



Pirates on the Mississippi: The Story of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Louisiana 1805 - 1812

G. H. Mc Loughlin

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Pirates on the Mississippi is the story of the Revenue Cutter Louisiana, the first armed vessel of the United States to be stationed in the Territory of Orleans following the Louisiana Purchase. Its job was to enforce U.S. customs laws, and to insure that duties were paid on all goods imported into the new Territory. During the seven years that it operated in the port, the Louisiana patrolled the Gulf of Mexico and connecting bays and waterways, engaging in action petty smugglers, international privateers and ruthless pirates—including the forces of Jean Lafitte. This history of the cutter's daily operations is based on information extracted from the vessel's log sheets which are preserved in the National Archives in Fort Worth. During those periods for which the log sheets are missing or were not recorded, the Louisiana's activities were reconstructed from newspaper reports of the day, and the correspondence between the cutter's captains and government officials responsible for its operation. The Louisiana's story is made the more interesting by the antics of its two commanders, who, despite their eccentricities, demonstrated great courage and fighting spirit in challenging privateers and pirates whose vessels were generally bigger, faster and better armed.

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