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**WILLIAM H. WHITE**

American maritime historian and novelist William H. White will publish a sequel to *When Fortune Frowns* this summer. Entitled *Disaster at Gun Bay – A Tale of shipwreck on Grand Cayman*, the book features Edward Ballantyne. “It is based on a true series of events with real people laced with fictitious characters who make the story more than just a straight narrative,” says White. In late January 1794, a 58-ship convoy, escorted by a single Royal Navy frigate, left Port Royal, Jamaica bound for the United Kingdom. Originally captured from France by the Royal Navy in November 1793, the ship was read into the Jamaica squadron as HMS *Convert* shortly thereafter. In the early morning of 8 February 1794, nine merchantmen and the frigate crashed on the reef at Gun Bay, East End Grand Cayman Island. The story is known there as the “Wreck of the Ten Sail.” The novel covers Ballantyne’s departure from England as supernumerary aboard a 64-gun man-of-war to his arrival in Jamaica and the events leading up to his assignment in *Convert*. The story also follows the trial and tribulations of getting the convoy together, manning *Convert*, the brief sail to disaster, and the captain’s court martial.

**NEW BOOK LAUNCH DATES 2013 - 2014**

US (United States)  
UK (United Kingdom)  
TPB (Trade Paperback)  
PB (Paperback)  
HC (Hardcover)

**MAY**

*Take, Burn or Destroy* (USHC)  
by S. Thomas Russell  
Note: The United Kingdom edition was entitled *A Ship of War*

*A Chain of Thunder: A Novel of the Siege of Vicksburg* (USHC)  
by Jeff Shaara

**June**

*Prince of Legend: Crusades Book 3* (UKHC)  
by Jack Ludlow

**AUGUST**

*Jane Austen’s England* (USHC)  
by Roy and Lesley Adkins

**SUMMER**

*The King’s Chameleon* (USHC)  
by Richard Woodman

*Disaster at Gun Bay* (USHC)  
by William H. White

**OCTOBER**

*Caribbee* (UKHC)  
by Julian Stockwin

**NOVEMBER**

*Caribbee* (USHC)  
by Julian Stockwin

**EARLY 2014**

*The Two-Decker* (USHC)  
by Dewey Lambdin

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**PAUL GARNETT**

New England marine artist Paul Garnett is currently researching the Coast Guard operation to save crew members of HMS *Bounty*, which sunk off the North Carolina coast late last October. Garnett says he will re-create the rescue in a painting. The artist sailed aboard the *Bounty* as a shipwright for seven years during the 1980s (see December 2012 *Quarterdeck*).

**ONLINE BOOK SOURCES**

McBooks Press  
www.mcbooks.com

Independent Publisher’s Group (IPG)  
www.ipgbook.com  
Tel 800-888-4741

Fireship Press  
www.fireshippress.com

Amazon  
www.amazon.com or www.amazon.co.uk

Barnes & Noble  
www.barnesandnoble.com

The Book Depository  
www.bookdepository.com

ABE Books  
www.abebooks.com
By George!

Our Red Beacon

It was a late winter day, under scudding gun-metal gray clouds. Looking down the channel from a knoll above South Haven Harbor, the blood-red light tower, with its winking amber lamp, was visible on the pier-head through the mist and fog.

No matter what the season, a visit to the light is restorative. On this bleak morning, the light tower appeared through the gloom, a reminder of brighter times under cerulean skies, catching a light breeze as our wooden cat-ketch Jane Ann cleared the Black River into Lake Michigan.

No matter what the season, my pal Mike Kiefer, who builds classic wooden boats, and I stop by the shore to observe conditions on the lake and to spend a few moments with the light, whether afloat or ashore. It is a year-round ritual.

Over two decades, we have sailed past this light in a variety of craft, including Jane Ann and Mike’s lobster boat, Spartina. Our cruises generally carry us north or south along the lake’s iconic sugar-sand dunes, leaving the red tower in our wakes. Under sail, the only sounds are the water passing down the hull, occasional snaps from wind filling the sails, and our discourse. At times, we simply take pleasure in silence.

In early autumn nearly eighteen years ago, the afternoon after we celebrated my father’s life, we raised the sail on one of Mike’s traditional Whitehall sailing dinghies, passing by the light as we rounded the pier on a starboard tack. It was a time to recall my dad’s love of sailing and the sea.

These many years later, I still sense the tower to port and the breeze on my face. I cherish the bittersweet memory.

Whatever our course, we always relate our position to the light – our red beacon. Once bound for the harbor, we estimate our time of arrival based on the height of the tower in the distance. If we’re under sail, the slant of the wind is factored into our calculations.

