



Texas Navy Association

Historical Article



The Cruise of a Forgotten Flotilla: An Historiographical Survey of the Texas Navy

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The seacoast is the threshold of American prehistory and history, of American culture, and like most well-passed thresholds, it is hallowed and worn. And historians routinely ignore it.

--John Stilgore, *Alongshore*

In 1994 historian Stephen L. Hardin published *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836* in which he attempted to provide a concise overview of the war from a military standpoint. The careful student of the revolution, however, will find something lacking in Hardin's work. While he paints a masterful portrait of the war on the ground, he fails entirely at his aforementioned purpose: a military history of the conflict. Nowhere in this volume does the word "navy" appear. While it is one thing to write about the revolution from a landlubber's perspective it is quite another to proclaim this a "military history" when such a gigantic portion of what makes up the military has been omitted in total.

Hardin is not entirely to blame for his error, for historians of Texas have been repeating this same mistake for generations. The history of the "Third Coast" of the United States, in general, is one that

has been largely ignored by American historians. Richard V. Francaviglia, in his introduction to *From Sail to Steam: Four Centuries of Texas Maritime History, 1500-1900*, outlined a number of reasons why historians have neglected the Texas coast. Although he diligently follows the argument of Ellis W. Shuler, that the coast of Texas is really "a barrier to rather than an invitation to settlement," he ultimately chalks the cause of neglect up to "simple bias" on the part of historians.¹ In terms of the Texas Revolution, simply put, historians have always preferred to write about land battles and, as a result, their significance has been over amplified. While the vainglory of the Alamo and the desperate vengeance of San Jacinto are certainly more romantic than shipping tonnage and materiel lines, it is the presence--or lack thereof--of munitions, food supplies, clothes, and capital that ultimately determines the outcome of wars. In an economy such as that of Texas in the

19th century so heavily dependent upon the coast, sea power played a pivotal role in the outcome of the Texas Revolution.

Historian Peter J. Kastor has argued that the model so often employed by military historians to analyze warfare is inadequate when one attempts to use it to understand naval operations. Military historians and biographers return, ultimately, to a kind of "great man/great battles" history that emphasizes personal heroism without bringing warfare into its broader context.² When considering such a tightly focused model one is reminded of General George Smith Patton's remark when he cynically sniffed "History is replete with accounts of military inventions, each heralded by its disciples as the 'Dernier Cri,' the 'Key' to victory."³ Military historians seem to engage in this fallacy when they focus in on an individual battle or person that becomes a metaphor for the war. Napoleon and Hitler

did not fight their wars alone, nor did they do so in a vacuum. Thus the Texas Revolution must become something more than just a series of skirmishes highlighted by the overarching personalities of its leaders.

Kastor has stated that most modern historians who write on naval affairs do so under the powerful influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan. As an historian he did much to bring about the idea that the traditional model of military history as propounded by the scholar of action on the ground could be applied to war afloat. Consequently, historians of naval activity have failed to place it into its proper context. Modern historians have neglected more recent historiographical developments and, as a result, the writing of naval history--and by extrapolation military history as a whole--has suffered. Kastor has written: "Like their intellectual ancestors, they [naval historians and biographers] have celebrated individual skill and heroism without trying to integrate naval personnel into a broader social, cultural, or institutional context."⁴

As early as 1963 James M. Merrill attempted to warn us away from this trend with an evaluation of post-Mahan historiography. He dedicated an entire article to what he believed was an emerging trend towards placing naval and military history into a much broader context.⁵ Sadly this trend failed to develop. Perhaps nowhere is this stunted growth more clearly exhibited than in the writing of Texas history. Author Clive

Cussler, himself a popular writer of best-selling adventure novels and the discoverer of the wreck of the Texas Navy Ship Zavala, echoed this lament best when he wrote "Regretfully, the day may never come when Texas naval heroes such as Moore, Hurd, and Hawkins are as familiar as Travis, Bowie, and Fannin."⁶

All-in-all it will take a new model of understanding in order to adequately evaluate the role of the Texas Navy in the broader history of the Texas Revolution. What is most earnestly needed is a synthesis of not only the Texas military at sea, but of the entire maritime operation, both merchant marine and ship-of-war alike, into the broader history of the revolution. Until this is done it will be impossible to fully understand why the ground war played out the way it did and, in the long run, how the Republic of Texas was able to play a role in commerce on the high seas. Historians can ill afford to pretend that Texas is a landlocked place.

The aim of this paper is, in some small way, to begin that task. What is performed herein is an historiographical survey of the literature of the Texas Navy with an eye toward the encouragement of synthesis. Thus this paper should function as a tool that places bibliographic resources in the hands of scholars and serves to guide the direction of subsequent research toward a broader understanding of the maritime role in the War for Texas. What is needed and, indeed,

what is called for is a true military history of the Texas Revolution that intersects the roles of both the army and navy within an overarching social, political, and economic context.

