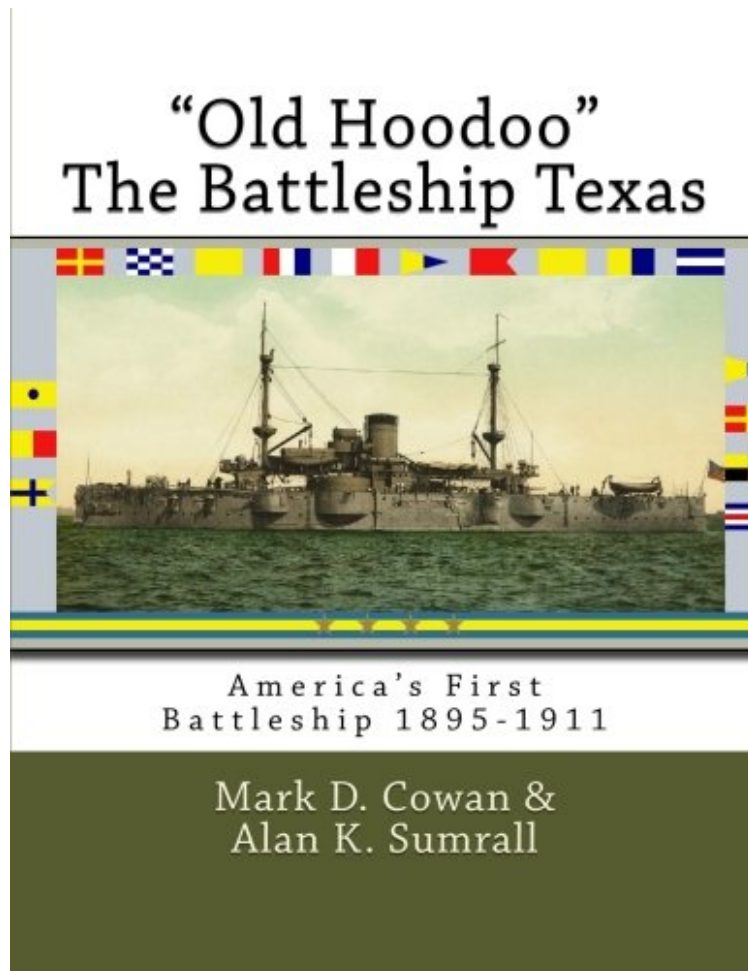


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Mark D. Cowan, Alan K. Sumrall

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised "Old Hoodoo" The Battleship Texas: America's First Battleship 1895-1911:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Historiacly Important but Often IgnoredSship.By George T AtwoodThe value of this book is in the massive amount of period documentation of many aspects of this historically important but often ignored ship. A book to just sit down and read, it is not, but this fact doesn't reduce it's potential to anybody with a strong interest in the ships of the American "Steel Navy." The book's greatest weakness, from my point of view, is that it contains a lot of information tangential to the ship, itself, much of which is available elsewhere, and very little about the ship's internal arrangements, apart from guns, engines, and bridge. There are some general ship plans, but they are so small as to be not very usable. This lack is especially unfortunate in that some of the

