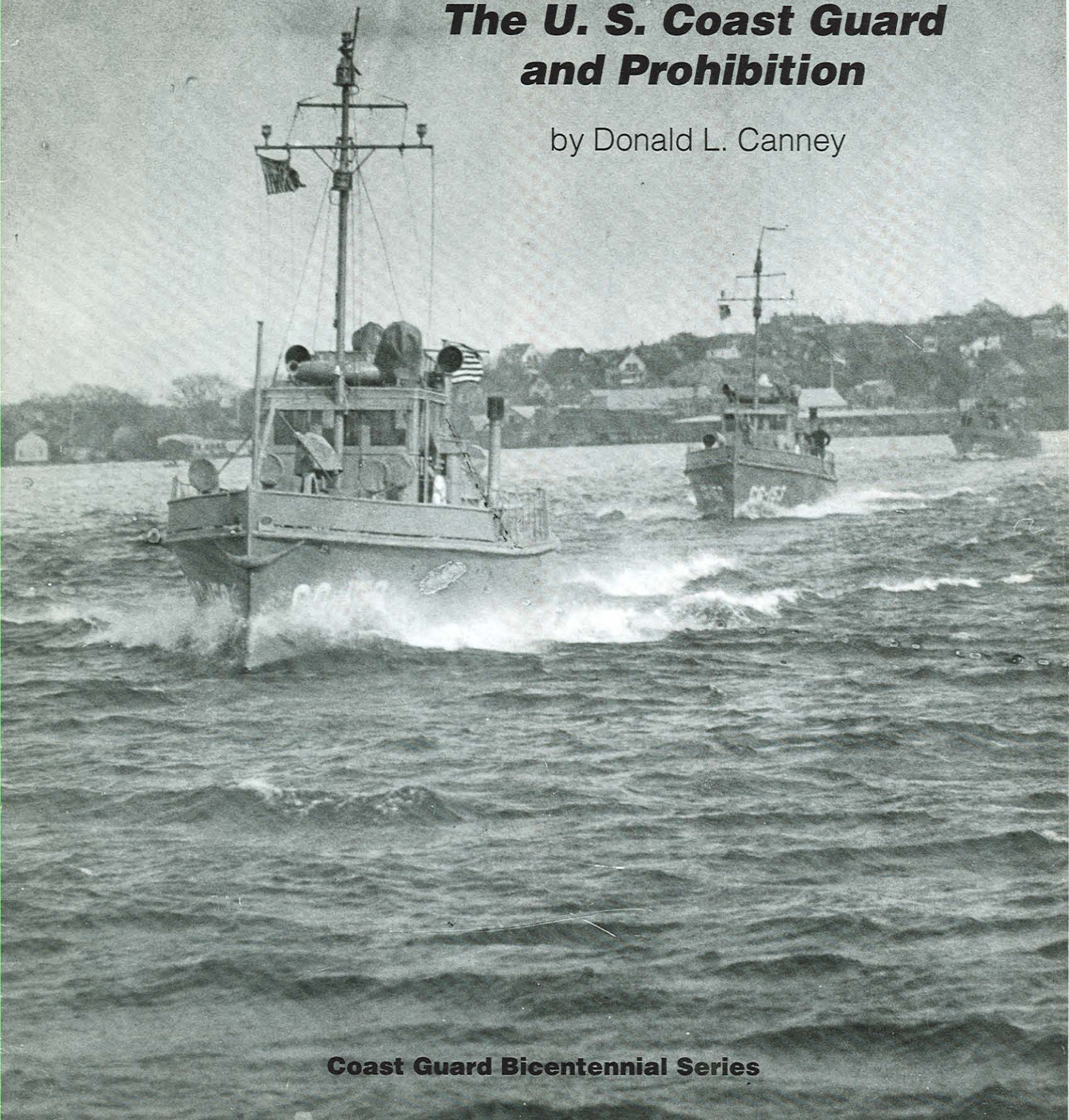


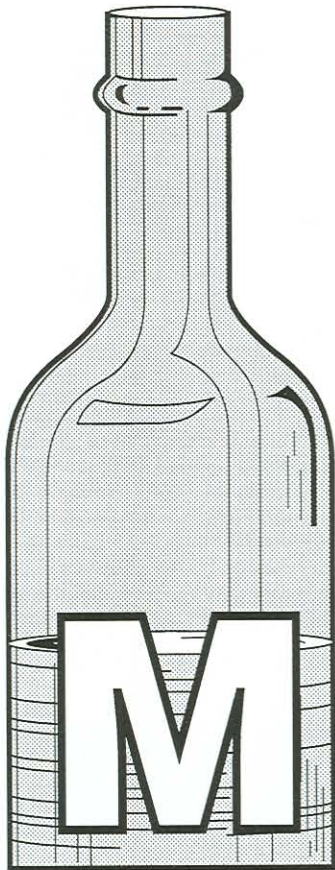
Rum War

The U. S. Coast Guard and Prohibition

by Donald L. Canney



Coast Guard Bicentennial Series

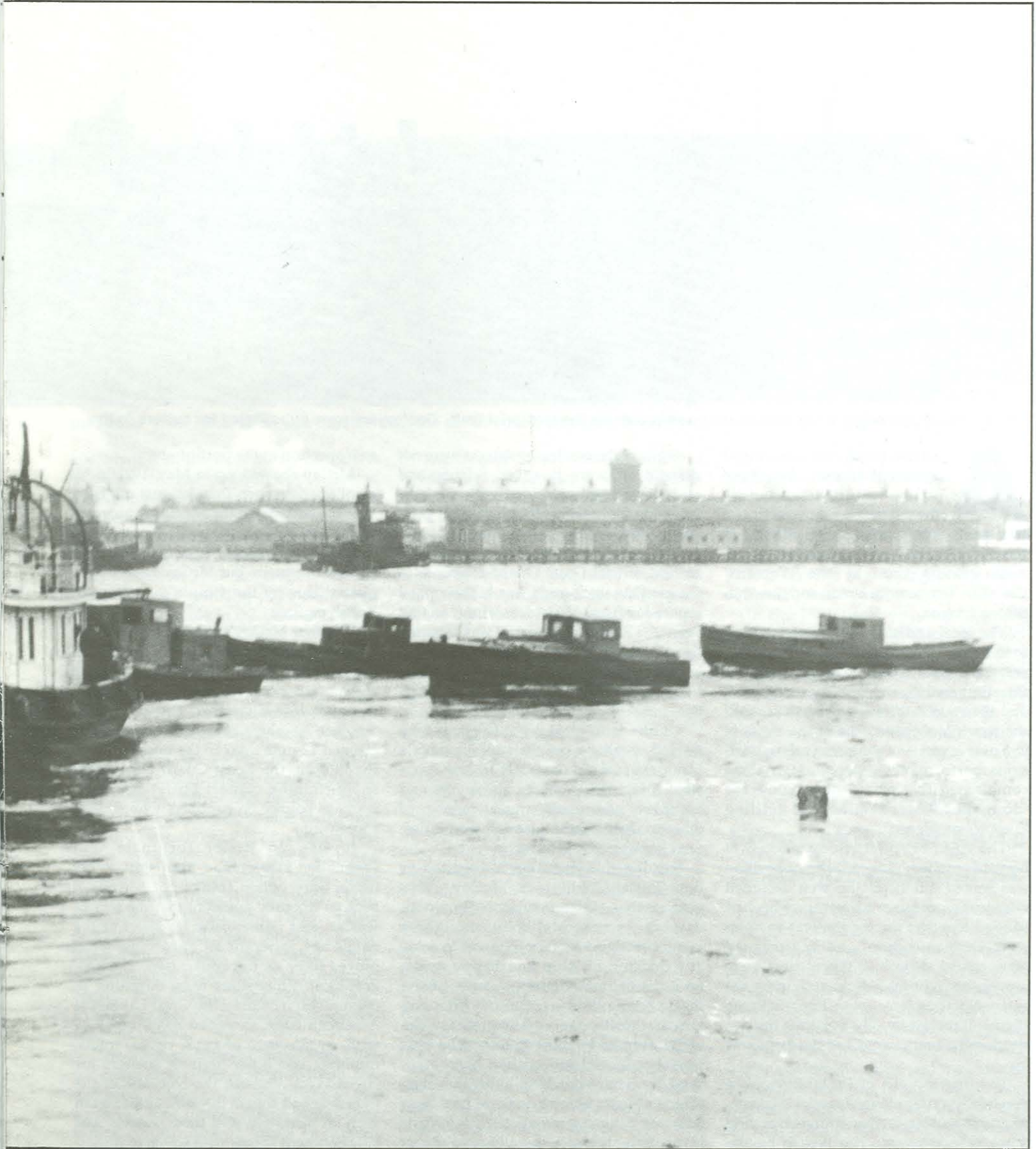


uch of the 'fuel' that made the 'roar' in the "Roaring 20s" was alcohol — beer, wine, bathtub gin, "hooch", "fresh off the boat" — and all of it manufactured, imported, transported, sold, and consumed illegally.

