

THE
DAYBOOK®

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NAVAL HISTORY &
HERITAGE COMMAND



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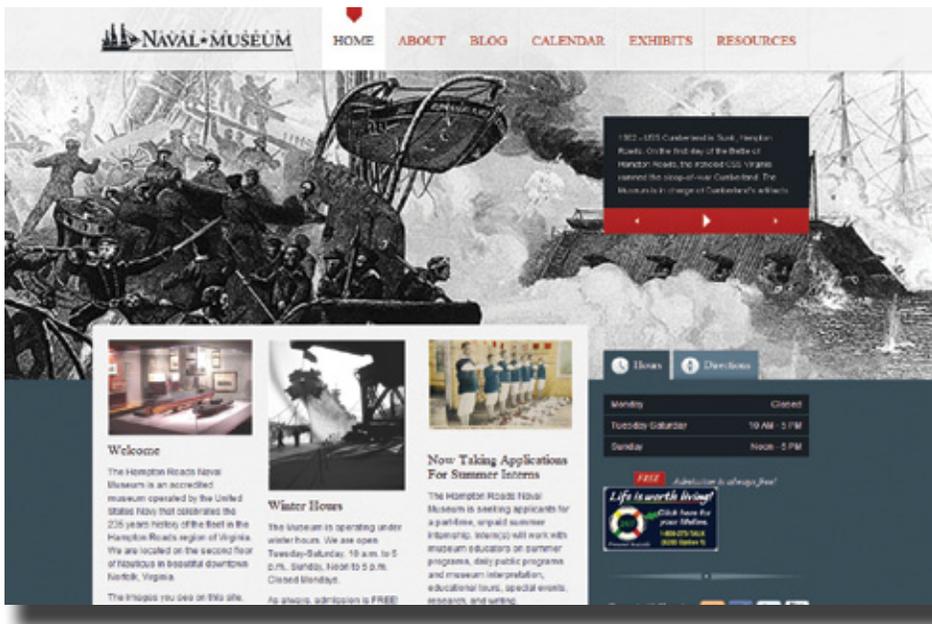
The Daybook's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum-related events. It is written by staff and volunteers.

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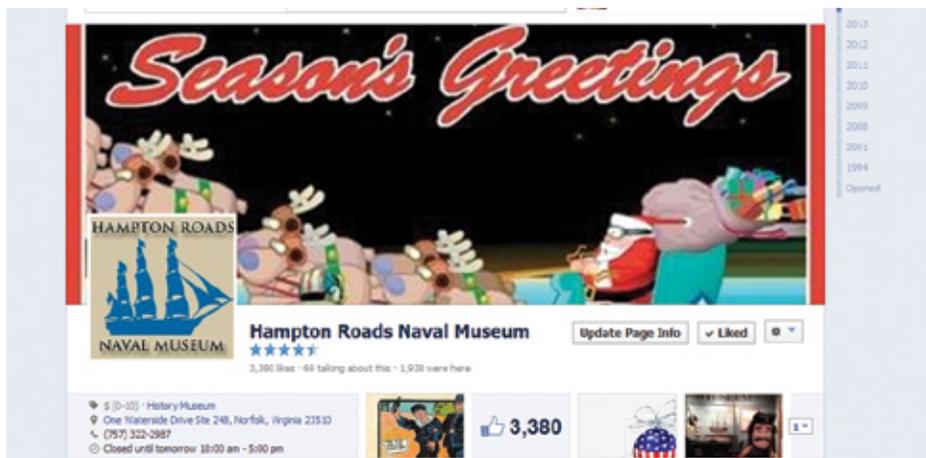
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HRNM's Internet Offerings

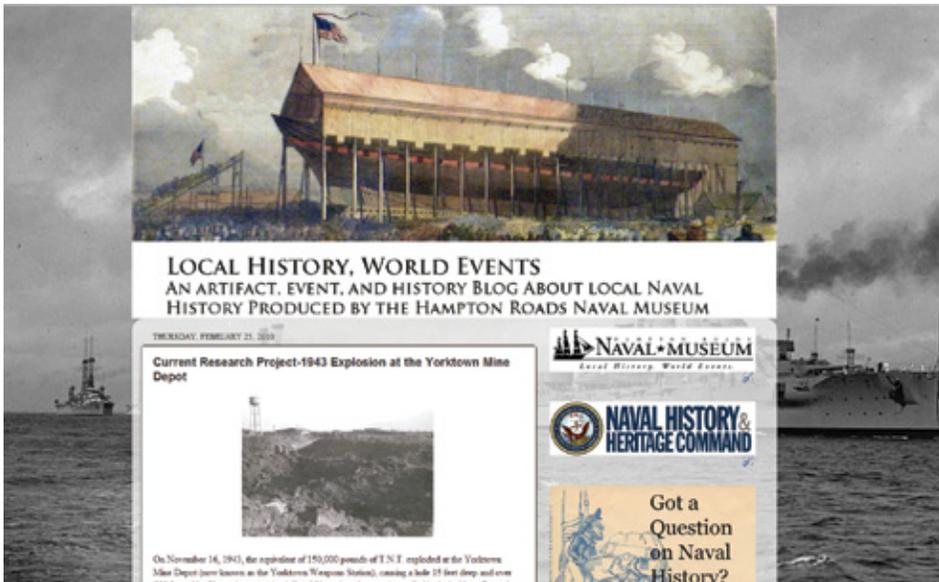
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Civil War Navy Sesquicentennial (Blog):
 It is the 150th anniversary of the Naval side of the American Civil War. Naval activity made up about ten percent of the military activity during the war. This blog presents both familiar and unfamiliar naval events. Go here--> civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com.



"The Death of Captain Lawrence," by Rufus Fairchild Zogbaum. In this 1897 interpretation of Lawrence's death, Lieutenant William Cox holds his captain's hand in the final moment. The image itself is factually incorrect, as Cox was attempting to rally sailors at the time. However, symbolically, it is a powerful statement of the professional relationship between the two officers. (HRNM image)

The Odium of Defeat

The Aftermath of the *Chesapeake-Shannon* Battle

By Joe Mosier

Two frigates sailed into Halifax harbor on Sunday, June 6, 1813. One was the familiar HMS *Shannon*, which had been coming and going since her first arrival in Nova Scotia on September 22,