Although it is not the purpose of this essay to provide an in-depth historical analysis of the Texas Navy, it will be worthwhile to draft a thumbnail sketch of the highlights of its career. Some historians, including most recently Douglas V. Meed, have argued that the "navy" was actually born in 1832, some three years before the General Council formally created a navy for Texas. It is true that ships played a major role in the tariff revolts that took place in the cities of Galveston and Anahuac in that year. In fact, a small flotilla of three schooners was organized that did a remarkable job of patrolling the sea lanes. The commander of one of these little vessels, the Red River, named Captain David L. Kokernot, would write years later, "We were the first Texas Navy."⁷

Several skirmishes involving naval activity took place before there was an open declaration of hostilities between Texas and Mexico. It can be argued, although with considerable trepidation, that the first shots of naval ordinance at Anahuac represent the opening volley of the Texas Revolution. Although Meed and others have made this case, this, once again, removes "military" activity from its broader context and unduly highlights it. Although these skirmishes

were, in a very real sense, open conflicts they were not viewed at the time as a pretext to war. That was to come later. So, perhaps, then, the first munitions spent at Gonzales deserve to hold the distinction of being the first shots fired “in war”. But subsequent research may reveal a deeper importance of those beginning skirmishes at Anahuac. Needless to say, these early altercations taught the Texans the importance of even the most rudimentary sea power.

By late in 1835 the provisional government of Texas had begun to see the importance of a formal naval force. On November 25 the General Council passed a bill establishing a navy of four schooners. This bill also allowed for the issuance of letters of marque.⁸ Privateers took almost immediate advantage of this authorization, helping to protect the coast and preventing crucial supplies from reaching the Mexican forces. However, no in-depth study of privateering during the Texas Revolution has yet been written. Historians such as Meed and Jim Dan Hill give us hints that something with far-reaching consequences may have been going on, but strong research on this topic simply does not exist.

By January of 1836 the four schooners that had been authorized were purchased and the official navy of Texas came into being. Its significance in the war largely had to do with the maintenance of sea power. Jim Dan Hill dedicated chapter four of his *The Texas Navy in Forgotten Battles and Shirtsleeve*

Diplomacy to the navy’s influence on the outcome of the battle of San Jacinto. Many of Santa Anna’s actions, according to Hill, were dictated by lack of supplies. The Mexican military never opened a marine front and proponents of the Texas Navy often argue that they were kept from doing so by the presence of the roving Texan “fleet”. However, it is more likely that the Mexicans simply never concerned themselves with trying.

It must be remembered that General Santa Anna considered himself to be Le Petit Napoleon. Napoleon, himself a land general, never fully understood the importance of sea power and ceded it quickly to the British. His Mexican protégé was equally unconcerned with the war afloat in Texas. The maintenance of open ports may ultimately be proven to be the deciding factor in the Texas Revolution. A further and more detailed analysis of commercial interaction between Texas, New Orleans, and Mexico will have to be undertaken in order to more fully explore this hypothesis. However, a cursory examination seems to indicate that this relationship was quite complex indeed.

By September of 1837 the first Texas Navy was no more, as all of the fledgling Republic’s ships had been lost.⁹ Although the Treaty of Velasco was signed on May 14, 1836, the battles with Mexico did not end for the Texas Navy until the eve of the Mexican War. In 1839 Texas began to rebuild its

navy with resolve. Texas was fortunate that Mexico never attempted to launch a major naval sortie, for what had been brokered in Velasco was not so much a treaty as a simple armistice built on somewhat shaky legal ground. Texas had never received the recognition it desired from its parent nation and by 1840 it was clear that this would not happen without further military conflict.¹⁰ Most scholars of the Texas Revolution have long abandoned their narratives by this point, but a truly thick description of the fight must include the work of the navy during the intervening years of the Republic. For during this time period the Texas Navy was to be the young nation’s major line of defense against her neighbor to the south.

In this defense, Texas was often aided by events taking place on the international stage. Mexico’s conflict with France, during which the port of Vera Cruz was subjected to naval blockade, cost Mexico significant naval resources. France annexed a part of the Mexican navy into her own fleet, once again taking much of the pressure off of Texas.¹¹ This only further serves to highlight the need for a careful analysis of external forces on the military outcome of the Texas Revolution.

Despite this lucky turn of events, Texas was forced on various occasions to engage Mexican ships. A list of those engagements is too numerous to be given here and it is not my purpose to “fight the war” in these pages. Of more importance is the dynamic of Texas

naval power. For instance, whether or not, as Jim Dan Hill puts it, one believes that the Texas Navy was affective, the government of the early Republic certainly did.¹² In the beginning Texan leaders fully supported the navy and were willing to fund it. However, complacency and an attempt to withdraw from the international scene during Sam Houston's second administration led to a crucial change in this dynamic that tells us much about the role of Texas in political affairs within the hemisphere during the Republic. Initially, Texas had been willing to engage in bold international intrigues, including a brief attempt at imperialism within Mexico.