Over lunch not too long ago, we chatted about the fascination so many, including ourselves, have for lighthouses. “They’re a beacon,” said Mike. “Not just for mariners, but a symbol for how we live our lives – a guidepost.” I have been drawn to these unique structures since I was a boy growing up on the shores of Lake Superior.

Continued on page 16
James L. Nelson returns to maritime fiction with the launch of *Fin Gall – A Novel of Viking Age Ireland* (see review on page 9), after writing and publishing highly-acclaimed American history for the past seven years. In 2009, Nelson received the prestigious Samuel Eliot Morison Award for Naval Literature for *George Washington’s Secret Navy – How the American Revolution Went to Sea*.

Nelson’s career as a novelist began in the early 1990s, while sailing as third mate aboard the tall ship *Rose*. His first book, *By Force of Arms*, introduced the five-volume *Revolution at Sea Saga* in 1996, which chronicles the exploits of Captain Isaac Biddlecomb in the Continental Navy. The series also includes *The Maddest Idea*, *The Continental Risque*, *Lords of the Ocean* and *All the Brave Fellows*.

The Brethren of the Coast Trilogy (*The Guardship*, *The Blackbirder* and *The Pirate Round*), featuring former pirate Thomas Marlowe, followed the Biddlecomb series. Nelson wrote two novels about the Civil War at Sea (*Glory in the Name* and *Thieves of Mercy*), featuring Confederate Navy Lieutenant Samuel Bowater. *The Only Life That Mattered* is a fictional account of the merry pirate lives of Anne Bonny, Mary Read and Calico Jack Rackham.


In this interview with *Quarterdeck*, Nelson discusses his return to fiction and the current state of publishing:

*A major sea change has taken place in publishing since your first novel was published in 1996. A great many brick-and-mortar book shops have closed, with*
the advent of online book selling. Publishers seem less inclined to take on first-time or unknown authors, while many previously published writers are turning to self-publishing, a growing segment of the book trade. What is your take on where things are headed?

For years now, the music industry has been going through wild changes, and I think a lot of us in publishing looked on smugly, since our venerable old industry wasn’t going to change. For example, we’ve been talking about e-readers for years, but for all the talk of the demise of the printed page it never seemed like anything ever happened. But now the ol’ chickens have come home to roost, and publishing is enduring some incredible shake-ups. Book stores are going away, and not just independents. Don’t forget that the behemoth Borders shut its doors, and the latest news is that Barnes & Noble is on shaky ground. And that is in a large part due to e-readers, mainly that B&N invested so much in their Nook reader, but it is being crushed by Amazon’s Kindle (let me apologize here and say it’s possible not every Quarterdeck reader is as interested in the minutia of the publishing industry as I am, but you did ask) I personally don’t have a big book store within forty miles of my home (may not seem like a big deal to people who live out west, but here in New England we call that a long way!)

Part of the problem with all this, I’m not sure now how people discover new books, I don’t think you can really browse on-line in any meaningful way. That’s going to make personal recommendations more important, especially as book reviews are also going away. With the increase in self-publishing, the old gatekeepers are becoming irrelevant, but, not to sound like a snob, there is sometimes something to be said for gatekeepers. With so many books coming on the market, and a lot of the traditional means of separating wheat from chaff disappearing it means the market is even more diluted. It’s never been easy to make a living or anything like a living as a writer, and now it is harder still. Writers and publishers make less money on e-books, though it is possible that increased volume will make up for that. Who knows? I think that is really the leitmotif of publishing today. Who knows? It’s pretty unsettling. Though I think a lot of people in a lot of industries are going through the same thing.

_After two successful nautical fiction series – the Revolution at Sea Saga and the Brethren of the Coast Trilogy – you turned to popular early American history with your writing. What led you to leave historical fiction?_

There were a couple of things that led me into nonfiction. It was something I had wanted to try and had a chance to ghostwrite a nonfiction book, which I thought was a great opportunity because if I screwed it up then my name wasn’t on it (as to the name of the book, I could tell you, but then I would have to kill you and your many readers, and I’ve come to like too many of them to do that). I enjoyed the process of writing straight history, so very different from fiction. I then did my _Monitor_ and _Merrimack_ book, _Reign of Iron_, which I also enjoyed. In some ways it is easier to sell nonfiction both to editors and readers – it’s a less subjective thing, taste-wise. It’s also easier to promote nonfiction, as you can get on shows such as C-SPAN’s Book TV. At the same time, there seemed to be a feeling in trade publishing that there was no market for historical fiction aimed primarily at a male audience, which is how the folks in New York view Age of Fighting Sail fiction. You could write ten books a year about Ann Boleyn and they would all sell, but throw in a ship and a few rolling broadsides and no one cared. I don’t think that was ever the case – I think there always was and is an real readership for historical fiction, and maritime fiction in particular, but it got to be harder to convince the guys that write the checks of that.