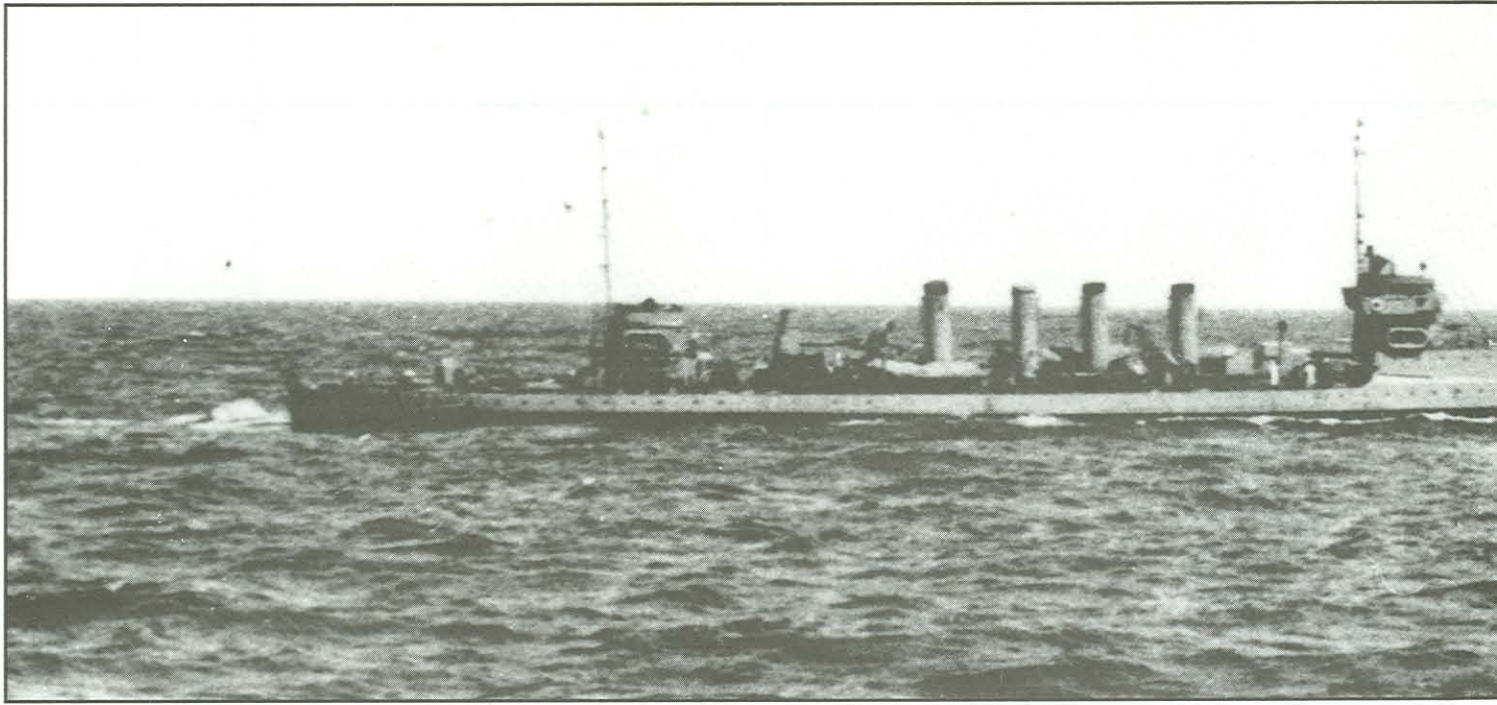
Prohibition, called the "noble experiment" by President Hoover became the law of the land on January 16, 1920, one year after the 36th state ratified the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. Enforcement of the law fell to the Department of the Treasury and the Coast Guard was charged with interdicting the flow of Demon Rum before it reached American shores.



Many of the vessels of the early '20s were harbor tugs such



as the *Tioga*, here towing a gaggle of seized rum boats.



The borrowed destroyer *Beale* pickets a rum ship outside the territorial limit. Destroyers were substituted for cutters in the

At first blush the task ahead appeared an easy one. Even today, historians exemplify the prohibition movement as a true grassroots campaign, originating in the mid-19th century and fostered by citizens groups such as the Womens' Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League.

The local and state power of the 'dry' forces was such that thirty-three states were officially 'dry' even before the Constitutional amendment was made law, and the state ratification process reached the requisite three-fourths of the states in just over a year — an impressively expeditious performance, even though some complained that it was done while the 'doughboys' were still away settling Europe's problems.

The spirit of social reform seemed to have triumphed. Indeed, the opposition was limited and inept: the 'wets' included numerous prominent brewers who had banded together during the war to "preserve German culture" and had pursued other covert activities. When these were brought to light by federal authorities, the anti-prohibition forces were hung with the stigma of disloyalty. By that time the dry steam-roller had peaked and the game was up.

The first months of Prohibition were deceitfully quiet along America's coasts, no doubt causing further optimism among those who expected the law to be the panacea for America's alcohol problem.

Signs of the coming onslaught were not difficult to discern, however. Seizures and raids inland had coincided with the laws inception and received the expected publicity. How serious both enforcement and evasion would be was not yet clear. The earliest official Coast Guard reference to the growing illicit trade was in the annual report for fiscal 1921, dated June of that year: the Florida coast patrol was reported "particularly vigilant" in this activity, having made an ominous "hundreds of trips" in support of Federal prohibition authorities, and seized several vessels.

Unlike land-locked bootleggers who needed nothing more than an automobile trunk, the seafaring counterpart had a substantial logistics problem: his sources and his thirsty consumers, a great number of whom inhabited the teeming port cities, were separated by blue water.

Solving this dilemma is credited to one Captain William S. McCoy. This gentleman — though supposedly a non-drinker — was intelligent enough to avoid the high visibility inherent in actually docking his ship and happy cargo: he hove to immediately outside of the magic 3-mile limit — immune from any U.S. authorities — and waited for the well-informed to come to him. The idea was simple, and indeed had been practiced by penny-pinching smuggler-merchants at least as long as there had been customs duties: unload the high-tariff items surreptitiously, usually onto night-hidden small boats, prior to submitting

to inspection at the port-of-entry.

McCoy showed up in May, 1921 in his auxiliary schooner *Tomoka*, just off Long Island, and became the popularly accepted "founder" of Rum Row. U.S. registered vessels were subject to seizure outside American waters, but McCoy had circumvented this by the simple expedient of British registry.

Whether McCoy's "founding" of Rum Row was real or popular fiction is irrelevant, Rum Rows were a fact — and an embarrassing one for the dries until international law dispersed the supply — "mother" — ships beyond the newly proclaimed 12-mile mark in the mid-1920s. In the interim, the Coast Guard harried the shore-running contact boats and stood ready to pounce on suppliers who strayed shoreward.

It was no doubt fortunate that Prohibition evasion had been slow to get under way: when things got serious it became woefully apparent that the service was at least numerically far short of the challenge inherent in enforcing what proved to be an unpopular law. The geographical dimensions were daunting in themselves: including the Great Lakes, the American coast exceeded 6,000 miles — with no shortage of bays, coves, inlets, estuaries and other inviting shelters for lawbreakers. Indeed, the blockade of the Civil War had shown the difficulties met in such an operation and those vessels had only Southern shores with which to deal.

It also can be said that the American



mid-20's. Their renovation was quicker than the construction time needed for new ships. They were also cheaper.

coast harbored the most thirsty of the wet population. The political opposition to Prohibition was centered in the large cities with ethnic populations. They were particularly incensed that generally moral considerations had been attached to their cultural use of such beverages. In any case, the large drinking populations just happened to reside in the great port cities: in particular, Boston and New York.

To deal the proper penalties to the lawbreakers, the U.S. Coast Guard in 1920 continued as if in pre-Prohibition years: Congress had not seen fit to increase their appropriations to meet exigencies to come.

In ships, the service had vessels of three classifications: cruising cutters, inshore patrol and harbor cutters. There were twenty-nine in the first category: vessels capable of extensive sea-going operations. This variety included some, such as the *Acushnet*, which were no more than 10-knot ocean tugs. Four were engaged in Northern Pacific waters at least part of each year: the famous *Bear*, *Algonquin*, *Bothwell*, and *Unalga*. Three were assigned away from the threatened coasts: *Puerto Rico*, *Panama Canal*, and *Evansville*, Indiana — plus one in the territory of Hawaii.

The average cruising cutter was built for endurance rather than speed and few exceeded 12 knots. The exceptions to this were the five former Navy *Eagle* boats which could make 18 knots — though their sea-going characteristics left much to be desired.

The inshore patrol vessels numbered twenty-six, as of January 1, 1920. Twenty-one of these were former USN subchasers: light draft, World War I veterans designed for 18 knots. These ships had recently been added to the service and the Coast Guard budget and personnel levels did not permit their effective use. Nine were turned over to the Prohibition Bureau as a result.

A few harbor cutters were 20-knot plus craft, however, the majority of these were simply tugboats utilized for routine harbor duties and exceptionally unfit for coping with zealous lawbreakers.

Manning this fleet was a force of some 4000. More accurately, this number was spread among cruising vessels, harbor tugs, surfboats, beach patrols, and other land stations. Pay was comparable to other military men of the era and certainly not generous. The lowest ranking officers brought home something less than \$130 per month. The Commandant was paid \$6000 per year. A new recruit had a four year commitment and drew \$21 per month.

