

Anatomy of a Revenue Cutter:  
The History of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing.

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## Introduction:

During the early afternoon hours of Saturday, June 27, 1863 the Revenue Cutter *Caleb Cushing* was hijacked from her homeport in Portland, Maine by Confederate privateers was under the command of Lt. Charles W. Read. She was under full sail about twelve miles off the coast of Maine, when she was quickly intercepted by pursuing federal authorities. Read, who was not able to dodge his pursuers, chose to set fire to the cutter and surrender. In her final moments, the *Caleb Cushing* blew apart from the resulting magazine explosion and slid quickly beneath the waves.

The story of the *Caleb Cushing* is an appealing narrative, complete with all the key ingredients of a great story. It has elements of suspense, danger, and intrigue with traces of brazenness added for good measure. It is about the capture and destruction of the only Revenue Cutter during the Civil War, and the men who served on the cutter in the years leading up to the war until her destruction.

The men who served in the Revenue Cutter Service were a unique brand of seafaring men. They shared many similarities with their cousins of the United States Navy, and on the opposite side they were many differences that came out in this critical analysis of a crew of a cutter during the Civil War. The men on the *Caleb Cushing* were older and more experienced than Navy sailors, and the events that lead to the hijacking of the cutter was one of good fortune for the Confederate under Lt. Charles W. Read, who as luck would have it ran out on for him on that fateful night.

Together with the poor condition of the cutter and bad luck that followed the crew in the days before the attack, this story was an opportunity for the Confederate Navy that could not be overlooked as the crew of the cutter reacted exactly as would be expected from a man that set such a dubious plan into motion off the coast of Maine in 1863.

This paper is the end result of more than a year of research that provided many fascinating and yet previously unknown details to compare and contrast what the life of a typical sailor was like and some of the interesting tidbits about the men that worked on a cutter in the service of the Revenue Cutter Service.

It is more than just a story of the crew, it is a narrative about the ship itself and what chain of events took place that ended on the night of June 26, 1863 and one that no crewmember that served onboard will ever forget.

Using many previously unpublished primary and a plethora of published secondary sources that have been overlooked before, this story is now more complete. The capture and the destruction of the *Caleb Cushing* come to life in the pages of this text.

## Chapter 1

### Lt. Charles W. Read “A Wolf’s in Sheep’s Clothing”

Late June 1863 found the Union army of the Potomac under new leadership of General George G. Meade apprehensively looking north, as gray-clad troopers of General Robert E. Lee’s rival army of North Virginia pushed through Maryland and continued north into Pennsylvania mounting a full-scale invasion.<sup>1</sup> Only a week earlier, a new danger beset the unprotected and unsuspecting eastern seaboard of the Mid-Atlantic region and further north off the New England coast. “A Pirate Near Home”, declared the *New York Times*, had the coastal populace both stunned and concerned about events unfolding in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>2</sup>

The “Pirate” the newspaper referred to was Confederate Navy Lieutenant Charles W. Read who was destroying commerce all along the eastern seaboard from Virginia to the coast of New England.<sup>3</sup> The voyage of Lt. Read struck panic in the minds of ordinary citizens all along the eastern seaboard, and had modest beginnings for Read years earlier, and his new command six weeks earlier and thousands of miles away.

Few persons from his Naval Academy days could have imagined Lt. Charles W. Read in command of his own privateer on so daring and challenging a mission. Read was a native southerner by birth, and was very proud of his heritage. Read was born May 12, 1840 in Yazoo County, Mississippi being the eldest of five children born to William F. and Maria L. Read. He moved with his family to Jackson, Mississippi after the death of his father in 1850. His father died in Nevada City, California after being requested to help with another relative. Growing up without the benefit of a father left a definite impression

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<sup>1</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 651-652.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, June 16, 1863. See Frank L. Owsley, *The C.S.S. Florida: Her Building and Operations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965) 80-81.

<sup>3</sup> R. Thomas Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy: Lt Charles W. Read and the Confederate Navy* (Shippensburg: Burd Street Press, 2000), 12, 102.

on Read as he became very independent and brazen in nature. It was these two qualities for command that make Read stand out from fellow officers.<sup>4</sup>

During his teenage years he went searching for more excitement than Jackson, Mississippi could offer him. Without telling his mother he went to New Orleans and signed aboard a sailing vessel, that disappointed his mother who immediately sought to obtain his release and did so with the help of friends. By 1856, Maria Read realized her son's love of the sea could not be concealed, and wrote to her local congressman, W.A. Lake, requesting help to admit Charles to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.<sup>5</sup>

Congressman Lake wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, James C. Dobbin who forwarded his application to the Academy. After passing the medical and academic examinations to enter the Academy on September 26, 1856 he was appointed Acting Midshipman in the United States Navy. Midshipman Charles W. Read spent the next four years at the Naval Academy learning all of the rudiments of sailing and navigating from instructors with years of seafaring experience.

Read's last year at the Academy witnessed his grades drop significantly. On June 10, 1860 Read graduated the bottom of his class of twenty-five cadets. Shortly after the start of the war he surrendered his commission on February 4, 1861 offering his services to the Confederate Navy. After service on the CSS *McRae*, he was transferred to the CSS *Florida* and was many miles from his boyhood home stationed on one of the Confederacy's most feared raiders.<sup>6</sup>

On May 6, 1863, off Cape San Roque, near the coastline of Brazil, the *Florida* under the command of Captain John Newland Moffitt cruised offshore when she sighted

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<sup>4</sup> Robert A. Jones, *Confederate Corsair: The Life of Lt. Charles W. "Savez" Read* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2000), 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> United States Naval Academy, *Minutes of the Academic Board*, vol 2, Annapolis, 1856; *Letters Received by the Superintendent Relating to Individual Midshipman, 1846-1888*. RG45, National Archives.

the brig *Clarence*-hailing from Baltimore, Maryland. The brig was sailing home after departing Rio de Janeiro loaded with Brazilian coffee. Captain Moffitt immediately sought to capture the brig as a prize, and in doing so he set in motion a chain of events that would be remembered in the annals of Naval history for many years.

With his prize secure, Lt. Read approached Moffitt with a bold plan to sail the *Clarence* with twenty good men into Hampton Roads, Virginia; and while there either hijack a Union gunboat or a steamer and use it for further pirating. Moffitt felt it was indeed a wild and brazen plan, but with luck it may succeed. Read was quick to point out he had in his possession documents from the captured brig and the Federal authorities likely would not question him sailing into the harbor-allowing Read to sail freely among the harbor traffic.<sup>7</sup>

At the outbreak of the Civil War the struggling Confederacy had neither a navy nor the capital to build one. The Union Navy steamed where it pleased, throwing up barricades of ships in an attempt to slowly asphyxiate the Southern economy. The Confederate government and Secretary of the Navy, Stephen R. Mallory fought back the only way they could. Mallory commissioned several lightly armed commerce raiders, commanded by staunch, loyal officers to take the war to the high seas in an effort to destroy the merchant fleet of the enemy. Lt. Charles W. Read formally of the *Florida*, now acting independently in the *Clarence*, followed Mallory's orders precisely.<sup>8</sup>

With the spirit of command and wind in his sails, Read set off north towards his rendezvous at Norfolk, Virginia.

Along the way, Lt. Read changed plans and decided that an attack on Norfolk would be too risky. He believed his mission would be more successful if he took

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<sup>7</sup> Richard M. Basoco, "The Cruise of 'Savez' Read" Civil War Times Illustrated 2, no 8 (1963) 10.

<sup>8</sup> Chester G. Hearn, *Gray Raiders of the Sea: How Eight Confederate Warships Destroyed the Union's High Seas Commerce* (Camden: International Marine Publishing, 1992), 1-8.

Moffitt's advice and harass Union shipping all along the eastern seaboard. With a new plan Read set out on a path of destruction that lasted twenty-one days from June 6, 1863 to June 27, 1863 and when finished he bonded or destroyed twenty-two vessels-a record that many have tried to break. Read captured his first prize, when he destroyed the *Whistling Wind* on June 6, 1863.<sup>9</sup>

Captain William G. Munday of the bark *Tacony* arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and recounted his whereabouts to E.A. Souder & Company the owners of the *Tacony*, who in turn reported to Secretary of Navy Gideon Welles "The pirate *Clarence* captured within sight of Cape Henry yesterday morning, the brig *Schindler*, and schooner *Kate Stewart* and bark *Tacony* of this port. They are using the *Tacony* for pirating further".<sup>10</sup>

Lt. Charles W. Read of the Confederate Navy in command of the converted privateer brig *Clarence* a few days after his first prize on June 12, 1863 was sailing off the coast of Virginia, near Cape Henry when he captured the bark *Tacony*. The vessel under the command of Captain William G. Munday was captured and Read now assumed command of the latter vessel, burning and then sinking the *Clarence*.

All the efforts of the Union Navy to find Lt. Read and his elusive crew proved unsuccessful, despite the Federal government expending both money and resources chasing the raider. Capturing Read became an immediate priority for the War Department that quickly realized they needed additional help. The Treasury department was enlisted in a joint operation to search for Read. In a message dated June 14, 1863, Abraham Lincoln wrote to Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase: "You will cooperate by the revenue cutters under your direction, with the Navy in arresting rebel

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy: Lt Charles W. Read and the Confederate Navy*, 103-110.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1896), Ser. II, I, 273. Hereafter cited as ORN.



depredations on American commerce and transportation and in capturing rebels engaged therein.”<sup>11</sup>

Seaman Albert L. Drayton of the Lt. Read’s crew on the Tacony wrote a few lines in his diary about his commander and his bold actions the last couple of weeks. Drayton wrote: “If successful in the object of the government and the people of the United States will be somewhat astonished...it is a noble scheme and will be highly noticed. If Lt. Read is not promoted to a Captain, no man in the Navy deserves it”.<sup>12</sup>

One of the vessels that cooperated with the Navy in the pursuit of the Lt. Read was the *Caleb Cushing*, stationed in Portland, Maine. Within several days, by the early afternoon hours of June 27, 1863, the *Caleb Cushing* would lie at the bottom of the ocean having been hijacked and later destroyed by this same “Pirate” Lt. Read, in a bold gamble to seize the cutter from her homeport under the cover of darkness.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ORN, I, II, 278.

<sup>12</sup> Albert L. Drayton Diary, June 26, 1863, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington DC

<sup>13</sup> Remo Salta, “Guardians of the Coast.” *America’s Civil War* 34, no. 6 (1994): 40.

## Chapter 2

### The *Caleb Cushing* joins the Service:

The Revenue Cutter Service was the oldest active seagoing service in the United States. Founded in 1790, the service can trace their origins to an act of Congress that became law on August 4, 1790 that authorized the Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton to fit out cutters (not to exceed ten) to be employed for protection of the revenue.<sup>14</sup>

With the passage of time, the Revenue Cutter Service would have additional duties assigned. Some of the duties thrust upon the service were military in nature during times of war, which included the aiding in coastal defenses and the protection of commerce in the cruising areas of each assigned cutter.<sup>15</sup>

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the service although slow in growth, proved its worth, not only with revenue expansion, but also in a limited number of conflicts involving the United States. In addition to their wartime duties, the constant and diligent search for pirates, plunderers, and slavers continued to be an integrate part of the service.<sup>16</sup>

During the decade of the 1840's the service faced additional difficulties when they attempted to change from sail to steam following the previous example set by the United States Navy. When the enthusiasm to convert to steam power overtook Captain Alexander Fraser (who served as the Bureau Chief) he promoted the building of several

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<sup>14</sup> Robert E. Johnson, *Guardians of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard 1915 to the Present* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 1; The nautical term of "cutter" was presented by common consent with few exceptions with that of a schooner. The cutters were to be lightly armed and manned, but designed for speed with an absolute need of seaworthiness. Each cutter would spend most of their service at sea in pursuit of smugglers and other lawbreakers. Howard I. Chapelle, *The History of American Sailing Ships* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1935), 179-180.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Guardians of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard: 1915 to the Present*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Florence Kern, *The United States Revenue Cutters in the Civil War* (Bethesda: Alised Enterprises, 1989), 1-13. The conflicts included the French-American Quasi War of 1797-1801, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War in 1846, numerous skirmishes with the Seminole Indians in Florida from 1836-1842, and the expedition to Paraguay in 1858.

paddle-wheeler cutters. For various reasons, all of the cutters were a complete and disappointing failure. As a result of the failed innovations, the service was basically neglected during the 1850's, and witnessed the return to wooden sailing vessels.<sup>17</sup>

Because of the steam-cutter debacle, the authority to build new cutters was removed from the Secretary of the Treasury and now placed firmly in the hands of Congress. Between 1849 and 1859 twenty wooden sailing vessels were constructed for the Revenue Cutter Service. All of the cutters were much smaller in design and each followed the provisions set by congress. The only bright spot for the service in the 1850's was the construction of another steam cutter a few years before the start of the Civil War. It was not until 1858 with the addition of the *Harriet Lane* that another steam vessel would join the ranks of the Revenue Cutter Service and operate until September 10, 1861 when she was turned over to the United States Navy.<sup>18</sup>

One of the vessels built during this ten-year period was the *Caleb Cushing*. In 1853 the Treasury Department contracted with J.M. Hood of Somerset, Massachusetts to build six cutters to join the service in their increasing need for vessels assist in the needs placed on the service.<sup>19</sup> Under the direction of Secretary of the Treasury Thomas Corwin, a veteran officer would be placed in charge to oversee the construction of the six new cutters. On February 18, 1853, Captain Napoleon L. Coste while stationed in Portland, Maine on the Revenue Cutter *Crawford*, was ordered to Massachusetts to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy*, 212 and Kern, *United States Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, 1-3/1-4. The *Harriet Lane* was named in honor of President James Buchanan's niece. For further reading see Philip E. Yanaway, "The United States Revenue Cutter Harriet Lane, 1857-1884" *American Neptune* 36, no 3 (1976) 178, 186-187 and *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard 1790-December 31, 1933* (Washington: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 1989), 37.