On September 18, 1841 Texas entered into an agreement with the rebellious Mexican province of Yucatan by which Yucatan agreed to pay Texas \$8,000 a month for naval protection.¹³ This move was coordinated during the Lamar presidency, characterized by attempts to affirm the independence of Texas. Although the fleet left for Yucatan in December of 1841, upon the inauguration of Houston into his second term, the navy was subjected to a recall.¹⁴ It is well known that Houston, unlike Lamar, was a supporter of the move to make Texas a part of the United States. A roving navy, actively engaging ships (often U.S. ships, as in the case of the brig Pocket) would not make Texas an easy friend of the United States.

However, Houston in his fight to recall, decommission, and sell the navy was

forced into a duel with both the people of Galveston, the homeport of the navy, and the navy's able commander, Commodore Edwin Ward Moore. Moore, who had put to sea in 1841, refused to return to Texas. Rather, Moore entered into negotiations with Yucatan for defense and succeeded in engaging the Mexican fleet on various occasions. However, when, in March of 1843 the Commodore received word that Houston had declared Moore and his navy as pirates he promptly returned to Galveston. It was not until 1844 that Moore would receive trial and subsequent acquittal by Congress on this charge.¹⁵ Moore's return to port in 1843 ended the active career of the Texas Navy. In 1846 the navy and her crews were incorporated into the United States Navy and promptly decommissioned. Texas Navy sailors would not have their claims for payment by the U.S. settled until 1857, the date when the Texas Navy officially came to an end.¹⁶

A number of historians have argued the veracity and importance of the career of the Texas Navy. Suffice it to say a Texan victory during the revolution against Mexico could not have been coordinated without adequate sea power. While the above historical sketch hardly does justice to the complex history of the Texas Navy, its only purpose is to give the reader sufficient background for the following historiographical survey.

The primary source materials relating to the Texas Navy are not voluminous but they

are adequate for the creation of some rather detailed analysis of the naval enterprise. The repositories for information relating to the Texas Navy are the Texas State Library and Archives, The Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Rosenberg Library in Galveston. The Texas State Library's collection contains the surviving records of the Texas Navy as well as the diplomatic papers of the Republic of Texas. In addition, this collection has a "Miscellaneous File" dedicated to Commodore Edwin Ward Moore, the Navy's most influential commander. Moore wrote two pamphlets explaining his role as high commander of the navy, chiefly as his defense against the charge of piracy. In addition, the TSL collection also contains the journal and logbook of Midshipman Alfred Walke.

The Center for American History's collection is notable for the number of journals and correspondence papers it contains relating to the Texas Navy. These journals have yet to be adequately plumbed by scholars and are of particular interest. They include the writings of Midshipman Edward Johns, Lieutenant William A. Tennison, and Midshipman James L. Mabry. In addition, a number of important letters written by key players in the naval action are also contained within this collection.

Finally, the Rosenberg Library is home to the Colonel James Morgan papers. Morgan was an early Texas settler, businessman, and military commander at Galveston.

Two ships under his control were often utilized by the Texas Navy.¹⁷ Any study of the interaction of the Galveston commercial interest and the navy must include a look at the work of Morgan during this time period.

Only a few primary source materials have found their way into print. This is surprising considering the dearth of material available. Both Alexander Dienst with his early work "The Navy of the Republic of Texas" and Linda Ericson Devereaux with *The Texas Navy* have attempted to bring to light some of these source materials. Dienst's work, itself, is mostly chronologically arranged excerpts from source materials. Devereaux provides us with a strong research tool, having compiled muster rolls of those who served, details about the navy's ships, and a strong bibliography. Although Dienst's work has appeared both in a scholarly journal and as a privately published book, Devereaux's book was printed to limited circulation and may be difficult to come by.

Two further source documents to which researchers should be referred were published in the *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* (now *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*) in 1902 and 1904. These are, respectively, the reminiscences of C.C. Cox and George F. Fuller. Both men served in the Texas Navy and, at the end of very busy lives, drafted these brief memoirs relating to their service. While these documents are interesting and should be looked at, their reliability is certainly

questionable. These materials offer the reader nothing new. With extensive contemporary journals available, these two recollections drafted some decades after events, do not really serve to augment the earlier diary-type manuscripts. Careful scholars may wish to keep a running mental list of discrepancies and anachronisms that appear in these documents before claiming them as sources for published findings.

