

Teacher's Resource  
for  
U.S.  
Coast Guard History



The United States Coast Guard is the nation's oldest maritime service. Its history is also very complex because it is a combination of five different agencies. These agencies, the Revenue Cutter Service, the Lighthouse Service, the Steamboat Inspection Service, the Bureau of Navigation, and the Life-Saving Service, were originally independent. The problem was that they often had overlapping authorities. These agencies were shuffled around the government and often received new names. This continued until they were finally united as the Coast Guard. The multiple missions and responsibilities of today's Coast Guard, therefore, stem from the diverse heritage and achievements of these agencies.

This packet is intended to furnish teachers with the basic information about the United States Coast Guard and its multi-faceted and distinguished history. Given that this resource is intended for use at several different grade levels, it is necessary for each teacher to determine which material is appropriate for that grade level.

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## AIDS TO NAVIGATION

### What is a lighthouse?

It is a tower, located at an important or dangerous place, with a bright light at the top. Its main purpose is to serve as a navigational aid warning ships and boats of dangerous areas. It is like a traffic sign on the sea.

Although we often think of a lighthouse as a tall, white conical tower, there are many variations of design. Depending on its location, it might be tall (where the land is flat) or short and squat (where there is a high cliff or rocky coast). It could be square, octagonal (with eight sides), conical (like an ice cream cone upside down), cylindrical (like a very fat pipe), or even like a skeleton.



**Tall, conical:  
Pensacola, FL**



**Screwpile:  
Thomas Point, MD**



**Round caisson/sparkplug:  
Duxbury, MA**

Lighthouses also come in different shapes and sizes...



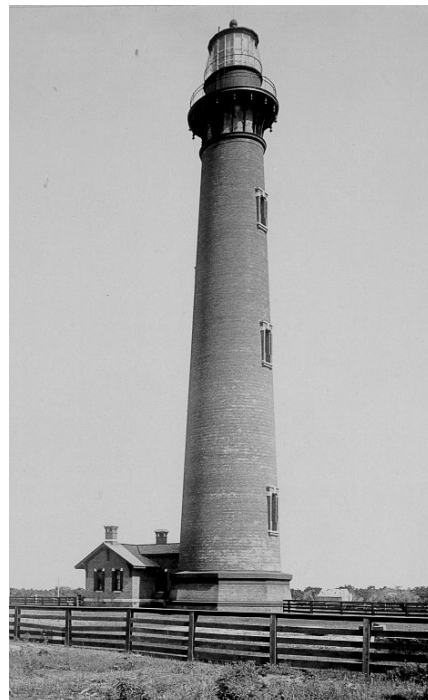
**Octagonal: Sandy Hook , NJ**



**Cylindrical: Point Arena, CA**



**Skeletal: Boca Grande , FL**



**Conical: Currituck , NC**



**Square: Big Bay, MI**

You might find the lighthouse standing alone, attached to the building where the lighthouse keeper lives, or connected to the keeper's quarters by an enclosed walkway. Sometimes the lantern room is built into the roof of the keeper's house.

When the lighthouses were built, they were constructed with materials that were most readily available. They were designed to fit the local geographic and climatic conditions. Some are made of stone; others brick, concrete, wood, steel, cast-iron, and even tabby (a mixture of shells, lime, sand and water). So you can see that each lighthouse is very unique.

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## Early Lighthouses and the U.S. Lighthouse Service

One of the first acts of the federal government was to provide for aids to navigation. On 7 August 1789 the First Congress federalized the lighthouses built by the colonies and appropriated funds for lighthouses, beacons, and buoys. Lighthouses generally reflect the existing technology of the time they were built. Each is also unique because their specific sites required special considerations.

The earliest Colonial and Federal lighthouses were built of stone and had walls up to seven feet thick. Later advances allowed even taller structures made of brick. Screw-pile structures, reinforced concrete towers, steel towers, and caisson structures all added to the rich and unique architecture. There have been more than 1,000 lighthouses built and they provided the main guidance to mariners into the harbors of the United States. For the first five decades there existed little bureaucracy and no tenders. Only the lone keepers kept the lights burning. Lighthouse administration bounced from the Treasury Department to the Commerce Department until transferred to the Coast Guard in 1939.

While many of the lighthouses have changed little since their completion, the light sources have continually evolved. Some of the earliest optics were merely multiple-wicked oil lamps with reflectors to concentrate the light. The French physicist Augustin Fresnel revolutionized lighthouse optics by inventing a lens with annular rings, reflectors, and reflecting prisms that surround a single lamp. These lenses proved so effective that many are still in use today guiding maritime traffic.

Sound has also been used to guide ships. In colonial times keepers fired cannons to warn ships in the fog. Improvements followed. A fog bell first went into use in 1852. This was followed by a mechanical striking bell in 1869, a fog trumpet in 1872, and an air siren in 1887.

The men and women of the Lighthouse Service, who frequently performed their duty in extreme hardship, were among the most dedicated civil servants. Abbie Burgess served 38 years at the Matinicus Rock and White Head Light Stations in Maine. She dutifully served while also caring for her family. Keepers were also cited for saving lives in shipwrecks. Marcus Hanna, the keeper of the Cape Elizabeth Light, is the only man to have won the Medal of Honor and the Gold Lifesaving Medal. Other keepers also performed noteworthy acts. When Indians attacked the Cape Florida Lighthouse and set it on fire, the keeper escaped after throwing a keg of gunpowder down the burning tower. Other keepers died on duty. A hurricane in 1906 destroyed twenty-three lights along the Gulf Coast. The keepers at Horn Island and Sand Island were killed. A tsunami in Alaska killed the crew of the Scotch Cap Lighthouse in 1946.

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## Ida Lewis (1842-1911)



Ida Lewis



Ida Lewis Conducting the 1869 Rescue

Ida Walley Zorada Lewis served as the keeper of the Lime Rock (RI) Lighthouse for thirty-nine years. In that time she was credited with saving 18 lives, but may have saved as many as 24. As the oldest of four children she rowed her brothers and sisters to the mainland so they could attend school. As a result, she became a skilled boat handler. This served her well in making her many rescues. She made her first rescue at age 15 and began tending the light the following year when her father, Hosea Lewis, became ill. Though she did not receive an official appointment as a keeper until her father's death in 1872, she faithfully performed the keeper's duties while also caring for her father. Word of her rescues spread and she was featured on the cover of *Harper's Weekly* magazine in 1869. She became famous throughout the nation and was even visited by President Ulysses S. Grant. She made her final rescue at the age of 64 when she pulled a drowning woman out of the harbor. She died of a stroke in 1911. In honor of her many years of faithful service, Ida Lewis received unprecedented recognition in the years following her death. First the Rhode Island legislature voted to re-name Lime Rock, Ida Lewis Rock. The U.S. Lighthouse Service did likewise re-naming the lighthouse in her honor.

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## LIGHTSHIPS

Lightships guided mariners in locations where lighthouses could not be built. There have been over 120 lightship stations along the coast of the United States. The Lighthouse Service placed the first lightship in Chesapeake Bay in 1820. Hundreds of lightships have served along the coasts and exposed anchorages. The vessels carried similar aids to navigation as lighthouses and lasted until 1983 when the Nantucket Lightship was replaced by a large navigational buoy.



**Lightship 117 rammed by RMS *Olympic***

Storms and ships have taken their toll on lightships. Hurricanes have sunk and blown many lightships from their stations. Vessels have collided with and sunk these floating aids. One of the deadliest collisions occurred on 16 May 1934. The 45,000-ton passenger liner RMS *Olympic*, sister of RMS *Titanic*, struck and sank the *Nantucket Shoals Lightship* (No. 117). En route to New York in a fog, *Olympic* struck lightship and drove it to the bottom. Seven of the eleven crewmen were lost.

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## Law Enforcement

Throughout its history the Coast Guard has had three primary law enforcement missions. These were ensuring that the tariffs (import taxes) were not avoided, protecting shipping from pirates, and intercepting illegal cargoes (contraband). In 1789 the First Congress had an urgent need for money. Trade revenue had to be the Treasury's main source of income if the United States was to survive. Imposing these taxes, however, was a bold act. Import taxes had been a primary cause of the American Revolution. Smuggling had also been a patriotic duty during the war and seamen who violated British trade laws and outran British warships were admired. A new respect for tariffs was needed.

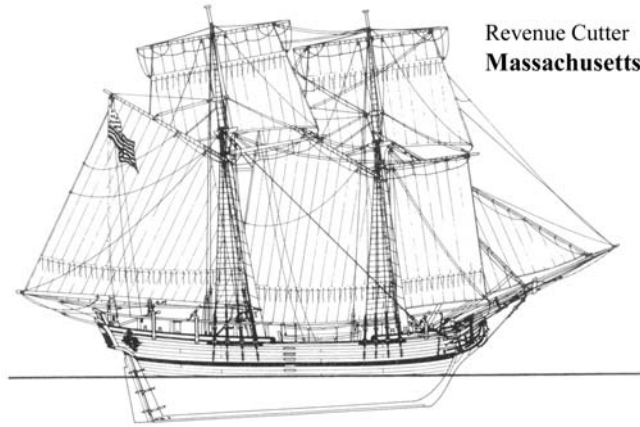
Congress, guided by Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, created a fleet of ten cutters to enforce the tariff laws. The new maritime service, later known as the Revenue Cutter Service, was thrifty and acted for the good of the public. The "system of cutters" collected money and cost little to operate. Seven of the ten cutters were built for the allotted \$1,000 each. Hamilton insisted that the vessels "be confined to the smallest dimensions...consistent with safety.... During the cutters' first ten years of service, the imports and exports of the nation rose from \$52 million to \$205 million. Hamilton also demanded that the officers be servants of the people. He wrote that, "They [the officers] will always keep in mind that their Countrymen are Freeman & as such are impatient of everything that bears that least mark of a domineering Spirit."