drawings showing gun location suggest that the authors had access to much better, large scale plans than they included in the book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book is not what it seems to be - it's much, much, MUCH more! By T. Stibal I had noted this book as being there for the taking for quite a while, but had hesitated picking up a copy, seeing the paper bound designation and figuring that it was just another "potted history" of the ship offered up by Osprey. However, I saw a reference somewhere else to an obscure detail concerning the ship, and figured that the under a double sawbuck price was worth it just to see what it had to say. There's just not that much there on the war, and any additional information on the topic is always welcomed. (I also found it interesting that I had never seen a copy before, despite frequent scanning of the Osprey pile for any interesting topics.) What I was sent was a bulky, large format paper-bound book, containing all of four hundred and eleven pages of information. However, not all of it pertains to the USS Texas (edition #1) - indeed, it would be hard to write an account of a single ship that would stretch to that length, at least one not stuffed with anecdotal details about the chief yeoman's love life. And, that is exactly NOT what the authors have provided. True, the detailed history of Old Hoodoo is here in spades, and written in a combination of photographs and drawings combined with narrative text. But, don't make the mistake of considering this to be just another picture book, a type all too common when dealing with military topics. A couple of years ago, I bought (and promptly returned) what I call a "Wikipedia book" on an obscure Japanese armored personnel carrier from the World War II period. In it, the oddly named "authors" had collected just about every detail pertaining to Imperial Japan, from the Sino-Japanese War to the history of Hino Motors (a firm not involved in any way with the vehicle), but only two pages on the actual topic - the same paragraphs of which had already been included in the ad for the book on .com. I wrote a scathing review, which can be found in the body of reviews that I've written, but with the title of the book deleted - clever protection of your profit makers, .com. That said, this book is NOT the same. What Mark and Alan have concocted here is an omnibus collection of facts surrounding a relatively obscure topic. And, that said, I find that the book has as much value in what is off of the direct topic (USS Texas, first edition) as what is on it. The USS Texas was the first "modern" US warship of the modern era. Built to a British design, the ship had a long gestation period, this due to the limitations of US industries at the time. The various components of the ship, as they are assembled in the long, complicated process of the ship's fabrication, are covered, but not just in the "here is a gun, there is a boiler" fashion of most books on warships. While not quite up to the details offered in the Norman Friedman book on the engineering behind US battleships, this book makes up for it in spades by publishing (again, sourced from obscure magazines of the era, or from long-out-of-print issues of magazines like Warship International) both text and illustrations of the technology involved. There aren't any great engineering concepts developed here - for a detailed understanding of the vertical triple expansion (VTE) steam engine, you'll still have to look elsewhere. But, as far as the installation of such a plant in the USS Texas, and the horrible problems encountered with this "first example" of modern warship design, it's all there, complete with comprehensive diagrams. (More than this, if you are so enamored of the ugly duckling that was the USS Texas (first edition), you have the option to purchase a set of large scale drawings of the ship through a mail order program. A nice touch, that.) So, there's a lot here about the Texas, from the armament design and modifications (complete with comprehensive drawings) to the life of the ship's mascot. About what you would expect from a book on the ship, after all. But wait - there's more - far, FAR more. What Alan and Mark have delivered here is a comprehensive graphic history of the ship and its milieu. You get the history line of the naval campaign of the Spanish American War. You get a capsule history of each of the Texas's officers, even including a rundown on the court marshal of the ship's chaplain. You get a detailed examination of the electrical systems installed in the ship, including a detailed drawing and explanation of the primitive electrical range-finding system (based upon a similar one used by the US coast artillery), down to the operation of its individual receivers scattered at the ship's gunnery emplacements. That last alone was enough for me to order a second copy of the book (which I intend to have hard-bound, as a permanent reference volume) But, there's a lot more. For example, you get a detailed examination (more detailed than I've seen in most books and articles on the topic) of the Texas's opponents at the Battle of Santiago. You get a detailed (with drawings as well as text) examination of the weapons included on the Spanish ships, down to some very minor details on the gun mounts. (This book answered a question about the secondary weapons on the Spanish armored cruisers that has been troubling me for many years, one that none of the enthusiasts who read and write for the Warship International magazine were able to answer. Again, more than worth the money that I paid for my two copies.) You get a capsule analysis of torpedo theory and practice at the time of the Spanish American War - better done and more concise than in any of the books on the automotive torpedo that are out there today. You get to read about the problems with early automatic cannon, and why we aren't sure if any of them were on the ship during the Yankoo-Spanko War. True, the book is published on less than ideal media - the photographs don't come through as well as they would have on gloss paper like you would find in a Naval Institute book. But, much of what is included here is in the form of drawings - patent drawings, drawings from plans, and drawings from early magazines like Scientific American, which back in the day was far more interested in warships and weaponry. They reproduce very well on the paper chosen. In the end, this is a book that (while not in the strict, scholarly traditions of the likes of Norman Friedman) is a very important addition to the modern (i.e., available to the masses) body of work on the Spanish American War. If you want to learn about the USS

