



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Charles F. Shoemaker

(1895-1905)



Charles F. Shoemaker was born in Glendale, IA on 27 March 1841. His father, William, was in the Army Ordnance Department. In 1858 he received an appointment to the US Naval Academy. He, however, resigned his position after two years and was appointed a Third Lieutenant in the Revenue Cutter Service on 20 November 1860. Shoemaker first assignment was on board the cutter *Lewis Cass* stationed at Mobile, AL. In the Spring of 1861, the Captain, James J. Morrison turned the cutter over to state authorities. Shoemaker then led the remaining officers and seamen back to Union territory. He served on various revenue cutters until he resigned from the service on 4 April 1864.

He was re-appointed a Lieutenant on 25 June 1868 served at various stations on the Atlantic Coast until 1875 when he was appointed assistant inspector of the New York office. In 1876 he was appointed assistant inspector of the Third Life-Saving District. He was transferred to Washington in 1878 and later became executive officer of USRC *Seward* in 1882. Returning to the Life-Saving Service in 1885, he eventually became inspector of all the districts except the 12th. In 1891 he became commander of USRC *Washington* at New York and in 1893 he assumed command of USRC *Hudson*. He served in this capacity until 19 March 1895 when Treasury Secretary John G. Carlisle appointed him to succeed Captain Leonard B. Shepard as Chief, Division of Revenue Cutter Service.

Building on the foundation of his predecessor, Shoemaker continued to improve the fleet. In the three years between his assumption of office and the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, he increased the number, power, and speed of the cutters. Among these were the new steel cutters like USRC *Gresham*, *Algonquin*, and *Onondaga*. The most notable, however, was USRC *Manning*. Built of composite construction, she was the model for a new class of cutters that were the best ships operated by the service until after World War I. She had 11 watertight bulkheads, a triple expansion steam engine, and the first generators ever installed in a cutter. Like Shepard, Shoemaker also tried to improve the officer corps. He remained as Commandant until he reached the statutory retirement age of 64 on 27 March 1905 and was placed on the Retired List. On 8 May 1908 he was advanced to the rank of Captain-Commandant on the Retired List by Act of Congress approved on that date. He died at his home in Woodstock, VA on 11 July 1913.