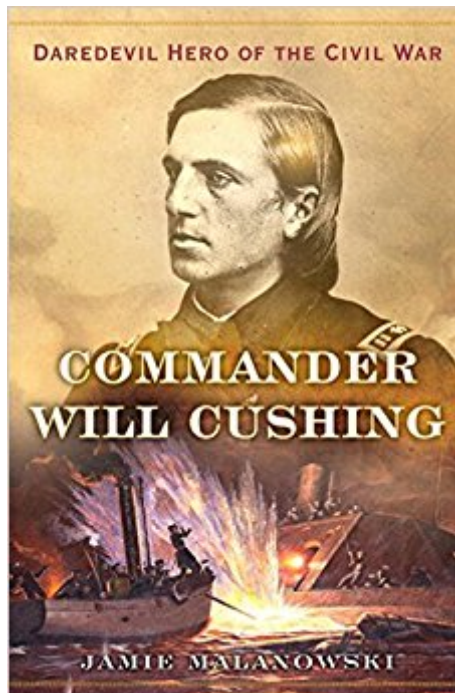




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Commander Will Cushing: Daredevil Hero Of The Civil War



Synopsis

The lead writer of the New York Times's award-winning "Disunion" series introduces William Barker Cushing, the Civil War's most celebrated naval hero. October 1864. The confederate ironclad CSS Albemarle had sunk two federal warships and damaged seven others, taking control of the Roanoke River and threatening the Union blockade.

Twenty-one-year-old navy lieutenant William Barker Cushing hatched a daring plan: to attack the fearsome warship with a few dozen men in two small wooden boats. What followed, the close-range torpedoing of the Albemarle and Cushing's harrowing two-day escape downriver from vengeful Rebel posses, is one of the most dramatic individual exploits in American military history. Theodore Roosevelt said that Cushing "comes next to Farragut on the hero roll of American naval history," but most have never heard of him today. Tossed out of the Naval Academy for "buffoonery," Cushing proved himself a prodigy in behind-the-lines warfare. Given command of a small union ship, he performed daring, near-suicidal raids, "cutting out" confederate ships and thwarting blockade runners. With higher commands and larger ships, Cushing's exploits grow bolder, culminating in the sinking of the Albemarle. A thrilling narrative biography, steeped in the tactics, weaponry, and battle techniques of the Union Navy, Commander Will Cushing brings to life a compelling yet flawed figure. Along with his three brothers, including one who fell at Gettysburg, Cushing served with bravery and heroism. But he was irascible and complicated—a loveable rogue, prideful and impulsive, who nonetheless possessed a genius for combat. In telling Cushing's story, Malanowski paints a vivid, memorable portrait of the army officials, engineers, and politicians scrambling to win the war. But he also goes deeper into the psychology of the daredevil soldier and what this heroic and tragic figure, who died before his time, can tell us about the ways we remember the glories of war. 8 pages of illustrations

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Customer Reviews

“Like many war stories, the tale of the young and rebellious Commander Will Cushing was tucked away into the dusty archives of history. Jamie Malanowski skillfully resurrects Cushing’s courageous adventures on the high seas during the Civil War in this action-packed page-turner. Beginning with Cushing’s youthful pranks at the U.S. Naval Academy and culminating with his triumphant sinking of the Confederate CSS Albemarle, Commander Will Cushing is a must-read about a daring young soldier whose extraordinary achievements have earned him a place alongside America’s most celebrated naval heroes.”

— Senator John McCain

“Jamie Malanowski has brought to life one of the great, little-known swashbucklers of the Civil War. A fun, exhilarating rush of a read, this is history told with the flair and panache of a great journalist.”

— Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *In the Heart of the Sea*

“It’s astonishing to me that I’ve never heard of such an astonishing and very American hero. Will Cushing is like a character out of fiction or the movies—a charismatic trouble-maker, patriot, half-mad can-do leader of men—and Jamie Malanowski beautifully tells the ripping yarn that was his remarkable life.”

