

WET, COLD, *and* THOROUGHLY MISERABLE

*Surviving Aboard Revenue Cutters Was Challenging
While Pursuing Pirates and Protecting U.S. Interests at Sea*

BY WILLIAM R. WELLS II

The popular historical image of the antebellum U.S. Revenue Cutter Service is one of a fast cutter chasing smugglers, slavers, and other scoundrels.

Speed remained an important quality for the cutters. “It is indispensably necessary that the Revenue Cutters in the Service of the United States should be fast sailers, so as to enable them to overhaul any vessels they may fall in with,” Treasury Secretary Samuel Ingham noted in an 1830 letter to Boston Collector of Customs David Henshaw about the construction of a 107-ton new cutter.

The Revenue Cutter *McLane* enforces federal tariff laws in Charleston Harbor during the Nullification Crisis of 1832–1833 in a modern painting. Castle Pinckney is in the background.

However, the cutters were very small and wet in the sense of taking on water from above and below. Because of tight fiscal concerns within the Treasury Department, the cutters received little maintenance other than what the crew could do.

Congressional funding for them did not exist, and any monies expended on them came out of the duties or tariffs assessed at the individual ports. Minimal expenditures were the rule, and most individual collectors of customs overlooked maintenance of habitability for the comfort and health of those serving in them.

The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service (USRCS) was formed in 1790 at the direction of the first treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton. The service's job was to enforce the laws and protect U.S. maritime assets, such as merchant ships that became targets for pirates, privateers, and home-grown shipwreckers. During the War of 1812, the cutters went to war to fight the British.

In 1915, Congress established the U.S. Coast Guard within the Treasury Department and included the Revenue Cutter Service and the Life-Saving Service. The two bureaus remained as separate in culture and tasks as they had been before passage of the law. No complete merger occurred until after World War II.

EARLY CUTTERS POSED TIGHT SQUEEZE FOR CREW

Cutters built in the antebellum period were 75 feet long, 20 feet wide, and an average of 7 to 8 feet deep—an external, not an internal measurement. The internal depth of the hold was measured from the spar deck to the top of the keel, and few measured more than 6½ feet. The lowest deck—the “berth deck,” or orlop deck—sat 2 feet above the keel, making space below deck sparse, dark, cold, or hot depending upon the season.

A few cutter captains understood the great discomfort of the narrow confines for officers and men alike. The poor living conditions

aboard the cutters became one cause of complaint in an 1889 petition submitted by a fed-up revenue cutter officer corps asking for wholesale transfer to the Navy Department.

House of Representatives Report Number 76 of February 15, 1890, reflects this concern:

On the other hand, the officer of the Revenue Marine has no settled home or habitation; he is, by force of circumstances, a nomad; he has two separate and distinct establishments to maintain—his temporary resting place on shipboard and the equally transitory lodgings of his wife and family on shore; he is confined to cramped and inconvenient quarters, in which, for the most part, decent privacy is denied him; he inhabits, with a half dozen others, a room 10 feet by 18 feet—here he must eat, sleep, perform his ablutions, receive and entertain friends, and break his daily bread with the congenial and uncongenial alike; his sleeping berth is barely big enough to contain his person; his comforts are such as he can catch as his life wears on.

Other captains raised the issue of their crew's welfare to the local collectors. In 1828, Capt. Samuel Trevett, commanding the cutter *Search* at Boston, recommended the installation of an iron water tank to replace the traditional water kegs. Trevett claimed a tank 70 inches tall with sides of 52 and 40 inches could hold as much water as 6½ standard 30-gallon kegs. The United States and British navies used these water tanks and reported that the water “keeps sweeter and is more salubrious.” The tank cost \$400, held a 30-day supply of water, and at one ton, also served as a substitute for the iron ballast.

Henry A. S. Dearborn, collector at Boston, suggested to Treasury Secretary Richard Rush that removing the “pig iron” ballast would make more space for the crew. No record exists of Rush's approval of the request. *Search* was then eight years old and

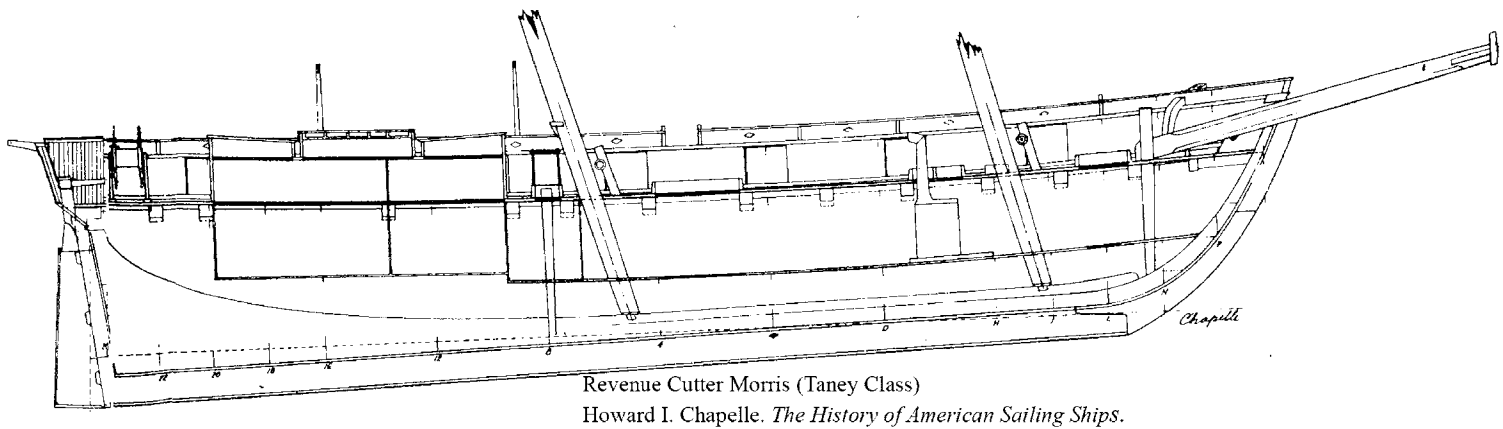
near the end of her career as a revenue cutter. However, the water tank idea went forward, and the Treasury Department installed four aboard the cutter *Van Buren* in 1839. The logs of 1841–1842 show as much as 1,850 gallons of water could be carried.

