

The story of Admiral Dewey's victory at Manila has usually been told from the view of the warships participating in the fight. There is, however, another side to this engagement — the role of the auxiliaries. One of the auxiliaries in the battle was the US Revenue Cutter *McCulloch*. Accounts by two eyewitnesses aboard the *McCulloch* have come into the possession of the author through the courtesy of the US Army Military Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. One account is a letter written by Bugler Harry Neithercott to a friend. The other is by Cabin Boy Archibald Forbis of Oakland, California, who, in 1969, answered a questionnaire on the Spanish-American War. This article will illustrate the role of the *McCulloch* by using these eyewitnesses as much as possible.

LITTLE WAR OF THE McCULLOCH

This heroic US Revenue Service Cutter fought with Commodore Dewey and went on to serve America in a variety of other roles before being rammed and sunk

BY DENNIS L. NOBLE

The 219-ft 980-ton Revenue Cutter *McCulloch* was first accepted by the Revenue Cutter Service, an ancestor to the modern day Coast Guard, on 14 June 1897. After fitting out in Philadelphia, the cutter was ordered to “sail for San Francisco via the Mediterranean and Suez Canal.”

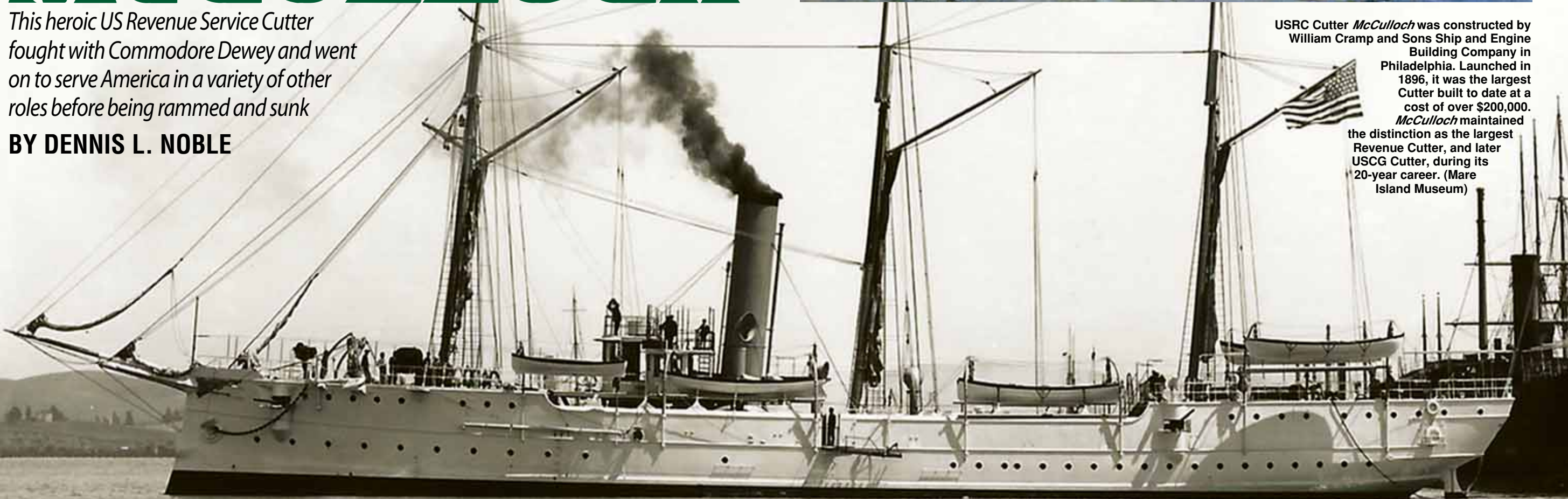
Such a long trip meant plenty of coaling stops with chances for shore leave in exotic out of the way places not usually frequented by the “cuttermen.” Indeed, her port schedules showed such ports as Gibraltar, Port Said, Aden, Colombo, and Honolulu.

At first everything seemed to shape up to a typical shakedown cruise — nothing in the routine held anything unexpected for any “deep water” sailor. Drills and work details were the order of the day, being designated not only to seek out the idiosyncrasies of the untried cutter, but also to acquaint the new crew with each other.

Unbeknownst to the crewmen, whose imaginations were filled with thoughts of the next liberty port, world events were closing in on the small cutter. Awaiting in Singapore were two cablegrams directing the Commanding Officer to “proceed to Hong Kong, report duty Commodore Dewey, Asiatic



Battle of Manila Bay on 1 May 1898. The Spanish fleet is depicted in the upper right. American ships listed in descending order on the left are: Cutter *McCulloch*, gunboats *Petrel* and *Concord*, protected cruisers *Boston*, *Raleigh*, *Baltimore*, and *Olympia* flagship signaling “Remember the Maine.” (Library of Congress)



USRC Cutter *McCulloch* was constructed by William Cramp and Sons Ship and Engine Building Company in Philadelphia. Launched in 1896, it was the largest Cutter built to date at a cost of over \$200,000. *McCulloch* maintained the distinction as the largest Revenue Cutter, and later USCG Cutter, during its 20-year career. (Mare Island Museum)