National tariffs did not go unchallenged. South Carolina tried to nullify the tariff laws in 1832. President Andrew Jackson ordered five cutters to Charleston Harbor continue to collect tariffs and support the efforts of the federal customs officials. In doing this, the cutters upheld the federal government's legal authority over the states. This was an important event in American history and the revenue cutters played a vital part. During the early 1800s protecting commerce also meant suppressing piracy. In 1819 the cutters *Alabama* and *Louisiana* engaged and captured the pirate ship, *Bravo*, commanded by Jean LaFarge. These same two cutters later destroyed the pirate base at Patterson's Town on Breton Island (LA). *Louisiana* captured five pirate vessels in 1822. The ship also cooperated with the Royal Navy and US Navy in sweeping pirates from the Caribbean.

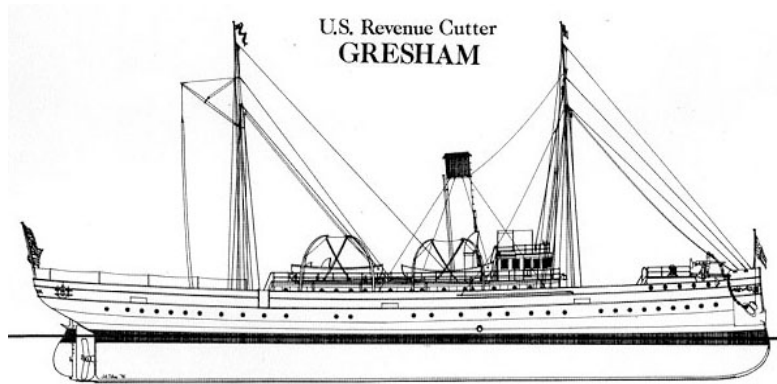
## **What is a cutter?**

The first use of the term "cutter" referred to the "small single-masted, sharp-built broad" vessels which commonly navigated in the English Channel . Though the cutter's mast was generally set further back, they were rigged just like sloops (another class of small sailing vessel), but with larger sails. These propelled them faster through the water. It was because of this ability to sail faster that they came to be known as "cutters." The early revenue collecting vessels in Britain were of this type and hence, the name came to refer to revenue ships in general. With the development of steam power, sails were no longer needed to propel ships. Even after the removal of sails, however, the term "cutter" still referred to the ships of the revenue service. The Coast Guard still uses the term today. It refers to any Coast Guard vessel over 65 feet in length. Anything less than 65 feet is classified as a boat.

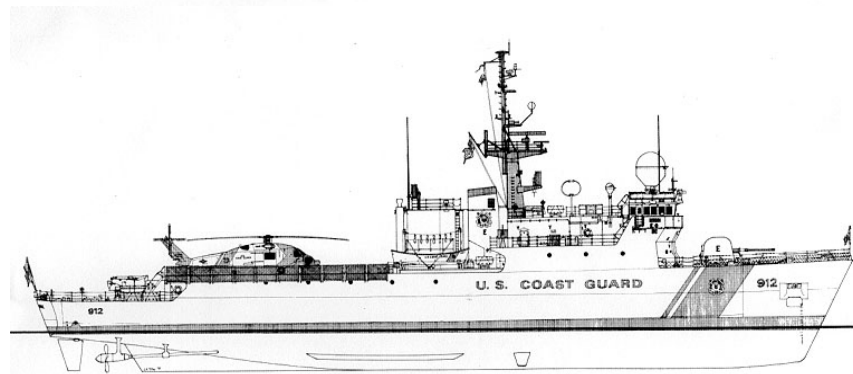




Revenue Cutter  
Massachusetts



U.S. Revenue Cutter  
GRESHAM



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter  
LEGARE

## Cutters through the years

Intercepting contraband has been the Coast Guard's most controversial commerce protection responsibility. In 1794 cutters were ordered to prevent the importation of new slaves from Africa. By the time of the Civil War in 1861, revenue cutters had captured many slave ships and freed almost 500 slaves. The revenue cutters, however, also enforced unpopular laws like President Jefferson's embargo that required the cutters to close all ports in the nation in 1808.

## Prohibition

Prohibition in the 1920s was another very unpopular law. The Volstead Act made it illegal to make or import alcohol. The Coast Guard (the Revenue Cutter Service and Life-Saving Service were combined to form the US Coast Guard in 1915) were required to enforce the law. The result was a "Rum War at Sea" as Coast Guard vessels tried to prevent ships from smuggling illegal alcohol into the country. During the early days of Prohibition, the Coast Guard was handicapped by a lack of vessels, particularly fast ones. By 1924 fleets of rum-running craft from broken-down fisherman to freighters hovered off the coasts of the United States and engaged in the illegal trade.

## Charles L. Duke

Ensign Charles L. Duke undertook one of the greatest feats in the history of Coast Guard law enforcement. On the night of 3 July 1927, he and two men were patrolling New York Harbor on board the 36-foot picket boat, CG-2327. Duke noticed a small, dimly lit steamer moving through the harbor under the cover of darkness. She had the name *Economy* painted on her stern, but she was really the rumrunner, *Greypoint*. Duke maneuvered CG-2327 alongside the ship and ordered her to stop. The master refused. Duke then fired two warning shots from his revolver, yet the freighter pressed on. As CG-2327 drew close to the ship, Duke grabbed the freighter's rail and swung onto the ship.





**Ensign Charles L. Duke Ensign Duke boarding *Greypoint***

Having told the men on CG-2327, "If I'm not out of that pilot house in two minutes you turn the machine gun on them," Duke moved to the deckhouse armed with a flashlight and a revolver with only three rounds. Stopped by a seaman, Duke pushed him aside and moved on to the pilot house. Storming in, he ordered the captain to reverse the engines. When the captain refused, Duke took the wheel and grounded the ship on Robbins Reef. Four hours later, he was relieved and at that time, he turned over the 22 men and \$1 million dollars of illegal alcohol that he had captured. Senior Coast Guard officers hailed Ensign Duke's almost single-handed feat as the most heroic exploit in the effort to stop the rumrunners.

When the repeal of Prohibition (5 December 1933) took the profit from running liquor, smuggling declined, but did not cease. Small boats continued to run guns to Central American countries and return with illegal drugs before World War II. The dropping of narcotics in waterproof containers by incoming vessels became so widespread that Coast Guard patrol boats were assigned to meet these ships far out at sea and trail them right into their docks.

## After Prohibition

Intercepting contraband had been the Coast Guard's prime mission prior to World War II. This responsibility had been magnified by Prohibition, (1920-1933), and later in that decade by the prelude of World War II. Following the war, the Coast Guard's prime responsibility shifted largely to safety at sea and aiding navigation.

In the early 1960s, law enforcement once again assumed increased significance. In 1961, two years after Fidel Castro took power in Cuba, the Coast Guard established patrols to aid refugees. Coast Guard vessels also enforced neutrality by interdicting the illegal transportation of men and arms. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, Coast Guard cutters also assisted the US Navy's quarantine of the island. The Coast Guard continues to patrol the waters off the southeastern US. With the mass migration of refugees from places like Cuba and Haiti US Coast Guard vessels work to uphold the country's immigration laws. The early 1970s also saw the re-emergence of an old law enforcement mission, the interdiction of illegal drugs. The "war on drugs " has become one of the Coast Guard's foremost missions. Using aircraft and ships, the Coast Guard works every day to prevent the illegal importation of drugs. As a result the service has boarded thousands of vessels, made thousands of arrests, and seized billions of dollars in illegal cargoes.

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## Military Readiness

The Coast Guard, through its forefathers, has fought in almost every war since the Constitution was ratified in 1789. Following the War of Independence (1776-83), the Continental Navy was disbanded and from 1790 until 1798, when the United States Navy was created, the revenue cutters were the only national maritime service. The acts establishing the Navy also empowered the President to use the revenue cutters to supplement the fleet. Laws later clarified this relationship between the Coast Guard and the Navy.

### From 1790 to 1861

The Coast Guard usually performed two roles in wartime. The first was to augment the Navy with men and cutters. The second was to undertake special missions that required the unique skills of Coast Guardsmen. During the Quasi-War with France (1798-99), eight cutters operated along our southern coast in the Caribbean Sea . Cutters captured 18 prizes unaided and assisted in the capture of two others. The cutter *Pickering* made two cruises to the West Indies and captured 10 prizes, one of which carried 44 guns and 200 men.

