



Coast Guard Heritage Museum

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

Fall 2019 Newsletter

August Visit of Motor Lifeboat CG36500

As part of the Museum's celebration of the U.S. Coast Guard's 229th birthday, members were invited to see the restored and fully functional Motor Lifeboat *CG36500*. While berthed at Rock Harbor in Orleans, where she is a floating museum, she proudly visited Barnstable Harbor under her own power. In 2005, the boat was added to the National Register of Historical Places.

On February 18, 1952, four Coastguardsmen, Coxswain Bernie Webber with crewmen Andrew Fitzgerald, Richard Livesey and Ervin Maske (all from the Chatham Lifeboat Station) risked their lives in a howling nor'easter off Cape Cod to save 33 mariners from the shipwrecked tanker *Pendleton*. They brought all but one to safety in a wooden motor lifeboat designed to hold no more than 16 people. The crew all received the Gold Lifesaving Medal, the Coast Guard's highest honor, for "extreme and heroic daring." In 2012, the Coast Guard commissioned the *Bernard C. Webber*, the first of 58 new Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutters (FRC). All of the new cutters will be named after USCG enlisted heroes.

At the Barnstable Harbor docking, volunteers John Norton (at left) and John Sinopoli (not pictured) were on hand to answer questions and recount the story of the 36500's role in the rescue of the crew of the *SS Pendleton*. The rescue is remembered as one of the most famous small boat rescues in the annals of Coast Guard history. Authors Michael Tougias and Casey Sherman write about the rescue in *The*



John Norton and CGHM member Peter Motyka on deck

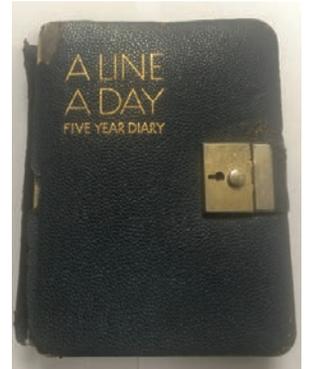


Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue. It became a movie produced by Walt Disney Studios, premiering in January 2016.

President's Report

This fall we completed our 15th year of being open to the public. There is much to celebrate as we continue to grow and improve.

Back in 2004, one of our founders expressed concern about how we would fill the entire old Custom House here in Barnstable Village with compelling exhibits containing museum quality items. Another founder profoundly told him "open the doors and it will come" . . . they were and it has. Today, our collection on display and in our archives is exceptionally deep and rich. Valuable new items are donated nearly every week. These are most often items of historic significance, including documents, artifacts, oral histories, exceptionally high-quality models, and other pieces of the service's history stretching back over 300 years (e.g. Boston Light in 1716). One recent example is a diary and many photographs donated this fall by the DiRosario family from Phoenix. Their family ties go back to Massachusetts. Jack



DiRosario's dad Leno was a Coast Guard 3rd class Carpenter's Mate on board LST 795 when it landed on the beaches of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in early 1945. The diary has many very interesting entries. One that could confirm the Coast Guard's involvement in an historic event. That entry reads:

"Feb. 22, 1945 - We hit the beach on Thursday at 1000 AM. We were the first three to hit the beach (Red 2) to unload cargo - At that time we lost our First LT. Greff who was shot in the left thigh by a sniper. We retrack of {sic} the beach at two thirty, leaving two men behind on the beach. Three men lost in our first invasion. Made 32' pole for marines to raise flag the next day.

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The Origins of American Icebreaking

William Thiesen, Historian, Coast Guard Atlantic Area

Though various ice-strengthened vessels were built in the era, most were simply ice resistant, and had neither the requisite horsepower nor hull design for forcing the vessels through the ice.

Donald L. Canney

Historian and Archivist, U.S. Coast Guard retired

During the Age of Sail, the seasonal pattern of icebound winters froze-in merchant vessels and reduced the winter-time demand for revenue cutters on the Great Lakes, in the Northeast and in the Mid-Atlantic States. In some cases, cutters were decommissioned in December, winterized and their crews dismissed until the spring thaw.