In addition to the aforementioned material in print related directly to the navy, one should also be referred to the published journal of Francis C. Sheridan. Adequately edited by Willis W. Pratt, the journal was published in 1954 under the title *Galveston Island Or, a Few Months off the Coast of Texas*, *The Journal of Francis C. Sheridan, 1839-1840*. Sheridan was an Irishman in the British diplomatic service that spent some time in Galveston. This work provides strong insight into the life of the port city of Galveston, told from an educated outsider's point of view, during a time when the Texas Navy was active.

It is interesting to point out that only recently have scholars begun to plumb newspapers as a resource for studying the Texas Navy. Obviously, this is due to the difficulty in locating materials in a medium that is typically dispersed and largely un-indexed. However, recent innovations in collection management and computer technology are making this resource more available to the scholar. Authors such as

James M. Denham and Douglas V. Meed have made good use of newspaper sources. Many of the activities and controversies in which the Texas Navy was involved were reported and debated in newsprint. As well, in analyzing the navy's activities and interactions in U.S. ports such as New Orleans and New York it would be wise to look to newspapers as a possible source for material. Papers that typically show up in citations in works on the Texas Navy are as follows: *Galveston Civilian*, *Galveston News*, *Houston Morning Star*, *New Orleans Courier*, *New Orleans Picayune*, *Telegraph & Texas Register*, *Texas Gazette*, and *Texas Republican*.

The majority of the histories composed on the subject of the Texas Navy can best be described as broad surveys. Each successive generation of historians, beginning most prominently with Alexander Dienst at the turn of the last century, has discovered the navy it seems, on its own. Sadly, as new writers come and go they rarely contribute anything new on the subject. A broad synthesis culled from the literature is impossible. Any new history of the navy must be written as just that--a new history. However, there is a body of literature available with which to work and much of it, mostly in the form of articles in scholarly journals, should be taken into consideration.

In a four part series that appeared in 1909 in the *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* Dienst traced the history of the

navy from early skirmishes in 1835 until the official end of the navy with the settlement of her surviving crewmembers' claims. Dienst relied heavily on source material, often reprinting it in its entirety. This work, later privately republished by the author, deserves careful study by anyone undertaking a study of the Texas Navy. Within this work Dienst creates the "formula" by which most subsequent naval histories have been written. He establishes the primary timeline, earmarks the crucial events, and, most significantly, creates the dichotomy between the land war and events at sea. Dienst was writing at a time when historians were only just seriously beginning to look at primary materials and, at times, he becomes bogged down in them. The Texas Navy in this work largely operates in a vacuum. At the time that Dienst was writing, naval power, thanks in large part to Mahan, was seen as a determinant of a nation's strength. No doubt this refined philosophical stance led Dienst to resurrect the forgotten Texas Navy. However, Mahan's influence is perhaps too great here, as we are provided with a completely one-sided narrative. While Dienst's work was groundbreaking it established a faulty paradigm on which a century of historians have based their work.

In 1936 Claude L. Douglas published the first major "popular" work on the Texas Navy, *Thunder on the Gulf, or The Story of the Texas Navy*. While this slim volume offers little to the scholar, it is oft cited in a myriad of magazine and newspaper articles

as well as lengthier "survey" works directed at a general audience. Douglas has nothing to expand on the "Dienst paradigm," simply mimicking the senior author's timeline and deleting almost all references to primary sources. No doubt, Douglas helped to solidify the Dienst model for writing on the Texas Navy into the popular mindset.

While this paper is not intended as a survey of the popular literature composed on the subject of the Texas Navy, scholars will want to become aware of the typical pitfalls that lay in wait for the less than thorough researcher. An especially disturbing problem is modern authors' crutch-like reliance on extremely early predecessors, even when composing relatively late works. For example, both Bess Scott's "Texians on the High Seas" (1983) and Jonathan W. Jordan's "Lone Star Republic's Navy" (1999) fail to consider personages and event timelines outside of the model established by Dienst. Scott's article is a work of popular writing, published in *Texas Highways Magazine* and Jordan's is a work of historical research published in a scholarly journal, *The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, but both pieces are of almost equal stature in their usefulness to revisionist historians.

Although Dienst, clearly influenced by Mahan, created the contextual paradigm that most historians of the Texas navy have pursued, an entirely different track of research was created in the late 1920's by James E. Winston. Winston's work seems

to have been of little use to writers of broad surveys or popular pieces on the navy, but his perspective is more closely in line with the proposal being made by this paper. In 1927 Winston published "New Orleans and the Texas Revolution," an article that expanded the war for Texas beyond the borders of the would-be republic. Few students of the Texas Revolution have successfully grasped the international nature of the conflict. While writers such as Stephen Hardin, even today, continue to only hint at a relationship between Texas and the United States, Winston was willing to acknowledge and explore this symbiosis three quarters of a century ago. Texas maritime commerce was the engine of early Texan capitalism. A strong tie with the United States, through her port at New Orleans, was a reliable source of capital and merchandise. The Texan merchant marine was the leading financial vehicle of the day and the military flotilla was designed to be her protector. Knowing this, one is able to see the ports of Anahuac, Copano, and Galveston as the true "interior" of Texas--places of high concentration of Anglo population, capital, and interest, while the sundry sites of Goliad and Bexar become the extreme frontier.

