THE COAST GUARD AT WAR

ALASKA

III

PREPARED IN THE
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THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD IN ALASKA

INTRODUCTION

ALASKA REDISCOVERED

When the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor in June, 1942, obscure and forgotten Alaska was suddenly focused in the spotlight of public attention. War-minded Americans searched in their atlases to find Unalaska just as they had looked a few days earlier for strategic Midway. For some fifteen months in 1942 and 1943 war activities in the Aleutians and the Bering Sea area held Alaska in the foreground of popular discussion. Along with the doubts and the fears for the safety of the Pacific coast, it brought to the Territory a long sought recognition. To the average American Alaska was just a yellow coloured section on the map, recently disclosed as an important American outpost in the North Pacific, now threatened by the enemy; the Aleutians were little more than a straggling chain of economically useless islands, the possession of which would put the aggressor in a position to attack our continental shores. During the months of the Aleutian campaign that followed, Alaska was rediscovered-rescued, as it were, from the myth and fantasy of romantic brochures and luring guide books. But lack of definite interest often breeds ignorance. As a people, we were as uninformed of the economic importance of Alaska as we were unaware of its strategic geographical position. Only gradually did we come to learn of the great development that had been taking shape there during the last few decades. In particular, we soon learned that the military was not caught entirely unprepared. At the beginning of the war the Coast Guard already had the nucleus of a well established organization operating in Alaska. Soon after Pearl Harbor the Army and Navy joined with it and other government agencies in the activation of full defense measures for the Territory, completed as rapidly as construction and military installations were possible. The Seventeenth Naval District soon became the center of feverish war preparations. The Bering Sea and Arctic region had been familiar ground to Coast Guardsmen for many years; it now became a practical theatre of activity for all branches of the military. Alaska constituted the main bulwark of defense for the entire northwest Pacific.

STRATEGIC POSITION OF ALASKA

There were those who had almost forgotten that our last frontier extended to the far Arctic. It was not until the advent of war that the Alaskan area was suddenly transformed into an active theatre of defense strategy. Within the immediate range of Japanese thrusts across the North Pacific and the acquisition of air and naval bases in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, Alaska was belatedly recognized as a key to the security of both the United States and Canada. Moreover, it served as a vital connecting link across the Bering Strait with our military ally, Russia, as well as a potential seat of operations for offensive action against the Japanese bases in the Pacific. Alaska lies approximately in the center of a great world circle around the North Pole, which encompasses part of the three continents of North America, Asia, and Europe. The Bering Sea, guarded by the Aleutians which enclose it, is our back door entrance to Asia. It is not surprising,

UNALASKA, ALASKA JUNE 1938

therefore, that Japan, long cognizant of the strategic position of the Aleutians, should consider them not as outposts but as central keystones in the Pacific war. It is well to remember that Dutch Harbor was nearer to Tokyo than British Singapore. In the advantages of geographical position, Alaska is to the Pacific what Newfoundland or Greenland are to the Atlantic. Fairbanks, in the heart of the Interior, is but a two-day polar flight from London, Paris, Berlin, or Moscow. Roughly, it is about the same air distance to Tokyo as it is to New York or Honolulu. Unalaska, where Dutch Harbor was bombed, is only about 2,000 miles from either Honolulu or San Francisco. The United States naval base at Kodiak is nearer to Tokyo by some 900 miles than Pearl Harbor. Although Attu, the most western American island, is approximately 1,500 miles from Tokyo, it lies only 750 miles northeast of the Kuriles, or the northernmost islands of the Japanese archipelago. After our recapture of that island we were within striking distance of the important Japanese naval base at Paramashiru, less than 800 miles away. The close proximity to Russia is equally significant. The Alaskan peninsula, which terminates in the Aleutian chain, is separated from the Kamchatka peninsula of Siberia by a bare ninety miles of water; Big Diomede Island and Little Diomede Island, respective possessions of the Soviet Republic and the United States, are but two and one-half miles apart. Had there been no military threat to this supremely important region, its main line position between the United States and two of her principal allies, Russia and China, was destined to effect a remarkable wartime development in Southern Alaska.

PRE-WAR NATIONAL DEFENSE

Not all the ramparts did we watch during the years preceeding the unheralded Japanese attack on the Philippines. Our back door of Alaska was left practically unwatched and completely undefended. As late as 1937, military authorities in the United States assumed that a small naval force was quite sufficient to assure the safety of Alaska and the Aleutians. Only a few far-sighted leaders, who envisaged the tremendous possibilities of air power in a future war, ventured to voice a protest. One such prophet was the late Brigadier General William ("Billy") Mitchell, who pointed out that the United States was in a better position than Japan to conduct an offensive campaign by air. With proper air bases, the Alaska peninsula could become a dagger threat to Japan, from which knife-like thrusts might be made from the Aleutians. He told a congressional committee in 1935 that Alaska was the most centrally located spot in the world for aircraft and that whoever held it might well be in a position to hold the world. "I think," he went on to add, "that it is the most important strategic place in the whole world." Whatever the exaggeration of the remark, his warning went unheeded. Although in 1940, the last year before our entrance into the war, the United States shipped $48,000,000 worth of products to Alaska and received $59,000,000 in return, we afforded practically no military protection to that trade. The peacetime strength of Alaska's military defenses consisted of a small Army garrison at Chilkoot Barracks, near Skagway. Attached to the Ninth Corps Area Headquarters at San Francisco, this garrison had about 300 men. The Navy Department maintained a seaplane station on Japonski Island, with a complement of approximately 216 personnel and twelve patrol planes. In addition to this base, there was a naval radio station at Dutch Harbor and radio direction finding stations located at Cross

COAST GUARDSMAN PROVIDES LIGHT FOR ESKIMO WOMAN IN REMOTE ALASKAN SETTLEMENT. THE "FUNNIES" SERVE AS WALLPAPER

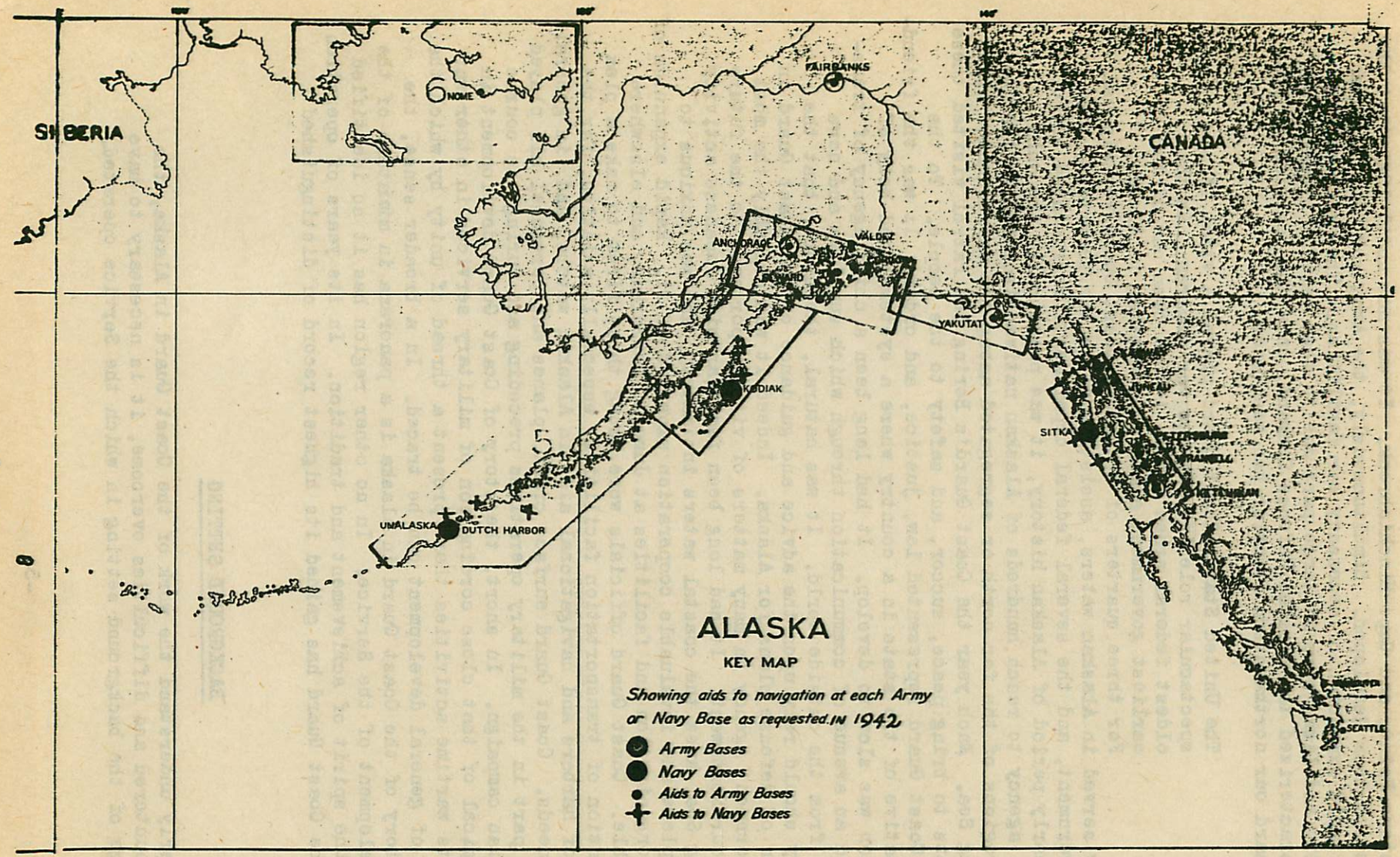
Sound, Soapstone Point, and Cape Hinchinbrook. It was not until 1941 that the new construction boom developed. Simultaneously, the Army and Navy began a race in the rapid expansion of necessary war facilities. The American successes at Attu and Kiska were in large part due to that careful preparation which so characterized the Alaskan Defense Command, once the decision to properly safeguard our northwestern frontier had been made.

COAST GUARD DEVELOPMENT IN ALASKA

The United States Coast Guard played a vital if unspectacular role in this new war program. As the oldest federal armed force, it had been one of the earliest government agencies operating in Alaska. For three quarters of a century Coast Guard vessels had continuously served in Alaskan waters, assisting alike the territory, the national government, and the several federal departments represented there. During the early period of Alaskan history, it was practically the only governmental agency to reach hundreds of Alaskan natives isolated in the inaccessable regions of the far north or segregated among the unfrequented isles of the Bering Sea. Each year the Coast Guard's Bering Sea Patrol visited these remote hamlets to bring peace, succor, and safety to the people. To the natives the Coast Guard represented law, justice, and order. It was the friendly representative of the state in a country where a systematized body of administration was slow to develop. It had long been a chief agency of transportation and an avenue of communication through which supplies and news were brought from the outside world. It was natural, therefore, that the Army and Navy should rely upon the advice and guidance of the Coast Guard in the formation of defense plans for Alaska. Indeed it was probably the most informed government agency on many matters of vital importance to the future security of our Northwest. It had long been familiar with Japanese activity in the Bering Sea, knew the coastal waters intimately, and was anxious to give the complete and invaluable cooperation expected of it. Rapid expansion of Coast Guard organization and facilities at Juneau, Ketchikan, and elsewhere were inevitable. Coast Guard officials were among those first to make a plea for the extension of transportation facilities, especially aviation, for the improvement of harbors and navigational aids in Alaskan waters, and, in general, for defense needs. Coast Guard surface craft, planes and personnel all played a legitimate part in the military operations preceding and during the course of the Aleutian campaign. In short, the story of Coast Guard development in Alaska is typical of that close cordination of military services in other war theatres. Its wartime activities there present a thread of unity by which the major trends of general development can be traced. In a broader sense, the complete history of the Coast Guard in Alaska is a panorama in miniature of the rise and development of the Service. In no other region has it so identified itself with the spirit of achievement and tradition. In its years of operation in Alaska, the Coast Guard has gained its highest record of distinguished service.

BACKGROUND SETTING

To properly understand the work of the Coast Guard in Alaska, the problems encountered and difficulties overcome, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the background setting in which the Service operated.


SIBERIA
6
NOME
FAIRBANKS
CANADA
ANCHORAGE
VALDEZ
SEWARD
YAKUTAT
KODIAK
5
SITKA
JUNEAU
UMALASKA
DUTCH HARBOR
SEATTLE
ALASKA
KEY MAP
Showing aids to navigation at each Army or Navy Base as requested in 1942
Army Bases
Navy Bases
Aids to Army Bases
Aids to Navy Bases

A brief review of certain historical, geographical, climatic, and economic factors will help to explain the many diversities of Coast Guard activity peculiar to that district alone.

THE HISTORICAL FACTOR

When the United States acquired Alaska in 1867 it was inhabited by a few hundred Russians and several thousand natives. Although all early census figures are incomplete and unreliable, it would appear that approximately 4,289 whites and 23,531 natives inhabited Alaska in 1890, just before the beginning of the gold rush of 1898. According to the last census of 1940 the total population figure had risen to 72,524, or only slightly less than that of Portland, Maine. Of these seventy odd thousand, only 39,170 are white, about the same number as fill the wartime Pentagon Building in Washington. The remainder are natives: the Eskimos of the Arctic and Bering Sea areas, the Athapascan and Tlingit-Haida Indians who respectively occupy the Interior and the southern coastal region, and the Aleuts in the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands. The population has expanded greatly since the beginning of the war period, being augmented by thousands of military personnel and civilian workers. Juneau is the capital but Ketchikan, as the supply and market center for the fishing and mining area, is the largest city. Skagway, Juneau, Cordova, and Seward are the chief ice-free ports in the south. However, Anchorage, ice-bound for half the year, still remains a principal port.

TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Alaska is a land of barren spaces and long distances. As an Organized Territory, including the Aleutian chain, it has an area of 586,400 square miles, of which over 21,000 are in government forest reservations. If superimposed upon the United States, this vast region, twice the size of Texas, would cover more than all the land area north of Tennessee and east of the Mississippi River. It lies in the same latitude as the Scandinavian peninsula and has rather a similar climate. Geographically it is divided into six quite well defined regions: The Arctic, Bering sea coast, south central, southwestern, southeastern, and the Interior. Historically, as well as from a military point of view, the southeast coastal region along the Canadian boundary and the Bering Sea area are the most important. Here the topography is the more desirable, the climate the best, and resources abundant. Elsewhere, regional contrasts are more striking. Southeastern Alaska is but a narrow strip of mainland with an adjacent string of islands, lying along British Columbia, yet it is the most highly developed part of the territory and supports over a third of its entire population. With its intricate network of innumerable narrow waterways and fjords, the 18,000 miles of southern coast line afford many sheltered, accessible harbors. The climate is quite equitable, with cool summers and moderate winter temperatures seldom dropping below zero. Tourists are always surprised to see the midnight sun and experience the average 60° temperature of Fairbanks. Even in the Arctic lowlands the average snowfall is less than that of Virginia. In both topography and climate, Alaska, like so many northern countries, is a land of many contrasts. No general description can characterize so vast a territory. About two-thirds of it lies in the temperate zone, while to the far north, remote outposts like Fort Yukon and Point Barrow mark the fringe of Arctic civilization. Mountainous ranges, supposedly the northward extension of the American continental chains, roughly divide the interior from

THREE COASTGUARDSMEN PAN FOR GOLD IN ALASKA DURING A WEEKEND LEAVE

the Arctic slope. The Interior, basin of the Yukon River system, is like a large plateau sloping toward the sea. It has the greatest extremes of temperature, the summers short, the winters long and severe. Precipitation is light in the interior regions whereas the rainfall is greatest on the Bering Sea coast, increasing to the westward along the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutians. Likewise the waters are inhospitable to all who are not intimately familiar with Alaskan seas. Heavy fogs, excessive rainfall, sudden squalls, icepacks, jagged shorelines, and hidden dangers all combine to render navigation generally hazardous, especially in the Aleutians. In most regions transportation is both difficult and uncertain, particularly in Arctic Alaska. For years the Coast Guard vessels of the Bering Sea Patrol and Arctic Cruise were almost the only contact between southern Alaska and the isolated outposts of the far north.

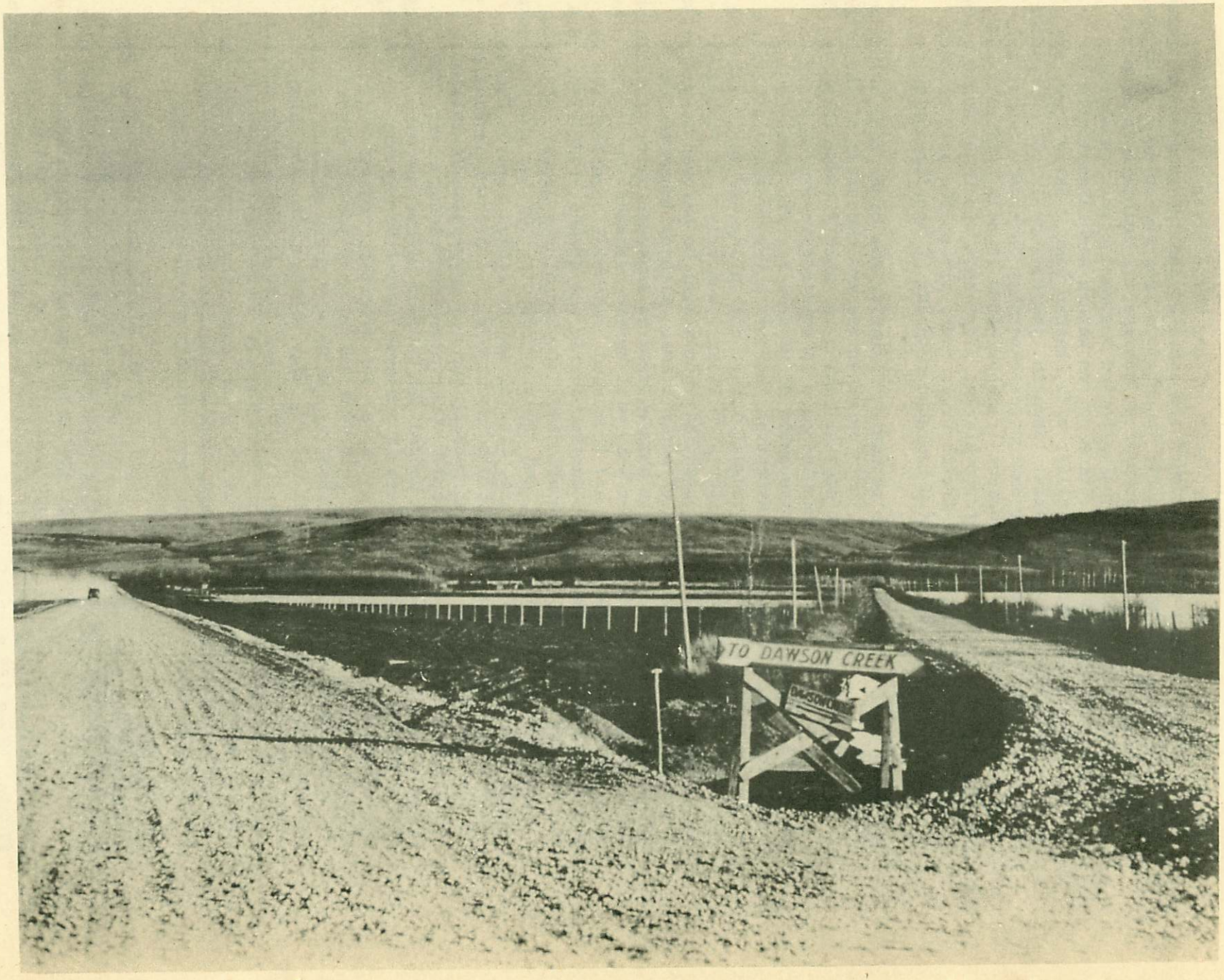
ECONOMIC POSITION

Alaska's economic insularity has often been noted by writers, but few observers are conscious of the extent to which that situation is rapidly being changed. The tremendous increase in aviation in recent years has brought Alaska within the active orbit of general Pacific commerce and communication. New aids to navigation, harbor improvement and additional port facilities have assumed unusual importance during the war. Internal improvements have become a matter of military necessity. It is highly improbable that new naval bases and air ports will be allowed to pass into desuetude after the cessation of hostilities. Already the Seventeenth Naval and Coast Guard Districts have emerged as separate units of organization, with increased facilities that will become permanent in serving peacetime needs. New trade routes and increased commercial opportunities had greatly stimulated Alaska's production during the decade, 1930-1940. She was fortunate in having a superabundance of natural resources: minerals, timber, water power, wildlife, and aquatic products. Of her three principal industries, fish, gold, and furs, fishing easily ranked first. Canned salmon and gold normally constituted about 80% of the total production of the Territory. In 1941 fish packing and mining grossed 74 million dollars, of which more than $56,000,000 represented canned fish. The annual output of gold averaged around $25,000,000 before the war. Actually, there has been little curtailment in economic output during the war years; oil, minerals, and timber are essential war materials; construction has boomed. During the peak year, 1943, the salmon pack totaled almost five and a half million cases. In 1944, approximately forty million pounds of halibut were taken from Alaskan waters. Fur taking in the Pribilofs, under governmental regulations, reached a new high in 1943, with 117,164 seal skins. However, mining has been sharply restricted, with gold production entirely eliminated. On the other hand, the output of coal and petroleum products is increasing. Meanwhile, the transportation and defense plans, begun in 1940-1941, were rapidly nearing completion.