Two historical trends changed this age-old routine in northern waters; first was the development of steel hulls and steam engines. During the Age of Sail, breaking ice proved impossible with brittle wooden hulls and wind power unable to push ships through ice. Steam and steel provided the technology necessary to survive, crush and clear ice-covered waters.

Second, as maritime interests chased valuable resources into icebound waters and commercial shipping continued further into the winter months, the duties of the Revenue Cutter Service increased in frozen areas previously considered unsafe in wintertime. For example, in 1867, Alaska became a U.S. territory luring adventurers and those exploiting natural resources on land and at sea. Alaska's vast maritime frontier required the support of the Service's law enforcement, humanitarian and search and rescue missions.



Rare photograph of *Bear* sitting in the ice while aiding another vessel. (USCG)

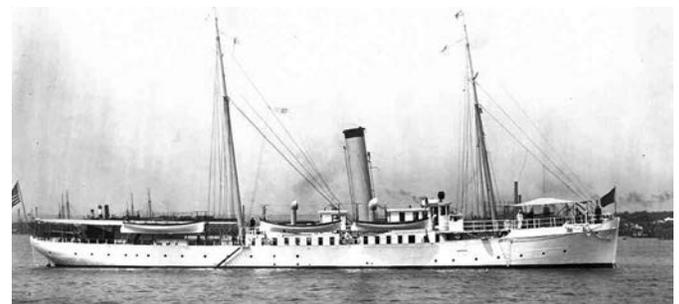
The first revenue cutters designed to operate in the ice were "ice resistant." These included the famed cutter *Bear*, which was heavily constructed with a wooden hull over a foot thick.

Built in 1874 for seal hunting, *Bear* had wooden sheathing covering its planks to resist puncture and compression by ice flows. It also had metal plating on its bow allowing it to push through leads and openings in the ice without damaging its stem. *Bear* carried a full sail rig, but relied on steam power to navigate through the ice.

In 1885, *Bear* began its service career when the U.S. Navy turned it over to the Revenue Cutter Service. *Bear* proved effective only in the warmer months and normally did not steam north of the Arctic Circle in winter months. One of the few attempts to do so was the Overland Rescue, which began in November 1897, when *Bear* steamed north to relieve starving whalers trapped in the ice near Pt. Barrow, Alaska. *Bear* made it to Cape Vancouver, as far north as pack ice permitted, then disembarked a rescue team that drove a herd of reindeer 1,500 miles north to the icebound whalers. The rescue succeeded due to land-based dog sleds, while the cutter remained stuck in the ice until the spring thaw. Other cutters carried on Alaska's storied Bering Sea Patrol, but none of them had hulls reinforced to serve in the Arctic ice.

In the early 1900s, the Age of Sail began to fade and the Revenue Cutter Service began a more aggressive approach of not just surviving in the ice but breaking and clearing it. This unofficial mission took root in New England and the Mid-Atlantic States as merchant vessels began operating into the winter months. To work in the ice, the Service began retrofitting existing steam-powered cutters to serve in icy conditions.

Records indicate that the first iron cutter reinforced to serve in icebound waters was the *Apache* (ex-Cutter *Galveston*). Commissioned in 1891 to serve on the Galveston Station,



Apache (ex-*Galveston*), the Service's first revenue cutter retrofitted to break ice with a reinforced plumb bow replacing its original clipper bow and bowsprit. (U.S. Coast Guard)

the *Galveston* served there several years and survived the cataclysmic Great Galveston Hurricane of 1900. In 1904, the Service modernized the cutter, replacing its powerplant with a 1,200 horsepower steam engine, reconfigured its superstructure and, to aid in icebreaking duties, replaced the cutter's original clipper bow with a plumb bow. In 1906, after retrofitting its hull and powerplant, the Service assigned *Apache* to the Chesapeake Bay where waterways and coastal areas commonly froze solid in the early 20th century.

In addition to the Chesapeake Bay, the Revenue Cutter Service began assigning cutters year round to the Northeast. Constructed in 1908 to operate in Massachusetts, the heavily built steel-hulled *Acushnet* was robust enough to cruise New England in the winter months. In addition to the *Acushnet*, the Service built the *Androscoggin* in 1908. Designed to break ice and keep open harbors in winter, the *Androscoggin* was the Revenue Cutter Service's last cutter built of wood.

