



Sea Wolf of the Confederacy: The Daring Civil War Raids of Naval Lt. Charles W. Read

David W. Shaw

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In June 1863, just days before the epic clash at Gettysburg ended the last rebel land invasion of the North, a small party of the Confederate Navy mounted a devastating series of raids on the New England coast, culminating in a battle off Portland, Maine. Veteran author David W. Shaw brilliantly re-creates this almost forgotten chapter of the Civil War in rich narrative detail drawn from accounts of the participants.

At the center of the conflict were two men: the hotheaded young adventurer Charles W. Read, who resigned his commission as a Union midshipman to become a lieutenant in the Confederate Navy; and Secretary of the United States Navy Gideon Welles, a well-connected politician who ably oversaw the explosive growth of the fleet -- including the revolutionary ironclads -- during the war despite his lack of maritime experience. Serving aboard CSS Florida off the coast of Brazil, Read hatched a daring plan to sail a captured brig directly into the Union's home waters and wreak havoc on their shipping lanes. Burning or capturing more than twenty merchant vessels in less than three weeks, and switching ships several times to elude capture, Read's rampage caused widespread panic in Northern cities, made headlines in the major daily newspapers, and brought enormous pressure on Welles to "stop the rebel pirate." At one point there were nearly forty Union ships sent to hunt down Read in a cat-and-mouse game that finally led to his dramatic capture off the coast of Maine.

Sea Wolf of the Confederacy brings to light this fascinating yet little known episode of the war, combining Shaw's flair for powerful storytelling with extensive research culled from contemporary newspapers, journals, and official war records. Taking readers to the heart of the action on the decks of the burning ships, Shaw offers a compelling portrait of the complex Read and an insightful new perspective on the divisions splitting North and South during this dark time in American history.

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