

Sailor's Story

Cook William Long

Don't call me "Slushy"

My name is William Long, though some of the crew call me "Grub Spoiler" or "Slushy" names which they find amusing. I come from the town of Wiscasset in the district of Maine, and joined *Constitution* in 1811 as a seaman. I was injured in the battle against *Java*, and though I am no longer sick, my left arm remains too weak for work on deck or aloft. So I was made cook, which demands little strength.



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I feed the ship

It is my duty to turn the ship's supplies into meals that might nourish the crew. I choose my words carefully, for "Nourishing" is not "Delicious". The victuals are preserved, and though the meat was once beasts that mooed or squealed, this is hard to believe when I take it from the steep tub. I do my best, but only a wizard could magic good food from this shrunken stuff.



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I work in the ship's hottest place

At the center of my world is the camboose, which is a giant cooking stove. Most of my work is done with boiling, steaming, copper pots. These are big enough to bathe in, because each day except Friday I cook up the meat of a whole ox, or several swine. Men called the food "salt horse", but this is a foul lie and they eat worse ashore.



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Pay and perks

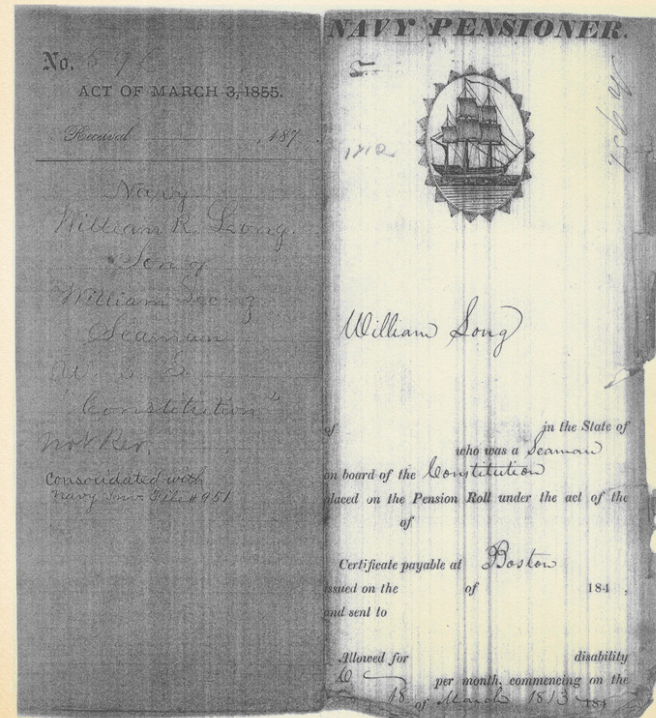
I earn a seaman's wage and half again: \$18 a month. I send my wife half of this. I have other benefits, too: in winter I am the only warm, dry man aboard, and I own the greasy slush that floats on stew pots. The men buy it from me to spread on bread. For ship's butter is rancid, and fit only to grease the rubbing wooden parts of the rigging.



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The Navy and after

Cooking for my shipmates was my life for a few years, but I was not always happy on *Constitution*. I was accused of using mutinous language, but a court martial proved this untrue (I always denied it.) But mud sticks, doesn't it? Perhaps this was part reason why I finally left the ship. The old wound was never really right, and the navy paid me \$6 a month for it all my life.



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