If these statistics are not sufficient to prove the Coast Guard's numerical inferiority as Prohibition began, it should be kept in mind that then, as now, the business of enforcing revenue laws is far from the sole mission of the service. Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, had founded his little navy as a "show of force" to overawe the "fraudulent few" involved in illicit trade, but the

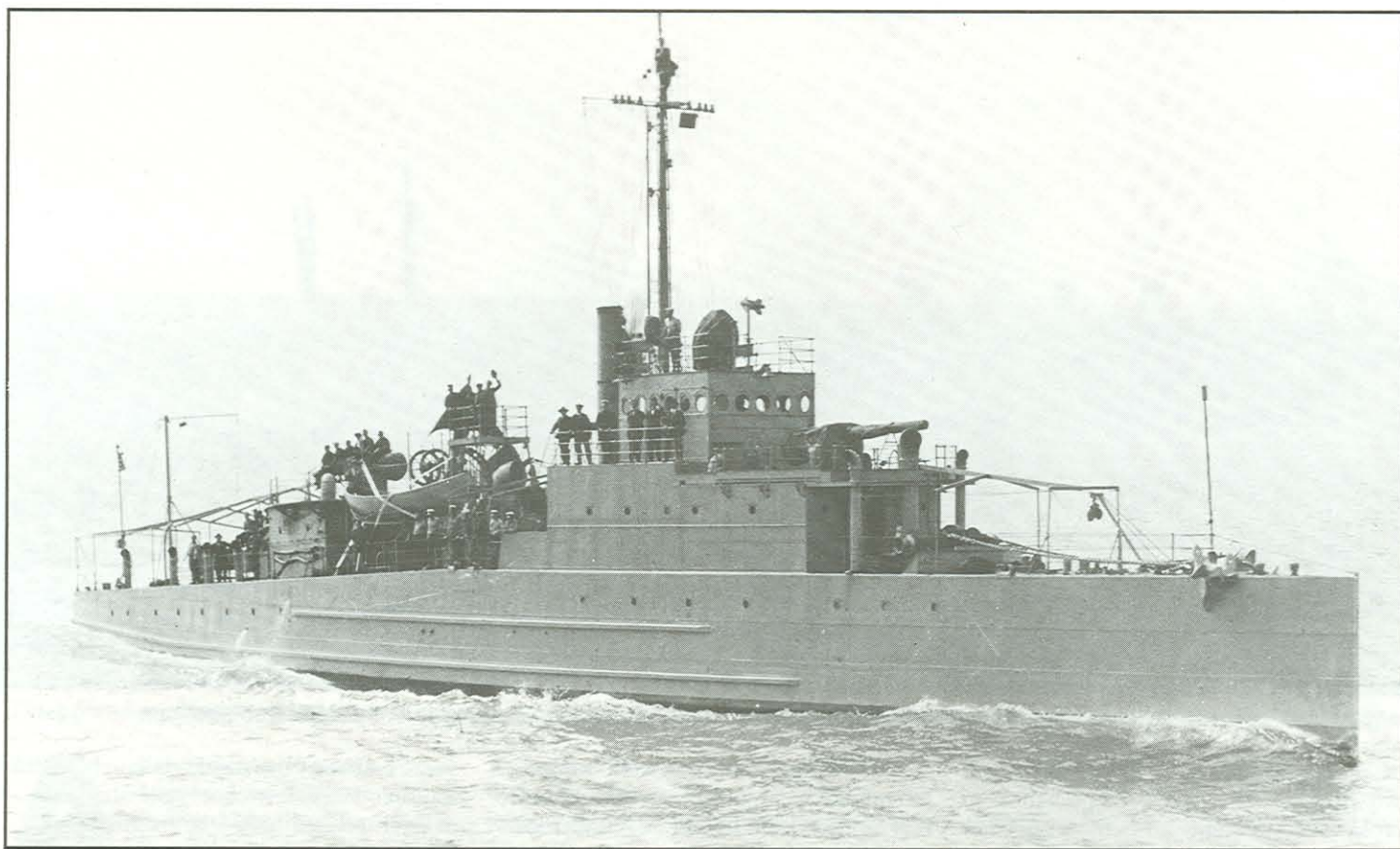
years had seen the service encrusted with multiple tasks, few of which enhanced — or even related to — the original intent. These were: protecting life and property at sea, maintaining military readiness, the Bering Sea Patrol, the Atlantic Ice Patrol, various services to shipping, and removal of derelicts from sea lanes.

In the 1921 fiscal year, for example, 14,000 persons were assisted, of which over 1,600 were in peril. Routine ship inspections numbered some 18,000. Assistance to those in danger was the most vital role of the service — despite its origins as a revenue enforcement agency, Prohibition would do nothing to enhance or facilitate this mission.

1920 to 1925: From skirmishes to a major campaign

The history of the Coast Guard's efforts to enforce Prohibition can be roughly divided in two, with the year 1925 as the chronological divider. Before this date, the service remained at nearly the same force level as 1920 — despite the patently obvious deluge of illicit alcohol coming ashore.

After 1925, the majority of a quantum leap in equipment, ships, and men became operational, resulting in significantly more aggressive tactics in the rum war. By 1925 the United States entered into agreements with important maritime nations whereby those nations would recognize seizures



Among the cruising cutters available at the onset of Prohibition were former U.S. Navy Eagle Boats.

made as far out as one hour steaming distance under certain circumstances. This significantly aided a more aggressive policy against the rum runners. This marked the decline of the easy motorboat jaunt by the amateur boater, and replaced it with dangerous runs beyond sheltered waters.

Probably the most visible symptom of the early Prohibition era was Rum Row. These lines of smugglers and liquor-mongers appeared off major and minor markets in 1921, and became magnets for literally hundreds of "contact boats" which swarmed out carrying ravenous purchasers. As early as 1922 Roy Haynes, Prohibition Commissioner, declared that "hundreds" of these mother ships were anchored off Atlantic shores, with over 60 off Jersey alone.

Lurid tales quickly grew up to satisfy the scandal-minded tabloid readers: the former 17,000 ton German passenger liner *Freidrich Der Grosse* was "fifteen miles off Fire Island" — a floating "bar and cabaret which is the playground of the rich and fast." — complete with on-board movies and a "Negro jazz orchestra." This story was later revealed as a romantic hoax, as were the German submarines "of a commercial type" flooding the shores with good Teutonic Ale.

The reality was less colorful. The mother ships would anchor and remain until their cargo was sold, then make their run north to the Canadian provinces or south to the Bahamas. While on "station" they made a great game of it: advertising their wares with splashy signs and competing in price and "added attractions" — call girls and gala parties were not uncommon. The Coast Guard, officially hamstrung outside the legal U.S. boundary, continued to patrol for contact boats and occasional unedifying verbal battles — and at least one potato fight — arose between would-be enforcers and defiant drinkers.

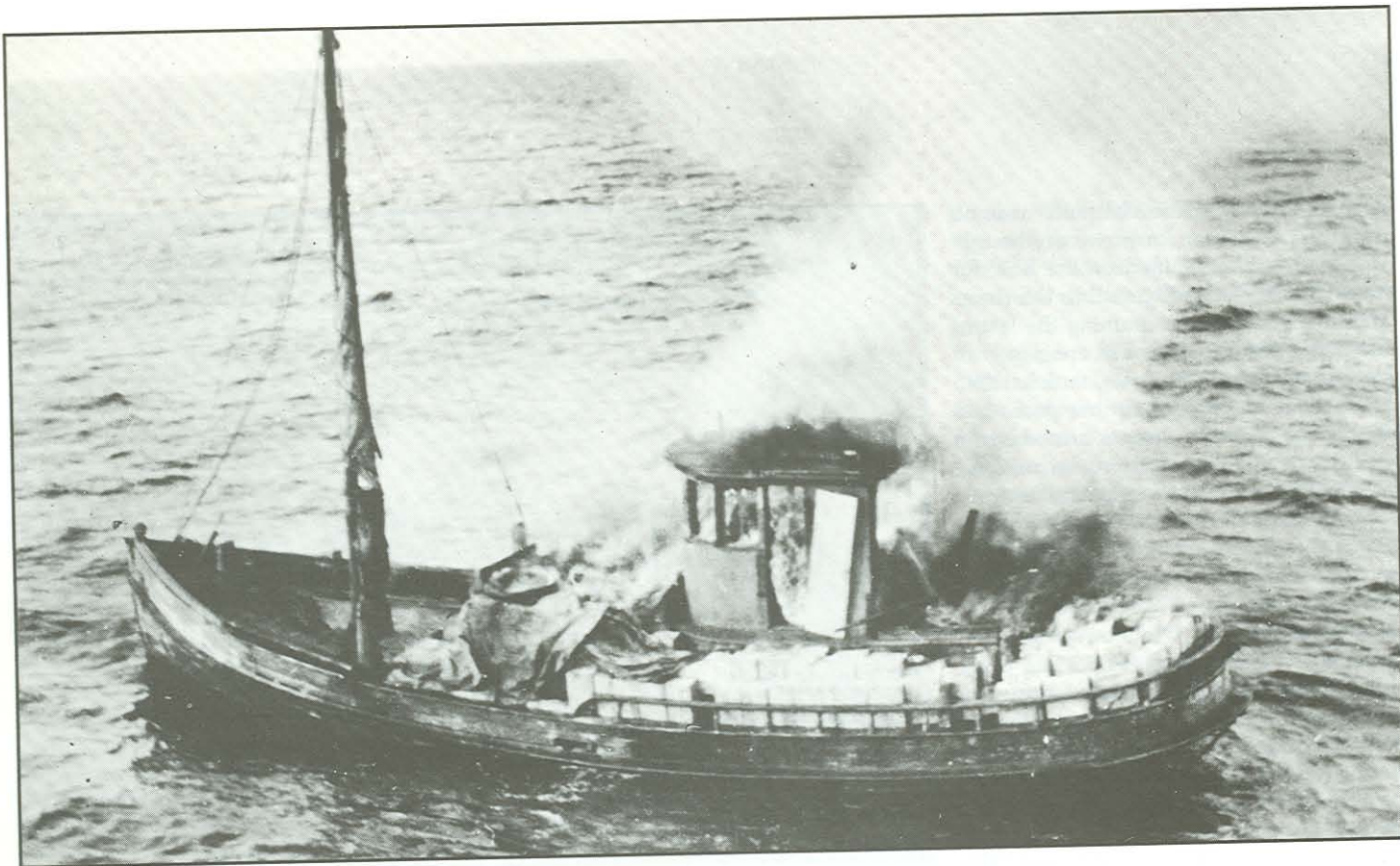
Enormous profits were to be made, with stories of 700 percent or more in profits for the more popular scotch or cognac — \$8 per case at port of origin, \$65 sale price on the Row. The exact amounts no doubt will never be told: the rumrunners boasted and exaggerated — not only the profits, but the payroll supposedly needed to stay out of the hands of the authorities. Furthermore the percentage of "undoc-tored" alcohol was criminally small: standard practice was to cut it three times before sale, and cheap rot-gut was not uncommonly palmed off as 'good stuff' by

the expedients of appropriate bottles and counterfeit labels.

