

the Prussian army—when, in reality, he never advanced beyond the rank of captain. The fiction was the creation of the diplomats, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, who hired him in Paris. They decided that only an extravagant lie would overcome Congress's disillusion with foreign volunteers. By 1778, when Steuben arrived in Valley Forge, too many of these gentlemen had acquired high rank and accomplished next to nothing.

With wry wit and engaging humor, Lockhart tells how Steuben brought off his improbable deception. The Continental army needed his experience as an organizer and drillmaster, and George Washington recognized this dolorous fact. Unable to speak a word of English, Steuben found French-speaking aides who translated his orders to a model company. The mere fact that this ex-lieutenant general was their drillmaster created a sensation. The Americans had been imitating the British army, where sergeants did the drilling. Steuben, imbued with the traditions of the Prussian army, soon changed minds—and hearts. He not only taught the Americans how to turn civilians into professional soldiers and maneuver them on a battlefield, but he insisted that an officer was responsible for the health and morale of his men—an idea that remains the core of the American army's training to this day.

Lockhart's portrait of Steuben is refreshingly realistic. He describes his faults—his irritability, his occasional pomposity, and his hunger for too much authority. Few modern readers realize how often Steuben angered the army's American-born generals. Along with these warts, Lockhart also emphasizes Steuben's good humor and innate generosity, which won him the loyalty and admiration of numerous friends. Even more important, the book takes us beyond Valley Forge, where Steuben won his fame, and reveals how often his gifts as a thinking soldier served the American cause in the last three years of the war. His efforts as an organizer and recruiter in Virginia had much to do with the survival—and ultimate success—of the American southern army in 1780–81. It was no coincidence that the last letter General Washington wrote before he resigned his commission was to General Steuben, thanking him for his “faithful and meritorious services.”

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TOM FLEMING

*If By Sea: The Forging of the American Navy—From the Revolution to the War of 1812.* By GEORGE C. DAUGHAN. (New York: Basic Books, 2008. 536 pp. Illustrations, maps, glossary, source notes, bibliography, index. \$30.)

*If By Sea* is thought-provoking reading for specialists in the naval history of the early American republic and a good introduction to the subject for the uninitiated. The first half of the book is a thesis-driven analysis of the contributions,

or lack thereof, made by the Continental navy to the winning of independence. The second half is a narrative of naval developments from the close of the War of Independence to the end of the War of 1812 within the context of the national debate over the strategic value of the United States Navy.

The chapters on the Revolutionary War are not what one might expect of a naval history. We read little about Continental naval operations or the challenges of creating a navy from scratch. Rather, Daughan tells the story of the Continental army from a strategic vantage point and on the basis that the war's outcome rested on the fate of the army. At critical junctures he asks, where was the Continental navy, and how could it have supported the army?

According to Daughan, the Continental Congress built the wrong kind of navy. The small blue-water navy it created had no strategic influence on the course of the war, and its frigates were employed on nonvital missions that privateers could have performed. To be truly useful, the Continental navy should have consisted of shallow-draft vessels, especially row galleys that could have impeded British naval operations in North America's bays and rivers. On May 8, 1776, thirteen Pennsylvania Navy row galleys, engaging a British forty-four-gun frigate and twenty-gun ship in the Delaware River, forced the forty-four aground. Daughan builds his thesis on this obscure incident. The general effectiveness of row galleys against broadside vessels, however, remains debatable. During the War of 1812, British warships in Chesapeake Bay easily neutralized Joshua Barney's substantial flotilla of galleys and barges. Nor is it clear why "a blue water fleet that could be a force outside harbors, rivers, and the immediate coast" was any less essential for asserting America's nationhood in 1777 than it would be in 1807 (395).

Daughan undervalues the services the Continental navy performed at sea—transporting diplomats, convoying specie, and showing the flag. None of the ministers that the Continental frigates carried to Europe was captured, whereas Henry Laurens, sent by Congress to Europe in a packet, was taken and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Congress could not place confidence in privateers for public missions. It would have been foolish to commit the shipment of specie from Havana that paid George Washington's restive troops and forestalled mutiny to any ship but the copper-bottomed Continental navy frigate *Alliance* and its redoubtable captain, John Barry.

The second half of Daughan's book is less original than the first, repeating a familiar refrain: seeking to avoid war by keeping the U.S. Navy small, the Jefferson and Madison administrations placed the country in a position in which it could not avoid war. The strength of this half of the book is the author's skill in orienting the reader within the larger contexts of relevant world events and national politics.