WAR CHANGES: TRANSPORTATION AND MILITARY PREPARATION

When war broke in 1941, Alaska was serviced by two railroads, five steamship companies, and four radio broadcasting stations. Various commercial air lines had established a well-developed, dependable system of air transportation. At the close of the fiscal year 1938, the territory had 109 air fields with an additional number of seaplane floats. Some 155 aircraft flew 5,634,461 miles during the year, carrying

ALCAN HIGHWAY NEAR ST. JOHN. ALBERTA. WITH BRANCH ROAD TO RIGHT TO DAWSON CREEK



nearly three and one-half million pounds of express and freight in addition to the regular passenger service. Although the Alaska Road Commission in 1937 estimated the total mileage of all its roads and trails to be in the neighborhood of 11,000 miles, only 2,000 miles of highway were suitable for ordinary motor traffic. Alaska in a sense was cut off from the rest of the continent; there were no land connections between the United States and the new military bases that soon were established. The first Army project under the defense program was the weather experiment station at Ladd Field, Fairbanks, begun in 1939. It was destined to be Alaska's premier army airbase. The next year the important army base center at Anchorage was established, developing around Fort Richardson and the Elmendorf Air Field. Strategically located on the Alaska railroad, Anchorage affords protection to both the Interior and coastal area. Eventually it was to become the headquarters for the Alaska Defense Command. Before Pearl Harbor, garrisons had been established at Seward, Kodiak, and Dutch Harbor. In 1942 Canada and the United States entered into a mutual defense agreement for the fortification of Alaska and the Canadian Yukon. Since these early beginnings, a network of bases have been constructed in the southeastern "Panhandle," along the southern coast and the Alaskan peninsula. The Navy extended operations from its chief base of Dutch Harbor, setting up air and submarine bases at Kodiak and Sitka, with radio stations and reservations scattered throughout the Alaskan theatre. The more important Army bases were located at Anchorage, Fairbanks, Annette Island, and Yakutat. Other bases were later acquired in the Aleutian Islands during and prior to that campaign.[1] As the problem of supply became acute, commercial facilities had to be expanded. In many of these internal improvements, the Army lent its full assistance, as in the construction of roads, power plants, or pipe lines from the oil fields of Whitehorse to feed the route of the Alaska Highway.

THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

Transportation difficulties proved to be the greatest obstacle in the preparation for Alaska's defense. Such air and land routes as were already available were highly inadequate for the increased military demands. It was not a mere question of a future system of interconnected highways in Alaska but rather an immediate practicable route for military supplies. Since 1933, joint American-Canadian plans had been held in the offing for an international highway from Seattle to Fairbanks, a distance of about 2,256 miles.[2] In March, 1942, the project to complete the Alaskan end of the road was begun. It was constructed by the Army Engineering Corps, to be under the control of the United States until six months after the war, at which time Canada will take over the Yukon sector. It extends for 1,600 miles from Edmonton Canada to Fairbanks, connecting with the Richardson highway which leads to Valdez and Anchorage. The road leaves Alberta at Dawson Creek, proceeding northward through British Columbia via Forts St. John and Nelson and enters the Canadian Yukon just south of the airfield at Watson Lake; after passing through White-

1. For our principal bases during the Aleutian campaign, see pp. 65, 67, and 75.
2. This strategic military road is variously known as the "Alcan," Alaska-Canadian, Alaska, or the International Highway.

COAST GUARD PLANE IN ALASKA

horse and Kluane, it runs northwest to Big Delta, Alaska, joining the seventy-five mile stretch of road to Fairbanks. The building of this "Burma Road" of America was one of the most spectacular construction feats of the war. Over ten thousand military engineers and thousands of civilian workers pushed the highway to temporary completion by autumn of the same year. It was officially opened in November, 1942, although it was not completely finished until 15 July, 1943. Meanwhile, the Richardson and Glenn highways were further improved. The initial link in the Alaskan military chain had been completed. The next step was the perfection of the air transportation system.

DEVELOPMENT OF AVIATION

In general, military priorities, travel restrictions, regulations of ordinary production of civilian commodities, et cetera brought a sharp temporary decline in Alaskan commercial aviation. Many local air services were forced out of operation. Nevertheless, as all aviation activities were gradually shifted to war purposes, a total growth in aviation is discernable. Statistics for 1942 show a remarkable percentage increase in not only flight distances and flying time but also in passenger and freight services. The 4,932,868 miles flown in 1942 represented an increase of 11% over the previous year, while the increase of mail carried to from the States was augmented by 274% and 310% respectively. From the time the military program began, improvement in air facilities went forward at a rapid pace. Adequate fields were constructed, radio ranges, beacons, and other aids to air navigation established. Mainland fields, designed to supplement the main Army and Navy air bases, were constructed by the Civil Aeronautics Administration. The Pan-American Airways, Inc. expanded its Alaskan Division in 1940 to establish a by-weekly clipper service between Seattle and Juneau, with a shuttle service to key centers in the interior region and along the coast. A continuous chain of well-equipped, modern airports along the southern Alaskan coast and adjacent islands, across the Canadian Yukon to Fairbanks, fanning out toward Nome and the Aleutians was a prerequisite to this new air power. Converted commercial air lines were pressed into service as auxiliary supply units. Sawmills, trucks, power units, gasoline storage tanks all were flown to Alaska during the days of military construction. In one instance a 3,220-pound PT boat engine was transported by air to the Aleutians. For the first calender year of the war the Pan-American company's planes alone carried 8,107 passengers and 195,842 pounds of express in Alaska; in 1943 the total was 20,204 passengers and 2,778,972 pounds of express. During the critical month of July, 1943, it completed 334 schedules for the forces engaged in the battle of the Aleutians. The Civil Aeronautics Board certified twenty-one Alaskan air carriers in December, 1942, providing an air service for all sections of the country. One of the six super-radio stations of the Federal Airways Service, for communication with all aircraft, is now operating at Anchorage. The American and Canadian systems of airways are so integrated with the Alaskan system as to virtually constitute a single coordinated unit. Today Alaska has as good a system of airways and airports as most parts of the United States. Indeed the Aviation Annual of 1944 describes it as "the largest and most efficient in the world." It has made an isolated territory an integral part of the United States. Aviation development in Alaska was originally tantamount to military security. It now guarantees the great territorial expansion of the future.

U. S. Revenue Cutter [illegible] at anchor [illegible]ia, B. C.
November, 1870.

COAST GUARD ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS IN ALASKA

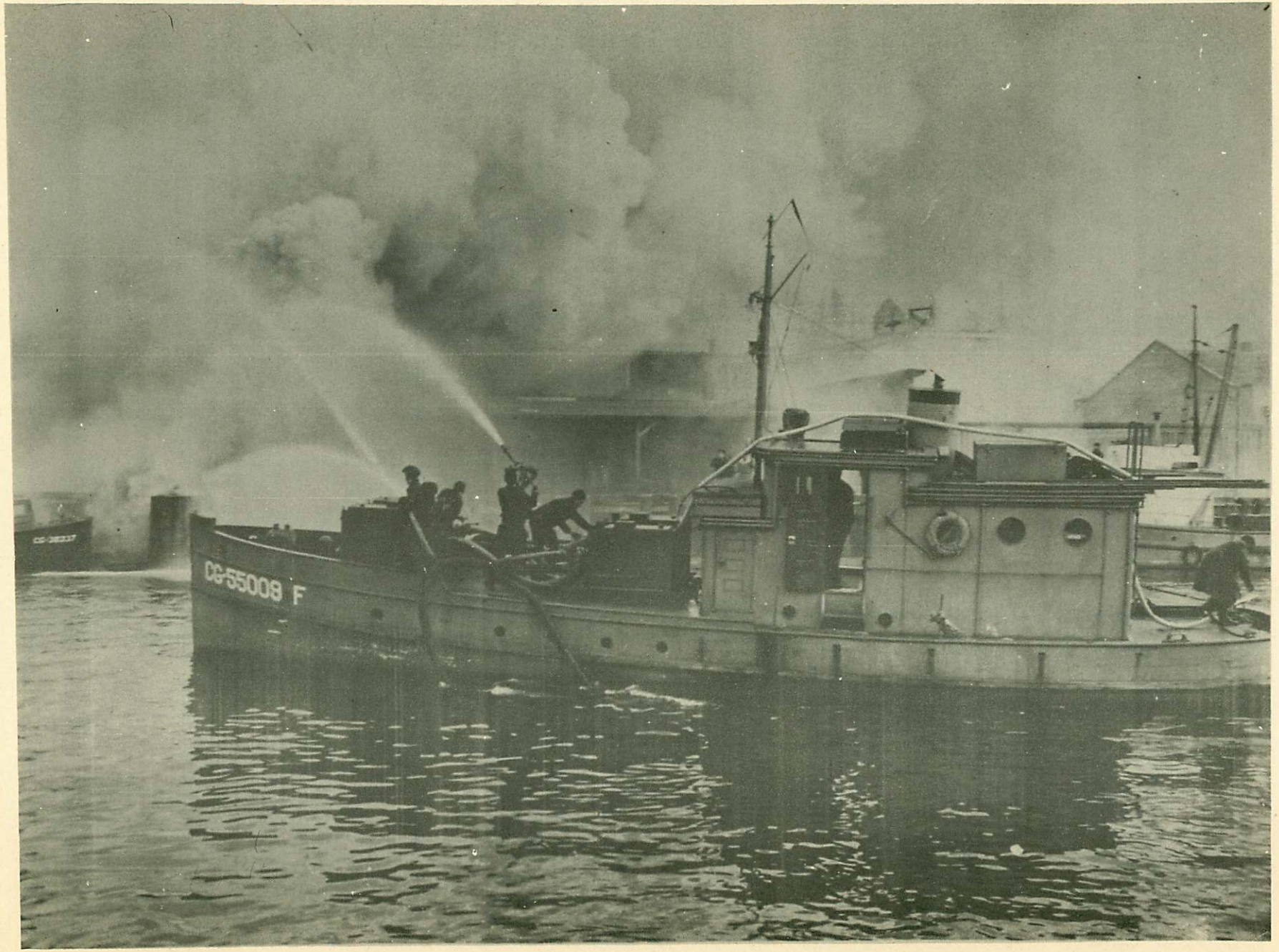
COAST GUARD BEGINNING IN ALASKA

The United States Coast Guard, authorized by the first congress in 1790, is almost as old as the government itself. It operated as the Revenue Cutter Service until 1915, when it was merged with the Life-Saving Service and given the name "Coast Guard." In one official capacity or another it has operated in Alaska ever since acquisition of the Territory. In fact, it had been concerned with Alaska before it became a United States possession. When the telegraph cable line to St. Petersburg was projected in 1865, a revenue cutter was cruising in Alaskan waters. After the territory was transferred to the United States, the cutter, LINCOLN was the first American vessel to arrive there. Regular Revenue Cutter patrol work in the Arctic region began as early as 1880, when the cutter CORWIN was assigned to general police work, in the Bering Sea. From the very beginning, therefore, Alaska became the peculiar responsibility of the Coast Guard. Conversely, the development of many Coast Guard activities has been clearly reflected in the vicissitudes of Alaskan expansion.

THE REORGANIZATION OF 1915

Prior to the amalgamation of the Revenue Cutter Service and the Life-Saving Service, Alaskan "Coast Guard" activities were under the immediate administration of the former organization, as a division of the Department of Treasury. The Captain Commandant at Washington, D.C., had charge of the "field services" in the five geographical regions of the American coast. Technically known as "divisions," these regions were: (1) Northern Division, Pacific coast, (2) Southern Division, Pacific coast, (3) Bering Sea Patrol Fleet, (4) New York Division, and (5) Eastern Division. Independent vessels for special duty were stationed at various port centers as required. The Bering Sea Patrol Fleet was composed of vessels detailed from the northern and southern divisions from May to October of each year. It was in charge of a senior officer stationed at Unalaska, Alaska. However, this official organization was changed by the Act of Congress, approved 28 January, 1915, which established the Coast Guard. It was actually an extension of the Revenue Cutter Service to which were added all the duties and personnel of the former Life-Saving Service. The new Coast Guard took over those two existing organizations, with their offices, duties, and personnel and operated as a part of the military forces of the United States--under the Treasury in time of peace and the Navy in time of war. In addition to the regular field services, which remained the same as before, the inland and coastal waters of the United States were divided into thirteen coast districts. The thirteenth district incorporated California, Oregon, Washington, and Nome, Alaska, under the direct jurisdiction of a superintendent stationed at San Francisco, California. The Coast Guard station at Nome thus became the nucleus around which the future district organization grew.

COAST GUARD PORT SECURITY FIREBOAT AT KETCHIKAN



DEVELOPMENT OF DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

As the national Coast Guard developed, minor changes in administration organization occurred. The annual patrol visitations to southeastern Alaska, the Bering Sea, and the Arctic came to be a special charge of the Thirteenth District. In 1922-1923, the thirteen coastal areas were revamped; among other innovations, the west coast area was redistributed between the twelfth and thirteenth districts. The Thirteenth District was set up to include northern Oregon, Washington, and all Alaska. It embraced ten active stations with district headquarters at Portland, Oregon. This organization was continued until July, 1939, when the Lighthouse Service was formally consolidated with the Coast Guard. The nine divisions and thirteen districts of the Coast Guard and the seventeen administrative districts of the Lighthouse Service were combined into thirteen new districts. This plan of organization included the United States territories, the thirteenth district, embracing Hawaii, and the twelfth, Alaska, which came to be normally referred to as the "Juneau District." However, the Alaskan headquarters of the Lighthouse Service had been located at Ketchikan rather than at Juneau. Effective 1 December, 1940, official headquarters for the Alaskan units were established at Ketchikan. Actually the main offices of the Lighthouse Service had never been moved to Juneau. The Ketchikan District comprised the Territory of Alaska, the coastal waters on its shores, the Pacific Ocean north of latitude fifty degrees, and the waters of the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean east of the international date line. During 1941 there were several changes in various district limits to effect a closer integration with the Navy and with the national defense organization. By the end of June of that year the Coast Guard had sixteen districts, including all the continental limits, territories, and possessions of the United States. Three new districts, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Charleston had been added to the original thirteen. By executive order of the first of November, 1941, the Coast Guard as a whole was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department to the Navy Department. For the period of operation under the Navy the term "District Commander" was superseded by that of "Senior Coast Guard Officer." Thus, the Coast Guard commander in Alaska became the Senior Coast Guard Officer, Ketchikan, Thirteenth Naval District. The Thirteenth Naval District was then separated into two administrative divisions, the Northwestern Sector and the Alaskan Sector, with respective headquarters at Seattle and Ketchikan. Shortly thereafter, the title of the Senior Coast Guard Officer in the two sectors was changed to that of District Coast Guard Officer in keeping with the policy in the other districts. This organization continued until 15 March, 1944, when the Seventeenth Naval District was created. At the conclusion of the Aleutian campaign the Navy set up a separate Alaskan District, independent of the older thirteenth. The new district was composed of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, with permanent headquarters at Kodiak and temporary headquarters at Adak. This creation automatically removed Coast Guard operations from the jurisdiction of the Thirteenth Naval District to that of the seventeenth. However, the headquarters of both Coast Guard districts remained unchanged. Except for the acceleration in development, the change had little practical effect upon

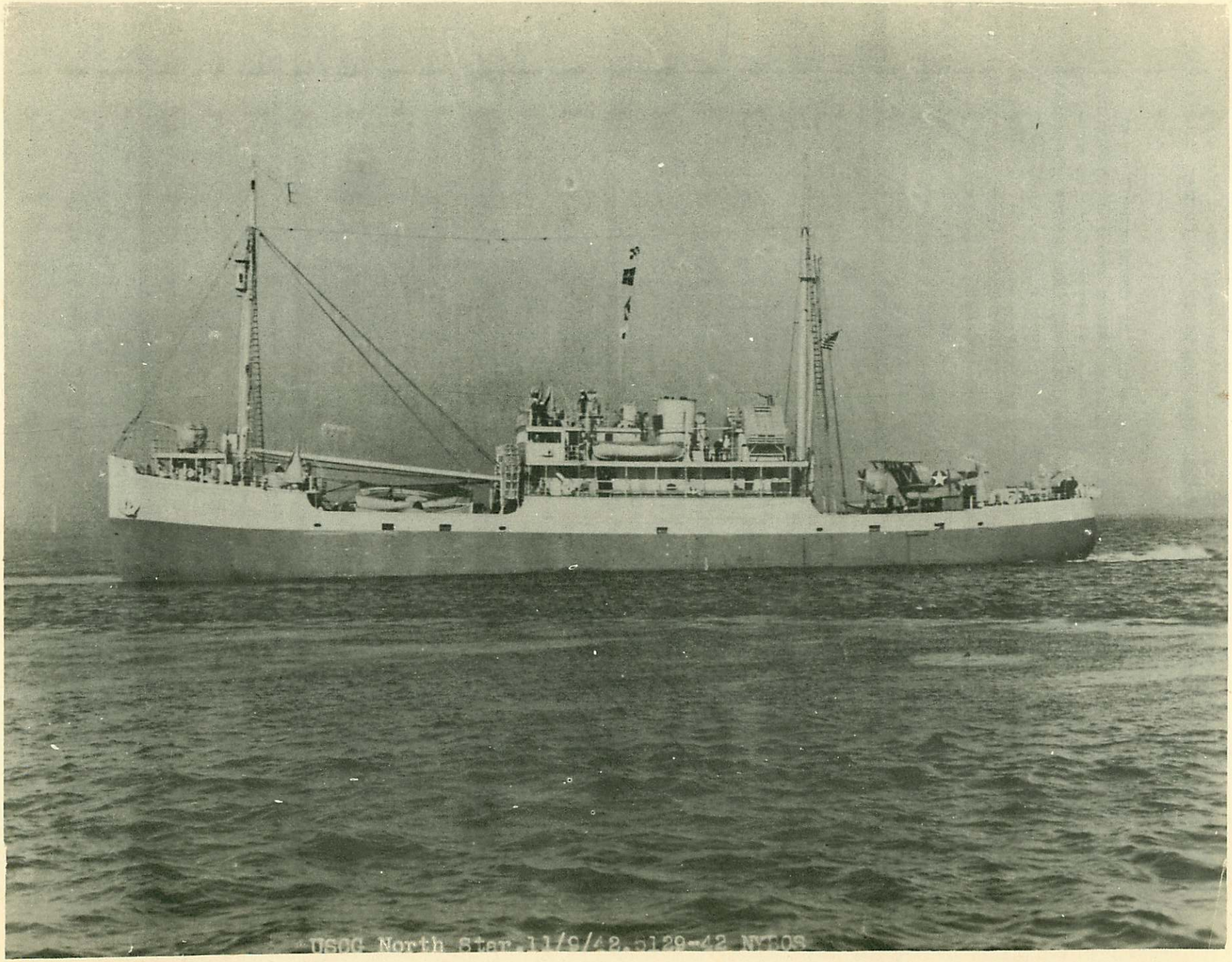
COAST GUARDSMEN RESPONDING TO A CALL BY A MERCHANT SHIP IN DISTRESS OFF ALASKA

operational activities in the Territory, since the Coast Guard had always maintained two separate divisions within the limits of the former Thirteenth Naval District.[1]

COAST GUARD MISSION IN ALASKA

During the first decades of its development as an American possession, Alaska was a special charge of the Coast Guard. The Revenue Cutter Service acted as a kind of liaison agent between the parent government at Washington and its territorial offspring. For years the Bering Sea Patrol was virtually the sole representative of the United States in the Bering Sea and Arctic regions. As the Coast Guard organization itself expanded so were its Alaskan activities extended. Shore operations developed as new stations were from time to time established along the coast and in the inland areas. In modern times, therefore, while the Service no longer occupies its former unique position in the Territory, nevertheless its influence has been greatly augmented. Actually the Coast Guard in Alaska performs all the regular duties discharged by the Service elsewhere, in addition to the special duties peculiar only to the territory. As the oldest armed force of the federal government, it enforces federal laws on navigable and territorial waters and on the high seas; as an enforcement agency, it aids in the execution of the customs revenues, health laws, and legislation relating to quarantine, fisheries, game, and wildlife; in its capacity of a life-saving service, it is traditionally responsible for the saving and protection of life and property. In a general way, it polices the sea, aids vessels in distress, destroys derelicts, enforces neutrality legislation, and engages in scientific investigation. A close cooperation is maintained with other bureaus and departments of the government, to whom it furnishes invaluable transportation of personnel and supplies. As an important adjunct to the Hydrographic Office it collects data, makes soundings, prepares maps, and publishes studies relative to north Pacific waters: all aids to navigation are in its hands. In short, it is an over-all service of the state, applying its special talents wherever and whenever necessary. Such is the Coast Guard in its traditional role in the North Pacific. But to Alaska it has always been something more than that. In a special way it has served the people of the Territory as has no other agency of the government. In peacetime it is primarily a police force and welfare agency. Coastguardsmen in Alaska have been called the American Northwest Mounties or the F.B.I. of the Bering Sea. However, in their earlier patrols they were more like the historically famous itinerant justices of Angevin England--extended arms of the state, reaching out to preserve peace and administer justice in those far-away regions where the authority of the government had not yet penetrated. While it is true that Coast Guard officers, as United States commissioners, tried cases and meted out justice, theirs was withal the chief mission of enlightenment. They were more apt to carry

1. This confusing pattern of organization in Alaska, has been traced in some detail in order to clarify the discussion that follows. It is difficult to grasp the peculiar nature of the development of Alaskan Coast Guard activities unless this basic changing structure is kept in mind.


USCG North Star 11/9/42 5129-42 NYSDS

the law to the individual than to bring the individual to the law. To the lawless they represented the might of the law but to most of the population, the Coast Guard was a harbinger of good will, bringing to them not only needful supplies but also relief and cheer. Many of the natives came to Coastguardsmen with the same respect and awe that the early Indians looked upon the Great White Father. To the remote Alaskan village the Bering Sea Patrol vessels were ships of mercy that furnished their year's supplies, delivered their mail, cared for the sick, performed their marriages, and, in general, performed all those services requiring the authorization of an outside agency. On its regular, periodic trips in Alaskan waters, the Coast Guard fleet visited practically every coastal village, extending services that were representative of all branches of the government. Indeed it was often the chief, if not the only, contact with the outside world for many an isolated settlement in the icebound Arctic or fog-covered Aleutians. The cutter officials took the census, made sanitary inspections, and collected data on shipping and local industries. The official reports of the commanding officers of these vessels are at once political, economic, and social surveys that furnish valuable information for the interpretation of the Alaskan scene.