You recently self-published _Fin Gall: A Novel of the Viking Age Ireland – your first novel in several years – which is set during the Viking Age. As a previously published novelist and historian, why did you choose this path to publication?_

This new endeavor was in part a result of some of the things I was mentioning earlier, the wild changes going on in the publishing world. I think a certain path to oblivion is to sit around hoping things will go back the way they were. They won’t. And self-
publishing is a trend that is developing and more and more becoming a path that established writers are taking. I had written *Fin Gall* a few years ago and for some reason could never find a publisher, which surprised me, because I at least thought it was a good book, and so did my wife, or at least she would have if she ever read it. So I thought, “I have this completed novel here, I’ve been intrigued by this new trend in publishing, why not give it a go?” The logical follow-up question would be, would I write a book specifically for self publishing? And that will depend on the outcome of the *Fin Gall Experiment* (doesn’t that sound like the title of a Robert Ludlum novel?)

**What attracted you to the Viking Age, rather than another historical period?**

I’ve always loved Vikings. I’m Swedish on my father’s side, so I think it’s in the blood. When I was a kid I read some Viking novels, might have been Henry Treece’s trilogy, I really can’t remember, but they always stuck with me. I’ve read a number of novels about Vikings since and was actually pretty well up on the subject, though I had never considered writing a novel. Then one day, the character of Thorgrim Night Wolf just popped into my head. That was it, just an image of a Viking and a name, and I started to wonder who he was and what he might be doing. So I thought and I read and I let my mind wander over the character, which is really how books come about. And once there was enough there to consider writing a book, then I became more focused, researching the specific time and place the book would be set, hashing out the plot-line in a more conscious way until the book was there and only had to be written down. This book was a lot of fun to write. I’d love to do a follow-up. So, it’s all hands to your Kindles! Let the downloading commence! (oh, yeah, paperback copies are also available).

How did you develop the storyline, along with the characters in *Fin Gall*?

As I said, Thorgrim just came into my head, the same way Isaac Biddlecomb had twenty years ago. I played around with that character, got to know him better, and then when I had a sense for him, I started letting my mind wander over the others. I have a son who is about Harold’s age, and I liked that idea of playing with the relationship between father and son and how a father’s love for his son might play out in the brutal world of a Viking raiding voyage. Plot and character tend to develop together. As the story is fleshed out, you start to see what people you will need to make it work, and start thinking about who they are. When I’m considering a character I will often purposely reject the first thought that comes to mind, since that is by definition the most obvious, and go for something a little more unexpected. That, for instance, is precisely what made Johnny Depp’s Jack Sparrow work so well – it was entirely unexpected, this sort of fey pirate, and we are now cursed with every pirate yahoo wannabe wearing mascara, still Depp created a great and unique character. I like to think Ornolf the Restless, ostensible leader of the Vikings in *Fin Gall* is like that. I hope readers will agree he is not exactly the very model of Viking chieftain.

Did delving into ancient history for *Fin Gall* present any unique challenges in comparison to your earlier fiction?

The further back you go, historically, the harder the research becomes, because the less we know. I could drive five minutes from my home and be inside a house that was standing when George Washington was alive. We do readings of the Declaration of Independence every Fourth of July at the same Meeting House at which it was read in Harpswell in 1776. But there are no structures left from the Viking era, or 800s Ireland, and it’s very hard to know what they looked like. We’ve got a pretty good idea of the clothing and weapons and ships, which helps, but much of the social history, how people lived their daily lives, is conjecture. Language presents its own unique problems. If I’m writing about the American Revolution, I am trying to replicate the way they spoke. With a book like *Fin Gall*, I’m not trying to replicate the language because they would have been speaking Norse and Gaelic. Instead I’m trying to write English in a way that suggests medieval speech, and trying to walk a line between not sounding too modern and anachronistic on the
one hand, and on the other avoiding the “Foresooth! Methinks this speech doth reek of great Silliness!” pitfall.

After several years spent researching and writing popular history, are you returning to historical fiction?