Whatever the profits, there was sufficient demand for expansion, with breaks only when winter storms scattered the rum ships. Probably the only reliable clue to the extent of the trade were the statistics on liquor passing through Nassau en route to the U.S.: 50,000 quarts in 1917 to 10,000,000 in 1922.

There is general agreement that the early years of the Coast Guard's inderdiction and law enforcement efforts were marked by only scattered successes. Some say that no more than five percent of the U.S.-bound liquor was stopped in these years. The sheer magnitude of the job, compared to the size of the enforcement forces, can account for this. Other factors were at work, further hindering the Coast Guard's efforts.

From the service's point of view, enforcement of Prohibition was not necessarily top priority in the early months and every effort was made to maintain the vital life-saving mission despite increasing pressure from the 'drys.' Secondly, as the profits mounted, the bootleggers became more and more associated with criminal elements and syndicates. This brought more sophisticated methods, both of importa-



The crew of the rum boat *Linwood* set fire to the vessel to destroy evidence of their illicit trade.

tion and circumvention, which may have helped in the offensive against the trade because it created an easy target for pay-offs and gangster-style intimidation.

Finally, the unpopularity of the law brought about innumerable cases where the courts refused to administer sufficient penalties to discourage the miscreants and thus support the actions of the Coast Guard. Miniscule technicalities landed the bootleggers back on the street in record times. Impounded rummy boats were auctioned for paltry sums and sometimes to their original owners — and brazenly reappeared making their habitual rounds.

Despite the odds, the Coast Guard managed notable individual captures, even early in the fray. In August, 1921, the *Henry L. Marshall*, owned by the reputed "founder" of Rum Row, Captain Bill McCoy, was seized by the cutter *Seneca*, under Cdr. Aaron Gamble, with 1500 cases on board. Her British registry raised a thorny international incident, but eventually the charges stuck. Some two years later McCoy himself was taken on a second of his rumrunning schooners.

Through a growing chain of informants in the supply ports such as Nassau, significant captures were facilitated, such as that of the *Grace & Ruby* off Salem,

Massachusetts. A tip had alerted Prohibition forces that a schooner-load was en route from Nassau. Customs officers stationed themselves on shore and found seven cars and two trucks with drivers equally anxious for the arrival of the boat. The welcoming party lost their enthusiasm when the agents arrived and had the intelligence to depart — as the motorboat *Wilkin II*, signalling confidently to her "customers", came up the harbor.

The motorboat crew, save one, eluded the law men, but: over 7,000 bottles of American bonded whiskey were taken. The supply ship was identified as the *Grace & Ruby*, out of Nassau. Next day, the cutter *Tampa*, a nearly new 240 footer spotted a suspicious schooner with tarpaulins obscuring her name and hailed her for detention. After an escape attempt thwarted by solid shot, she submitted to boarding and was found holding \$150,000 worth of whiskey and gin. She was outside the 3-mile limit, but a court held that she had landed "merchandise" illegally, and the seizure was upheld.

In several instances, the life-saving and prohibition missions of the Coast Guard went hand in hand. The *Krazy Kat II* ran aground off Long Island in heavy weather, sent distress rockets up, and both the crew

and \$10,000 in liquor were saved.

A December, 1922 northeaster brought at least three rum schooners to ruin: *Jennie Bell*, *Madonna V*, and *Annie L. Spindler*. The crew of the first escaped from their grounded vessel, the crew of the second was rescued and captured, as was the crew of the third schooner. As the *Spindler* was breaking up in the surf near Cape Cod, a substantial crowd gathered hoping to share in the salvage of her cargo, an unknown quantity of contraband whiskey.

The story of the former yacht *Yankton* illustrates another factor which in this case operated to the advantage of the Coast Guard: piracy. She was, in happier days, a luxurious British-built yacht; a 217-footer with teak fittings and all the trappings of the rich. She had even participated as a Naval auxiliary from the Spanish American War through World War I. However, by 1923 she was bumming as a liquor runner from Nassau with 8,000 cases of grain alcohol and a motley crew.

The first contingent of "pirates" showed "credentials" of the correct bootlegging syndicate and offloaded 2,000 cases — none of which reached the supposed buyers. Later, a second band of less

devious pirates boarded her and made off with the remaining cargo — or thought they had. She remained on the Row for another month, finally selling the dregs and at the same time draining the last of her provisions and coal. The crew, by then cold, hungry and desperate, took her into New York — chopping up her decks and fittings for fuel. The master turned her in and the papers on board proved valuable as intelligence sources for the authorities.

In 1923, another tactic was tried by the Coast Guard and eventually was upheld by the courts: starving out the mother ships on rum row. The Alex Clark had been seized in May while carrying provisions to a British liquor ship. The court ruled that such activity constituted foreign trade and was illegal as she was only licensed and enrolled for coastwise trade — to and from American ports only.

Despite some such legal victories, other instances pointed up the legal barriers sometimes faced by the Coast Guard. The steamer Underwriter, for instance, was seized four times in one year, three times by the same vessel. Each time, she was auctioned off immediately and resumed running liquor.

Another, the Sagatind, a Norwegian steamer, was boarded and found with 43,000 cases on board, along with \$26,000 in cash and cases piled on deck. No resistance had been met by the Coast Guard boarders: the crew had been 'sampling' the merchandise and was collectively stupefied. She was taken by the Seneca and was the largest rum ship seized up to that time (1924). Libels against the ship were dismissed, however, for the government's failure to prove she was importing, instead of merely transporting the contraband.

1925 to 1930: New Rules and New Equipment: The Offensive Begins

As the rum tide continued to rise in epidemic proportions, pressure built for drastic measures to meet the problem. The dregs suggested what seemed the logical solution to the uninformed mind: call in



An attractive photo of CG 249, possibly at her commissioning. Two years later, she was the scene of the murder of her commanding officer, Boatswain Sidney C. Sanderlin, in a horrifying Prohibition-related incident. Three Coast Guardsmen were victims that day, and only mischance prevented further bloodshed.

the Navy. President Calvin Coolidge studied the legal and Constitutional aspects of this, and, with the advice of Attorney General Harry Daugherty, decided that only in a congressionally declared emergency could the Navy be called in to enforce the law.

The enlargement of the Coast Guard was the next logical step in dealing with the seagoing bootleggers. As early as October, 1923, Commandant William E. Reynolds was directed to submit a plan for the enlargement of the service to contend with the enforcement situation. In his report Reynolds admitted that the present force was able to prevent "only a small part" of the illegal traffic — a traffic "entirely unprecedented in the history of the country. ..." He called for twenty additional cruising cutters, 203 "cabin cruiser" type motorboats and 91 "small motorboats"; about 3,500 additional personnel were necessary, and an immediate appropriation of over \$19 million.

In principle, the idea and extent of the enlargement was immediately accepted. However, by early 1924 a significant change occurred: the plan was modified

from a "permanent" increase to a "temporary" increment in Coast Guard strength.

Furthermore, emphasis was placed on obtaining the vessels and personnel at all possible speed to meet the problem head-on. Therefore, the cruising cutters recommended by Commandant Reynolds were to be replaced by a similar number of laid-up Navy destroyers, which could be converted in a short time.

It is interesting that the "temporary" suggestion seems to have emanated from the Bureau of the Budget - and may have had more to do with the Coolidge administration's penny-pinching habits than with expediency. In point of fact, Reynolds had earlier received a report from the service's chief engineer describing Navy destroyers as "unsuitable" for Coast Guard work and excessively expensive. In any case, twenty destroyers were agreed upon, along with 203 cabin cruiser type and 100 smaller boats. With appropriate personnel, the bill came to approximately \$14 million. This was the largest single increase in the history of the Coast Guard.

The "new" destroyers were 750 and



The Coast Guard destroyer *Paulding*, a 750-ton veteran of World War I, was one of the 25 destroyers temporarily lent from the Navy for Prohibition duties. Fast but uncomfortable and wet in a seaway, *Paulding* was returned — exhausted — to the Navy in 1931 and “traded” for a flush decker.

1,000 tonners, built from 1910 to 1916. Several of the famous flush-deck four stackers were also obtained, all were capable of over 30 knots. Considerable renovation was required with at least one described as an “appalling mass of junk” by her commanding officer. The first — the *Henley* — went to sea in late summer, 1924. The majority of her enlisted men were new recruits — men who may well have been selling shoes one day and swabbing decks the next: the Coast Guard did not establish recruit training centers until the early 1940s. Destroyers which joined the force later had larger percentages of experienced manpower.

The two other categories of new vessels were the famous six-biters — 75-foot patrol boats — and the 38-foot picket boats. The smaller boats were designed for fast inshore work, and were of the Seabright dory type, with Spartan interiors and robust construction. Thirty were without cabins and “stripped” for speed — a designed 24 statute miles per hour. The remaining seventy vessels were given basic cabins and a galley for overnight

duties and were somewhat slower in speed.

The 75-footers were designed for 17 statute miles per hour and a crew of eight. Their mission was for extended picketing 20 to 30 miles at sea. Therefore, endurance and seaworthiness were considered priorities over speed. The building program was one of the largest in history and contracts were let to firms on both coasts. All of the six-biters were in service in 1925 — accounting for 50 percent of the authorized personnel increase. Between 1924 and 1926, Coast Guard personnel levels jumped from 5,982 to 10,009.

In the next few years — until the end of Prohibition — there were other increases in the service inventory. There were 100-footers such as the *Petrel*, the 125-foot — buck-and-a-quarters of the *Tiger* class, and 165-foot cutters. The 78-foot patrol boats — a speedier variety of the six-bitter were also new additions to the fleet. These “400” series boats were designed for 24 statute miles per hour.

Increase in the floating forces was not the limit of the Coast Guard’s plans to deal with both the bootleggers and the requirements of an increasingly technological

future. The potential of aviation in fighting rum-runners had not been lost on prohibition leadership — despite the primitive state of flying in this wood-and-wire era.

