

Battle Cry

Founded 1961,
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
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Battle Cry deadline is
1:00PM Wed. two weeks
before the regular
meeting. Items can be
given the editor by hand,
mail or e-mail.

President's Message: Many thanks to Phil Avila for his spirited discussion of Joseph Kershaw and his South Carolinians as they managed to serve heroically at almost all the major battlefields of the Civil War Eastern Theater. The maps of the campaigns and battles were of great help in understanding the roles of his division and brigade. It's important to realize that the whole is only as great as the sum of its parts and it is fitting to recognize that Kershaw and his men were a vital part of the overall picture. I am grateful to Phil for driving from Sebastopol and trust he will allow one of us to return the favor.

I am also grateful for those who volunteered to be with us on May 6th at Gibson Ranch. We have the requisite fifteen but if anyone is available as a reserve it would be appreciated. Also please call me if for some reason cancellation is necessary so I can scramble for a replacement. We are to meet at 8:30AM in front of the store. Gibson Ranch is on Elverta Road west of Watt Avenue. Thanks also to those who volunteered to person the booth. See you there!

May speaker is Walt Bittle (welcome back) who will tell us about the events that led to the firing on Fort Sumter. See you at the Hofbrau May 11.

NEXT MEETING!!! May 11th at 7:00PM at the Hofbrau on the northeast corner of El Camino & Watt Ave. Come early for dinner and conversation. Walt Bittle will discuss the events leading to Fort Sumter. SEE UPCOMING PROGRAMS ON PAGE 3.

The cash balance following the April 13, 2005 meeting was \$1,025.82. Thanks to members and guests, the raffle brought in \$62.00.
George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
WEDNESDAY APRIL 13, 2005
HOF BRAU RESTAURANT 2500 WATT AVE, SACRAMENTO

Attendance-31

Members - 28

Don Hayden, President
Susan Williams, Vice President
George Foxworth, Treasurer
Edie Keister, Secretary
Dudley Albrecht
Roy Bishop
Walt Bittle
Fred Bohmfalk
Ken Dalpe
Lydia Donaldson
William Donaldson

Alan Geiken
Kyle Glasson
Ted Hansen
Ken Kitchen
Dennis Kohlmann
Leslie Michaels
Jim Middleton
Maurice Mitchell
Betty Mitchell
John Nevens
Ruben Orozco

Paul Ruud
Richard Sickert
Drew Van Winkle
Robert Williams
Maxine Wollen
John Zasso
Guest-3
Phillip Avila
Susan Gjerde
Michael Gjerde

1. Meeting started at 7:05. Guest were welcomed and introduced. Walt Bittle (our past secretary) is visiting from St. Louis, he will be our speaker next month. Welcome back (for awhile) Walt!
2. This Day in Civil War History was read. A sign up sheet for volunteers at Gibson Ranch was passed around. Thanks to all who signed!
3. Phil Avila spoke on Colonel Kershaw and his South Carolina Brigade; the many battles and hardships encountered throughout the war. Phil provided maps and pictures to follow his presentation. Very interesting - thanks Phil.
4. The raffle was held - lots of prizes. Meeting ended at 8:35 pm.

Edie Keister
Secretary

Month	Speaker	Topic
May	Walt Bittle	Events Leading To Attack on Ft. Sumter
June	John Martini	Fortress Alcatraz
July	Paul Ruud	Lincoln Assassination
August	Open	
September	George Beitzel	Lincoln at Ft. Stevens and Presidential Military Exp.
October	Ray Bisio	To the Edge of Greatness: Meade at Gettysburg
November	Open	
December	Maurice Mitchell	Recontruccion



**The Hunley
California Tour
1st at Gibson Ranch**

On the cold night of February 17, 1864, the submarine H.L. Hunley attacked the warship Housatonic, sinking her in a matter of minutes. This American technological marvel thus became the first submarine in the world to sink a ship.

For reasons that continue to baffle the scientific community, the Hunley failed to return to port. She and her crew remained as a time capsule at the bottom of the Charleston, South Carolina Harbor for 136 years.