SPECIAL DUTIES

It was in connection with the fishing and sealing industries in Alaska, that the Coast Guard derived much of its original jurisdiction. Various acts of congress and international agreements concerning domestic and alien fishing in Alaskan waters, the protection of halibut, restrictions on whaling, the control of the sea otter and fur seals were all entrusted to Coast Guard enforcement. The halibut and fisheries patrol has long been a distinctive feature of the summer duties of the Bering Sea fleet. The seal patrol was organized in 1912, after the signing of the international convention for the protection of fur seals and sea otters of the North Pacific Ocean. As the Alaskan industries developed, increased surveillance became necessary. In the course of time additional duties were imposed upon the Coast Guard, some by legislative action or executive order, others by virtue of the fact that it was the most accessible agent. Its vessels soon became "carrier" patrols, transporting official personnel, missionaries, teachers, nurses, natives, or simply Alaskan visitors who found its summer cruises both convenient and desirable for emergency services. Legal privileges, such as rights to make arrests, hold court, notarize documents, issue marriage licenses, hold inquests, and so on were concomitant developments. The dispensing of medical and dental services came almost automatically. These and other duties were incidental to the increased activity of the patrols. Eventually, shore stations were established as it became increasingly impossible for the vessels assigned to periodic patrols in Alaskan waters to discharge effectively all the responsibilities evolving upon them. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the Coast Guard was entrusted with the enforcement of the neutrality act, as well as with the special task of guarding our shores against espionage and counter-espionage. When in 1941, the U.S.S. NORTH STAR, formerly with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was detached from that division, additional responsibilities were superimposed upon our patrols. Likewise, as Coast and Geodetic Survey vessels were assigned to the Navy, further assistance

WRANGELL, WRANGELL ISLAND, ALASKA

was required in hydrographic surveys. Upon America's entrance into the war, exigencies of military defense in the Territory brought other problems. Transportation of freight both by land and sea was a serious Coast Guard burden. As the war developed, marine inspection, port security, harbor patrols, and various military assignments have characterized the more recent activities.[1] If the duties of the Coast Guard in Alaska are possibly more comprehensive than elsewhere in the United States it is not entirely due to the greater distances, larger areas, or almost insurmountable difficulties of sea and weather. It is also because the numerous government services there are more dependent in their reliance upon the Coast Guard than in any other district.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION

One of the most important functions of the Coast Guard in Alaska has been its responsibility for maintaining aids to navigation. During the present war period this development has become so significant that a separate treatment of special aids and harbor improvements is included in this study.[2] For military purposes the charting of Alaskan waters as well as a close study of the coast line was obviously indispensable. To do this so thoroughly that the Coast Guard will remain the best informed of all services in Alaska has been a definite policy. Whenever practicable, notes and sailing directions are prepared of such unsurveyed or little frequented harbors as are encountered during normal operations. Thus various types of hydrographic information daily find their way to Headquarters. This service alone was of incalculable value to the military and naval authorities during the progress of the Aleutian campaign.

THE REVENUE CUTTER SERVICE

EVOLUTION OF THE REVENUE CUTTER SERVICE

The antecedent of the present Coast Guard in Alaska was the Revenue Cutter Service of the Department of the Treasury, which had a continuous existence from 1790 to 1915. Variously known as the "Revenue Service," "Marine Service," or "Revenue Marine Service," it was officially designated as the Revenue Cutter Service in 1863. It had an independent existence until 1915, when by act of congress of 28 January of that year it was merged with the Life-Saving Service as the United States Coast Guard. Its original and primary functions was that of an organized armed patrol for the entire coast of the United States and, in the absence of any national Navy at that early period, the general protection of all coastal areas. Coincident with the slow evolution of the nation, new branches of government developed but, since there was an insufficient amount of maritime work for any one department, it became contingent upon the Revenue Cutter Service to perform the maritime work of all. Its principal duties, therefore, consisted of safeguarding life and property, assisting distressed

1. A complete list of Coast Guard duties and services in Alaska is given in Appendix II, pp. iii, iv, and v. For detailed analyses of the special activities of the Bering Sea Patrol and the DCGO in Alaska, consult the later sections dealing with these units.
2. Vide ut infra, pp. 55-63.

SITKA ALASKA FROM INDIAN RIVER

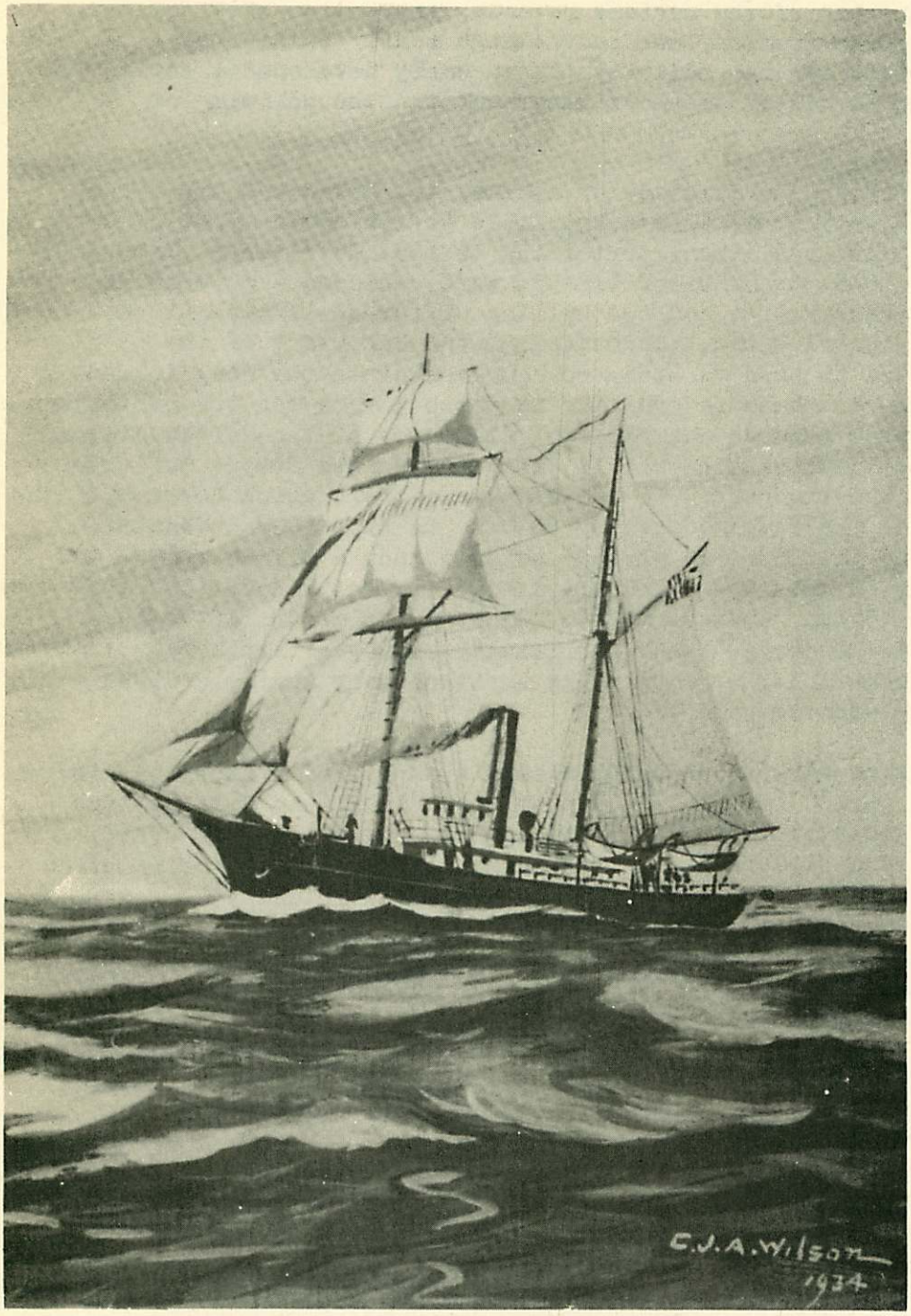
vessels at sea, protection of the customs revenue, prevention of smuggling, and the enforcement of navigation laws on the high seas. Within the variable pattern of this general activity, there early developed a series of other duties of which one of the most important was the policing of the Bering Sea.

EMERGENCE OF THE ALASKAN PATROLS

After the purchase of Alaska, the Revenue Cutter Service was held responsible for enforcing most of the regulations pertaining to that territory. In 1868 the Pribilof Islands were declared a government reservation and the killing of fur-seals prohibited, except under certain restrictions. Accordingly, the Secretary of the Treasury was authorized to send "a steam revenue vessel to the seal islands of Alaska and maintain the same in cruising in those waters for the protection of the sea-otter hunting grounds and the seal fisheries of the United States." The law specified that such vessels should carry the United States mails to Alaskan ports. This was the origin of the Alaskan patrols which began with the first Arctic cruise of the revenue steamer CORWIN, in May, 1880. Meanwhile, the revenue cutter the LINCOLN, had already set out upon a maiden voyage in that little-known region when she transported a government inspection party from San Francisco to Sitka, Alaska, in 1867, just a few months after the signing of the purchase treaty. These preliminary surveys, little more than pioneer exploring expeditions, were only the first of many Arctic cruises that followed in the years to come.

POSITION OF THE REVENUE CUTTER SERVICE IN ALASKA

The darkest phase of Alaska's chequered history was the period from 1867, down to about 1912. As a "forgotten country," she had little in the way of law and order; exploitation was rife. Nominally under the jurisdiction of the United States Army, she had virtually no government of her own. The Organic Act of 1884 was the first of a series providing for definite organization and civil government. It was not until after the maladministration and lawlessness of the gold-rush days of 1898-99, however, that civil and criminal codes were provided. In 1912 Alaska was created a Territory, at which time the capital was moved from the former Russian site at Sitka to Juneau. Agencies of control multiplied rapidly until today practically every department of the federal government is intimately concerned with Alaskan affairs. In fact, if anything, the Territory has suffered from the proverbial dilemma of overorganization. Some fifty-odd federal agencies still retain some measure of supervision of their special activities in Alaska, with the resulant evil of overlapping jurisdiction. As late as 1942, a report of the Office of Alaskan Defense observed that this condition still cluttered up the war effort. It is because of this situation that the Coast Guard has always played such a prominent role in Alaskan development. As a general law enforcement agency, hers was a general jurisdiction,--a unifying force for all departments. During the period of the Revenue Cutter Service's extended activities it literally serviced every other agency in Alaska and assisted in the enforcement of almost every type of legislation.



"Corwin"
1876 - 1900

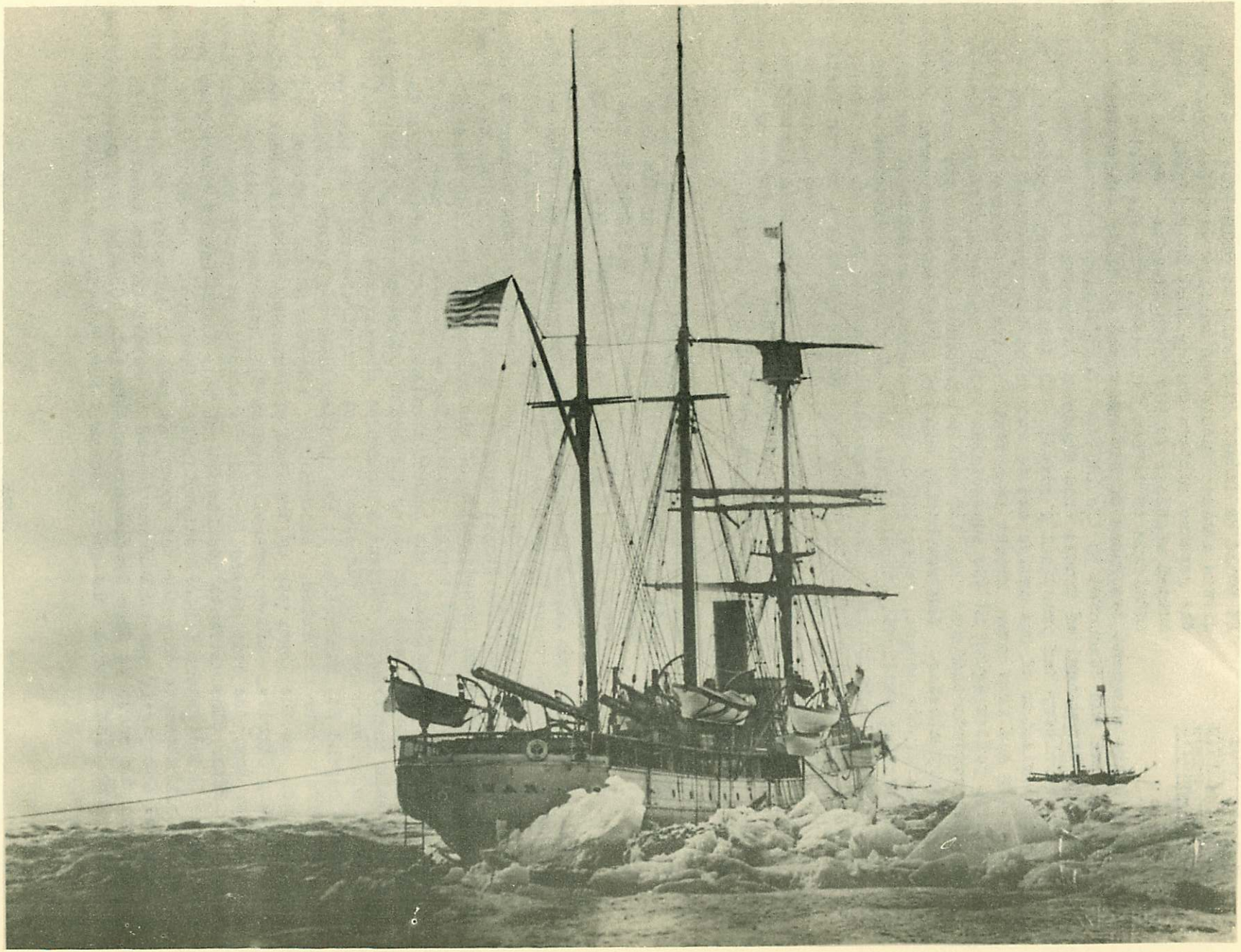
U.S. REVENUE CUTTER CORWIN IN THE ARCTIC

It would be indeed difficult to enumerate all the divers administrative and welfare services rendered by the revenue cutters during that long period of their annual missions to the North Pacific. Nor is such a catalogue of duties necessary, for the record of each vessel bears eloquent testimony of the sum-total of their achievements. The first patrol was conducted by the 145-foot CORWIN during the summer of 1880. Since the withdrawal of troops from Alaska a few years earlier, the management of the territory had practically rested with the Treasury Department. The ostensible mission of the cruise was to intercept the prevalent illegal traffic in whisky and fire arms, report on prevailing ice and weather conditions, and act as a police agent in the supervision of fur sealing activity. However, her regular reports indicate that the CORWIN performed services far overshadowing her primary mission. She was busily engaged in transporting cargo, delivering mail, taking the census, reporting on the customs and habits of the natives, and collecting pertinent ethnological, zoological, meteorological--even sociological, information. The voyage lasted from 22 May, to 12 October, 1880, during which time she had covered the most dangerous waters of the Bering Sea and the Arctic. Some idea of the great difficulties involved in such a trip may be suggested by the fact that fifty-four vessels had been lost in that part of the Arctic within the previous decade. One of the hopes of the cruise was to rescue the thirty-three whalers that had been carried to the northeast by the ice pack and never returned.

THE VOYAGE OF THE CORWIN 1880

The CORWIN, under the command of Captain C.L. Hooper, left its home port of San Francisco on the 22nd of May. Twelve days later it arrived at Unalaska in the Aleutians, ready for its grueling four month's tour of duty. From Unalaska it proceeded to Cape Romanzoff, visiting the Pribilofs and Nunivak Island along the way. The passage was rough and the weather bad; often beset by grounded ice, the vessel was forced to drift helplessly in the pack for hours at a time. Forced to take temporary refuge on Nunivak Island, Captain Hooper took the opportunity of contacting a few natives and making an investigation of the culture of the interesting troglodyte villages found there. Continuing on around the cape to St. Michaels' and Norton Sound, she headed straight for the Bering Straits. But treacherous ice made the going difficult. Days of slow progress enabled the captain and crew to contact a number of the natives along the route, many of whom were awed by the sight of their first steamer. As the ice grew thicker beyond St. Michael's, it was decided that the Asiatic offshore waters would offer fewer obstacles. Accordingly, the course was directed to Point Providence, on the lower tip of the Cape of Dezhneva, Siberia, just south of the Bering Straits. After several stops on St. Laurence Island and refueling at Plover Bay, the ship passed through the straits to enter the Arctic Ocean on June 29th. The ultimate destination of this first lap of the voyage was Kotzebue Sound, where illicit whisky traffic abounded. Ice conditions prevented all attempts to enter the sound, as well as endeavors to reach Point Hope, so once again the CORWIN was forced to return to the Asiatic side, touching the coast at Cape Serdzckerz on July 1st. Unable to proceed further on the scheduled course, she spent the next few days in a profitable investi-

REVENUE CUTTER BEAR ASSISTING CORWIN IN ARCTIC ICE



gation of the mid-Arctic. Encircling the ice pack, Captain Hooper made another try at Kotzebue Sound, but, finding the ice still solid, returned to St. Michael's on the 7th for refueling and necessary repairs. So ended the first month of the Alaskan patrol. On 10 July, the vessel resumed her northward journey with a spectacular broadside of fire for the benefit of the astonished natives. Some haste was desirable because it had been learned that a rum runner was cruising ahead of them, en route for Kotzebue Sound. Nevertheless, brief stops were made at Nome, Cape York, and Sledge and King's Islands. On the 13th the American schooner LEO, earlier spotted and still being pursued, was overtaken and apprehended about 61 miles north of Cape Prince of Wales. Caught red-handed with a load of contraband firearms and liquor, the LEO was detained and sent back to San Francisco under official custody. Upon rounding Cape Blossom, it was discovered that Kotzebue Sound was now partially free of ice, so Chamisso Island was reached without undue difficulty. Following the shore line as far northward as Cape Beufort, further progress was once more halted by impossible ice. In a vain effort to edge around the pack to the westward, the heavy drift brought the forward journey to an impass in the western Arctic waters about thirty-five miles south of Herald Island. Returning to Cape Blossom to pick up a crew that had been left on the way up to make soundings and tidal observations, another attempt was made to get around the ice pack by sailing through the straits between Wrangel Land and the coast of Asia. August 20th found the CORWIN northeast of Herald Island. Since Point Barrow, Alaska, was the end objective of the voyage, an eastern course was struck; Point Barrow was reached five days later. Thus attaining the northernmost limits of the United States, both captain and crew caught something of the thrill that always awards final achievement. But there was little time for careless idling. On the same day the homeward voyage was begun, after an all too brief pause for water, fuel, and current soundings. A few unusual specimens of fish and eider duck were taken aboard for later presentation to the Smithsonian Institute. The return route was direct as far south as the Bay of Good Hope, but from there they doubled back along the coast to Point Hope. Meanwhile, on the 29th the whisky-trading schooner LOLETA was seized off Point Hope, the prize being sent, under guard, to San Francisco. Five days, between the 8th and 13th of September, were spent in an inspection of the ice pack around Wrangel Land. Since the first investigation of this region the pack had drifted southward. To the disappointment of all, neither Wrangel Land or Herald Island were clear of ice; nor were soundings or chartings possible in that vicinity. Consequently, they shortly returned to Point Hope and thence to Cape Prince of Wales, which was reached on the evening of September 13th. The remainder of the long voyage home was uneventful. The last run was quick, the weather favorable. The sturdy CORWIN steamed into San Francisco on the morning of October 12th, after 143 days of uninterrupted vigil.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CRUISE

In a sense the labor of ship and crew were not at all singular, for she was only one of many revenue cutters to follow that ragged Alaskan coast to the northern extremity of American waters. Later Coast Guard vessels built well upon her modest beginnings. Nevertheless, the original pattern of the Alaskan patrol laid down by the CORWIN was significantly fundamental. The ship's reports clearly indicated the nature of the activities involved; its

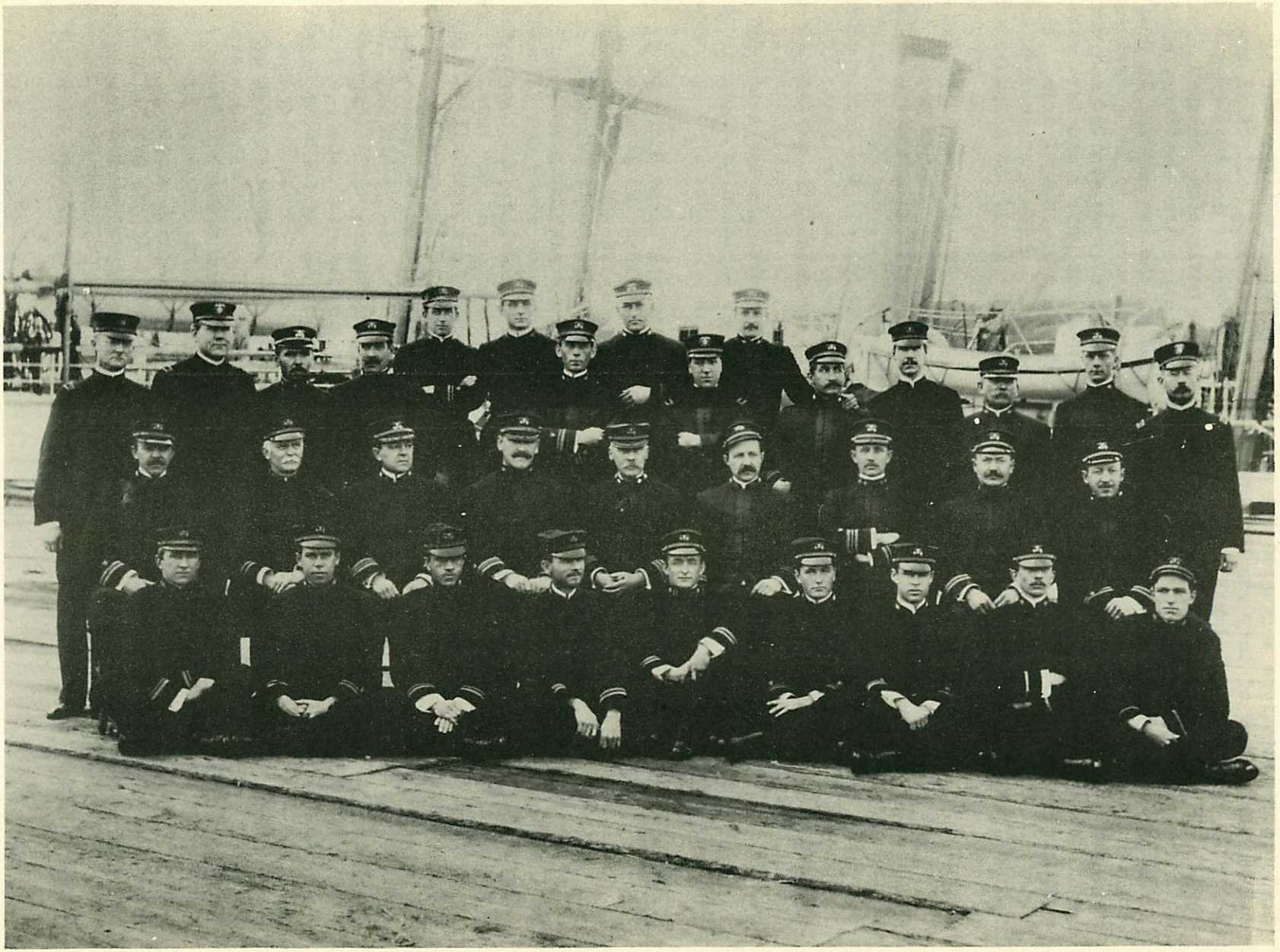
HAREMS AT LITTLE POLOVINA ROOKERY, ST. PAUL ISLAND, JUNE 1938

basic recommendations suggested the principles of future policy. During one summer's tour of duty she had investigated fur sealing activities and enforced a series of federal regulations, boarded vessels and intercepted smugglers, examined harbors and spotted dangers to navigation, checked both English and American hydrographic charts and corrected locations, made soundings and determined the nature and movement of the ice packs. In short, she observed everything that might be of value or interest to the government, from weather to native "shamanism." Dozens of villages were visited and new settlements charted. The report of Captain Hooper includes a complete meteorological journal of the cruise as well as pertinent zoological data. Incidentally, his detailed descriptions of the natives, their institutions and habitat, comprise an interesting sociological study. Among the recommendations offered was the suggestion that other vessels be assigned to the all important patrol. It was clearly evident that a single cutter was utterly incapable of protecting the entire Alaskan coast. In due course of time it was to become possible for the entire Bering Sea Patrol fleet properly to execute all the tasks expected of it. During the following summer, 1881, the CORWIN again made the Alaskan trip, specifically engaged in a search for the lost whalers and the missing exploring vessel, the JEANETTE. This time the naturalist, John Muir, accompanied the Captain to assist in the scientific investigations. In all, the cutter made six memorable cruises north of the Bering Straits before retiring from that theatre of activity. In 1886, she was succeeded by the no less distinguished BEAR, whose remarkable exploits in Alaskan waters have become almost legendary.