Augmenting the Navy with shallow-draft craft started with the War of 1812 and became a continuing wartime responsibility. Since this beginning, cutters have been used extensively in "brown water" combat. A cutter made the first capture of the war. One of the most hotly contested engagements was between the cutter *Surveyor* and the

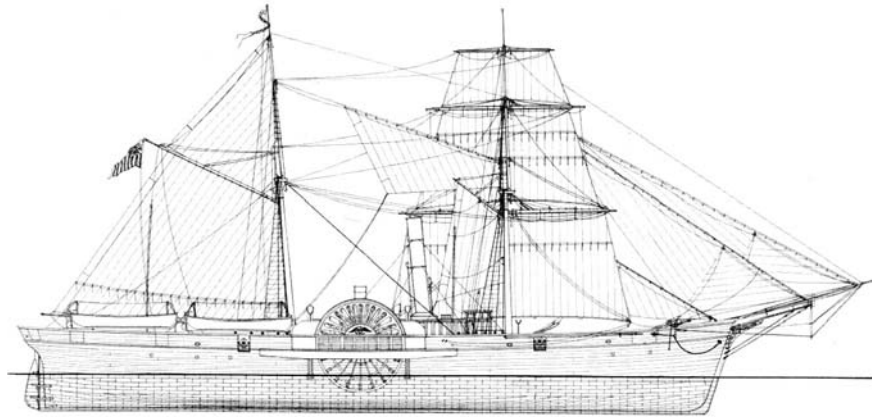
British frigate *Narcissis*. Although the *Surveyor* was captured, the British Captain wrote to Captain Samuel Travis on the following day,

Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed, and induced me to return you the sword you so ably used in testimony of mine... I am at loss which to admire most, the previous arrangement on board the *Surveyor* or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed inch by inch. The defense of the cutter *Eagle* against the attack of the British brig *Dispatch* and an accompanying sloop is one of the most dramatic incidents of the War of 1812. The cutter ran ashore on Long Island . Her guns were dragged up on a high bluff. From there the crew of *Eagle* fought the British ships from 9 o'clock in the morning until late in the afternoon. When they had exhausted their shot, they fired back the enemy's shot that lodged in the hill. During the engagement the cutter's flag was shot away three times. Each time volunteers from the crew replaced it. The British finally took the beached cutter with overwhelming numbers.

From 1836 through 1839, revenue cutters fought a riverine war with the Seminole Indians in Florida . Cutters attacked parties of hostile Indians, broke up their rendezvous, picked up survivors of massacres, carried dispatches, transported troops, blockaded rivers to the passage of Indian forces, and landed riflemen and artillery for the defense of the settlements. These duties covered the whole coast of Florida . With the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846, the Navy was once again short of small steamers and schooners. Revenue cutters filled the void as shallow-draft revenue steamers towed ashore naval craft packed with Marines and seamen. Revenue cutters also assisted the Navy in blockading Mexican ports.

Military preparedness has never been limited to declared wars. Second Lieutenant James E. Harrison, of the revenue cutter *Jefferson Davis* stationed in Puget Sound, accompanied Company C, 4<sup>th</sup> US Infantry during the Indian uprising in Washington in 1855. The Revenue Cutter Service had been assisting the Army throughout the Puget Sound area and Harrison was acting as second-in-command. On December 3 Indians attacked the company and killed its commander. Harrison rallied the company, engaged in a firefight, and defeated the attackers. He then led the company back to Fort Steilacoom, arriving on 21 December 1855. In 1858, the cutter *Harriet Lane* was part of a naval squadron sent to blockade Paraguay .





U.S. Revenue Cutter  
HARRIET LANE

## Civil War

In 1861 the Civil War broke out and like the rest of the country, the sympathies of the cutter force were divided between North and South. Union cutters patrolled for commerce raiders and provided fire support for troops ashore while those serving the Confederacy were used as commerce raiders. Revenue cutters were involved in numerous individual actions. *Harriet Lane*, under the command of Captain John Faunce, fired the first naval shots of the Civil War. On 11 April 1861, she challenged the steamer *Nashville* with a shot across its bow. In December 1862, the cutter *Hercules* battled Confederate forces on the Rappahannock River. The cutter *Reliance* engaged Confederate forces on Great Wicomico River in Virginia in 1864. Her commanding officer was killed in the action. On 21 April 1865 cutters were ordered to search all outbound ships for the assassins of President Lincoln.

## Spanish-American War

Revenue cutters fought in the Caribbean and Far East during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Eight cutters, carrying 43 guns, were in Admiral William Sampson's fleet and on the Havana blockade. *McCulloch*, carrying six guns, was at the Battle of Manila Bay and was later served as Commodore George Dewey's dispatch boat. At the Battle of Cardenas on 11 May 1898, the cutter *Hudson* sustained the fight against the gunboats and shore batteries of the enemy with the torpedo boat, USS *Winslow*. When *Winslow's* commander, Ensign Bagley, was wounded and half the crew killed, *Hudson* braved furious enemy fire to rescue her. In recognition of this act, Congress authorized a gold medal for Lieutenant Frank Newcomb, USRCS, a silver medal for each of his officers, and a bronze medal for each crewman.

During the war the U.S. Life-Saving Service assisted the Navy as coast-watchers. As such, approximately two-thirds of the Navy's coastal observation stations along the US coast were Life-Saving Stations. Although the Spanish fleet never entered US waters, this Coast Guard predecessor service dutifully manned its posts throughout the war.

## World War I

On 6 April 1917, a coded dispatch was sent to every Coast Guard cutter and shore station. Within hours the entire service came under the operational control of the U.S. Navy. In August and September 1917 six Coast Guard cutters, *Ossipee*, *Seneca*, *Yamacraw*, *Algonquin*, *Manning*, and *Tampa* left the United States to join US naval forces in European waters. Constituting Squadron 2 of the Atlantic Fleet's Division 6, these patrol forces were based at Gibraltar . They escorted hundreds of vessels between Gibraltar and the British Isles and also performed escort and patrol duty in the Mediterranean .

On the evening of 26 September 1918, USCGC *Tampa* proceeded toward the port of Milford Haven , Wales . At 8:45 p.m. a loud explosion was heard and *Tampa* failed to arrive at her destination. U.S. destroyers and British patrol craft made a search. They found only a small amount of wreckage and two unidentified bodies in naval uniforms. It is believed that a German submarine torpedoed and sank *Tampa* . All 115 hands were lost. The British Admiralty wrote to Rear Admiral William Sims, USN,

*Their Lordships desire me to express their deep regret at the loss of the USS Tampa . Her record since she has been employed in European waters as an escort to convoys has been remarkable. She has acted in the capacity of ocean escort to no less than 18 convoys from Gibraltar comprising 350 vessels, with a loss of only 2 ships through enemy action. The commanders of the convoys have recognized the ability with which the Tampa carried out the duties of ocean escort. Appreciation of the good work done by the USS Tampa may be some consolation to those bereft and Their Lordships would be glad if this could be conveyed to those concerned.*

With the exception of USS *Cyclops*, this was the largest loss of life incurred by any US naval unit during the war.

## World War II

War again broke out in Europe on 1 September 1939 and by 1941 the US had become a combatant. On 5 September 1939, however, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the Coast Guard to carry out neutrality patrols. This began America 's progression toward war. President Roosevelt later invoked the Espionage Act of 1917 on 22 June 1940. The Coast Guard was now charged with the security of US ports. This governed the anchorage and movement of all ships in U.S. waters and protected American ships, harbors and waters. Shortly afterwards, the Dangerous Cargo Act gave the Coast Guard jurisdiction over ships carrying high explosives and dangerous cargoes. In March 1941 the Coast Guard seized 28 Italian, 2 German, and 35 Danish merchant ships. A few days later, the Coast Guard transferred 10 modern Coast Guard cutters to Great Britain via Lend-Lease.

On April 9, 1941, the United States incorporated Greenland into the defense system for the Western Hemisphere . The Coast Guard became the military service primarily responsible for these cold-weather operations. These continued throughout the war. On 12 September 1941 the cutter *Northland* took the Norwegian trawler *Buskoe* into "protective custody" and captured three German radiomen ashore. This was the United States ' first naval capture of World War II.

On 1 November 1941 President Roosevelt placed the Coast Guard under the operational control of the Navy Department. During the war Coast Guard-manned ships sank 11 enemy submarines while a Coast Guard aircraft sank one. Coast Guard personnel also manned amphibious vessels, from the largest troop transports to the smallest attack craft. These landed Army and Marine forces in every important invasion from North Africa to the Pacific. Coast Guard picket vessels patrolled along the US coast where enemy submarines concentrated early in the war. On shore armed Coast Guardsmen patrolled beaches and docks as a major part of the nation's anti-sabotage effort.

Coast Guard craft also rescued more than twenty-five hundred survivors of torpedo attacks and over fifteen hundred more were rescued during the D-Day (Operation OVERLORD) landings on Normandy . During the war the Coast Guard manned 802 cutters, 351 naval ships and craft, and 288 Army vessels. Almost two thousand Coast Guardsmen died in the war. Almost two thousand Coast Guardsmen were decorated. This included Douglas Munro who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Guadalcanal campaign. Six other Coast Guardsmen received the Navy Cross and one the Distinguished Service Cross. After the war ended in 1945, President Harry S Truman returned the Coast Guard to the Treasury Department on 1 January 1946.