Raised from the depths in August 2000, the Hunley and her crew have been the focus of a world-class team of archaeologists, forensic experts and other scientific disciplines who continue their efforts to unravel her secrets.

The Hunley is now the property of the U.S.

government. She is on permanent loan to the Hunley Commission in South Carolina. The submarine and her crew have been the subject of two National Geographic television specials and have made repeated headlines worldwide.

Now the Hunley Team has utilized 3-D laser scanning and hands-on experience to create an exact replica of this priceless national treasure.

California is indeed privileged to be the

location of the first tour of this truly remarkable reproduction - this engineering marvel that was so very far ahead of her time.

Staffed by members of the Hunley Team, this exhibit brings a wealth of knowledge concerning one of the most remarkable events in America's history.

Gibson Ranch County Park has the honor to be the site of her first appearance on the tour.

*Presented by the
National Civil War Association*

FOOD CONCESSIONS AVAILABLE
10:00am - 5:00pm

LIVING HISTORY CAMPS OPEN
10:00am - 5:00pm Saturday
9:00am - 3:00pm Sunday

BATTLE RE-ENACTMENTS
Battle at 12:30pm and 4:30pm Saturday
Battle 11:00am and 2:00pm Sunday
Seating will be "picnic style", bring a blanket

- CIVIL WAR FASHION SHOW
-
- CIVIL WAR MUSIC & DANCING
-
- SCHOOL PROGRAM
May 6th - Reservation Required
-
- 1860 CRAFTS
-
- SPEECHES BY
HISTORICAL CHARACTERS
-
- HORSE DRAWN WAGON RIDES

**GIBSON RANCH COUNTY PARK
May 7th & 8th, 2005**



8556 Gibson Ranch Road, Elverta, CA 95626

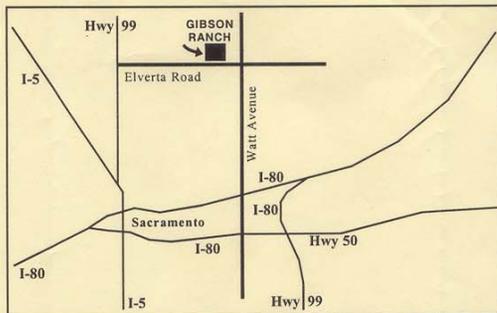
(916) 991-2686 (event line)

www.gibson-ranch.com

General Admission \$ 10 each
Seniors (55 and older) \$ 8 each
Children (14 and under) ..\$ 8 each
Children (5 and under) FREE
Group Discounts Available

Not recommended for small children & pets

Parking Included
*Advanced Ticket Sale \$ 1.00 discount per ticket.
Must be purchased by April 15th. (916) 991-7592*



*Sponsored by:
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Boy Scout Troop 53*

(E) GCW0128-5

Lieutenant William Cushing, USN and the CSS *Albemarle*

Under the innovative leadership of Steven Mallory, CSA Secretary of the Navy, the Confederacy completed 22 casemate-type Ironclads during the Civil War, and 28 others were under various stages of construction. Considering the limited technological and manufactory resources that the South possessed, this was indeed a miraculous accomplishment. The majority was uniform in appearance with sloping iron clad sides set at about 35 degrees angle for deflecting incoming shots, but in other respects with few exceptions, they varied significantly in size, draft, armor and armament. Only two of these vessels survived the War. They were the CSS *Tennessee* and *Atlanta*, which surrendered at Mobile Bay and Savannah, respectively. All others were destroyed by their own crews to prevent capture, except one the CSS *Albemarle*. *Albemarle* was the only rebel ironclad ram to gain the distinction of being sunk by enemy action. That action was taken by U.S. Navy Lt. William Cushing and a crew of 28 sailors, all volunteers, in a torpedo boat raid on the night of 27 Oct 64.

