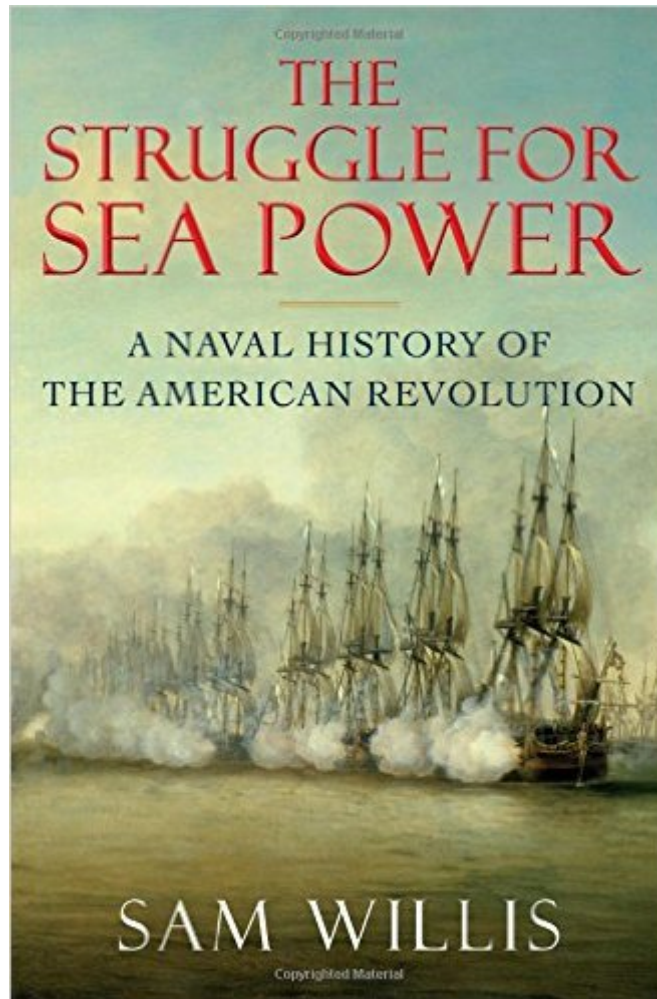


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The Struggle For Sea Power: A Naval History Of The American Revolution



Synopsis

A fascinating naval perspective on one of the greatest of all historical conundrums: How did thirteen isolated colonies, which in 1775 began a war with Britain without a navy or an army, win their independence from the greatest naval and military power on earth? The American Revolution involved a naval war of immense scope and variety, including no fewer than twenty-two navies fighting on five oceansâ to say nothing of rivers and lakes. In no other war were so many large-scale fleet battles fought, one of which was the most strategically significant naval battle in all of British, French, and American history. Simultaneous naval campaigns were fought in the English Channel, the North and Mid-Atlantic, the Mediterranean, off South Africa, in the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, the Pacific, the North Sea and, of course, off the eastern seaboard of America. Not until the Second World War would any nation actively fight in so many different theaters. In *The Struggle for Sea Power*, Sam Willis traces every key military event in the path to American independence from a naval perspective, and he also brings this important viewpoint to bear on economic, political, and social developments that were fundamental to the success of the Revolution. In doing so Willis offers valuable new insights into American, British, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Russian history. This unique account of the American Revolution gives us a new understanding of the influence of sea power upon history, of the American path to independence, and of the rise and fall of the British Empire. 8 pages of color illustrations

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Customer Reviews

An excellent and fascinating perspective on the War of the American Revolution - easily the best

I've read on the subject. It is extremely well-researched and very readable. The author obviously has been to many of the places where the war took place and many little known aspects of the war are covered. Throughout, the focus is on the application of sea power both successfully and unsuccessfully and how it dominated the war.

I have written several critical reviews of books on the American Revolution on , so it was a joy to read one as good as this. Willis obviously spent much time with original source material in the National Archives of the United Kingdom and the National Maritime Museum. He did not read it in another book, like other authors do, but poured over the true sources. Willis reveals seemingly unimportant things - like how difficult it was to actually sink a sailing ship, or how to navigate in ice-filled waters - that the book gave me a rare pleasure when reading it.

The only reason I gave this book five stars is that won't let me give it six. Willis, in a smoothly written volume, covers the American Revolution in fine stile, covering everything from grand strategy to minutiae (for example, instructions on how to burn a ship). In doing so, he covers blue water, riverine, and lacustrine topics, describing the Revolution in ways that are never taught in school. Everyone knows (or thinks he does) the key points of the war: Bunker Hill, Saratoga, Yorktown and so forth. But who remembers the Spanish contribution? Or how Benedict Arnold invaded Canada? Who remembers the terrible material condition of the Royal Navy's ships and how sickness decimated their crews? Or how inept command decisions that weakened, sometimes critically, the Navy's efforts in North America? Or that Britain became involved in a world war because of French and Dutch involvement in our Revolution? Read this book--it'll change your whole view of our Revolution!

If you like history, or ships, or naval strategy, or U.S. history with new twists, wrinkles and insights, give this a read. Hard to capture all the good aspects of it. There are a lot of good history books the last thirty years, and this is one of the best of the best. I was aware of things like the Marblehead sailors, and their work on the Delaware and Lake Champlaign. I was aware that rivers were as important as oceans in this war. But Willis, something of a waterman himself, who has navigated many parts of the U.S., does what we need historians to do. He pulls it all together; he lets you see into corners you might have missed. For instance he talks about bad feelings between French mariners and common people in Boston in 1778, as the French came into the harbor to get food. This was war. Food was in short supply, poverty everywhere. The additional large number of men

were competing for less than adequate food supplies, and they had more money and leverage to get the food. In the Caribbean he notes how important these naval strategies were to the overall war. He also shows us how deadly a place it was to sailors from the north -- for instance the British lost 4700 troops to disease in Havana in 1762. Ships broke down more in warmer waters, and there were more storms, and ship worms were as big as snakes. One fifth of Antigua's 38,000 slaves died between 1778 and 1781 -- the area was overrun with sailors, and they needed food and were prioritized over slaves. Slaves starved because France and Britain and the colonies were at war. The book attempts to show us much of what was happening from 1775 to 1781, with navies as the beginning point for discussion.

An excellent study of sea power in the American Revolution. There is a comprehensive evaluation of naval affairs on all aspects of the American Revolution; both blue and brown water. Despite considerable reading, have never seen this broad and integrated approach to all naval aspects of the conflict. Particularly impressive is the analysis of the naval threats on strategic decisions. The best known of these is the British abandonment of Philadelphia in 1778; but, the author includes quite a number of other instances. There is significant emphasis on the difficult economics of building, equipping, and manning naval forces. Also the effects of ill health and poor supplies on the effectiveness of naval forces. Even the naval effect on French women's hairstyles are described. Diplomatic and national aspirations impact are well covered for France, Spain, Holland and even Russia and Mysore as well as America and Britain. The book is well written and easy to read. The maps plentiful, large and well done; well above average. This is certainly a welcome change from the recent trend in military books to reduce map size and fonts. However, the maps could have shown more of the units involved.

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