### **Douglas A. Munro (1919-1942)**

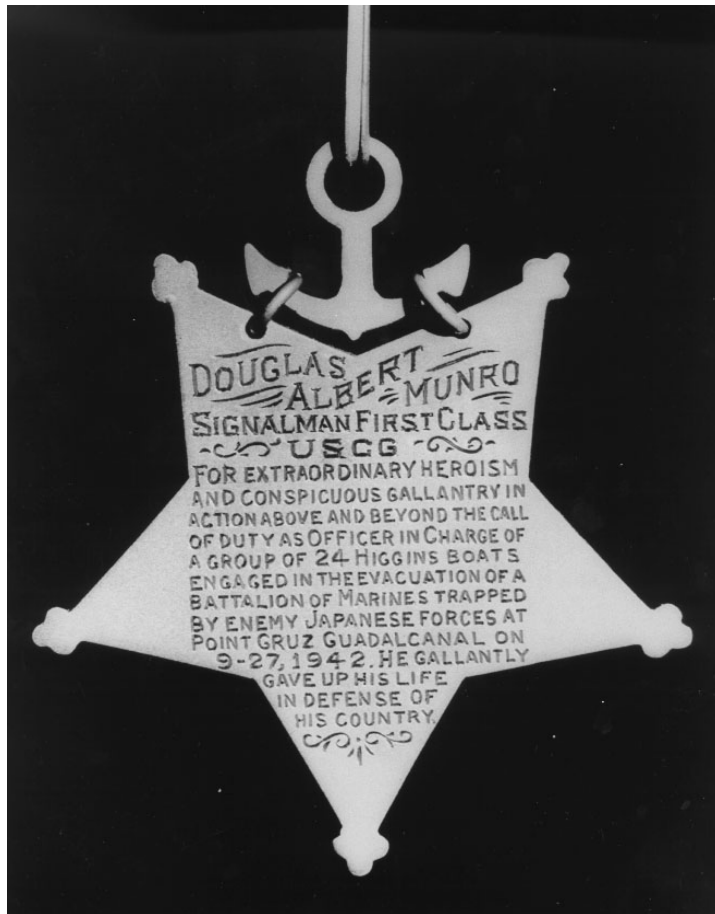


**Signalman First Class Douglas A. Munro**



**Munro at Guadalcanal on 27 September 1942**

On 27 September 1942 approximately 500 men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marines were attacked by an overwhelming Japanese force west of the Matanikau River on Guadalcanal. Isolated from the rest of the battalion, they were forced toward the beach. Signal First Class Douglas A. Munro took charge of more than a dozen landing craft assembled to evacuate the Marines. Munro commanded a 36-foot Higgins boat and also manned one of her two machine guns. As the boats approached the beach, the Japanese opened fire to prevent the evacuation. Munro directed the boats to approach the beach in waves of twos and threes while he and Petty Officer Raymond Evans provided covering fire. After most of the men re-embarked into the waiting boats, the Japanese pressed the few remaining Marines on the beach. Realizing these men were in danger, Munro maneuvered his boat to provide cover for the Marines. Because of this action all the Marines, including 23 wounded, managed to escape. Only minutes after placing the last man on board, Munro received a fatal wound as he continued to provide covering fire from his exposed position. For his extraordinary bravery during this action, Munro was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for actions above and beyond the call of duty.



Reverse of Douglas Munro's Medal of Honor

## Korea , Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf

The Coast Guard served primarily in a supporting role during the Korean Conflict. Its principal contributions included improving communications and meteorological services along with assuring port security and proper ammunition handling. The Coast Guard also served in Vietnam performing duties uniquely suited to its specialized skills. In 1965 twenty-six 82-foot Coast Guard cutters were ordered to Vietnam . These were used in the "brown water" war against Vietcong and North Vietnamese infiltration and logistics. In 1966 the first ocean-going cutters arrived in Southeast Asia to augment Navy and Coast Guard surveillance forces already "in country." Coast Guardsmen were also detailed to improve port security and to assist with problems involving the Merchant Marine. This included teaching workmen the basics of safe handling of ammunition and other dangerous cargoes. Coast Guard personnel also created a LORAN (long-range navigation) network. In February 1969 the Coast Guard began to pull out of Vietnam . This process was concluded by December 1971, though a number of Coast guard cutters were de-commissioned and transferred to the South Vietnamese government. In all, 56 Coast Guard cutters served in Vietnam.



The Coast Guard has served in other military operations since the end of the Vietnam War. These include participation in the invasion of Grenada, performing port security and other missions in the Persian Gulf during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and participation in the peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans. In each of these operations, Coast Guard men and women have faithfully served their country and upheld its honorable traditions as of the nation's five armed services. On 9/11 the Coast Guard was one of the first federal agencies to respond to the attacks on the World Trade Center. The Coast Guard has also provided units to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In March 2003 the United States Coast Guard transferred to the newly formed Department of Homeland Security

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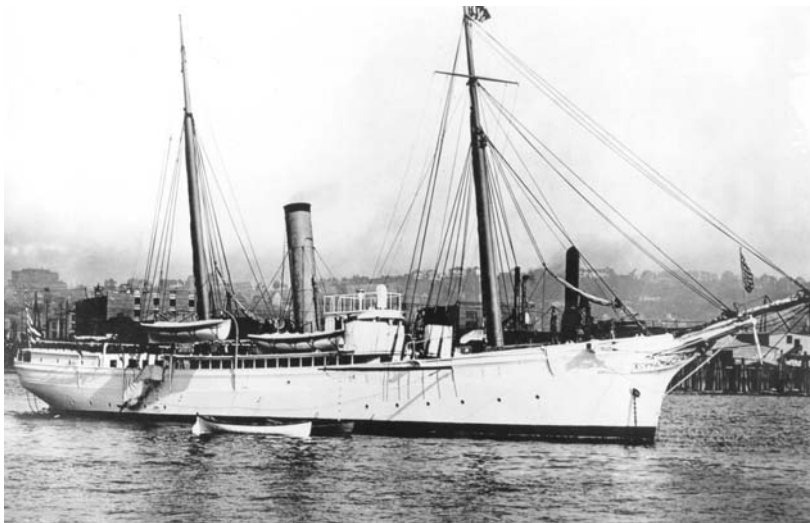
# Environmental Protection

The Coast Guard has helped to protect the environment for over 175 years. In 1822 Congress created a timber reserve for the Navy. The President was also authorized to use whatever forces necessary to prevent the cutting of live oak on public lands. He chose the revenue cutters for this mission because their shallow-draft cutters were well suited to patrolling the narrow waterways that meandered through the timber reserve lands.

The service's ecological responsibilities expanded greatly with the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. Given the high value of seal pelts, mariners decimated the seal herds hunting them to the point of near extinction. Each year the herds congregated to breed on the Pribilof Islands and here they were ruthlessly slaughtered. During the first four years of American control, hunters killed a quarter-million seals. In 1870 Congress placed restrictions on the number that could be killed. Beginning in 1894, small parties of Revenue Cutter Service personnel camped on the Pribilof Islands to prevent raids on the rookeries (Seal breeding grounds). These responsibilities grew and beginning on 11 May 1908, revenue cutters were charged with the enforcement of all Alaskan game laws.

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## USRC *Rush* and the Bering Sea Patrol



From 1874 through 1913, two cutters with the name *Rush* served on the Bering Sea Patrol in the waters between Alaska and Siberia . While patrolling this area the ships were responsible for protecting the seal herds and preventing their illegal slaughter on the Pribilof Islands . Due to the success of these patrols, seal poachers would have to

conduct their hunts before the cutter arrived in the area and arrested them. It was because of this that we now have the saying, "Get there early to avoid the *Rush!*" The Revenue Cutter Service had environmental responsibilities in other areas as well. In 1885 the Service cooperated with the Bureau of Fisheries in connection to the "propagation of food fishes." Twenty years later, cutters also enforced the regulations governing the landing, delivery, cure, and sale of sponges in the Gulf of Mexico.

## Anti-Pollution Efforts

Maintaining the cleanliness of America's waterways has also been a concern for many decades. The Refuse Act of 1899 was the first attempt to address the growing problem of pollution. It was enforced jointly by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Revenue Cutter Service. Today, the current framework for the Coast Guard's Marine Environmental Protection program is the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972. In 1973, the Coast Guard created a National Strike Force to combat oil spills. There are three teams. One is a Pacific unit based near San Francisco . The others are a Gulf team at Mobile , AL and an Atlantic Strike Team stationed in Elizabeth City , NC. Since the creation of these forces, the teams have been deployed worldwide to hundreds of potential and actual spill sites, bringing with them a vast array of sophisticated equipment. Their most notable "battles" were with *Metula* in the Straits of Magellan during August 1974, *Showa Maru* in the Straits of Malacca during January 1975, *Olympic Games* in the Delaware River during December 1975, and *Argo Merchant* during December 1976.

The 200-mile zone created by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 quadrupled the offshore fishing area controlled by the United States . The Coast Guard has the responsibility of enforcing this law. The 1989 grounding of the supertanker *Exxon Valdez* in Alaska 's Prince William Sound led to the passage of the Oil Protection Act in 1990. This law charged the Coast Guard with the single largest legislative tasking in its history. Increased concern about the environment promises to make environmental protection one of the Coast Guard's most important missions.