The CSS *Albemarle* was one of the smaller, but some say better built, of the southern ironclads. She was 376 tons, 152 feet long, 8 foot draft, 4 inch iron plate, and armed with two 6.4 inch Brooke rifles in pivot mounts, each firing through three gun ports, fore-aft and/or either broadside. Speed was up to 6 knots which was better than most. Her main duties were to protect the entrance to the Roanoke River at Plymouth, N.C. and this she did well. In earlier engagements she had beat of a swarm of very versatile, but unarmored Union Gunboats of the “double-ender” type; sinking the USS *Southfield*. She was almost sunk by the USS *Sassacus*, however, who rammed and partially submerged the rebel ship (see picture); but somehow *Albemarle* worked free and went on to win that earlier encounter.

William Barker Cushing was born 4 November 1842. He had three older brothers the youngest of whom was Alonzo Hersford Cushing, born January 1841. The family lived in Milwaukee vicinity and Chicago when their father, a physician graduate of Colgate, died in 1846. The young family then moved to Fredonia, New York to be near other family members who provided care and other assistance. Although pressed financially, the family lived an upper middle-class life, the boys attending the Fredonia Academy an upscale secondary school. Upon graduation, “Will”, at age 14 was appointed a Page in the U.S. Capitol by his uncle, Congressman F. S. Edwards; and in 1857, the Congressman followed up with a further appointment for Will to the U.S. Naval Academy. (Another relative, Mrs. Cushing’s cousin, Commodore Joseph Smith, participated in obtaining that appointment) During this same period the Congressman also obtained an appointment for Alonzo, now known as “Lon”, as a cadet at West Point to be a member of the class of 1861. Thus the two young Cushing brothers left home in September 1857 for Annapolis and West Point, calling each other a “tar” and a “sojer”, respectively. (The following is mainly about Will, but a few comments will be included pertaining to Lon as well, or perhaps he deserves entirely separate discussion?)

Commodore Smith, Chief of the Navy Yards and Docks had been quick to point out to William that what was then called “Navy School” was not a place for lazy or mischievous boys, but that was slow in sinking in. Will, a born prankster simply had one hell of a good time! It required 200 demerits for misconduct during any one year to be expelled, or as the saying went, “to restore one to ones friends”. Cushing received 99 his first year. Not bad, but he was still learning. The next year he did much better receiving 188. In June of that year he almost went over

the line, when he was discovered scaling the wall after spending the evening with a girl in town. When it was determined that this would put Will over the limit and he would be dismissed. another midshipman with a lower total count admitted the “crime”, so Will was safe for another year. During his third year he managed to collect only 155 demerits: but this did not mean that his department was improving, only that he was getting cleverer.

Considering the amount of time Will spend in an array of practical jokes and attempts to outwit the authorities, it is surprising that he had an enough time left to do the required academic work. But the facts were that he was not doing badly at all, despite being the youngest member of his class of 37. In his second year he stood 3 in gunnery, 8 in ethics, 13 in astronomy, 9 in general order of merit, *but* 37 in conduct. The February 1861 exams found him 6 in ethics, 7 in gunnery, 9 in artillery, 11 in philosophy, 26 in modern languages, and 6 in general order of merit. Conduct was not mentioned, but it was undoubtedly high! In his fourth year at mid-term he had racked up 147 demerits; but he had gone over the line so far as the faculty was concerned, by pulling the old “bucket of water above the door” trick on his Spanish teacher, consistently mimicked his drill instructor who stuttered, “H-h-h-h-h-halt, R-r-r-r-right face, At-t-t-t-t-t-ten-shun, etc. Additionally, he managed to shoot up the fence at the superintendent’s residence with a six-ponder during artillery target practice. That did it! The following report went to the Navy Department from the Superintendent, “ Deficient at Feb.1861 semi-annual examination; Midshipman William B. Cussing. Deficient in Spanish. Aptitude for study: good. Habits for study: irregular. General conduct: bad. Aptitude for Naval Service: not good. Not recommended for continuance at the Academy.” Will was ordered to leave the Academy and his enforced resignation as midshipman was signed 23 March 1861. To dismiss a first classman, standing high in his class for being unsatisfactory in Spanish seemed rather unusual and mysterious. Some credit it to the signs of the time. The Southerners were leaving, security fears existed, the Academy and remaining students were relocated to Newport, RI; and all first, second and third classes were graduated in early May and sent on active duty.