In March 1830, Capt. John Cahoone echoed Dearborn's space-saving suggestion; Cahoone suggested replacing the cutter *Vigilant's* ballast stone on the berth deck to “make room for the addition of Stores and crew.” Cahoone wanted clean iron ballast because he now had to move his four 4-pounder guns and carriages back on deck. Revenue cutters that had little need for guns—such as *Vigilant*—commonly used the guns and shot for ballast. In 1845, *Van Buren* held 289 pieces of kentledge (iron pigs), 384 12-pound shot, and 96 odd pieces of iron for ballast—all of it painted white.

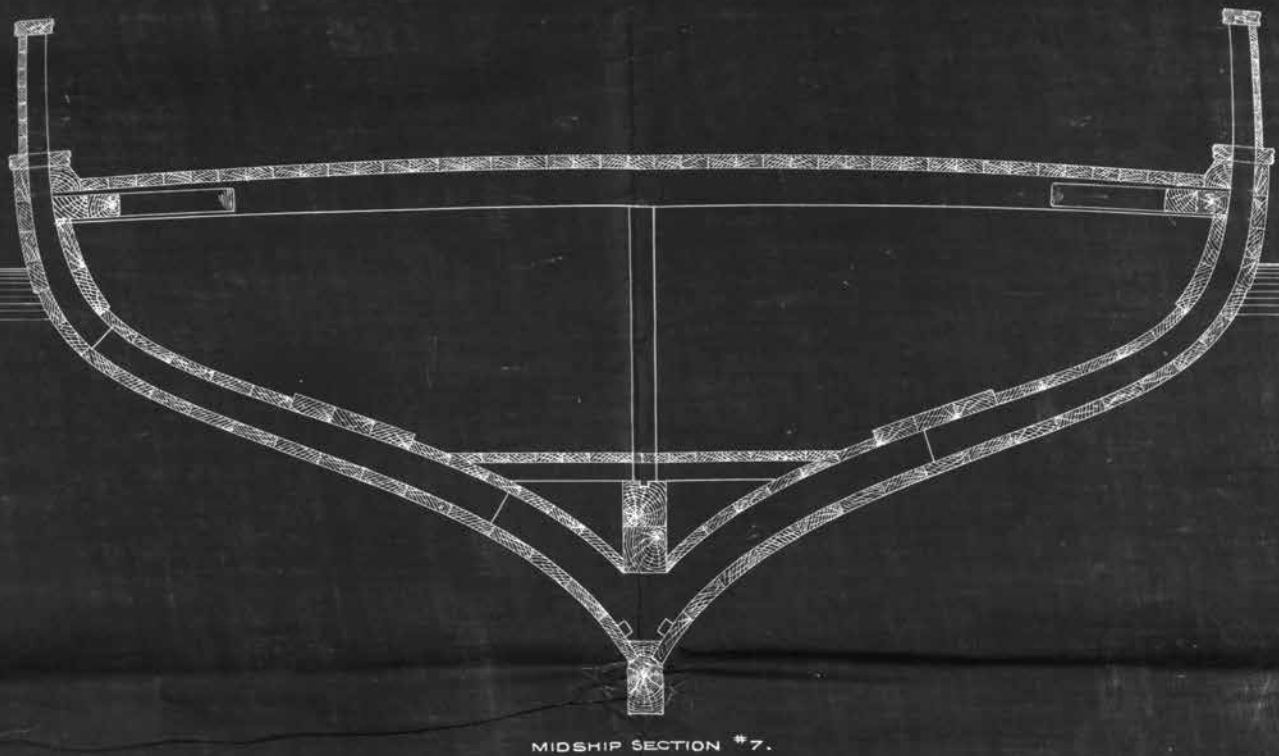
Portsmouth's OFFICERS COMPLAIN ABOUT QUARTERS

The below-decks space became more constricted with the advent of winter cruising to assist distressed vessels. On December 16, 1831, Treasury Secretary Louis McLane ordered the collector of customs at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to have the cutter *Portsmouth* “furnished without delay, with such quantities of provisions, water, wood, and other necessary supplies as can be conveniently stowed in the vessel and to cruise between Cape Ann and Cape Elizabeth” to assist vessels as well as fulfill normal duties. McLane ordered Capt. Thomas Shaw not to return to “port until forced to do so from stress of weather and want of supplies.” This arduous and uncomfortable duty severely tasked the crew and the 11-year-old cutter, which had been built as a pilot-boat and purchased by Treasury in 1829.