<sup>19</sup> Donald L. Canney, *United States Coast Guard and Revenue Cutters: 1790-1935* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 23.

confirm that the cutters would be built to Revenue Cutter Service and Treasury Department specifications.<sup>20</sup>

On the arrival of Captain Coste work on the cutters set out in earnest. James M. Hood, a local New England shipbuilder, owned two large yards for building the cutters. Four of the cutters were to be built in his yard at Somerset, Massachusetts located on the Taunton River, just north of Falls River. The remaining two cutters were to be built in his other shipyard located along the seacoast in Bristol, Rhode Island.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after Captain Coste's arrival in March 1853, Thomas Corwin stepped down as Secretary of the Treasury, and James G. Guthrie assumed the leadership role of Secretary under the direction of the newly elected President of the United States Franklin Pierce. On June 30, 1853 with the cutters nearing completion, Guthrie informed Captain Coste that names have been secured for the four new cutters when he wrote: "I have to inform you that the four; fore and aft schooners being built at Somerset Massachusetts under your supervision for the Revenue Cutter Service will be named as follows: *James C. Dobbin, Robert McClelland, James Campbell, and Caleb Cushing.*"<sup>22</sup>

Each of the cutters was named for men with long notable service to the United States government. The remaining two cutters built in J.M. Hood's Bristol, Rhode Island shipyard, were likewise commissioned and named in the same fashion.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kern, *United States Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, 3-2 and Letter Thomas Corwin to Captain Napoleon L. Coste, February 18, 1853. *Letters sent to Revenue Cutter Officers*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Chapelle, *The History of American Sailing Ships*, 215 and U.S. Bureau of Census. *Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850* (National Archives) Somerset, Bristol County, Massachusetts. RG29. Microfilm Publication M432. Roll 308. Pg 428.

<sup>22</sup> Letter James G. Guthrie to Captain Napoleon L. Coste, June 30, 1853, *Letters sent to Revenue Cutter Officers*, RG26. National Archives.

<sup>23</sup> Kern, *The United States Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, 2-1. The cutters were named for men in the Presidency of Franklin Pierce, namely, Jefferson Davis-Secretary of War, William L. Marcy-Secretary of State, Robert McClelland-Secretary of the Interior, James C. Dobbin-Secretary of the Navy, James Campbell-Postmaster General, and Caleb Cushing who served as the Attorney General. Consult Claude M. Fuess, *The Life of Caleb Cushing* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1965), 134-135.

On July 12, 1853, the *Caleb Cushing* along with the other cutters built by J.M. Hood prepared to set sail for New York harbor to be fitted for sea. They arrived in New York a short time later on August 13, 1853 ready to assume their new duty stations.<sup>24</sup>

While stationed in New York before setting sail for Portland, the *Caleb Cushing* prepared to receive some modest armament before officially setting sail for Portland. Under the direction of another veteran Revenue Cutter Officer, William C. Pease, each of the six cutters on October 27, 1853 took onboard 1 12-pounder cannon (to be fitted out on the bow) from the West Point Foundry across the Hudson River at Cold Spring, New York.<sup>25</sup> Before leaving New York Harbor the *Caleb Cushing* was officially measured and weighed by the Surveyor of the Port of New York, John Cochrane, who certified his findings and reported to the Treasury Department.<sup>26</sup>

On November 7, 1853, the *Caleb Cushing* set sail for Portland, Maine, arriving two weeks later ready to take on a full complement of crewmembers.<sup>27</sup> The first assigned Captain was another aged veteran of the Revenue Cutter Service. Captain Green Walden, a native of Cape Elizabeth received orders on August 5, 1853 to report to New York to take command of the *Caleb Cushing*. Later on October 5, 1853, he officially assumed command of the cutter. Walden maintained command of the cutter until he was granted permission to remain on shore until his health was restored.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard*, 389 and *New York Times*, August 6, 1853 and *Pittsfield Sun*, August 18, 1853.

<sup>25</sup> Letter James G. Guthrie to Captain William C. Pease, October 27, 1853, *Letters sent to Revenue Cutter Officers*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Certificate filed by John Cochrane-Surveyor of the Port of New York, August 24, 1853, *Correspondence of Revenue Cutter Construction 1853*. The *Caleb Cushing* measured two decks, two masts, and her length was eighty-six feet, with a breadth of twenty-one feet. In addition her depth was eight feet and two inches, and weighed one hundred and thirty six tons. John Cochrane served in the Civil War from his native state of New York. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 86-87.

<sup>27</sup> *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard*, 389.

<sup>28</sup> *Revenue Cutter Officers Rosters, 1790-1870*, RG26, National Archives, 84. Letter Captain Green Walden to Salmon P. Chase, October 2, 1861, *Letters sent to Revenue Cutter Officers*, RG26, National Archives. Dennis L. Noble *Historical Register: United States Revenue Cutter Service Officers 1790-1914* (Washington: Coast Guard Historian Office, 1990), 74.

The *Caleb Cushing* spent most of her time in service stationed in Portland, being the only cutter available between that city and Boston. There were however other ports of operation in Maine-such as Bath, Kittery, and Bangor, but they did not justify the stationing of a cutter at their location, instead each had a small Custom Service boat to assist in harbor related work. The *Caleb Cushing* handled all the larger and more significant assignments.<sup>29</sup>

In early fall of 1854 Captain Green Walden received orders from the Secretary of the Treasury to sail from Portland to nearby Bath to render assistance in apprehending a fugitive slave reported aboard the bark *Franklin* which set sail from Jacksonville, Florida and was now off the coast of Maine. The Anthony Burns affair of March 1854 in Boston was still fresh in the minds of residents of Bath and all of New England. The *Caleb Cushing* was dispatched to apprehend the fugitive slave and take him to Boston. She arrived in Bath on September 19, 1854 but found the *Franklin* had already put the slave ashore. With the slave free the *Caleb Cushing* returned to Portland a few days after the incident making a full report of her actions.<sup>30</sup>

By 1860, in addition to the occasional need assisting in detaining fugitive slaves she was boarding and examining nearly thirty fishing vessels a day. The *Caleb Cushing* would also be utilized to put down prospective mutinies of would be vessels in Portland and answering distress calls as needed in her district.<sup>31</sup>

On January 1, 1861 with open conflict between the factions in the United States becoming increasingly possible Lt Joseph Amazeen reported to the Treasury Department

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<sup>29</sup> Kern, *United States Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, 2-2.

<sup>30</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, 119-120; Anthony Burns was forcibly removed from Boston to Norfolk, Virginia onboard the Revenue Cutter *Morris* under the command of Captain John Whitcomb. Consult *New York Daily Times*, September 22, 1854; *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard 1790-December 31, 1933*, (Washington: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 1989), 43.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

(per regulations) the overall physical condition of the *Caleb Cushing*. In an open letter to Secretary Philip F. Thomas he complained about the poor condition of his vessel and reminded his superiors that the *Caleb Cushing* was being properly utilized and needed repair work to continue to fulfill her duties as prescribed by the service. He wrote:

The hull appears to be sound, but requires some caulking about the upper deck...the after part of the vessel is badly arranged, and is dangerous for a sea going vessel...should a sea break over the after part, she would inevitably be swamped...I think some alterations very necessary here...the foremast appears to be in good order, but the mainmast was examined and reported as sprung as long ago as March 20, 1855, and has never been replaced by a new one...the fore and main gaffs [supporting the spars] have both been worn...the forward one is only held together by lashings and nails and it is quite rotten...the sails have been in use for more than four years, and the vessel will soon require a new suit. The boats; one of copper and the other iron have been in constant use since the vessel was first built and are nearly worn out...The iron boat is the only one suitable to board a vessel in a heavy sea...I do not consider safe as both tanks leak and the iron much worn and very deceptive from the constant action of the salt water upon it for so a long a time.<sup>32</sup>

Lt. Amazeen's remarks were not limited to the physical condition of his cutter. He believed it essential to write about the armament of the *Caleb Cushing* relating his concerns about the defense of his vessel. He wrote:

The armament of the vessel is comparatively useless...the nine pound cannonade, a chambered gun...has rusted in the chamber causing it to hang fire...it is not considered safe in firing a salute or any number of guns in quick succession...the muskets have been condemned as worthless...the pistols and cutlasses are in good order...but more for ornament than use.<sup>33</sup>

Lt. Amazeen was very concerned about the safety and the security of his vessel and was very forthright about her condition. He concluded by reminding his superiors of the importance of his cutter and how committed the officers and crew were to the mission placed in their care.

The vessel has been actively and usefully employed during the last quarter within the limits of her cruising ground...having boarded and examined during

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<sup>32</sup> Letter, Joseph Amazeen to Philip F. Thomas, January 1, 1861, *Letters Received from Revenue Cutter Officers, 1836-1910*, RG26, National Archives and Joseph Palmer, *Dictionary of Naval Terms* (London: Palmer Publishing, 1975), 91.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

the time three hundred and twenty vessels, and rendering assistance to four...including four ships, seventeen barks, fifty-five brigs, and two hundred and forty [fishing] schooners.<sup>34</sup>

With the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, the duties of the Revenue Cutter Service and the *Caleb Cushing* would change forever. The service during wartime would now have to assume a new role; to assist the United States Navy wherever needed, either on blockade duty or protecting ports of operation. The start of the War also witnessed some important changes sensed by every members of the crew. Each officer and enlisted man now had to decide where exactly his loyalties would remain. The Revenue Cutter Service like the United States Navy had every officer wrestle with the decision to resign his commission or face possible dismissal from the service on the seat of Civil War.<sup>35</sup>

In a letter dated August 17, 1861 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Thomas H. Lawrence of New York complained to the War Department about the lack of respect among some of his fellow officers of the Revenue Cutter Service. Two of his senior officers, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Dudley Davenport of Georgia and 2nd Lieutenant Constantine A. Richardson from Maryland, were both from southern slave holding families. Both officers, against the wishes of their families, chose to remain faithful to the Federal Government and not surrender their commissions. In his letter, Lawrence made very clear his treatment and that of another junior officer-3<sup>rd</sup> Lieutenant Cyrus Riehl of New York, as being akin to a slave, perhaps hinting to the southern leanings of their senior officers.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> William S. Dudley, *Going South: U.S. Navy Officer Resignations & Dismissals on the Eve of the Civil War* (Washington: Naval Historical Foundation, 1981), 18-19. The start of the Civil War had the United States Navy with 1554 officers of whom 373 resigned or were dismissed for a total of 24% of the men in 1861. In the Revenue Cutter Service the situation was very similar with a total of 88 officers with 27 resigning from the service for the Confederacy totaling 30% of the officers. See Noble, *Historical Register Revenue Cutter Service Officers* (Washington DC: Coast Guard Historian Office, 1990), 1-81.