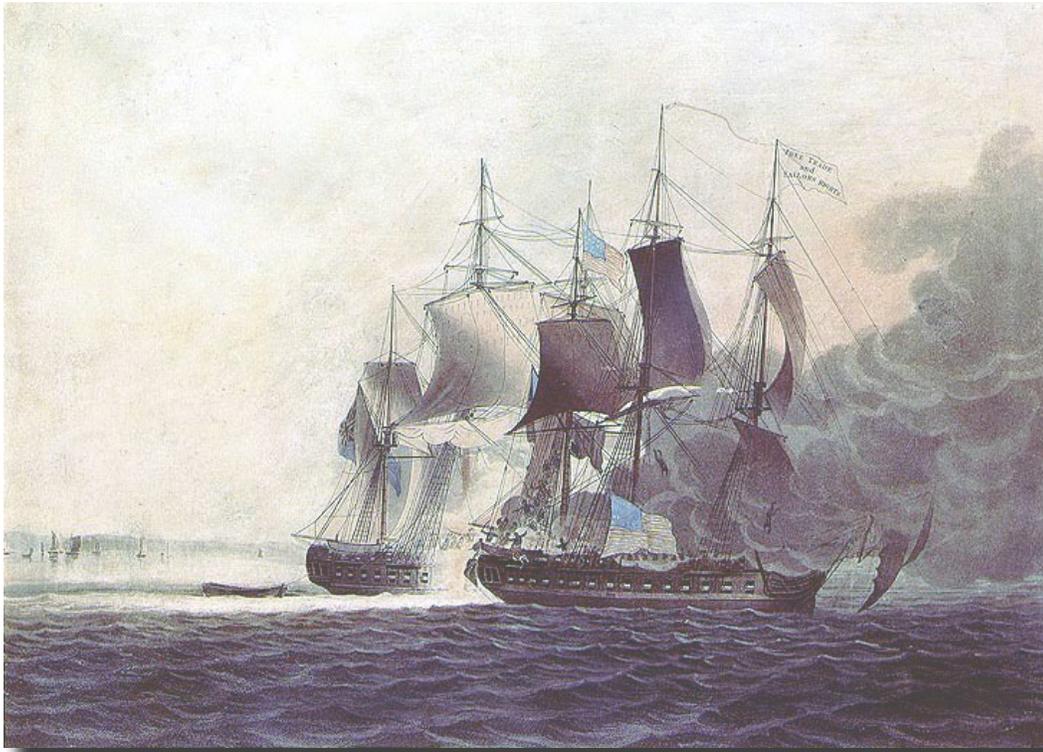
1811. It was the other ship that excited the crowd and caused spectators to leave church in mid-sermon. The British white ensign displayed above the American flag at half-

staff showed her to be a prize. Onlookers thought she might be USS *President*, which was known to have sailed from Boston some time before. In fact, the captured frigate was the 36-gun *Chesapeake* defeated by *Shannon* in battle five days earlier.

While people ashore were joyous, a more somber mood prevailed onboard the vessels. One American captain, James Lawrence, lay dead; while the British commander, Philip Vere Broke, had such severe wounds that he was expected to follow. With over seventy-four dead and 157 wounded, the conflict had been one of the most savage engagements in the Age of Sail. It was also the reversal of a trend of American single ship victories over the Royal Navy. Thomas Bladen

Capel, senior officer at Halifax, quickly arranged the funerals for Captain Lawrence and his first lieutenant, Augustus Ludlow. Just as quickly, he dashed off a message to the Admiralty in London. Captain Brooke was too ill to help, so the report was cobbled together from the accounts of junior officers. *Shannon's* Fourth Lieutenant, Charles Falkiner, was dispatched to England with the glad tidings.

The news arrived at the Admiralty just a month later on July 7, 1813. It brought joy to the countryside and political ammunition to a cabinet under siege. Whig opponents had been mocking the lack of success by the Royal Navy against America's "fir frigates". Surely, this was the result of Tory



The Shannon-Chesapeake battle was of the most decisive defeats in all of U.S. Naval history. The public, however, did not place any blame upon Chesapeake's captain, James Lawrence. Instead, the public made him into a national martyr. (HRNM image)

mismanagement. Admiralty Secretary John Crocker was able to turn the table on his critics and offer proof of the superiority of British naval arms, especially when directed by his political party. To further advertise the favorable result, Croker ordered medals struck for Captain Broke and his surviving lieutenants, Provo Wallis and Falkiner. Broke's was the first gold medal ever awarded to a Royal Navy captain for a battle between frigates.

While the English press expressed shock at the effectiveness of the U.S. Navy at the start of the war, the press also vehemently argued that such successes were the result of American perfidy. Their frigates were not really frigates, but ships-of-the-line in disguise. In any fair fight, superior British gallantry, skill, and training would carry the day. Broke and his crew on *Shannon* had surely proven this to be an incontrovertible fact.

One of the loudest supporters of this line of reasoning was William James. A lawyer from Jamaica, who had been interned in Philadelphia as an enemy citizen at the start of the war. He was furious at both what he saw as American braggadocio in the wake of early ship battles and at the treatment of his mulatto wife. Once back in England, James wrote often in the semi-official *Naval*

Chronicles using the pseudonym "Boxer," addressing the superior nature of American frigates and the inferior nature of American navy men. After the war, James would go on to write two volumes that "defined the argument" when it came to discussing the naval history of 1812-1815. Future President Teddy Roosevelt gained early notoriety in 1882 by writing *The Naval War of 1812*. He wrote it specifically to counter James' reasoning. Roosevelt proved modern in his suggestion that there was nothing wrong with the Navy planning ahead to produce better weaponry than its opponent's. The idea of a "fair fight" was chivalric, but false. Most modern commanders would say that if you find yourself in a fair fight, it means you have failed in your planning.

The American reaction to the loss was as shocked as the British reaction was triumphant. In the wake of victories of His Majesty's Frigates *Guerriere*, *Macedonian*, and *Java*, this defeat was not the natural order of things. Surely, something or someone must be blamed. One early excuse came from the report of the Boston harbor pilot who had taken *Chesapeake* out to sea. He watched part of the battle from a pilot schooner. At one point he saw an immense cloud of smoke envelop the American frigate from foremast to mizzen top. Historians

know from subsequent reports that this was caused by a British grenade exploding in a box of ready ammunition stowed on the American poop deck. But U.S. observers of the day thought it obvious that the smoke resulted from some kind of British "infernal machine," an undefined secret weapon that somehow allowed the English to steal the victory.

Another widespread myth was that misbehavior by the American crew had jerked defeat from the jaws of victory. A fanciful account spread of the actions of a "Portuguese" sailor onboard *Chesapeake* (described right down to his outrageous dress). This "foreigner" convinced many of the crew to desert their posts and head below crying, "This is what happens when we don't get our prize money!" In fact, Captain Lawrence had made arrangements for those due prize money to be paid by the purser before the ship left Boston. In another instance, the ship's "mulatto bugler" was blamed for failing to sound "borders away" at the pivotal moment. Obviously, the responsibility for the defeat lay with those who were not really "American." Problems with the crew did exist, but most were related to the limited time available for integration. One division officer testified that he had never mustered his men until



As commandant of the Charleston Navy Yard at the time of the Chesapeake-Shannon duel, Commodore William Bainbridge presided over a three-judge panel that included Captain Isaac Hull of Constitution and Captain John Smith of the frigate Congress to investigate Chesapeake's defeat. The panel recommended a formal court-martial of Lieutenant William Cox and several other junior officers and sailors. (NHHC image)

immediately before the battle. They went into the fight as strangers.

