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July
1907



[To be read at a muster of the officers and crew on board each vessel of the Revenue-Cutter Service in accordance with the provisions of article 913 of the Regulations.]

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D. C., July 8, 1907.

To the officers and men of the
United States Revenue-Cutter Service:

The 4th day of August is the anniversary of the establishment of the United States Revenue-Cutter Service. The Service had its inception in an act of the first Congress approved by President George Washington on August 4, 1790, which thereby established the first maritime force organized by this nation subsequent to the establishment of the Federal Government.

The action of Congress in providing for the building and equipping of 10 revenue cutters was taken in accordance with a recommendation of Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, in his report to the House of Representatives dated April 22, 1790. The Department soon had under its control 10 vessels fully manned and equipped. The names of these vessels, the first cutters in the service of the United States, were: *Scammel, Massachusetts, Argus, Vigilant, General Green, Active, Virginia, Diligence, South Carolina, and Georgia.*

The first appointments of officers in the Revenue-Cutter Service were made from among those who served in the Continental Navy, and a large number of the enlisted force were men who served the colonies afloat in the great struggle for independence.

By the act of July 1, 1797, the President was authorized to increase in his discretion the strength of the several revenue cutters not to exceed 30 marines and seamen to each cutter, and he was also authorized to employ the revenue cutters to defend the seacoast of the United States and to repel any hostility to its vessels and commerce. By the act of June 22, 1798, it was provided that the complement of the larger vessels of the Service should not exceed 70 marines and seamen.

The Service when first established was recognized as an important part of the national defense. This is evidenced by the fact that in the expedition sent to the West Indies in 1798 to operate against French privateers and French commerce, 8 cutters participated, carrying a total of 96 guns and 416 men. This naval expedition consisted of about 20 vessels in all, including the famous *Constitution* and *Constellation*, and included among its officers such noted names in the naval annals of the country as those of Barry, Truxtun, Preble, and Decatur. It is noteworthy that of the 22 prizes taken by our forces in the next few years the revenue cutters captured 16 unaided and assisted in the capture of two others.

The cutter *Pickering* made two cruises to the West Indies and captured 10 prizes, one of which carried 44 guns and 200 men—three times her own force. This vessel sailed a third time, August 20, 1800, in company with the frigate *Insurgent*, to join the squadron off Guadeloupe, but nothing was ever heard of either vessel. They evidently foundered in the hurricanes that prevailed in the month of September of that year.

The Service has borne an honorable part in the wars in which the country has been engaged. In the war of 1812, which brought such renown to the American sailor, the revenue cutters rendered conspicuous and meritorious service. The first capture made was that of the British schooner *Patriot* by the cutter *Jefferson*, and a total of 14 British vessels taken indicates the activity of the Service during this war.

An illustration of the devotion to duty exhibited by the officers and men of the Service during the war of 1812 is to be found in an account of the brave resistance shown in the defense of the *Eagle*, Capt. Frederick Lee, in Long Island Sound. On the morning of October 11, 1814, the *Eagle* was sighted and pursued by two British vessels, the brig *Dispatch*, of 18 guns, and a sloop. The cutter was run ashore near Negro Head, Long Island, stripped of her sails and rigging, and her guns dragged up a high bluff, from which point of vantage her crew fought the two British vessels from 9 o'clock in the morning until late in the afternoon. When their ammunition was exhausted they fired back the enemy's shot that lodged against the hill, tearing up the ship's log book to make cartridges. Near evening the enemy withdrew and the next day Captain Lee flouted the *Eagle* and was about removing her when the enemy returned and this time succeeded in securing their prize. During the engagement the flag flying on the *Eagle* was shot away three times and was each time replaced by volunteers from the crew on the hill.

Revenue cutters participated in the campaign against the Seminole Indians in 1836 and from three to five vessels operated on the coasts of Florida, and, together with the sloop of war *Vandalia*,

rendered effective aid to the Army and won the commendation of the commanding generals.

A provisional fleet of revenue cutters under the command of Capt. J. A. Webster, U. S. R. C. S., who on account of ill health was later succeeded by Capt. Winslow Foster, U. S. R. C. S., participated in the war with Mexico. The *McLane* and *Forward* took a prominent part in the operations against Alvarado, Frontera, and Tabasco, and in the blockade of the Mexican coast.

