of the sea on an America "free of the heavy hand of British control ... to thwart the will of government and to suppress freedom of expression and freedom of trade". (ix)

A mischievous Canadian might ask why that heavy hand did not interfere with a rather healthy interaction between the Canadian maritime provinces, as well as Newfoundland, and the sea in the nineteenth century, but that would raise a whole set of issues that have little to do with the thrust of this book. There is no doubt that the seaboard colonies that came to form the United States bred their people to the sea in a remarkable way, and that American ships and seafarers flourished in the early years of the Republic. Samuel Eliot Morison led the way in this field,^{[11](#)} and after reading this collection I think it is true to say Morison's early work is standing up pretty well. Elizabeth Nuxoll's evidence in "The Naval Movement of the Confederation Era" with respect to Robert Morris supports her argument, an argument that Morison would I believe have accepted, that "the grandiose

dreams attributed to 'navalists' were subordinated to the practical realities confronting that generation of Americans".(23) This is an interesting and open challenge to Craig Symonds^[2] that deserves a response.

Six subsequent essays deal with maritime commerce and the sea services: all of them merit careful reading. One is struck by the Castine smuggler who had his son read Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (49), by Robert Morris' continuing influence in the China trade, the extraordinary first contact with Japan by the *Lady Washington*, and by Daniel Caulkin's brief but eventful life at sea. Christine Hughes seems to me ambivalent about Lewis Warrington's actions in *USS Peacock*: there is a moral to that story that naval officers can no doubt decide upon for themselves. The last essay in this section, Peter Fish, "War on the Slave Trade: Changing Fortunes in Antebellum U.S. Courts of the Mid-Atlantic South" covers a later period, and is noteworthy in revealing a link between the sea and state politics. Fish demonstrates that federal judges "who deeply believed in southern political principles ... separated law and politics and interpreted the statutes enacted by Congress to combat the nefarious maritime trade in a manner that resulted in the laws' enforcement." However in "seething South Carolina" Andrew Gordon Magrath "sacrificed on the altar of state sovereignty the nation's commitment to an international war against oceanic traffic in humans". (175)

The last four essays in the book dealing with John Fenimore Cooper will be delightful reading for those who have enjoyed the books of that remarkable novelist and historian. This forms an important part of the American naval tradition, and it is instructive to see how Cooper's life helped formed his worldview. The link between commerce and naval life in the American experience becomes clear in these discussions.

William Dudley's introduction to the collection is significant, not only because it is admirable concise and informative, but because it reflects his commitment both to the navy and to historical scholarship, an essential quality for "official" historians. As Dean George Baer of the Naval War College wrote in his summary of the proceedings of a conference in Newport, if it is accepted that a historian can provide "lessons of process, lessons of a discipline, lessons of a mode of inquiry, then history does have a lesson in its

sense of variety, particularity, contingency, volition - in short in its awareness of human experience". ^[3] That is one of the important ways a historian can help the navy, and Bill Dudley in striving to work within both the navy and the academic world is achieving that aim.

^[1] S.E. Morison *The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921)

^[2] Craig Symonds, *Navalists and Anti-navalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827* (Newark, Del: University of Delaware Press, 1980)

^[3] James Goldrick and John Hattendorf, (eds), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1993) 287



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