By late June 1813, American prisoners began to be released from Halifax. Three cartel ships, *Frederick Augustus*, *Agnes*, and *Henry* (all American vessels freed by the Nova Scotia vice-admiralty court) carried the liberated sailors to New England. Not all of those captured on June 1 returned to American soil. The British buried eleven who had died of their wounds or sickness at the prison graveyard on Melville Island. Twenty-two of the sailors signed on to British warships. Of these, four were British subjects who had not deserted the Royal Navy, but were willing to join to avoid the charge of treason. One, Joseph Warburton, a native of Lancashire, was known to have deserted from HMS *Aeolus*. To make matters worse, he had sailed a British prize into an American port. Warburton was sent to Portsmouth, England, where he was tried, convicted, and hanged on November 18, 1813.

Back in the United States, Commodore William Bainbridge headed a three-person court of inquiry held in Boston. This court was roughly similar to the civilian court system's grand jury. Its mission was to investigate the incident and recommend to the Secretary of the Navy who, if anyone,

should be charged with violations of Naval rules and regulations. If it found anyone at fault, the Secretary would convene a formal court martial to determine guilt or innocence.

The court exonerated James Lawrence. The defeat had come as a result of "the almost unexampled early fall of Captain Lawrence and all the principal officers, the bugleman's desertion of his quarters, and inability to sound his horn...and the failure of the boarders on both decks to rally on the spar deck, after the enemy had boarded, which might have been done successfully."

To further whitewash the outcome, the court overstated both the size of *Shannon's* crew and her armament, putting the figures at 396 men and fifty-two guns. This made the Royal Navy frigate superior in every respect to *Chesapeake*. In reality, the two vessels were almost identically armed, with the Americans having a slight edge in manpower. If something went wrong--as it certainly had--then somebody must be blamed. The crew had rushed below in confusion rather than face the British boarders. The court recommended withholding the back pay due *Chesapeake's* sailors. Refusing to "exculpate" those who acted in what was seen as a criminal manner, it recommended the court-martial of Third Lieutenant William Cox, Midshipmen James W. Forest and Henry P. Fleischman (or Fleshman), Bugler William Brown, and Gun Captain Joseph Russell on a variety of charges.

In mid-March 1814, the court martial convened on board the frigate *United States*, which was then bottled up by the British blockade in New London. All who sat in judgment had personally experienced the chaos of battle. The president of the court was Commodore Stephen Decatur. The panel consisted of Captain Jacob Jones, Commander James Biddle, Lieutenants William Carter, Jr., John T. Shubrick, Benjamin W. Booth, Alexander Claxton, David Conner, John Gallagher, John D. Sloat, and Matthew C. Perry. Both Shubrick and Conner had served with Cox under Captain Lawrence onboard *Hornet* at the time of her battle with HMS *Peacock*.

Midshipman Forest was tried for cowardice, neglect of duty, and drunkenness. The confused nature of the fight prevented a clear recounting of his actions. He admitted to the charge of drunkenness while ashore on parole in Halifax. The severity of his sentence (cashiered with no

chance for reinstatement) makes it seem that the court either believed it had been one long drinking spree or, more likely, at least one of the other accusations against him had merit. Midshipman Fleischman's case was somewhat different and at least had a reasonable explanation. He was charged with "imposition and unofficer like conduct after capture by the enemy." While in Halifax, Fleischman assumed the identity of another midshipman, William Brown (not to be confused with the bugler William Brown). Brown had, in fact, left *Chesapeake* before she sailed from Boston, but his name was still carried on the ship's muster book. The youngster explained that he had been previously captured by the British in Nova Scotia until sent back to the U.S. in a cartel. He worried that the proper paperwork had not been processed, and thus could be charged by the British with breaking that previous parole. That would leave him susceptible to permanent imprisonment by the Royal Navy. The court was uncomfortable with



William S. Cox as pictured several years after his service in the U.S. Navy. After being removed from duty, he took up medicine and moved to Minnesota. (Minnesota Historical Society image)

this explanation, but felt it could be excused by his youth and honorable behavior during the engagement. Fleischman was sentenced to be "publicly reprimanded in such a manner as the Honorable Secretary of the Navy shall direct." At Secretary William Jones' direction, the reprimand was delivered by Decatur on the quarter deck of USS *President*.

Gunners Mate Joseph Russell and Bugler

Cox's Main Accuser-Lieutenant George Budd

William Sitgreaves Cox was the loser in an institutional game of Pin the Tail on the Donkey.

Lieutenant George Budd put him in that position. Even the president of the court-martial was skeptical of Budd's ability to see all of Cox's actions about which he gave testimony. It might prove useful to compare the two with an eye for possible motivation.

Both were young naval officers from the mid-Atlantic region of America. Budd was born about 1785 in Harford County, Maryland, near what is now the Aberdeen Proving Grounds. His father is recorded as owning 400 acres of land, so the family was reasonably well-off. Budd was appointed a midshipman probably in the early fall of 1805 (although one source puts the date of his warrant as November 22, 1807). *Chesapeake's* second lieutenant was 28-years old at the time of the battle.

Cox was born to a family of wealthy Philadelphia merchants in January 1790 and was 23 years on June 1, 1813. He received his midshipman's warrant in 1809, but was immediately furloughed to make a merchant cruise to Canton. Upon his return, Cox took up his duties effective February 26, 1811. During all of his service at sea--in three different ships--James Lawrence served as his commanding officer. This is explained when one notes that Lawrence's wife, Julia, had a brother in the firm of Cox

& Montauvert. The other half of that partnership was John Cox, older brother of William.

Budd and Cox served together previously under Captain Lawrence in early 1812 aboard the smaller *Hornet*. Budd transferred to join Captain Samuel Evans for *Chesapeake's* first wartime cruise. Cox remained and fought aboard *Hornet* during the victory over HMS *Peacock*. When Lawrence assumed command of *Chesapeake*, he removed four of the frigate's existing lieutenants for illness or perceived incompetence. The former first lieutenant under Captain Evans, Octavius Page, was so ill that he was hospitalized, dying a few days later. He was placed by Augustus C. Ludlow who, though seven years younger than Budd, outranked him by two years. Thus, Budd remained as the ship's Second Lieutenant. The departure of other former lieutenants of Evans opened up the Third and Fourth Lieutenant billets for incoming midshipmen Cox and Edward J. Ballard, respectively. (To avoid the confusion that creeps into later histories: Cox held the rank of "acting" lieutenant, but would be promoted on June 23, 1813. His job title was "Third Lieutenant." This job oversaw the middle guns on *Chesapeake's* gun deck. He was never an "acting third lieutenant.")