The officers straightaway complained that the *Portsmouth* was too small. There was no wardroom, and with a 10-foot draft, it sat low in the water, making it a “very wet vessel” in heavy weather and uncomfortable to



Above: The Revenue Cutter *Morris*, 1831. Cutters built in the antebellum period were 75 feet long, 20 feet wide, and an average of 7 to 8 feet deep—external, not internal measurements. A few cutter captains understood the great discomfort of the narrow confines for officers and men alike. Below: The midship section of the *Joe Lane*, built in 1849, illustrates the tight quarters found on revenue cutters of the antebellum period. It was the lowest deck (the “berth deck”), four to five feet in height, with sparse space, and dark, cold, or hot depending upon the season.



sail and live aboard. In 1832 Shaw wrote that the cutter’s small size required him to “carry all provisions and part of her ballast,” including four cannon, on the berth deck, which measured 3½ feet in height and where a crew of at least 12 lived. “With the necessary wood, water, provisions, peoples’ dunnage [term for the crew] &c there is little room for much else,” Shaw wrote.

Added to this were the 30 tons of ballast and the additional winter cruising supplies, which

included 6 barrels of beef, 400 pounds of bread, 6 barrels of water, 50 pounds of candles, 10 pounds of tea, and 1 cord of dry hardwood.

These materials provided convenient hiding and breeding places for rats, mice, and insects. At least once a year, the captain of the cutter ordered the holds cleaned out and the hatches and openings sealed. All officers and men moved ashore to temporary quarters and then for two days used smoke to remove the vermin.

In July 1833, Capt. Andrew Mather complained of the cabin, wardroom, staterooms, and the inadequacy for the physical needs of the officers and crews aboard the *Wolcott*. Mather requested to alter the captain’s cabin and wardroom while at New Haven. The *Wolcott*’s cabin, he wrote, was smaller than those of other cutters of the same type, built at the same place and at about the same time. One had a cabin two feet wider and “somewhat longer,” and another had been lengthened “from three to four feet.”

Wolcott's cabin, Mather added, had been constructed with no place to hang clothes or store books or other items. Therefore, he had drawers made, but the “sharpness” of the cutter’s hull was such that these drawers could not be placed under his bed. Mather’s cabin had two berths, one of which he removed to install more storage drawers.

SOLVING PROBLEMS ABOARD THE *Wolcott*

Mather said that other alterations solved another problem. During the winter, the cutter officers placed a heating stove in the wardroom (the crew forward had no heating stove). When the stove was in place, the forward gangway into the wardroom had to be closed. This meant the officers had to use the gangway in the cabin to access the wardroom.

Mather suggested adding two feet to the wardroom forward into the trunk. That way, the wardroom gangway could be used when the winter stove was in place and relieve Mather of the annoying tramping of officers through his cabin. Stoves were not allowed in the crew’s quarters because of the potential of fires.

In 1836 living space became a concern for the cutter *Madison* at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Captain Shaw, now commanding the *Madison*, wished to put right the “very great inconvenience” suffered by the cutter’s crewmen: 16 men and 4 boys who lived in a berth deck just three feet, seven inches high.

As a comparison, Shaw measured the height of the cutter *Hamilton's* berth deck and found a comfortable five feet, seven inches at maximum height. The *Madison* ship’s carpenter estimated it would cost \$275 to lower the deck and add bulkheads and lockers for the crew.

However, replacing the ballast to accommodate a lowered deck might require additional costs. In a remarkable seven days, Treasury Secretary Levi Woodbury responded with approval to lower the berth deck but did not approve the new ballast. It is

unknown how Shaw was able to rearrange the old ballast, but cuttermen had learned to make do with less or what was given.

Officers’ quarters often contained more luxurious articles. In 1840, New Haven Collector William H. Ellis purchased for *Wolcott* a “hair mattress,” one three-pound feather pillow, one “hair” pillow, four sheets, four pillow cases, one “Double Comfortable [comforter],” a pair of Rose Blankets, and 20 yards of “3 ply” carpet and binding to make four carpets. The purchase also included 10 yards of damask-style fabric with 26 yards of silk binding to make bunk curtains hung on three brass rods and eyes.

The cutter crews made the hammocks, mess cloths, and bags from cotton canvas. In 1844, *Van Buren's* crew made these new items and then blackened the hammocks and mess clothes with a mixture of black

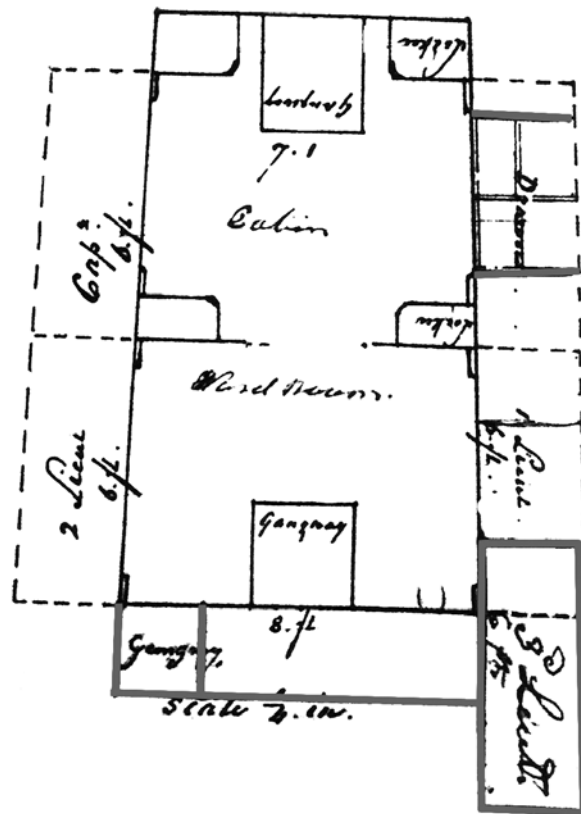
paint. The paint sealed the canvas and made for easier cleaning and longer wear.