Winston expanded his premise in 1930 with the publication of "Notes on Commercial Relations and the Texas Revolution". Published only six years before the Texas Centennial, it is hard to think of this work as being of great influence at the time. In a day when Texas was attempting

to create a “Western personality”, that is distance itself from its Southern roots of cotton, slavery, and Yankee colonialism through the accentuation of ranching, oil, and the rugged, individualistic frontier ideal, Winston’s work placed early Texas directly within its Southern context. Cotton is brought to the fore as the “white gold” of Texas and a colonial connection with the United States is shown to have been the life blood of Texas material and materiel success. After carefully studying Winston and his intellectual heirs one can only puzzle at military historians such as Hardin. While he carefully pointed out that Anglo Texans often achieved the upper hand through their possession of superior munitions such as accurate rifles and Delaware gun powder he then never proceeded to explain the all important factors that created this situation.¹⁸

In tracing the early historiography of the Texas Navy at this point we must take one brief step backward to 1909 in order to analyze an almost anomalous article written by C.T. Neu. Too early to have been strongly influenced by Dienst, this work, entitled “The Case of the Brig Pocket” looks, in some considerable detail, at an incident that occurred early in the Texas Revolution. In March of 1836 the brig Pocket, sailing under the colors of the United States, was captured by the Texas Navy Ship Invincible. Pocket, sailing from New Orleans to Matamoros, contained contraband cargo, was sailing under false papers, and had as passengers

high ranking officers in the Mexican army. Neu argued that Invincible was within her rights to capture Pocket and claim her as a prize or war. Texas was, after all, attempting to blockade the port of Matamoros and both custom and maritime law of the day put Pocket legally in the hands of the Texan crew. However, this event proved to be near disaster for the diplomatic struggle between Texas and the United States.

Neu, who is perhaps a little too easy on the Texans, is one of the very first authors to place the war for Texas into its proper international context within the overarching politics of the hemisphere. As well, the United State is seen at the birth of a role it has repeated throughout most of the 19th and 20th centuries: that of disinterested profit taker. Although U.S. sympathies clearly lied with the Anglos of Texas, American capitalists were more than happy to supply Mexico in order to earn profits. The case of Pocket serves to illustrate the diplomatic position Texas was in as conflict between military and diplomatic strategy came to a head. In addition, Neu ably illustrates the importance of Texan sea power during the conflict. For the first time, the U.S., normally seen as a monolithic neutral party in the fight, takes an active role. This serves to illustrate the necessity--and the danger--of the Texan maritime strategy. At times, the Texas Navy and the privateers sailing under Texas colors were forced into a duel with their Anglo brethren from the United States and, more often than not, the Texans

were able to maintain the upper hand.

To return to our primary track, the year 1937 saw the publication of arguably the best piece of scholarship on the Texas Navy yet produced. Written, once again, around the Centennial year at a time when Texans were rediscovering many aspects of their history, Jim Dan Hill’s *The Texas Navy in Forgotten Battles and Shirtsleeve Diplomacy* is the closest thing we have to a true synthesis of naval and ground action during the war for Texas. As was previously mentioned, Hill dedicates an entire chapter to the naval contribution to the victory at San Jacinto. To accomplish this task, Hill brought to bear a fully battery of sources and ideas not normally seen in a history of the Texas Revolution. Trade relations, international political connections, and supply lines are all discussed.

Arguably, Hill’s most important contribution is the attention given to the Texas Navy as a tool of diplomacy. This tool was often deployed inconsistently, with varying degrees of success, but Hill does an admirable job of removing the war for Texas from its vacuum by highlighting the fact that, for better or worse, the navy was often the fledgling republic’s most visible international representative. Early on, Hill acknowledges his indebtedness to Dienst, but points out that Dienst was primarily an “antiquarian” and his research “made no effort to integrate the maritime activities and naval operations with the

complexities of the foreign and domestic affairs of the turbulent Mexican and Texan Republics...".¹⁹ Hill begins this project with *The Texas Navy in Forgotten Battles and Shirtsleeve Diplomacy*, but, sadly, the thesis has never been fully expanded upon--either by students of the navy itself, or of the Texas Revolution as a whole.