I may be going back to fiction. I’ve been talking with a former editor about just that. I guess I’m half-way through a mid-career course correction (though as my darling daughter said a few years back, when I was telling her about something I would like to do in the future “Oh, Dad, your life is practically over!”) I say half-way because I’ve decided that a course change is needed, but I’m not sure what the new heading will be. This is due in part to the changes going on in the industry, in part because I have this editor who might be interested in fiction, and in part due to various other circumstances. I love fiction, it was my first interest in the writing world, and I would love to go back to it. It’s funny how I have some readers who only like the fiction, some who only like the nonfiction and some who like both. Mostly, I hope, readers who like both.

Writing history, you are basically held to facts about historical figures and events as they occurred, according to contemporary documents. How do you develop historical fiction plots that reflect facts to make your stories credible with readers?

Historical fiction always has to be built on a bedrock of historical fact. If your readers don’t think you know what you’re talking about, or skimped on the research, then you’ve lost them. To properly build this fictitious world, you have to know as much about it as you can. For me, I start with the historic world – the social history, the clothes, language, houses, towns, food, all those parts of the world – and then decide if the story itself will follow actual historical events or be more or less made up of whole cloth. The Biddlecomb books, and my Civil War novels, for instance, closely follow actual history, I’ve put my characters into real historical events. In that instance I need to know not just the social history, but also the history of the events, what happened, for instance, when the Americans took Nassau (and see I was so determined to get it right that my wife and I undertook the hardship of a trip to Nassau to research!) or what was it like at the Civil War battle at New Orleans. For books like the Marlowe series or Fin Gall I will research the events surrounding the time and place, the story itself is made up out of whole cloth. Thus the Vikings did in fact raid Ireland and settle in Dublin, that’s all true, as are my descriptions of Viking-age Ireland, but the story is all fiction. Those are really two separate approaches to historical fiction, either valid, but both depend on getting the underlying facts right.

Do you have a preference for writing either history or historical fiction?

As I mentioned before, the two are entirely different animals, as much as they might seem similar on the surface. Each presents its own challenge. With fiction you’re trying to create believable characters. With nonfiction you are looking at real people and trying to burrow down through their writings and their actions and discover who they really are. Both processes are enjoyable. Nonfiction takes a lot more research, but doing that work and having the truth of some historical event slowly materialize in front of you is a great thing. The one challenge they have in common is that the stories have to be compelling, the pages have to turn. To that extent, nonfiction is more of a challenge since you can’t manipulate the story to make it more gripping. Actually, that’s not true. You can manipulate the story, you just can’t make any of it up. That’s the real challenge – telling the story completely and accurately in the most compelling way possible.

When do you prefer to write?

I write in the mornings, before the considerations of the day have my head clogged up. That said, I’m not a morning person. I know some writers like Bill Hammond talk about getting to work at 5:00 AM or some ungodly hour like that. I can’t do that, I’d be face down on the keyboard. But I try to be writing by 8:00.

Do you write in a particular place?

I have an office in my house, with
my files and reference library right within reach. It’s far enough removed from the rest of the house that it’s quiet, despite having four kids at home. Well, sort of quiet, anyway.

Are you disciplined enough to adhere to a specific writing schedule?

I’ve always tried to keep to a page minimum per day, five pages, if I’m writing fiction, two or three if I’m writing nonfiction. I don’t always make it, but that’s what I shoot for, and I generally do pretty well.

What else you would like to share with your readers?

I’d like to thank my readers for the terrific level of support they’ve given me specifically and maritime fiction in general over the years. And that goes to you as well, George, and all you have done for the genre. I’m sure there are no readers naïve enough to think that any publisher puts this stuff out for the sheer love of the genre. It’s a business and publishers will publish the books they think they can make money on. For that reason, it’s the support of readers that will assure that good quality naval and maritime fiction will continue to be published. Historical fiction fans of the world, unite!


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**Fin Gall**

by James L. Nelson

CreateSpace, $12.99, Trade Paperback / $2.99 Kindle

The longship Red Dragon struggles against mountainous seas, with penetrating cold spray sweeping across her open decks. It is 852 A.D. Ornolf the Restless, “roaring drunk,” clings to the wooden neck in the bow, “his beard drenched and matted until it looked like seaweed.” As the tempest strengthens, the Viking chieftain howls to the Norse god Thor, “This the best you can do!? It will take a damned site more than this to kill Ornolf!”

At this I was hooked by Fin Gall, sailing aboard the Red Dragon, bound for the Viking longphort (shore fortress) called Dubh-Linn in Ireland with Ornolf, Thorgrim Night Wolf and his son, Harald. Slipping back to another time in a Nelson adventure has been a pleasure since I discovered his first novel, By Force of Arms, in our local independent book shop nearly two decades ago.