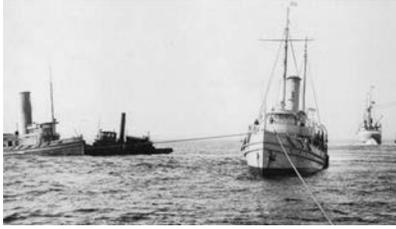
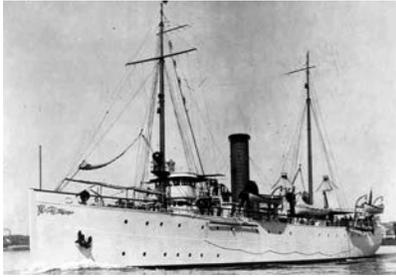


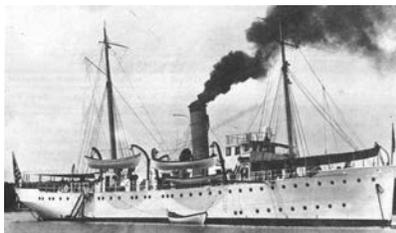
Photo of the steel-hulled ice-capable cutter *Acushnet*, built in 1908. (U.S. Coast Guard)

At the time, some ship designers still preferred wooden hulls to serve in icebound waters. With an iron-reinforced spoon bow and powerful steam engine, *Androscoggin* cruised the Maine Coast from Eastport south to Massachusetts. *Androscoggin* was likely the first icebreaker designed to ride over the ice and crush it rather than backing and ramming.



Black and white photo of the *Androscoggin*, last wooden cutter built for the Revenue Cutter Service. (U.S. Coast Guard)

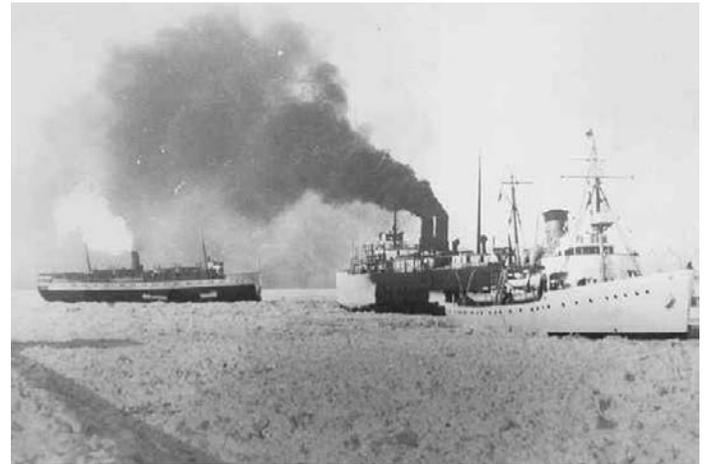
In 1915, the modern Coast Guard continued icebreaking efforts begun by the Revenue Cutter Service. That year, the 165-foot steel cutter *Ossipee* was built with reinforced hull for light icebreaking duties. *Ossipee* replaced the older *Androscoggin* and broke ice on the Maine Coast. After World War I, the Service assigned another cutter to Maine to augment that region's icebreaking capability. Acquired in 1921 by the Coast Guard, the 157-foot ocean-going tug *Kickapoo* was modified for icebreaking duties. The Service added to the cutter a six-foot icebreaker bow and eight feet to its beam. Like the *Androscoggin*, *Kickapoo's* bow was designed to ride over the



Built in 1915, *Ossipee* was one of the first classes of modern cutters designed for light icebreaking duties. (U.S. Coast Guard)

ice and crush it rather than breaking the ice with blunt force. With a powerful 1,600 horsepower steam engine, the *Kickapoo* proved successful in its icebreaking role and took on buoy tending duties in World War II ending its career in 1945.