— Kurt Anderson, host of Studio 360 on NPR

“Commander Will Cushing is a happy combination of one of the Civil War’s best tales and a writer whose taut, smart prose is up to the task of writing it. So much Civil War writing loses its luster in an ocean of sheer data. In Malanowski’s hands the narrative just drives forward, carrying you with it. A superbly entertaining book on a subject that, somehow, everyone else overlooked.”

— S. C. Gwynne, author of *Empire of the Summer Moon*

“Jamie Malanowski restores Cushing to his proper place in the first rank of American naval heroes in this fast-paced, rousing biography that illuminates both Cushing the man and the hero. Gracefully written and admirably nuanced, Commander Will Cushing makes a significant contribution to the naval history of the Civil War.”

— Peter Cozzens, author of *Shenandoah 1862: Stonewall Jackson’s Valley Campaign*

“Jamie Malanowski’s compelling history sheds new light on Will Cushing, a major naval hero of the Civil War who, but for a technicality, would have surely received the Medal of Honor. The Cushing name reverberates through those years, with four brothers serving the North, including Alonzo, a cannoneer who fell at Gettysburg. But this story is about Will, and

it's a corker. - Larry Smith, author of Beyond Glory: Medal of Honor Winners in Their Own Words "[G]ripping, accessible | Malanowski's nimble prose serves the action scenes perfectly and gives Cushing's battles the weight and presentation they deserve | [H]as the page-turning excitement of a thriller | - Publishers Weekly, Starred review

Jamie Malanowski has written for The New Yorker, Vanity Fair, and the New York Times. Author of And the War Came, about America's six-month-long descent into war after Lincoln's election, he lives in Briarcliff Manor, New York.

After having read and enjoyed thoroughly Jamie Malanowski's excellent book "And the War Came", I decided to give his biography of Will Cushing a try. I had been unfamiliar with Cushing prior to this book but found him to be a mesmerizing character. His exploits read like an action adventure screenplay but they are real. Mr Malanowski makes the adventure jump off the page and also manages to give us a flavor for what drove this remarkable man. I particularly liked the voice that the author brings to his writing. This is not a dry historical retelling. It feels from start to finish like an old friend telling you a favorite story. While I am not a Civil War junkie, I gave it as a gift to a friend who is and he enjoyed it as much as I did. Well done.

Full disclosure: I was actually named after Cmdr. Cushing as part of a traditional Naval family and grew up hearing stories about him. Therefore, I am related (tangentially) to the Cushing brothers, which included recent Medal of Honor winner Alonzo. This narrative was well done and completely unvarnished--showing Cushing's warts as well as everything else we know about him. There are many details here, and the narrative follows him beyond the Albermarle "legend" up to (and beyond) his death due to unknown causes. There are also some interesting points of conjecture as Malanowski closes this out. And I loved one of the closing sentences in the last paragraph: "Cushing was one of those rare men who met his moment, and the result was sublime."

Wonderfully told history of an American hero. He died of some misunderstood malady in the early 1870's when he was about 32. Before there were the Ryan Brothers of WW2, there were the Cushing brothers. Alonzo stemmed Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg but died in that battle (and received the Medal of Honor for it in 2012). Will had the fearlessness associated with youth but also the skill of a Horatio Hornblower. A third brother died fighting Comanches. All three were

described by those who knew them as "the bravest man I ever knew". A fourth brother served in a supply capacity in the Civil war and survived, but he also died at a relatively young age. Their mother outlived them by 30-40 years.

I love history and the Civil War period. Naval engagements are of interest to me.

Mr. Malanowski has a wonderful way of bringing a person's story to life. He has certainly accomplished that in this book. Will Cushing is completely and fairly described to a degree that brings you back to the 1860s and allows us a unique glimpse into a life that many of us never knew of. The book is a captivating read from cover to cover and leaves you wanting more about our heroes of our past, be they Union or Confederate.

We loved the book, partly because we lived in North Carolina where much of it is set and could relate the Civil War history we knew of the area. It was very well written and encourages us to read more books by Jamie Malanowski.

Will Cushing is the original SEAL. This book is authored well with small breaks from Will's life to cover stories that his brothers are involved in and battle he just missed out on. Commander Cushing is excellent.

A great story of a true American hero. His brother received a Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at Gettysburg (finally). William should get one, too. This guy was a true daredevil and hero in his own right.

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