The revenue cutter *Harriet Lane*, named for the niece of President Buchanan, was one of the most efficient vessels in the service of the country at the time she was built, in 1857. She participated in the naval expedition against Paraguay in 1858, and under the command of Capt. John Faunce, U. S. R. C. S., rendered most valuable service to the expedition. Later she took part in the capture of the fortifications at Hatteras Inlet during the civil war.

The Service participated with credit in the civil war, both in naval engagements and in the blockade of the southern ports, and rendered important service commensurate with the size and character of its vessels.

The achievements of the Service during the Spanish-American war are too fresh in the memory of its personnel to need to be recounted at length. The gallant conduct of the *Hudson* at Cardenas, the efficient service of the *McCulloch* at Manila, and of the *Manning*, *Woodbury*, *Hamilton*, *Windom*, and *Morrill* on the Cuban blockade, as well as the earnest performance of duty by the other vessels cooperating with the Navy and Army under circumstances affording less opportunity for distinction, served to uphold the best traditions of the Service.

Throughout its history the Service has faithfully and honorably performed the many and varied duties that are incumbent upon it in time of peace. The assistance of vessels in distress, the enforcement of the maritime laws, the removal of obstructions to navigation, the protection of the seal and other fisheries in Alaska, the enforcement of the quarantine laws, are duties that are ever present and calling for constant attention, and the Service may take pride in its record of having measured up to all that was required of it in the performance of these duties.

Many incidents are on record of bravery and devotion to duty on the part of officers and men in time of peace. The rescue of the survivors of the *City of Columbus* off Gay Head, Mass., by the *Dexter* in 1884, excited the admiration of the country, and the gallant expedition of 1897-8 for the relief of the whalers at Point Barrow won special recognition of its participants by Congress.

The splendid work of the officers and crew of the *Galveston* in saving life during the hurricane at Galveston, Tex., in September,

1900, and of the *Winona* in saving life during the hurricane that swept the Gulf in September, 1906, the devotion to duty under the most trying conditions shown by the officers and men who enforced a rigorous patrol against yellow fever on the Gulf coast in the summer of 1905, and the assistance rendered by the Service to the stricken city of San Francisco in April, 1906, are all achievements that have won the commendation of the Department and reflected credit upon the Service.

An honorable record covering so many years should be a source of pride to every officer and man in the Service. On the other hand, the obligation rests on each officer and man to worthily uphold and maintain this record and to strive earnestly to make the Service of even greater value to the country than it has been in the past. It is the duty of each man, therefore, whether in the commissioned or enlisted force, to manifest an unwavering loyalty to the Government and to the Service, and in his own sphere of responsibility to be "always ready" for any demands that may be made upon him.

BEEKMAN WINTHROP, *Assistant Secretary.*



TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, June 11, 1909.

[The following paper, prepared by Capt. B. L. Reed, U. S. Revenue-Cutter Service, will be read at a muster of the officers and crew on board each vessel of the Revenue-Cutter Service in accordance with the provisions of article 913 of the Regulations:]

To the officers and men of the United States Revenue-Cutter Service:

The custom which is now established of observing the 4th of August, the birthday of the Revenue-Cutter Service, finds its sufficient support, aside from Department regulation, in the common practice throughout our country of celebrating in an appropriate and becoming manner important anniversaries, and of making such occasions memorable by distinctive ceremonies.

Since August 4, 1790, when it was originally organized, the Service, while preserving its original plan and purpose, has been enlarged and expanded with the growth of the country to meet the increasing requirements of maritime and commercial interests, until its vessels now cruise on both coasts of the United States and in distant waters beyond their boundaries, wherever there are important duties to be performed; yet it is still within such limits of numbers that the achievements of each officer and man should be, as they are, matters of interest and pride to the whole corps. The personnel of the Service should feel drawn together, especially upon this day, by the bonds of a mutual pride in its history and a common purpose to uphold its honorable traditions.

In the turbulent times of the country's early history, when our commerce was annoyed by foreign cruisers, belligerent activities began, not only against those national offenders whose hostility was a source of great irritation to the new government, but also against the lawbreakers engaged in illicit traffic on the coasts. The duties of the Service from the beginning required fighting qualities, and the officers and men in their small craft were schooled by rough experiences in sailing and fighting.

The legislation which, in 1837, resulted in adding the assistance to vessels in distress to the duties previously prescribed by law opened up a field of activities and endeavor that has required energetic atten-

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tion ever since. Authentic records of the results under the law of 1837 have been kept only since 1860. During the first decade of that statistical period, while sailing cutters were still in active service and equaled steam craft in number, the annual average of vessels assisted exceeded 113 and, in addition, many lives were actually saved from drowning. In the whole period covered by distinctive records since 1860 the lives and property saved by revenue cutters have reached an imposing aggregate.