Lawrence was very critical of Lieutenants Davenport and Richardson and revealed his displeasure with serving with both men. He communicated:

I am a native of New York and knowing you to be a citizen of the old empire state I take the liberty of addressing you...I wish to inform you of the conduct of two southern officers attached to this vessel with Lt. Riehl of New York and myself...their names are 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Dudley Davenport of Savannah, Georgia, a connection of the traitor Howell Cobb and C.A. Richardson 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt of Maryland...they do everything in their power to aggravate us so as to make us discontented...We have endeavored to do our duty faithfully, but it is impossible for us to take a pride in doing so when we are imposed upon by those over to us and spoken to more like slaves than officers...Lt Davenport has often used profane language toward me on the decks of this vessel before the men...both men speak in favor of the Government for they dare not say anything against it in this part of the country...we have heard them express themselves in a manner that lead us to believe they favor the south...we hope that our Government will no longer allow themselves to be lead astray by the flowery letters and conversation of southern officers, but will put them in a position where they cannot do any harm if they wish too...If these gentleman are to be retained onboard the Caleb Cushing, Lt Riehl and myself would most respectfully ask you to intercede with the Honorable Salmon P. Chase and have us sent to some other vessel where we can be treated as officers and can place confidence in those over us.<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, the Captain of the *Caleb Cushing*, 1s Lt. Joseph Amazeen failed to share the uniform opinions as his junior officers. He experienced a similar problem with 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Thomas H. Lawrence while the *Caleb Cushing* was briefly stationed as Boston, Massachusetts a couple of months earlier.

The Treasury Department quickly realized the armament on the cutters were highly inadequate for the responsibilities placed on the service by the War Department. On April 25, 1861, the *Caleb Cushing* was ordered to set sail for Boston arriving there a short time afterwards on May 3, 1861. While at the Navy Yard at Charlestown, Massachusetts (near Boston) orders were received to arm the cutter with an additional cannon to be fitted on the stern-aft part of the cutter.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Letter, Thomas H. Lawrence to William H. Seward, August 17, 1861, *Miscellaneous Correspondence and Reports, 1793-1910*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Letter, Salmon P. Chase to Gideon Welles, August 28, 1861, *Miscellaneous Correspondence and Reports, 1793-1910*, RG26, National Archives. Letter, Captain William A. Howard to Salmon P. Chase, June 14, 1861, *Letters Received from Revenue Cutter Officers, 1836-1910*, RG26, National

Lt. Amazeen was a loyal officer who served in the Revenue Cutter Service for since 1837. On May 22, 1861 he was suspended from command until further orders. He was charged with having refused to hoist the National Ensign on the *Caleb Cushing*. On June 15, 1861, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Thomas H. Lawrence wrote the Collector of the Customs House in Portland, Maine and complained about the actions of his commanding officer. Lawrence wrote: "I have the honor to inform you Lt. Amazeen late in command of this vessel...tell Lt. Riehl it was not necessary to hoist the colors...the remarks were made in the morning of the day after he ordered the American flag to be hauled down."<sup>38</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Constantine A. Richardson was placed in temporary command until Captain John A. Webster Jr. took command on August 10, 1861 being transferred from the *James Dobbin* to the *Caleb Cushing* joining her in Boston.<sup>39</sup>

Following this brief transfer at Boston the *Caleb Cushing* returned to Portland on September 6, 1861 to continue in the responsibilities placed in her care serving faithfully in her duties month after month.<sup>40</sup> With the fighting between the great armies continuing, the general citizenry in Portland settled down for a long arduous war. The men and woman of the city were far removed from the battlefields of Virginia and places where native sons were being killed and wounded fighting to preserve the Union.

Closer to home, the men of the *Caleb Cushing* were required to take an oath of allegiance to defend the Constitution of the United States. Each crewmember regardless of their rank or position on the cutter was required to sign their name (or make their

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Archives. The *Caleb Cushing* was fitted out with 1 32-pounder on the aft part of the cutter and twenty-one carbines along with twenty-five cutlasses. See Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy*, 115. *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard*, 389

<sup>38</sup> Letter, Thomas H. Lawrence to Jedediah Jewett, June 15, 1861, *Letters Sent to Collectors of Customs, 1834-1896*.

<sup>39</sup> *Revenue Cutter Officers Rosters, 1790-1870*, RG26, National Archives, 153-181.

<sup>40</sup> *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard*, 389.

mark) and subscribe to the oath placed before them. All of the men affixed their name to this document and did so understanding the consequences of their actions.<sup>41</sup>

A few months prior to the *Caleb Cushing* being hijacked 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Dudley Davenport requested a transfer to another vessel because he felt qualified for command of his own cutter. In his letter dated January 5, 1863 requesting action from the Secretary of the Treasury; Davenport wrote: “A vacancy existing in the command of the Revenue Cutter *Isaac Toucey* at Castine, Maine for a first Lieutenant to command...I would respectfully ask to be assigned to her in that position...feeling myself as well qualified in either navigation or seamanship as any officer of my grade...who has had the benefit of practical seamanship in the merchant service”.<sup>42</sup>

His letter was forwarded to the Treasury Department and the Collector of Customs with the endorsement of Captain George Clark. However the Revenue Cutter Service felt he should remain at his station and serve on the *Caleb Cushing*. For the officers and the crew of the *Caleb Cushing* not much excitement occurred in Portland in the early months of 1863 except for the occasional transfer, discharge or desertion of members of the crew, leading up to the last days of June when Lt. Read shocked everyone in Portland with his unannounced arrival.

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<sup>41</sup> *Miscellaneous Correspondence and Reports*, 1793-1910, RG26, National Archives, September 3, 1861.

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Dudley Davenport to Honorable Salmon P. Chase, January 5, 1863, *Letters Received from Revenue Cutter Officers*, 1836-1910.

### Chapter 3 Capture of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing

The events leading up to the last days of the *Caleb Cushing* proved to be very interesting and somewhat bold in nature. The citizens of Portland were completely unaware of the dubious plan that was hatching at the hands of Confederate privateer Lt. Charles W. Read. On June 26, 1863 the *Caleb Cushing* returned to port after an unsuccessful search for the *Tacony* not knowing that Lt. Read had switched vessels and was at this time heading for Portland. The *Portland Daily Advertiser* reported: “The Revenue Cutter *Caleb Cushing* has returned after twelve hours ineffectual search after the rebel privateer, *Tacony*...she ran short of provisions, and the barnacles were so thick on her bottom that she couldn’t sail fast...she has returned and anchored as near her old place as will allow”.<sup>43</sup>

During the early morning hours of Friday, June 26, 1863, two fishermen from nearby Falmouth, Maine, Albert T. Bibber and Elbridge Titcomb, while sailing in their fishing schooner the *Village*, were about eight miles southeast of Damariscove Island, near Portland, when they sighted another fishing vessel.<sup>44</sup> Both fishermen were in their dory hauling in a trawl when they noticed the fishing vessel close to within a half-mile of their location sailing in their direction. When the fishing schooner reached their vessel, strange men onboard ordered them to cut their trawl, to which Titcomb replied “We couldn’t, we are under running our trawl”. Titcomb immediately took notice that the men

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<sup>43</sup> *Portland Daily Advertiser*, June 26, 1863.

<sup>44</sup> Herbert C.F. Adams, “*Pirates: A Battle In Portland Harbor: The Comedy of the Caleb Cushing*” *Civil War Times Illustrated* 20, no 9 (1982) 27 and Randy Dominic, “*The Rebels are Coming, The Rebels are Coming*” *Greater Portland Magazine* 26, no 4 (1992) 48.

on the schooner-although dressed as fisherman, were armed and realized it would be useless to resist their demands.<sup>45</sup>

Lt. Read immediately took both fishermen prisoners and declared he was an officer in the Confederate Navy from the privateer *Archer*. He informed both men of how he planned to sail into Portland to disrupt the commerce in town and wanted some information concerning harbor related traffic. Read proceeded to question both fisherman about the shipping lines that ran into Portland and the times that commerce moved about town. Additionally, Read wanted to know if there were any armed vessels in Portland and was informed that the only armed vessel was the Revenue Cutter *Caleb Cushing* anchored in the harbor.

Read also learned from the fisherman that two steam ferries ran into Portland from Boston and was determined to hijack at least one of them. The steamers Chesapeake and Forest City had regular runs and sailed everyday between Boston and Portland. Lt. Read believed that both of these vessels would be great prizes for the taking. Two days earlier on June 24, 1863 while sailing near the coast of Maine, in the *Tacony*, Read came across the fishing schooner *Archer* and seized her as a prize.

The Revenue Cutter Service in agreement with the Union Navy was looking for Read in the *Tacony* after he sank the *Clarence* twelve days earlier. Read quickly realized if he sank the bark and assumed command of his new prize no one would suspect him of changing vessels. He quickly moved his command to the *Archer* and sent the *Tacony* to the bottom of the ocean.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Deposition of Eldridge Titcomb, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 29, 1863, RG21, National Archives and Clarence Hale, "The Capture of the *Caleb Cushing*" Maine Historical Society, March 14, 1901, 191-192.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, *Confederate Corsair: The Life of Lt. Charles W. "Savez" Read*", 121-122. Mason P. Smith, *Confederates Downeast: Confederate Operations in and Around Maine* (Portland: Provincial Press, 1985), 83-85.

Read was very pleased in the way that his new vessel sailed and how easily it handled, but still needed the fisherman to guide him into the harbor. Both men outright refused to help Read, who told them to go below and not make any noise as he piloted the *Archer* into Portland harbor near Pomeroy's Rock. He awaited darkness to set his plan of attack into motion.<sup>47</sup>

The city of Portland, Maine made an imposing target. It was the largest port in Maine and the cradle of American shipping. Lt. Read planned to attack seize one of the two steamers and upon leaving Portland he would take his newly captured prize and shell the city. Read also learned that the Union Navy was building two Federal gunboats-the *Agawam* and *Pontoosuc*, both of them moored nearby at Franklin Wharf. They were nearly complete but required engines. For Read this was a remarkable opportunity to strike a huge blow to the Federal Government by hijacking a steamship for further pirating, shelling a northern city and crippling the Union Navy by destroying two gunboats expected to join the Navy upon completion.<sup>48</sup>

Lt. Read was making his final provisions for attack, when he was informed by his second in command, Engineer Eugene H. Brown of a potential problem. In his after action report, Read related the concerns of his second officer.

At sunset we entered the harbor and anchored in full view of the shipping. I explained to my officers what I expected to do after dark. My engineer, Mr. Brown, express his doubts as to his ability to start the engines of the steamer proposed to be captured without the assistance of another engineer...but as the nights were very short it was evident that if he failed to get the steamer underway...we could not get clear of the forts before we were discovered... I then decided to capture the cutter, and after getting from under the forts, to return and fire the shipping.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Richard M. Basoco, "The Cruise of 'Savez' Read" Civil War Times Illustrated 2, no 8 (1963) 13-14.

<sup>48</sup> Paul H. Silverstone, *Civil War Navies: 1855-1883* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 40 and W.W. Clayton, *History of Cumberland County Maine* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 141-143

<sup>49</sup> ORN, I, II, 657.