The greatest criticism that can be lodged against Hill is that he was, in fact, using his book to make an apology for the Texas practice of slavery. He states at the outset that he is attempting to revise historians who had previously concocted the theory that an independent Texas was encouraged by Southern "slaveocrats" as a means of expanding their peculiar institution into the North American Southwest. Hill, it must be remembered, was publishing at a time when Texans were attempting to shake off the "tyranny of cotton" and establish themselves as a Western state. Hill uses *The Texas Navy in Forgotten Battles and Shirtsleeve Diplomacy* to advance that newly emerged paradigm. He wrote "It [the Texas Revolution] was rather a phenomenon of a rapidly increasing population expanding into a great geographical semi-vacuum--the West, of which Texas was merely a part."²⁰ The trouble with this statement is that evidence later presented by Hill himself largely serves to contradict this theory. The ports of Texas are seen as being very intimately tied with the U.S. South, especially through New Orleans. Modern revisionists are once again placing Texas

back into its Southern context. Subsequent, detailed studies of the Texas Revolution should take a serious accounting of what influence slavery and the cotton industry as a whole had on the need for maritime supremacy.

The 1960's proved to be the "Golden Age" for scholarship on the Texas Navy. The majority of the literature produced on the subject was created during this time period. Much of it was written by the intellectual heirs of Winston who sought to use the navy as a means of expanding the context of early Texas during the Revolutionary period. Diplomatic relations and trade became the primary focus of writings by historians who were, once again, revising Texas' historical context.

In 1960, Tom H. Wells began the decade with his very short, but poignant "An Evaluation of the Texas Navy". This little survey, with Commodore Moore featured as the primary player, serves as a short reminder to historians that the Texas Navy did, indeed, exist and was waiting, once again nearly forgotten, for inquiry. Published alongside Wells' piece was another short article by George F. Haugh entitled "History of the Texas Navy". This thumbnail sketch provided a timeline somewhat different from that established in the "Dienst paradigm". For the first time the role of merchants Thomas F. McKinney and Samuel M. Williams in the birth and financing of the Texas Navy was touched upon. A detailed

study of the company founded by these two men in the role of the Texas Revolution is greatly needed. As slave owning businessmen largely backed by interests in the U.S. a study of their relationship with Texas would, no doubt, further expand our understanding of the Texas Revolution and the role Yankee capital played in it.

Haugh followed up this little sketch in 1961 with "The Texas Navy at New York". Haugh, for the first time, delved into new primary source material for an understanding of the Texas Navy and its relationship with the United States. He introduced into the equation, articles from New York newspapers and material from the Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. We see the Texas Navy in port at New York stirring up trouble--racking up debt, attempting to encourage New Yorkers into service aboard Texas ships, and finally, of actually attempting to "impress" men, including a Briton, into the navy. Any lengthy survey of the Texas Navy should build upon Haugh's article and further plumb the sources that he discovered. The activities of the navy in New York only further serve to underscore the often-shaky relationship Texas had with its neighbor to the north.

In 1960 Tom Wells followed up his brief article with the publication of a full-length book on the Texas Navy. This work, Commodore Moore and the Texas Navy, was the first book length publication to

appear on the navy since Jim Dan Hill's piece almost three decades prior. While Wells' work is good, it is sadly lacking in many respects. The "main character" in the drama is Commodore Edwin Ward Moore who did not come to command the Texas Navy until 1839. Wells offers no background material on the navy up to this point. As a result, the uninitiated reader is no doubt left puzzled by many of the events that quickly unfold. The navy's diplomatic intrigues and its interactions on an international scene are represented. In addition, Wells focused on many of the commercial and financial maneuverings that not only brought the Texas Navy into existence but also made it a necessity.

Wells, himself a navy man, however, was clearly far too enamored with his subject. Moore was a young man, seasoned but not always wise, who often acted rashly and without taking into account his position within the government of Texas. His loyalties, eternally, were to the navy and not to his adopted nation. Wells, at times, simply apologizes for the Commodore's behavior rather than attempting to explain it. On occasion he falls into the trap laid by Mahan in his pursuit of "great man/great battles" naval history. Clearly, Wells was attempting to provide Moore with a place at the table of Crockett, Bowie, Travis, and Houston. Nevertheless, his book is an important step forward toward a more expanded context into which to place the Texas Navy.

Another navy man, retired Admiral Samuel Murray Robinson, under the auspices of the Sons of the Republic of Texas, published a slim little pamphlet entitled *A Brief History of the Texas Navies* in 1961. Robinson's tiny work is a true gem for the historian of the revolutionary maritime experience. With this work the retired Admiral turned his considerable understanding of military strategy to the Texas Revolution. Robinson drafted a strategic assessment from the perspective of, as he called it, the "jaundiced eye" of General Sam Houston. He pointed out that, although Houston owed the Texas navy a debt of gratitude for its contribution to the victory at San Jacinto, his ultimate betrayal of the navy was based on strategic ignorance and pecuniary expediency. Robinson's little volume features perhaps the most succinct appraisal of the Texas Navy's strategic value found anywhere in print. He clearly outlined the role sea power played in both war and "peace", highlighting successes that lead to the Texans holding the sea-lanes in the face of superior tactical might. Any military assessment of the Texas Navy must begin with Robinson's book.