A false start in the field was begun in 1920 with a borrowed Navy biplane, but lack of appropriations killed the project. Missions as diverse as spotting stills in the backcountry, to transporting doctors to emergency victims, demonstrated the potential, however, and in 1924 a substantial Congressional appropriation allowed establishment of a permanent air arm.

Five biplanes were purchased and 10 air stations were authorized. The Loening OL-5 had a cruising speed of 75 miles per hour and a range of 415 miles; the Chance-Vought UO-1 flew 15 miles per hour faster and had a range of 365 miles. These speeds were typical for non-fighter aircraft of the era. By comparison, Lindbergh had cruised at just over 100 mph on his epic flight from New York to Paris in 1927. Furthermore, float-type aircraft were typically slower than land-based craft.

For the Coast Guard, radio became the ‘final frontier’ in the Prohibition war under the leadership of Lt Frank L. Meals and others. As early as 1919 the radio direction finder had come into use in an improvised form on the cutter *Androskoggin*. Two years later a navy-type finder was installed on the new *Tampa* and others followed. These aided in picking up lines of bearing on transmissions from rum ships, and two cutters working together could establish fixes on the illegal senders. The increased radio use brought about formal training for Coast Guard operators, and the utility of this communication system resulted in the establishment of ten shore stations. Finally, the use of radio necessarily brought the development of codes and cryptanalysts and sophisticated techniques were used by both the Coast Guard and the adversaries.

The Coast Guard’s welcome increase in numbers were accompanied in 1924 by international agreements with maritime nations whereby those nations would recognize seizures made as far out as one hour steaming distance under certain circumstances. Enforcing the new “twelve mile limit” was not as simple as it sounded. Technically, it was an “hour’s steam-

ing distance" — thus a foreign mother ship was liable to seizure if she was in contact with any American boat within an hour's steaming distance from shore. If the contact boat could run at 20 miles per hour, her mother ship could be seized as far as 20 miles out.

The term "12-mile" limit was used as a typical speed and distance figure. This new law complicated matters somewhat and required careful work by Coast Guard navigators to provide sufficient proof that seizures were unarguably within the requisite boundaries. Of course, it also handicapped the faster contact boats, some of which could attain over 30 knots.

The forces of the adversary were not idle about counteracting the build up of the Coast Guard. What little was not published in the public press was learned through their network of local 'spies' and the vital statistics of the new vessels — particularly speed and range — became benchmarks to be outdone.

The speed of the contact boats had always been important, and now became it became more so. Purpose-built motor-boats were now essential and were being turned out in considerable numbers. Only the basics were necessary for relatively short hauls at high speed: virtually bare hulls, thirty to forty feet in length, with as much engine shoehorned in as compatible with a decent cargo.

Surplus wartime water-cooled aircraft engines turning out 200 to 300 horsepower were easily found and adapted, and the wartime luxury of steel armor was sometimes used to protect cargo — and crew — from Coast Guard projectiles. Generally, the boats were cheap and astonishingly fast — the rummies would tell you 40 knots — and the profits were such that a couple of good runs would easily pay for the boat and the loss of one of them put no great strain on the trade.

As has been mentioned, the use of radio was not lost on the more sophisticated rum operations. Their own direction finders were useful in locating the cruising cutters, and they developed numerous clandestine radio stations complete with codes and codebreakers.

It was not unheard of for the Coast Guard to receive "distress" calls, send their cutters to the scene where they would find no source. Meanwhile, the

rummies would run their cargoes to shore — taking advantage of the hoax and the gap created.

The longer distances now involved in reaching the mother ships resulted in a new tactic among the runners. Usually at night the mother ship would run in as far as she dared, to a prearranged point within the 12-mile limit, and rendezvous with the contact boats. This was risky and obviously required good communications — again radio helped them pull it off.

Various other ruses were in the rummy repertoire. At times, several runners were sent in at once, with large loads on the faster boats and a token case on a slower,

Their own direction finders were useful in locating the cruising cutters ... and they developed numerous clandestine radio stations

expendable boat. The latter would act as decoy for the local cutter and the important boats might escape capture. This could be effective, as the cutter crew would have no way of determining the size loads in these vessels.

The 30 to 34-knot destroyers were a problem which required special tactics by the rum runners. The favorite move used in a high speed chase — where the big vessel had the advantage — was liberal use of a smoke screen and a sudden reversal in direction. By the time the trick was known and the big four-stacker came round with her helm hard over, the runner may have made good her escape. If shoal water was available the lighter draft had yet another advantage over larger cutters.

It should be kept in mind that there was a distinction in the Coast Guard vessels and their methods of operation. The larger cutters and destroyers were used for off-shore work. Individual mother ships would be picketed continually, usually

with the cutter maintaining a 10-knot circle around her, preventing contact with boats from shore. At the same time, the inshore patrol boats screened the coast for contact boats looking for opportunity to make their runs. The faster, smaller, 38-footers were designed for this work, and liberal use was made of fast contact boats which had been seized and brought into the Coast Guard for just such work.

Given these factors, the Rum War in the last half of the decade took a decided turn: big profits and stiff opposition brought higher levels of danger and increased possibilities of violence. The new aggressiveness of the Coast Guard was not long in coming.

In May, 1925 the Great Offensive began: a "concentrated, determined drive against the rum fleet lying off our coast north of the Delaware Capes." This operation involved concentrating forces off New York and Block Island and every available vessel was called up: including every first class cutter on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts — except two on Ice Patrol — as well as the Mojave from Alaskan waters.

According to Commandant Billard's report, virtually all 50 vessels of the rum fleet were dispersed, most returning to Canadian ports. The offensive continued at least into August, but was beginning to wear as the cutters reached their limits and began to come in for maintenance and overhaul. Intelligence of such quickly filtered back to the waiting rummies who were quick to take advantage and run another load.

The operation was a single success, though it stretched the service's resources to the limit. The salient lesson learned, according to Commandant Billard, was the need for "more major ships."

The mother vessels had taken to operations at such distances from shore that the smaller cutters with limited fuel supplies were unable to maintain their picketing duties. Consequently, he recommended obtaining major vessels which could "take care of the patrol boats off shore and supervise and direct them ..."

Besides more destroyers or cruising cutters for this purpose, he called for moderate speed vessels with a high endurance: specifically mentioning the 100-foot, 11-knot boats under construction at the time. Significantly, he stated that the service did

not — “need any more 75-foot patrol boats.”

Commandant Billard’s report is significant also in what was not said. Much has been made of the slowness of the Coast Guard vessels, particularly by the former rumrunners and the press. However, this report makes it plain that speed was not a high priority. The prime targets were the supply ships — there were fewer of them and they were not speedy vessels — therefore long range, seaworthy vessels with endurance were more valued than those with excessive speed.

Therefore, the highly visible, dramatic chases close to shore were activities of the second line of defense and of much less overall significance than the dreary, unspectacular picketing going on day and night over the horizon.

Whether at sea or inshore, individual seizures continued to be the stock in trade of the Rum War. They ranged from the routine, where the presence of a cutter and the force of law was sufficient to bring an offender to book, to those where violence came into play, or the complications of international law, or where surprising ingenuity on the part of runners or Coast Guardsmen was demonstrated.

In the Prohibition game, large cargoes usually called for more brazen methods than those usually employed by “traditional” smugglers. However, there were exceptions. Simple expedients such as loading a substantial layer of fish over top of the ‘real’ cargo were attempted a surprising number of times.

More enterprising runners resorted to falsifying their vessels’ holds. Several feet above the true bottom of the fisherman Marianne, for instance, a false deck was built with a concealed hatch. As the deck ran stem to engine, a considerable amount of illicit alcohol could be carried. Careful measurements revealed the discrepancy between the external size of the vessel and the depth within.

More ingenious was the bottom of the Alice seized on the Pacific coast: 22-foot compartments were built onto the outside of her hull, near the keel, and retrieval cords were attached to each case loaded and stuffed into the closed compartments. At her destination, a sufficiently long pike was all that was necessary to fish the cargo out of these hideaways.

Finally, brazenness was turned on its head and vessels considered patently useless for rumrunning were employed. The lowly barge, for instance, seemed the least likely choice for “running” contraband, but at least three were known to make contact with the Jersey rum fleet on their regular runs from Maine to Newport News. In another variety of this, a barge tug, the Lorraine Rita, was brought in on suspicion by CG-183 and found to have over 3,000 cases stashed on board.

A few strategems were not unknown among the Federal forces. Commander Philip H. Scott, for instance, commander of the Seminole, had taken the 8-knot tug

The sound of gunfire became a great deal more common in this era, and both Coast Guardsmen and civilians fell victim to deadly force.

Pacific, dressed himself in old rummy’s clothes, and cruised around talking to those he was about to seize. The ruse worked well, though only for the limited time it required for the true vocation of the tug to get around.

Lt. Comdr. J.E. Whitbeck, of the destroyer Ericsson, on picket duty, discovered a way to prevent his victim from dousing her lights and eluding him. He simply hailed her captain with the information that he intended his crew to practice night machine gun drill, so “keep your lights on, so we won’t accidentally hit you.” The drill was somehow postponed until the rummy killed her lights and started engines — when a few bursts from the gun on the flying bridge flew dangerously near, and the rummy suddenly lit up and became docile again.

Probably the most notable incident from which international complications resulted was that of the schooner I’m Alone, of Nova Scotia, a vessel built for the

rum trade and capable of handling 2,800 cases of liquor. She had successfully plied this trade for over four years when she appeared off the Texas coast and was picketed by the cutter Wolcott in the spring of 1929. Boatswain Frank Paul marked her at 10.8 miles from shore and signalled her to heave to. Several blanks were fired and this brought the vessel to a stop.