Most writers about the court-martial see Budd's motivation to shift all blame to Cox as one of simple self-preservation; jealousy may be another, equally human, reason for



The grieving widow, Julia Lawrence. Through her family connections, Lieutenant Cox and Captain Lawrence came to know each other quite well. Julia's brother was a partner in Lieutenant Cox's brother's shipping business. (U.S. Naval Academy museum image)

Budd's actions. Glory was the goal of most naval officers of the period, it had escaped Budd thus far. His war had been active under Evans, but without notoriety. Younger, flashier junior officers had come aboard with Lawrence riding the fame that accompanied the sinking of *Peacock*. In Cox's case, the new captain felt a particular attachment to him. There would not have been enough time to abate before going to sea. Some separation and animosity was sure to have remained. It is possible that Budd found it pleasing as well as convenient to ensure the "captain's pet" shouldered the blame for this national tragedy. 

William Brown came before the court charged with cowardice. Russell was gun captain of No. 2 gun of the First Division in the forward part of the gun deck. When boarders were called away, Midshipman William E. McKenney saw him taking off the gratings of the fore hatch leading down to a lower deck. Russell saw that the midshipman had noticed his action, turned, and loudly called to his men to go on deck. After going briefly toward the main hatch, Russell returned and jumped below. Russell was found guilty of "gross misconduct" during the fight and sentenced to a wage stoppage.

This is a light punishment compared to that which befell William Brown. The bugler had been found cowering under a boat during the fight and when ordered six or seven times by Midshipman John Fisher ordered him to blow the call for "boarders

away" six or seven times, but he was unable to do so out of fright. (See the sidebar on page 9 for more on Brown.)

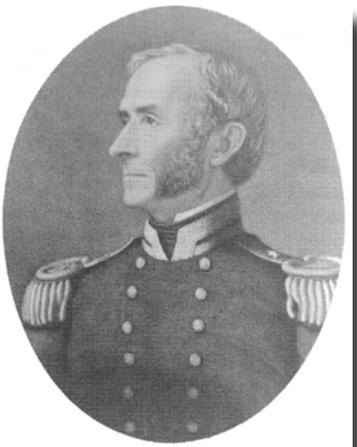
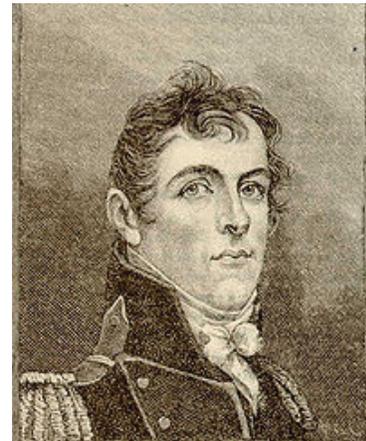
The man seemingly selected to become the scapegoat for the loss of *Chesapeake* was William S. Cox. An acting lieutenant at the time of the engagement, he had been officially promoted on June 23. As Third Lieutenant, Cox was the second most senior officer to survive the battle. His main accuser was Lieutenant George Budd, who had risen to command with the death of Captain Lawrence and Lieutenant Ludlow. The charges against Cox were cowardice, disobedience of orders, desertion from quarters, neglect of duty, and unofficer-like conduct. The basis of all the accusations were that when boarders were called away, Cox came up from the gun deck to see Captain Lawrence, leaning wounded against the compass binnacle. After ordering his

men to rush aft, Cox helped carry Lawrence below. According to the charges, Cox lingered too long in doing so in order to avoid the fight going on above. When he finally made his way forward to come up through the fore hatch, he was blocked by men rushing below. Cox refused to use force to push them back again, saying it was of no use. This whole event lasted no more than five minutes.

Given the chaos that reigned, it seemed that no one could offer conclusive testimony about Cox's actions. Had he just carried Lawrence to the hatch and then passed him on to other below? Or had he cowered below in the cockpit? Had Lawrence ordered Cox to leave him and return to fight? Why had Cox not drawn his sword and slashed at his own men fleeing the fight? Only

**The Odium of Defeat
continues on page 14**

Cox's Judges and Jury



A distinguished group of senior and junior officers composed Cox's court-martial. Stephen Decatur (upper left) served as president of the board. With him (from left to right) were Jacob Jones, James Biddle, John Sloat, John Shubrick, Matthew C. Perry, and David Conner. Not pictured are Alexander Claxton, William Carter, Jr., and John Gallagher.

To Whom Much is Given, Much is to Blame: *Chesapeake's* Bugle Boy

In 1913, the *New York Sun* ran an article marking the 100th anniversary of the *Shannon-Chesapeake* battle. Its headline read, "Silent Bugle Leads to Lawrence's death." This headline sums up many commentators' opinions regarding the man at fault for *Chesapeake's* loss: the bugler. Because the bugler did not sound his horn to alert *Chesapeake's* company to repel the British boarders, the American company never organized a successful defense of the ship.

The bugler was a black sailor, described by some as a mulatto, named William Brown. Like many of *Chesapeake's* ship's company at the time of the battle with *Shannon's* company, Brown had served on *Chesapeake's* first cruise under Captain Samuel Evans' command. Officially, his title was "loblolly boy." The title was a common term used in both the British and American navies for any under-age male who served as an assistant to the ship's medical staff. The U.S. Navy would later change the title to the more respectable sounding name "pharmacist's mate," and later to "medical corpsman."

When Lawrence took over command of *Chesapeake*, Brown reenlisted and resumed his duties. When the dashing young captain stepped on board his new command, he brought with him a bugle. Possibly reading about the effectiveness of bugles as a military communication device in land warfare, Lawrence wanted to change the way battle signals were sent among the company. Traditionally, a drummer boy would make different cadences with his drum to signal what the company should do. Hence, we get the term "beat to quarters" when the company was to go to battle stations. Lawrence, however, thought a bugle would be more effective and asked the company-at-large if anyone knew how to play. Brown volunteered and was told to go practice. At the time of the battle, he was so terrified of the combat around him, he could not even play one note. Even when a midshipman implored him to play, Brown could produce nothing.

As a result of his inaction, the court charged Brown with cowardice in the face of the enemy, one of the most serious

offenses any officer or sailor could face.