The 1960's, however, did not close without the publication of a heavily Dienst-influenced work on the Texas Navy. Somewhat ironically this brief softbound book was printed by the Naval History Division of the United States Navy in 1968. Entitled *The Texas Navy* this book is really nothing more than an expansion of the Dienst timeline, notable mostly for a great

number of illustrations and photographs featured throughout. Written apparently as a popular work designed, ultimately, to highlight Texas' modern contribution to the U.S. Navy (chiefly through the work of Admirable Chester Nimitz) this book is mentioned only to serve as a benchmark. While revisionist scholars were, at last, taking a closer look at the Texas Navy and, consequently, the Texas Revolution, in a broader context, the popular audience was being exposed to a recycled paradigm that by this time was half a century old. Sadly, as the 1960's closed, this paradigm would continue to hold fast.

The quality of scholarly materials produced on the Texas Navy since the close of the 1960's has been strong, although the quantity has been lacking. In 1970 K. Jack Bauer published "*The United States Navy and Texas Independence: A Study in Jacksonian Integrity*". At last, one is taken directly to the heart of the relationship between the United States and Texas. Bauer's in-depth analysis posited that although the United States clearly had sympathies, both financial and philosophical, in line with the Texan cause, her navy attempted to maintain the strictest neutrality even to the detriment of her Anglo brethren. Although there are holes in Bauer's argument, he firmly accepted the navy as the representative vehicle of Texas' relationship with the outside world. Naval conflict, both military and diplomatic, is given its proper due. We see the war for Texas as a conflict of broader proportions

and we begin to understand more deeply the international pressures placed upon the would-be republic.

While Bauer's work looked at the external pressures endured by the Republic of Texas and her navy, Margaret Hatton, in 1973, examined one of its chief internal conflicts. "The Houston-Fisher Controversy" explored the fight between President Sam Houston and his naval secretary, Samuel Rhoads Fisher. Almost from the beginning the two men locked horns. Fisher was a firebrand with a stubborn temper to match Houston's equally aggressive disposition. He often saw fit to "trash" the Chief Executive in the press in order to defend his own agenda. Despite this, Fisher had an understanding of the need for a navy, in the face of a Mexican threat, that Houston did not grasp. Fisher managed to hold the navy together, often by crook, and even accompanied it on a cruise that Houston had officially disallowed. For his trouble, Houston, in spite of a lack of constitutional authority, eliminated the position of Naval Secretary putting Fisher out of a job. Houston here is seen as an imperial figure bent on bending the government to his will. A further exploration of his motives, especially in regard to his desire to withdraw from the international scene, is warranted.

To once again return to the international stage, in 1985 Josefina Zoraida Vazquez introduced the Mexican perspective to the story of the Texas Revolution. Her article, "The Texas Question in Mexican Politics,

1836-1845", by coming through the "back door" of the debate, so to speak, accomplished many important tasks. The length of the conflict, from the Mexican perspective, is thus increased from that typically viewed by modern Anglo historians. The action, after San Jacinto, simply moved from the land to the sea. Mexican politics, indeed, was shaped by the controversy over Texas. The Texas Navy and its attempts to control and regulate trade and foreign naval maneuvers on the Gulf proved to be a leading factor in the internal machinations that played out within Mexico. A good deal more research should be undertaken in this area.

Before beginning an evaluation of the current state of affairs attention should be drawn to one aspect of literature that has been excepted from the above survey: naval biography. Almost every major player in the Texas Revolution has been biographed in some form or another. However, with only a few notable exceptions, few of these are worthy of comment. The reader's attention should be drawn especially to two books written on Robert Potter, the hot-headed North Carolinian known as the "founder" of the Texas Navy. Potter was a notorious troublemaker and a controversial figure throughout his life, having been killed in the Regulator-Moderator War. Thus this somewhat "lesser light" has been made the subject of two fine books that feature the Texas Navy prominently. These works are Ernest C. Shearer's Robert Potter: Remarkable North Carolinian and Texan

and Ernest G. Fischer's Robert Potter: Founder of the Texas Navy. While the naval materials found within these works can certainly be gleaned from other sources, it is interesting to view the Texas Navy from the perspective of this one man. It can only be hoped that future biographers of other persons involved in the activities of the Texas Navy, especially Messrs. McKinney and Williams, Samuel May Williams, and Sam Houston will include more in-depth discussion of the role of the navy in these people's lives.