By midnight, Read had made his final decision. He would seize the *Caleb Cushing* rather than make an unwise attempt to capture a steamer. There would be no turning back now for Read and his crew. Meanwhile, unknown to Lt. Read, half the crew was not on duty. Only the previous day, June 26, 1863, the Captain, George Clark, who had been ill for several months, died, and command devolved on 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Dudley Davenport. Most of the crew was on liberty, or were laying out the Captain for his funeral. The officer in charge on the evening of the attack, Lt. Davenport, had with him twenty men including the cook and stewards. Davenport, a southerner by birth, was not very popular with the crew and other junior officers who thought he favored the Confederacy.<sup>50</sup>

Davenport, ordered to remain in command on the *Caleb Cushing*, and waiting the arrival of the new Captain, anchored near her usual place off of the Custom House Wharf. The harbor by this time was completely quiet except for a party on a neighboring island that went into the night, so Davenport set out the two-man watch and bedded the crew down for the night. Read realized to take the cutter would require swift work to avoid being discovered. He assembled his crewmembers and whispered final orders as he prepared to cast off two boats from the *Archer*.<sup>51</sup>

Lt. Read set sail toward the *Caleb Cushing* with nineteen heavily armed men from the *Archer* in the two small boats in his possession. Read took command of one of the boats, with Acting Masters Mate John W. Billups in command of the other. He kept three men on the *Archer* with orders to set sail at first light, and gave the signal for his men to

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<sup>50</sup> *Portland Daily Advertiser*, June 27, 1863; Deposition of Lieutenant Dudley Davenport, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 30, 1863, RG21, National Archive and Noble, *Historical Register Revenue Cutter Service Officers*, 12, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy*, 115, 212 and Winfield M. Thompson, "A Confederate Raid: Being a Faithful Historical Narrative, Derived from Original Sources" *Rudder Magazine*, 244. Ivan Musicant, *Divided Waters: The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Castle Books, 2000), 339.

pull towards the cutter, their oarlocks wrapped in marlin and rags to muffle the sounds of their rowing.<sup>52</sup>

Rowing slowly the men (still dressed as fishermen) came up on the cutter from astern. One of the men on watch, Seaman George P. Davis, was alone, his companion having gone below for some water. While on deck, Davis heard the dropping of oars coming in from the port quarter and saw the outline of a small boat nearing the cutter “I hailed them three times, but got no answer...I immediately shoved the slide of the companionway... opened the door and called for Lieutenant Davenport”.<sup>53</sup> When Davis turned about to go forward, he was met by several men who boarded the cutter on the starboard side, that he had previously not seen. Before he could sound the alarm “They caught me by the collar, shoved pistols in my face, and threatened to shoot me if I made any resistance”.<sup>54</sup>

The other man on watch, Seaman Hugh Finnegan, was below deck when Davis was captured. He described his ordeal “Shortly afterward, I heard Davis sing out, but did not take much notice...then I heard the noise of men coming aboard on deck...I started for the hatchway...but was met by a man holding a pistol in one hand and in the other a cutlass...He told me go below or I’ll blow your brains out, you are my prisoner.”<sup>55</sup>

Below deck, the cook Benjamin Ashby was asleep in the galley, when a stranger wielding a sword awakened him, unexpectedly. Ashby was asked whether he was alone, to which he replied he was. Ashby went on to say: “He ordered me to get up, asked me

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<sup>52</sup> Jones, *Confederate Corsair*, 6-7

<sup>53</sup> Deposition of Seaman George P. Davis, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 29, 1863, RG21, National Archives.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>55</sup> Deposition of Seaman Hugh Finnegan, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 29, 1863, RG21, National Archives.



whether I was black or white...I told him I was white...and he put me in irons and kept me there until half past four in the morning.”<sup>56</sup>

Lt. Davenport, surprised by all of the commotion on deck, thought another ship in the harbor had struck the *Caleb Cushing*. When Davenport tried, he was shoved back and ordered not to come on deck. Afterwards, three men who went below, armed with revolvers and cutlasses, seized Davenport saying: “You are a prisoner to the Confederate States...we must put you in irons” to which he protested angrily stating he was an officer and believed this would disgrace him.<sup>57</sup>

The remainder of the men onboard gave up without any resistance. The men were asleep in hammocks on the berth deck, when persons ordering them to get up, abruptly disturbed them. Seaman Samuel A. Prince described his ordeal when he was roused from his hammock.

I stood watch from 10 o'clock to 12, and then turned in...When I had been in my hammock about a half hour, and was just dropping off to sleep, I heard men climbing over the side and then the sound of many footsteps on deck...It is the new Captain I thought coming to take command...in the next instance I learned my mistake...A voice close to my ear cried-surrender in the name of the Southern Confederacy...for an instant I lay as one paralyzed, then jumped up to find the berth deck swarming with men armed with pistols and cutlasses, and everything in confusion.<sup>58</sup>

Each man taken prisoner was immediately put into iron and placed under guard. Afterwards, Lt. Read addressed his prisoners saying “Now boys, what we want is the *Cushing*, not you Yanks, If you behave yourself, we'll put you off on some island as we

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<sup>56</sup> Deposition of Cook Benjamin Ashby, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 29, 1863, RG21, National Archives and Michael J. Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 163-164. Dennis J. Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998) 14-15. Lt. Read expected the cook to be black. This was a longtime tradition in the United States Navy and the Revenue Cutter Service. Blacks were increasingly relegated to jobs as cooks, stewards, and boys. See Linda E. Townsend, *History of Blacks in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1790* (Washington: Coast Guard Historians Office, 1990), 3 and W. Jeffrey Bolster, “To Feel Like a Man: Black Seaman in the Northern States, 1800-1860” *The Journal of American History* 76, no 4 (1990), 1194.

<sup>57</sup> Deposition of Lieutenant Dudley Davenport, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 30, 1863, RG21, National Archives.

<sup>58</sup> William B. Kenniston, “*The Capture of the Caleb Cushing: A Little Struggle in Portland Harbor as Told by One of the Crew*”, *Lewiston Journal Illustrated Magazine*, May 30, 1908.

go out of the harbor. If you make trouble, you'll be shot and thrown overboard." Read then left the crew under the guard of two sturdy Confederate sailors with cocked pistols to guard the men, as he hurried on deck to get the *Caleb Cushing* underway.<sup>59</sup>

The task of capturing the cutter was now complete, however there was a much larger problem for Read to contend with. The wind that aided in his capture, had died out completely, and no sailing vessel would move without wind. Furthermore, Read had difficulties slipping the cable, and had to raise the anchor by hand. This took almost an hour when every minute counted to make his escape. Read was only able to get away by putting both of the small boats out in front of the cutter and towing the unwieldy craft out of the harbor.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Adolph A. Hoehling, *Damn the Torpedoes: Naval Incidents of the Civil War* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1989), 68 and Kenniston, "The Capture of the *Caleb Cushing*: A Little Struggle in Portland Harbor as Told by One of the Crew", *Lewiston Journal Illustrated Magazine*, May 30, 1908. The crew captured onboard consisted of twenty-one men including Lieutenant Dudley Davenport, Quartermaster Alexander Hayden, Quartermaster John Matson, Cook Benjamin Ashby, Ordinary Seaman John Avelleno, Seaman Byron S. Blish, Ward- Room Boy James H. Bush (Black), Seaman John Collins, Seaman George H. Plummer, Boy Dickson B. Wescott, Seaman Samuel A. Prince, Boy Edward Mahoney, Seaman Charles Wilson, Seaman Edward J. Williams, Ordinary Seaman Thomas Heffern, Ordinary Seaman George H. Rand, Ordinary Seaman Peter Warner, Ordinary Seaman John Hayes, Seaman Hugh Finnegan, Seaman George P. Davis, and Boy George McCarty. *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Edward S. Miller, *Civil War Sea Battles: Seafights and Shipwrecks in the War Between the States*. (Conshohocken: Combined Books, 1995), 179

## Chapter 4 Destruction of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing

At about four in the morning Read was finally underway, moving slowly through the channel of the Portland harbor. At this same time, the steamer *Forest City* was coming into Portland Harbor from her regular run from Boston. One of the men on the steamer, Reuben Chandler, working as the baggage-master noticed a ship passing his way out of the harbor, “Coming in, we passed the Revenue Cutter *Caleb Cushing* being towed to sea by small boats. Eleven men were in each boat. There was no wind, so we thought nothing of it, as the cutter was a sailing craft. We did not stand close enough to recognize, any of the crew, and there were only two men on her deck.”<sup>61</sup>

Onboard the *Forest City*, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant James H. Merryman, watched the cutter being towed out of the harbor towards the open sea. He was just recently appointed Captain of the *Caleb Cushing*, and was coming to take command of the ship, when he demanded that Captain John Liscomb of the steamer intercept the cutter to put him onboard. Liscomb refused to do so arguing he needed to make his railroad connection and therefore could not stop. The passengers arriving at the dock noticed men in uniform standing on the Custom House wharf. Merryman soon discovered these men were the crew of the *Caleb Cushing*, returning from liberty, wondering why the cutter sailed without them. In his after action report he stated “I found Lieutenant Richardson, with the boatswain, gunner, and fourteen seaman of the *Cushing*, and assumed command of the party...I proceeded to make my dispositions for the recapture of the cutter.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Reuben J. Chandler, “*Portland Man Tell of Civil War Battle in Harbor Here 60 Years Ago Today*”, *Portland Press*, June 27, 1923.

<sup>62</sup> ORN, I, II, 323-325 and Jones, *Confederate Corsair*, 8 The remaining crewmembers that met Lieutenant James H. Merryman were Lieutenant Constantine A. Richardson, Master-At-Arms William Hall, Gunner Samuel N. Ball, Boatswain John P. Butcher, and fourteen Seaman.  *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives*

Lt. Merryman immediately took command of the situation, and sent a courier to tell the Customs House collector of Portland what had happened. Jedediah Jewett, the port collector was eating breakfast when he was notified that the *Caleb Cushing* was no longer in the harbor and had gone to sea. He immediately suspected Lieutenant Davenport as a Confederate sympathizer, had somehow tricked the crew and made off with the ship. Afterwards, he recanted his harsh words about Lt. Davenport.<sup>63</sup>

Acting quickly, Jewett worked with Portland's Mayor Jacob McLellen, to immediately charter several vessels to chase after Read. Additionally, he reacted by requesting men and equipment from the neighboring military bases in the vicinity of Portland. Messages were sent to Colonel Edwin C. Mason of the 7<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry at nearby Fort Abraham Lincoln, on the Fore River, to send troops and supplies. Mason responded swiftly by having men on the Portland waterfront within the hour with the help of the tug *Tiger*. Another message was to nearby Fort Preble on the opposite side of the bay to Major George Andrews for troops and supplies. Andrews responded by sending thirty-five men under the able command of Captain Nathaniel Prime to help with the crisis.<sup>64</sup>

One Portland resident who kept a watchful eye of the harbor was Enoch Moody, who worked as the watch-keeper of the Portland Observatory. Believing that trouble was stirring, he sounded the alarm to notify the citizens of the city that help was needed to recapture the cutter.<sup>65</sup> Once Jewett had organized the military forces he needed to

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<sup>63</sup> Smith, *Confederates Downeast*, 92 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Dudley Davenport from Georgia chose to remain loyal to the Union at the start of the hostilities. He was a native of Savannah, and his family were slaveholders. He had an older brother (Hugh Davenport-1<sup>st</sup> Georgia Infantry) joining the Confederate cause. U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia. RG29. M653. Roll 115, Pg 228. U.S. Bureau of Census, *Slave Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia. RG29. M653, Pg 52 and *Compiled Service Records*, Military Service Branch, National Archives. RG109. M226. Roll 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 93

<sup>65</sup> John K. Moulton, *The Portland Observatory: A Triad* (Yarmouth: Moulton Publishing, 1990), 9.

recapture the *Caleb Cushing*, he sought to bring the vessels together that would transport the men and supplies needed for the pursuit.

The steamers *Casco*, *Chesapeake*, and *Forest City* would be utilized to pursue and recapture the Revenue Cutter The *Casco* transported men from nearby Fort Preble and brought with onboard a small 6-pound field piece and one 12-pounder along with shot and shell. The artillery was lashed to the decks of the steamers for the passage to sea. Jewett then ordered the steamer *Chesapeake* loaded under the vigilant eyes of Mayor Jacob McLellen. The steamer took onboard a small detachment of men from the 7<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry and another two 6-pounders brought from the Maine State Arsenal. In addition to the armament more than fifty Portland city residents boarded the steamers eager to see a fight.<sup>66</sup>

One citizen on board the *Chesapeake* to witness the scene unfolding was James W. Brackett. He was a clerk for the firm of Fillebrown & Burton on Commercial Street in Portland. Great excitement spread through the city and he wanted to be a part of this historic event “This settled the matter for me...I ran down the wharf, and as I was passing, the Mayor held up a musket, shouting, this is the last one...whom takes it...for once I was in luck.” Brackett would now get the chance to chase after the “pirates” that took the cutter.<sup>67</sup>

Lt. Read by this time had cleared the harbor and was approximately twelve miles out when he observed through his marine glasses black smoke billowing from several vessels steaming towards him in hot pursuit of his captured prize. He noticed the smoke from the two lead steamers bearing down and immediately ordered the deck cleared for action. Read quickly realized he had limited ammunition onboard to defend himself. He found six rounds of solid shot next to the 32-pounder, with plenty of powder to spare.

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<sup>66</sup> Smith, *Confederates Downeast*, 93.

