

William Cushing: The Daring Raid to Sink the Ironclad CSS Albemarle

In the annals of naval history, few feats of daring and skill surpass the raid led by Lieutenant William Cushing to sink the ironclad CSS Albemarle. This Confederate warship had wreaked havoc on Union shipping in the Roanoke River, effectively sealing off the vital port of Plymouth, North Carolina. Cushing's audacious plan involved leading a small crew of sailors in a torpedo boat to infiltrate the Confederate stronghold and destroy the Albemarle.

William Cushing was born in Delafield, Wisconsin, in 1841. From a young age, he displayed an adventurous spirit and a keen interest in naval warfare. In 1857, he entered the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, graduating four years later at the top of his class.



Civil War Commando: William Cushing and the Daring Raid to Sink the Ironclad CSS Albemarle by Jerome Preisler

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With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Cushing eagerly joined the Union Navy. He quickly distinguished himself through his bravery and resourcefulness, earning the respect of his superiors and the admiration of his fellow sailors.

In April 1864, Cushing was assigned to the command of the torpedo boat *Picket Boat No. 1*. This small and nimble vessel was equipped with a spar torpedo, a device designed to explode upon contact with an enemy warship's hull.

Cushing's mission was to penetrate the Confederate defenses in the Roanoke River and sink the Albemarle. The ironclad was a formidable opponent, armed with powerful guns and protected by thick armor plating. To make matters worse, the river was heavily fortified with Confederate artillery and sharpshooters.

Undeterred, Cushing meticulously planned his attack. He studied the river's currents, the location of Confederate defenses, and the vulnerabilities of the Albemarle. He handpicked a crew of 16 volunteers, each of whom shared his determination and courage.

On the night of October 27, 1864, Cushing and his crew set out on their perilous mission. They rowed stealthily up the Roanoke River, carefully avoiding Confederate patrols and obstacles. As they approached the Albemarle, they encountered heavy gunfire from the Confederate shore batteries.

Undeterred, Cushing pressed on, directing his crew with unwavering resolve. They skillfully maneuvered around the ironclad's defenses and positioned themselves alongside the massive warship. With lightning

speed, Cushing detonated the spar torpedo, sending a thunderous explosion that tore a gaping hole in the Albemarle's hull.

The Confederate ironclad sank rapidly, its proud silhouette disappearing beneath the murky waters of the Roanoke River. Cushing and his crew had triumphed against overwhelming odds, striking a major blow to the Confederate Navy.

Cushing's daring raid earned him widespread acclaim. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander and received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his extraordinary bravery and leadership.

The sinking of the Albemarle had a profound impact on the course of the Civil War. It reopened the Roanoke River to Union shipping, cut off a vital supply line for Confederate forces, and boosted the morale of Union troops.

William Cushing's legacy as a naval hero continues to inspire generations of sailors and military personnel. His daring raid to sink the CSS Albemarle stands as a testament to his unwavering courage, his exceptional skill, and his unwavering devotion to his country.



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