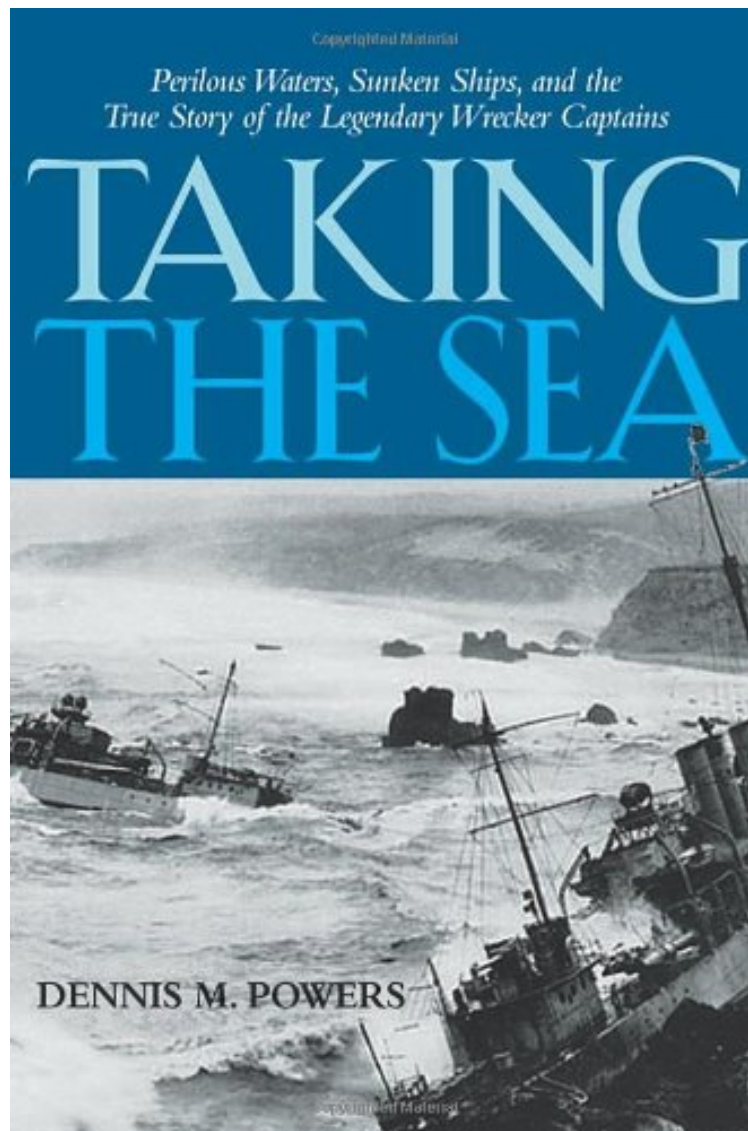


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Taking the Sea: Perilous Waters, Sunken Ships, and the True Story of the Legendary Wrecker Captains

Dennis M. Powers

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Dennis M. Powers : Taking the Sea: Perilous Waters, Sunken Ships, and the True Story of the Legendary Wrecker Captains before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Taking the Sea: Perilous Waters, Sunken Ships, and the True Story of the Legendary Wrecker Captains:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Taking the Sea. A thrilling story about salvaging shipwrecks
By Audrey Dennis Powers's Taking the Sea is the thrilling story of Thomas P. H. Whitelaw who came from Scotland to America in 1863 when he was 16 and had only 25 cents in his pocket. Some years later he became a multi-millionaire through very hard, dangerous work as a salvager of wrecked or sunken ships. Whitelaw loved the challenge of saving ships, or when that wasn't possible, helping to salvage their cargo. When his salvage operation became larger, he hired divers who, like him, worked with primitive equipment and hand-pumped air lines amidst dangerous sea creatures and in the darkness of deep, icy water. Those men had to be seasoned, tough and highly skilled in carpentry, diving, and engineering to patch the holes in the sides of a sunken ship so that the ship could be raised or at least divested of its cargo. When ships loaded with expensive cargo went down, it often meant financial ruin for the ship's owner as well as the merchant(s) who would lose the value of the cargo. And there were 'salvagers' who would rush to the wreckage site and try to improve their own situation by bargaining with the captain for a share of the spoils--often while the imperiled ship was breaking up and sinking. People hoped that saving the lives of the passengers and crew would come before saving cargo--but that wasn't always the case. Powers is a marvelous story-teller and historian, and as such, he takes us 'safe and dry' to a period when sea captains had only primitive equipment and the stars to guide them through treacherous channels and the open seas. This was a time when one third of the ships were devoured by a ravenous sea because of violent (and in those days unpredictable) storms. Many of those ships still lie in Davey Jones's locker after crashing against submerged and uncharted rocks. Which is my favorite of Powers's books? Hmm, tough question; they're all great. But Taking the Sea just might be the one.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Ship Salvage Person Can Get Rich Fast.
By Bob Egli
The story of the Sunken Ship Salvage Industry, how and when it started. Remarkable stories of the people and the ships of this era up to the 1930's in North America. Its one of those books that I will read again in a few years.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars
By Michael Ryan
Good read. Informative