In Fin Gall, James L. Nelson vividly re-creates the dangerous and often violent world Norsemen brought about as they sailed their longships from Scandinavia to lands south and east, initially plundering and later building settlements, despite fervent opposition to these intrusions from local inhabitants. England and Ireland were well within reach of the longships and fell prey to the marauding Vikings.

As Red Dragon approaches southern Ireland, the Fin Gall (a Gaelic term describing Vikings of Norwegian descent or “white strangers”) chance upon an Irish ship. After a brief battle, they capture the vessel’s only prize – a golden crown – which thrusts the Norsemen into a violent struggle between Irish kings and rival Danish Vikings seeking to rule the island.

Nelson, a master storyteller and experienced tall ship seaman, knows Vikings and the Middle Ages. Once started, Fin Gall is a page-turner, as Ornolf and Thorgrim and their band face death along the craggy Irish coast and behind every stand of trees. The clang of swords reverberates off the pages as the Norsemen advance across the rugged terrain in search of a solution to the mystery surrounding the precious crown. This tale is highly recommended.

George Jepson
V. E. Ulett

INSPIRED BY 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY JOURNALS AND LETTERS

CAPTAIN BLACKWELL’S PRIZE – a romantic sea adventure set during the Napoleonic Wars – is California-based V. E. Ulett’s debut novel (see review on page 12).

Ulett says eighteenth and nineteenth century journals and letters were inspirations for the book.

The author, who is presently finishing the sequel to Captain Blackwell’s Prize, shares her story with Quarterdeck in this recent interview:

Were books an important part of your world as a young girl? Were there particular authors and genres that were your favorites?

As a youngsters I read almost exclusively nineteenth century authors; Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and, most particularly, Jane Austen. Contrary to the impression the scenes with the fictional Jane Austen in Captain Blackwell’s Prize might suggest, I have the greatest respect and admiration for her, and I’ve read her letters and much about her life.

What drew you to write historical fiction and, particularly, nautical fiction?

A love of reading and the genre. I read all the Hornblower novels, and then I read somewhere that Patrick O’Brian was the Jane Austen of nautical fiction. That did it for me, I read all twenty of the incomparable Aubrey/ Maturin series (several times), and much of Patrick O’Brian’s other fiction and non-fiction, including his Joseph Banks: A Life. I’m currently reading his Picasso: A Biography. Samuel Johnson and Patrick O’Brian are literary heroes of mine. There are homages to O’Brian in Captain Blackwell’s Prize; for one, anytime a character begins a sentence with the word “which.”
What most appeals to you about the early nineteenth century in which Captain Blackwell’s Prize takes place?

I think the class and social structure in England and Europe in the early nineteenth century is convenient for a novelist, because there were clear cultural and social norms. Society was structured such that a woman, with no legal status of her own, had to marry or count upon the protection of a father or brother. These societal expectations form a framework for a writer, as opposed to contemporary times where there are no or few norms, in the Western world. I’m fascinated by the wooden world of the Royal Navy of that time, and how isolated the ships were when at sea. There was no communication with shore and the ship’s captain had to make immediate decisions without reference to a superior commander. In the beginning of the novel when Captain Blackwell attacks the Spanish treasure ship La Trinidad, a series of events are set in motion that he didn't anticipate, and that challenge his notions of honor, duty, and social class.

How did you research Captain Blackwell’s Prize?

The story takes place in 1802, a not so very distant time period, and there are good primary source materials written by nineteenth century ship captains, and their wives, describing their lives and how they felt about their circumstances and events round them. Here are just a few of these books: Augustus Hervey’s Journal, Five Naval Journals 1789 – 1817, and The Wynne Diaries 1789 – 1820.

Some reviewers of Captain Blackwell’s Prize have commented about the unlikelihood of women aboard men-of-war, but the books listed above and contemporary accounts and letters tell a different story. Royal Navy captains sometimes carried their wives and mistresses, with and without official sanction. And many nationalities were represented aboard Royal Navy vessels, particularly during war time. Captain Blackwell’s Prize is set during a conflict that lasted close to twenty years.

What was the genesis for your protagonist, Captain James Blackwell?

I suppose Captain Blackwell is a composite of what I’ve learned of sea captains of that day. I read two biographies and parts of the autobiography of Lord Cochrane. One reviewer called Blackwell an “Aubrey-Ish” character. I already acknowledged my indebtedness to Patrick O’Brian, who based some of his main character’s exploits on the life of Lord Cochrane. Mercedes also is a composite of Latin women I’ve known, who may be small and unassuming, but have steel in their backbones.

Do you plot out your novels before beginning to write?

I have an idea of the story arc, and one or two scenes firmed up when I begin to write. But the connective tissue and the whole tale is the work part, the invention.