EXPANDING JURISDICTION

Since 1880 the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard in Alaska has developed apace. In 1885 the Revenue Cutter Service was delegated to aid the Bureau of Fisheries whenever requested. The Paris Tribunal of Arbitration of 1893 set forth a set of regulations governing sealing activities in the Bering Sea and established the "closed zone" and "closed season" for that area. Four years later Congress authorized the search and seizure of all American vessels violating the provisions of the laws for the protection of the fur seals. In 1910 the government took over all sealing operations of St. Paul and St. George Islands, assuming the support of over 400 native inhabitants of the Pribilofs. At the same time the killing of certain fur-bearing animals, especially the sea otter, was prohibited. Despite these regulations, however, open pelagic sealing continued until the four interested powers (United States, Great Britian, Russia, and Japan) effected an international agreement in 1911. As a result of this agreement a patrol was organized. Shortly thereafter patrol cutters were ordered to extend medical and surgical aid to the crews of all American vessels engaged in deep-sea fisheries. The halibut, salmon and other fisheries are protected by patrols as a result of similar legislation. Special authority over fishing in the Territory came in the Act of 6 June, 1924; likewise by Act of 1 May, 1936, definite restrictions were imposed upon whaling. Meanwhile, 1924, the Coast Guard was charged with the enforcement of the Oil Pollution Act for the War Department. Since 1942, port security and marine inspection have been added to its more basic duties. Along with its many other services, law enforcement has always been the major duty of the Bering Sea Patrol.

OFFICERS OF THE REVENUE CUTTERS McCULLOCH, PERRY, THETIS AND RUSH - UNALASKA, ALASKA - SEPTEMBER 27, 1908

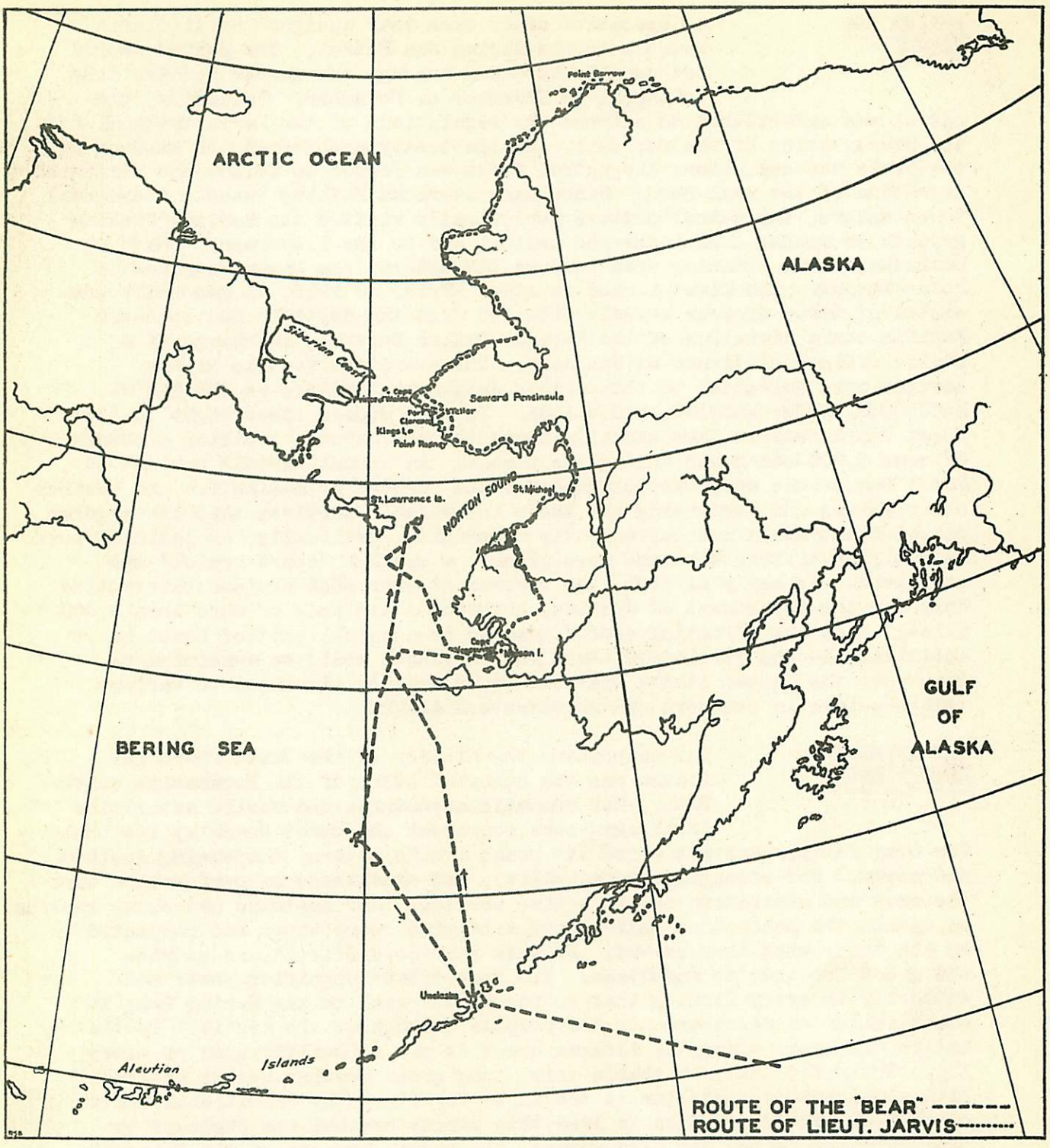


BERING SEA PATROL

An executive order each year assigned particular vessels to the Bering Sea Patrol. The period varied but usually extended through the summer months, from mid-April to November or December. Primarily, the patrol was established to enforce the regulations of the Paris Tribunal for the preservation of the fur seal. As the treaty prohibited the killing of the seals and sea otter, the patrol fleet was forced to follow the northward migration of the seal herd. Since many American fishing vessels frequented those waters, the patrol cutters periodically visited the various fishing grounds to render assistance and medical aid to the fisherman. Based at Unalaska, their cruising area covered the waters from Dixon Entrance to Point Barrow. The fleet varied in size. Prior to 1915, it generally consisted of three or four vessels detailed from the northern and southern Pacific coast divisions of the Revenue Cutter Service, in charge of a senior officer stationed at Unalaska. The sturdiest vessels of the service were delegated to this ardous duty--such cutters as the TAHOMA, McCULLOCH, RUSH, MANNING, and UNALGA. In more modern times eight to ten Coast Guard cutters have annually conducted the patrol, cruising a total of some 5,000 odd hours during the season. An annual "Arctic cruise" to Point Barrow was early established for the purpose of making ice and weather observations and performing all those innumerable services that the regular patrol fleet could not conveniently undertake. Eventually, as judicial work in outlying districts became more urgent, a special "court cruise" was organized. As early as 1891, the revenue steamer BEAR cruised thirty-nine days for the Department of Justice, covering a distance of more than 5,000 miles. Soon the "floating court" came to be a normal part of Coast Guard activities in the Territory. Each year a vessel would be appointed to transport the United States District Court and its attachees to various remote points in southern and southwestern Alaska.

THE REVENUE CUTTER BEAR

For many years the history of the Coast Guard in Alaska was the colorful story of the barkentine cutter BEAR. Her dramatic adventures and varied activities in Alaskan seas represent the Coast Guard at its best. For over forty years she plied the rough Arctic waters, dispensing justice and mercy. Her strength, dependibility, and excellence of performance were the envy and admiration of the entire service. Her captains and crew, zealous to uphold the honor of a well-earned tradition, were known and respected by all those whom they served. No task was too difficult, no service too great for them to undertake. The name "BEAR" signified power and authority to every fishing boat or merchant vessel in the Bering Sea; it meant relief or assistance to the peoples throughout the Arctic. To the native villagers along the Alaskan coast it was a familiar name on every lip. Truly did that remarkable ship, long grown weather-beaten and hoary with age, come to symbolize to the whole Territory the traditional spirit of "SEMPER PERATUS." When in 1926 this sturdy cruiser was replaced by the NORTHLAND, after her 42nd voyage, the Annual Reports of the Treasury paid her a glowing tribute:


ARCTIC OCEAN
ALASKA
Point Barrow
Siberian Coast
Seward Peninsula
Point Rodney
St. Lawrence Is.
NORTON SOUND
St. Michael
BERING SEA
GULF
OF
ALASKA
Unalaska
Aleutian
Islands
ROUTE OF THE "BEAR" ------
ROUTE OF LIEUT. JARVIS.....

It is peculiarly fitting under the heading of cruises in northern waters, an activity with which the veteran Coast Guard cutter BEAR has so long been identified, to pay tribute to this distinguished ship... Her duties in the service for many years have sent her annually to the far-away North on cruises to Alaska and the Arctic Ocean, and to Point Barrow. Her yearly visits to the northern country have been a welcome episode in the lives of the natives. Her coming among them was an inspiration, a promise always fulfilled, a light penetrating the darkness and wilderness of their desolation. Her mission was to help, to aid, to succor, and she fulfilled that mission. Her record is both conspicuous and interesting. She was always ready, exemplifying the motto of service. Returning to the States from a six months' cruise in Arctic waters, she set out again on November 27, 1897, just three weeks from the time of her arrival from the North, on the historic expedition for the relief of the whaling fleet caught in the ice in the vicinity of Point Barrow, and ten months later she returned bringing four crews of wrecked whalers without loss or accident of any kind. She is 53 years old... has valiantly borne the rigors of the hardest of service, battling oftentimes with the northern ice that threatened to send her to her doom. The ravages of service and time have at last told on her. Her work is done. Her last cruise to the frozen regions of the North is made and she must go to the inactive list. The old ship will have a place always in the hearts of her shipmates and in the history of the service.

THE BEAR RESUMES ACTIVE DUTY

Nevertheless, the retirement of the BEAR in 1926 proved to be only temporary. The next year she was returned to Oakland, California, to grace the marine museum for several years. Although she had earned her well deserved respite, she was still too worthy a ship to remain idle. Recalled to active service in 1933, the BEAR was sent to the Antarctic with the Byrd expedition to Little America. In 1941, now manned by the Navy, she was assigned to the Greenland patrol. It was the invincible BEAR who brought the captured freighter BUSKO back from Greenland in 1941. More recently she has continued her valiant service as a member of the Greenland patrol fleet. However worthy her war contributions have been, they do not constitute a part of this present study. The BEAR has been drydocked since 7 June, 1944.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BEAR

The BEAR was almost ten years old when she was purchased by the Navy in 1883 for the Greely relief expedition beyond Grinnell Land in the American Arctic. In 1885, she was transferred to the Revenue Cutter Service to be used on Alaskan missions. Already she was experienced in Arctic waters. Built at Greenock, Scotland, in 1874, she had originally served as an Arctic whaler before being acquired by the Navy. By construction and subsequent periodic modernizations, the BEAR was admirably fitted for her job in the frozen north. A steamer barkentine, with an over-all length of 198 feet, a 28½-foot beam, with a draft of 18 feet 2 inches, she drew a displacement of approximately 1,700 tons. The frame was solidly built

OFFICERS OF THE USS BEAR ON RELIEF EXPEDITION 1897-98

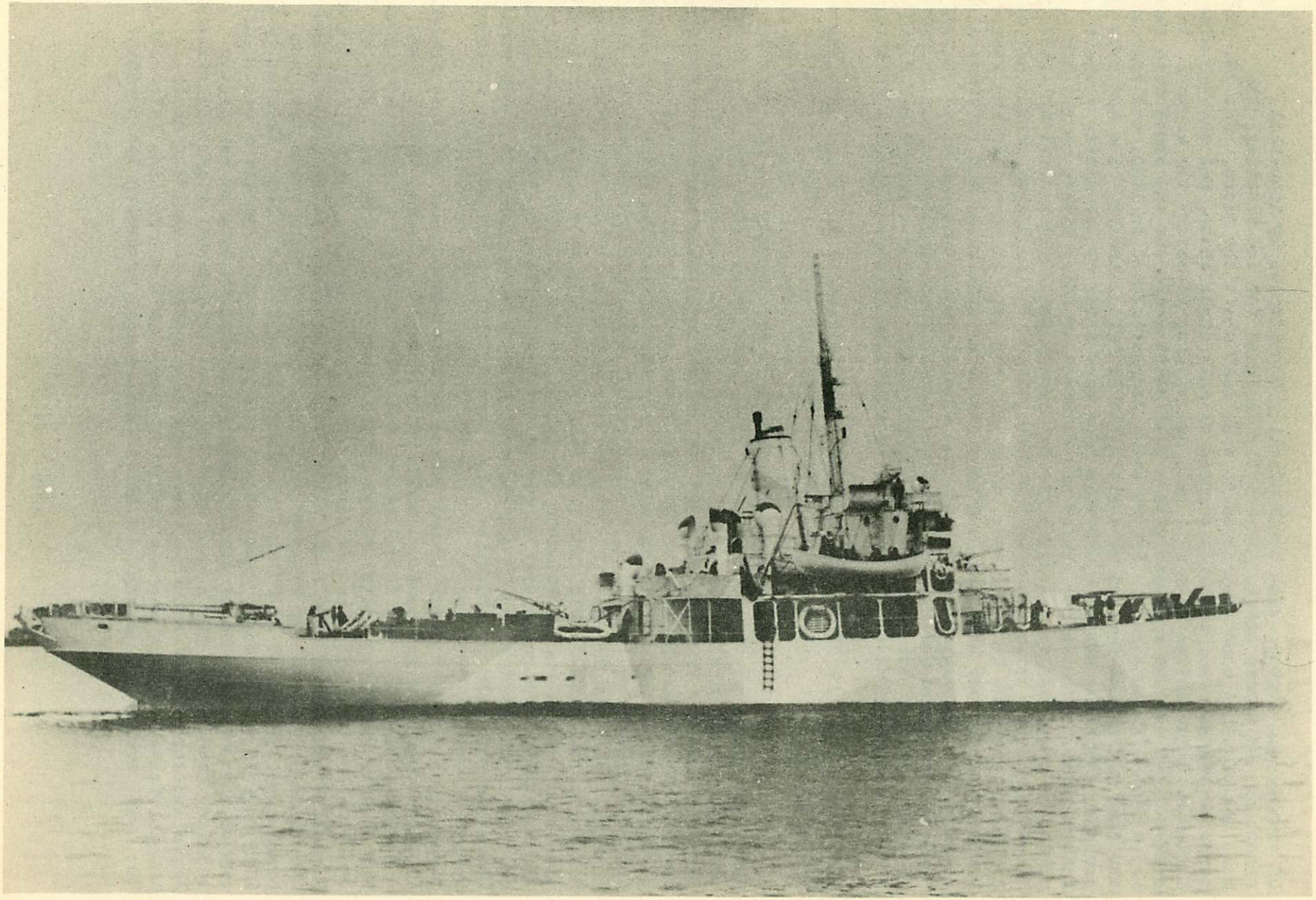
BACK ROW: BRYAN; WOOD. 2ND ROW: BERRY; TUTTLE; COCHRAN; BROWN; SPENCER; HAMLET. 1ST ROW (SEATED): CAMDEN; SPEAR.

of squared oak timber, with thick planking re-enforced by iron-bark sheathing, 2½ inches thick. Especially designed for ice-breaking, the hull was of solid wood from seven to nine feet abaft the stern. The 350 horse power engine gave her a cruising speed of only eight knots, yet she was also fitted as a barkentine with full sail and rigging to assist the engine. In modern times she was equipped with a 2-kilowatt radio set and armed with three rapid-fire six-pound guns. Before being decommissioned in 1926, the fame of the BEAR had spread far and wide along the Pacific seaboard. She had made 42 cruises, averaging about 16,000 miles for each trip. Other Arctic vessels looked to her officers for advice and guidance, fishing fleets sought her protection; she became notorious for her rescue feats and a continual annoyance to every poacher or smuggler in the Bering Sea. Distinguished guests sat at her table, natives knew her mess, while all who were ill or suffering shared her doctors and her bounteous service. Sailors, criminals, and ruffians alike slept in her historic brig. It was not without logic that her first skipper "Hell Roaring Mike Healy," was a by-word to all those who feared the approach of that agency of law and order. The PUK OOMIAK, Healy's "fire canoe," was the source of many a native yarn or the inception of some imaginary adventure.

THE BEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS

The life-story of the BEAR has all the flare and romance of a Conrad novel. Her records read like the tales of the sea-dog exploits of the sixteenth century. Even the more dramatic episodes in her history are too numerous to draw more than a passing comment. In 1891, five years after she had succeeded the CORWIN, she carried witnesses and arrested criminals in western Alaska for the Department of Justice, conveyed the Russell exploring expedition for the National Geographic Society to Icy Bay, transported supplies to ice-bound points, rendered valuable assistance to a number of whaling ships, and, returning to Unalaska in the autumn, took up patrol and guard duty around the seal islands. She brought the first reindeer from Siberia to Alaska, maintained discipline and order during the gold stampedes of the late nineties, and more than once sent rescue expeditions overland into the interior of Alaska to aid the helpless. The successful rescue of the lost whalers in 1897 was undoubtedly the most spectacular of all rescues in the entire annals of the Revenue Cutter Service. By presidential order, she set out in November for a winter voyage of over 2,000 miles to relieve the eight vessels trapped for the winter by the "polar pack" around Barrow Point, although she had just returned from her regular eight months Arctic cruise. Captain Francis Tuttle, then commanding the BEAR, was to undertake, not only to effect a difficult rescue, but to make the first winter voyage in the Arctic ever attempted. Blocked by solid ice pack off Nelson's Island, he anchored at Cape Vancouver and sent a small relief party some 1,600 miles overland by sled. After commandering 200 reindeer to feed the stranded sailors and 500 starving villagers, the mushing party arrived at Point Barrow some three months later. Eventually the BEAR herself got through, with the end result that only two lives were lost out of the several hundred saved. During the half-century of her Arctic service, she carried off a half dozen or more performances almost as remarkable. While the more normal annual cruises were not nearly so exciting as these unusual feats, the regular day to day work performed was no less interesting. The usual cruise was through the Bering Sea, always preceding the merchant

U.S.C.G.C. NORTHLAND

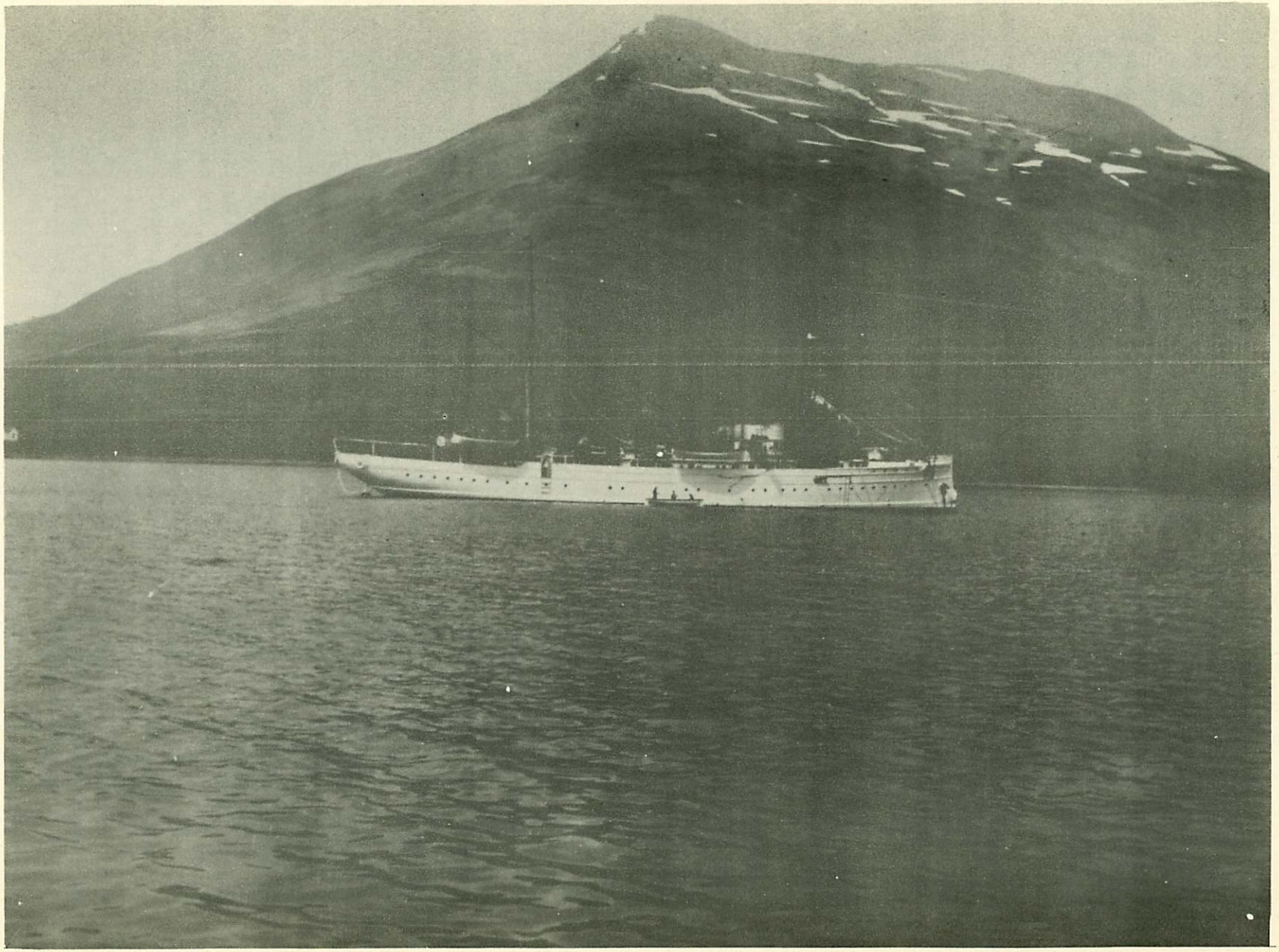


fleet which sought to reach Nome each spring just as soon as ice conditions would permit. She was for many years the only revenue cutter on the Pacific coast that was at all adapted for the arduous activities of the Arctic area. Her basic function was to investigate the extent and condition of the ice fields, report movements and changes to all vessels concerned and, when necessary, guide them through the treacherous passages. In all events, she was there until the ice left, rendering whatever assistance they required. Proceeding northward she would visit all villages and government schools, dispensing medical aid and supplies. Being a commissioned United States marshal, her skipper could make arrests, try minor offenses, and perform various and sundry acts of a legal nature. Inquests were sometimes held, marriage ceremonies performed and discipline maintained in many small communities in the more distant parts of the territory. After completing her tour, the BEAR would return to the Bering Sea, remaining in the Nome orbit until the close of the stormy season. After the last trading vessel had gone she sailed back to her winter quarters at San Francisco.