“CORPOREAL PUNISHMENT” TO DISCIPLINE THE CREW

Although crew comfort was a concern for some cutter captains, others inflicted punishments that guaranteed discomfort. Flogging did not become an official form of punishment by regulation on the revenue cutters until the 1843 Rules and Regulations of the U.S. Revenue Marine (taken from U.S. Navy Regulations of the same year). Even then, the term flogging or “lashes” saw no use, but the ubiquitous “corporal punishment” was administered, and only then by the authority of the cutter captain.

A scan of cutter logs indicates that the personal experiences of the individual captains played a large part in the choice of

*A Plan Cutter *Wolcott's* Cabin*



punishment type. Those officers with U.S. Navy experience were more prone to use flogging, but those coming from the merchant service tended to use lesser means of physical discipline.

Causes for flogging consisted of insolence, disobedience to orders, threats toward officers and warrant officers, and drunkenness, and the first three served to be most often caused by the latter. The number of lashes with the cat o' nine tails numbered no more than 12. Unlike the U.S. Navy, the Revenue Cutter Service had no courts-martial system that allowed more lashes.

There were other forms of punishments, however, not specified in the regulations.

The use of the "colt" (sometimes called the

"starter") was common for minor offenses and for boys. The colt was a piece of manila rope spliced backwards to form a club that was one inch or less in diameter and two to three feet long.

A description of the colt is given in the testimony of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie during his 1844 court-martial. "A colt is a piece of rope larger than a quill, and not so large as your little finger. . . . [T]hey were punished over the clothes they happened to have on, with the exception of the jacket," he said.

Boys in common practice received 6–12 strokes and, in general, not laid heavy. Use of the "rattan," a cane, was more common in the U.S. Navy, where it was used, as was the colt, for informal punishment. However,

cutter service captains formalized the use of the colt. A common practice was to secure a boy or midshipman to the length of a cannon barrel, known as "kissing the Gunner's daughter," and deliver strokes across the back.

Use of "irons" during short periods of confinement was frequently mentioned in the cutter logs. The irons consisted of single irons, hand restraints (later known as Lilly-irons), and double irons consisting of leg restraints with a sliding bar with ankle loops attached to the deck.

Despite the cruel nature of such punishments, they did not normally prevent the men on the cutters from working. Those flogged received basic treatment, but they

Below: In July 1833, Capt. Andrew Mather of the *Wolcott* complained in a letter of the inadequacy of the cabin, wardroom, and staterooms for the physical needs of the officers and crew. Opposite: He enclosed a drawing with measurements and highlighted in red ink some suggested alterations to add two feet to the wardroom forward into the trunk.

U.S. Revenue Cutter *Wolcott* July 29, 1833.

Your letter of 23rd instants to the Collector for the District of New Haven, has been forwarded to me for response, in respect to a desired alteration of the Cabin of the Cutter *Wolcott*. I beg leave to represent that the Cabin of this cutter is of smaller dimensions than any of the other new cutters. The Cabin of the *Brush* is two feet wider and somewhat longer, the *W. Lane* is about two feet longer and about two feet wider than the *Wolcott*. The *Crawford* or *Ingham* (I do not remember which) has been lengthened from three to four feet. Enclosed is a plan giving the dimensions of the *Wolcott's* Cabin. As no place was provided to place the bunks &c it became necessary to make drawers in the Cabin. Owing to the sharpness of the vessel these drawers could not be made under the bunks, consequently it became necessary (as has been done in other cutters) to take down one bunk in order to put drawers in the place thereof. The drawers are provided with drawers under them bunks owing to the Wardroom being more in the back of the vessel. In this winter season we carry a stove in the Wardroom which leaves barely room to set a table for two persons, and in order to set the stove we have been obliged to shut the forward guarnsey leaving the only entrance to the wardroom through the cabin.

In most of the other cutters the bunks were by themselves in the main overboard, and the Captains in the cabin - but enclosed the *Wolcott* we are obliged to mix together.

In the plan enclosed I have marked the exact size of the bunks and main overboard as the new one (in black) and the alterations that should like to make in red ink, and I do not think the expense would be much if any was, and the detention of the cutter in port would not be six or eight days. The addition of two feet to the foreward is what is marked in the plan which will furnish an additional berth, and in the Wardroom much more comfortable for in the winter.

I am Sir with great respect
 your Obedient Servant.

And^d Mather Capt
 Com^d of the Cutter *Wolcott*

The Hon^d W. J. Swanwick
 Secretary of Treasury.

Treasury Department
July 13. 1848.

Sir:

Herewith is returned the Requisition of Capt S. C. Harby, dated June 21st ultimo, and is approved with the exception of the following articles which are disallowed and must be paid for by the Commander.

