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The Coast Guard under Sail: The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, 1789- 1865,

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state, weather, sun, rain, and suchlike in his discussion whenever they affected the results of the battle; he also examines the quality of the seamen, the training and morale of the crews, the condition of the vessels, the leadership qualities of the captains, and the influence of the impressed or deserted seamen. This analysis gives a wealth of material for the modeler of historical naval battles or for the wargamer.

This work is a part of the "Classics of Naval Literature" series published by the Naval Institute Press. The volumes have been carefully selected and are beautifully printed and bound. An introduction by Edward K. Eckert reviews Roosevelt's life and his contribution to the study of American naval history. This introduction is well worth the time to read.

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King, Irving H. *The Coast Guard under Sail: The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, 1789-1865*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989. 233pp. \$29.95

Writing the early history of the United States Revenue Cutter Service is a difficult undertaking for a variety of reasons; the most important is that it was hardly a true service during the period discussed in this book. Rather, it was more nearly a number of small vessels dispersed among the Atlantic and Gulf coast ports, without central administration or control for much of the time. Toward the end of this period several

revenue cutters were stationed on the Pacific coast as well; like their sisters on the eastern seaboard, they were under the control of collectors of customs, whose attitude toward the cutters and their personnel varied considerably.

The absence of a central administration resulted in a dearth of records, requiring the historian to use considerable ingenuity in seeking sources. This is reflected in the counting of, and descriptions of, the cutters. On occasion, several were built to the same design; precise identification of some remains doubtful.

Irving H. King, professor of history and head of the Department of Humanities at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, has been grappling with this problem for years.

He described the origins of the Revenue Cutter Service in *George Washington's Coast Guard*, published in 1978 by the Naval Institute Press. The book discussed the service through the Quasi-War with France, and is summarized in the first two chapters of *The Coast Guard under Sail*.

As in his other work, King discusses the military contributions of the Revenue Cutter Service, emphasizing its role as a precedent-setter for the U.S. Navy: testing sailcloth; having its cutters built in various areas of the country, under the supervision of their prospective commanding officers; and providing advice on ship design and navy yard locations. Consideration of the revenue cutters' service in the nation's various wars is made more difficult because some of the vessels were transferred directly to the navy and

were manned by naval officers and crews while others remained with the Treasury Department (sometimes serving under the operational control of the army or the navy). A case in point is the Second Seminole War (1836-1842) during which revenue cutters cooperated with naval vessels in Florida waters. In 1841 the cutters *Jefferson*, *Madison*, and *Van Buren* were transferred to the Navy Department, yet King continues to discuss their operations as if they were still revenue cutters. This is surprising because one of his principal sources, *Records of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard*, makes it clear that the three schooners were naval vessels until their return to the Treasury Department.

King's problem, however, is that of giving importance to the war services of relatively few, small, weakly-armed ships. Certainly cutter sailors fought bravely on occasion, but their opponents were usually privateers or other small vessels whose loss was unlikely to be noted with concern by the enemy. During the Mexican War the navy found itself embarrassingly short of shallow-draft ships able to operate close inshore and to ascend rivers; even then, purchased steamers proved more effective in this task than the few cutters that joined the Gulf Squadron. King's final chapter puts this matter in perspective—the Revenue Cutter Service's part in the Civil War requires no more than fourteen pages of text.

The author does not neglect the peacetime functions that justified the service's existence: enforcement of the nation's customs and maritime revenue

laws; saving of life and property at sea; suppression of piracy and the slave trade; working with aids to navigation; and generally assisting other governmental agencies in the discharge of their duties. With regard to the first of these, he points out quite properly that success was by no means foreordained; smuggling had long been a part of American life, and efforts by the British authorities to suppress it had added to the grievances which culminated in the American Revolution. Yet the Revenue Cutter Service did succeed, in large part because of the care with which cutter officers were chosen, and also because the cutters won acceptance by the seaboard population through their performance of humanitarian duties.

The cutters' dispersal and the multiplicity of their duties posed obvious organizational problems; nonetheless, King's use of topical divisions within a chronological framework is reasonably effective. The illustrations generally complement the text, and the notes are extensive. One wonders, however, about the author's repeated references to his earlier work as a source.

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Waters, John M., Jr. *Rescue at Sea*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989. 324pp. \$28.95
The history and heritage of the United States is closely linked with the great