BERING SEA PATROL IN MODERN TIMES

The Bering Sea Patrol in modern times does not differ radically from that of earlier days. Activities have gradually been extended but the general character of the work is essentially the same as that accomplished by the veteran cutters, CORWIN and BEAR. The Coast Guard in Alaska actually performs any work in the Territory that may require the use of government vessels. Many venerable Coast Guard cutters have given long years of service in this capacity. Distinguished vessels like the RUSH, ALGONQUIN, McCULLOCH, MANNING, ONONDAGA, THETIS, TAHOMA, REDWING, ITASKA, and NORTHLAND deserve honorable mention. The ALGONQUIN, McCULLOCH, ONONDAGA, and THETIS were all old ships built before the Spanish American War. The latter, the THETIS, originally a Dundee whaler and not transferred to Alaskan duty until 1900, was used primarily for transporting the United States court on its perennial visitations to the Territory. The UNALGA, RUSH, TAHOMA, and MANNING, constructed in 1912, were all destined for Alaskan waters. Perhaps the best known in recent years was the NORTHLAND, commissioned in 1927 to take over the manifold duties of the famous old BEAR. Since its work was quite different from that required of other cutters, it had very special features of construction. It was build of steel, with a strong hull designed to offer maneuverability in the heavy ice fields and greater resistance to the ice packs. This 216-foot vessel has powerful Diesel engines and is fully equipped with modern armament and sick bay. At one time she was outfitted with square sails, but her yards have long since been removed. Like the BEAR, she carried special personnel, doctor, dentist, judge, minister or priest. It was the NORTHLAND who made the first historic naval war capture in the western hemisphere when, in 1941, she seized the German weather observation post in Greenland, taking the sealer BUSKOE as a prize. As a result of the European situation in 1939, there was a general reassignment of Coast Guard cutters, as well as a noticeable increase of jurisdiction in Alaska. The President's proclamation of neutrality in September of 1939 and later acts of congress brought a number of new duties to the Coast Guard. After the penetration of the Army and Navy into southern and central Alaska, much of the time of the cutters was necessarily occupied with the problems of transporting vital war supplies and military personnel. It was impossible to continue all the

REVENUE CUTTER MANNING OFF DUTCH HARBOR, ALASKA. JUNE 18, 1900

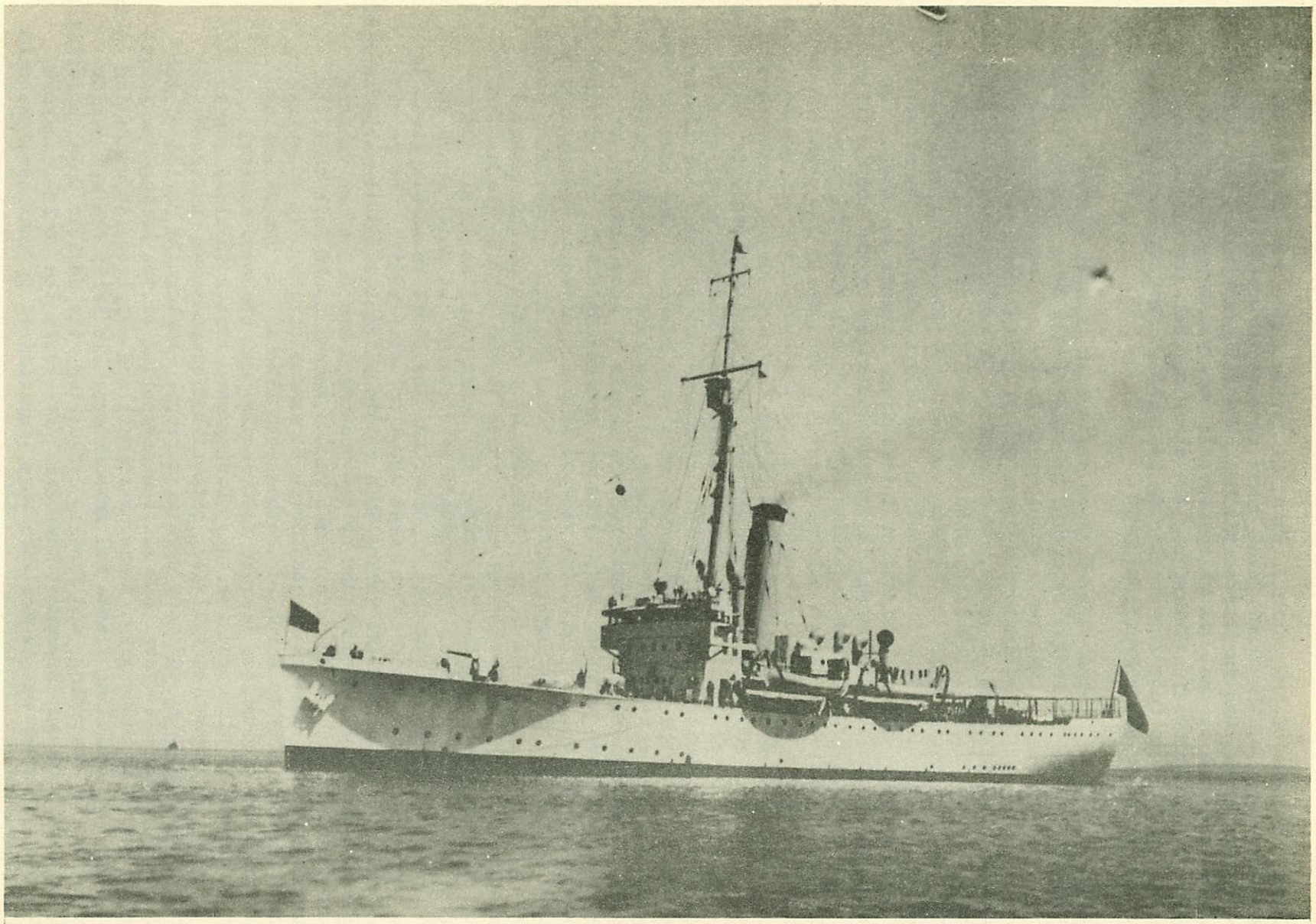


regular services of the patrol. When, in April, 1941, the United States transferred ten of the newer Coast Guard cutters to Great Britain, the Bering Sea Patrol was further curtailed. The HAIDA continued her court cruises but, one by one, the patrol vessels were reassigned to other fields of war activity. Therefore, the close of 1941 saw only one vessel on fulltime duty for the Bering Sea fleet. The regular patrol was discontinued after Pearl Harbor.

COLORFUL INCIDENTS

The work of these cutters in Alaskan waters was always rather colorful, because of the human interest element involved. People were joyful in their reception of both officers and crew, enjoying with them the barter of commodities, the exchange of yarns, or an occasional hunting excursion when time would afford. Still a new land, unburdened with the modern trappings of civilization, outposts in the Alaskan peninsula or the Arctic region offered challenging opportunities for adventure. Hardly a year went by without witnessing some unusual incident or interesting episode to record. An over-indulgent stomach to be purged, an urgent operation by the ship's surgeon, or some emergency call from a distressed cruise; all sorts of people found their way aboard, each passenger a welcome guest. Occasionally the peculiar antics of some Japanese schooner lent added zest to the neutrality enforcement. Later on it was to be discovered that these polite Jap adventurers, while careful never to commit an overt act, were all the while busily engaged in collecting all sorts of vital data. Came, too, the smugglers and poachers, some caught only after an exciting chase. Vessels came and went on their multifarious business: all were carefully watched, many were boarded. Nor were national calamities unknown to the Coastguardsmen in this land of stark physical reality. Everywhere they encountered the perils of snow and ice, the ravages of disease in unsanitary villages, accidental death, and ofttimes literal starvation. In 1912, the violent eruption of Mount Katmai brought sudden terror to the stricken population around Kodiak. Hundreds of people were in dire danger of death or starvation as a result of this natural disaster. The Bering Sea Patrol was rushed to the spot to rescue the helpless, administer to the destitute, and carry supplies to all the villages affected. One of the greatest services of the Coast Guard in such events was the maintenance of order and the boost in morale given to the people by the sight of government ships in their midst. The heroic performances of the MANNING during this crisis attracted considerable publicity. Captain K.W. Perry was commended by the president and had a new village named in his honor. Even on a normal run, a vessel could feel that its humanitarian work was one of considerable responsibility. In a typical cruise from January to March in southeastern Alaska, the UNALGA sailed almost 3½ thousand miles, boarded 342 vessels, and rendered medical assistance to 19 different persons; During more than a thousand hours at anchor, she inspected villages, established quarantines, enforced sanitary regulations, and made general surveys. During the period of the first World War this vessel did all the patrolling of the Bering Sea single handed, carrying passengers, transporting mail and supplies, adjudicating labor disputes, and assisting fleets and merchantmen. In 1919, she won public recognition by combating, and finally conquering, the serious Spanish influenza epidemic that spread throughout Unalaska. For weeks the health, comfort, and safety of every man aboard ship were jeoparidized in that struggle with the new scourge.

COAST GUARD CUTTER CHELAN



OCEANOGRAPHIC CRUISE OF 1934

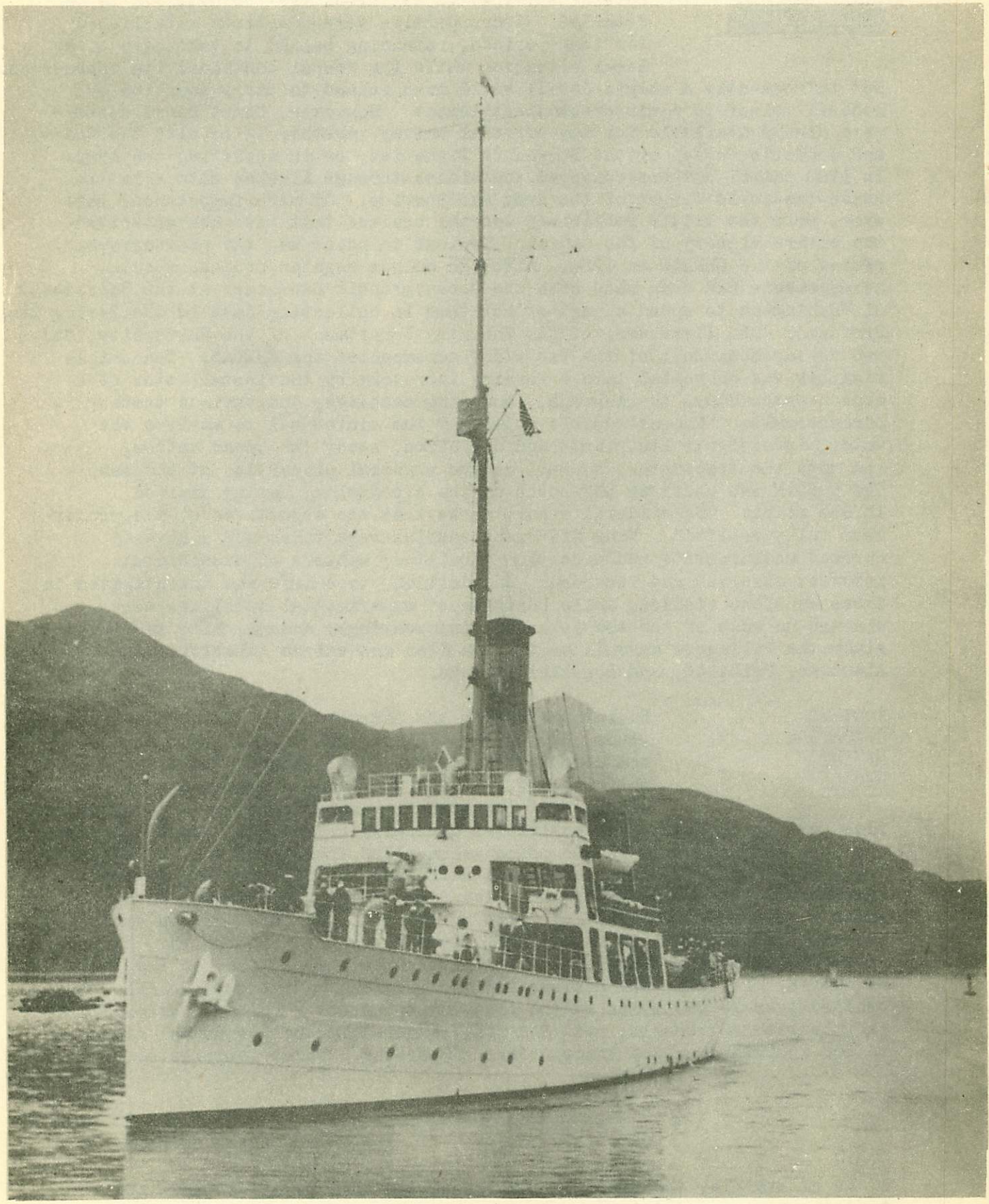
Special services of all kinds are too numerous to be detailed. Shore parties were sometimes established for long periods, remaining behind to take care of a local situation while the vessel continued its operations. Not infrequently a ship's detail would mush inland to carry supplies or medical relief to a winterbound settlement. Moreover, Coast Guard cutters were always available for any official survey, whether it be with the Coast and Geodetic Survey or the Bureau of Fisheries, or in assisting the Army. In 1923 patrol cutters convoyed the planes through Alaskan waters in the round-the-world flight of the Army Air Service. Of more importance, however, were the little publicized special cruises that have characterized the entire history of the patrol. Typical in point was the oceanographic cruise of the CHELAN in 1934. Although on her regular cruise, special arrangements had been made with the Oceanographic Labratory at the University of Washington to spend a part of her time in collecting data in the Bering Sea. Professor J.L. Alexander, of the Forestry Department of the University, and two research members of the labratory accompanied the CHELAN. The ship's sick bay was converted into a working labratory by the installation of a modern fathometer, thermograph, sounding machines, and various testing paraphernalia. The ostensible object of the cruise was to analyze the water, investigate its plants and organisms, study the ocean bottom, and note the temperature as well as the physical properties of the sea. The CHELAN was underway 897 hours on the expedition, having cruised 11,683 miles. The official report shows that the objectives of the cruise were fully realized. Many different samples were taken and analyzed; current measurements and direction tabulated; matters of exceptional interest observed and recorded. In addition, tree life was investigated in those sections visited, while hundreds of experimental seedlings were planted on many of the sea islands. Interestingly enough, time was found to study the villagers as well as the sea lion and walrus inhabiting the Aleutian, Pribilof, and Bogoslof Islands.

WARTIME OPERATION OF THE PATROL

During the 1930's the patrol of the North Pacific Ocean, Bering Sea, and southeastern Alaska was conducted by six to ten Coast Guard cutters and patrol boats. As the Coast Guard grew, the earlier practice of occasionally assigning an interdepartmental fleet was abandoned.[1] All activities generally increased. Supplementary services to which vessels and personnel applied themselves were constantly being augmented. Transportation and mails grew steadily, other federal agencies required more assistance, law enforcement was more difficult, while a newer service, that of settling labor differences between employers and employees, gradually developed. After our entry into the war, marine inspection and many other special war assignments were added to the list of duties. In 1931, six cutters and the 125-foot patrol boat McLANE cruised over 70,000 miles in the prosecution of their various patrols; they boarded 46 vessels, assisted six, rendered medical or dental aid to 565 individuals, and transported 712 persons. Three years later,

1. As an example, the fleet in 1921 consisted of 3 Naval, 4 Coast and Geodetic Survey, and 4 Coast Guard vessels.

COAST GUARD CUTTER-HAIDA



during the annual patrol season, nine Coast Guard vessels cruised 78,116 miles, assisted six vessels and boarded 60 others, and gave medical or dental attention to no fewer than 3,055 people. This did not include the halibut fishing patrol conducted annually by the Coast Guard for the Bureau of Fisheries, which would add some 600 more miles to the total distance covered. For the season preceding Pearl Harbor, 1941, six cutters were on duty in the Bering Sea from 1 May to 11 December. The average period of duty for each was about fifty days. A total of 46,251.1 miles was cruised. They gave medical relief to 211 people, dental care to 668, transported 211, carried altogether 304 tons of freight, and performed four judicial acts. Regular weather reports were made, ice observations taken, and several Japanese vessels identified. Thereafter, war activities in Alaska developed apace. Some idea of the part played by the Bering Sea Patrol cutters can be gained from the official reports of the HAIDA. Between 7 December, 1941, and 12 January, 1942, the HAIDA was completely equipped for war assignments. During the next two years she transported troops, escorted vessels, carried ammunition and war cargoes, and made several significant rescues. In addition to all this, she was a member of the Northern Surface Search Group Unit and stood special patrol duty in various parts of the Bering Sea. For all Coast Guard vessels in Alaska modification of scheduled operations in order to perform some emergency service for the Army or Navy became the normal routine of the day.

