



Ship of Death: A Voyage That Changed the Atlantic World

Billy G. Smith

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It is no exaggeration to say that the *Hankey*, a small British ship that circled the Atlantic in 1792 and 1793, transformed the history of the Atlantic world. This extraordinary book uncovers the long-forgotten story of the *Hankey*, from its altruistic beginnings to its disastrous end, and describes the ship's fateful impact upon people from West Africa to Philadelphia, Haiti to London.

Billy G. Smith chased the story of the *Hankey* from archive to archive across several continents, and he now brings back to light a saga that continues to haunt the modern world. It began with a group of high-minded British colonists who planned to establish a colony free of slavery in West Africa. With the colony failing, the ship set sail for the Caribbean and then North America, carrying, as it turned out, mosquitoes infected with yellow fever. The resulting pandemic as the *Hankey* traveled from one port to the next was catastrophic. In the United States, tens of thousands died in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston. The few survivors on the *Hankey* eventually limped back to London, hopes dashed and numbers decimated. Smith links the voyage and its deadly cargo to some of the most significant events of the era—the success of the Haitian slave revolution, Napoleon's decision to sell the Louisiana Territory, a change in the geopolitical situation of the new United States—and spins a riveting tale of unintended consequences and the legacy of slavery that will not die.

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