Captain Randall of the schooner allowed the Boatswain on board, there was a discussion, but when he returned, the I’m Alone continued on her way. The chase resumed and shots were fired into her rigging. On the second morning, some two hundred miles south of the U.S., the cutter Dexter came up to assist and proceeded to fire into the runner, sinking the vessel. One of her crew was drowned.

Repercussions were heard immediately from Canada, Britain, and France — the drowned seaman was French. The initial complaint was that of the position of the schooner at the point of contact. Her captain maintained she was only a 7-knot vessel and she was anchored about 15 miles out in safe waters. The second infraction was that the pursuit was not a continuous one — that the intervention of the Dexter muddled this question.

Since the speed of the suspect vessel is a consideration in determining how far out it might be seized, it should be noted that I’m Alone managed to stay ahead of the Wolcott, a nearly new cutter capable of at least 11 knots, for over 24 hours. As the I’m Alone was sunk, the captain’s statement that her engines were in need of repair also could not be proven. In any case, the international round of diplomatic niceties did not cease until 1935 when the United States backed off and compensation was paid to the crew of the schooner.

It is interesting to note that even the Canadian Minister admitted the vessel had been “endeavoring” to smuggle liquor into the U.S. for years prior to her demise. Therefore, regardless of the brouhaha which resulted, the trade was short one more rum ship due to the persistence of Boatswain Paul.

The sound of gunfire became a great deal more common in this era, and both Coast Guardsmen and civilians fell victim to deadly force. One official report estimated some 200 civilians were killed in Prohibition enforcement activities — about

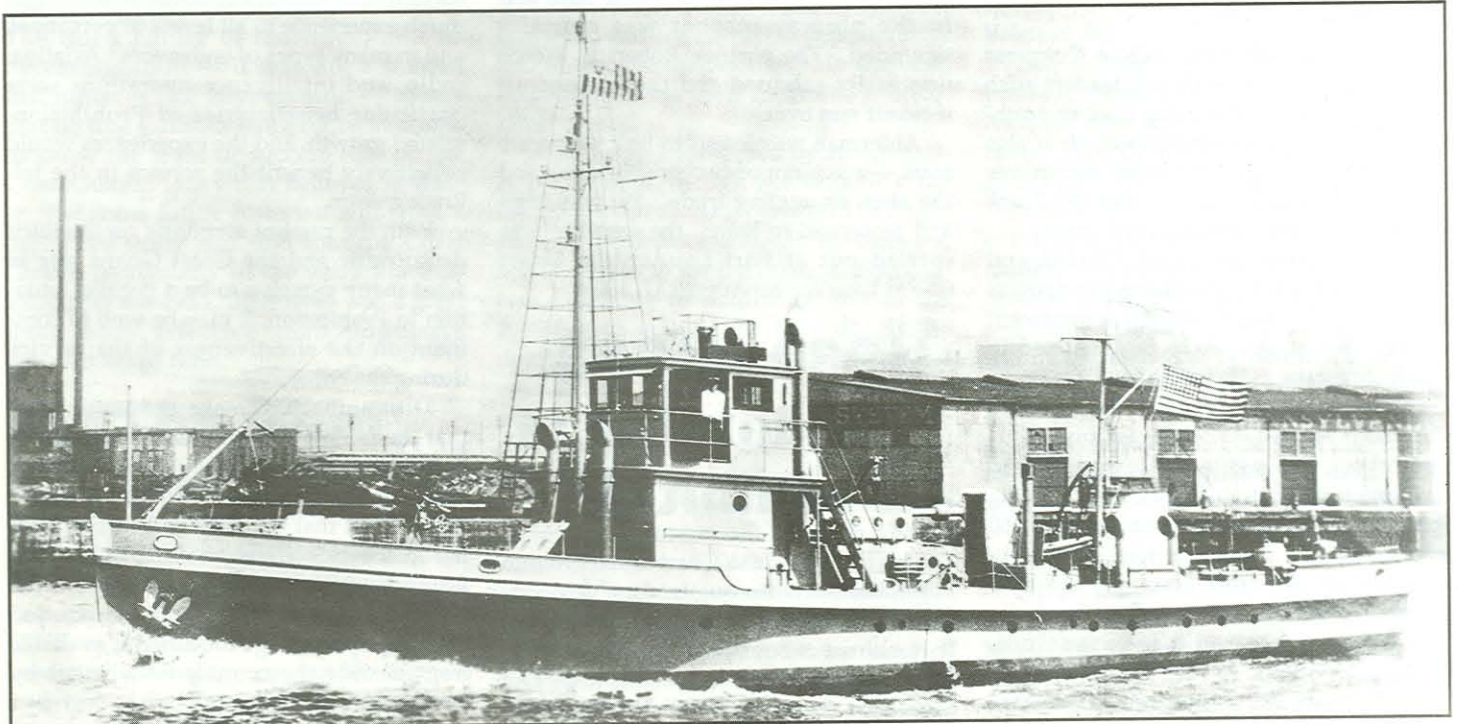


(top) The last vessels added during Prohibition were the 165-foot cutters, such as the *Thetis*. At 12 knots they had a cruising radius of 6,000 miles.
(right) Contact boat alongside schooner *Kathrine* off New Jersey. Note covered cargo on deck and automobile type engine, probably 6-cylinder, in the motorboat.





(left) Drug bust, 1920s style. Coast Guardsmen search contraband runner for drugs. Smuggling of alcohol was not the only illicit trade during the era. (below) The Chance-Vought UO-1 was also part of the Coast Guard air build up. These seaplanes cruised at 90 mph and less than 12,000 feet. (bottom) Eleven 100-foot patrol boats were added to the inventory after mid-1925. These were 11-knot boats for off shore picketing duty. This is the Petrel, built at Cleveland.



twenty per year. These figures were not broken down to show the casualties in the seaside theater of the war, but three of them resulted from the *Black Duck* incident of 1929. *Black Duck* was a fast 50-footer with aero engines and smoke screen device.

Boatswain Alexander C. Cornell was in the pilot house of CG-290 in the wee hours of the night when the 30 knot rumrunner rumbled out of the murk — piled high with liquor in sacks. He signalled with klaxon horn and searchlight, to no avail, and she passed within 75 feet of the CG-290's bow. As she drew away, Cornell ordered his machine gunner to fire. He did so, firing astern of the fleeing boat as per previous orders.

Twenty-one shots ripped away, but at that moment the *Black Duck* swerved to port and the shots went into her pilot house. She disappeared into the night but a short time later pulled alongside the cutter: Two of the crew were dead and a third dying. A fourth was wounded in the hand. After taking the wounded in for medical attention, the incident was reported by Cornell. The *Black Duck* was taken into the service as CG-808, and her speed became an asset in running down other vessels of her type.

The deaths on the *Black Duck* brought repercussions long afterwards. The incident itself was investigated by the Coast Guard and the actions of the Guardsmen were cleared. However, questions were raised about the veracity of the testimony and there were allegations that the crew of the cutter was specifically "out to get" the *Black Duck*.

There was testimony before Congress about the incident with wet leaders such as Fiorello LaGuardia using it as an example of the failure of Prohibition. It is also interesting to note that there was never any question as to the fact that the *Black Duck* was indeed carrying illicit liquor.

The incident involving CG-249 and motorboat V-13997, illustrates the dangers inherent in the Coast Guard's enforcement duties, but which rarely materialized in such ferocity. Boatswain Sidney C. Sanderlin and crew were en route to Bimini in August, 1927 when a suspicious motorboat was sighted. He approached and ordered her to stop, then fired to bring her to. On boarding, a search revealed 160 cases of liquor. Sanderlin seized the boat, arrested the two crew members, and took them on board the cutter. When Sanderlin went forward to radio for assistance, Horace Alderman, captain of the captured vessel, produced a gun and killed him with one shot.



The first aircraft built for the Coast Guard was this Loening OL-5, delivered in 1926. Aircraft were useful in many facets of Coast Guard work, not the least being the spotting of rum boats at sea.

He quickly wounded another Coast Guardsman and took control of the boat. After having the liquor transferred back to V-13997, Alderman ordered his partner to set fire to the cutter and threatened to kill the remainder of the crew or throw them overboard.

The vicious scheme faltered when the cutter failed to ignite and the engine of the V-13997 did not start. Taking advantage of the distraction, the Coast Guardsmen rushed Alderman and subdued him, and in the process another was mortally wounded. The partner, Robert E. Weech was easily subdued and the horrendous incident was over.

Alderman was found to be a desperate man — a veteran of two prison terms and the alien smuggling trade. He was tried and sentenced to hang: the sentence was carried out at Fort Lauderdale Coast Guard Base Ten on August 17, 1929.

1930 - 1933: The demise of Prohibition

The history of the Coast Guard role in Prohibition saw no outstanding developments in the last years of the law's sway. It remained a constant, sometimes niggling, battle of minor skirmishes. The numerical strength of the service contin-

ued to grow, though of course not in leaps comparable to 1924 and 1925. By 1932, it was becoming obvious that repeal of the 18th amendment was coming, and some of the steam began to run out of enforcement efforts. On December 5, 1933 the 21st amendment became the law of the land and Prohibition was dead.

The Coast Guard came out of the Prohibition era quite different. It had grown substantially, both in ships and personnel. The efforts expended had brought much experience to all levels of personnel, and in many types of endeavors. Aviation, radio, and intelligence operations were particular beneficiaries of Prohibition-related growth, and the experiences would collectively benefit the service in the following years.

With the present emphasis on the illicit drug traffic and the Coast Guard role in what many perceive to be a parallel situation to Prohibition, it may be well to comment on the effectiveness of the service during the era.

Most authorities make the assumption that the failure of Prohibition automatically indicates the defeat of the enforcement mechanism. In this regard it should be pointed out that the sources for illicit alcohol in the U.S. were across land borders, from domestic manufacture, and from the seaboard. Domestic production exceeded by a large percentage the amount available from outside the country — whether by land or sea routes.