Texas (first edition), get this book. If you want to learn about the Spanish fleet circa 1898, get this book. If you want an easily accessible text on naval warfare at the turn of the previous century, get this book. Hell, if you want to learn about the USS Maine, the contemporary ship that served alongside of the USS Texas (when they were both operational) get this book - there's more here on the ill-fated ship than in most books about the Maine. Too bad the authors couldn't have coaxed a higher quality edition from a more-enabled publisher. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Comprehensive Text Marred by Poor Image Reproduction By Anthony Nigrelli The amount of research that went into this detailed monograph on the USS Texas is impressive. The ship is described in great detail, from conception to the final breakup of the wreck. Unfortunately, the book has one great flaw: poor quality paper and low-resolution, heavily pixellated image reproduction. Yes, there are plans, photographs, reproductions of period postcards, line drawings, and other illustrations liberally sprinkled throughout the work, but unfortunately, they are VERY poorly reproduced. If you're looking for a thorough service history of the Texas, this book certainly fills the bill. If you're scratchbuilding a large scale model of the Texas and looking for clear, high-resolution photographs and plans reproduced on glossy, fine-quality paper, forget about it.

The Texas was early-on considered something of an ugly duckling in the Navy, often characterized as a clumsy "hoodoo", or jinxed ship. Her service in the Spanish American War proved her to be a late bloomer, an odd-looking ship that met the challenges of combat and served her nation well as a critical step in the development of the New Navy. Perhaps being seen as the least valuable battleship in the Navy and therefore the most expendable, the Texas found herself in the enviable position of seeing more action than any other capital vessel in the US Fleet. The Texas shone in every engagement in which she was committed. She took part in the search for the Spanish fleet. She also participated in the first significant independent Marine Corps action in history when she provided critical support in their capture of Guantanamo Bay. She then provided support to the Army in the invasion of Cuba and the subsequent investiture of Santiago, engaging a number of Spanish forts in the process. Off Santiago, she took the first hit by an enemy gun and the first combat death for the Navy, being struck by enemy shells in two different actions. At the Naval Battle of Santiago she steamed aggressively forward into the thick of battle and directly engaged six warships of the Spanish fleet. Though clearly obsolescent, few patriotic sailors would not have wanted to walk her powder and blood-stained decks. The Texas was conceived in an era when the US Navy was attempting to arise from the post-Civil War neglect that had crippled its ability to assert itself in international waters. It was a period of great change, both technologically and in the development of the theory of naval power as espoused by Alfred Thayer Mahan. She sailed in the time before the US Navy had reached the renowned strength and professionalism it exhibited in World Wars One and Two, but contributed immeasurably to this achievement. This is the illustrated story of the design, construction, and operational history of the USS Texas of 1895, America's first battleship and hero of the Spanish-American War. Hundreds of historic photos and plans combined with exhaustively researched text capture the spirit of the age, as well as the technological details of the ship.

About the Author Mark David Cowan is a native Texan and has a Masters Degree in Architecture with a Certificate in Historic Preservation from Texas AM University where, in addition to his architectural studies, he completed courses in engineering, nautical archeology, military, and naval history. He has worked both privately and for the State of Texas in the field of architectural preservation for over a decade and is currently a project reviewer for the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program at the Texas Historical Commission. Alan K. Sumrall is the author of the book *Battle Flags of Texans in the Confederacy*, published by Eakin Press, Austin, 1995. He is by profession an attorney at law in Austin, Texas and volunteers as the Antique Vehicle Coordinator at the Pioneer Flight Museum located at Kingsbury, Texas. He is a contributing author to the Spanish American War Centennial and the Flags of the Confederacy websites and is a member of the associated email-ring of Confederate vexillologists. His next literary project is anticipated to be "America's First Machine Gun - The Colt 1895 Automatic." He is also an active living history participant focusing on 1916 US Army Impression (border period).