



Coast Guard Heritage Museum

at the U.S. Custom House in Barnstable Village, Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Fall 2021 Newsletter

Latest update in the saga of the storied US Revenue Cutter *Bear* ...



July 1908 photograph of U.S. Revenue Cutter Service *Bear*
Launched 1874; Commissioned 2 March, 1885 (RCS)
Decommissioned 3 May, 1929 (USCG)
Foundered under tow off Chatham, Massachusetts. 19 March, 1963

BOSTON - The wreck of a storied military ship that served in two world wars, performed patrols in waters off Alaska for decades, and at one point was captained by the first Black man to command a U.S. government vessel has been found, ending a 42-year search for its resting place in the north Atlantic. The information was confirmed by Coast Guard officials and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on October 12, 2021 in Boston.

Built in 1874, the steam and sail-powered *Bear* was purchased by the U.S. in 1884 to take part in the search for an ill-fated Arctic expedition led by Lt. Adolphus Greely, a member of the U.S. Army's Signal Corps. That was the beginning of a 41-year career on the Alaskan Patrol which has yet to be surpassed. The *Bear's* duties on patrol were many. She carried mail as well as Government agents and supplies, performed search and rescue, conducted censuses of people and ships and recorded geological and astronomical information, recording tides and escorting whaling ships. On her trips south from Alaska, she transported federal prisoners and other questionable characters whose presence in Alaska was 'undesirable'. She, and other cutters like her, were often the only law enforcement entity in that turbulent part of the world.

In 1885, the colorful "Hell Roaring" Mike Healy assumed command and in time, Healy and his ship became legend in the brawling Alaskan Territory. Born in 1839, Healy was the son of a Georgia plantation owner and a slave. To prevent his children's enslavement, Healy's father sent him to join his brothers at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. He completed



Captain "Hell Roaring"
Michael Augustine Healy
Oceanexplorer.noaa.gov

his education and came up through the enlisted ranks on merchant ships to become a merchant marine officer before applying for an officer's commission in the Revenue Cutter Service. According to USCG Atlantic Area Historian William H. Thiesen, Ph.D., in March 1865, just a month before his assassination, President Abraham Lincoln signed Healy's commission. He was the first Black commander of a US vessel and helmed the *Bear* for nine years, responsible for law enforcement in the territory of Alaska and the Bearing Sea which was an expanse of water and land roughly the size of the lower 48 states.

Not the least of Healy's accomplishments was the importation of reindeer from Siberia to provide food for the natives who were never free of the threat of famine. As he reasoned it, the Siberian reindeer should be introduced to Alaska, and would be an excellent source of food, clothing and transportation. In 1891, *Bear* shipped sixteen live deer and hundreds of bags of native moss for feed from Siberia to the Aleutian Islands to test the animals' ability to travel by sea. In 1892, he brought over the first official shipment of the animals to Alaska. During the 1890s cutters transported thousands of reindeer, and by 1930, domesticated deer herds totaled 600,000 head with native Alaskans relying on them for sustenance.

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The Bear (cont'd from pg. 1)

But of all the *Bear's* exploits, none captured the public imagination more than her Overland Rescue of 1897. In the fall of that year, Captain Francis Tuttle, the *Bear's* new commander, learned that eight whaling vessels and their crews, totaling about 275 men were trapped in the ice pack off remote Point Barrow, Alaska. Upon order of the Secretary of the Treasury, *Bear* prepared to go to the rescue, the first time an Arctic voyage was attempted during the winter season. By 14 December 1897, it was clear that the *Bear* had gone as far north as possible. With ice so thick, she was forced to turn back. Before departure, she landed an over-land party near Cape Vancouver. It consisted of First Lieutenant D.H. Jarvis, Second Lieutenant B.P. Bertholf, and Surgeon S.J. Call, all of the Revenue Cutter Service. Equipped with dog teams, sleds and guides, Jarvis and his companions set out for Point Barrow. Before them lay a 1,600 mile journey through frozen, trackless wilderness. But the "Overland Expedition for the Relief of the Whalers in the Arctic Ocean" as it was officially called, became one of the great epic tales of the north. Gathering a herd of about 950 reindeer, Jarvis and Call reached Point Barrow about three and one-half months after being put ashore by the *Bear*. The miraculous arrival of the relief party



brought the malnourished Native Americans survival in one of the most successful Arctic rescues in history and proved the foresight of Captain Michael Augustine Healy.

