Revenue Cutter Service Employees, 1790–1915

Established initially as the Revenue Marine in the Department of the Treasury by Alexander Hamilton on August 4, 1790, the Revenue Cutter Service represented the nation's first armed maritime or seagoing service until the U.S. Navy was founded in 1798. The Revenue Cutter Service collected taxes and tariffs, enforced maritime laws, and suppressed piracy. After 1848, it partnered with the U.S. Life-Saving Service to assist shipwrecked mariners and passengers, administering shore-based rescue and lifeboat stations along the U.S. coastline. The Revenue Cutter Service formally merged with the U.S. Life-Saving Service on January 28, 1915, to form the modern United States Coast Guard.

Official Register of the United States

The *Official Register of the United States*, a directory of Federal employees published by the Federal Government from 1816 to 1959, lists Revenue Cutter Service personnel from 1816 to 1915. Listings primarily include information about officers, including dates of commission, and the location of revenue cutter stations.

For more information, see the following reference report: *Using the Official Register of the United States to Research Federal Employees, 1816–1959.*

Textual Records

Textual records relating to employment in the Revenue Cutter Service are in the Records of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), Record Group 26. The records are located at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.

Officers

___**Records of Officer Personnel, 1797–1919** (NC-31, Entry 265). 16 vols.
The entries in these bound volumes are arranged alphabetically by the name of the officer, and include dates of service, citations, and charges preferred for disciplinary actions.

___**List of Commissions of Revenue Cutter Officers, 1791–1910** (NC-31, Entry 266). 10 vols.
The records are arranged chronologically.

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Enlisted Men
Enlisted crew members in the Revenue Cutter Service generally did not have individual personnel records. Their service must be researched using available records of the revenue cutters on which they served. The records, however, are not indexed; therefore, it is necessary to know the name of the vessel and the individual's approximate date of service.

___**Muster Rolls, 1848–1910** (NC-31, Entry 188).
These records contain captains' copies of muster rolls for officers and crew of revenue cutters, arranged alphabetically by vessel.

___**Muster Rolls, 1833–1932** (NC-31, Entry 189). 158 vols.
These bound volumes include headquarters' copies of muster rolls for officers and crew of revenue cutters, arranged by time period and then alphabetically by vessel. They list the name, rank, date mustered, amount of pay, deductions for hospitalization, net amount of pay, and signature of master.

___**Ship's Rosters, 1819–1904** (NC-31, Entry 196). 7 vols.
The records are arranged alphabetically by vessel, then chronologically.

___**Revenue Cutter Service Payroll Records, 1836–1901** (P, Entry 32).
The records are arranged alphabetically by vessel.

___**Shipping Articles of Revenue Cutters, 1863–1915** (NC-31, Entry 255). 30 vols.
The records are arranged by date spans, then alphabetically by vessel, then chronologically.

Revenue Cutter Vessels

___**Logs of Revenue Cutters and Coast Guard Vessels, 1819–1941** (NC-31, Entry 159A).
The logs include daily entries concerning the weather, courses sailed, crew, and activities in which the vessel was engaged. They are arranged alphabetically by vessel, then chronologically.

___**Cruise Records of Cutters, 1886–1913** (NC-31, Entry 160). For each cutter, the records list the time at anchor, under steam and canvas, under steam only, and under canvas only; name of district cruised; number of days not cruising; number of lives saved; number of vessels boarded, seized, or aided; losses to vessel and cargo; and amounts of coal and lubricating oil used.

___**Histories of Revenue Cutters, 1790–1937** (NC-31, Entry 162). The histories show, for each cutter, the date built, cost, district of assignment, period of operation, dates of major repairs, and date of sale or disposal.