At the trial, Brown's lawyer produced two lines of defense. One line attacked the court's assertion that the greatest defeat in the history of the U.S. Navy rested solely on one scared boy. He stated, "God has made the prisoner too insignificant a being on whom to visit the loss of the *Chesapeake*. If you decide otherwise and charge the whole misfortune to one who could barely comprehend his simple duty, other nations will laugh at the subterfuges to which we resort. Instead of enlarging our naval frame, we shall belittle our national character."

His other line of defense was more unfortunate. Brown's lawyer played the race card in the most horrible way. He stated, "I would suggest as a subject worth some enquiry whether the Negro is not naturally inferior to the white man in those qualities which go to make up courage." Brown's lawyer attempted to argue that his client should be found innocent simply because of the color of his skin. When asked by the court about Brown's character, his immediate superior, the ship's surgeon, tended to agree with Brown's lawyer by stating that Brown was slow and dumb-witted.

Thus, there would be no good result from the trial. If the court found him innocent, then it believed that Brown and black sailors in general were slow, stupid, and incapable of standing up in a fight. If the court found him guilty, then he could receive the death penalty.

The court found Brown guilty. It believed Brown possessed the necessary courage; he just failed to use it. While it did not sentence him to death *per se*, the court did sentence him to be flogged 300 times. If given in one session, that number of lashes would easily kill him. The Secretary of the Navy endorsed the punishment and forwarded it to President James Madison for final approval.

When news of the court's judgment reached the papers, several writers immediately jumped to Brown's defense. One writer wrote, "A QUESTION: If William Brown late Bugleman on board the frigate *Chesapeake*, should receive one hundred lashes for cowardice, how many, on like account, should big Bully Jones [a



reference to Secretary of the Navy William Jones] receive, making due allowance for the difference in the SIZE OF THE TWO COWARDS?" The writer went on to infer that since Brown was lashed, then every senior U.S. Army officer should also be flogged for his cowardly performance on the Canadian frontier. A British officer later commented on Brown's punishment in the military trade publication *United Service Magazine*, writing, "Thus flogging the breath of Yankee courage into the body of a Negro. They will next WASH THE BLACKAMoor WHITE!"

Nothing more is known about Brown beyond 1814. When Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves wrote his biography of Lawrence in 1904, he renewed the charge that Brown was more to blame than anyone for *Chesapeake's* defeat. He wrote, "Brown was a dull-witted Negro, but seems to have been more knave than fool."

Gleaves even went so far as to praise Lawrence for introducing the bugle to the Navy as a revolutionary form of military communication. In this respect, Gleaves did not do his research, as the mid-19th century Navy moved toward the use of clackers and rattlers to summon ships' company to action stations. Nonetheless, many followed Gleaves' lead and renewed the blame on the failed bugler.

In the end, Brown had one person who at least partially sympathized with him: the President. When Jones' endorsement of punishment reached Madison's desk, the President reduced Brown's punishment from the prescribed 300 lashes to 100. Deserving of sympathy or not, Madison modified only Brown's sentence and none of the others on trial. His decision spared the "loblolly boy's" life. 

Book Reviews

The Elusive Enemy: U.S. Naval Intelligence and the Imperial Japanese Fleet

By Douglas Ford

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna

How did America and its allies win the war against Japan during World War II? Was it America's overwhelming ability to produce machines of war? Was it the supply of men and men dedicated to winning, no matter what the cost? Was it military leadership? Or did the U.S. win because the government understood the Japanese culture and how the Japanese would wage war? Author Douglas Ford unequivocally says that *naval intelligence* "played a pivotal role in paving the way for the U.S. Navy's triumph over the

Douglas Ford. *The Elusive Enemy: U.S. Naval Intelligence and the Imperial Japanese Fleet*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011. ISBN 978-159114-280-5

I.J.N. (Imperial Japanese Navy)."

Until the publication of this book, as the publishers says, "the subject of qualitative intelligence about the performance and fighting capabilities of the Imperial Japanese Navy has remained largely unexplored." The recent declassification of secret documents has now made this possible. Ford took on his task and does a credible job of making the work of intelligence agents and analysts understandable. The first thing he did was to admit that from 1918 to 1941, the U.S. intelligence agencies failed to obtain sufficient intelligence about Japan's military forces and that "their assessments of the I.J.N. were affected by a number of popular misconceptions." American analysts believed that the Japanese economy and industries lagged much further behind America than they actually were. Second, they failed to realize that President Franklin Roosevelt's economic reprisals in response to Japan's moves into Indochina between 1940 and 1941 could "incite the ruling the elite in Tokyo" to embark on risky moves to eliminate American naval power in the Pacific. Even "on the ground" intelligence

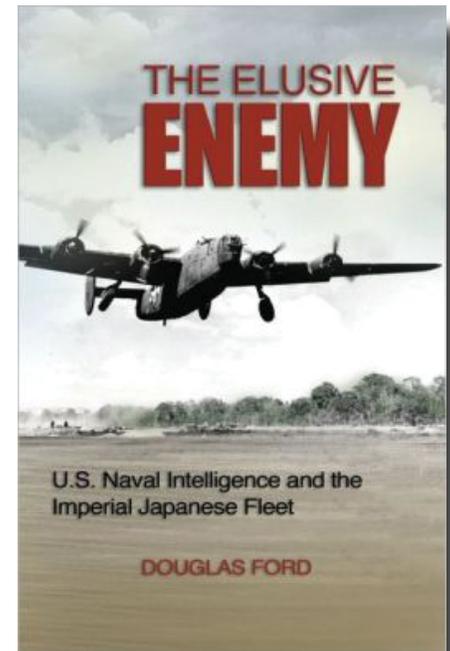
warnings in 1907 from the naval attaché in Tokyo, Lieutenant I.V. Gillis, were ignored or considered overreactions to Japan's desire to expand its influence in Asia. In 1912, while stationed in Peking, Gillis renewed his warning. Again, little notice was taken, nor naval strategy changed. But when Japan said it would not sign further arms limitation agreements once the Washington treaties expired in 1936, the U.S. Navy woke up and began to develop the serious intelligence machinery needed to scrutinize the Japanese fleet. It would be a long road to success, but according to Ford, Naval Intelligence shaped the conduct of the Pacific war.

Few of us know what military intelligence actually entails. We know about breaking enemy codes, Mata Hari spies, and planes with technological devices that can map and identify locations of enemy gun and rocket emplacements. We also know that intelligence agencies have hundreds of analysts who pore over reams of communication data to interpret their meaning. But do we know where the most reliable intelligence information comes from?

Ford used extensive research to substantiate that "combat experience" was the most important source of intelligence for American understanding of the Japanese way of fighting a war. His researched examined secret unpublished documents in both England and America, and the private papers of major military leaders.