Will Cushing was stunned by the action taken and ashamed for letting it happen. He went to Washington and stayed with Commodore Smith, who was critical of both the Navy and his young second cousin for the events that occurred. Smith made arrangements for Cushing’s reinstatement “at the appropriate time”, and in the interim for him to serve as an Acting Masters Mate on board the USS *Minnesota*. (Masters Mate, I believe, would have been equivalent to either a warrant officer or chief petty officer in today’s navy). The appointment was not made without difficulty, however, and even required an interview with Gideon Wells, Secretary of the Navy. (Wells and Cushing would get to know each other much better three years hence.)

Cushing’s service as a masters mate aboard *Minnesota* was judged to be meritorious. This, coupled by that fact that his former commandant at the naval academy had relented and now thought Will could become a good naval officer resulted in his reinstatement as a passed midshipman on 19 October 1861, the warrant to be dated 1 June 61. He was ordered to duty on the USS *Cambridge*. His 1861 Class standing was set at 21st among the 26 remaining class members. In this interim, Alonza had graduated from West Point (12-34) 24 June 1861, had been a cadet captain, was assigned to the 4th U.S. Artillery and was currently serving as a brevet captain on General Sumner’s staff. Will’s performance continued to be highly satisfactory in the eyes of his superiors, although he was personally finding blockade duty to be extremely boring. He, of course, was not alone in such feelings. Increases in naval personnel were again offering opportunities of promotion. Will hoped to receive one to Ensign or perhaps even Master. To his surprise in August 1862 he was elevated to Lieutenant, a grade that placed him above the majority

of the class of 1861 from which he had been a member, but had not graduated. In addition, he was given the right to choose what officer he wished to serve under. He chose Lieutenant Commander C. W. Flusser; a former Academy teacher who had remained more loyal to him during his period of difficulty than he probably deserved. Accordingly, Cushing was named ExO of Flusser's ship the USS *Commodore Perry*, a smallish side wheel steamer with a crew of only 29 and four guns but good for upriver fighting, which was then becoming more and more necessary.

Cushing's high proficiency continued and he was soon given independent command of the USS *Ellis* and then the heavily armed USS *Commodore Barney*. He was also given "roving" assignments as differentiated from purely blockade duties, and this led to a number of "commando" and/or "navy seal" type operations on Cape Fear River and elsewhere. (Well before those words were coined into the English language during the Boer War of 1899 and WW2, respectively). Indeed, he was becoming well known in the "front office" for his daring, bravery, and good judgement in those matters. By spring 1864, CSS *Albemarle* remained queen of the North Carolina coastal waters. She was stationed just above the bar on Roanoke River where the deeper draft USS Monitors could not reach her. She had fought several battles with unarmored union gunboats and won them all. (In the last one Cushing's close friend, Commander Flusser had been killed.). Accordingly, Admiral S. P. Lee asked Will Cushing his views on how the ram could be destroyed. Will suggested two ways: 1) He would lead a boarding party at night, capture the ironclad, cut her loose and float downstream to union lines, if possible, or if not set her on fire, or 2) using a small steam launch, equipped with a spar torpedo blow her up where she sits. The Admiral told Lt. Cushing to put his thoughts in writing and dispatched him to Washington on 27 July 64 to talk with Fox and Wells. Assistant Secretary Fox was not enthusiastic. He disapproved the first approach as much too risky and expressed strong reservations about the second; but he knew something had to be done, and he could not dampen Will Cushing's ardor. Cushing turned to him, his eyes beaming, and said, "I'll try it, sir; I'll do my best". Fox wrote a note to Wells and an order for Cushing to obtain the small boats and torpedo equipment from the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The mission would be undertaken.