After service in two World Wars, and countless safety and mercy missions, the *Bear* was decommissioned in 1944. It sank on March 19, 1963 as it was being towed to Philadelphia where it was to become a floating museum and restaurant. Search teams had worked since 1979 to find the wreckage.

In 2019, the Coast Guard and NOAA used sonar equipment to scan 62 square miles of seabed where the *Bear* was believed to have gone down, according to Joe Hoyt, national coordinator for the maritime heritage program in NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Through sonar images, NOAA determined there was a shipwreck, but needed more precise images to verify if it was the *Bear*. After 30 hours of visual footage of the site and a comparison to historic ship's plans, the 42-year search for the final resting place in the north Atlantic of US Revenue Cutter *Bear* was over. Dr. Thiesen stated, "*Bear* had served in a variety of capacities for nearly 90 years, a remarkable record for a ship built of wood."

The Coast Guard Heritage Museum has a detailed display of the *Bear*, and you are welcome to visit and see for yourself the incredible story of this piece of Coast Guard history.

Patricia Garrity

WORKS CITED

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Thiesen, William H. Ph.D., U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, *Bear* Cutter File

President's Report

All is well and thriving at our museum as we complete our 17th year here in Barnstable Village. We have successfully fought our way through the many challenges presented by COVID and have come out even stronger as we, hopefully, near the end of the pandemic. Thanks to the support of our members, donors/sponsors, active-duty personnel, and talented and dedicated volunteers, we have continued to grow and are excited about our ambitious plans for the future. These include significant infrastructure improvements, more interactive exhibits, and several new outreach programs.

This past year, we expanded our audio tours, added several important artifacts to our exhibits, and have given many public talks at the museum, to local groups on the Cape, and to Zoom audiences as distant as Pennsylvania (National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum) and Michigan (USS *Silversides* Museum). We also have been working closely and productively with senior staff at the Foundation for Coast Guard History, Coast Guard Historian's Office, and the offices of the proposed National Coast Guard Museum.

Many influential individuals, potential sponsors and history groups have visited the museum this summer. These included Captain Fred Herzberg of the CG Museum NW (Seattle), state and local politicians, and many veterans with interesting stories.

For 2022, our Changing Exhibit Gallery will be dedicated to the story of Coast Guard Oceanography – Admiral "Iceberg" Smith, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute & the Coast Guard Oceanographic Unit, WWII Greenland Patrol, International Ice Patrol, and the service's polar operations supporting marine science research. If you have stories or artifacts that may add to the value of this planned exhibit, please contact us.

Thank you all for your interest in the Coast Guard's rich history, particularly here on Cape Cod.

Greg Ketchen

Crew from Cape Cod Canal Station move 19th century 210# bell to 2nd deck for display in AtoN exhibit room.



The Buoy Depot, South Weymouth, Massachusetts

by John G. Stanley Jr, LCDR USCGR (ret.)

Located, fifteen miles south of Boston, is a small, little-known but vital, cog-in-wheel of the aids to navigation service-cycle. I'm referring to the Industrial Production Detachment (IPD), South Weymouth, Massachusetts—otherwise known as the Buoy Depot.

There are approximately 4800 floating aids to navigation (ATON) on station in the First Coast Guard District, which covers more than 2000 miles of coastline from the Canadian border to Toms River, New Jersey. In addition, there are 1300 “out-of-service” buoys which includes buoys waiting either to be serviced or deployed and temporary aids such as ice buoys, which substitute for certain aids in winter. Of these aids, approximately 4100 are made of steel, the rest are plastic.