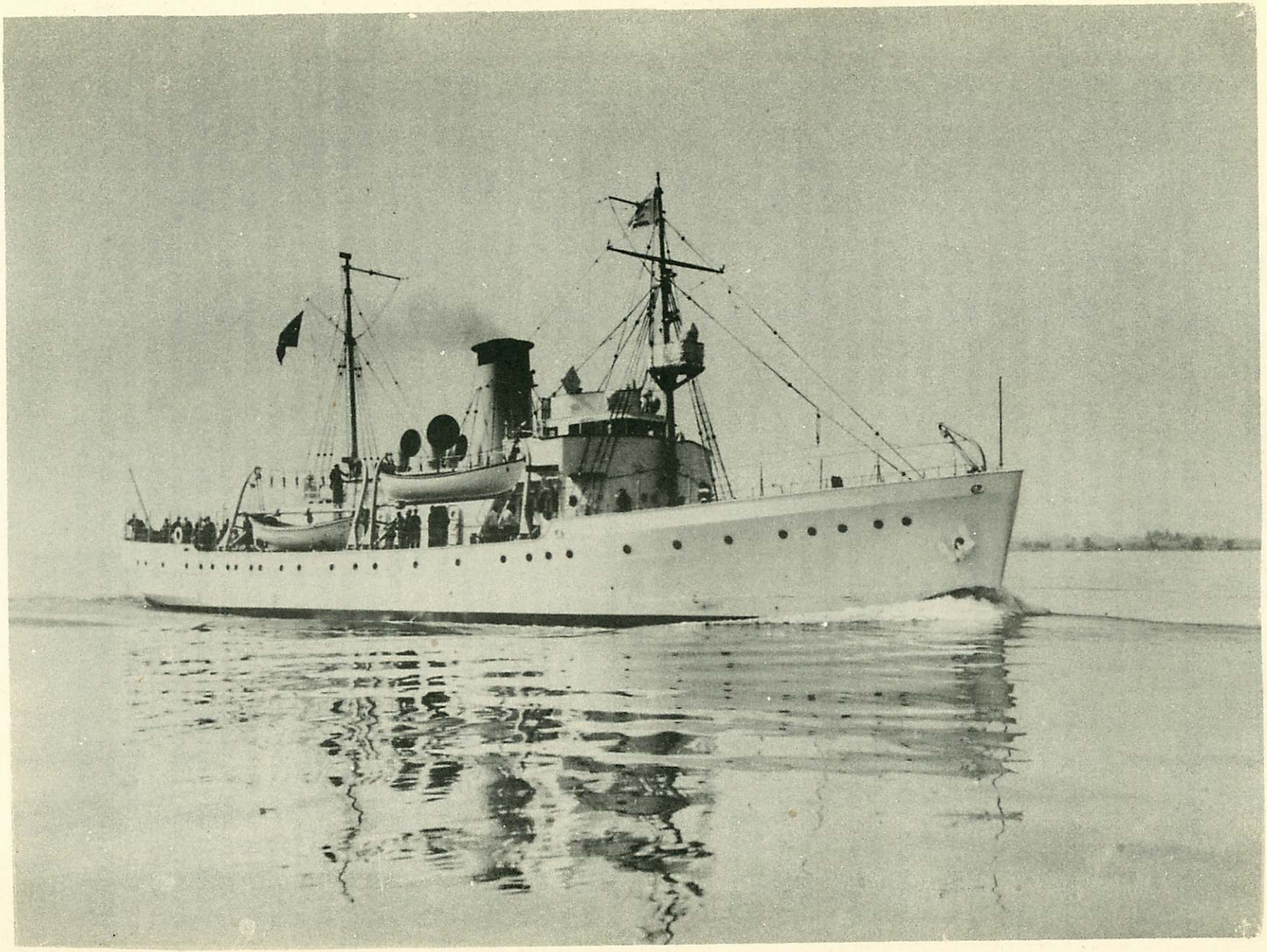
SITKA WITH NAVAL RADIO STATION

WAR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SEVENTEENTH NAVAL DISTRICT

ALASKA UNPREPARED FOR WAR IN 1941

At the time of the outbreak of European hostilities in 1939, Alaska's population of some 80,000 was entirely undefended. Her armed might consisted of a meagre garrison of 300 soldiers near Skagway and a naval station at Sitka, boasting of one tender and a dozen patrol planes. The Army's half-century old tug was its only means of transportation. Both the naval base at Sitka and the Chilkoot Army Barracks were situated in the southeast, far away from the scene of eventual attack. Dutch Harbor was only a dot on the map, "the Road" (Alcan Highway) still a crusader's dream. Actual war in the Northwest seemed remote until after the surprise attack on the Philippines in 1941. Even then Alaskan defenses were slow in gettingunder way. A subsidence of the Japanese submarine menace along the Pacific coast tended to allay our fears. Although the Navy continued its inshore and offshore patrols in the Thirteenth District, the immediacy of Alaska's danger was largely ignored. However, early in 1942, America began to realize that while Japan's boasts of naval preparations were somewhat exaggerated, her air strength was a force to be reckoned with. Sober thinking leaders understood that the Japanese rightly estimated the decisive importance of the Aleutians, while we were dismissing the problem altogether. Delegate Dimond called upon congress for plane bases in the Aleutians. "We need planes, more planes, and lots of planes," he argued. Governor Gruening told the President on the thirteenth of February that Alaska was thinking in terms of an offensive war and not a defensive action. "We want more of everything," the governor contended. Once defense preparations got under way, the movement was rapid enough to suit everybody. Congress appropriated nearly $150,000,000.00 for military and naval installations during 1942. The Army and Navy began to establish numerous bases and modern facilities of communication. At the time, the largest of several airfields in the whole territory was but 3,260 feet long--the average only about 1,000 to 1,500 feet. Most of them were nothing more than open beaches or leveled patches of land inshore. The War Department set up a Northwest Service Command for Alaska, to handle all construction and supplies; a new Territorial Guard to replace the old Alaskan National Guard was organized, which eventually equipped the 20,000 Eskimos around the fringe of the Bering Sea to defend their homelands; the Alaskan Defense Command, under Major General Simon B. Buckner, was created. Before Dutch Harbor was bombed in June, 1942, the Japanese had been rounded up and shipped to detention camps in the States, while shortly thereafter some 500 natives were evacuated from Atka and the Pribilofs. Following the Japanese occupation of Kiska and Attu the Alaskan War Council was formed to mobolize civilian man power and resources, working in close harmony with the military authorities. In July, the Navy was put in charge of joint operations, after the creation of a unified Army-Navy aircraft command. Defense drills and blackouts were staged. The general feeling was an expected surprise attack somewhere along the coast. Captain R.C. Parker, head of the Navy in Alaska, records that there were so many false alarms they "took to expecting the Japs regularly every Tuesday and Thursday."

COAST GUARD CUTTER ALGONQUIN



COAST GUARD PARTICIPATION

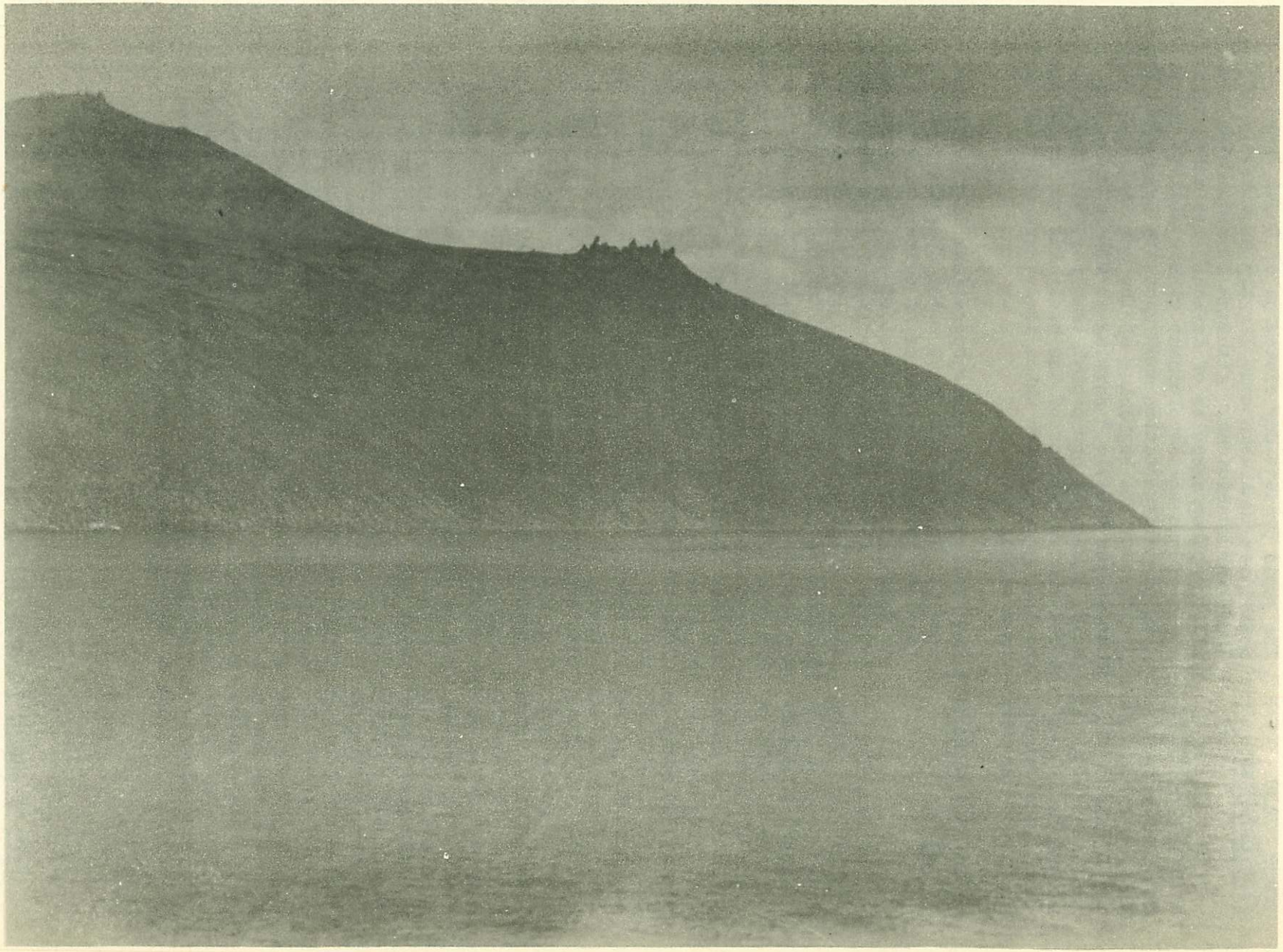
The rapid present-day expansion of Coast Guard activities in Alaska came largely as a result of these war conditions. Although it cooperated with all the other agencies of defense, its chief contribution was in transportation and in the development of new aids to navigation. So great were the demands of transportation made upon the Bering Sea fleet and other Coast Guard cutters at the beginning of the war that they became, in effect, "glorified passenger vessels," serving as mobile units for the Army and Navy. Similarly, increased commercial transportation and military movements at sea required the assistance of the best aids to navigation that could be provided. The thoroughness with which these were provided reflects credit to the whole organization.

SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS IN ALASKA

The development of shore operations in Alaska came very slowly. Most of the Coast Guard operations before 1939 had been through the medium of cutters based in California or Washington, operating out of their winter quarters at San Francisco or Seattle. These Alaskan patrols enforced the laws of navigation, rendered aid to water transportation, assisted vessels in distress, and maintained the maritime laws in the Territory. Coast Guard skippers in Alaska were the most experienced navigators in those waters and for years their records were invaluable aids to navigation for the straggling chain of barren unchartered Aleutian Islands stretching across some 17,000 miles of the stormy Pacific. Sometimes they were indispensable agents in assisting Army or Navy enterprises, as in the case of the Army airplane flight around the world in 1923. Not only did Coast Guard officials help plan the route of the flight but two Coast Guard cutters, HAIDA and ALGONQUIN, were assigned for convoy and special transportation services through the Bering Sea.[1] Even the news reports of the progress of the flight were radioed back to the states from Coast Guard vessels. Prior to 1915, the Life-Saving Service had for years maintained a station at Nome, Alaska. The act of congress of 1 March, 1905, which organized the Alaskan coast as a part of the Thirteenth Life-Saving District also authorized the establishment of a surf station in Alaska. Owing to the urgent demand for the services of a life-saving crew in the Bering Straits area, a vacant building on the government reservation at Nome was turned over to the Service and equipped with the life-saving apparatus already established there under the provisions of the act of 30 June, 1902. When the Life-Saving and the Revenue Cutter Services were amalgamated in 1915, the Nome station had seven surfmen and two surfboats. Since that date the Nome station had continued as one of the principal Alaskan Coast Guard bases. However, after its destruction by fire in 1934, the station was not rebuilt.[2] During the war emergency a life-saving boat has been maintained at Nome in place of the destroyed station. In addition, shore stations were maintained during the decades before World War II at Korovin Bay, Atka, Kiska, and Attu to keep watch on various bays and harbors which were much frequented by pelagic sealers. For the period of the fishing season temporary shore details, under the direction of warrant officers, cooperated with the patrol vessels

1. Vide ut supra, p. 45.
2. It then had four small boats attached. In 1937 there were only three men stationed at Nome.

CAPE PRINCE OF WALES, ALASKA

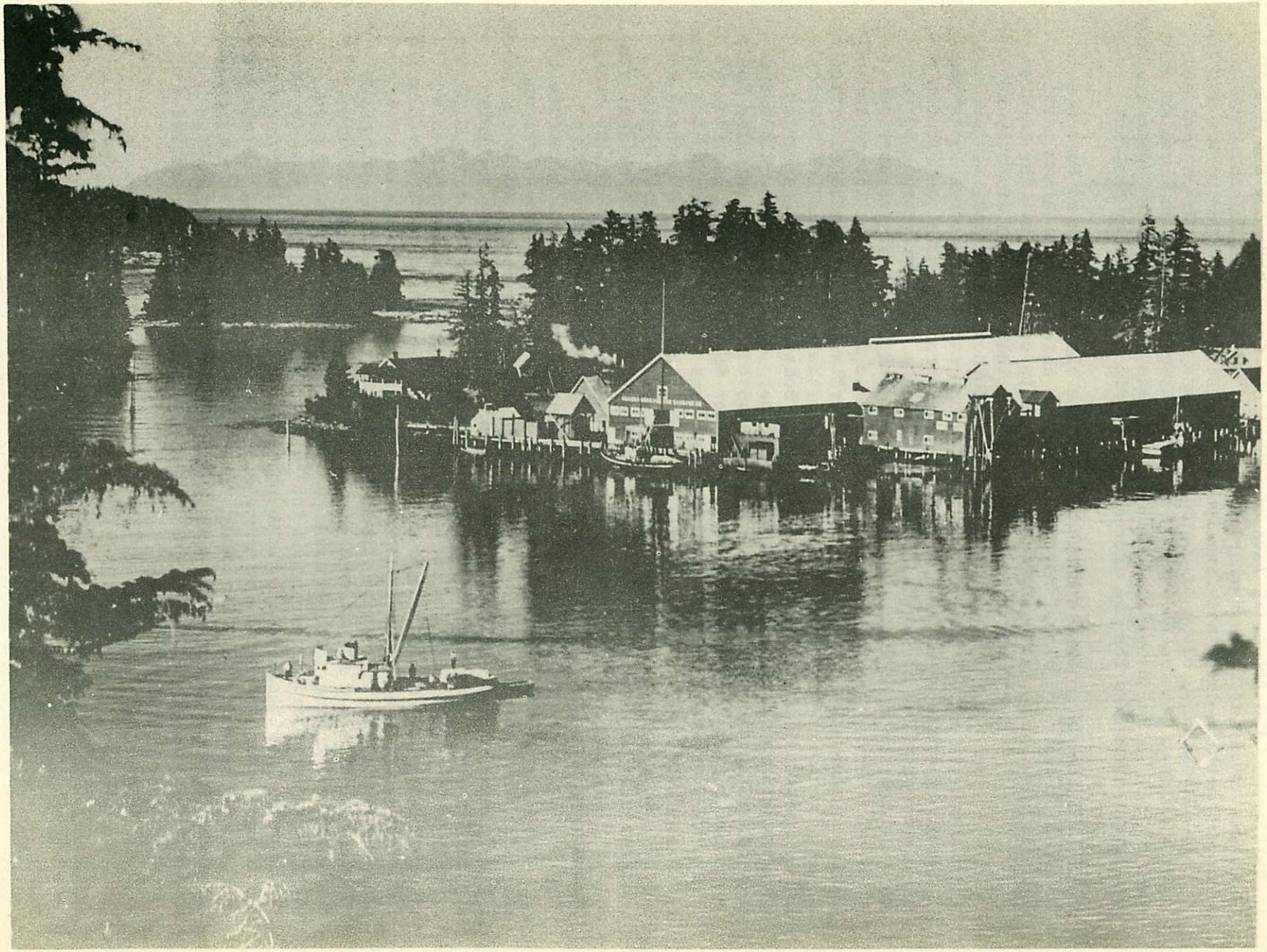


in that area. The temporary base of operations for the Bering Sea Patrol fleet was either at Dutch Harbor or Unalaska, on Unalaska Island, until a permanent service depot was finally established at the latter port. The tiny village of Unalaska, close by Dutch Harbor, was formerly a fur capital and later a halfway station for supply ships to Alaska during the Klondike gold rush of '98. Like the modern Dutch Harbor base it eventually became a stragetic government anchorage for the increasing traffic of the North Pacific.

HEROIC ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY THE NOME STATION

Small though it was, the shore station at Nome was in a position to maintain a unique humanitarian service, not only for the immediate community but for an area much more extensive than that which it directly served. Station No, 305 was well-known for wreck, rescue, and assistance work in the entire orbit of its operations. Several instances of heroic missions by members of the station personnel have contributed to the high reputation of the Coast Guard in Alaska. Two extraordinary cases can be cited, both of which indicate the unusual nature of the services rendered. During the raging influenza epidemic in Alaska in the winter of 1918, the Nome station undertook to furnish relief to influenza sufferers at Cape Prince of Wales, 160 miles to the northward. Surfman L.E. Ashton and an assistant travelled by dog sled from Nome to the Cape, carrying supplies and medicine to 122 stricken natives. Amid the bitter winds and snow of mid-December, these men mushed for seven days before reaching their final destination, pausing only to administer to the sick and destitue at eight villages along the way. Arriving at Cape Prince of Wales on the 13th, they found the village in a state of complete chaos. Some 157 persons were already dead, with no one available to administer to those still living. Unburied dead in almost every home lay side by side with the sick and dying. Ashton remained in the village for over two months, laboring against every obstacle to save the lives of the remaining population. He set up a hospital and a dispensary, perfected a relief organization to take care of the sick and to bury the dead, and, in effect, acted as nurse, physican, and undertaker for the entire village until the epidemic had spent its force. By 20 February, 1919, order was restored and the men returned to their station at Nome. Again, in 1921, the station crew under the command of the officer in charge of the station, Boatswain Thomas A. Ross, effected a timely rescue of a man stranded on a drifting ice pack about thirteen miles from Nome. Two rescue parties were sent out travelling by sleds and dog teams in different directions, in an attempt to reach the drifting pack. Repeated signals and flares were used to inform the exhausted sufferer that help was coming. Finally one party reached the open lead by sled, launched a skin boat, and reached the half-frozen man just in time to save him from an inevitable death. After battling the dangerous, floating ice and a temperature of 14° below zero, they succeeded in getting the man safely back to the station where first aid was applied. The following morning he was transported fourteen miles across the frozen northland to his own home. Such was the character of the speedy assistance that the well trained surfmen were daily prepared to give.

ALASKA SALMON CANNERY



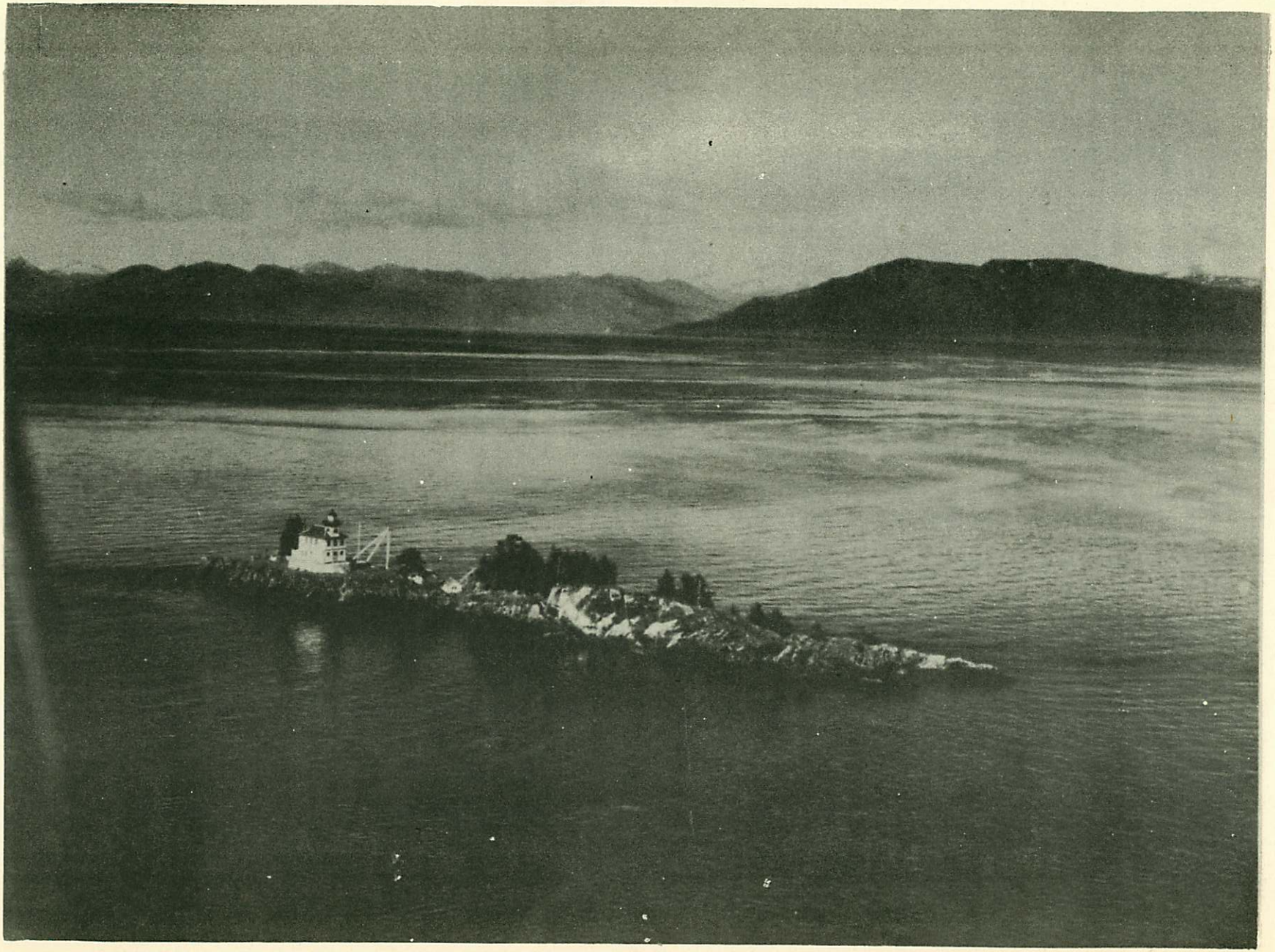
FISHERIES SERVICE DURING THE WAR YEARS

One of the important Coast Guard activities in Alaska has always been the assistance rendered to the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior. Not only has the Bering Sea Patrol assisted in the enforcement of fish and game regulations, but from time to time its vessels have engaged in cooperative fisheries investigations. During 1938 and 1939 the Bureau of Fisheries began an extended investigation of the salmon in the Bristol Bay region, which ranks as the greatest red-salmon producing area in the world, with an annual output of over sixty million pounds. The Coast Guard cutter REDWING was assigned to assist in that biological study, and to conduct observations on temperatures, currents, tides and salinities throughout the Bay region. More than 10,000 square miles of water were included in the survey in addition to the five river systems which comprise the area. During the more recent war years this close cooperation has been continued as far as possible, despite the heavy demands of war duties. During 1942 and 1943 a Fish and Wildlife Service Patrol Plane was used for Coast Guard purposes, while, in turn, the Coast Guard assisted in relaying messages, reporting fisheries violations to law enforcement agents, and cooperating generally in the conservation work in Alaska. As far as possible all Coast Guard war patrols have given the usual protection to the migrating fur-seal herd and to the preservation of fisheries and wildlife in the territorial waters.