One bottle Sands Sarsaparilla, Six bottles Townsend Sarsaparilla, One Galvanic bracelet \$1⁵⁰/₁₀₀. One Galvanic bracelet \$3. Six bottles magnesia at \$1 per bottle. 2 prescriptions at 10 cts. Coleman's pills 8/. 3 mo bottles Tonic Mixture \$2. 3 mo boxes Suidley Powders \$6. Six boxes Capsules \$5. One bottle Syrup of Wild Cherry 8/. 3 mo bottles Lime Juice 2/ Ten bottles Wood's Mixture, \$10. 2 gallons Blue Pick Water 8/ and jug 4/.

I have to express surprise that the Commander of the Mollott should think proper to approve a requisition of this unprecedented and extravagant character. The usual medicines prescribed for medicine chests are all that are required or allowed on board of revenue vessels, and the before mentioned articles are not enumerated, even in sea going vessels medicine chest books, and if they were, would not be allowed in those of the revenue service.

Very respectfully

Your Obt. Servant

R. J. Walker

Secy of the Treasury

Collector of the Customs

Mobile

Ala.

PUNISHMENT AND PRAISE

Excerpts from logbooks

Revenue Cutter Crawford

April 18, 1846. “Lectured Francis Boriere (steward) Robert James & Samuel Brown (sea[man]) for insubordination.”

Revenue Cutter Wolcott

May 6, 1846. “William Summers (sea[man]) on board who was taken by the Constable from on board the Steamer *Creole* where he was secreted for the purpose of deserting from this vessel and deposited by them in the Guard House for safe keeping for desertion and Bail [illegible], placed in single Irons on Board.”

Revenue Cutter Van Buren

October 27, 1843. “Punished George Thompson with twelve lashes with the Catt for disobedience of orders from 3rd Lt. C. L. Collier.”

October 31, 1843. “at 11 of 40 A. M. the Warrants of this vessel were duly installed on their respective warrants assigned them by the Department as warrant officers & their warrants handed them in presence of those who were Mustered for this occasion.”

February 3, 1846. “James Callahan, Augustus Osmon & John Brown (Seaman) took the dingy [*sic*] during the night and went ashore without leave. . . . [They] were brought on board by a Constable. Put all three in Irons.”

were able to return to regular duties the next day or the same day. The small crew size of 16 men made losing one man a burden to the other crew members. Crewman in irons could be physically away from work for several days.

In May 1855, Treasury Secretary James Guthrie issued revised regulations for the USRCS. He ceased publishing the regulations as a separate volume and included them within the general regulations of the Treasury Department. Guthrie removed most of naval-like rules and reverted to the regulations of 1841. In addition, the new regulations removed all mention of “corporal punishment.”

Prescribed punishment returned to the 1862 USRCS regulations in unspecific and vague terms, referring to punishment “according to the laws and usages of the sea service.” Confinement in single irons was codified in the USRCS regulations in 1894 and made a last appearance as an authorized punishment in 1907. The Navy abolished the use of “confinement in irons,” single or double, in 1909.

RATIONS FOR CREWS IMPROVED BUT “SPIRITS” ONLY WEEKLY

One improvement in attention to the crew’s health was the 1834 removal of the “spirits” portion from the daily ration, but the daily diet of high fat and salt remained unchanged from the Revolutionary War. Because there was no national navy

Opposite: A rejection of Capt. Levy C. Harby’s July 1848 requisition for medicines identifies those products not allowed in the Revenue Service’s medicine chests. They included one bottle Sands Sarsaparilla, one galvanic bracelet, six bottles magnesia, twelve boxes Seidlitz Powders, and more. *Left:* A Revenue Cutter Service rations chart for the period, adopted from the U.S. Navy. A diet high in fat and salt, this ration, with few modifications, became the constant for the revenue cutters for decades.

DAYS OF THE WEEK.	LBS. OZS.		POUNDS OF			OUNCES OF				HALF PINTS OF				
	Suet.	Cheese.	Beef.	Pork.	Flour.	Bread.	Butter.	Sugar.	Tea.	Peas.	Rice.	Molasses.	Vinegar.	
Sunday, - - - - -	¼	-	1½	-	½	14	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Monday, - - - - -	-	-	-	1	-	14	-	1	Four ounces per week.	1	-	-	-	
Tuesday, - - - - -	-	2	1	-	-	14	-	1		-	-	-	-	
Wednesday, - - - - -	-	-	-	1	-	14	-	1		-	-	1	-	
Thursday, - - - - -	¼	-	1½	-	½	14	-	1		-	-	-	-	
Friday, - - - - -	-	4	-	-	-	14	2	1		-	-	1	1	
Saturday, - - - - -	-	-	-	1	-	14	-	1		-	1	-	-	1
Per week,	½	6	3½	3	1	98	2	7		4	2	2	1	1

To learn more about

- The Life-Saving Service during World War I, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2009/fall/.
- Capt. Michael Healy of the Revenue Cutter Service, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/fall/.
- The records of the Coast Guard, go to www.archives.gov/research/military/coast-guard/.

in existence when the Revenue Cutter Service was created in 1790, the Treasury Department followed the ration scheme of the U.S. Army. The ration was not healthy by any culinary standard. A 1792 advertisement for purchasing 1793 Army rations specified that

The rations to be supplied are to consist of the following articles, viz.

One pound of bread or flour;

One pound of beef, or $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of pork;

Half a gill [four ounces] of rum, brandy or whiskey;

Per 100 rations

One quart of salt,

Two quarts of vinegar,

Two pounds of soap,

One pound of candles.