At the Navy Yard, Will found two open launches 30 feet long with small engines and screw driven. Each vessel was fitted with a 12-pounder howitzer and a complicated spar torpedo device (see photos). While the boats were being prepared and delivered to Norfolk under command of his subordinates, Ensigns Howorth and Stockholm, Will traveled to Fredonia to visit his mother. This was unfortunate in the sense that when he arrived in Norfolk separately he discovered that one of the boats had been lost in route due to lack of experience of the ensign commanding. He decided to continue anyway, and left Norfolk, 20 Oct with 6 men: Howorth, Stotesbury, engineer, Higgins, fireman, Deming, Wilkes, and King. Upon arriving at the Squadron he picked up 8 additional volunteers: Woodman, Steever, Hamilton, Smith, Harley, Swan and Houghton, and an old friend Ensign T. S. Gay. In addition, Cushing decided that, in the absence of the planned second launch, he would tow a cutter with 13 additional volunteers under command of Masters Mate W. D. Burlingame to be used as pickets, if necessary.

At 11:28 p.m., 27 October 64, the launch with the cutter in tow headed up the Roanoke River (15 in the launch and 13 in the cutter). It would take two hours to reach the *Albemarle*. There was to be no talking and the sound of the steam engine was muffled with a canopy. Cushing had still hoped to remain undiscovered and be able to board and capture the Ironclad, but a barking dog awakened the sentries. He cast off the cutter to move downstream to picket the wreck of the *Southfield*, if needed. When approaching the Ram he noticed that it was protected with a log boom around its anchorage. Thinking that the logs were probably slimy and

slippery from being in the water some time, he decided to try to ride over them. Gaining as much speed as possible, he partially did so, reaching a point close enough to the Ram that he could place the long spar with torpedo under her.

All of this was occurring in the hail of small arms fire and the ram crew's preparation to fire one of its 6 inch Brookes rifles at a point blank range. Cushing pulled the light rope attached to the release mechanism. He slowly counted to five to allow the torpedo to rise against the wooded hull. Bullets were tearing into his jacket and a shoe, but not himself. Then he slowly pulled the lanyard to the firing device, and a massive explosion occurred. Almost simultaneously the Brookes rifle fired. Fortunately, it could not have been depressed sufficiently to strike the launch directly, but the air pressure flattened everything. Again came the call to "Surrender". Will had not noticed it before, he was busy. He shouted back "Never, I'll be damned first" "Men, Save Yourselves". He threw off his sword, revolver, ripped up jacket and shoes and dived into the cold water of the river. Several of the crew followed him, but they were soon separated.

Cushing, a strong swimmer, swam across and down river some distance to a cypress swamp where he hid out until the next day. He talked with a Negro who verified that the *Albemarle* had indeed been sunk. Elated, he "borrowed" a small skiff left by a search party who were looking for him; rowed to the mouth of the river into the bay, and fortunately was discovered at 10:15 p.m. by crew of the USS *Valley City*. He was not in a very good condition, but rapidly recovered the next day. Three of the crew drowned and the remainder were captured and sent to Libby Prison.