IMPROVEMENT IN WATER TRANSPORTATION

As a result of the increased commerical traffic and the extended transportation of war supplies to Alaska during the war years, 1941-1943, improvements in harbors, water transportation, and port facilities became imperative. Such basic items as canned goods, cured meats, machinery, gas and fuel oil, gasoline, military cargoes, and general merchandise significantly indicate the war trends. The grand total of all traffic in the Valdez Harbor increased from 21,811 tons in 1941 to 118,439 tons in 1943; Juneau from 144,447 tons to 201,158 tons; Kodiak from 14,564 tons to 75,386 tons. Certain regions, as Unalaska Bay, were within naval defense sea areas where there was nothing but military cargoes. Normal peacetime improvements in Alaska were brought to a speedy completion. By 1940 harbor projects by the United States Army Engineers had either been completed or were in a state of postponement at Sitka, Juneau, Wrangel, Skagway, Valdez, Nome, Ketchikan, Cordova, Petersburg, Port Alexander, Kodiak, and Seward. Other projects included the improvement of the Stikine, Salmon, and Egegik Rivers, Dry Pass, and Wrangel Narrows. This work encompassed channeling, dredging, removal of obstructions, snagging, the clearance of rivers, flood control work, new wharves, dikes, breakwaters, and jetties, and additional terminal port facilities. The total of existing, completed, and flood control projects as of the end of that year, 1940, amounted to $2,381,590.46, with an estimated maintenance cost of $857,819.63. Although particular improvements were added where necessary, most of the war expenditures for the accomodation of wartime water transportation was in the form of new aids to navigation.

FIVE FINGER LIGHT, ALASKA



FUNCTION OF THE LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE IN ALASKA

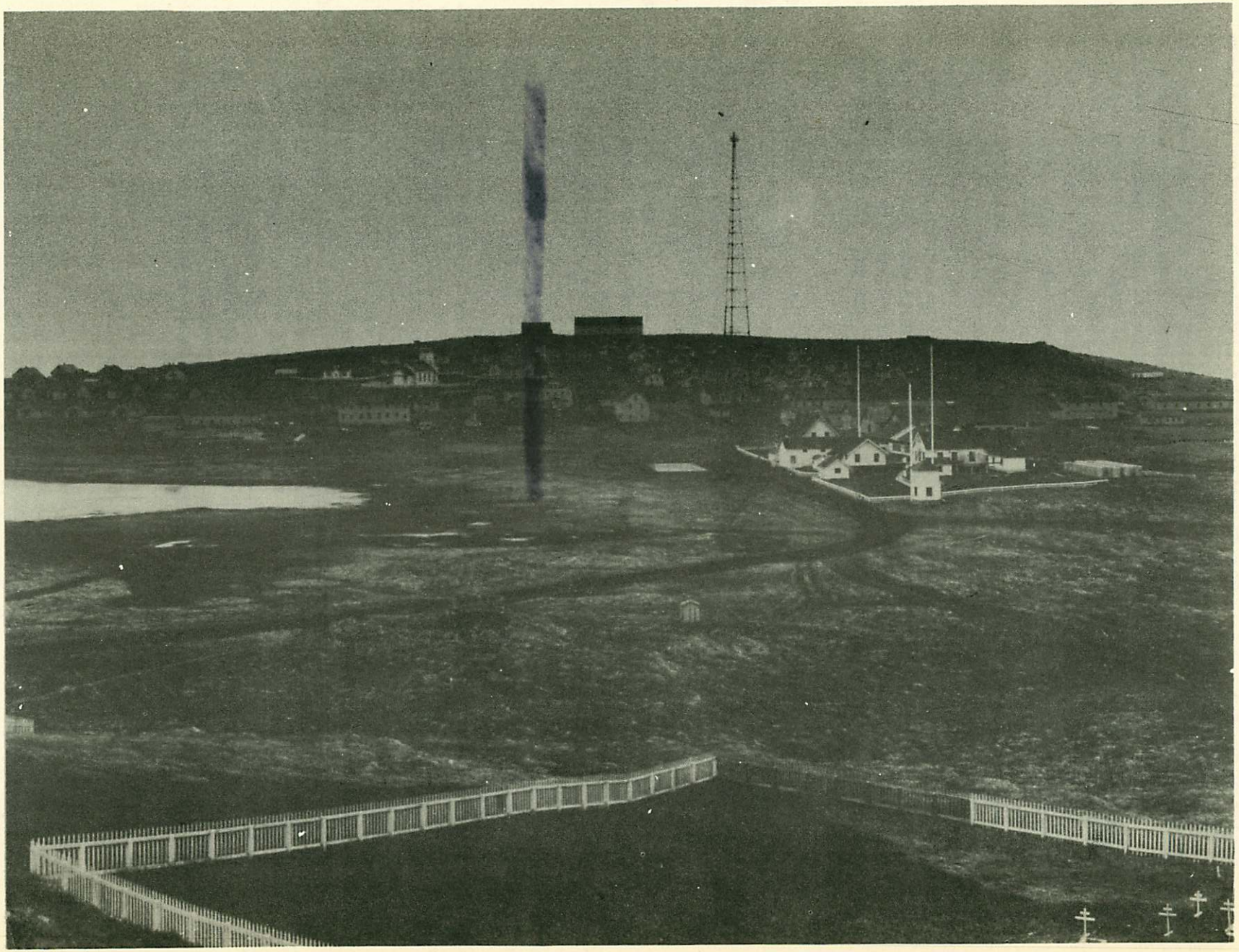
The function of the Lighthouse Service in Alaska has always been one of great responsibility, but after its consolidation with the Coast Guard in 1939, it has rendered an even greater service to the Territory. Because of the retarded development of land transportation and the added problem of great distances between ports, where vessels must depend largely upon established aids to navigation for their protection, the Coast Guard has been able to make a real contribution to the war effort. Throughout Alaskan waters the safety of the merchant fleet, fishing fleets, and to a marked degree all airplanes flying in the Territory, are dependent upon the functioning of lights, signals, and the accurate location of buoys. Furthermore, since this part of the North Pacific is not well known to most navigators, oftentimes absolute reliance upon published charts and navigational manuals is necessary. Nor was the task of safeguarding the 14,899 miles of Alaskan shoreline an easy one.[1] A brief examination of the progress made in that direction reveals the extent to which proper navigation aids enabled the military development to continue without unnecessary risks.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF AIDS TO NAVIGATION IN ALASKA

The early history of lighthouses dates back to 1715-16 when the first lighthouse at the entrance to Boston harbor was established on this continent. Provided for by the first session of congress in 1789, our lighthouse service is one of the oldest of all federal agencies. The former Bureau of Lighthouses, which superseded the old Lighthouse Board in 1910, administered all aids to navigation in Alaska until 1939, when the Service was turned over to the Coast Guard. Despite the increasing demands of Alaskan commerce, little attention was given to the problem of navigational aids until after the turn of the century. During the earlier decades of Alaskan history, mariners were forced to shift for themselves. In 1894, the first Russian governor of Alaska established a lighthouse at Sitka, which became the first on the Pacific coast of North America. The first American aids were set up in 1884, when 14 iron buoys were established, but the first light was not installed until 1895, just a year after the Sitka light had been destroyed by fire. Came in 1902 the first two lighthouses with keepers, one on Sentinel Island in the Lynn Canal and the other at southeast Five Finger Island in Frederick Sound. On 1 August, 1910, Alaska became a separate lighthouse district with headquarters at Ketchikan. This newer organization tended to promote both efficiency and economy and generally effected a more rapid extension of aids during the ensuing periods. About this time the acetylene, automatic "blinker" light was coming into vogue; it soon proved itself particularly useful in Alaska, where oil lights were so impracticable because of isolated stations which had no keepers and oftentimes no local resident to keep them properly serviced. By 1911, the Territory boasted of 71 unwatched lights and 10 lighthouse stations with permanently assigned keepers.

1. These figures are in statute miles and include the mainland and off-lying islands. The inland tidal high water line, which includes bays, sounds, rivers, and streams, of Alaska is over 19,000 miles in length.

ST. PAUL VILLAGE



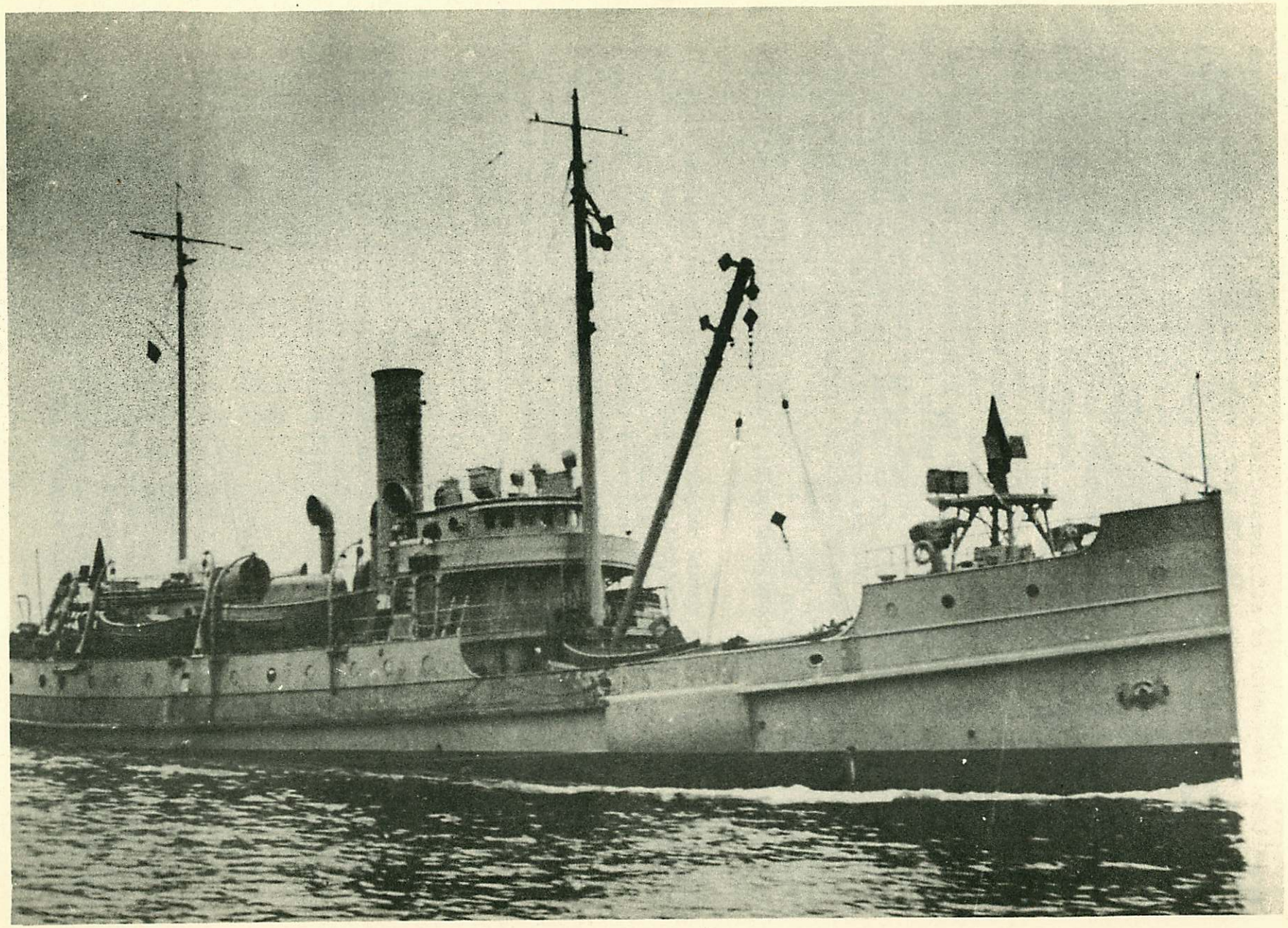
Since then the number of aids maintained in Alaska has steadily increased at a fairly uniform rate. In 1890 there were only 42 aids, 160 by 1910, 535 in 1920, and 584 in 1922. These included lights, buoys, fog signals, and beacons, representing an increase of 187 lighted aids since 1910, or about 505 per cent. Nevertheless, there were vast stretches of shore along the Bering Sea and the Arctic which were entirely unmarked, save for a few small lights in Norton Sound. The Aleutian Islands still represented an unchartered region. The remote station at Cape Serichef, marking the Unimak Pass into the Bering Sea, represented the only lighthouse along the entire Bering Sea shoreline. Most of the aids were located along the mainland in the southeast where the traffic was heaviest. The first radiobeacon was not established until 1926. It was strategically located at Cape Spencer, where a new station was completed the following year. In 1930, a radiobeacon was installed at the Scotch Cap Light Station in the entrance to Unimak Pass. This was the most westernly extremity of the Alaskan mainland, beyond which stretched the straggling Aleutians--the foggiest region in the world--whose waters were yet unlighted. In 1932 the important station at Kuiu Island on Cape Decision was completed at a total cost of $152,000. By June 1936, Alaska had some 900 aids to navigation, which represented 14 keeper light stations with compressed air fog signals, 349 unwatched non-floating lights, 40 lighted buoys, 1 automatic fog bell, and 7 radiobeacons. Another radiobeacon was completed on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs the next year.

IMPROVED EQUIPMENT

The actual number of aids, however, does not show the steady improvement that had been made in the district's equipment. Lighted buoys were introduced in 1917, when the first seven were installed in Alaska. Flashing or occulting lights likewise made their appearance, as well as the latest type of air fog signals. In time a special type of structure for unattended lights was designed for use in Alaska, where it was so difficult to maintain resident keepers.[1] Special base towers were constructed of 4' x 6' or 6' x 6' timbers, which were filled with concrete to support the superstructure, consisting of a tower, platform, and an acetylene lantern located above the roof. These structures ranged from 20 to 50 feet in height, although the general elevation of lights in Alaska was low, owing to the prevailing cloudy weather. Since all light stations were inaccessible by land, radio communication had to be given special attention. By 1937 radios were in operation at eight stations, two of which also had radio-telephones. Meanwhile, a new lighthouse depot, with berthing and wharfage space, storehouses, shops, and modern equipment had been constructed at Ketchikan to replace the out-

1. A special feature of the Lighthouse Service exhibit at the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition held at San Francisco in 1915 was a modern watch-room of a lighthouse which was subsequently installed at Cape St. Elias, Alaska. The complete structure, consisting of the parapet deck, watch room, and helical bar lantern, was of massive metal, standing 29 feet high and weighing approximately 44,000 pounds.

COAST GUARD CUTTER CEDAR



moded, rented quarters there. From this base the service boats operated. Between 1911 and 1917 the coal-burning steam tenders, the AMERIA, the COLUMBINE, and the KUKUI stood duty in the Ketchikan district. In 1917, however, the new, oil-burning, steel tender CEDAR was commissioned for special service in Alaska. The largest tender in the lighthouse service, the CEDAR was 200 feet long, with a 36-foot beam and a displacement of approximately 1,300 tons at a draft of 13 feet. It had seven water-tight bulkheads, a double bottom, a triple expansion engine with two Scotch, oil boilers, modern appliances, radio communication, and was capable of a cruising radius of about 3,800 nautical miles. For many years, this redoubtable vessel plowed the rough waters of Alaska, servicing stations and equipment as far as 15,000 miles from her Ketchikan base. Each year she made the round-trip voyage to the remote lighthouse at Cape Serichef to carry mail and supplies to the station there. When the duties of the CEDAR became too heavy to be borne alone, the steam tender FERN, and, later, the steel tender HEMLOCK were assigned to assist her in the southeastern sector.

STATUS IN 1939

When the Coast Guard assumed the added responsibilities of the Lighthouse Service in 1939, Alaska was organized as the Sixteenth Lighthouse District with a district office and depot at Ketchikan. The fact that it already owned building and property there to the value of some $450,000.00 was, in part, responsible for the new district Coast Guard headquarters being finally established at Ketchikan instead of at Juneau. At that time, there were 15 light stations in Alaska, of which all but one were provided with resident keepers. Of the total of 970 aids to navigation, 482 were unlighted, silent aids, 442 were lighted aids, and 26 were fog signals.[1] The district also had three tenders in commission, the ALDER, CEDAR and HEMLOCK. Ten light stations were equipped to report weather conditions, important data that was extremely valuable to both marine navigators and airmen. These reports included information on ceiling height, sky conditions, visibility, obstructions to visibility, temperature, wind velocity, and sea conditions. Furthermore, new district improvements were already in the process of completion. The allotment for the fiscal year 1939 included $45,660.00 for marking channels, and $7,000.00 for new minor, aids to navigation. Altogether, it was a good beginning, but much work remained to be done before Alaska was ready to accomodate the new war traffic that suddenly developed in 1942 and 1943.

1. Figures for the total number of aids for the fiscal year 1939 vary appreciably. The (USCG) "Aids to Navigation on the Coasts and Waterways of the United States--Statistics," 30 June, 1941, lists a total of 970 for the Juneau District in that year. The fourteen light stations with resident keepers were located as follows: Tree Point, Mary Island, Guard Island, Lincoln Rock, Five Finger, Cape Decision, Sentinal Island, Eldred Rock, Point Retreat, Cape Spencer, Cape St. Elias, Cape Hinchinbrook, Scotch Cap, and Cape Serichef.

COMMANDER (NOW REAR ADMIRAL) FREDERICK A. ZEUSLER

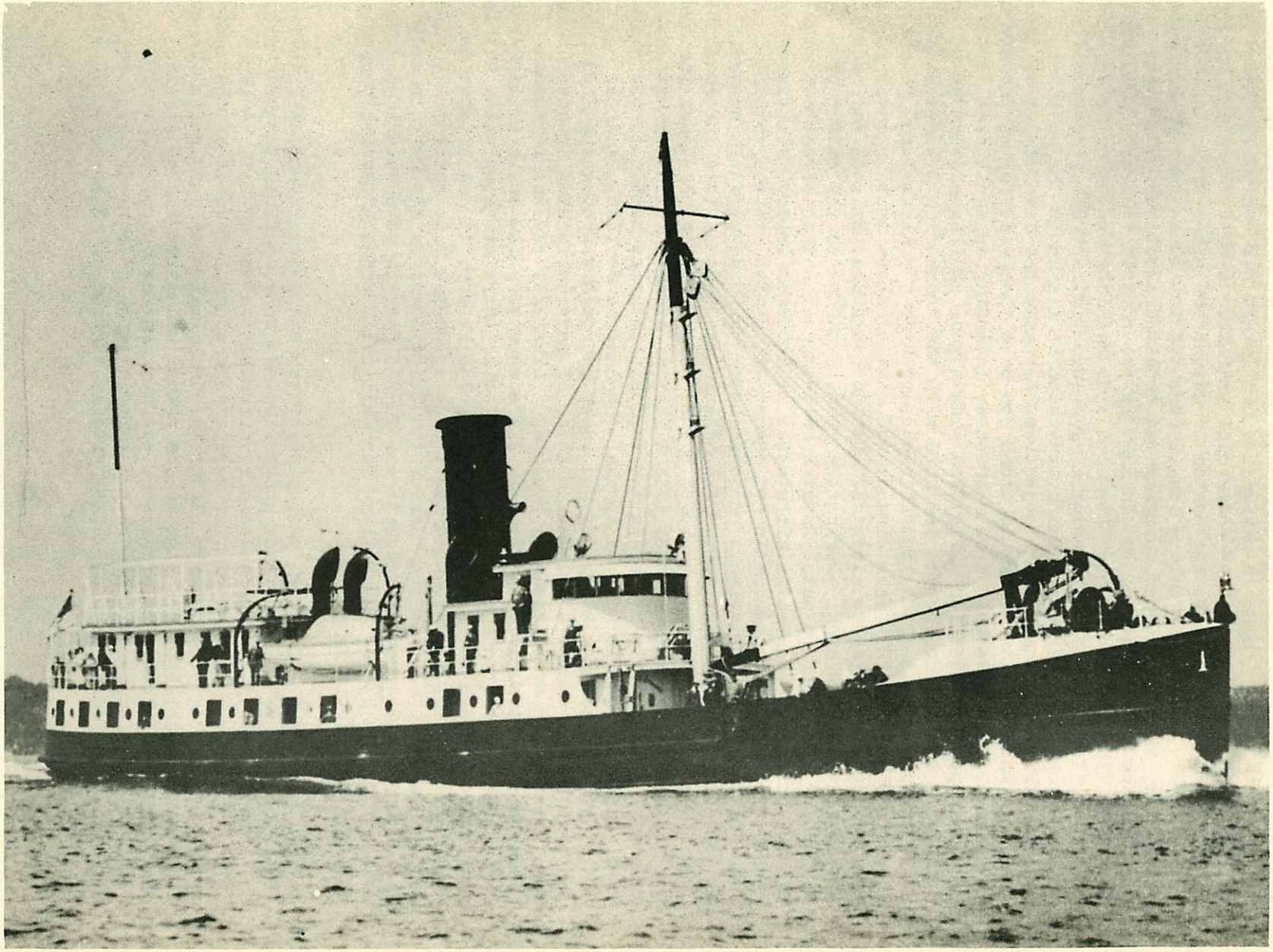
WARTIME NEEDS FOR NEW NAVIGATIONAL AIDS

For some quarter of a century the Alaskan system of aids to navigation had lagged far behind the growing needs of commercial traffic. Always there was an urgent, insistent demand to extend the areas of protection into new waters long before federal funds were appropriated. Heretofore, the Coast Guard normally had received about $30,000.00 per year for new aids to navigation, but in 1940 it was reduced to $20,000.00, and that at a time when the demand for more aids had increased about 400%. In September, 1940, Captain Frederick A. Zeusler, District Officer, submitted a development plan for Coast Guard expansion in Alaska to the National Resources Planning Board. The objectives embraced the development of the navigable waterways of Alaska in order "to make them safe for marine and aerial navigation." More vessels were requested, including an additional tender, and greater appropriations for navigation aids urged. During mid-summer of the next year, 1941, a conference was held with the commanding officer of the Alaskan Defense Sector. A list of necessary aids for Alaska was presented, of which only about 20% were disapproved. Among those most urgently required were new buoys and lights along the Alaskan Peninsula, Bristol Bay, and in the northern Alaska area. During the year, projects to the extent of $12,500.00 were carried out. However, with the exception of certain aids in the vicinity of the naval air station at St. Paul Island, all these items were for the accommodation of commercial craft. It was not until 1942 that new aids for defense purposes began to be so urgently needed. On 20 October, 1942, a directive from Washington Headquarters informed the DCGO of aids to navigation approved by the Navy as being necessary for the war program in Alaska, together with a list of aids important in national defense. These mostly concerned the region from Sitka harbor to the westward, encompassing the Gulf of Alaska, the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands. The heavy fog and rocky approaches around the Aleutians, where there was almost a complete absence of servicable aids, rendered the need for new constructions most pressing. Likewise, the waters about Kodiak were particularly dangerous. There were very few bells or markers beyond Dutch Harbor and no fog signals at all; there was absolutely nothing at Attu. Although there was a light at Dutch Harbor, it had no permanently manned lighthouse, the attended lighthouse at Unimak Pass being the farthest western station. It was the task of the Coast Guard in Alaska to remedy this deficiency and to provide adequate safeguards for the main waterways cargo routes from the States, as well as for particular areas extensively used by military patrol craft.