Grounding of *Argo Merchant* in 1976



Oil-soaked otter being treated after *Exxon Valdez* spill

# Search and Rescue

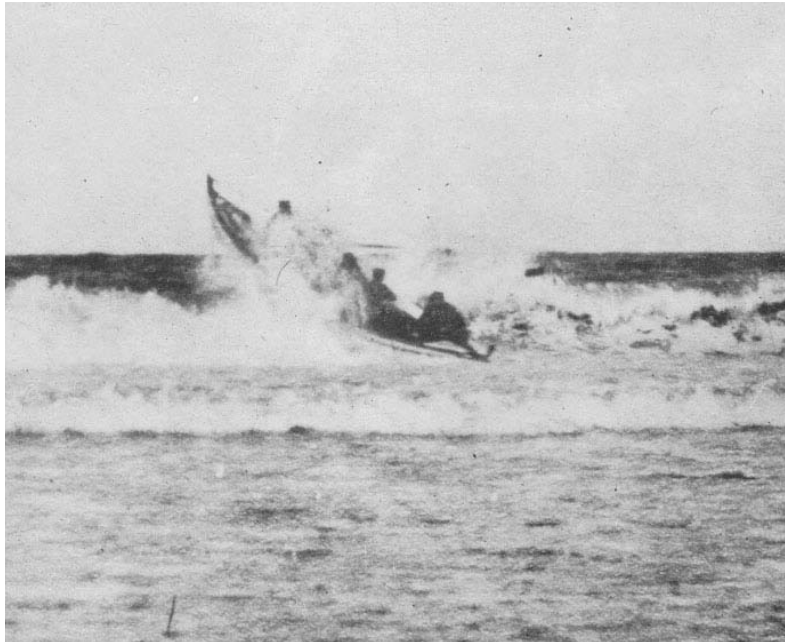
Ever since man has journeyed on the sea, great risks have been taken to rescue those in danger. In order to improve the possibilities of success, however, someone had to be responsible and they had to have resources to perform the mission. In 1831 the Secretary of the Treasury directed the revenue cutter *Gallatin* to cruise in search of persons in distress. This was the first time a government agency was assigned to search for those in danger. Later, in 1837, Congress authorized the President to have government ships to cruise the coast during the winter to search for those in distress and render assistance. Although this addressed rescue on the high seas, in the age of wood and sail, most disasters occurred close to shore.

From colonial days the states salvaged the goods tossed upon their beaches from shipwrecks. Many states also required the salvagers to rescue persons on board shipwrecked vessels in order to obtain salvage rights. Persons appointed by the states, called "wreckmasters," "commissioners of vendue," "commissioners of wrecks," etc., were charged with assembling a volunteer boat crew within the wreckmaster's jurisdiction for the purpose of rescue and salvage. These early efforts were closely tied to maritime interests at the large coastal ports of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

The middle of the 19th Century saw large-scale immigration to the U.S. Small sailing ships were often packed with several hundred European immigrants. As these ships neared New York violent storms called nor'easters often drove many of the crowded vessels aground on the New Jersey shore. The surf would pound the sturdiest craft to pieces and the cold water would overcome the strongest swimmer. While many rescue attempts were made from shore, only about half the people reached the beach alive. The losses were not for a lack of volunteers. Rather, it was mostly because no means had yet been devised to reach the wreck and retrieve the occupants across the breaking surf.

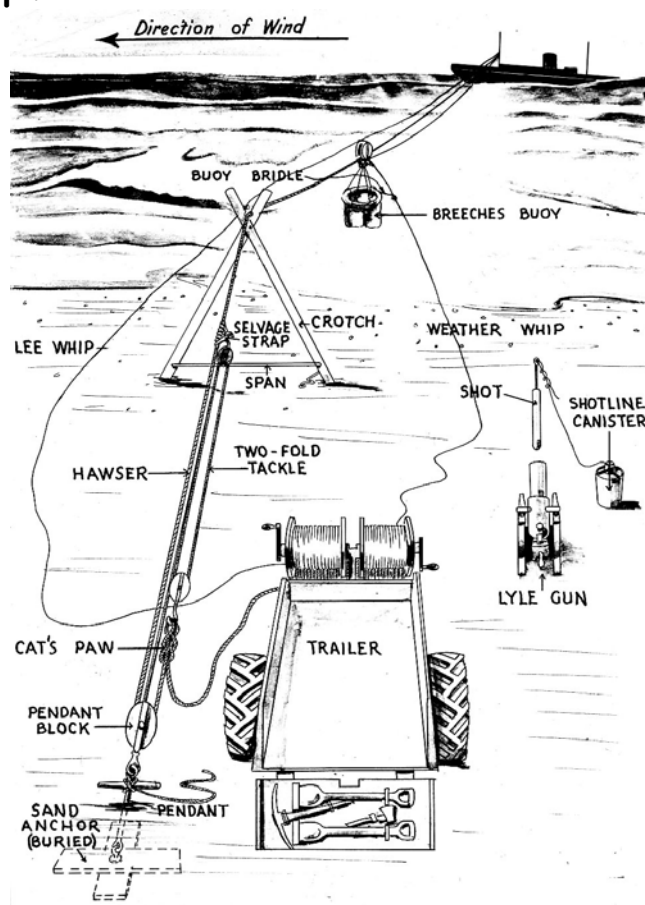
## **U.S. Life-Saving Service**

An innovative solution was needed. New techniques and equipment had to be developed in order to save those stranded. A federal lifesaving service began to take shape in 1848. At first, the government provided a garage-like structure outfitted with rescue equipment. As the coasts of New Jersey and Long Island had the greatest numbers of wrecks, the first new stations were located there. The construction and equipping was a joint project carried out by a Revenue Marine officer, the boards of underwriters, and local citizens associated with salvage work. There was a fully equipped iron boat on a wagon, a mortar apparatus for propelling a rescue line, powder and shot, a small covered "life car" for hauling in survivors, a stove, and fuel. The keys to the station were entrusted to a community leader, usually a wreckmaster who organized his volunteer crew.



Life-Saving crew to the rescue

## Life-Saving Equipment



Life-Saving Equipment



There were some successes. In 1850, for example, the immigrant ship *Ayrshire* grounded during a snowstorm at Squan Beach , NJ . Under the supervision of wreckmaster John Maxon, the volunteers rescued 201 of the 202 persons on board. There were also failures. Nevertheless, over the period 1848 through 1870 about 90% of the persons on board vessels wrecked within the scope of this Life-Saving Service survived.

In 1871 the federal government finally created an agency to rescue of those in distress. It was called the U.S. Life-Saving Service and Sumner L. Kimball was appointed Superintendent. His assistant was Captain John Faunce, the commander of *Harriet Lane* in 1861. New stations were built, new equipment was developed and the scope of the service was expanded beyond the area around New York . Much of the equipment and techniques developed during the mid-1800s continued in use for a century. The best example of this is the Lyle gun. Named for Captain David Lyle, the Army captain who devised it, this device threw a line from the shore to a distressed ship.

Perhaps one of the most important changes regarded organization. Personnel were placed under federal control and each district was assigned an Assistant Inspector. Usually a first or second lieutenant these officers reported to a Revenue Marine captain who was assigned as the full-time Inspector of the Life-Saving Service. The inspectors performed training and administrative inspections and conducted investigations in instances where lives were lost during shipwrecks.

In September 1888 the crew of Hunniwells Beach Station rescued fifteen persons from Glovers Rock in Maine . They lashed the Lyle gun onto the lifeboat and set the shotline box on the stern. The gun was loaded and fired, casting the line almost into the hands of those in danger. As the rocks made it impossible to remove the people by breeches buoy, a small dory was rigged instead and the fifteen people were hauled to safety. During the same storm the crew of the Lewes ( Delaware ) Station fired their gun from the upper window of a fish house. They landed the crew in the loft with a breeches buoy.

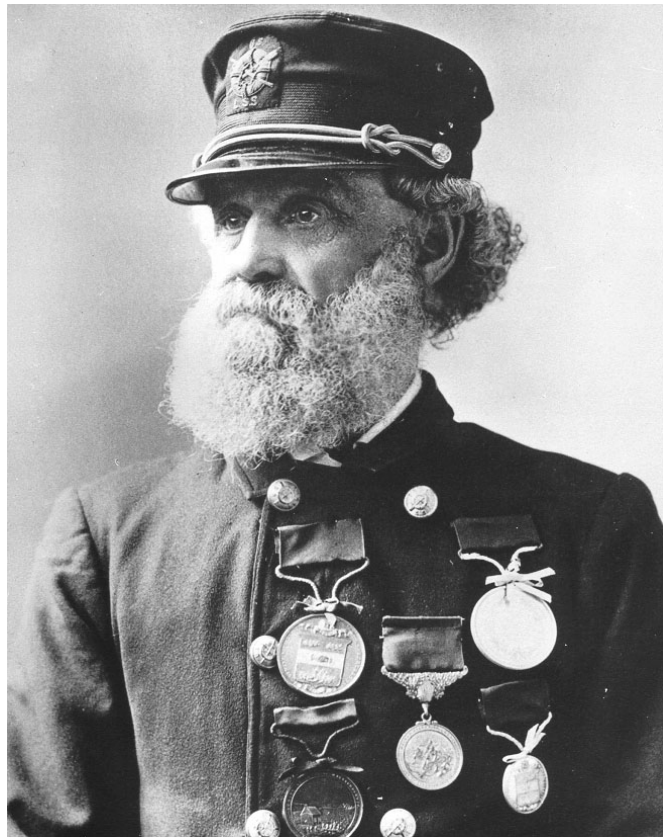


**Breeches Buoy rescue**

Crews also had to be able to perform their duties at night. On 3 February 1880 a storm hit the New Jersey coast. At the height of the storm and with lanterns practically useless due to sleet, life-saving crews set up a beach apparatus. Working in almost total darkness, they rescued the crew and passengers of four ships without a single loss. The U.S. Life-Saving Service annual reports are crowded with many such rescues.