Congress authorized the Treasury Department to contract for rations for the

revenue cutters for the first time on March 2, 1793. The individual cutter captains purchased rations locally without standard amounts. Although Congress did not authorize a federal navy in the 1794 "Act to Provide a Naval Armament," section 8 of the act contained a provision for rations:

Sunday, one pound of bread, one pound and a half of beef, and half a pint of rice.

Monday, one pound of bread, one pound of pork, half pint of peas or beans, and four ounces of cheese.

Tuesday, one pound of bread, one pound and a half beef, and one pound of potatoes or turnips, and pudding.

Wednesday, one pound of bread, two ounces of butter, or, in lieu thereof, six ounces of molasses, four ounces of cheese, and a half pint of rice.

Thursday, one pound of bread, one pound of pork, half pint of peas or beans.

Friday, one pound of bread, one pound of salt fish, two ounces of butter or one gill of oil, and one pound of potatoes.

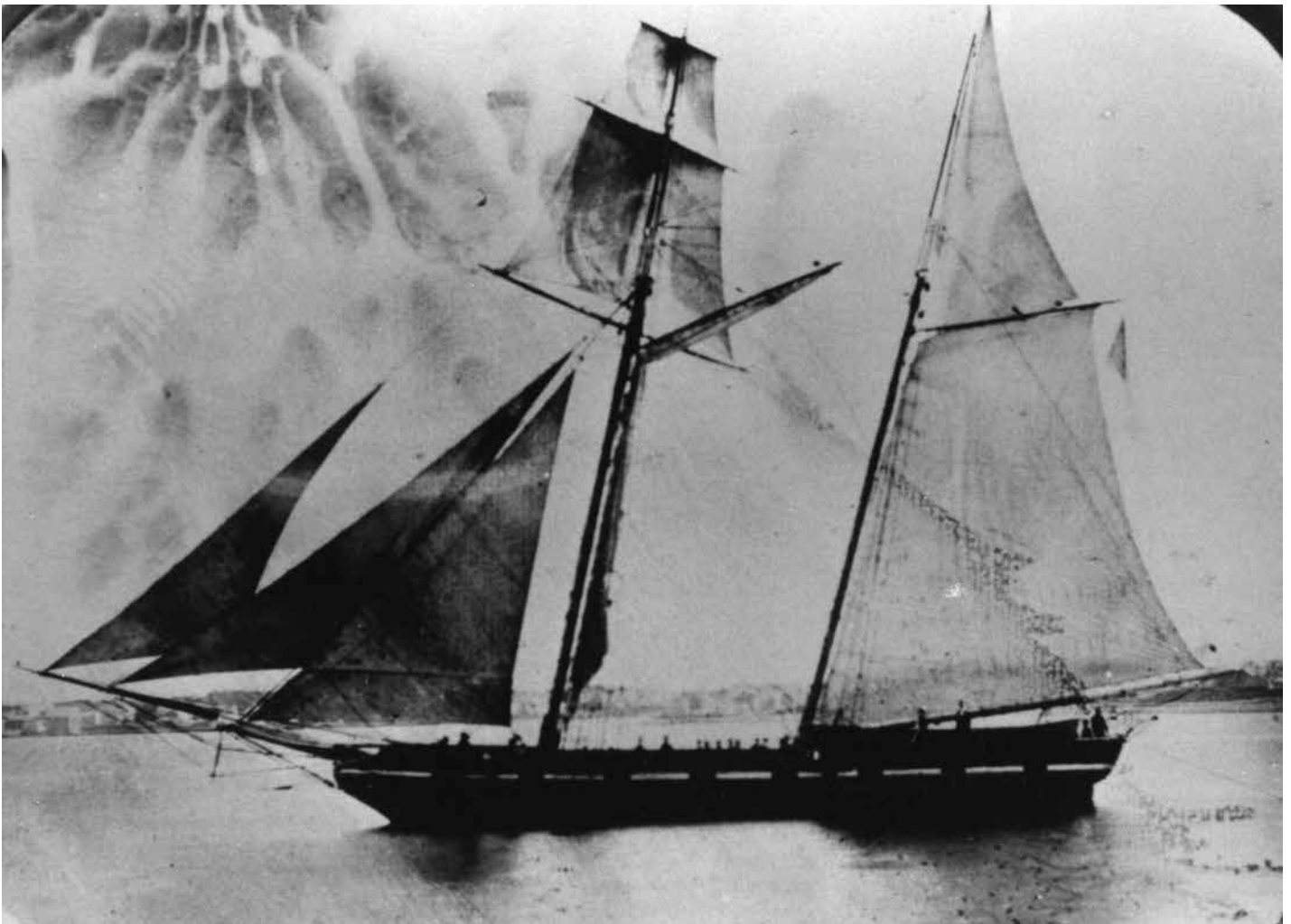
Saturday, one pound of bread, one pound of pork, half pint of peas or beans, and four ounces of cheese.

There will also be allowed, one half-pint of distilled spirits per day, or, in lieu thereof, one quart of beer per day, to each ration.

The revenue cutters began cooperating with the U.S. Navy in 1798 and adopted the naval ration in 1799. With few modifications, this ration became the constant for the revenue cutters for decades. The 1834 USRCS regulations allowed the navy ration without the "spirits."

This ration allowance continued into the 1894 Revenue Cutter Service regulations. Although additional food items, pickles, dried raisins, and cranberries are included during

The U.S. Revenue Cutter *Gallatin*, shown here in the oldest-known photograph of a cutter, was a 78-foot topsail schooner commissioned in 1830. She served off Charleston, South Carolina, starting in November 1832, to enforce federal tariff law during the Nullification Crisis.



the 1840s, the basic weekly menu did not vary much from that of the late 18th century.