The precept of activity and preparedness embodied in the original motto of the Service has been followed faithfully; and the great increase in important work in recent years shows that the Service has emulated the example of its early history in meeting and overcoming the trials and difficulties of coast cruising at all seasons. To these good results modern equipment, trained personnel, and improved organization have contributed materially.

In the varied requirements of duty on a revenue cutter the sailor must be developed in military efficiency as well as in the management of ships and boats and in the life-saving methods of the day. The sailor's life is an active one, and by the nature of his calling he must be alert at all times. He is obliged to regard fogs and gales and disasters as incidents in the routine of his profession, which should school him in patience, in fortitude and in helpfulness, and develop self-command in overcoming trials and perplexities.

The Service has been quick throughout its history to respond to the demands of war and has gained an enviable reputation and distinction in the military annals of the country. The transition from a peaceful to a warlike situation has occurred often, involving revenue cutters and their complements, both upon our own shores and in distant ports, and should a state of war again confront the nation, the Revenue-Cutter Service will be found ready to perform its share in the national defense.

We may look about upon the Service and note many actions that have attracted attention in the recent past and have contributed greatly to its reputation for excellent performance. Take, as an instance, the sending of a revenue cutter thousands of miles in winter to save shipwrecked men threatened with death from exposure on a barren shore in Alaska, and carrying them to comfort and safety. Again, when the wireless telegraph told of the disaster to the steamship *Republic*, revenue cutters promptly found their way to the wreck through the fog and darkness, and one of them rescued from the ocean the survivors who had clung to the ship until she went down.

The special service of destroying derelicts with a vessel designed for that purpose has been intrusted to the Service, and is a mark of confidence in which all may properly take pride. This vessel in her brief career, since November, 1908, has already done splendid work

in saving abandoned property, assisting unfortunate mariners, and removing obstructions to navigation from the paths of commerce.

To illustrate further the record of service in the cause of humanity and devotion to duty, we may point to the men to whom medals have been awarded and those who have been commended and honored for the execution of important trusts. There are upon the present register of the Service three names of men who have received the thanks of Congress for notable life-saving work; four others were awarded special medals by joint resolution of Congress for heroism and gallantry in battle; one has a gold medal granted by special act of Congress for a winter's journey through Alaska on a mission of humanity; two more have received life-saving medals of honor, which, as their name implies, were awarded under the laws of the country for conspicuous daring, while there are many recipients of campaign medals earned by participation in the hardships of war. In addition, there are 27 names of warrant officers and the enlisted personnel of the Revenue-Cutter Service in the published list of medalists who have been signally honored for their bravery in saving lives from the watery elements at great personal risk. It is a high honor, and a much coveted honor, to receive the thanks of Congress, to receive a medal especially authorized by Congress for a particular achievement in peace or war, and to receive a life-saving medal under the laws of Congress for signal heroism in saving lives from the perils of the sea. The enactments and medals have been bestowed on brave men for unselfish effort, and in no sense are they intended to compensate them for their own exposure to danger. Considering the number of officers and men in the Revenue-Cutter Service, the award of medals has been large. There have been also other special services which have been appropriately recognized by foreign governments, by congressional enactments, and department letters.

The history of the Service is made up of everyday details, from the accomplishment of great things to almost unnoticed deeds, to which all the ships and all the men, with few exceptions, have contributed. The feeling acknowledgments of these many services by their recipients have been a source of encouragement in prosecuting our allotted work, although there is no reward comparable to the sense of duty well done.

The accomplishments in peace and in war have been brilliant in particular cases and in the grand total, for in peace the Service has performed its duty with constancy and fidelity and in war it has played an honorable part. In recognition of the accumulated results Congress has enacted legislation applicable to the whole Service, beneficial to all officers and men who are constant and faithful in the performance of duty.

We may contemplate the past history of the Service with pride and enthusiasm, and we should have no doubt as to the future. This occasion of yearly observance and the recollection of the history we have in common ought to take root deep in our hearts and its celebration should strengthen us for the duties lying beyond. Let us draw an inspiration from the examples of duty well performed, preserve the traditions of the Service by high endeavor and achievement, and continue to fulfill our allotted obligations "with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right."

C. D. HILLES, *Assistant Secretary.*

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