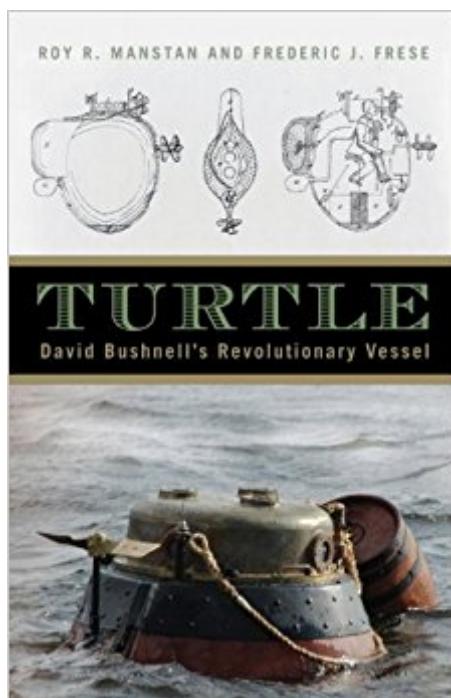


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# Turtle: David Bushnell's Revolutionary Vessel



## Synopsis

â œBuilt at the dawn of the American Revolution, the one-man wooden submersible, its creation, and its attacks on the Royal Navy in New York harbor is a story still surrounded in mystery. In this much anticipated book, Roy Manstan and Frederic Frese bring the story of Bushnellâ ™s revolutionary underwater machine to life.â • - JERRY ROBERTS, Director, Connecticut River MuseumAt the onset of the American Revolution, the British expected to quell the rebellion quickly with a show of overwhelming force. In an experiment in asymmetric warfare, David Bushnell created the first submarine vessel designed specifically â œfor the destruction of vessels of war.â • On a quiet September night in 1776, sergeant Ezra Lee maneuvered Bushnellâ ™s strange little craft out from Manhattan and into the midst of the greatest naval fleet ever assembled in the Americas. Leeâ ™s goal was to sink the British flagship HMS Eagle by attaching a powerful explosive to its hull. Although the mission was unsuccessful, Bushnellâ ™s concept of submarine warfare was considered by George Washington to have been â œan effort of genius.â •David Bushnell was raised in the town of Saybrook at the mouth of the Connecticut River. More than two centuries later, another Turtle would be launched into the same river within sight of Bushnellâ ™s first forays with his vessel during the summer of 1775. Under the direction of technical arts teacher Frederic J. Frese, students at Old Saybrook High School created a working replica of Bushnellâ ™s submarine, facilitated through an education partnership with the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Newport, Rhode Island, where Roy R. Manstan was a mechanical engineer and Navy trained diver. With twenty-first century submariners at the helm, the Turtle replica was subjected to a series of operational tests at the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. In *Turtle: David Bushnellâ ™s Revolutionary Vessel*, the authors provide new insight into Bushnellâ ™s â œengine of devastation,â • tracing the history of undersea warfare before Bushnell and the origin of the many innovations Bushnell understood would be necessary for conducting a covert submarine attack. The knowledge gained from testing the Turtle replica enabled the authors to speculate as to what Americaâ ™s first submariner Ezra Lee experienced that September night and what may have caused the attack to fail.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

ROY R. MANSTAN is a mechanical engineer and former Command Diving Officer of the NUWC. He has degrees from Lafayette College, the University of Connecticut, and Connecticut College.

FREDERIC J. FRESE is a technical arts teacher at Old Saybrook High School. He received his teaching degree from Central Connecticut State University

**Turtle- David Bushnell's Revolutionary Vessel** This book is a wonderful history of the development of the first practical attempt to use a submarine for a military attack during the American Revolution. I was drawn to read this book because of my interest in American history and because of my interest in the history of southeastern Connecticut in particular. Although I do not live in that area, I have been there numerous times. I have a good knowledge of the area history but only previously had a general knowledge of Bushnell's work on the Turtle. The two authors are very familiar with the area around Old Saybrook, the scene of most of the book. One is a retired commanding diving officer, the other a high school technical teacher. They, bring a wealth of knowledge and research to this task. Not only did they want to know all about the Turtle but to construct an exact replica. They describe in detail their historical research and bring their vast technical expertise to the project. They made great efforts to view the details as they would have been assessed during the Revolution. This book will be enjoyed by readers interested in Revolutionary War history, submarines, naval history, and students of mechanical technology. Of course it will also be appreciated by those interested in the history of southeastern Connecticut.

The full story of David Bushnell's Turtle, the legendary submersible that made three failed attempts to sink British ships. Encouraged by Benjamin Franklin and George Washington during the period when the British were reentering the colonies through New York island, Bushnell's sub made it's

attack. The authors examine the origins of the processes Bushnell used in construction, reconstruct the actual attack from the little documentation, speculates on why the attack failed, and details the efforts by a modern group including a high school class to build an operable replica of the Turtle. Great book for those interested in this early effort, decades even before the Hunley succeeded in its attack on a federal blockade ship in Charleston harbor.

Love this submarine book! Beautiful pictures and great information. Found this book to be very helpful in writing a paper on submarines in the Civil War.

Roy Manstan and Frederic Frese's "Turtle: David Bushnell's Revolutionary Vessel" is a dual story. First, it is a detailed history of the development and employment of the first vessel ever built as a military submarine to attack enemy shipping. Although the American Revolution's Turtle ultimately failed to sink a single British ship, the curious craft itself was a substantial success, a practical submersible vessel that indeed carried out underwater attacks. The authors to a considerable extent function as technological detectives, seeking to understand how the Turtle was designed and constructed, within limits imposed by the contemporary state of the art. Intertwined with the historical story is a technical study of a modern replica of the Turtle, built largely by high school students under the authors' direction and tested to rigorous standards. At times, the technical aspects of reporting the Turtle's performance perhaps impedes the overall flow of the book, although the authors' experiences are not told without a little leavening humor. Of particular value are several first-hand primary accounts reproduced as appendices.

A fascinating book on a subject covered by a number of authors. What makes this book different is a very academic and experimental approach taken by the participants, first in researching the history and then in actually constructing a working replica. The book documents how they first looked at all the available primary sources and also researched what the original authors would have meant by using particular words and phrases by using dictionaries and other technical sources of that time period to which Bushnell would have been familiar with. The book then documents how the team designed the replica to be as representative as possible of the original, including how it would be operated and employed. Building of the replica was next, then they tested it and assessed the results. Finally the book describes the actual sorties of the Turtle based upon the primary sources and what the team found to be the likely performance abilities and limits. Overall a most interesting and informative book. Recommended for the more serious student of American or naval

history.

I am very happy with this book. I was looking for something fresh and stimulating and I found it. As a boy I read about the Turtle, but was never able to find much information. That would be because there has never been much information available until now. The author starts by relating what information was in print at the time of the American Revolution on submarines, and from there makes an excellent case for how the Turtle was built based on known technology of the time. I've seen many artist's conceptions over the years, and all of them show a barrel shaped craft with helical screw propellers. The authors state their case for how these misconceptions are not logical or even possible. The building of their own Turtle gives you the feeling that they have produced a craft that Bushnell would certainly recognize as his own design. I have come away from this book with the feeling that I finally understand that the Turtle fully deserves the place that it holds in world history for being the first fighting craft of its kind.

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