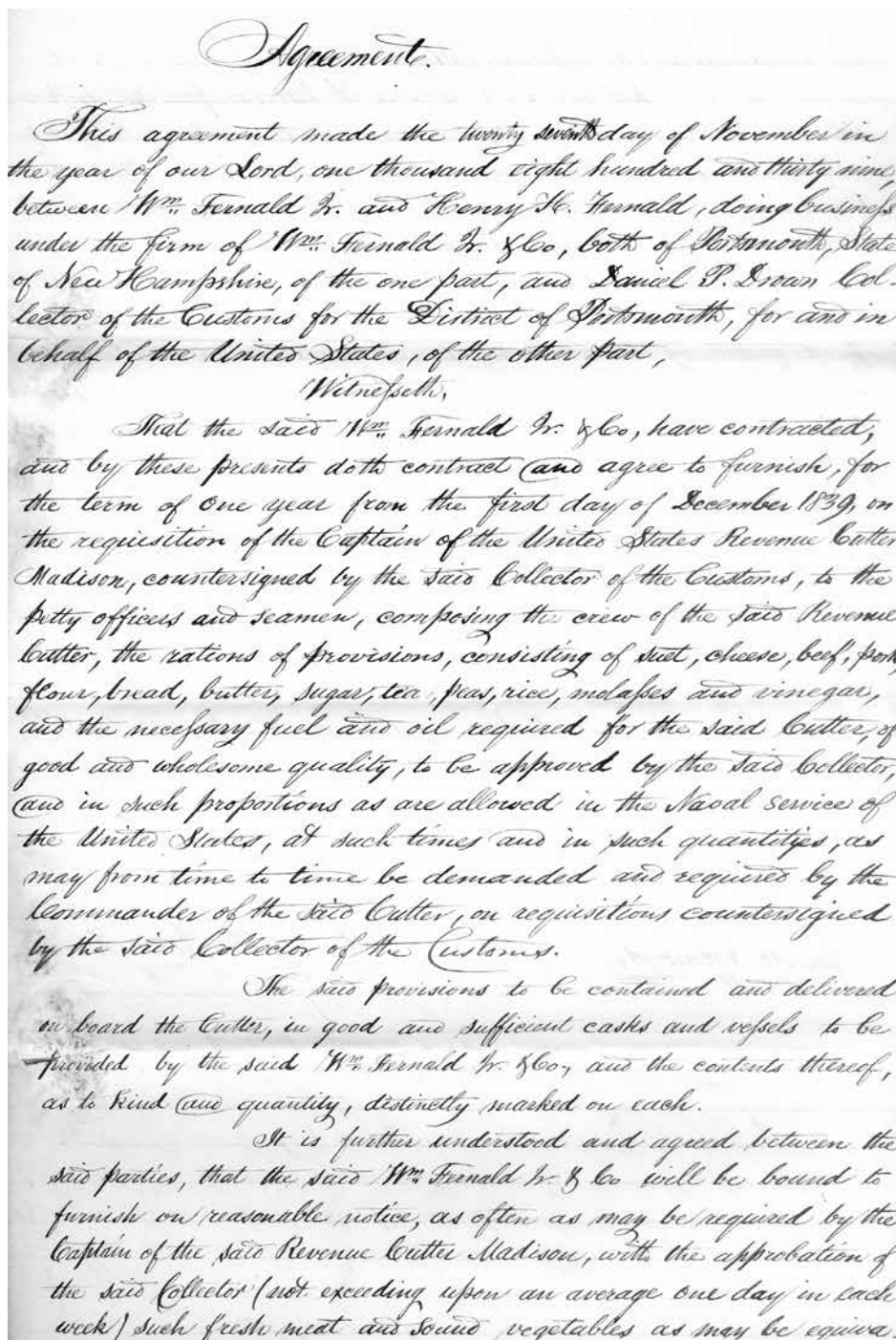
A HEALTH CARE PLAN MANDATORY FOR CREW

The health of the crew was important, and crews spent many hours a week cleaning the “berth deck.” A ship’s requisitions record the purchase of 12 to 18 hickory or corn brooms. However, the living conditions, inadequate diet, and hard labor for both officers and seamen often produced long-lasting illness and disease.

By law, each man paid a tax, or fee, of 20 cents a month for individual health care at the marine hospitals, but these hospitals were few and distant from the cutter’s locations. The cutters carried neither surgeon nor surgeon’s mate, and whatever treatments and remedies used came from the cutter’s allowed medicine chest.

If a man became too incapacitated to serve, the captain discharged him. Such was the case in 1844 with the cook, James Murphy, aboard the cutter *Crawford* at Savannah, Georgia. Murphy’s rheumatism could not be treated with patent medicines. Hired slave Linus Olmstead took his place as cook. Some illnesses proved incurable. In 1841 had four men aboard *Crawford* died from unspecified fevers, and another died from yellow fever. *Van Buren* had one seaman die in 1845, and 1st Lt. William Norris died in 1846.

