



John Barry: An American Hero in the Age of Sail

Tim McGrath

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Finalist for the Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison Award for Excellence in Naval Literature

“Ashore as well as at sea, Tim McGrath paints an informative, engaging and highly entertaining portrait of this worthy but neglected hero of American independence. The author shows us a man who was a magnificent embodiment of common sense—and uncommon courage and dedication. That such a work is long overdue makes its achievement all the more pleasurable.”—*Wall Street Journal*

“Combining sophisticated use of sources with a pleasing writing style, McGrath masterfully rescues a father of the U.S. Navy from unmerited eclipse.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“A nearly indispensable addition to U.S. Navy collections.”—*Booklist*

“McGrath employs exemplary narrative style in this work. . . . In *John Barry*, the author adroitly juxtaposes maritime history, narratives of naval combat, and early U.S. social history.”—*New England Quarterly*

“McGrath is a compelling and lucid writer. He brings Barry to life, makes battles understandable, and provides the clearest description of Barry's 1778 capture of the British transport ships *Mermaid* and *Kitty* that this reviewer has seen.”—*Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*

“A great read and an absorbing account of a drama-filled life.”—*Naval History*

“Well researched, well written, and a pleasure to read, this book restores John Barry to the important place he once held as one of our nation's great heroes. It is a tale of high adventure and personal courage and you will not want to put it down.” —JAMES L. NELSON, author of *George Washington's Secret Navy*

“Readers of this vivid biography will imagine they smell the ocean's salt air and the sulfurous fumes of gunpowder as they navigate these action-packed pages. Fans of Horatio Hornblower and Lucky Jack Aubrey will rejoice in discovering their real-life American counterpart.”—GREGORY J. URWIN, author of *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island*

The man regarded as “the Father of the American Navy” returns to the quarterdeck in *John Barry: An American Hero in the Age of Sail*, the first comprehensive biography of this legendary officer in generations. Son of a hardscrabble Irish farmer from County Wexford, Barry was sent to sea as a child, arriving in Philadelphia during the restless decade before the American Revolution. Brave and ambitious, he ascended the ratlines to become a successful merchant captain at a young age, commanding the most prestigious ship in the colonies and recording the fastest known day of sail in the century.

Volunteering to fight for the Continental cause, Barry saw his star rise during the War for Independence. As captain of the Lexington, Raleigh, and Alliance, Barry faced down broadsides, mutinies, and even a fleet of icebergs. He captured the first enemy warship taken by a Continental vessel and fought the last battle of the American Revolution. His hard-won victory over two British warships simultaneously garnered him international notoriety, while his skill as a seafarer and cool temper established Barry as a worthy foe among British captains. Without a ship during the winter of 1776-77, the ever resourceful Barry lead a battery of naval artillery at the battle of Princeton. With peace came a historic voyage to China, where Barry helped open trade with that reclusive empire. In 1794, President Washington named Barry as the first commissioned officer in the new United States Navy. Given the title of commodore, Barry ended his career during America’s naval war with France, teaching the ropes to a new generation of officers, most notably Stephen Decatur.

Drawn from primary source documents from around the world, *John Barry: An American Hero in the Age of Sail* by Tim McGrath brings the story of this self-made American back to life in a major new biography.

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