How do you name your characters?

The main characters’ names were just ones that I liked and thought sounded well. There is cultural diversity in the character names, and fortunately in my non-author business life I handle a fair amount of international business with exposure to names and proper spellings from many regions, including Arab and Spanish. I’m guilty of naming secondary characters after friends and family. Fortunately for me none of them feel I’m accusing them of having been alive in 1802; this last was a quick witted remark made by my editor when I asked his opinion of what I feared was a questionable practice. Some names I also gleaned from reading primary source material from the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most ship names I used were actual ships in commission, chosen for their bearing on the story.

Do you write the sort of story you would like to read, or do you write strictly for readers?

Is that one of those work to live or live to work questions? I write stories I’d like to read. I think one of the primary duties of fiction is to entertain.

Royal Navy captains sometimes carried their wives and mistresses, with and without official sanction.”
me is ongoing. I write every day, or I work on some part of the process; editing, audio book edition recording and production (very time consuming). Book marketing doesn’t count as working time.

**Please describe where you write?**

In an office bedroom of a small old house, surrounded by books piled even upon the floor. I should like to go out like Pushkin, looking at books and saying “Goodbye, my friends.” Without the duel and the gut wound, of course.

**Will there be a sequel to Captain Blackwell’s Prize?**

Yes. *Blackwell’s Paradise* takes Captain Blackwell and Mercedes into the Pacific ocean and the world of early nineteenth century exploration. A world where betrayal and danger lurk round every coral atoll.

**Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?**

I had always planned a trifecta of sea stories, and then I believed I would return to dry land. But the combination of a great title my father recently suggested, and a first-hand account I had just read of an extraordinary act of piracy, planted the seed of a fourth sea-going tale. It may be just a short fiction, and I hope readers will indulge me so far. Also, I will be attending and presenting at the Historical Novel Society 2013 Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida, June 21-23.

Visit V. E. Ulett online at [www.veulett.com](http://www.veulett.com).

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**Review**

**Captain Blackwell’s Prize**

by V. E. Ulett

*Fireship Press, $19.95, Trade Paperback / $8.50, Kindle / $9.50, NOOK*

His Britannic Majesty’s 28-gun frigate *Inconstant*, en route to Gibraltar, encounters the Spanish heavy frigate *La Trinidad*, carrying 42 guns, off the Portuguese coast. A pitched battle ensues, with the smaller, more nimble British ship, commanded by Captain James Blackwell, quickly gaining the upper hand, raking the Spaniard with broadside after broadside.

Laying alongside *La Trinidad*, the *Inconstants* swarm aboard, and capture the ship. During the melee, the Spanish captain is killed. Although the Spaniard vessel is badly battered, Captain Blackwell soon learns there are two valuable prizes, chests laden with a fortune in gold and the late Spanish captain’s beautiful mistress, Doña Mercedes de Aragon.

V. E. Ulett deftly sets the stage for a romantic adventure reminiscent of Horatio Hornblower’s amorous affairs, with a swiftly paced narrative. Ulett’s understanding of naval life in the days of wooden ships underscores an engaging story line with historical authenticity.

Once underway with *La Trinidad* survivors aboard and the treasure safely stowed, *Inconstant* is bound for the British naval base at Gibraltar and action in the Mediterranean. Not surprisingly, Blackwell is attracted to Mercedes, while she is initially a bit more introspective about her immediate future.

Weighing anchor, *Inconstant* sails into action, while impassioned tension builds between Blackwell and Mercedes. Treachery among the ship’s officers, a battle against Barbary pirates, a kidnapping and a rescue mission to the North African coast provide enough adventurous twists and turns for anyone who delights in a lively sea story, spiced with a fine flavor of the period.

**George Jepson**
Joanthan Kincaid Adventures
By Michael Winston

1 - Independent Action
(CreateSpace, $14.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle) Independent Action introduces Lieutenant Jonathan Kincaid aboard the American frigate Randolph of 32 guns, blockaded in the port of Philadelphia during the winter of 1776-1777. Tasked with orders to undertake independent action in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic against a formidable British convoy, the “Lucky Randy” manages to elude enemy warships long enough to transform her crew, from crusty boatswain O’Toole to teenage midshipman Billy Weatherby, into an effective fighting force.