The Service retired Alaska's ice-resistant wooden cutters *Thetis*, which served from 1899 to 1916, and *Bear*, which served until 1927, so the Coast Guard required a new cutter to serve in the icebound areas of Bering Sea. Rather than a heavy icebreaker, the Service built a modern vessel similar in some ways to the *Bear*. Commissioned in 1927, Cutter *Northland* came equipped with a sail rig, reinforced steel hull and a cutaway bow to push through openings and leads in pack ice. With a cruising range of nearly 20,000 miles, *Northland's* diesel-electric powerplant proved economical for long Bering Sea Patrols, but it was too weak to break thick ice.



Cutter *Escanaba* breaking ice near Sault Ste. Marie together with icebreaking car ferries serving that part of the Great Lakes. (U.S. Coast Guard)

Color photograph of *Northland*, with cut-down masts, sitting in the ice in World War II's Greenland Patrol. (U.S. Coast Guard)



Color photograph of *Northland*, with cut-down masts, sitting in the ice in World War II's Greenland Patrol. (U.S. Coast Guard)

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Early Icebreaking continued from page 3

In the early 1930s, the Service built its first class of cutters with icebreaking in mind. Built of steel, the 165-foot Escanaba-Class cutters had a slightly cutaway forefoot and double plating in the bow allowing them to break over a foot of ice. However, these cutters could not break the thickest ice in the Great Lakes where a number of them were stationed.

In 1936, the Coast Guard received its first official directive to break ice. On December 21, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 7521 directing the Coast Guard “to assist in keeping open to navigation by means of icebreaking operations . . . channels and harbors within the reasonable demands of commerce.” Written in response to a severe freeze blocking much-needed heating oil barges on East Coast waterways, Roosevelt’s executive order mandated the domestic icebreaking mission carried out unofficially for decades by the Revenue Cutter Service and then the Coast Guard.

Roosevelt’s directive led to the development of a class of 110-foot icebreaking tugs. Commissioned in 1939, before U.S. entry into World War II, the Raritan-Class of tugs incorporated an icebreaking bow that could break thick ice in the nation’s inland waterways, rivers and harbors.

They also incorporated heavy hull plating and framing, and powerful diesel-electric powerplants. These tugs were the first Coast Guard cutters designed to break thick ice and not merely survive in it. Their successful design was proven in January 1940 when the 110-foot tug *Arundel* competed against the 165-foot Escanaba-Class cutter *Comanche* in breaking 12-inch sheet ice on the Hudson River. While the *Comanche* made slow progress backing and ramming the ice, *Arundel* made steady progress plowing through the ice with its icebreaking bow and powerful engine. These tugs served as a model for later icebreaking tugs, buoy tenders and cutters.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Coast Guard took its earliest strides in icebreaking. The Service transitioned from ice resistant cutters to light icebreaking cutters and, just before World War II, to successful icebreaking tugs. The Service no longer used wooden hulls, but only steel. In addition, icebreaker bow design evolved and powerful engines were used to push icebreakers through the ice. World War II would mark a shift from the incremental technological change witnessed in the early 20th century. Instead, the war accelerated production of icebreakers capable of breaking thick ice domestically and in the ice-bound Polar Regions.

Did you know . . .

Long before cute puppies and adorable kittens were being used to promote animal welfare, the Massachusetts Humane Society was a volunteer organization of concerned Boston citizens, looking for ways to save human lives. Established in 1786, members were mostly concerned about the needless deaths resulting from shipwrecks and drownings.



Humane Society Building in Barnstable Harbor (from the collection of Barnstable Historical Society)

Modeled after a similar organization established in Great Britain in 1774, early activities consisted of publishing procedures for dealing with victims of water-related accidents and the placement of lifesaving equipment, lifeboats and shelters on the islands and coast of Massachusetts. It offered rewards to individuals who successfully rescued injured mariners from the state’s waters, and by the early 20th century, the Society operated more than 50 support stations along the coast.

In the early 19th century, the Society was a major funding source for the establishment of Massachusetts General Hospital. The Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts became the model for the United States Life-Saving Service, funded by Congress in 1848 and operated as a mission of the United States Coast Guard since 1915.



LST595 offloading on Iwo Jima beach

Feb. 23, 1945 – The American Flag was raised on top of MT. Suribacki (sic). Many a life was lost trying to get to the top of that MT.”