By "combat experience," he meant the information gotten from men (fliers, grunts in the trenches, commanding officers in the battlefield on ships--almost anyone) right after they had been in battle. During World War II, this kind of intelligence quickly determined that strategic plans would be bound by the premise that it would be a long war, and knowledge of the capacity of the Japanese to match the U.S. forces would be the key to victory. Japan was an "elusive enemy" that had to be deciphered from the experiences of the battlefield.

This is a scholarly book, not one that



you might read for pleasure. Ford's bibliographic notes are extensive and secure credibility to every page. However, the writing is often convoluted and difficult to clearly understand until its conclusions, and sometimes not even then. For example, in his concluding chapter, Ford began a paragraph with this sentence, "The U.S. Navy circumvented the problems arising from the shortage of intelligence concerning Japanese fighting techniques by basing its conclusions on a calibrated analysis of the information that was available." He then ended this long paragraph with, "At the same time, because U.S. intelligence did not fully understand the I.J.N.'s attitudes, the shortcoming was most often attributed to Japan's shortage of economic and technical resources, which prevented industries from producing large quantities of high-performance weapons." It seems to me that this book was written in an academic way, most likely with contributions from Professor Ford's graduate students. It probably will only be enjoyed by other academics in the field of military history.

No doubt, this book will contribute to the knowledge of how a war is won. It will be added to the required reading list at the Naval War College, but it seldom will be found in a junior naval officer's library. 

Josephus Daniels: His Life & Times

By Lee A. Craig

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna

It would be hard to name a Secretary of the Navy who changed the United States Navy more than Josephus Daniels. During his eight years, he reorganized the Navy's command system, which had lasted for over half a century. He changed the system from being fragmented and decentralized to one whose power centered in the office of the secretary. This gave Daniels the power to institute his progressive ideas to reform the Navy into a more educated, moral, and egalitarian force. He dramatically changed the status of enlisted men. Can you imagine what it

Lee A. Craig. *Josephus Daniels: His Life & Times*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013. ISBN 978-1-46960-695-8

must have felt like to be in Daniels' Navy?

He called enlisted recruits "gentlemen," which shocked his aides because protocol allowed only officers to be called gentlemen. Daniels simply ignored their suggestions. Furthermore, he stated in his first *Annual Report* to the President, "It is my ambition to make the Navy a great university, with college extensions afloat and ashore. Every ship should be a school, and every enlisted man, petty officer and warrant officer should be given the opportunity to improve his mind, better his position and fit himself for promotion." The nucleus of this naval educational policy was the four recruit training schools at Newport, Norfolk, Chicago, and San Francisco, plus eleven technical schools, two of which were in Norfolk. Daniels even required that 100 appointments to the Naval Academy be reserved for qualified enlisted men. In addition, he said that all appointments needed to be by academic competition, not political.

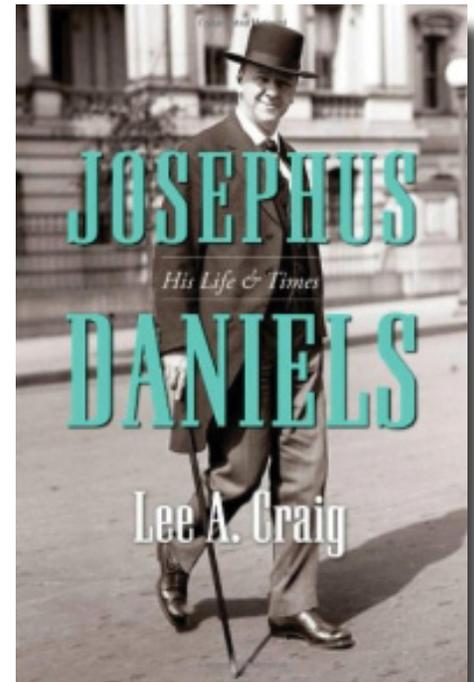
In *Josephus Daniels: His Life and Times*, Lee A. Craig does an excellent job of telling how Daniels' ideals were formed by the

times in which he lived. Born during the Civil War and raised during Reconstruction, he reached maturity in the age of "Rugged Individualism." He made his fortune as a newspaperman, owning his first North Carolina paper at the age of 18. Before his 21st birthday, he owned another newspaper and half ownership in a third. In 1894, he achieved his dream of owning and editing the state's major newspaper, the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

Interestingly, while critics made Daniels out to be a rural newspaper editor with no knowledge of the Navy and little understanding of Washington political intrigues, one only has to read his annual reports to find the knowledge he really had of those different worlds. He learned quickly what the Navy needed in order to become the world's leader. He emphasized the addition of modern ships, the development of the Naval Reserves and Militia, and was the first secretary to allow women to serve in the Navy and Marine Corps. He also established the requirement that officers and petty officers had to have a majority of their service at sea in order to be promoted. These are just some of the Daniels' policies that are still operational today.

There are two issues with the book. One of the Daniels' greatest contradictions was that he was unabashed "white supremacist." As Joseph L. Morrison explained in his book *Josephus Daniels: The Small-d Democrat*, "he might have been a democrat, but his democracy was for whites only." In the 1890s, with the power of his editorials, Daniels chased the "Fusionist," the combination of white and black Republicans and disaffected Democrats from North Carolina political offices. The book does not discuss if Daniels' view on race had any affect on Navy policy.

The second issue is a lack of discussion of Daniels' tenure as operational head of the powerful fleet during a major war. Daniels was often asked what he considered America's greatest achievement in World War I. His standard answer was the



"transporting by the Navy of two million soldiers and Marines to France, all in eighteen months." He called it "the biggest transportation job in history." Of course, it was only a precursor to World War II convoys that were even more important to the victory. Additionally, Daniels' greatest foresight concerned air power. In his 1919 *Annual Report*, he wrote "The necessity of developing aviation as an integral part of our military and naval forces...the ocean is no longer a dependable protection against possible attack." Craig's book did not include this perception.

There have been several biographies of Daniels, the latest published in 1966. Voluminous articles have also been printed in major magazines and newspapers. None of them do as thorough a job as Craig in describing one of the most influential American politicians from the 1880s to the 1940s. In his review of this book, distinguished author Robert K. Landers said, "Mr. Craig, an economist and historian at North Carolina State University, brings a keen analytical intelligence to bear at each stage of Daniels's eventful life. His judgments are fair, and his prose is clear, vigorous and free of jargon (though not of a certain repetitiousness)." To me, this book provides a fascinating glimpse into the mind and actions of a truly American newspaper editor, progressive businessman, politician, and incontrovertibly the most influential Secretary of the Navy in 20th century. 🚢

Lieutenant Cox Immortalized

Science Fiction Master Robert Heinlein Used Cox's Actions as the Foundation for Officer Training in His Classic Sci-Fi Work *Starship Troopers*

Long before *The Daybook* began discussing the unfortunate circumstances of the United States Frigate *Chesapeake* and her third lieutenant, William Cox, science fiction master Robert Heinlein used Cox in his military of the future drama *Starship Troopers*. You will have to actually read the book to fully understand the circumstances of Heinlein's use of the event. The movie, like many movies based on books, conveniently leaves this part out.