Medicine chests mirrored those of the merchant marine and contained patent medicines, many of which were alcohol-based or opiate-based, or both; others were benign and useless, while still others such as the “Mercurial Ointment” were poisonous. The cutter’s officers were as susceptible to fads in medicines as in any generation then or since. Capt. Levy C. Harby, commanding the *Wolcott* and stationed in Mobile, Alabama, submitted bills for replenishing the medicine chest. Treasury Secretary Robert J. Walker questioned the expenses



A contract for provisions and fuel for the Revenue Cutter *Madison* dated November 27, 1839, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Wm. Fernald Jr. & Co. agreed to furnish the vessel regularly with the required food supplies and the necessary fuel and oil.

for items not allowed in the chest and disallowed the payment. This made Harby personally responsible for payment. The doubtful items enumerated by Walker included:

One bottle Sands Sarsaparilla, six bottles Townsend’s Sarsaparilla, One

Galvanic Bracelet \$1.50, One Galvanic Bracelet \$3, six bottles magnesia at \$1 per bottle, 2 prescriptions at 40¢. Coleman’s bitters 8, Two bottles Tonic mixture \$2, Twelve boxes Seidlitz Powders \$6, Six boxes Capsules 8,

One bottle Syrup of Wild Cherry 8,
Two bottles Lime juice 2\$, Ten bottles
Woods Mixture \$10, 2 gallons Blue
Lick water 8 and jug 4.

Walker checked contemporary books listing medicines for seagoing vessels and remarked that even if listed, they “would not be allowed in those of the revenue service.” In December, Mobile Collector James Saunders intervened in the discussion. He asserted that his “special order” authorized the purchased items, adding that the largest outlay, for Dr. Wood’s Brown Mixture, was for treatment of Lt. Osmond Peters’s rheumatism. Saunders was under the impression there was no “regulation confining all medicines,” but he noted that those procured for *Wolcott* he “deemed useful in this climate.” Saunders asked that the “rejected articles” be paid for because it was difficult to determine just what proportion of medicines were for which officer. Secretary Walker relented and authorized payment of the bill to the patiently waiting Mobile druggist Joseph Jackson.

The Treasury Department continued its arbitrary application of regulations and customs for habitability, rations, and various medicines and general health care and pursued whatever it deemed worthy or necessary for the revenue cutters. However, these factors, including punishments, cannot be viewed separately but as parts of the overall service culture. They all influenced how the cutters operated and maintained responsible crews.

The constant rotation of treasury secretaries and collectors of customs guaranteed the loss of any continuity for the administration of the revenue cutters for the next half century. What did continue was the near constant flow of correspondence over trivial matters, but trivial was the watchword of the Treasury Department over expenses.

The eventual result was a near revolt of the revenue cutter officers in 1889 when they petitioned to transfer to the Navy Department, where management for officers

and men was far superior to that of the Treasury Department.

Nonetheless, the Coast Guard remained in the Treasury Department until 1967, except for temporary transfer to the Navy during

World Wars I and II. In 1967, it became part of the new Department of Transportation, and in 2003 was merged into the new Department of Homeland Security. **P**

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NOTE ON SOURCES

Archival sources used in this article are mainly drawn from the Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group (RG) 26, and Records of the U.S. Customs Service, RG 36, at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. In addition, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Treasury from Collectors of Customs (“G,” “H,” “I,” Series), 1833–1869, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, RG 56 (Microfilm Publication M174), provided additional information.

The correspondence in RG 26 and RG 36 between the various cutter captains, the collectors of customs, and the sitting treasury secretaries provide sporadic comments about the needs and concerns toward cutter material conditions and the overall health and welfare of the officers and men serving cutters. These logs are useful in understanding the daily routine and material culture of the revenue cutters.

The 1833 comments of Capt. Andrew Mather (RG 56, M174) of the proposed changes to the cutter *Wolcott* cabin and wardroom are marked in red in the original. The interesting parts of his letters involved showing the non-standardization of the cutters although built at the same place and at near same time.

The most complete information came from the logs of the cutter *Van Buren*, Entry 159A, RG 26. These log entries are the transcribed transcripts of reports sent to the Treasury Department. This was a requirement and was used as a check on the activities of the cutters. There was no standard for making the entries. What was included depended upon the activity of the individual captains. Some were very complete in their notations; other not so. The amount of provisions, water, punishments, desertions, the sick list, hiring, discharges, deaths, and minutia deemed necessary by the individual captain as worthy of mentioning, or perhaps justification, varied. Not all men were punished for infractions. It was common for deserters to return to the cutter and give a plausible explanation that the captain found satisfactory and persuaded him to suspend punishment. However, desertion caused by drunkenness was not tolerated.

Between 1841 and 1842, *Van Buren* had four captains and one first lieutenant as acting captain. In the period between 1841 and 1842 *Van Buren* was under Navy control and was not particularly active in the Florida campaigns. However, this period provides details of the cutter not previously known.

The deaths of men from *Van Buren* are recorded in Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1841–1842, August 3, 1841, Entry 155, RG 26.

William N. Brady, *The Kedge Anchor, or, Young Sailor’s Assistant*, 18th ed., (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1872; originally published in 1847; retrieved from Google Books) is an excellent source for the description of naval life and details in the 19th century. Brady was a sailing master and had intimate knowledge of naval service that is not seen in many biographies. It is practical information that could remain of service in the present. He does explain the use of red ochre and, in turn, provides a reason the cutter *Van Buren* noted in one log entry that red ochre was used on the cannon and other metal parts. On the blackening of hammocks, Brady provides the procedure but not the purpose. Painting canvas can make it more durable and easier to clean.

The model for the illustration of the schooner frame was adopted with permission from in the Age of Sail Workshop (website) www.cindyvallar.com/ageofsail.html. Photograph of museum display from Mystic Seaport.



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