Furthermore, of the imported liquor, in



Underwriter, an irritation to the enforcers of Prohibition, and example of the quick turnaround possible in overworked court systems. She was seized four times in one year, and each time quickly auctioned and returned to the rum trade.

1924 two-thirds came across from Canada, one-third from Rum Row. Therefore, the obvious continued supply of alcohol throughout Prohibition cannot be directly attributed to the Coast Guard. Additionally, it is well known that the majority of the high visibility gangsterism of the era was based on domestic beer production — not foreign liquor.

Unfortunately, it may never be possible to accurately determine the degree of success attained by the service in Prohibition. The illicit nature of the trade, and its decentralization — it was not a unified institution which kept records — means that no true statistics will ever be available to show the level of success had by the Coast Guard. This writer believes, however, that some future historian will write a definitive study and find that the Coast Guard, particularly in the years immediately after the 1925 “offensive” was a great deal more effective than popularly believed at the time.

“The Real McCoy”

Popularly, the Prohibition era brings to mind notorious characters such as Al Capone, “Legs” Diamond and others. “William S. McCoy”, on the other hand, is hardly a household name, but his story — and his name have become a part of Americana.

Captain McCoy was familiar figure along the Florida coast, having operated a motor boat service and a boat yard out of Jacksonville for many years before Prohibition began. The sea was in his blood: his father had — ironically it seems — been in the Union Navy in the Civil War, serving on the blockade of Southern coasts.

By 1921 McCoy had gained a reputation as a skilled yacht builder, having constructed vessels for the likes of Andrew Carnegie, and for all-round dependability and honesty in his dealings. He was also, according to his own memoirs, a teetotaler.

After being approached by an obviously prosperous, though not far above the law boat-owner to skipper a load of liquor from the Bahamas at a handsome daily fee, McCoy began to see the financial possibilities available to skilled sailors in the Prohibition economy. Accordingly, he determined to go with the very best, and entrained to Gloucester, Massachusetts to acquire one of the legendary and fast fishing schooners for his planned circumnavigation of the 18th amendment.

The *Henry L. Marshall* was available for an investment of \$20,000. She was a handsome Gloucester fisherman with knock-about rig and twin auxiliary engines for emergencies, and able to carry 3,000 cases of liquor — re-packed into burlap sacks or “burlaps” for ease of storage. She was 90 feet long and built of white oak — and all he could afford at the time.

But not for long ... Even before McCoy came to anchor in Nassau on her first voyage, a speedboat brought an entrepreneur with an offer: 1500 cases to Savannah at \$10 per case. In less than two weeks McCoy had recouped nearly his vessel’s purchase price.

Amazed at the ease in which this astonishing sum was made, McCoy soon had a tidy sum and a growing circle of contacts, both in Nassau and in New York. In the latter city, he was approached by a member of a gangster-syndicate with a lucrative offer — if he could “import” 5,000 cases at a crack.

The skipper lost no time in returning to Gloucester — this time to purchase the *Arethusa*, a vessel he considered the finest of the Gloucester-built fishing schooners. And she was on sale — literally. Her owners were bankrupt and McCoy got her for \$21,000 — she had been appraised at twice that. He paid cash.

Rather than selling the *Henry L. Marshall*, McCoy hired her out — his first mistake. He attempted to allay misgivings about the quality of the ship’s captain and crew by insisting his schooner be kept no less than 20 miles from the Jersey shore. Captain and crew got drunk and she drifted into the waiting arms of the Coast Guard Cutter Seneca — or at least that was McCoy’s version of the story. The more official version had it that she was running under auxiliary engines while the crew was pitching liquor overboard double-quick. Though seized four miles out, the act was upheld on the grounds of a “conspiracy” to violate Customs laws and the Volstead Act.

Late in July of the same year, McCoy himself hove to off Long Island in *Arethusa*, now renamed *Tomoka*, with 5,000 cases, 2,000 of which were consigned to gangster backers. The remainder was “first come, first serve’ to all who could come alongside with the right color money. For a week *Tomoka* hovered, and McCoy cleared \$50,000 for his trouble.

McCoy claimed to be the originator of Rum Row: that line of floating bars and liquor “wholesalers” seen off major market cities in the early days of Prohibition — just outside the three mile limit and therefore a mocking offense to the dries. The rows would persist until international law was bent to scatter the fleet beyond 12 miles from shore.

After the seizure of the *Henry L. Marshall*, Captain McCoy returned to Nassau and concentrated on enlarging his fleet — and avoiding American arrest. When he finally returned in *Tomoka* in late 1922, his name was only one of many on



Rum Schooner, former fisherman, *Henry L. Marshall*, McCoy's first vessel in the bootlegging business. She was under another skipper when captured in 1921. McCoy saw the possibility of quick money in supplying "high grade" liquor to eager, high paying customers.

The Real McCoy. A former yacht builder from Jacksonville, Florida, William S. McCoy. He disregarded the illegality of the trade.

the row off Fire Island. The way McCoy told it, he fell in with a friend selling "cheap rye from Cuba" who agreed to steer customers in search of quality stuff to McCoy, who had a reputation for only selling the best: "the real McCoy." The phrase put this rumrunner in the language.

Once his reputation was reestablished, Captain McCoy saw his profits soar and in 1923 he was bringing in \$100,000 per voyage, with two vessels, the *Tomoka* and Gardner. His days were not all to be spent in high rolling cash, however.

As "founder" of rum row, and with an indictment against him outstanding in connection with the *Henry L. Marshall*, McCoy was certainly a sought-after catch for the enforcers of the Volstead act. On November 24, 1923 off Seabright, New Jersey, it happened: *Tomoka* was boarded and ordered to follow the cutter Seneca into port.

When a passenger liner passed between the two vessels, McCoy attempted a run to sea - but was not fast enough to outrun the cutter's gun. Though outside the 3-mile limit at the time, the seizure was upheld and two years later *Tomoka* was auctioned off.

The same year saw McCoy incarcerated for nine months for rum running. He was released on Christmas Eve, 1925. Despite legal fees and the loss of two of his ships his illegal trade had been incredibly profitable. For over a year he had cleared \$100,000 a month — a total sufficient to retire on. And he did.

The 'Six-Bitters' and the '400' boats

The largest single element in the Coast Guard expansion program of the mid-1920s was the construction of 203 75-foot patrol boats — nicknamed 'six-bitters' by the service. These sturdy vessels became the mainstay of the anti-liquor war resulting from the Prohibition amendment to the Constitution, and were far more numerous than any other class in the '20s and '30s.

These vessels were intended for off-shore work. They were to picket the rum vessels beyond the 12-mile limit and pre-

vent the contact vessels from obtaining their loads of liquor. In practice, such duties meant remaining 20 to 30 miles at sea for several days at a time. These mother ships were not built for speed. Consequently, the priorities in the design and construction of the 75-footers were "seaworthiness, habitability, and speed" — with emphasis on the first two qualities. The construction program itself emphasized standardization, economy, and efficiency.

The design of these vessels emanated in most aspects — layout, machinery, operational features, weight - from the Coast Guard's Superintendent of Construction and Repair office. The second phase of the design, the final lines and plans, were prepared by John Trumpy, a naval architect of the Mathis Yacht Building Company. The dimensions were: length, overall: 74' 11" (74'1" between perpendiculars); beam: 13' 7 1/2"; draft: 3' 9"; displacement: 37.5 tons.

The construction of the vessels was quite substantial, ranging from 5 3/4" keel to 1 3/8" planking. The frames and keel were white oak and the planking and bulwarks fir or yellow pine. Fir was used on



Crew of CG 158 looks over stash of illegal liquor which they had recently seized. Note that the liquor is packaged in burlap sacks. This was done to facilitate the loading and unloading by the rum runners. The single shot six-pounder just forward of the bridge was the principal weapon mounted on the "six bitters."

the vessels constructed on the west coast.

Two six-cylinder gasoline engines powered the vessels and drove twin screws. Each developed 200 h.p. at 1200 rpm and the designed speed was 17 – 18 statute miles per hour. In the interests of standardization, all engines were built by the Sterling Engine Company of Buffalo, New York, at \$4,129 each.

They were flush decked, with pilot house and two trunk cabins. One of the latter sheltered the engine spaces, the other was over crew accommodations. They were designed for a crew of eight men, and a week at sea without return to base.

Actual construction of the vessels was a remarkable exercise in cooperation between the Coast Guard and the 17 boat builders eventually selected for the contracts. Prior to the completion of the final design, a conference of all interested builders was held to discuss the technical details of the plans, with an eye towards formulating specifications in line with the general practice of the day.

In the end each contractor built ten or fifteen vessels, depending on their capacity. There were supplemental contracts

totalling 25 vessels made to Mathis Yacht Company and Gibbs Gas Engine Company, and three of the vessels were built at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Prices ranged from \$18,675 to \$26,900 each — not including engines.

Twenty-five boats were built on the West Coast, and an equal number on the Great Lakes. The Atlantic "bias" was a source of complaint among the contractors, but was in line with the policy of building the vessels close to their eventual stations. In fact, all twenty-five Pacific-built vessels remained there.