<sup>67</sup> James W. Brackett, Papers Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine

The *Forest City* sailing ahead of the *Chesapeake* and was the first to be fired upon by Lt. Read. As she came into range, the 32-pounder onboard the *Caleb Cushing* was fired in defense, with the first shot splashing in the water about fifty yards off the bow of the *Forest City*. Read then fired three more shots, the last falling very close to the waterline of the lead steamer.<sup>68</sup>

When his ammunition ran out Lt. Read grabbed whatever he could find on deck to fire as his pursuers. His final shot was loaded with check chains and broken kettles. He knew that without additional firepower he could not possibly defend himself from his pursuers. Unknown to Lt. Read the *Caleb Cushing* had a hidden compartment onboard behind a mirror in the Captains stateroom. In this compartment were stored ninety rounds of shot. Not only could Lt. Read not find the shot locker, but also Lt. Davenport had thrown the key to the locker overboard to prevent the “pirates” from using the ammunition against the steamers in pursuit of Read. Frantically, Read collected anything that he could use to fire at the steamers. His precarious situation was only made worse when the wind had again died down and Read was now sitting still in the water. For Read his situation was looking bleak as he saw only one course of action to take.<sup>69</sup>

Read immediately ordered his captives over the side into one of the three small boats alongside the cutter. Lt. Davenport was the last of the crew to board and was thrown the keys to unshackle the remainder of the crew. Davenport reported: “We rowed off in such a way as to keep out of the way of the shot...and ran for the steamer *Chesapeake*, on board of which we were taken...I took off my white shirt and gave it to

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<sup>68</sup> Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy*, 119.

<sup>69</sup> Kern, *U.S. Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, 12-4 and Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy*, 120; See also Benjamin J. Willard, *Life History and Adventures of Captain Benjamin J. Willard* (Portland: Lakeside Press, 1895), 78.

my men to hold up as a flag of truce, and it was held up on a boat hook for that purpose”.<sup>70</sup>

While rowing towards the *Chesapeake*, the crew observed Lieutenant’s Read and Brown setting fire to the cutter. Davenport stated: “Before getting to the Chesapeake I observed the smoke of the burning of the cutter and saw the pirates leave the cutter in their boats”.<sup>71</sup> One citizen soldier onboard the *Chesapeake*, John M. Gould of Portland, Maine came along to report the story for the local newspaper. Gould observed a small boat pushing off from the cutter “Full of men with blue jackets...picking up the boat first...they ran up a white rag, just in time to save a charge from our guns” The men in the small boat responded “We are the cutter’s crew”.<sup>72</sup>

Many civilians onboard the *Chesapeake* were frustrated and wanted the men from the cutter shot or hung outright, but “They were kept from their evil intentions on the innocent fellows by some strong minded men, but I never saw any men so particularly anxious to do something”.<sup>73</sup> While picking up the crew from the cutter, someone onboard the steamer remarked “She is afire” and “Sure enough there was the cutter afire and the rebels pushing off in two boats”.<sup>74</sup> Both steamers broke off their approach to the cutter fearing the impending explosion. Within several minutes, there was a blinding flash, a deafening bellow, as more than 500 pounds of powder exploded and blew the *Caleb Cushing* apart.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Deposition of Lieutenant Dudley Davenport, *Affidavits, Depositions, and Docket Books-Portland, Maine*, June 30, 1863, RG21, National Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> *John M. Gould Diary*. June 27, 1863. Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine. Gould acted as a correspondent reporting the story for the *New York Times* on June 29, 1863. He was discharged as Adjutant from the 10<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry on May 8, 1863 and was a civilian when the *Caleb Cushing* was hijacked. After the affair he rejoined the Army on September 18, 1863 as Major of the 29<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry. *Compiled Service Records*, Military Service Branch, National Archives. RG94. M543. Roll 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Kern, *U.S. Revenue Cutters in the Civil War*, 12-5 and Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy*, 120.

Onboard the *Chesapeake*, Gould witnessed the explosion of the *Caleb Cushing* and described the scene, “A volume of black and red flame shot up from the whole aft part of the schooner. It reached in a second of time its altitude and then with a lesser force expanded into one grand immense wreath of smoke, the debris commenced to fall...simultaneously with this grand explosion came the report the effect was beyond all description”.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, onboard the *Forest City* the men onboard watched the cutter sink quickly beneath the waves. Lt. Read and his “pirates” made their way towards the steamer and had a line tossed to their boat. They were ordered onboard one at a time. Read climbed onboard the steamer and declared himself a prisoner of war and surrendered his side arm to Lt. James H. Merryman.<sup>77</sup>

During all of the confusion the *Archer* had been left unchecked. Onboard the *Forest City*, Albert Bibber, the captured fisherman went to the captain notifying him that the *Archer* was nearby and would attempt to escape unless pursued. Jedediah Jewett reported “The steamer [*Forest City*] ran a few miles out to sea and overhauled the schooner, when, on firing one gun across her bow, she hove to and surrendered with three men on board”.<sup>78</sup> For Read his bold attempt had nearly succeeded.

The triumphant citizens and soldiers who participated in the pursuit were treated like heroes on their return to Portland. Many citizens wanted Read and his crew hanged as “Pirates” for their daring attack, but fortunately cooler heads prevailed. One local paper in Portland captured the air of misgivings felt by the citizens of town. *The Portland Transcript* described the scene best: “Our citizens could hardly reconcile themselves to

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<sup>76</sup> John M. Gould, Diary. June 27, 1863.

<sup>77</sup> Jones, *Confederate Corsair*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> ORN, I, II, 324.



the idea of not hanging somebody”<sup>79</sup> For the crew of the *Caleb Cushing*, returning to Portland had not ended the affair for them. Seaman Samuel A. Prince described the ordeal that met his fellow crewmembers upon disembarking from the *Chesapeake*: “When we arrived at the city, a mob met us at the wharf and gave us a reception very similar to what we had received when the steamer picked us up...The people had of course, not learned the true state of affairs, and believed the crew, or a part of them, at least had been disloyal...We were marched under a strong guard to the jail where we were left till the next day, when an investigation was held and we were given our liberty”.<sup>80</sup>

Captain Nathaniel Prime recognized that the walls of the fort would be much safer than the jail in Portland. He proceeded to organize his regulars and march Lt. Read and his crew to nearby Fort Preble where they were to remain until July 25, 1863 when they were transferred to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor until exchanged a year later.<sup>81</sup>

Erroneous reports, phony sightings, and inflated press coverage all aided in the hysteria that settled all along the East Coast during the summer months of 1863. Lt. Read had managed to destroy or bond twenty-two prizes in a short period of twenty-one days, demonstrating how effective a small well-trained crew with a dedicated commander could wreak disorder on the Union shipping so vital to the supplying of troops in the field. Always operating on stale information, the vessels in pursuit of Read were a couple of days behind the Confederates-added to this his ability and good fortune to change vessels three times.

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<sup>79</sup> *Portland Transcript*. June 29, 1863.

<sup>80</sup> Kenniston, “*The Capture of the Caleb Cushing: A Little Struggle in Portland Harbor as Told by One of the Crew*”, *Lewiston Journal Illustrated Magazine*, May 30, 1908.

<sup>81</sup> *Returns from U.S. Military Posts*, Fort Preble, Maine, 1863 and Campbell, *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy*, 123-125 and Hearn, *Gray Raiders of the Sea*, 93.

Whether Read was lucky, daring, or just plain intelligent is debatable. Not only had the *Caleb Cushing* been destroyed, but also Lt. Read's bold attacks on Union shipping had come an end. The men who served on the *Caleb Cushing* responded exactly as men would that were captured in the dead of night with no prior knowledge of their assailants. The capture of the *Caleb Cushing* one of the most unique incidents to occur during the Civil War and one that would actually be repeated the following year in Georgia.<sup>82</sup> With the captain laid out for burial, and the crew either on liberty or sleeping, Read was able to gain access to the cutter with little resistance preserving for her a place in Naval History.

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<sup>82</sup> Derek Smith, "Rebel Raid on the Water Witch" *North & South* 5, no 2 (2002): 80-85. Confederates captured the gunboat *Water Witch* on the night of June 3, 1864 off the coast of Georgia with the loose of a number of sailors on both side. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, 14-15.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Socio-Economic Analysis of the Crewmembers of the Caleb Cushing**

The men that served in the Revenue Cutter Service and on the *Caleb Cushing* played an equally important role in the overall Union war effort as the men who served onboard any warship in the service of the United States Navy. They were also just as important as the soldiers that waged war on land in support of their Naval brothers. Although the Revenue Cutter Service is often overlooked, most men regardless of their background or experience, and like their counterparts in the United States Army and Navy, enlisted for many of the same reasons at the outbreak of fighting, and served faithfully for the duration of their enlistment. This scholarly research is the first attempt to uncover in-depth facts and details about the men who served in a branch of service that is often ignored or forgotten.

This research project covered the period of January 1861 to the last available muster roll of June 1863. In the twenty-nine months that were scrutinized the number of men who actually served on the *Caleb Cushing* (including Officers) totaled 143 men.<sup>83</sup> This research incorporated statistical research before many of the crew joined the cutter and spanned for years afterwards to understand some of the after effects that the Civil War had on the crew.

With the research concluded some generalizations could be made about the crew of a Civil War Revenue Cutter. The men could be best described as a comparatively heterogeneous group who served together in conditions that often were less than comfortable. In some instances crewmembers of the Revenue Cutter Service fit neatly into the stereotyped view of a common sailor in the United States Navy was like during the Civil War-while in other ways they differed greatly.

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<sup>83</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives.*

Some of the common threads that both shared originated from very old seafaring traditions stretching back decades before the start of the Civil War. One major similarity took the shape of shipboard routine. Although enlistments and initial training differed for each, they still shared common ground with the responsibilities and duties placed on each sailor whether “jack tar” trod the quarterdeck of a Revenue Cutter or a United States Frigate. Some of the customs shared by both services included the daily grog ration and the monthly hospital deductions from the wages for each member of the crew.

Additionally, the United States Navy and the Revenue Cutter Service both had long traditions of black sailors who served alongside their white shipmates. The men were equally paid for duties regardless of the color of their skin. Both services had a wide variety of men from different localities, although the Revenue Cutter Service was more likely to recruit from their homeport.

When researching some of the differences between each service some very important qualities of a typical sailor came to light very quickly when compiling all of the research. The officers and their crew in the Revenue Cutter Service were older and more experienced than the men who served in the United States Navy during the Civil War. This age difference is very apparent from all of the records that were researched. The men of the Revenue Cutter Service also had a greater number of men who had prior or subsequent military service in other conflicts involving the United States, unlike the Navy who had few men with prior experience.

The naval experience for the common sailor as stated above was similar, but some of the methods employed in enlisting and training in each branch worked very differently. Men enlisting in the United States Navy did so at one of the many rendezvous stations in larger cities dotted all along the eastern seaboard. Many of the stations were located near Navy yards and many were located in large urban areas that were likely to supply sailors.

In the Revenue Cutter Service it was completely opposite, with men reporting aboard any number of cutters and enlisting for military service.<sup>84</sup>

Both branches required recruits to sign shipping articles before any training or shipboard duties could be assigned. Shipping articles essentially functioned as a contract between the sailor and the Federal Government providing detailed information sworn and witnessed by a duly appointed officer. Once signed a man now was officially a member of his respective branch of service for a specified period of time. Crucial information about the sailor included his rating, monthly wages, and term of service. In the Navy they also contained descriptive information setting forth age, occupation, and physical characteristics. In the Revenue Cutter Service shipping articles were not quite detailed. They only provided the name, rank, rate of pay, and the date of enlistment.<sup>85</sup>

Once the new enlistee signed his shipping articles and took his oath of allegiance he was ready to be trained in the art of seamanship and navigation. In the United States Navy new sailors were sent to receiving ships located in most major ports in the North. These ships were generally aged obsolete, but not necessarily fragile ships of the line remaining from the Mexican War. Here new recruits received limited training waiting assignment to one of the newly commissioned ships frequently being constructed to fill the needs of the Navy. In the Revenue Cutter Service there was no central training

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<sup>84</sup> Donald L. Canney, *Lincoln's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organizations, 1861-1865*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 120-121, U.S. Treasury Department, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 20 and Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, 20

<sup>85</sup> Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*, 29. Men enlisting in the United States Navy could do so for periods of one, two or three years. Men enlisting in the Revenue Cutter Service would be shipped for a term of one year (unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of the Treasury) under the supervision of the commanding officer of a cutter, in accordance to the terms of the shipping articles. Crewmember could only receive an early discharge by the Treasury Department or the Port Collector. Consult U.S. Treasury Department, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 24-25.

facility for recruits, as men were given on the job training aboard the cutter they signed on.<sup>86</sup>

Aboard a vessel men had comparable shipboard jobs and responsibilities. Both services had commissioned officers, petty officers, and seaman who constituted the backbone of any sailing vessel. Some other positions including stewards, cooks, and boys performed more mundane duties aboard any ship at sea. In the Revenue Cutter Service no officers held any rank above Captain and each cutter had fewer rated petty officer because each person aboard a cutter performed multiple duties and generally served together for longer periods of time.<sup>87</sup>

Wages onboard a cutter was very close to pay aboard a United States Navy ship during the Civil War. Very few pay increases, and new legislation have come over the years for sailors. Generally on the lower end of the pay scale were the boys, stewards, and cooks. The bulks of any fighting ship comprised seaman and over them in positions of immediate authority were petty officers. The highest rank was reserved for officers who commanded the ship and were ultimately responsible for the safety of their vessel. Wages were determinate on prior experience of the new recruit and this affected the possibility of promotion. On any ship, the captain generally rated the most qualified seaman as petty officers to help with the daily activities of shipboard life. This practice was common in both seafaring branches.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, 26-27 Canney, *Lincoln's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organizations*, 122.