Leno DiRosario

Confirmation of the Coast Guard contributions to the events surrounding the two flag raisings by U.S. Marines on Iwo Jima on February 23rd (the second famously photographed by Joe Rosenthal) needs more research. We, with the assistance of the Coast Guard Historian's office, are working on it. The currently accepted story is that the Marines used an old Japanese water pipe as a flag pole for both the first and second flag raising. It appears clear that the flag pole actually used was much less than 32' but Jack told us that the pole his father made was in two pieces. Possibly only half of it was ultimately used by the Marines? More to come.

If you are in the area and interested in helping us out set up new exhibits, catalog items in our archive, help with research, or work on one of a variety of other projects planned for this offseason, please let us know. Many of us are usually at the museum on most Tuesdays and Thursdays during the winter.

*Greg Ketchen, Captain, USCG (retired)
President, CG Heritage Museum*

The Early Role of Women in the U.S. Coast Guard

by Patricia Garrity

The Coast Guard Heritage Museum has winter plans to expand the story of Diversity in the Coast Guard in our upstairs exhibit space. In researching for this topic and looking into the formal role women took on, one needs to include the lighthouse keepers such as Ida Lewis and Hannah Thomas. But often, those brave women were fulfilling the job previously held by their husband or father, and not formally recognized with a title or rank.

Although the Coast Guard had done many jobs since 1790 without taking women into its enlisted or officer ranks, the onset of a world war changed the course of history for women in all the armed services. When World War II came, the Coast Guard and the other services found themselves in great need of more men at sea and more troops on foreign soil. By filling the U.S. shore jobs with women, more men were allowed to serve elsewhere, in combat or naval duty for the war effort.

The first director of the SPARS was Captain Dorothy C. Stratton, the Dean of Women on leave from Purdue University. It was she who developed the SPARS name. The motto of the U.S. Coast Guard is “Semper Paratus” which means “Always Ready”. SPARS is an acronym for “Semper Paratus Always Ready”.



In correspondence to Commandant, Vice Admiral Russell Waesche, Captain Stratton explained that a spar, in nautical terms, referred to a supporting beam. She felt that the members

of the Women's Reserve would be just that – support for the Coast Guard. Captain Stratton held a master's degree from the University of Chicago, and a doctorate from Columbia University. (She died in 2006 at the age of 107).

The average SPAR officer was 29 years old, single, a college graduate, and had worked in a professional or managerial position (in education or government) before entering the service. The average enlisted SPAR was 24 years old, a high school graduate, and had worked for over three years in a clerical or sales job before joining the service. The likelihood was that she was from the state of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio or California.

Uniforms worn by SPARS were the same design and style as those worn by the WAVES (Naval Women's Reserve), except for the service insignia. They were created for them by the New York fashion house of Mainbocher and consisted of a navy blue suit, plain black pumps, a brimmed hat, black gloves and a black leather purse. The summer uniform was of the same design as the standard uniform, worn in white Palm Beach cloth, tropical worsted or other light fabrics.

With the end of the war in 1945, the SPAR program began to disband and the Women's Reserve of the USCG (SPARS) was formally deactivated on 25 July, 1947. The 10,000 members of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve returned to civilian life. Although the SPARS no longer exist as a separate organization, the term is sometimes informally used for a female Coast Guardsman; however it is not an officially sanctioned term.



Coast Guard Heritage Museum

P.O. Box 161 • 3353 Main Street, Barnstable, MA 02630
508-362-8521 • email: cgheritage@comcast.net • www.cgheritage.org

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

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Coast Guard Heritage Museum's 2020 Opening Day: Friday, May 1
Join us for a Commemoration of
Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod's 50th Anniversary

BECOME A COAST GUARD HERITAGE MUSEUM MEMBER!

Individual - \$25 Single membership: attending annual meeting with no voting privilege, individual admission to the museum, and a 10% gift shop discount.

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We are a 501(c)(3) organization and our mission is to preserve and share the story of the U.S. Coast Guard in the former U.S. Custom House, Barnstable, MA.