Steel buoys are designed to have a service life of twenty to thirty years depending on location and employment history. They are inspected by aids to navigation (ATON) units every one to three years. If all is well, they remain on station. If not, they are replaced. Regardless, every buoy gets refit (at least) every six years. That's where the Buoy Depot comes in.



The Coast Guard Buoy Depot South Weymouth, Massachusetts.

In general, buoys are serviced in accordance with a pre-determined maintenance schedule. In the past, before more stringent environmental regulations were instituted, buoys were serviced in site. Nowadays, a buoy tender simply removes an aid and replaces it with one specifically prepared for the location. The relieved aid is then brought to shore where it is loaded on a flatbed truck and brought to the Buoy Depot. If the buoy is serviceable, it's prepared for refitting. If not, it's scrapped and its steel is recycled. In general, a given buoy will pass through the depot six or seven times before it can no longer be repaired.



Scrapped buoys awaiting recycling.

The Refit Process.

First, if the buoy has a light, bell, or gong they are removed. Then the buoy is placed in a carriage for its journey through the facility. Each carriage is equipped with rollers that allow the buoy to be rotated as it's being worked on.



Buoys on carriages.

The first stop is the sandblasting bay for the removal of everything that is not steel – rust, mud, barnacles and other marine growth, old coatings, etc. This enormous bay is big enough to handle the largest buoy. Each buoy is wheeled in and suspended from the ceiling of the bay.

Once the doors are secured, the blasting begins. Grit is shot out of four nozzles, which are aimed by computer to cover one side of the aid. As the sanding grit strips the aid, it's vacuumed and recycled back to the nozzles. On its way, it passes through a filter that catches the grit and returns for another go-round. Particles which are too small, such as paint chips and rust, fall away and are collected for disposal. Once the one side of the aid is done, it's rotated to sandblast the other side.



The sandblasting bay.

The sandblasting reveals the flaws in the aid's steel; most often it's pitting caused by water getting through the aid's protective coating through natural wear along the waterline or if the aid has been damaged. If the coating is breached, that area will begin to rust and when the rust is removed, the remaining steel will be pitted.

After sandblasting, the next step is the welding shop. Here the steel is repaired. Most often, this is to fill the pitted areas by arc welding. These filled areas are actually stronger than the steel they replace. The aid's bottom ring, cage (if it has one), and radar reflector are also repaired.

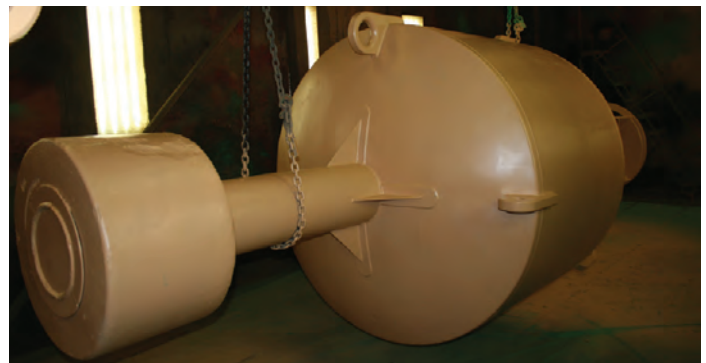


A buoy after welding. Note the band around the upper portion of the vessel approximately at the waterline – a common location of rusting/pitting.



A partially sandblasted buoy.

The next stop for the aid is the "paint shed" where it will get its coatings. Once again, the aid is lifted off the carriage and suspended from the ceiling. This allows for the aid to be coated on all sides. The buoy is primed and painted – usually red or green above the waterline and with anti-fouling paint below the waterline.



An aid suspended in the paint shed after priming.



Buoys after sandblasting.



An aid after receiving its final coatings.



After the coating(s) are finished, if the aid has a sound signal, such as a bell, that device is installed along with the proper color reflectors.

At left:
The bridle for lifting a bell onto an aid.

Below: refurbished buoys ready for transport to an ATON unit.