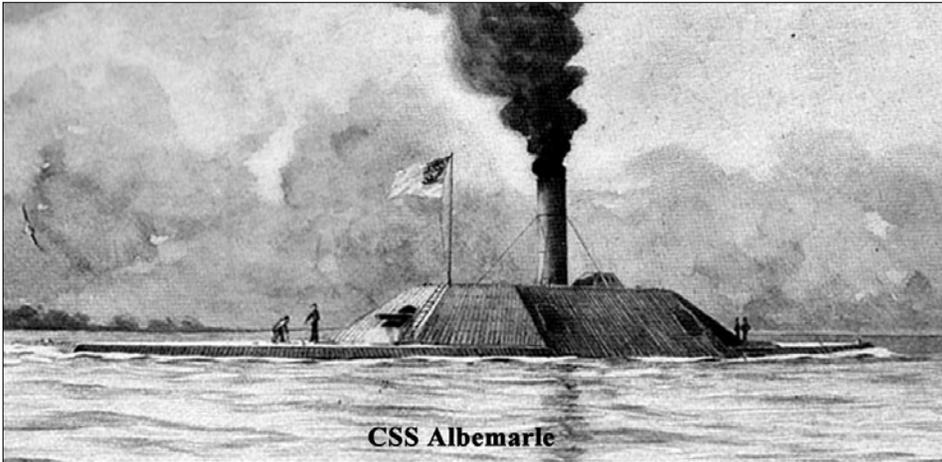
Honors were poured upon William Cushing. He was voted the "Thanks of Congress" (The only sailor ranking below Flag Officer to receive that honor); promoted to Lieutenant Commander (at age 22, the youngest in the Navy); and was granted a total of \$56,000 in prize money (about \$780,000 in today's dollars). His was an extreme act of heroism and his country remembered him well. Since 1890, the Navy has named six Destroyers for William Barker Cushing. Why did not he receive the Medal of Honor? Because that award was not given to Naval Officers until 1915. On 15 Jan 1865, Cushing followed up this action by leading a force of sailors and marines against the seaward face of Fort Fisher (key rebel defense of Wilmington, N.C.). Remaining in the Navy and commanding the USS *Wyoming* in 1873, he intervened with Cuba's Spanish government to prevent the killing of American sailors detained at Santiago. His extended bravery may well have taken its toll on his health, however. While serving as ExO of the Washington Naval Yard, Commander William Cushing died, 17 Dec 1874. He was 32. He was buried at Annapolis. Lieutenant and Brevet Lt. Col. Alonzo Cushing was killed near the Angle* at Gettysburg, 3 July 1863. He was 22. He was buried at West Point.

*Lon Cushing was killed only a few paces from where CSA General Lewis Armistead was mortally wounded.

References: "Lincoln's Commando – Biography of W. B. Cushing" by Roske & Van Dorn", 1957
" Battles and Leaders of the Civil War" Vol. 4 p 625
"ORN's" S. 1 Vol. 10 & 11
" Cushing of Gettysburg – Story of an Artillery Commander" by K. M. Brown, 1993

Bob Williams: 4-24-05

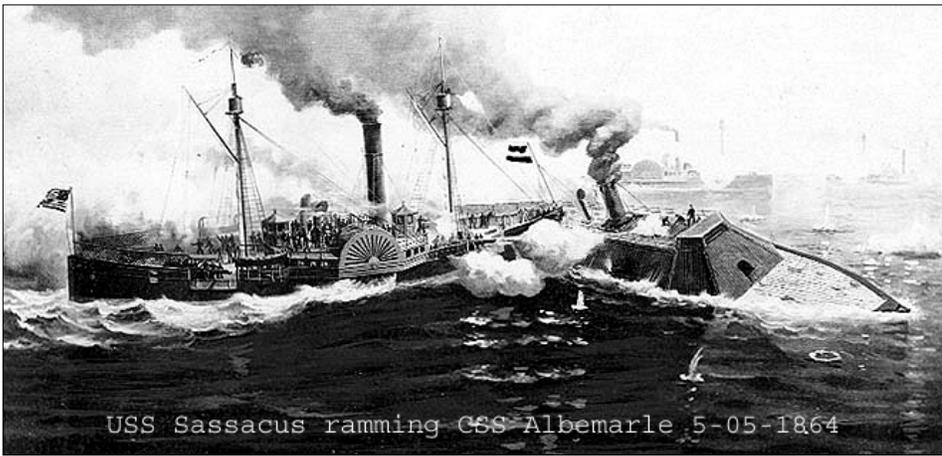
Lieutenant William Cushing, USN and the CSS *Albemarle*