Some of the more spectacular rescues include those of the crews of the *Robert Wallace* and *David Wallace*. These ships wrecked at Marquette , MI on 18 November 1886. The Ship Canal Life-Saving Station crew traveled 110 miles by special train and rescued the ships' crews. In three days' work, 10-12 September 1889, the life-saving crews at Lewes, Henlopen and Rehoboth Beach Stations in Delaware helped 22 vessels, and saved 39 persons by boat and 155 by breeches buoy without losing a single life. The British schooner *H. P. Kirkham* wrecked on Rose & Crown Shoal on 2 January 1892. The lifesaving crew, at sea in an open boat without food for 23 hours, rescued the crew of seven. There were also sacrifices. Seven surfmen, for example, lost their lives going to the aid of the Italian ship *Nuova Ottavia* on 1 March 1876.

### **Joshua James (1826-1902)**



Joshua James was probably the most celebrated lifesaver in the world. He was credited with saving hundreds of lives from the age of 15 when he joined

Massachusetts Humane Society until his death as a member of the U.S. Life-Saving Service at age 75. His most famous rescues were those conducted on 25-26 November 1889. On these two days he and his crew saved 29 persons on five different vessels. He died on 19 March 1902. After conducting a boat drill with his crew, he collapsed and died of a heart attack after reaching the beach. For his over 60 years of service, Joshua James was the most highly awarded and most highly respected member of the U.S. Life-Saving Service.

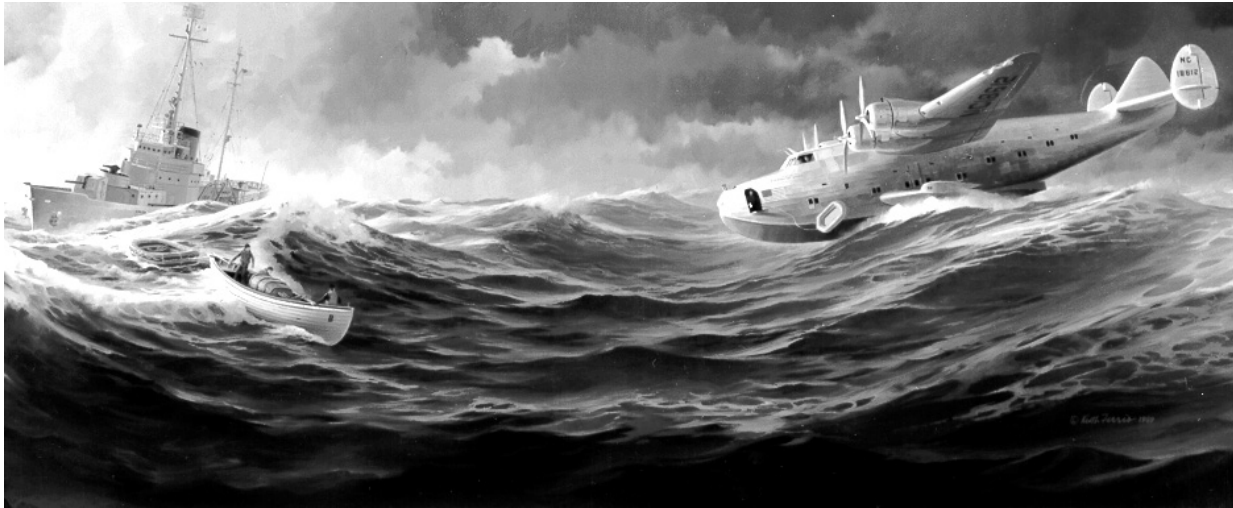
Those who have benefited from search and rescue operations has continually changed. From 1830 through 1870 it was mostly immigrants. The introduction of steel, steam, and improved aids to navigation reduced coastal disasters affecting large passenger vessels. These innovations produced a shift in the area of operation for search and rescue activity. Smaller coastal sailing vessels, however, remained as the focal point for U.S. Life-Saving Service operations until the turn of the century. The U.S. Life-Saving Service rescued 178,741 from 1871 to 1914. This was accomplished while losing only 1,455 persons.

Personnel from the Lighthouse Service and the Revenue Cutter Service also performed heroic rescues. On 31 Decemeber 1839 hurricane winds drove the schooner *Deposit* onto the Massachusetts coast. T.S. Greenwood, keeper of the Ipswich Lighthouse, tied a line around his waist and swam through the roaring surf to the doomed ship. He then pulled a surfboat with a colleague in it to the ship and the pair rescued the captain's wife. In 1897-1898, crewmembers of the cutter *Bear* drove a herd of reindeer 2,000 miles to feed 97 starving whalers caught in the Arctic ice.

## **Search and Rescue since 1915**

By the 1930s "Blue water" cutters and flying amphibians became the primary rescue platforms. With regular transatlantic air traffic initiated just before World War II, the Coast Guard established Ocean Stations. This was first done in the Atlantic and later in the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific. A cutter was stationed in mid-ocean to provide rescue sites and to report on weather. Increased aircraft reliability and improved electronics have removed the need for the stations and the last was disestablished in 1977.

## ***Bermuda Sky Queen* rescue**



**Crewmen from USCGC *Bibb* move out to *Bermuda Sky Queen***

On 14 October 1947 the American-owned flying boat *Bermuda Sky Queen* was flying from Foynes , Ireland to Gander , Newfoundland . Gale force winds had slowed her progress and she was running low on fuel. Too far from Newfoundland and unable to make it back to Ireland, the captain decided to fly toward the cutter *Bibb* which was on Ocean Station Charlie in the North Atlantic. The plane's captain decided to ditch and have his passengers and crew picked up by *Bibb*. Rough seas and gales made this transfer both difficult and dangerous.

During the course of the operation the cutter sustained some damage. The conditions and the approach of darkness forced the rescue's suspension with only a few of the passengers having been transferred. By dawn the conditions had improved and the rescue resumed. The remaining passengers and crew were transferred and *Bibb's* captain decided to sink the abandoned aircraft with gunfire to prevent its becoming a hazard to navigation. The rescue made headlines throughout the country and upon their arrival in Boston, the *Bibb* and her crew received a hero's welcome for having saved all those aboard the ditched *Bermuda Sky Queen*.

Search and rescue has also been influenced by technology from 1831. During World War II the Coast Guard was charged with developing the helicopter for anti-submarine warfare. Yet, with the lessening of the submarine threat in 1944, the emphasis of helicopter development changed to search and rescue. The U.S. Coast Guard initially trained all helicopter pilots, both British and American, for this mission. Following World War II search and rescue operations shifted back to the coastal areas with the emergence of boating enthusiasts. With the increase in the number of pleasure craft, the helicopter emerged as a primary rescue tool. Each era has required new equipment suited to the needs of that day.



Experiments in the 1940s



Rescues today are conducted by helicopters like this HH-60J

High-seas search and rescue has long presented the Coast Guard with one of its greatest challenges. In October 1980 the Dutch cruise ship *Prinsendam* was jarred by explosions and stopped dead in the water after a fire in the engine room. In spite of rough seas and strong winds, four Coast Guard, one Air Force, and two Canadian helicopters plucked more than 500 survivors from crowded lifeboats in the Gulf of Alaska . Many of the survivors, mostly senior citizens, were lifted in rescue baskets to the awaiting Coast Guard Cutter *Boutwell* and the commercial tanker *Williamsburgh*. Not one life was lost. This is but one of the many instances where the Coast Guard and its predecessor services distinguished themselves in rescuing those in distress--a service they have faithfully performed since 1831.

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# Preventive Safety

In the decades after Robert Fulton's success with the *Clermont*, the steam engine came into widespread use as a means of propulsion. Beginning in the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, there was a series of shipboard boiler explosions that resulted in huge losses of life. Almost immediately there were two opinions regarding how to ensure commercial vessel safety. There were those who favored strong federal regulations and those who opposed government interference into transportation. The federal government, at first, followed a laissez-faire policy. Secretary of the Treasury Richard Rush, for example, remarked in 1825 that legislative "enactments are calculated to do mischief rather than prevent it...."

## Emergence of Safety Inspections

With federal complacency, state governments attempted to establish safety standards for steam vessels. These, however, were of limited utility due to the interstate nature of waterborne commerce. The catalyst for federal action occurred in 1837 when the steamboat *Pulaski* exploded in North Carolina killing 100 people. Congress passed an act "For the better security of the lives of passengers." This was the birth of commercial vessel inspection. The act provided the installation of fire-fighting and life-saving equipment. Enforcement, however, was the weak link. District judges appointed local persons to be inspectors. There were often conflicts of interest as the individuals competent to pass judgment generally had close ties with shipowners. Also, there were no codified standards. Each inspector used his own judgment. This lack of uniformity invited further disasters.