In the book, Cox's circumstances are



The Museum Sage

brought up by an instructor challenging his officer cadets on whether or not they had thought about what it would be like to be court-martialed for losing an entire regiment. The instructor then proceeded to grill one cadet. For those of you following at home, the instructor's lecture begins on page 193.

"Mr. Hassan! What is the largest number of command levels ever knocked out in a single battle?"

Dead silence.

"Very well. It was one of the brush wars that flared up during the Napoleonic wars. This young officer was the most junior officer in a naval vessel--wet navy, of course--wind-powered in fact. This youngster was about the age of most of your class and was not commissioned. He carried the title 'temporary third lieutenant.' He had no combat experience; there were four officers in the chain of command above him. When the battle started, his commanding officer was wounded. The kid picked him up and

carried him out of the line of fire. That's all he did. Make a pickup on a comrade. But he did it without being ordered to leave his post. The other officers all bought it while he was doing his duty and he was tried for 'deserting his post of duty as commanding officer in the presence of the enemy.' Convicted. Cashiered."

After being questioned by the book's protagonist, one Johnny Rico, about the unfairness of this, the instructor replied:

"There was doubt about some circumstances, but no doubt that he had left his post during the battle without orders. True, he was green as grass--but he was lucky not to be hanged. Mr. Rico--could this happen to you?"

Now, there are several errors in the instructor's lecture. Among other errors is Cox's rank. As one of the sidebars has pointed out, "third lieutenant" was not his rank, but rather his job title. Additionally, to say he was "green as grass" with no combat experience is simply not true. Cox served with Lawrence on the sloop *Hornet* when she defeated HMS *Peacock*.

That the instructor gave factually incorrect information to his cadets has been pointed out by many readers of the work. Did Heinlein intentionally allow the instructor to give his cadets erroneous information, or did Heinlein himself just not know any better? The short answer is that Heinlein should have known better.

G.P. Putnam and Sons first published *Starship Troopers* in 1959. Congress cleared Cox of wrong doing and reinstated his commission in 1952. Additionally, and probably more importantly, Heinlein was a U.S. Naval Academy-educated and trained officer.

According to the Heinlein Society (www.heinleinsociety.org), Heinlein was a member of the Class of 1925 at the Naval Academy, graduating fifth overall, but discipline demerits kicked him down to twentieth. He served on two ships, the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* (CV-2) and the destroyer USS *Roper* (DD-147). The Navy medically retired him during his tour



on *Roper* after Heinlein contracted a severe case of tuberculosis. He served with the Navy as a civilian during World War II and became a passionate advocate for Navy-sponsored space exploration.

It is possible that Heinlein may not have cared about the details, as he was trying to make a bigger point. One of the reasons Heinlein is considered one of the great science fiction masters is that many of his workers are not written for the sake of a good read. Through the use of the science fiction genre, Heinlein, often with brutal choices of words, tried to make an argument about real society and what was wrong with it. For example, in the case of Lieutenant Cox, Heinlein probably believed the young officer should have been hanged.

If this is the case, then Heinlein also must have believed that the concept of the U.S. Naval Academy was a flawed idea. The previously mentioned instructor stated to his cadets that officers in the Mobile Infantry (the military outfit that is the center of *Starship Troopers*) did not become officers with being battle tested among the enlisted ranks first.

Now *The Sage* is usually harsh and nit-picky about facts and those who would tarnish and abuse them for their own purposes. After all, *The Sage* is in the



Robert A. Heinlein, class of 1925 of the U.S. Naval Academy (left) and Robert A. Heinlein, the author of over 250 works of science fiction (right). After serving on USS Lexington (CV-2) and USS Roper (DD-147), health issues forced him out of active duty. He wrote Starship Troopers in the 1950s and it continues to be one of his best known works. It is currently on the Navy's official reading list for junior enlisted sailors. (Images from the Heinlein Society, www.heinleinsociety.org)

business of history, not novel writing. In this case, however, The Sage can only be so harsh, as this is Robert Heinlein we are talking about. So, The Sage will give him a pass.

The fact of the matter is that Heinlein could have done what other historians and commentators on leadership have always done and used a more positive case. The early U.S. Navy produced dozens of examples of leadership excellence, honor, and bravery. Instead, Heinlein chose to

focus on the Navy's most glaring defeat. For that, Cox gets a place in history that Decatur never got.

By using Cox's example, Heinlein has posed a challenge to us all about leadership, and not just for the military: just when does blame begin when something goes wrong?

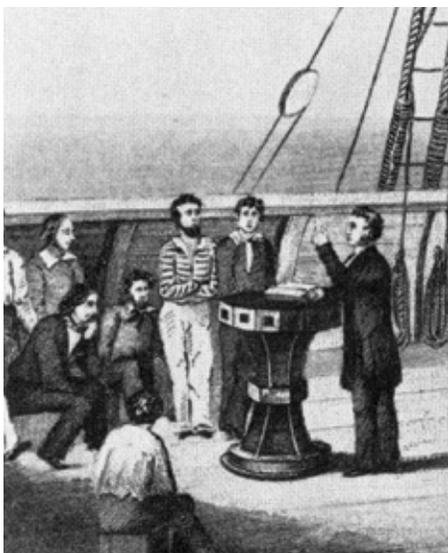
As a footnote, Rico asks his instructor:

"Sir, that temporary third lieutenant--the one that got cashiered. How could I find out what happened?"

"Oh, young man, I didn't mean to scare you. Just to wake you up. The battle was on one June 1813; old style between USF Chesapeake and HMF Shannon. Try the Naval Encyclopedia; your ship will have it."

Since the *Naval Encyclopedia* does not exist, The Sage would suggest reading a real book about the event. Many are available online for free. 

Writers Wanted!



The Editor of *The Daybook* is seeking willing and eager naval enthusiasts to write articles for the publication. The Editor is looking for writers to focus on:

- Cover stories about local Naval history
- Sidebar articles about local Naval history
- Book Reviews

Go to www.hrn.navy.mil to view previous *Daybooks* or e-mail the editor at hrnavalmuseum@navy.mil and join us in producing the best naval history publication anywhere!

The Odium of Defeat continued from page 8

two officers offered anything definitive. Midshipman Delozier Higginbotham said he had asked Cox if he should “cut down” the twenty or so American sailors retreating from the spar deck. Cox told him it was of no use. Lieutenant Budd, however, seemed to keep a close watch on Cox’s actions. He offered testimony about Cox’s actions that he obviously could not have seen. When it came to matters such as Lawrence’s words to Cox, Budd relied on “conversations” he had with Cox while imprisoned in Halifax. Cox argued that conversation is not testimony: “It must have been that either a full statement was not made by me at the time, or that it was not fully understood and recollected.” The court allowed Budd’s recollections as evidence.