Within the past ten years writing on the subject of the Texas Navy has fallen off quite drastically. By and large, scholars of the Texas Revolution as a whole, as typified by Stephen Hardin's Texian Illiad, continue to follow an outmoded dichotomy that separates the land and naval wars into two distinct realms, all the while demoting maritime activity in its importance. Sadly, writers attempting to compose new works on the Revolution have made little if any use of the scholarly works produced over the past half century that expand the role of the navy and place the Revolution into a broader international context. There have, however, been two notable exceptions to this standard.

In 1994 a direct intellectual descendent of Winston published a long overdue revision of that elder author's original thesis. In "New Orleans, Maritime Commerce, and the Texas War for Independence, 1836",

James M. Denham once again looked at the connection between the United States and Texas through the port city of New Orleans. The nature of this shaky balance between commercial interest and military necessity was once again brought to the fore. Texas was both a facilitator and an inhibitor of trade. By keeping the sea lanes open Texas-New Orleans commerce was allowed to take place, however the Texas Navy's practice of seizing both Mexican and American ships engaged in trade with New Orleans infuriated that city's business elite. Denham argued that New Orleans, as the embarkation point for volunteers from the United States bound for the fight in Texas, became the center of Texan revolutionary activity within the United States. The Texans' tumultuous relationship with New Orleans, it can be argued, was one of the deciding factors in the outcome of the war. Denham's expansion of Winston's original work now sits awaiting its inclusion into a broader synthesis of the war.

In 1998 a seminal work on the Texas maritime experience was published by Richard V. Francaviglia. With *From Sail to Steam: Four Centuries of Texas Maritime History, 1500-1900*, Francaviglia firmly placed Texas within its maritime context. The chapters dealing with the Texas Navy included arguable the best materials produced on the subject to date. The navy is placed not only into its proper context within the war for Texas, but also in the overarching portrait of Texas maritime history as a whole.

The merchant marine is given fair treatment and the trade relationship and diplomatic harangues with other nations are explored. No book on the history of Texas--especially on the subject of the Revolution--should be undertaken without thoughtful study of Francaviglia's work. He has, however, taken up a heavy gauntlet, indeed, for in attempting to return Texas to a maritime context he is forced to smash many idols and disrupt many accepted paradigms. One can only hope that this trend in scholarly revision continues.

Standing as an almost polar opposite to Francaviglia's work is Douglas V. Meed's *The Fighting Texas Navy, 1832-1843*. Published in 2001, this work represents only the fourth major book published on the Texas Navy. Although the work offers a few useful arguments (stated above) in regard to the employment of naval power during the tariff revolts at Anahuac and Galveston, sadly this work is nothing more than a slightly revised version of the "Dienst model". Following the elder author's established timeline Meed expanded upon certain events only marginally. No part of this book dealt with the Texas Navy in its broader context either on the international scene or within the confines of the Revolution itself. The Dienst dichotomy, once again, was fully reinforced. Further, a perusal of Meed's bibliography indicates absolutely no recognition of the work of Winston and many of his intellectual heirs. In short the most promising body of research to be produced over the last century

on the subject of the Texas Navy has been utterly ignored. Sadly this work, intended for the popular audience, clearly represents the gross lack of impact serious scholars of the Texas Navy have had on the study of the subject.

Arguably the Texas Navy is one of the most influential aspects of the Texas Revolution and the subsequent Republican Period to have been almost utterly ignored by scholars. Even historians such as Stephen Hardin, attempting to revise many of our misconceptions of the revolution, fail to grasp the significance of sea power during the struggle. Further, popularizers of the navy's "cause" such as Douglas V. Meed often labor under an outmoded paradigm created almost a century ago. In attempting to revise our understanding of the Texas Revolution one must step beyond the shadows of Alfred Mahan and Alexander Dienst. New models for our understanding of naval operations, as proposed by Kastor, must be taken into account. The work of James Winston and those who have followed in his footsteps such as Denham and Francaviglia are in need of synthesis and expansion. Ultimately what is called for is nothing short of a complete history of the Texas Revolution, tracing its origins from the beginnings of Anglo settlement through the tariff revolts of 1832 and beyond the Battle of San Jacinto on to the closure of the Mexican War.

What scholars have provided us with up to this point is an incomplete picture. The

importance of the land battles in the Texas Revolution have become divorced from the truly important commercial and political pressures that ultimately led to the outcome of the war and the incorporation of Texas into the United States. The Texas maritime experience is the unexplored vehicle for our understanding of these events. Texas must be seen as a player on the international scene and as the dominant force in the Gulf of Mexico throughout this time period in order for a true understanding of the broad significance of the Texas Revolution to be reached. Not merely a regional conflict, the Texas Revolution both directly and indirectly involved a number of nations, commercial and political interests, and a myriad of intrigues rarely touched upon by most scholars. The incorporation of the maritime context into the war for Texas will radically alter how we perceive those events and, in the end, perhaps a more accurate portrayal of them can be created.

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