2 - Uprising
(CreateSpace, $15.95, US trade paperback / $8.99, Kindle) Jonathon Kincaid’s daring and proficiency are tested to the limit when he is given command of the 12-gun brig Swift. Ordered to deliver a diplomat bearing a copy of the Declaration of Independence to the Dutch free port of St. Eustatia in the Caribbean, his mission seems easy enough. But why have the vessel taken on over 100 muskets and heavy weapons? All Kinkaid is told is that he must assist a major of marines with a secret assignment that takes them to the wet, steaming jungle island of Dominica, inhabited by cannibalistic Carib Indians. Kinkaid must also gain information of pirate activity in the Caribbean.

3 - Hazardous Duty
(CreateSpace, $14.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle) Jonathan Kinkaid takes command of the 18-gun sloop of war Ranger, tasked with scouting duties for the Continental Fleet. Braving the foul and frigid weather of northern waters, Kinkaid must contend with an inexperienced crew, a badly leaking ship, and personality clashes among senior officers, one of them being the bold and aggressive John Paul Jones, in command of the Continental frigate Alfred. After taking valuable prizes off the shores of Long Island and Nova Scotia, the American Fleet is dogged by a large and powerful British force.

4 - Tidings of Victory
(CreateSpace, $14.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle) American Navy Captain Jonathan Kincaid and his seagoing patriots take the news of the great victory over the British at Saratoga to Benjamin Franklin in Paris. The plot thickens when Kinkaid is reunited with characters from the earlier novels. Filled with spies and saboteurs, intrigue and villainy, this masterfully written tale is another triumph of high-seas adventure, as a more confident and newly married Kinkaid wrestles with his own demons and enemies of the cause. This installment contains everything from the sound of cannon fire in ship-to-ship battles to a bold rescue mission of American seamen from an English prison, and much more.
The Only Life That Mattered
by James L. Nelson

(McBooks Press, $24.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle / $8.99, NOOK) Fed up with an outlaw existence, Calico Jack Rackam swears off the pirate life, until he meets Anne Bonny, a woman who would as soon stab a man as give him a good tumble — that is, unless he’s a pirate. Soon Jack finds himself out on the high seas, with Anne by his side and his men spoiling for action. And when they capture a Dutch merchant ship, they pick up an unlikely crew mate, an expert sword fighter and topmast seaman who is secretly a woman named Mary. Together, Jack, Anne, and Mary cut a bold swath through the West Indies, stealing naval sloops, plundering rich merchant ships and choosing to live a life of freedom — the only life that mattered.

"Nelson's portrayal of the pirate menace and its unique seagoing society is thorough, accurate, colorful, and utterly convincing, providing a full broadside of reading entertainment."
—Publishers Weekly

Between Two Fires
by Nicholas Nicastro

(McBooks Press, $16.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle) In this novel about John Paul Jones, Nicholas Nicastro tells the story of America’s first naval hero during the prime of his spectacular yet tragic career. Commanding his small, bitterly divided squadron deep into enemy waters, Jones must master both the opposition and himself as he joins the battle that will seal his fame. Meanwhile, his former comrade, John Severence, confronts another, more ominous brand of warfare on the frontiers of colonial New York. Both men are transformed in the crucible of combat, courage, and wartime folly.


Flashman and the Seawolf
by Robert Brightwell

(FeedaRead.com, $13.95, US trade paperback / $2.99, Kindle and NOOK) Following the popularity of the memoirs of Harry Flashman, the Victorian scoundrel who got himself embroiled in many events of his age, this book introduces a new generation of the family: Thomas Flashman, whose career covers the Napoleonic and Georgian era. This first book covers his adventures with Thomas Cochrane, one of the most extraordinary naval commanders of all time. From the brothels and gambling dens of London, through political intrigues and espionage, the action moves to the Mediterranean and the real life character of Thomas Cochrane. This book covers the start of Cochrane’s career including the most astounding single ship action of the Napoleonic war. Thomas Flashman provides a unique insight as danger stalks him like a persistent bailiff through a series of adventures that prove history really is stranger than fiction.

Flashman and the Cobra
by Robert Brightwell

(FeedaRead.com, $14.95, US trade paperback / $2.99, Kindle and NOOK) This is the second story of Thomas Flashman, who shares many of the Flashman family traits, particularly the ability to find himself at the sharp end of major events of his age. This installment takes him to territory familiar to readers of his nephew’s adventures, India, during the second Mahratta war. It also includes an illuminating visit to Paris during the Peace of Amiens in 1802. As you might expect, Flashman is embroiled in treachery and scandal from the outset and, despite his very best endeavors, is often in the thick of the action. He intrigues with generals, warlords, fearless warriors, nomadic bandit tribes, highland soldiers and not least a four-foot-tall former Nautch dancer in India, who led the only Mahratta troops to leave the battlefield of Assaye in good order.
The Halfhyde Adventures
by Philip McCutcheon

1 - Halfhyde at the Bight of Benin
(McBooks Press, $18.95, US trade paperback / $9.99, Kindle / $8.99, Nook) It’s the 1890s. Royal Navy Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde finds himself out of favor with the Navy and on half-pay ashore when he is summoned to the Admiralty. His mission: to sail to the Bight of Benin in West Africa and spy on the not-so-secret Russian presence there. As a Russian speaker who is familiar with Benin, Halfhyde is confident he’s the man for the job – until he runs into Admiral Prince Gorsinski, his former jailer.

