

Revenue Cutter Service ^[1]

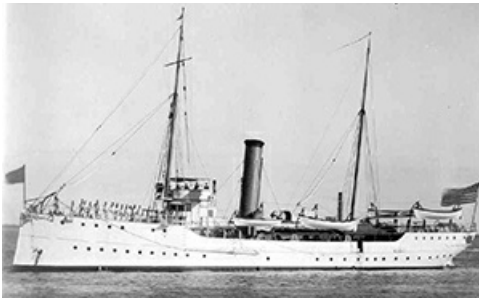
Revenue Cutter Service

by Beverly Tetterton, 2006



The USRC Gallatin, 1855, at Newport, Rhode Island. Image from the United States Coast Guard.

^[2]The Revenue Cutter Service, which employed federal cutters to enforce maritime laws, was established in 1790 to collect much-needed revenue for a post-Revolutionary War ^[3] U.S. Treasury and to terminate well-established smuggling activities along the Atlantic Coast. The newly elected first president, George Washington, gave the task of organizing the cutter service to Alexander Hamilton, the nation's first secretary of the Treasury. Hamilton enlisted the help of customs collectors by inquiring in two Treasury Department circulars, dated 2 Oct. 1789 and 23 Sept. 1790, whether smuggling existed in their districts and if they needed boats to secure revenue. Overwhelmingly, the collectors replied that smuggling was rampant. Armed with collectors' correspondence, Hamilton



The USRC Seminole, circa 1900-1934.

presented Image from the United States Coast Guard. ^[2]Congress with a bill on 22 Apr. 1790 calling for establishment of a Revenue Cutter Service. Congress passed Hamilton's bill on 4 Aug. 1790, empowering the president to build and equip ten boats for the service. North Carolina received one of these boats.

By 1837 the Revenue Cutter Service was participating in the rescue of and aid to vessels in distress, and by 1871-72 the service was involved in the organization of lifesaving stations along the Atlantic Coast. In 1878 the Treasury Department formally established the U.S. Lifesaving Service ^[4], and Revenue Cutter Service officers acted as inspectors of lifesaving stations. Vessels that have operated in North Carolina include the cutters Diligence ^[5], Gallatin, James C. Dobbin, George M. Bibb, W. H. Crawford, Colfax, Morrill, and Seminole. In 1915 Congress combined the Revenue Cutter Service and the Lifesaving Service to form the U.S. Coast Guard ^[6].

Reference:

Irving H. King, *The Coast Guard under Sail: The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, 1789-1865* (1989).

Additional Resources:

"USRC Diligence." North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=C-67> ^[5] (accessed October 23, 2012).

"Eighteenth, Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Century Revenue Cutters: A Historic Image Gallery." United States Coast Guard. http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/USRC_Photo_Index.asp ^[2] (accessed October 23, 2012).

Image Credits:

"U.S. Coast Guard survey schooner GALLATIN photographed in 1855 at Newport, R.I. This Revenue Cutter was built at

the New York Navy Yard in 1831. (Original of this photo is in the custody of the Historical Society, Newport, R.I.)."; photographer unknown; copy of image in Gallatin cutter file, USCG Historian's Office. United States Coast Guard. http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/USRC_Photo_Index.asp ^[2] (accessed October 23, 2012).

"USRC Seminole; no caption; Photo No. 130254-6a; date/photographer unknown." United States Coast Guard. http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/USRC_Photo_Index.asp ^[2] (accessed October 23, 2012).

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[Tetterton, Beverly](#) ^[16]

Origin - location:

[Coastal Plain](#) ^[17]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[18]

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^[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/revenue-cutter-service> ^[2] http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/USRC_Photo_Index.asp ^[3]

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