In the late 19th century, an intrepid, reckless group of men ruled the ocean. Known as "wreckers," they earned their living by rescuing and raising sunken ships, even in the face of monstrous waves and fierce weather. To some, they were heroes, helping to rescue both passengers and ships with courage and skill. To others they were ruthless pirates, who exploited these ship wrecks purely for their treasure. In Taking the Sea, Dennis M. Powers uncovers a fascinating, yet largely unknown, period in our history. Here he traces the journey of these legendary men through the story of Captain Thomas P. H. Whitelaw, the most important ship salvager of his day. From their early beginnings when greedy villagers would lure ships to the rocky coasts of Europe to their heyday during the era of the fast but vulnerable American clipper ships and their founding of the city of Key West, Powers offers a compelling portrait of the wrecker captains and the dangerous lives they and their men led. From the East Coast to the Pacific, we travel along with these men as they faced the savage seas to save ships and plunder untold wealth. Beautifully written and vividly told, this is a magnificent look at the untold history of the fearless and often mercenary men who made their living from the sea.

well-researched book distinguished by clear prose, characterization worthy of a seasoned novelist
Outstanding for lovers of ships and the sea. -- Booklist "...plenty of interludes blending tragedy and triumph, and a few wondrous, death-defying finales. -- Kirkus s Anyone who loves the sea and history will find hours of fascinating reading pleasure in this latest book. -- Bookviews.com a compelling portrait of the wrecker captains and the dangerous lives they and their men led -- Statesman Journal [the book] tells gripping tales of salvage in the golden era of shipping, when men's fortunes could all too easily be made and lost Powers has written authoritatively on tsunamis, lighthouses and wreck recovery. -- The Oregonian Powers has done a superb job of research and writing on an unusual subject that might otherwise have passed us by. -- US Naval Institute Proceedings "Powers is a thorough researcher with a feel for the wet environment he writes about." -- Mail Tribune
From the Inside Flap
By the mid-19th century, an intrepid, reckless group of men ruled the ocean. Known as wreckers, they made their living by rescuing ships in distress and raising sunken ones, even in the face of monstrous waves and fierce weather. To some, they were heroes, helping to rescue both passengers and ships with courage and skill. To others, they were ruthless pirates, who exploited these shipwrecks purely for their treasure. The vessels they rescued could be waterlogged on a reef or stuck high and dry on rocky shoals. They could be listing on the beach or rolling in the turbulent surf miles out to sea. The crew could have hastily abandoned the ship in which case it was considered to be a derelict with enormous salvage value or people might be still aboard, desperate to be taken off, even fearful of their would-be rescuers. But the daring wreckers, or ship salvagers, came aboard. In Taking the Sea, Dennis Powers uncovers a fascinating, yet up to now largely unknown, period in our history. Here he traces the journey of these legendary men through the story of Captain Thomas P. H. Whitelaw, the most important ship salvager of his day. Powers offers a compelling portrait of Whitelaw and the other wrecker captains, recounting the dangerous lives they and their men led. He tells us their stories from the early beginnings when needy villagers followed stricken ships in the hopes of improving their lives a little to the heyday of the wreckers in the early twentieth century when steamships and schooners ruled this country's byways. Starting with the early years of wrecking in Europe, Dennis Powers explores the evolution of ship salvaging. The confrontational

battles in the Florida Keys eventually give way to the well capitalized, specialized companies represented by the legendary wrecker captains like Thomas Whitelaw, Israel J. Merritt, and Thomas Scott. Powers explains in fascinating detail how these wreckers raised sunken ships, using pontoons and caissons, powerful tugs, strong donkey engines, and an understanding of the moon and tides to create an artificial buoyancy inside the hull. From the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea, we travel along with these men and Captain Whitelaw as they face the savage seas to save foundering ships and frightened passengers. Beautifully written and vividly told, this is a magnificent look at the untold history of the courageous men who earned their living by taking ships away from the sea. DENNIS M. POWERS is the author of ten books, including the acclaimed maritime narratives *Sentinel of the Seas*, *Treasure Ship*, and *The Raging Sea*. He has also been featured in *USA Today*, on *CNN*, *Hard Copy*, *Extra!*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and other shows. Dennis Powers lives in Ashland, Oregon. More information about the author and his books is available at his website: www.dennispowersbooks.com.

From the Back Cover Incredibly well researched and descriptive, *Taking the Sea* skillfully draws the reader into the precarious life of shipwreck salvage. A fascinating read. Jennifer Hooper McCarty, co-author of *What Really Sank the Titanic: New Forensic Discoveries* Definitive and engrossing history of those fearless and determined seagoing entrepreneurs of yesteryear known as the master wreckers. No maritime library is complete without Dennis Powers's *Taking the Sea*. Bruce Henderson, author of *Down to the Sea: An Epic Story of Naval Disaster and Heroism in World War II* A wonderful story that all shipwreck hunters, wreckers, and lovers of the sea will enjoy. Jim Kennard, shipwreck explorer and discoverer of the *HMS Ontario* A compelling story of the brave and ambitious men who forged a new industry in the waning days of sail. Dennis Powers salvages valuable treasure from the depths of America's rich maritime history. Brian Hicks, author of *Raising the Hunley* and *When the Dancing Stopped: The Real Story of the Morro Castle Disaster and Its Deadly Wake* *Taking the Sea* is a book to be relished by readers who love tales of maritime adventures. A fine book. Willie Drye, author of *Storm of the Century: The Labor Day Hurricane of 1935*