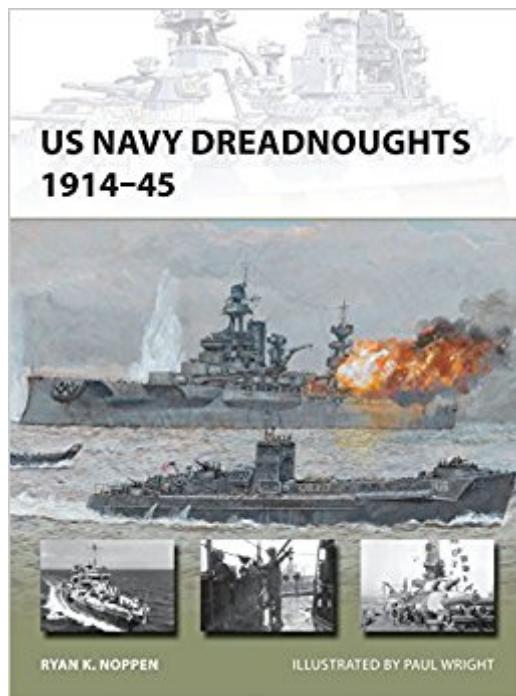


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US Navy Dreadnoughts 1914–45 (New Vanguard)



Synopsis

When the United States went to war with Spain in April 1898, few European observers believed the small and relatively inexperienced American navy could achieve a decisive naval victory over an established European colonial power. In less than five months however, two Spanish naval squadrons lay at the bottom of the seas and the once great Spanish Empire ceded its last colonies in Asia and the New World to the upstart Americans. Admiral George Dewey, victor at the battle of Manila Bay, became a demigod in the eyes of the American media and public overnight and the excitement of new conquests overseas breathed new life into the traditional American expansionist doctrine of Manifest Destiny. The American naval hubris that developed in the wake of the Spanish-American War in reality rested on only a handful of modern battleships in a navy that was an obsolescent coastal defense force only ten years before. No one understood this better than Theodore Roosevelt. An expansionist who fought with distinction during the war with Spain and an advocate of the sea power theories of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, Roosevelt knew the present American navy was not strong enough to defend American shores against the larger navies of Europe let alone those of a new empire. European powers still skirted the Monroe Doctrine as evidenced by the British-German-Italian blockade of Venezuela from 1902-03 and the Dutch-FI Venezuela War of 1908, and the United States was increasingly threatened in the Philippines, Samoa, and the Caroline and Marshall Islands by the imperial ambitions of Germany and Japan. To remedy the lack of naval preparedness for America's sudden emergence as a world power, Roosevelt and the United States embarked on rapid naval building program. To emphasize America's growing naval prowess and to demonstrate his "speak softly and carry a big stick" approach to foreign policy, Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet, a squadron composed of sixteen battleships (all commissioned after 1898), to circumnavigate the globe, a great technical and logistical feat for the time. As impressive as the spectacle of the Great White Fleet was, all of the ships in it were quickly being rendered obsolescent by the dreadnought-type battleships coming into service in Great Britain and Germany. This did not catch the United States off-guard however for as the Great White Fleet was completing its world cruise, the USS South Carolina, America's first dreadnought whose design pre-dated that of HMS Dreadnought, was already fitting out. By the beginning of World War I, the United States possessed the third largest navy in the world and had ten dreadnoughts in service with four more under construction.

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Customer Reviews

Ryan Noppen is a military author and aviation analyst originally from Kalamazoo, Michigan. A Master of Arts holder from Purdue University, he specialized in the history of aviation, completing a major thesis on German trans-Atlantic aviation in the interwar years. He has worked as a subject matter expert for a defense firm on projects involving naval and aviation logistics, and has taught several college courses on the World Wars. The author lives in Grand Rapids, MI.

I was very pleasantly surprised by this volume of the Osprey vanguard series. First, from the title, US Navy Dreadnoughts 1914 -45, for some reason I expected it to cover probably Arkansas or Texas through Colorado classes. Instead it covers Delaware through New York (Texas) classes, with some interesting comments on the deficiencies of these classes I had not noticed in mass of data in Friedman or Garzke's tomes. I am guessing there will be a follow-on to cover the remaining classes. Technical data on the classes is pretty brief as is typical of this series, but there are some nuggets I hadn't heard of before. More important to me, the class histories contains some information new and enlightening to me. Specifically a section on the Veracruz operation, and some details about the neutrality patrols in 1941 and Operation Torch, normally skipped over very briefly in most naval histories. The illustrations are clean and crisp, unlike some other volumes which contain copies of fuzzy and unclear impressionistic paintings,. The ones in this book are much more suitable for a booklet of this type. Overall glad I bought it, which is more than I can say for many of the Osprey New Vanguards.