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Treasury Department, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 23-26.

<sup>88</sup> Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*, 34-35. In the Navy recruits were paid according to their rate. Boys were rated in three separate classes and paid between \$8.00-\$10.00/mo. Landsman received \$12.00, Ordinary Seaman, \$14.00, and Seaman, \$18.00 per month. Petty officers were paid between \$22.00-\$30.00/mo depending on the job description. In the Revenue Cutter Service, Boys were paid \$10.00/mo, with Ordinary Seaman, \$14.00, and Seaman, \$18.00 per month. Petty officers were paid between \$22.00-30.00/mo. In the Revenue Cutter Service there was no rate of Landsman. Generally men with five or more years of experience were rated Seaman. Men with two years experience were rated Ordinary Seaman, and men with no prior

The practice of rating men to positions of petty officers was something that the United States Navy frequently was accustomed to doing. Because the Navy grew so rapidly and out of need for men they were willing to rate someone regardless of prior experience simply based on being older and possibly more experienced in the eyes of the Navy. One excellent example is found in 1862 aboard the United States Navy gunboat *Victoria*. Sumner Howard enlisted in the Navy at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 24, 1862 for a period of three years being rated as a Landsman with no prior naval experience. After a short period of training lasting three weeks on a receiving ship in New York he was transferred to the gunboat *Victoria* on March 15, 1862 still a Landsman. Two days later Howard was rated to Master-At-Arms (senior petty officer of any vessel) for the next five months until health issues forced him to return to port. In August 1862 he was reduced in rank to Landsman and sent to New York and discharged on August 25, 1862. In the Revenue Cutter Service petty officers were promoted based on gathered experience in all matters directly related to their abilities as sailors.<sup>89</sup>

Onboard any vessel regardless of design or complement, men were entitled to their daily grog ration according to regulation prescribed by the War Department. In the Revenue Cutter Service men were likewise entitled to daily grog rations as set by the Treasury Department. On September 1, 1862, the time-honored practice was disbanded in the Navy and sailors were paid five cents per day in place of the ration for a total of \$1.50 extra each month in pay. In the Revenue Cutter Service the grog ration was similarly disbanded in 1862, with each crewmember (less the boys) to be paid three cents

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experience were rated as Landsman. See also *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing*, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>89</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Gunboat Victoria, 1862-1865*, RG24, National Archives and *Rendezvous Reports and other Personnel Records, 1846-1884*, RG24, National Archives.

per day in place of the ration for a total of \$.90 extra paid in wages to each man serving on a cutter.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the grog ration being disbanded, men in both branches had to pay a small allotment from their wages to cover hospital care provided by the Federal Government. In the United States Navy and the Revenue Cutter Service both branches deducted twenty cents each month to help finance the hospital system in providing care for sailors detached from their ships. In the Navy the hospitals were Navy hospitals located at the various yards. In the Revenue Cutter Service if a man was sickly he went to the Marine hospital (run by the Merchant Marine) where he would receive treatment. For the men of the *Caleb Cushing* the Marine hospital that handled their men was located in Westbrook, Maine a few miles west of Portland.<sup>91</sup>

Another important balance linking both services comes from the old naval practice concerning black sailors serving onboard vessels during the Civil War. Black sailors are not unique to seafaring, with this practice stretching back several decades. In the United States Army during the war blacks were segregated into all black regiments usually commanded by white officers. A black private was paid \$10.00 per month to a white private who was paid \$13.00 per month for the same job. In the naval branches men worked and toiled together for the same wages and berthed together on the same ship regardless of skin color. In the Navy some blacks were advanced to the rank of petty officers. This was not a majority of the men, as most were consigned to positions of landsman, boys, and stewards. When conducting research on the *Caleb Cushing* and the Revenue Cutter Service it was concluded that the service measured nicely with the black-

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<sup>90</sup> William N. Still, *Raiders and Blockaders: The American Civil War Afloat* (Washington: Brassy, 1998), 72-73 and U.S. Treasury Department, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 26.

<sup>91</sup> E.G. Shettleworth, "United States Seaman had to pay 20 Cents per month to get Hospital Care", *Portland Evening Express*, August 2, 1967. The Marine hospital at Westbrook, Maine opened in 1852 and served the needs of seafaring men of Portland for more than 100 years. *Portland Inquirer*, March 22, 1855.



to-white crew ratio for ships in the United States Navy. However, onboard the *Caleb Cushing* the several black crewmembers held no positions of immediate authority as each of them was relegated to rates of cook, stewards, and boys. Considering the information found on the pie chart below the number of black crewmembers on the *Caleb Cushing* held at the 5% mark. Typically not more than 5% of any crew was black on any ship of the United States Navy during the Civil War.<sup>92</sup>

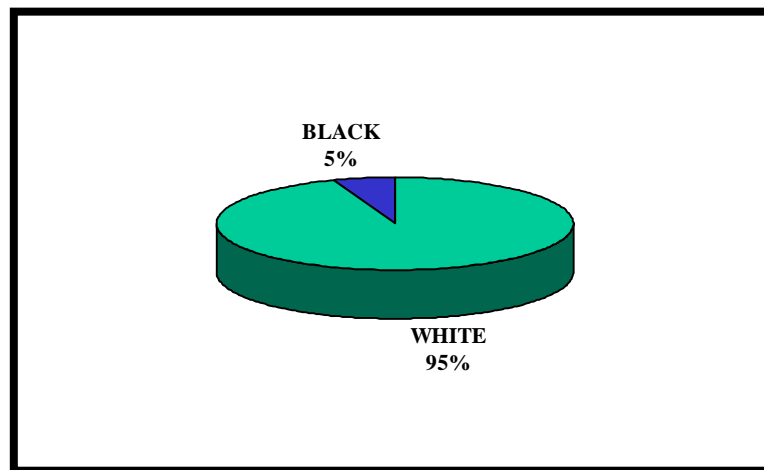


TABLE 1

On the *Caleb Cushing* there were six men of the crew recorded as black or mulatto who served with the cutter during the Civil War. Two of the men were older and had more seafaring experience than the four younger black crewmembers. The older men were William P. Brown and John D. Smith, and they served in the rating of cook. The other four were William A. Brewster, James H. Bush, George L. Revaleon, and James H. Williams. All of them were under the age of twenty and had limited seafaring experience

<sup>92</sup> Joseph Glatthaar, *Forged In Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 65. In Glenn F. Williams's article on the USS *Constellation* 16 black sailors served on the frigate. This total was no more than 5% of the crew. One man with several years of seamanship experience James Evans of Boston, MA served as a coxswain onboard (petty officer) for more than 2 years. See Glenn F. Williams, "The Many Tasks of Uncle Sam's Webfeet" *America's Civil War* 15 no. 1 (2002): 22-29. James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (New York: Random House, 1993), 176-177.

as each was rated boy. Each of the six men was literate and made their own marks to receive wages each month indicating all had some rudiments of education.<sup>93</sup>

#### William P. Brown

He was a native of Newburyport, Massachusetts born there on November 22, 1808 to John F. and Rosanna Brown. Brown married his wife Charlotte in Massachusetts and moved to Portland with his family before 1850 and lived in the vicinity for many years until his death on December 19, 1873. On June 13, 1849, Brown was registered as a seaman and that provided an accurate physical description proving his ability as a seaman. In 1860 he was living in an ethnic neighborhood of Portland just prior to the start of the Civil War, with another crewmember James H. Williams who was only a boy. In the city directories of Portland and the Federal Census Brown always appears as Sailor living in sometimes secluded locations. He was shipped onboard the *Caleb Cushing* on February 1, 1862 and discharged several months later on August 16, 1862. Brown served as a cook and was paid \$20.00 per month in wages. His wages were better than the seaman, but less than the petty officers onboard. After his discharge Brown work downtown close to the waterfront till his death in 1873.<sup>94</sup>

#### John D. Smith

Smith was born in Pennsylvania in 1815 working along the coast in New England. By 1860 he was in Massachusetts living in New Bedford and working as a seaman. After the start of the war, he moved to Portland and shipped aboard the *Caleb Cushing* signing

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<sup>93</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing*, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>94</sup> *Vital Records of Newburyport, Massachusetts to the end of the year 1849* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1911), 15; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29. M432. Roll 252, Pg 29; *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29, M653. Roll 436, Pg 10; *Seaman Protection Certificates, Portland, Maine, 1820-1875*, RG36, National Archives; *Portland, Maine City Directories*. Portland Public Library, 1856-1877; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing*, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives. *Maine Death Certificates*, Maine State Archives, Augusta, Maine.

on September 1, 1861 being rated as a cook. Smith served as the cook until February 1, 1862 when William P. Brown took his place. He was then rated a cabin steward and did this work until the *Caleb Cushing* was destroyed. He was one of the crewmembers who had liberty the night she was hijacked. Afterwards, he drifted about and was very difficult to follow due the frequency of his name.<sup>95</sup>

William A. Brewster

William A. Brewster proved to be an interesting man to research, as he was not a native of the United States. He was born on October 15, 1847 in St. John, Newfoundland, Canada and was the son of Henry and Hannah Brewster. He was always listed as a mulatto in the census and his death record. He shipped aboard the *Caleb Cushing* on January 1, 1863 and was rated as cabin boy. He served until the cutter was destroyed and was on liberty that evening. A few weeks later Brewster joined the United States Navy on July 27, 1863 in Boston, Massachusetts signing on as a landsman. He was a boy on the *Caleb Cushing* and had limited seafaring experience. He signed on for two years serving on the USS *Princeton* and being trained on the receiving ship USS *Ohio* in Boston harbor. Brewster was discharged from the Navy on July 19, 1865 and lived in Massachusetts for the rest of his life. He never married and died a few years later on July 15, 1869 in Milton, Massachusetts. At the time of his death he was listed as a ship steward indicating that after his time in the Navy he went back to the life of a sailor.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts. RG29, M653. Roll 490, Pg 680; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>96</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives; *Rendezvous Reports and other Personnel Records, 1846-1884*, RG24, National Archives; *Massachusetts Vital Records, 1841-1910*; Milton Town Clerk, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston.

George L. Revaleon

Revaleon like Brewster was a boy when he served on the Caleb Cushing performing many of the menial tasks on any vessel. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts on August 20, 1848 and was the son of Charles F. Revaleon and Dorcas Ames. After his father passed away in 1860 the family moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts. He joined the crew of the Caleb Cushing on May 1, 1862 signing on as a cabin boy onboard the cutter. On December 31, 1862 he was discharged and went back to Massachusetts to be with his family. By 1865, George had moved into Boston and joined the United States Navy on February 14, 1865. He recorded his civilian occupation as waiter and signed for a period of three years to serve with the Navy. After his initial training onboard the receiving ship USS Ohio in Boston he reported onboard his first vessel. Revaleon was rated as a 1<sup>st</sup> class fireman and served on the USS Hartford. He was later transferred to the USS Wachusett and discharged while on that vessel on August 14, 1868 being rated a landsman. After his discharge from the Navy he went back to Boston and was employed as a postal clerk the remainder of his life. Revaleon married on August 4, 1883 to Bessie Fraser in Boston, Massachusetts. The couple never had any children and he died on September 28, 1918 in Boston. His wife survived him a number of years and died in Boston on July 24, 1948. Both of them were buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Boston.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (National Archives) Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. RG29. M593. Roll 623, Pg 461; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives; *Rendezvous Reports and other Personnel Records, 1846-1884*, RG24, National Archives; *Massachusetts Vital Records, 1841-1910*; Boston City Clerk, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston; Civil War Pension Files, 1860-1934, Certificate Number: 1167206. RG15, National Archives; Franklin A. Doorman, *Twenty Families of Color in Massachusetts: 1742-1998* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1998), 368-371; *Boston Globe*, September 30, 1918 and July 25, 1948.