2 - Halfhyde’s Island
(McBooks Press, $18.95, US trade paperback / $9.99, Kindle / $8.99, NOOK) Royal Navy Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde is assigned a second in command of the heavy cruiser Viceroy and ordered to a volcanic island which has recently surfaced in the north Pacific. The Admiralty hopes to claim the island for the Crown and establish an outpost there, but the hostile Russians have other ideas and the wily Japanese are prepared to carry out their own agenda. As the naval powers converge, Halfhyde once again faces Prince Gorsinski.

3 - Halfhyde and the Guns of Arrest
(McBooks Press, $19.95, US trade paperback / $9.99, Kindle / $8.99, Nook) It’s high noon for the British Empire. Royal Navy Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde is once again dispatched to Africa. This time his mission is to help capture a British traitor who carries secret blueprints of British warships. Assisted by a Scotland Yard detective and a handful of sailors, Halfhyde must outwit the clever Germans, who are determined to take the traitor and his secrets back to the Fatherland.

4 - Halfhyde to the Narrows
(McBooks Press, $13.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle / $8.99, Nook) With a ship to call his own at last, Royal Navy Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde sails for the Dardanelles in command of the little torpedo-boat Vendetta, part of a flotilla sent to rescue a British sailing ship unlawfully detained by the Russians. Cutting out the ship from amidst the Russian fleet and sneaking her back through the Narrows under the deadly batteries of the Turks and the Russians is the easy part. Facing Gorsinski’s vengeance is another matter!

5 - Halfhyde for the Queen
(McBooks Press, $19.95, US trade paperback / $7.99, Kindle / $8.99, Nook) In Andalusia, Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde is sent by the unpredictable Captain Watkiss on a secret mission ashore: to aid the Queen’s messenger who is being pursued by nefarious Spanish agents. But when Halfhyde discovers a plot to kill Queen Victoria herself, the stakes are raised. Now he and the rest of his flotilla must face down the Spanish Navy and get the messenger back to Britain with vital information.

6 - Halfhyde Ordered South
(McBooks Press, $14.95, US trade paperback / $9.99, Kindle / $8.99, Nook) Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde and the irascible Captain Watkiss steam south in the old iron-clad Meridian on route to her new home in the Chilean Navy. Using the transfer of the ship as cover, Halfhyde and Watkiss are on a covert operation to protect British interests in South America from the encroaching Germans. Soon Halfhyde has an added mission: he must help a detective from the Metropolitan Police track down and intercept a traitorous civil servant.

7 - Halfhyde on Zanatu
(McBooks Press, $17.95, US trade paperback / $9.99, Kindle / $8.99, Nook) All is not well on Zanatu. The idyllic Polynesian island is in rebellion and the British Navy sends Lieutenant St Vincent Halfhyde to find out why. Halfhyde steams to investigate, braving typhoons and coral reefs along the way. But things go from bad to worse once he steps foot on the island, as angry natives armed with guns assault the British sailors. The natives swear allegiance to a mysterious god named John Frumm, who promises wealth and prosperity.
The Marquette Lighthouse, which is now painted a dark red like the South Haven Light, was a two-story yellow-brick building, with a tower rising on the front. On days when fog would envelope the community, we were serenaded by a two foghorns emitting two separate deep baritone notes, alerting townsfolk and vessels in the vicinity of the danger.

Modern technology has rendered these once proud sentinels obsolete for commercial shipping and recreational boaters, with GPS navigation systems. Thankfully, there are groups like the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association, who are committed to collecting and disseminating the histories of the lakes’ lighthouses and their keepers, as well as preserving the structures.

All along the shores of the Great Lakes, these wonderful reminders of a time now past draw enthusiasts from spring until the snows fall in late autumn. Along Michigan’s western shore, lighthouses abound every few miles.

Every time I sail past the South Haven Light, I think of my great-grandfather traversing these same waters in the 1870s aboard his 67-foot schooner, Mamie Jepson, named for his wife. In those days, a white wooden tower greeted vessels. The “new” tower – our red beacon – was raised in 1903.