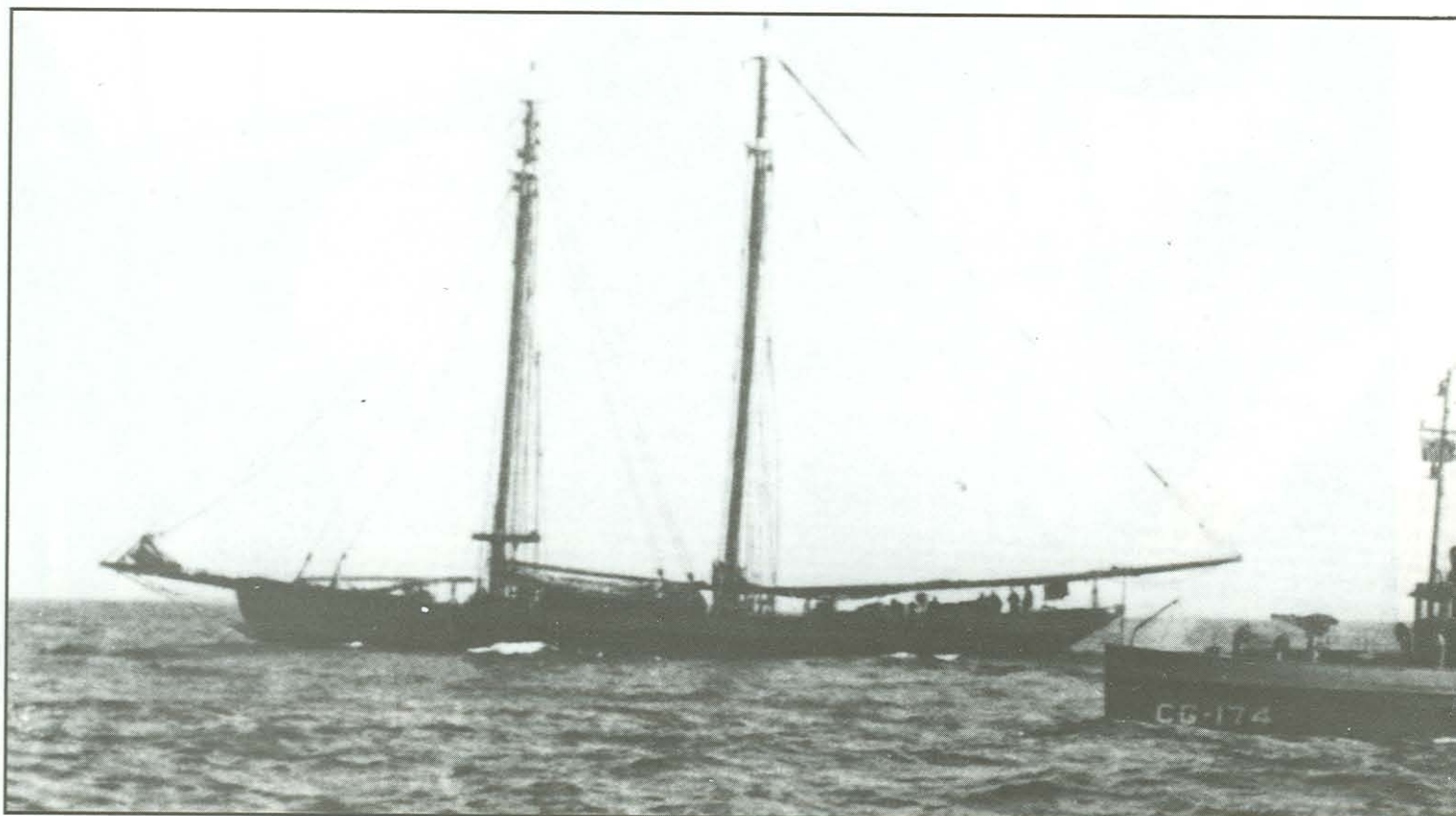
The pre-planning and standardization paid off in the expediency of the boats' construction. The final plans were available in April, 1924, and the first of the class — CG-100 — was commissioned October 21, 1924. CG-302, the last completed, was commissioned July 18, 1925. An average of five were completed each week.

In service, the speed of the vessels fell somewhat short of expectations — about 15.7 statute miles per hour. However, they proved to be exceedingly hardy ships. In January, 1925, CG-125 was abandoned in a storm some 40 miles east of Boston lightship. Five days later, she was picked up

by the cutter *Acushnet*. The vessel was reported "in apparently good condition. There was some water in the engine room space and after part of crew's space about up to floor boards. All other compartments were dry ... The fact that the CG 175 rode through two gales before it was picked up and then towed through two intense gales by the *Acushnet* without any damage, speaks well for the sturdy construction of these boats." So read the salvaging officer's report.

The vessels continued to be useful long after Prohibition ended. Harbor patrols, regatta work, assistance, and other duties were assigned to them after Prohibition ended. Forty-six were turned over to the Navy in 1934, and about fourteen went to other government agencies. Many of the navy six-bitters remained in service through World War II, and the last one in Coast Guard service was sold in 1946. Jane's Fighting Ships of 1955 listed six still in use in Central American navies. Forty-two were listed in the 1955 edition of Merchant Vessels of the U.S., being used in various functions — from private yachts to oceanographic research vessels.

In 1930, an improved, speedier, varia-



Two "six bitters" stop a rum runner on the high seas. The Coast Guard constructed over 200 of these sturdy craft. This was

tion of the six-bitter was designed. It was a 78-foot patrol cutter. Six of these were built and were numbered, beginning with CG-400, thus the '400' boat nickname. The hull design was visually similar to the earlier class, but one of the trunk cabins was eliminated. A single mast abaft the wheelhouse replaced the two present on the six-bitters.

Materials used in their construction were similar, though the new vessels incorporated four galvanized iron watertight bulkheads. As with the 75-footers, armament was a one-pounder mounted forward, and a .30 caliber machine gun.

The major improvement was in the power plant. Two eight-cylinder Sterling Viking II engines were used, each developing over 500 h.p. These, as well as finer lines enabled them to reach 24 statute miles per hour.

After Prohibition ended, all six were transferred to Hawaii to serve out their years in the service. The boats were under Navy jurisdiction during World War II, though their comparatively short range prevented their extensive use in convoy

work. All were sold out immediately after the war.

Ensign Duke plays a hunch

It was the third of July, 1927 and Ensign Charles L. Duke was following his instincts. More precisely: there was a shadowy steamer running in the darkness of New York's Upper Bay — passing behind a well-lit liner in Quarantine and proceeding rather uncertainly up the Narrows. Duke, a two-year veteran in the Coast Guard, was suspicious: It was the night before a holiday and a prime time to lay in fresh "off the boat" party gin.

The Ensign, with two crewmen and a total offensive armament of five bullets in his service revolver, gave chase. At over 20 knots, in CG-2327, a 38-foot picket boat, they soon closed and identified the suspect as the *Economy* — a run-down rust bucket of European registry: a profile which further fueled Duke's inclinations that she was up to no good.

Fighting a heavy chop and drenching spray, Duke drew alongside and hailed her to heave to. The only reply was a refusal and she showed no sign of slackening her pace. Not to be easily deterred, Duke fired two rounds for emphasis, then maneuvered to close with the vessel, despite maintaining a speed which put his stem into every sea and quickly soaked his little crew.

Knowing the precarious situation of his vessel and the imminent danger of being swamped or colliding with the fleeing freighter, Ensign Duke gambled: he had his helmsman bring the pitching, wallowing picket boat within arm's length of the quarry reached out, grabbed her rail and pulled himself on board. He carried his revolver — now with three bullets — and a flashlight.

Feeling his way forward on the darkened freighter, Duke encountered a burly sailor blocking his path. The butt end of his pistol displaced this obstacle, and he continued to the wheelhouse where he found six men, including the vessel's master.



the largest class of cutters built by the Coast Guard until the advent of World War II.

These odds, given the ensign's obvious audacity, meant only that the element of surprise was on his side, and this was sufficient. Pushing his revolver into the side of the master, Duke demanded the vessel be stopped, then brought to anchor at Bedloe's Island where Prohibition agents could board and inspect — and, incidentally, give Ensign Duke a badly needed back-up. When the skipper proved reluctant, despite the proddings of Duke's gunpoint, the ensign again took matters in hand by spinning the untended ship's wheel and grounding her in 10 feet of water on Robbins Reef. Though the odds were unfavorable, he had both "captured" the ship and prevented her reaching the Jersey shore where the crew might escape.

Of course, the Ensign was still on board an alien vessel with an unknown number of presumably hostile miscreants. Duke quickly hailed his two crewmen on CG-2327 and sent them to Bedloe's Island for assistance. By the time help was sent, it was after 12:30 AM. The boarding had taken place somewhat after 9:00 PM and Duke was still alone on the Economy. In

fact it was 2 AM when the cutter *Calumet* approached — and she could not close because of the shallow water. CG-122 then grounded in the mud and CG-143 nearly met the same fate. It was 6 AM when friendly faces relieved Ensign Duke on board the seized vessel.

Ensign Duke's hunch had paid off. Investigation revealed 3,000 drums of alcohol, each with fifty gallons, valued at \$50,000 "on the street". The vessel was in actuality the 793-ton *Greypoint* from Antwerp and Halifax: her name had been changed en route.

In all Duke had captured 22 men and led "perhaps the most heroic" exploit in the rum war. Ensign Duke explained with these words: "I had a hunch that the rum-runner might try to slip by over the holiday weekend. This steamer had the rum-runner look. You'd think they would be wise and paint their boats, but they pick out the worst old tubs for their rum ships. I can tell one almost every time."

Books on the Prohibition Era

Probably the most familiar and popular

book on the 1920s is Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday*: an entertaining book about this entertainment oriented era. On Prohibition itself, there is *The Long Thirst*, by Thomas M. Coffey, and Herbert Asbury's *The Great Illusion* — among others. The former follows stories of individuals significant in the era, including Captain Bill McCoy. McCoy's biography is *The Real McCoy*, by Frederick F. Van De Water.

The Coast Guard has published *Rum War at Sea*, by retired Commander Malcolm F. Willoughby, dealing strictly with the service during the era. This is the only serious, systematic attempt to deal with the Coast Guard role in enforcement and it is extremely useful and well done.

Also, writers on the era tend to quickly go astray on the general subject — always popular — of gangsterism in the twenties. Other books on the subject include: *The Black Ships: Rumrunners of Prohibition*, by Everett S. Allen and *Rum Row* by Robert Carse and *Smugglers of Spirits* by Harold Waters.