James H. Williams

Williams was living with the family of William P. Brown in 1860 and was a boarder in his home with no relation. He was about 16 years old and was born in Maine when he joined the crew of the *Caleb Cushing*. Williams signed onboard the cutter on November 7, 1861 as a boy. On December 1, 1861 he was rated as a cabin boy and served with the cutter until he was discharged on March 30, 1862. No further information about his whereabouts could be located after his service on the *Caleb Cushing*.<sup>98</sup>

James H. Bush

Bush was born in Portland, Maine in 1849 and was the son of George and Elizabeth Bush. His father was a native of North Carolina and was a mariner in 1860. He signed on the crew of the *Caleb Cushing* as wardroom boy (tended to the officers) on July 1, 1862 at the age of 13. He served on the cutter until 1863. He was one of the crew captured on the night she was hijacked working with the cook Benjamin Ashby. After his discharge from the Revenue Cutter Service he lived in the vicinity of Portland, Maine over the next twenty years getting work wherever he could. No information is available concerning when he died.<sup>99</sup>

Another interesting record concerning the crew of the *Caleb Cushing* comes from the diversity found in the nativity of the crew of a Revenue Cutter. Men who joined either military branch found their companions onboard equally heterogeneous in origin as themselves. In the Navy men came together at the rendezvous stations and later onboard the receiving ships to find themselves ships to the next available warship being

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<sup>98</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29. RG29, M653. Roll 436, Pg 10; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29. M432. Roll 252, Pg 8; *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (National Archives) Windham, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29. M593. Roll 542, Pg 526; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives;

commissioned. In the Revenue Cutter Service this impression of variety is found amongst the genesis of the crew, with more central geographical leanings on the cutter from the surrounding states and regions. In the chart below this sense of assortment is apparent when analyzing the crewmembers of a cutter.<sup>100</sup>

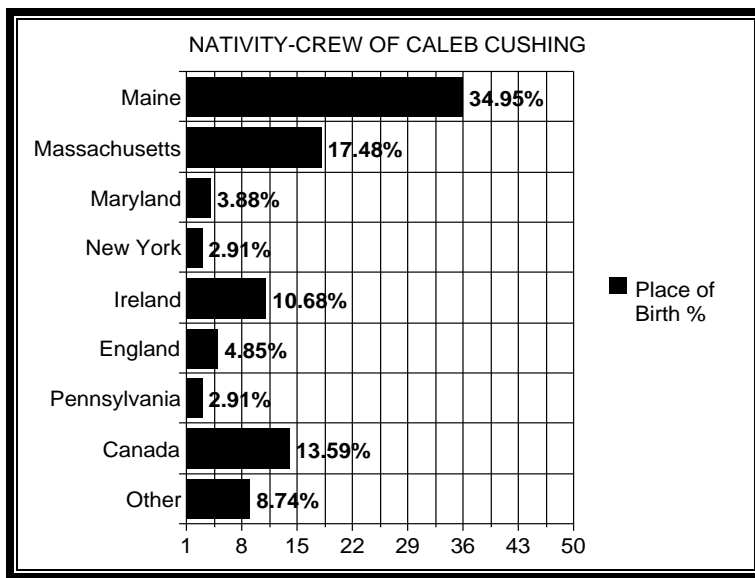


TABLE 2

With the above data compiled about the crew of a typical Revenue Cutter during the Civil War a researcher can get a feel of what kind of men were interesting in joining the Revenue Cutter Service. The above chart is also very revealing about the foreign influence felt about the crew of a cutter. Nearly 1/3 of the total crew was not native born to this country. This information shows the universal need to recruit seaman from all

<sup>100</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the United States, 1840-1930*, RG29, National Archives; This information was compiled from available primary sources. Shown here are percentages of the total crew and their place of birth. Under the heading of “other” this included New Hampshire, Virginia, Rhode Island, Georgia, Alabama, Italy, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands each at about 1% of the total crew. From the total of men from Maine (34%) half of the men were from Cumberland County, Maine and the city of Portland. *Seaman Protection Certificates, Portland, Maine, 1820-1875*, RG36, National Archives; *Civil War Pension Files, 1860-1934*, RG15, National Archives; *Rendezvous Reports and other Personnel Records, 1846-1884*, RG24, National Archives; *Conduct Reports and Shipping Articles, 1857-1910*, RG24, National Archives; *Compiled Service Record, Military Reference Branch, 1861-1865*, RG94, National Archives; *Descriptive Book of Recruits, Showing Disposition, 1863-1865 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine*, RG110, National Archives; *Descriptive Lists of Drafted Men, Showing Disposition, 1863-1864 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine*, RG110, National Archives;

walks of life. The Revenue Cutter Service kept very closely with traditions in the United States Navy by recruiting foreigners.<sup>101</sup>

As much as the men in the Revenue Cutter Service share in common with their United States Navy cousins, there are some twists and turns when painting the overall picture of a sailor during the Civil War. One of the initial and fascinating discoveries was how the men of the Revenue Cutter Service are significantly older and had more years of seafaring experience that counted very highly when considering their training methods and recruitment.

Considering information gathered about the crew from primary sources on the age of the men when each served on the *Caleb Cushing* can add depth to any research project. This allows historians to discover something personal about the men and at the same time learn about the chemistry of a Revenue Cutter.

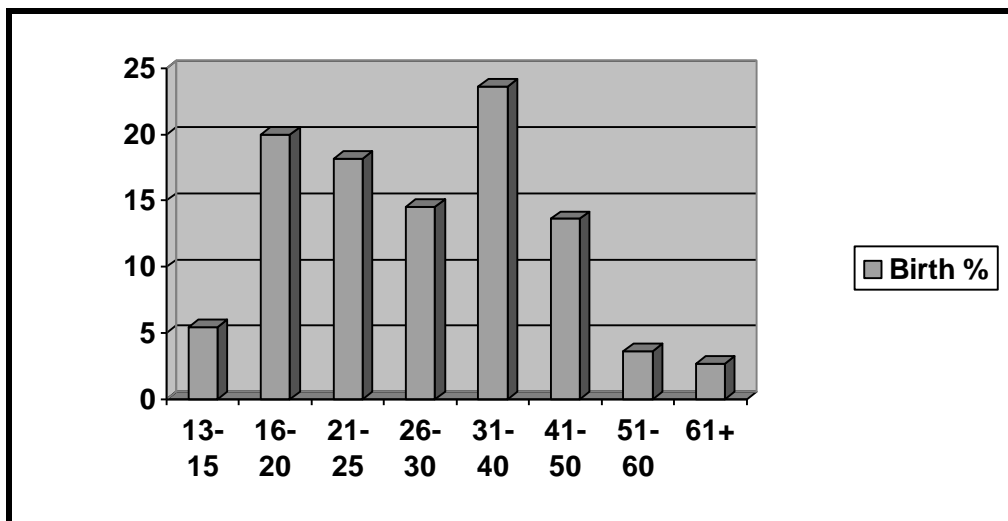


TABLE 3

The officers and enlisted crew of the *Caleb Cushing* covered an extensive range of age between 13 and 64. The crew's average age was nearly 30, actually coming in at 29.7 years old with the median age slightly lower at 27 years. This table above represents the percentage of the men in each age category spanning the entire crew. One figure that

<sup>101</sup> Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*, 9-11 and Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 579-580.

pushed the average up notably was nearly 25% (23.63 %) of the crew was between the ages of 31 and 40.<sup>102</sup>

The oldest crewmember of the *Caleb Cushing* was Green Walden who served as the first Captain of the cutter. Walden served the Revenue Cutter Service faithfully for many years and was stationed in Portland, Maine for most of his active duty service, and was 64 years of age indicating his many years of experience while on the opposite end the youngest member of the crew was 13 years of age.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to the men on the *Caleb Cushing* being reasonably older than the average sailor in the United States Navy the many years of seafaring experience stands out as very clear and cannot be overlooked when analyzing primary sources of research. The crew of the *Caleb Cushing* had a long background in seafaring before signing onboard the cutter and for many years afterwards. Considering information about the occupations of men in the Revenue Cutter Service some broad generalizations can be made about these men. First and foremost was their ability to perform and keep to task when completing their responsibilities. This was a crew of men who took the ways of the sea very seriously, being that nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the crew relied solely on this as their only means to support their families. With this kind of inducement, no wonder many men shared common backgrounds and worked well together. This is probably why several of

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<sup>102</sup> Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*, 5; Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, 24-25.

The average age of men in the United States Navy was 26 years old in comparison to the men who served in the United States Army that were much younger at 21 years of age. The data for the Navy was drawn from sampling Rendezvous Reports and one scholarly article on the composition of a typical gunboat crew during the Civil War. See David F. Riggs, "Sailors of the U.S.S. Cairo: Anatomy of a Gunboat Crew" *Civil War History* 28, (1982), 272-273 and Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 303.

<sup>103</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archive. Three crewmembers were 13 years old. James H. Bush-Ward Room Boy, George McCarty-Boy, and George L. Revaleon-Cabin Boy each served for several months on the *Caleb Cushing*



the crew had relatives onboard the cutter signifying that this was more than work, but was actually a family affair.<sup>104</sup>

In the table below the occupational differences and similarities are clearly visible as the crew of the Caleb Cushing is scrutinized for valuable data to legitimize the claim that the men who served in the Revenue Cutter Service were more than just a different group of men, but were a more experienced and stronger group of men determined to fight and work together to defend the principles of the Constitution in times of war or peace.<sup>105</sup>

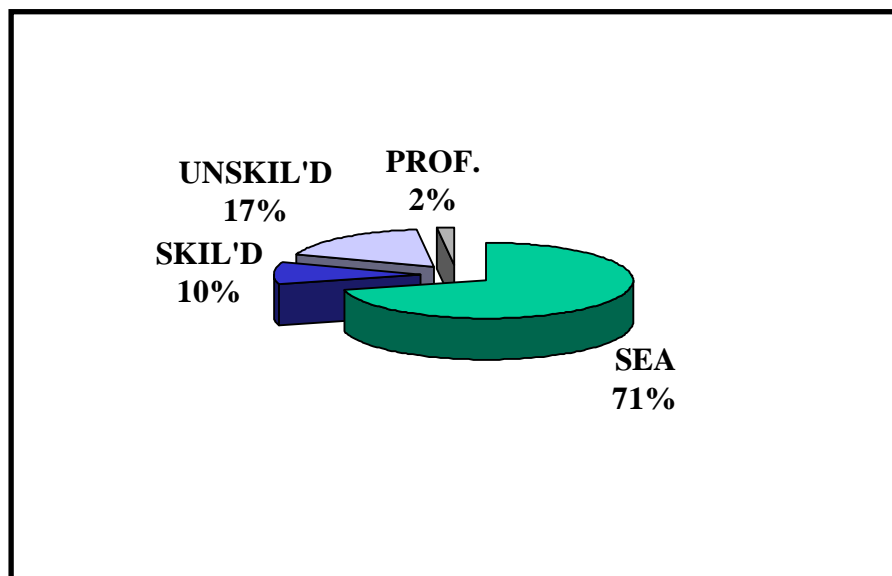


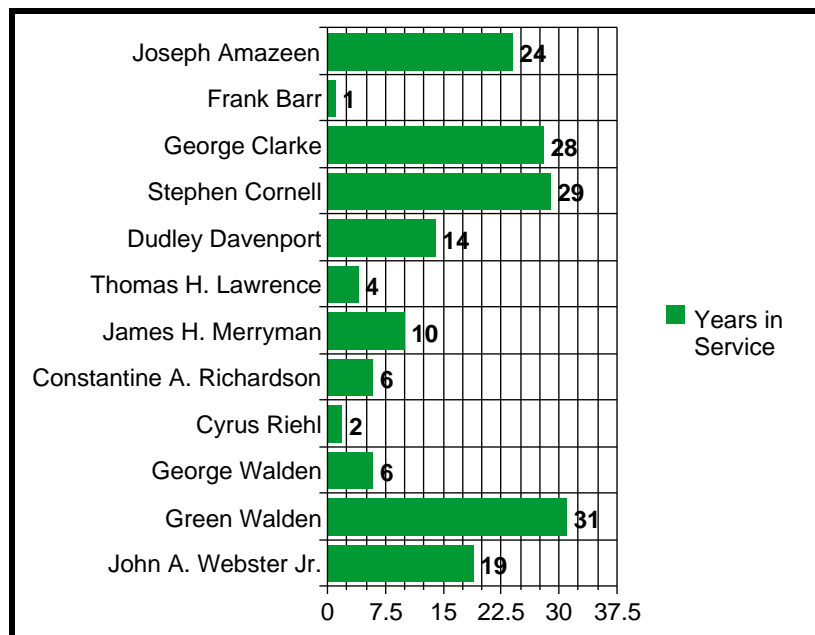
TABLE 4

<sup>104</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives.