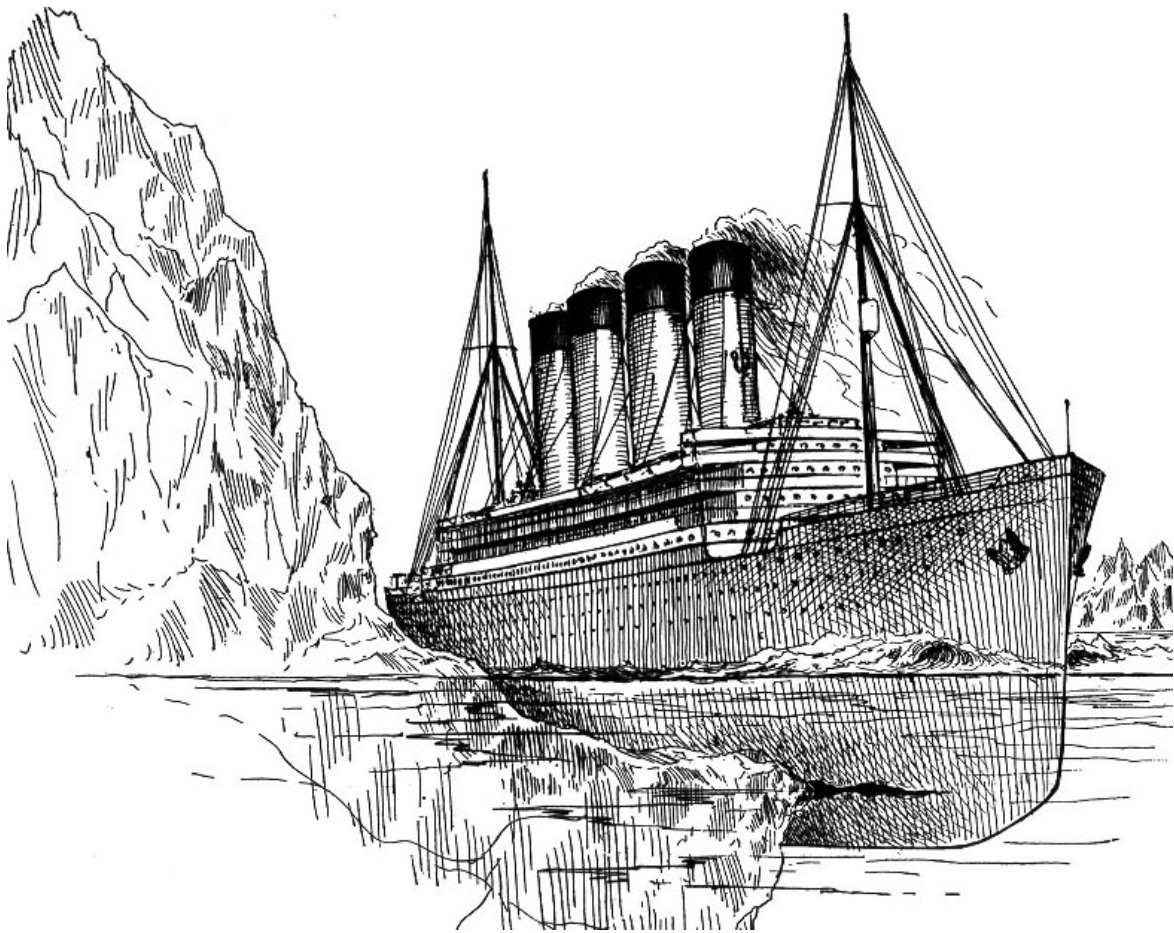
The evolution of technology outstripped these mild legislative controls and explosions continued. From December 1851 through July of the following year, there were seven major disasters, costing nearly 700 lives. Congress responded with the Steamboat Inspection Act of 1852. This expanded the responsibilities of the Act of 1838 and corrected the major flaw of the earlier law by controlling inspections and licensing. This new law had its shortcomings as well. Only steamships carrying passengers were subject to its provisions. Thus, steam tugs, freighters, canal boats were exempt from the provisions of the 1852 law, although still remaining subject to that of 1838. The Act of 1852 was the first law to require the federal licensing of mariners. This act authorized the Steamboat Inspection Service to issue licenses to engineers and pilots of steamers carrying passengers. Licensing has been refined and expanded throughout the decades to include masters and chief mates plus others in positions of responsibility on board all types of ships. Licensing and certifying of U.S. maritime personnel is another of the safety functions of the Coast Guard.

The Civil War diverted America's efforts from commercial vessel safety, as it had from lifesaving, and an awesome price was paid. Fifteen hundred people perished in the largest U.S. commercial maritime disaster on board the stern-wheeler *Sultana* in 1865. *Sultana* embarked nearly all of the 376 allowed passengers. Taking advantage of the

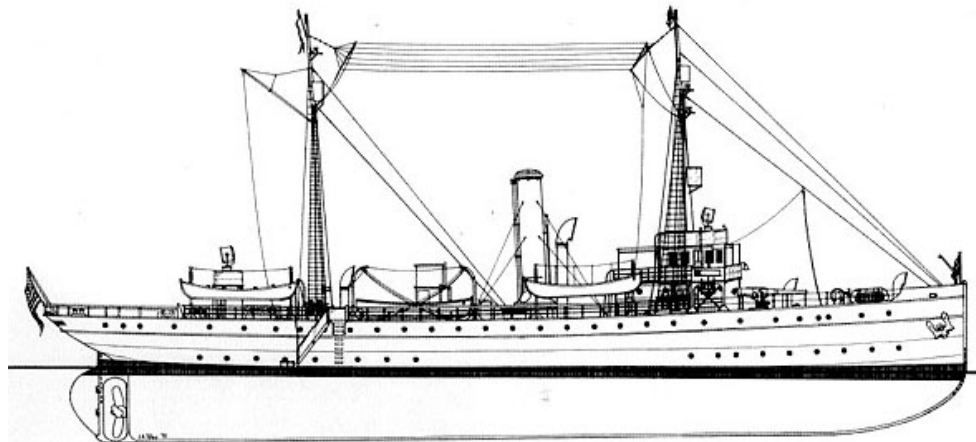


wartime environment, 2,000 Union veterans, most of whom were recently freed prisoners of war, were also packed on board. While plying the river between Memphis , TN and Cairo , IL , a boiler exploded and the ship went up like a torch. Future disasters further illustrated the desperate need for improved safety regulations. Almost 1,000 lives, for example, were lost on *General Slocum* in 1904. As a result, safety regulations and inspection equipment were improved. More than 1,500 lives were lost on *Titanic* in 1912. This resulted in improved life-saving devices and certification and the beginning of the International Ice Patrol.

## **RMS *Titanic* and the International Ice Patrol**



**Artist's depiction of *Titanic's* collision with the iceberg**



U.S. Revenue Cutter  
**SENECA**

**First revenue cutter on the International Ice Patrol**

On the night of 14 April 1912 the White Star liner, RMS *Titanic*, was cruising at over 20 knots across the Grand Banks off Newfoundland . Just before midnight she struck an iceberg and ruptured her hull plates. Water flooded into five of her forward compartments and in just over two hours the ship went to the bottom of the North Atlantic. The loss of over 1,500 lives on this "unsinkable" ship caused a tremendous public outcry for increased safety. This resulted in the enactment of new regulations requiring enough lifeboats for everyone on board and mandatory lifeboat drills. The loss of the *Titanic* also led to the establishment of the International Ice Patrol For the remainder of the 1912 ice season, the U.S. Navy cruisers, *Chester* and *Birmingham* , patrolled the Grand Banks to monitor the icebergs in the busy sealanes. In 1913, however, the Navy had no ships to spare for ice duty. The Secretary of the Treasury, W.G. McAdoo, therefore, ordered the Revenue Cutter Service to send the cutters *Seneca* and *Miami* into the ice fields to track their drift.

Each day at 9:00 PM during the months of April, May, and June, one of these two vessels would transmit radio messages detailing the position of the floating ice. The public outcry in the wake of the loss of *Titanic*, however, required that there needed to be something more permanent. In November 1913 there was an International Conference on the Safety of Life at Sea in London . Ellsworth Bertholf, Captain-Commandant of the Revenue Cutter Service, was the U.S. representative.

It was decided that two cutters would patrol the ice fields during the three-month ice season from April to June. The ships would also attempt to keep the shipping lanes clear of floating derelicts (abandoned ships which were hazards to navigation) during the rest of year. The result of this plan was the establishment of the International Ice Patrol in June 1914. Captain Bertholf was also appointed chairman of the newly created Inter-Departmental Board on International Service of Ice Observation, Ice Patrol and Ocean Derelict Destruction and the mission for the ice patrol fell to the Coast Guard when it was founded in 1915.

The Coast Guard continued the ice patrol until the U.S. declaration of war against Germany in April 1917. With that *Seneca* and *Miami* were detached to perform convoy escort duties. The duty was resumed in 1919 after the war ended. The Coast Guard, with the exception of a break during World War II, has performed this mission ever since.

The postwar years, however, have seen a change in how the patrol is conducted. No longer dependent on cutters, the Ice Patrol is conducted solely by Coast Guard aircraft. As it enters its tenth decade of service, the International Ice Patrol has proven very successful. After all, since its establishment in 1914, there has not been a single ship lost as a result of a collision with an iceberg.

### ***After the Titanic***

More than 100 lives were lost on board *Morro Castle* in 1934 and another 45 on *Mohawk* the following year. Partly as a result of these two disasters, more marine legislation was passed in 1936 and 1937 than during the previous twenty years. Though commercial vessel regulations seem a reaction to disaster to the novice, disasters have proven a catalyst for perfecting efforts previously undertaken. The Coast Guard is a 20th century agency. The United States is an active member of the International Maritime Organization. An arm of the United Nations, IMO is composed of more than one hundred nations focused on problems like safety at sea, prevention of pollution from ships, and technical cooperation among governments. These problems are under continual study and as solutions emerge, IMO sponsors conferences to draft international conventions and agreements. The Department of State looks to the Coast Guard as the agency having the expertise to enable effective U.S. participation.