His opening statement to the court in his defense showed that Lieutenant Cox knew he was in trouble. “If the object be to heal the wounded honor, or reinstate the naval pride of the nation by offering me as a sacrifice, I lament that some kind of shot, commissioned for my death, had not saved to your feelings and mine the necessity of

this meeting. If, because I have survived and found no fault with others, I am to bear the odium of defeat, I cannot but consider the prosecution as ungenerous.”

The verdict came on April 24, 1814. Cox was not guilty of cowardice, disobedience of orders, and desertion from quarters, but was guilty of neglect of duty “in not doing his utmost to aid in capturing *Shannon*, by animating and encouraging, in his own example, the inferior officers and men to fight courageously, and in denying the use of coercive means to prevent the desertion of the men from their quarters, and in not compelling those who had deserted from their quarters to return to duty.”

He was also found guilty of unofficer-

like conduct “in that, while the enemy was boarding, or attempting to board the *Chesapeake*, the prisoner accompanied his disabled commander, James Lawrence, Esq., from the quarterdeck, where his presence and command were essential to animate and direct the *Chesapeake*’s crew in repelling the boarders of the enemy.” The young lieutenant was sentenced “to be cashiered, with a perpetual incapacity to serve in the Navy of the United States.” President James Madison approved the verdict. Cox tried in vain to have his case reopened, but public opinion was against his effort. Political reality was that for a disaster as large as the loss of *Chesapeake*, the system demanded that somebody take the blame. 🚢



The 140-Year Struggle

Lieutenant Cox’s Family Fights to Have Their Relative’s Name Cleared

After his dismissal from the Navy, Cox sought other ways to serve his country during the War of 1812. Shortly after being cashiered, he enlisted as a private in the U.S. Army for the remainder of the war. After the war, he completely changed careers and entered medical school. Upon completion, he set up a medical practice in the Boston area. He got married and had several children.

Possibly seeking to get away from the emotional pain of *Chesapeake* and the resulting trial, Cox moved his family to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he set up a successful medical practice. One account stated (somewhat over dramatically) that Cox was pleasant throughout his life, but never smiled. He died in 1874. According to one magazine article, he died “a quiet, respected man and the head of a distinguished family.”

After he died, his family fought to restore Cox’s reputation. After the first generation of descendants failed, Cox’s grandson, Reverend William Cox Pope,

attempted to bring the case to the public’s attention and lobbied the Navy directly to remedy the situation. In 1911, acting Secretary of the Navy Beekman Winthrop replied to Pope, “there is nothing in the record which would justify the Department in recommending to the President a reversal of the Court’s findings.”

Undeterred, Pope enlisted the help of the Minnesota Historical Society to review the case. The society condemned the Navy for its inaction. In 1913, a Congressman, Charles R. Davis, then got involved and asked the Navy to once again review the case. This time it was Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt’s turn to say no. The future President stated, “It is impossible to try or properly inquire into the case now because actions for which Lieutenant Cox was cashiered from the navy happened more



As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt was one of several Department of the Navy officials to hear and reject appeals from Lieutenant Cox’s descendants. (Library of Congress image)

than a hundred years ago. To reverse or cancel the record in the Navy Department would not alter the actual facts any more than canceling the record of the capture of the U.S. Frigate *Chesapeake* by the British Frigate *Shannon*.”

Cox’s family persisted, but took a different course of action. Since it became obvious that the Department of the Navy would do nothing, the family

82D CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES { REPORT
2d Session } { No. 1684

AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF A COMMISSION AS
THIRD LIEUTENANT, UNITED STATES NAVY

APRIL 3, 1952.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered
to be printed

Mr. DURHAM, from the Committee on Armed Services submitted
the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H. J. Res. 222]

The Committee on Armed Services, to whom was referred the joint resolution (H. J. Res. 222) authorizing the President to issue posthumously to the late William S. Cox, a commission as third lieutenant, United States Navy, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the joint resolution do pass.

The purpose of this measure is to authorize the President to issue

In 1952, Navy veteran and congressman Thomas Durham (D-NC) sponsored a resolution to clear Cox's name. With Congress now involved, the Navy's Judge Advocate General saw no reason to continue to fight the issue. The resolution cleared Cox and restored his rank retroactive to 1874. Unfortunately, the resolution has a serious error: "Third Lieutenant" was Cox's job title aboard Chesapeake, not his rank. (Library of Congress image)

went to Congress. They found a friendly voice not from Minnesota, but from North Carolina. Congressman Thomas Durham submitted a resolution to the House of Representatives to restore Cox's commission to lieutenant retroactive to 1874. A leading member of Congress and a Navy veteran from World War I, Durham agreed to sponsor the resolution in support of overturning Cox's conviction.

Seeing no further reason to keep fighting it, the Navy endorsed the resolution in 1952. Rear Admiral G. L. Russell, Judge Advocate General of the Navy, reported, "Nothing can be found to indicate that a young man in Cox's position could have saved the ship after he became aware of the fact that his seniors had all been incapacitated by his injuries." With this endorsement, Lieutenant William Cox's name and rank were cleared. 

“It is impossible to try or properly inquire into the case now because actions for which Lieutenant Cox was cashiered from the Navy happened more than a hundred years ago. To reverse or cancel the record in the Navy Department would not alter the actual facts any more than canceling the record of the capture of the U.S. Frigate Chesapeake by the British Frigate Shannon.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1913

“Nothing can be found to indicate that a young man in Cox's position could have saved the ship after he became aware of the fact that his seniors had all been incapacitated by injuries.”

-Rear Admiral G. L. Russell, Judge Advocate General of the Navy, 1952

Two Brave Men at Rest



Mourners laid Captain James Lawrence to rest at famous Trinity Churchyard at the corner of Wall and Trinity in New York City. His remains are located near other national personalities, including Alexander Hamilton, Albert Galitan, Salias Talbot, and Horatio Gates (Images from findagrave.com)



Lieutenant/Doctor William Cox's family buried their relative in 1876 at Oaklawn Cemetery in St. Paul, Minnesota. Cox had moved to Minnesota after the War of 1812, where he set up a successful medical practice (Image from findagrave.com)

In Our Next Issue...



*All Quiet in Hampton Roads...Sort Of:
Civil War Naval Events in 1863
And*

*A Review of A. Jay Cristol's The Liberty Incident Revealed:
The Definitive Account of the 1967 Israeli Attack on the
U.S. Navy Spy Ship.*