<sup>105</sup> Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*, 5; Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, 6-7. The Revenue Cutter Service clearly showed a leaning of men with sea experience. On the *Caleb Cushing*, 71% of the crew had prior experience with seafaring work. This included seaman (23%), mariners (26%), sailors (3%), fisherman (5%), stevedores (1%), Revenue Cutter officers (11%), and ships stewards and carpenters (2%). The most fascinating figure is that the men who worked as mariners alone outnumber all in percentage all of the men with seafaring experience in the United States Navy. The data for the Navy was drawn from sampling Rendezvous Reports and one scholarly article on the composition of a typical gunboat crew during the Civil War. See David F. Riggs, "Sailors of the U.S.S. Cairo: Anatomy of a Gunboat Crew" *Civil War History* 28, (1982), 271 and Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, 24-25.

The above chart represents more than simply seafaring related occupations. This chart also shows a number of other occupations including skilled work, unskilled work, and any persons in the professional field of work.<sup>106</sup>

The large number of men that had seafaring experiences took into effect the officers of the cutter that served onboard the *Caleb Cushing*. The men were professional sailors with years of seafaring and navigational experience and were highly dedicated and mobile men who performed their jobs with safety and genuine concern for the men they commanded at heart. In compiling experience about the officers onboard the cutter there is a very distinctive pattern of experience that the United States Navy simply cannot compete with. Considering information on the table below and from the service jackets of the officers on the cutter this experience shines through very clearly.<sup>107</sup>



<sup>106</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives.* Utilizing all of the previously stated primary sources the other occupations for skilled work (10%) of crew included-steamfitters, shoemakers, roofer, machinist, boilermaker, blacksmith, and mechanics. With unskilled work (17%) of crew included-junk dealers, teamsters, farmers, cook, lumberman, waiters, and paint manufacturers. Lastly the few professional listings (2%) of crew included a clerk, bookbinder, and a lithographer.

<sup>107</sup> *Revenue Cutter Officers Rosters, 1790-1870, RG26, National Archives, The officers on the Caleb Cushing had an average of 14.5 years experience between them in the Revenue Cutter Service. This is a significant difference in the expertise and experience that officers in the United States Navy possessed. See Bennett, Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War, 39-43.*

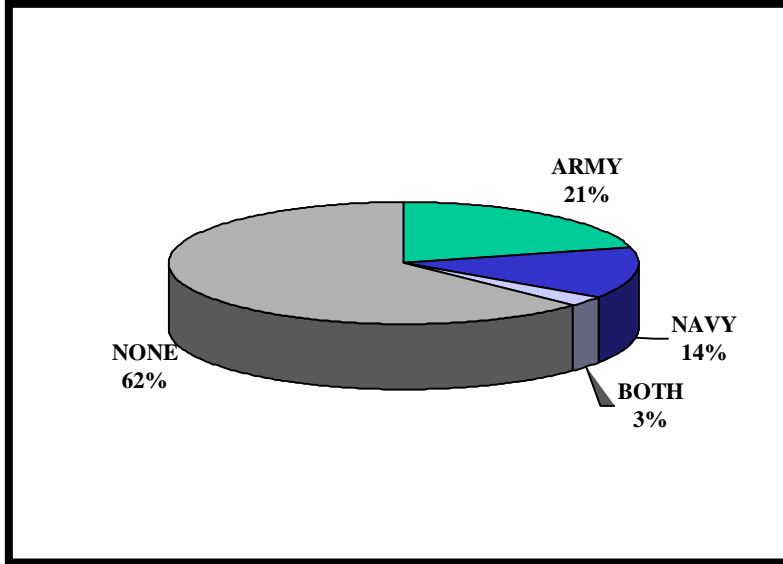


TABLE 6

Another really interesting fact about the Revenue Cutter Service and in particular the crew of the *Caleb Cushing* was the large number of men who had prior or subsequent military service. There were a number of men who served in the United States Army and a close number that also served in the United States Navy both before and after their service on the *Caleb Cushing*. This number also took into consideration men who had military duty in other wars besides the Civil War.

Two of the sailors on the *Caleb Cushing* were Mexican War veterans and one served many years later and was involved with the Spanish American War in 1898. By examining a couple of these men, this can add some depth to the overall picture of the *Caleb Cushing*. By examining the table above the information it provides is critical to any analysis of military service outside of the Revenue Cutter Service, but for those men who only served on the cutter this information is still useful to get overall numbers of men with prior or subsequent military service. Two of the men on the *Caleb Cushing* were veterans of the Mexican War of 1846. Joseph Adams and Samuel N. Ball served in the United States Navy during that time.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863, RG26, National Archives.* Examining the rendezvous reports and the compiled service records for the men with prior or subsequent military service was very helpful in finding the number of men who served in the military other than with the *Caleb Cushing*. 15 crewmembers served in the United States Navy (15%) of the crew. 22 crewmembers served in the United States Army (21%) of the crew. 3 crewmembers served in both the United States Army and Navy (3%) of the crew and 70 crewmember served strictly with the Revenue Cutter Service with no other military service (59%) of the crew. *Rendezvous Reports and other Personnel Records, 1846-1884, RG24, National*

Joseph Adams

Joseph Adams was born in Hanwell, Middlesex County, England on January 1, 1823. He was the son of John Adams. He emigrated to the United States when a young man and fought in the Mexican War enlisting in the United States Navy on February 1, 1845 at Baltimore, Maryland for three years as was rated as a seaman. He served on the USS *Pennsylvania* and the USS *Saratoga* and was honorably discharged on February 1, 1847 at Norfolk, Virginia. Adams then moved to Portland, Maine and lived there from the time of his discharge until the start of the Civil War. He was married in Portland on October 8, 1850 to Charity Mayberry and had a large family. By 1860, Adams was working as a sailor and watched the war clouds move closer. After the start of the Civil War, he enlisted in the United States Army as a private serving in Company H. 5<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry (3 months) on May 4, 1861 in Portland. He served in the regiment and was discharged on November 17, 1861 and came home. It was shortly after his discharge from the Army that Adams signed on with the Revenue Cutter Service. He shipped aboard the *Caleb Cushing* on May 1, 1862 and was rated an ordinary seaman and promoted to the rate of seaman on May 3, 1862 because of prior seafaring experience. Adams served on the cutter faithfully being discharged on June 14, 1862 after serving a few months of his one-year enlistment. After the war ended he continued to live in Portland always following seafaring work as his trade and he died on September 21, 1895.<sup>109</sup>

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Archives; *Conduct Reports and Shipping Articles, 1857-1910*, RG24, National Archives; *Compiled Service Record, Military Reference Branch, 1861-1865*, RG94, National Archives; *Descriptive Book of Recruits, Showing Disposition, 1863-1865 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine*, RG110, National Archives; *Descriptive Lists of Drafted Men, Showing Disposition, 1863-1864 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine*, RG110, National Archives

<sup>109</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29. M432. Roll 252, Pg 87; *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Westbrook, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29, M653. Roll 436, Pg 6; *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (National Archives) RG29, M593. Roll 591, Pg 34; *Population Schedules of the Tenth Census of the United States, 1880* (National Archives) Portland,

Samuel N. Ball

Ball was also a native of England born in Kent on May 2, 1818. He was a veteran of the Mexican War of 1846 enlisting in the United States Navy on September 7, 1843 at New York, NY and serving on the USS *Savannah*. He was rated as a seaman and was discharged after four years on September 23, 1847 in New York. Afterward, Ball moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for a short period and filed his Seaman Protection Certificates on August 22, 1850. By 1853 he moved to Portland, Maine and joined the Revenue Cutter Service. He signed on the Caleb Cushing several years before the start of the war on December 26, 1853 and was rated a seaman because of his prior seafaring experience. He served on the cutter until 1863 when she was hijacked and was onshore on liberty that evening. After the Caleb Cushing was destroyed Ball transferred and signed on again in the Revenue Cutter Service this time with the James C. Dobbin that had come to take the place of the sunken Caleb Cushing in Portland harbor. He served in the Revenue Cutter Service into the 1880's being one of the oldest sailors on the cutter. He lived in Portland until about 1893 and moved to Massachusetts where he died a few years later.<sup>110</sup>

Dickson B. Wescott

Dickson B. Wescott was one of the younger crewmembers on the *Caleb Cushing* who came from Canada to join the crew of the cutter. He was born on August 19, 1846

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Cumberland County, Maine. RG29, T9. Roll 478, Pg 40; *Seaman Protection Certificates, Portland, Maine, 1820-1875*, RG36, National Archives; *Civil War Pension Files, 1860-1934*, RG15, National Archives, Application Number#1996, Certificate Number#552996; *Portland, Maine City Directories*. Portland Public Library, 1856-1877; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives. *Maine Death Certificates*, Maine State Archives, Augusta, Maine; *Daily Eastern Argus*, September 24, 1895.

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29, M653. Roll 436, Pg 13; *Population Schedules of the Tenth Census of the United States, 1880* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29, T9. Roll 479, Pg 145; *Seaman Protection Certificates, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1801-1860*, RG36, National Archives; *Portland, Maine City Directories*. Portland Public Library, 1856-1877; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives.

in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, Canada and was the son of Robert and Caroline Wescott. He moved with his family to Maine at a young age and by 1860 he was living in Portland. He joined the Revenue Cutter Service and shipped aboard the *Caleb Cushing* two years later on December 1, 1862. He served on the cutter until it was destroyed in 1863 being one of the crew captured during the raid of Lt. Charles W. Read. He was discharged from his duties and decided to join the United States Army. On August 19, 1863 he listed himself as a sailor and joined Company A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine Infantry for two years. He was a private his entire time in service and was discharged on September 11, 1865 at Washington DC. Wescott returned home and was married on July 21, 1868 to Margaret Nelis in Portland and lived in the city working as a blacksmith the remainder of his life. He died of the Spanish influenza on December 21, 1918 in Portland and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in town.<sup>111</sup>

All of the data compiled about the *Caleb Cushing* and her crew had been months in the making with many hours spent on detailing, indexing, and organizing facts and figures about the men who served in the Revenue Cutter Service during the Civil War. Their story is one worthy of mention and should not be forgotten by historians for generations to come.

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<sup>111</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (National Archives) Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. RG29, M653. Roll 436, Pg 24; *Descriptive Book of Recruits, Showing Disposition, 1863-1865 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine; Seaman Protection Certificates, Portland, Maine, 1820-1875*, RG36, National Archives; *Portland, Maine City Directories*. Portland Public Library, 1856-1877; *Muster-Roll Records of the Revenue Cutter Caleb Cushing, 1853-1863*, RG26, National Archives; Virginia E. Dowe, Interview by author, August 14, 2005. Palermo. Tape recording. Shepherd University, Shepherdstown *Daily Eastern Argus*, December 23, 1918.

## Conclusion

The story of the Caleb Cushing is well known by Naval historians; however the story of her crew is something that has been shrouded in mystery for many years until now. The men who served on the *Caleb Cushing* were a different brand of sailor. They were older and more experienced than their counterparts in the United States Navy, and were more closely associated with each other with several of the crew having immediate family members who served with them on the cutter.

The events that led to the destruction of the cutter on that fateful day of June 27, 1863 was mere happenstance for the crew of the *Caleb Cushing*. The attack was one of opportunity for the Confederate who under their present conditions had good fortunes smile on them as they hijacked the cutter in the dead of night. Together with the loss of their Captain, and the crew at less than half strength, the cutter was placed in a vulnerable situation. With the general citizenry and the men of the cutter completely unaware of the dubious plans of Lt. Charles W. Read, the crew conducted themselves in a manner that was expected.

Although the Revenue Cutter Service was first envisioned as a force of revenue tax collectors, their ability to conduct many divergent missions, some simultaneously, during both peacetime and war became the hallmark of the service. Interestingly one editor of the Army and Navy Journal in the November 26, 1864 issue not only recognized the value and potential of this unique organization, but also unknowingly predicted both the motto "*Semper Paratus*" and the future name of the Coast Guard intended for it. He wrote: "Keeping always under steam and ever ready, in the event of extraordinary need, to render valuable service, the cutters can be made to form a coast guard whose value it is impossible at the present time to estimate." This event was one time that the Revenue Cutter Service was caught unprepared. Today, the current day descendants in these early

Coast Guardsman look back to learn from past experiences as the men and woman who serve today strive to live by the Coast Guard motto and will continue to do so for generations of future service.



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