When the process is complete, the aids are taken by flatbed truck to an ATON unit where they will be placed on board a buoy tender for deployment. Right before that happens, the local unit puts the final touches on the aid reinstalling its light and putting on its identifying numbers and/or letters. Then the buoy is placed on station.

A Personal Connection

My father, John G. Stanley (CAPT, USCG ret.), was responsible for the Buoy Depot's establishment. Dad, a commander at the time, was the head of the First District Civil Engineering Branch from 1971 to 1976. During that time he learned that ATON were being serviced at bases all over the District and thought there had to be a better way. He did a study, got his idea for the Buoy Depot approved, and got the funding. The land was acquired from the (now defunct) South Weymouth Naval Air Station (hence its location) and building commenced. It became fully operational in April of 1973. This facility is the only one of its kind in the Coast Guard.



The officers assigned to the First Coast Guard District, Civil Engineering Branch Summer 1971 Pictured from left to right, LCDR Costa Alton, Assistant Branch Chief; MAT2 James Henderson; CAPT Norman Scherer, Chief, Engineering Division; LT Bill Miller; LT Harry Budd; CDR John Stanley, Branch Chief; and Mr. Edward Williams, Technical Assistant. Missing from picture: LTJG Christian Wethe

John Stanley Jr is the First District all-hazard Contingency Planner, a position he has held since 1989. He retired from the Coast Guard Reserve on 2004.

His dad, prior to becoming a full-time engineer, served as a deck watch officer and engineer on the USCGC BIBB from 1956 to 1960. He retired as the Chief of Civil Engineering Branch at Coast Guard Headquarters in 1982.

Did you know . . .

The United States Coast Guard is one of the oldest organizations of the federal government. Established in 1790, the Coast Guard served as the nation's only armed force on the sea until Congress launched the Navy Department eight years later. Since then, the Coast Guard has protected the United States throughout its long history and served proudly in every one of the nation's conflicts.



Jack McGrath presenting Elmer Stone medallions from CG Aviation Association to Buck Baley, Greg Ketchen and Bill Collette.



Coast Guard Heritage Museum

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Would you like to publish an article in our newsletter? Contact us at 508-362-8521.

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Janna Lambine, CDR USCGR (Retired) U.S. Coast Guard's First Female Helicopter Pilot

Janna Lambine, CDR, USCGR Retired, the US Coast Guard's first female helicopter pilot passed away on October 21, 2021 in Brewster, MA with her wife Lisa Bartran at her side. Janna was the first woman designated as a Coast Guard aviator, becoming CG Aviator #1812 on March 4, 1977.

Janna was born in 1951 to Alberta and Oscar Lambine in Norwood, MA, and grew up in neighboring East Walpole, MA. Walpole High School was progressively ahead of Title IX with their girls' sports program and Janna excelled in basketball, softball, and field hockey. Upon graduating from Bates College, Janna was accepted into the Coast Guard's Officer Candidate Program.



With Janna's lifelong love of the sea, she wanted to be assigned to a Coast Guard cutter, but they were not open to women at that time. However, CG aviation opened to women just then. Janna went to flight training, becoming the first woman in the Coast Guard to become a pilot, and more specifically, a helicopter pilot, assigned to Air Station Astoria, Oregon.

Janna was also most likely the first woman to land a helicopter on a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier. In a training approach to the USS Lexington, Janna called in on the radio and the command scrambled to figure out what to do. While the regulations specifically did not allow Navy women on the carriers, there were no rules prohibiting a Coast Guard woman so she was allowed to land. Janna fulfilled her active-duty obligation and transferred to the Coast Guard Reserves.

Janna earned her MBA at Portland State University, which she put to use in project work during multiple extended active-duty reserve assignments. She served as the Commanding Officer of Reserve Unit Newport, OR, worked as a reserve intelligence officer during Operation Desert Storm, served as Executive Officer of Reserve Unit Atlantic Area, was the senior reserve officer at Support Center Boston, and was the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. Janna retired at the rank of Commander.