At one point in American history battleships or their predecessors the dreadnoughts were seen as a projection of national power, and the Great White Fleet was viewed as a coming out to the world of the United States as a major naval power. In somewhat the same fashion, individual states took enormous pride in the role that ships bearing their names played in building America's reputation around the world. Young men wishing to enlist in the navy sought to serve on the ship bearing their native state's name. And I admit as a native of Arkansas being interested in the U.S.S. Arkansas and its career. One way to do this, at least with regard to her service in WW II, is to look up every reference to the Arkansas in the 15 volume official history of U.S. Naval operations in WW II overseen by and largely written by Samuel Eliot Morison. The Arkansas shows up in the volumes on the battle for the Atlantic because she, like other aging battleships like the Texas and the New York - the three ships often not just in the same ocean but the same action throughout in the War, with some exceptions, such as the New York being attached to Mediterranean invasion fleets, providing bombardment support - was too slow to escort aircraft carriers. As a result the three were either escorting Atlantic convoys or providing bombardment support for invasions. That is the Arkansas, by the way, on the cover of the book, firing a salvo on D-Day at Omaha Beach. There is much more to the book than the Arkansas, Texas, and New York, of course, though as you read through it you start to realize how few dreadnoughts made it until WW II. The Arkansas was a Wyoming class battleship, but her sister ship spent the war as a training vessel, while the first American warship sunk in WW II was a dreadnought style battleship, the U.S.S. Utah, retired to serve as a target ships, though it is easy to see how Japanese pilots making their first pass on Ford Island would mistake the Utah for a battleship given her lines. She was hit by torpedoes and capsized at Pearl Harbor, and along with the Arizona was the only ship not raised and repaired (qualification: the Oklahoma was eventually turned over and floated, but sank while being towed to the Pacific Cost but sank in heavy seas on the way. The Utah was moved from where capsized on December 7th; she extended a bit into harbor lanes so she was shifted that she would be less in the way of other ships. But the New York, Texas, and Arkansas all put in significant service in WW II despite being among the oldest ships in the U.S. Navy. The Arkansas was, in fact, the oldest warship in the U.S. fleet. Ironically, though she was the oldest ship, she did not fire her guns in combat until D-Day. So she saved the very best for last. But all the ships from 1914-1945 are covered in superb detail, with wonderful color drawings of their configurations both before and after later modifications. I loved the drawings so much that I ended up buying two copies. I know this sounds heretical, but I bought a second copy so that I could cut out key pages and frame them. I own a circa 1920 antique postcard of the Arkansas, which I have framed, but now I can add at least two more framed pictures to my

walls. There are a host of wonderful facts and details. For instance, I was unaware that on D-Day and thereafter the Texas and Arkansas did not use their Kingfisher spotter planes used to target their gunnery, but instead used Spitfires because they were afraid that they might encounter German fighters. Spitfires made logical sense for this kind of operation since all available fighters that excelled in ground support - like P-38s and P-47s - were used in attacking ground targets. Spitfires and P-51s, though used in ground support, were inferior ground support planes. But thanks in part to the Spitfire spotting planes, the Arkansas and Texas both contributed significantly to the invasion of France, both at Normandy and Cherbourg. Both were heavily refitted with anti-aircraft guns before being relocated to the Pacific, where both contributed to the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The Texas is today a museum ship close to Brownville, Texas while the Arkansas and New York were moved to the Bikini Atoll where they were used in the Able and Baker atomic bomb tests. The New York survived both tests and was later sunk as a target ship. The Arkansas sank in the Baker test. In the very famous photo of the Baker test explosion, perhaps the most famous photo of an atomic bomb photo ever taken, you can see the Arkansas on the bottom right side of the mushroom stem, at the tall black spot. The bomb exploded very close to the Arkansas and literally flipped it over. She sank in that position, and rests today upside down and is one of the more popular wrecks that divers can visit at Bikini Atoll, not far from other ships like the Saratoga, West Virginia, Prince Eugen, and Nagato (the latter Yamamoto's flagship leading up to Pearl Harbor and on which he listened to the Pearl Harbor attack several hundred miles to the east of him). The Texas is the only dreadnought still afloat in the world, though the older Japanese pre-dreadnought Mikasa is in drydock, which is actually the future of the Texas. So if you have any interest in pre-modern American battleships, this is essential reading. The quality of the photographs and illustrations is outstanding and many of these are not in any other book that I own. So, a great book in a great series. And maybe the only book I have ever purchased two copies of without losing one.

This booklet is a concise review of the second generation of battleships produced and used in both world wars. Subsequent works cover the battleships developed after the first world war and used during the second world war and those developed during the second world war for use during that war and after. What is missing is a book devoted to the battleships developed prior to the dreadnaughts which were exclusively coal-fired, in other words, those commissioned by President Theodore Roosevelt and sent around the world in the cruise of the "Great White Fleet". If developed as thoroughly as this book and the others which followed, the history of U.S. capital ships would be completely described and illustrated. There is, therefore, a void which needs to be filled.

This book provides a short but interesting history of the U.S. Navy's development of dreadnought class of battleships. It details the philosophies of its designers and why some of the designs had drawbacks. It's interesting to note that the early designers had no sea experience in naval combat operations. Hence, the designers made decisions based on convenience and easy of construction versus effective gun platforms. Additionally, I found it interesting that early Dreadnoughts had underwater torpedo tubes, much like a submarine.

good

Well-written synopsised history of South Carolina, Delaware, Florida, Wyoming and New York class dreadnouts to include modifications and actions each class underwent from launching through end of World War II. Photographs and color plates of each class are excellent. A great addition to a home library.

Tiny book. I guess I should have noticed this before ordering. Some good period pictures, but very narrow in scope.

Good book to read on a hot, summers day and has a lot of information on the old battleships that we had.

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