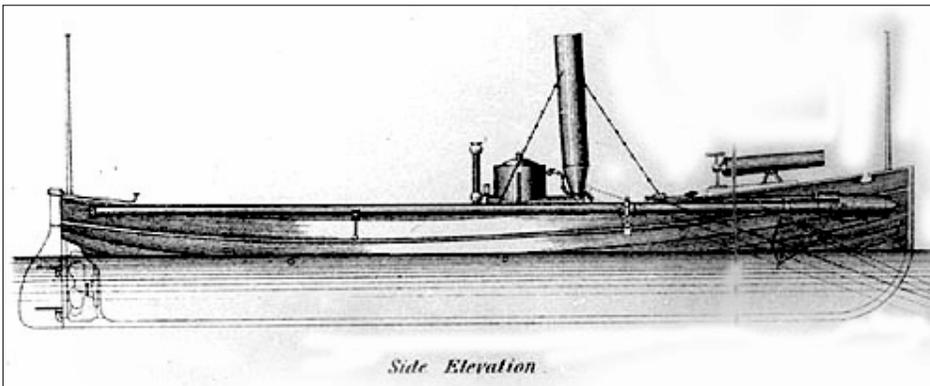
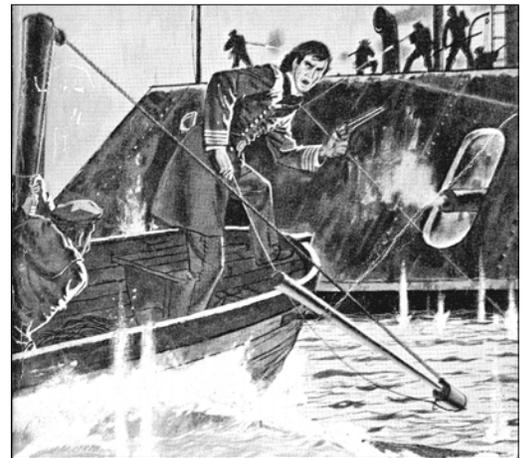
CSS *Albemarle*



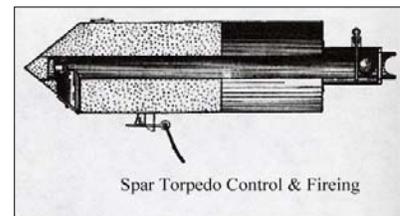
Lieutenant William Barker Cushing, USN



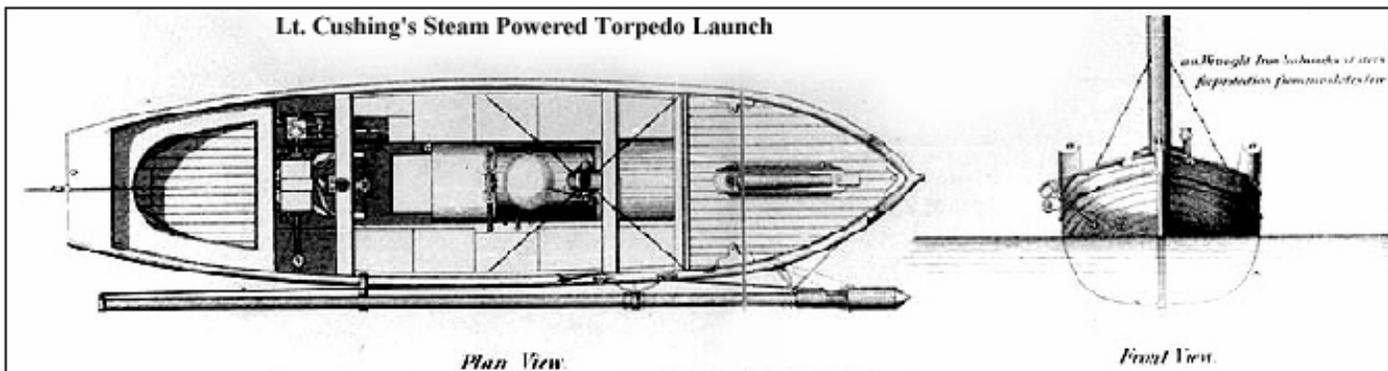
USS *Sassacus* ramming CSS *Albemarle* 5-05-1864



Side Elevation



Spar Torpedo Control & Firing



Lt. Cushing's Steam Powered Torpedo Launch

Plan View

Front View