Today, one of the most visible missions of the Coast Guard is boating safety. Yet, the beginnings of this responsibility are obscured by indecisive legislation. In 1896 the Secretary of the Treasury was authorized "to prescribe regulations to insure the safety of passengers on ... [all] craft ... attendant ...upon regattas..." Although a very narrow law, it was the first attempt at regulating pleasure boat safety. In 1908 this modest responsibility was transferred from the Treasury to the Department of Commerce and Labor which had only a single vessel to enforce the law! The Motorboat Act of 1910 finally established a creditable boating safety program. The act required boats to be equipped with navigation lights, whistles, fire extinguishers, and life preservers. Although enforcement was still a problem, the number of accidents immediately declined.

### **U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary**

The next milestone occurred in 1939 when the volunteer organization, known today as the Coast Guard Auxiliary, was created. The Auxiliary, working side by side with the active Coast Guard, has significantly contributed to solving the enforcement problem.

The 1940 Motorboat Act improved safety standards. Meanwhile, advances in technology have required the updates in the laws with major changes in 1958 and 1971. The Coast Guard's philosophy toward boating safety has been to educate the public rather than carry out punitive measures. Despite the ever-increasing number of pleasure boats in US waters, this policy has limited the number of deaths in boating accidents.

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# Traditions of the United States Coast Guard

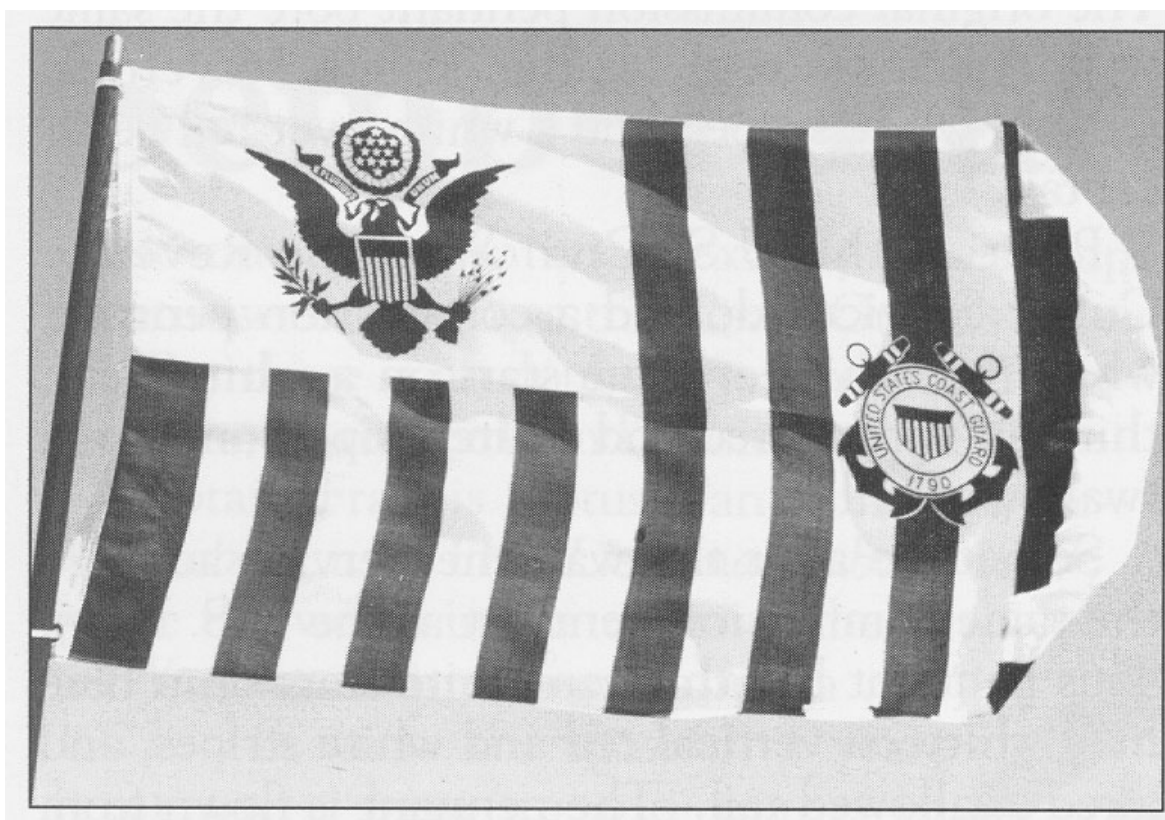
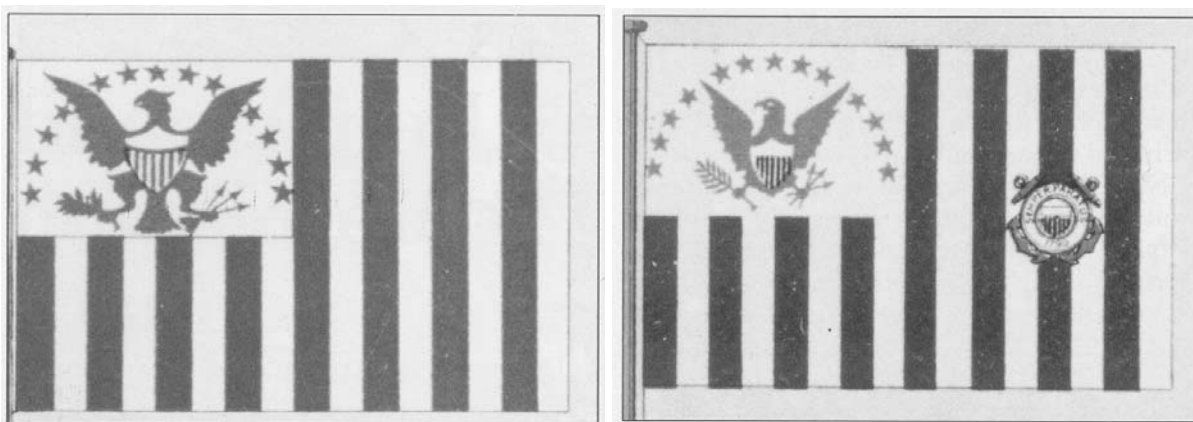
## The ensign

The original revenue cutters had very little money. Things were so bad that neither officers nor men had uniforms. As such, revenue cutter needed some obvious symbol to distinguish them in an age of pirates and privateers. The solution was to create an ensign unique to revenue cutters which would fly in place of the national flag while in American waters. The Act of 2 March 1799 provided that vessels employed in the service of revenue collection should be distinguished from other craft by a unique ensign and pennant. On August 1, 1799 Secretary of the Treasury, Oliver Wolcott, issued an order. It announced that the distinguishing ensign and pennant would consist of "16 perpendicular stripes, alternate red and white, the union of the ensign to be the arms of the United States in a dark blue on a white field."

The ensign had 13 stars, 13 leaves to the olive branch, 13 arrows, and 13 bars to the shield to represent the original 13 states. The 16 vertical stripes in the body are symbolic of the number of States composing the Union when this ensign was officially adopted in 1799. This ensign soon became very familiar in American waters and served as the service's symbol of authority until the early 20th century.

The ensign was supposed to only be flown from revenue cutters. Over the years, however, it was also found flying from customs houses. President William H. Taft issued an executive order on 7 June 1910. This added an emblem to the ensign to distinguish the Revenue Cutter Service ensign from those flown from the customs houses. It was also about this time that revenue cutters began flying the U.S. flag as their naval ensign and the revenue ensign became the Service's distinctive flag. When the service adopted the name Coast Guard, the Revenue Cutter Service's ensign became the distinctive flag on all Coast Guard cutters. The colors used in the Coast Guard ensign are all symbolic. The color red stands for our youth and sacrifice of blood for liberty's sake. The color blue not only stands for justice, but also for our covenant against oppression. The white symbolizes our desire for light and purity. As it was intended in 1799, the ensign is displayed as a mark of authority for boardings,

examinations and seizures of vessels for the purpose of enforcing the laws of the United States.



**The Ensign at different times in the service's history**

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# Mascots of the sea

Animals have served as mascots on board Coast Guard vessels since the early days of the Revenue Cutter Service. The practice of ships' crews keeping pets may have started when cats were brought on board to combat the rat population. But for years, pets have helped keep the crew's morale high during their many lonely days at sea. During the first half of this century, nearly every ship had at least one mascot and some had menageries that were the envy of a small zoo. Captain Mike Healy, commanding officer of the Revenue Cutter *Bear*, kept his parrot on board for company.



The bear mascot of the cutter *Thetis*



Captain Healy with his parrot on USRC *Bear*



Dogs, however, have been the most common Coast Guard mascots. The most famous of these was Sinbad. He came on board the ship in 1937 when *Campbell* made a port call in Portugal and served throughout World War II. A "salty sea dog," Sinbad stood watches and ate and slept with the crew. Every time the *Campbell* would make a port call and liberty was granted, Sinbad would be the first off the ship. Sinbad was as much a part of the *Campbell* as his two-legged shipmates. His contributions to that ship were incalculable in terms of the morale boost he provided. To his shipmates he was the good luck charm that brought them through battles with submarines, storms, and the terrible ice of the North Atlantic.



**Sinbad of USCGC *Campbell***



**Sinbad at his battle station during World War II**