NAVIGATIONAL AIDS ESTABLISHED SINCE 1940

During the period of war emergency, practically all authorized appropriations were confined to those aids which materially affected the war effort. A large part of them were at the special request of the Army and Navy. After the declaration of war against Japan, there was a considerable change in the nature and direction of Alaskan commerce. Restricted sea areas were set up, new regions of war traffic developed, while pleasure travel and certain types of cargoes progressively declined. Many aids were no longer vitally necessary. Therefore, in view

COAST GUARD CUTTER HEMLOCK (TENDER CLASS)



of the shortage of material and servicing equipment, aids for purely private commercial uses were not serviced, many lights, radio beams, and fog signals were discontinued altogether, and practical innovations for promoting efficiency introduced. Among the important changes was the institution of newer automatic acetylene lights to replace the older oil lights that required local lamplighters and frequent servicing. In some cases electric illuminants were used, which improved the lighting aids in those waters where strong tides would momentarily extinguish the acetylene lights. Between 1941 and 1944 scores of lights, beacons, buoys, and miscellaneous minor aids were established at strategic points in the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutians. By 1945, the islands in the Aleutians had a radio beacon and some thirty odd additional aids. The number of radio beacons for the entire Territory had increased from nine in 1940 to sixteen in 1944. Comparative statistics for the period 1940 to 1944 show an increase from 980 to 1,102 in the total number of aids maintained.[1] By the end of April, 1945, this grand total had been further augmented to 1,110, including 93 improved fog signals.

1. Appendix III, (A) and (B). The navigation projects for July of 1945 illustrates a characteristic type of improvement.

COAST GUARDSMAN WATCHES THE TRANSPORT RETURNING ALEUTS TO THEIR HOME ISLANDS

THE RAMPARTS WE WATCHED

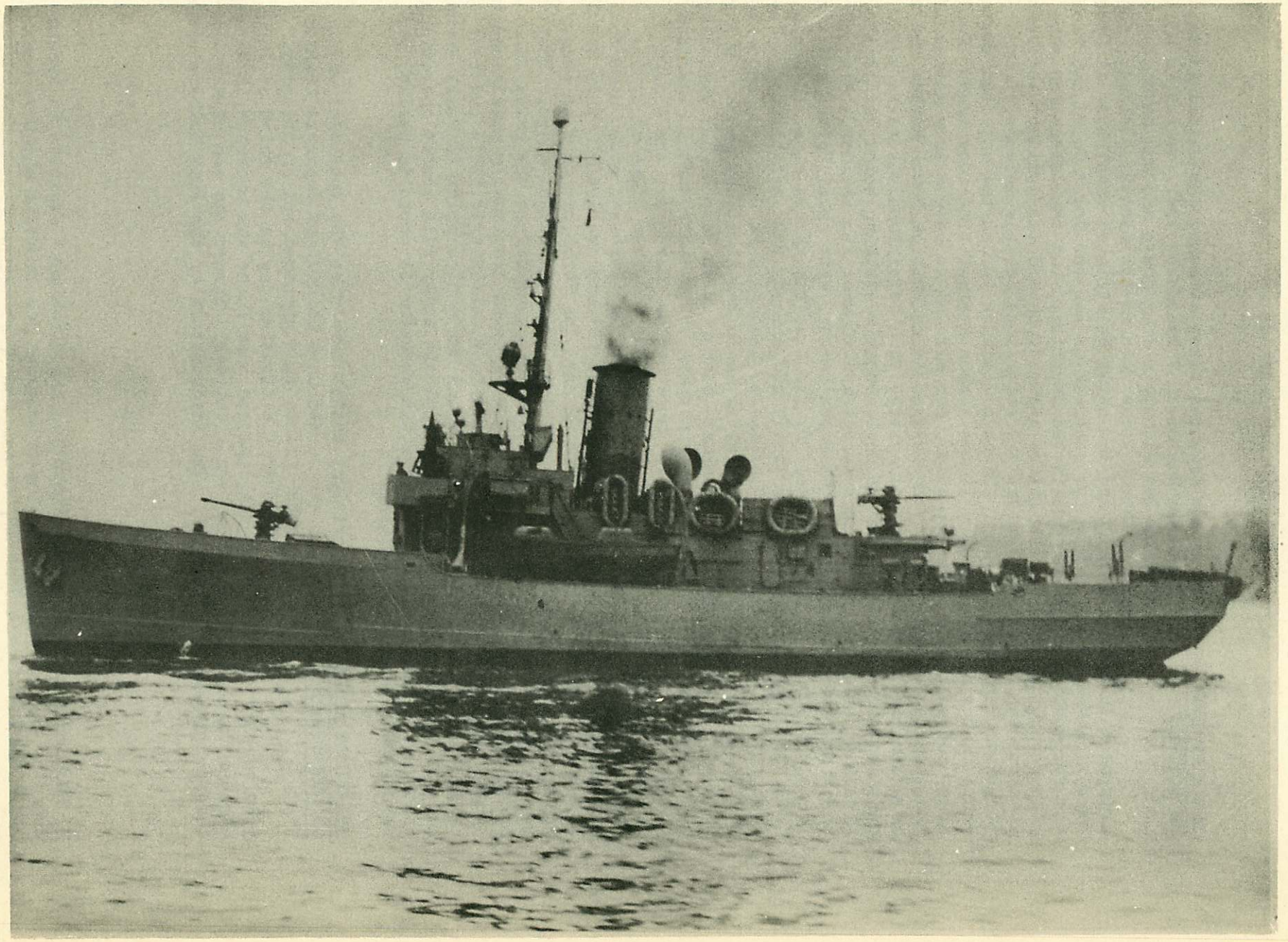
When the Japanese first attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor on 7 December, 1941, we had in all Alaska but six small army posts and one naval base. Only two of these were in the Aleutian Islands, one army post on Kodiak Island, and the newly established naval base at Dutch Harbor on Unalaska. Before the outbreak of war the Coast Guard had been the foremost military service in the Territory, but that situation was soon changed in 1942 when military security became the dominant interest. The Army and Navy began immediate preparations for the defense of the strategic Pacific Northwest. Since a Japanese thrust was expected somewhere in the Alaskan sector, it was a race against time; new bases, equipment, communication, planes, ships, men all had to be put in readiness for the anticipated attack. If the unexpected assault on Pearl Harbor had come as a surprise, our military authorities were determined not to be taken unawares a second time. As the most probable striking point was in the Aleutians, special precautions were taken to meet the invader there. Preparations were rushed forward at Dutch Harbor, with naval forces and air forces strengthened in the area. By the time the thrust came, in June, 1942, two important secret air fields had already been established. The eastern field was located on the Alaskan peninsula at Cold Bay, opposite Kodiak Island, and the other was situated in the Aleutians proper, being just west of Dutch Harbor, on Unimak Island. Both were highly camouflaged under the disguise of buildings purporting to be two recently-organized cannaries supposedly operating in those parts. Moreover, the Alaska Defense Command, which was fondly styled the "offense command" by its head, Major General Simon Bolivar Buckner, had exercised every care to put the entire Alaskan coast in readiness for any emergency. When the first reports of the Hawaii attack reached the Territory on that eventful morning of 7 December, Buckner had ordered a constant alert. That same night a total blackout was effected.[1] Long before the raids on Dutch Harbor, vigilant naval patrols were being continually maintained in southern Alaska and the Peninsula. In fact, the Navy's PBY's had been patrolling the Aleutian waters for about two months prior to Pearl Harbor and early in December of 1941 began patrols under full combat operation. Whatever the enemy force, wherever and whenever it chose to strike, our forces were watchfully waiting.

THE FIRST ATTACK ON DUTCH HARBOR

The critical moment came when the spotlight of events was turned on a handful of Japanese fighter and bomber planes that appeared out of the gray denseness of the Aleutian fog on the third of June, 1942. About the same time the Japanese task force was approaching Midway, another force was sent out to the Aleutians. Toward the end of May the tension quickened everywhere. The headquarters of the Army bombers command

1. Buckner soon became well known for his "iron man" exploits in Alaska where he was credited with doing a ten-year job in about eighteen months. Later, as Lieutenant General, he achieved distinction as commander of all fighting forces on Okinawa, where he was killed in action, 18 June, 1945.

COAST GUARD CUTTER ONONDAGA



and squadrons of medium bombers were moved down the Alaskan Peninsula to Cold Bay and Umnak. The forward echelon of the Eleventh Air Force was sent to Greely, while the rear echelon was retained at the administrative center in Anchorage. Navy and Army squad and patrol planes wearily searched the fog-blanketed island chain, amid the drizzling rain and unpredictable "williwaws" of that difficult region. Our Intelligence Division had already warned Alaska of an impending advance against the islands, or perhaps even an attack on the mainland itself. It was no surprise, therefore, when, late on the 2nd, a patrol plane cited an unidentified surface force, about 400 miles south of Kiska, proceeding eastward. Meanwhile, submarines had been reported in the vicinity of Umnak and Unalaska. Just before dawn on the morning of the 3rd a tender in the neighborhood of Dutch Harbor reported possible Japanese planes cruising low over the harbor. As the squadron circled the base one of the ground crew spotted a wing-marking which identified it as Japanese. Shore and ship batteries immediately opened fire a few minutes before the first bomb fell. Although the attack was of short duration, a few barracks and warehouses were set on fire and a Navy patrol plane strafed. Only two PBY's were lost. Several enemy aircraft were shot down. Estimates of the total number of attacking craft vary considerably but there were undoubtedly fewer than 40 engaged in the attack. It is believed that most of them were never able to regain their carrier ships. This first assault seemed to be primarily for reconnaissance purposes, designed to survey the strength of the base before the main attack was launched. At the time, the actual strength of Dutch Harbor was not great. The base, which was still under construction, was garrisoned by a couple of regiments of troops and a few marines. In the harbor were several vessels, three destroyers, a minesweeper, an Army transport, an old station ship, the NORTHWESTERN, and the Coast Guard cutter ONONDAGA. The latter vessel, moored at the south buoy in the harbor, sighted the enemy at 0540 before the air station was attacked. General quarters were sounded, battle stations manned, and all batteries put in action within a few seconds. During the brief period the Japanese planes were within range, the ship fired 115 rounds of 3"-23 caliber, 1,400 rounds of .50 caliber, and 500 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition, without suffering any casualties. It was reported that the personnel responded to the call of duty in a most commendable manner.

ENEMY OBJECTIVES

In the attempt that followed to locate the Japanese surface force, a PBY, piloted by Lieutenant L.D. Campbell, contacted five enemy vessels about eighty miles off Umnak. Simultaneously upon sighting the vessels, the PBY was fiercely attacked by a Japanese Zero, which so seriously crippled it that a forced landing was required. However, the crew was successfully rescued by a Coast Guard cutter, which carried Campbell on to the Shumagins before he had an opportunity to amplify his first meagre reports. From the information that could be pieced together on the basis of several contacts, the Navy estimated the Japanese force to consist of two small carriers, two seaplane tenders, four to six transports, and a full support of cruisers and destroyers. Apparently Dutch Harbor had been the immediate objective, after which they might then seize the Pribilofs to the north, make a mass landing on the Seward

COAST GUARDSMEN UNLOADING SUPPLIES IN ALASKA

Peninsula, and eventually occupy the coastal harbors to penetrate into the very heart of Alaska. Naturally, any deductions as to the exact nature of the mission must remain conjectural until the conclusion of the war verifies the thread of truth in the various conflicting theories. Nevertheless, it is probable that it represented a major attempt at a surprise blow against the North American continent. The Navy report substantiates this conclusion:

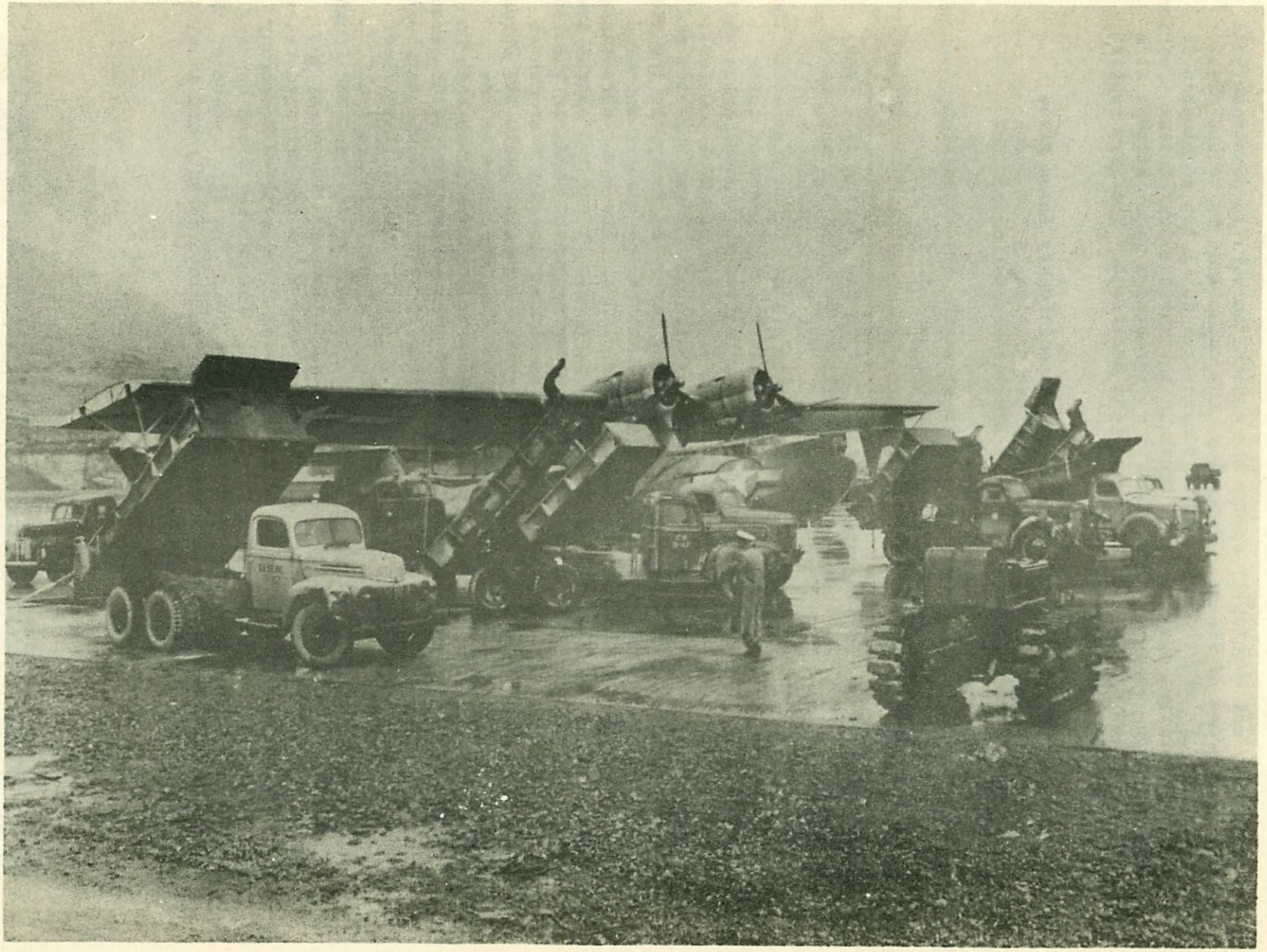
> The behavior and size of the expeditionary force gives basis to the belief that the Japanese originally had been assigned to occupy bases on the Alaskan coastal area. But when they found the opposition at Dutch Harbor, and after suffering a tremendous loss of air strength, the expedition is believed to have chosen the landing spot of far-off Kiska as an alternative.[1]

SECOND ATTACK ON DUTCH HARBOR

The second attack came on the evening of 4 June, when the main assault on Dutch Harbor and nearby Fort Mears occurred. The force consisted of 18 bombers and 16 fighter planes, which approached the harbor from two directions, in fleets of three planes each. The bombers dropped heavy explosives and incendiaries while the fighters straffed the streets from an elevation of about 500 feet. A warehouse, a few oil tanks, and an empty aircraft hangar were hit and the old NORTHWESTERN bombed and destroyed by fire. Suddenly, in the midst of the battle, United States Army fighters and medium bombers appeared out of the fog in the rear of the Japanese planes. The enemy were taken completely by surprise since they had no knowledge of our two secret Army fields at Cold Bay and Umnak. In stunned confusion the Japanese wheeled to attempt escape, only to find themselves flying directly over one of the secret Army fields. The pursuing Warhawks downed at least two Zeros and perhaps two or three dive-bombers before they were lost in the enveloping fog. At the same time an unsuccessful air raid was made on the Army post at Fort Glenn on Umnak, about 70 miles west of Dutch Harbor. Altogether three or four score planes failed to return to their carriers, being either shot down or lost. Meanwhile, the invading surface fleet had been located and attacked. Before the fleet scattered, several direct hits were scored by our planes. Subsequently, the hunt continued during the driving rain and fog of the days following. The enemy was forced to withdraw with the loss of one cruiser and a few crippled vessels. Thus baffled in their original plans, the task force retired to occupy Kiska, lying some 700 miles to the westward. The carrier group appears to have escaped northward through the Bering Sea. The first phase of the Aleutian campaign was closed, but the enemy remained to entrench itself on the islands of Kiska, Agattu, and Attu.

1. Report on the Navy and the War, Part I, p. 22. A report, prepared by the Office of Public Relations of the Department of the Navy, submitted to the senate, 18 October, 1943.

TRUCKS SERVING AS A WINDBREAK FOR COAST GUARD PLANE AT DUTCH HARBOR, ALASKA

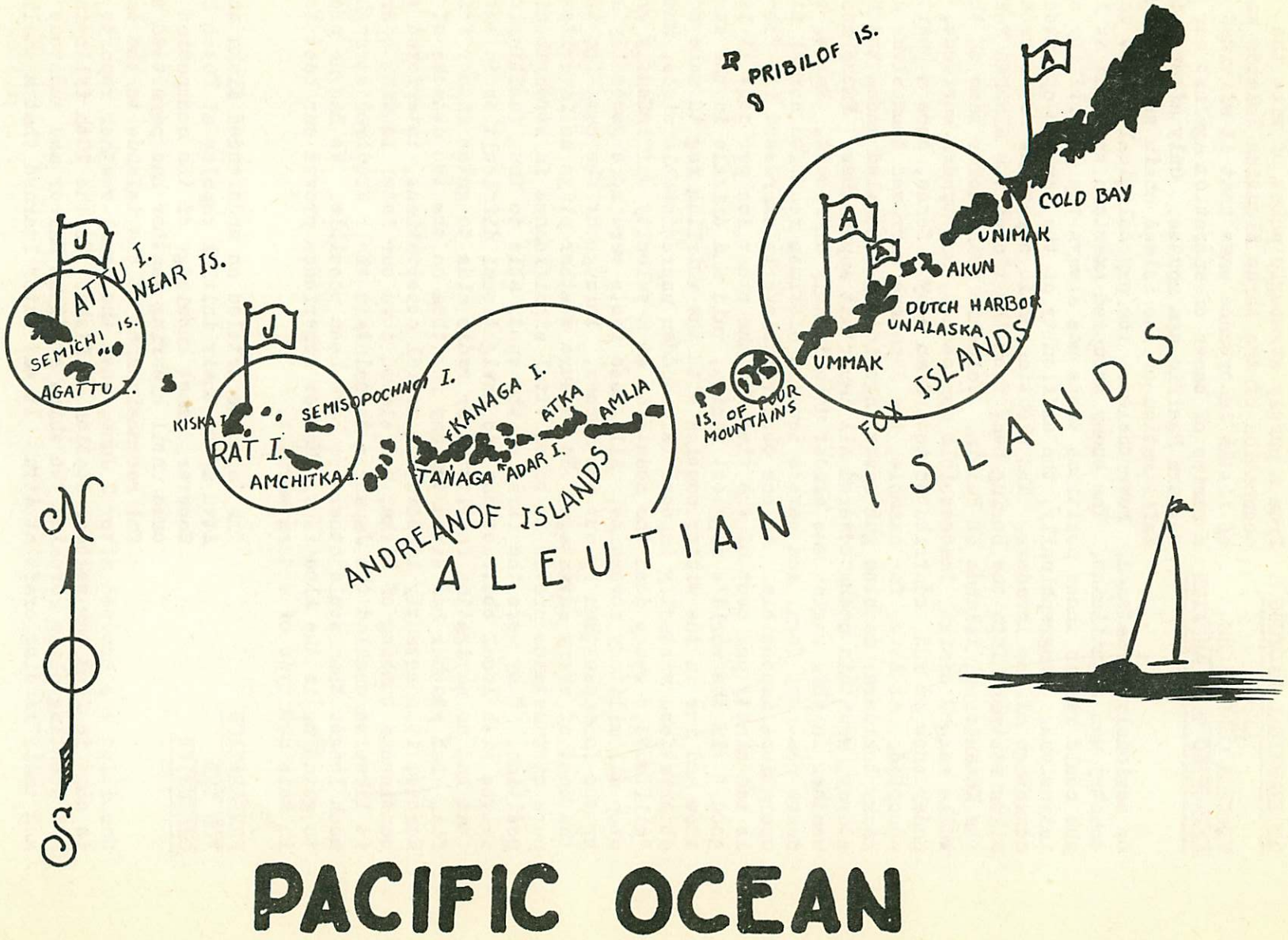


GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE CAMPAIGN

From a purely strategic point of view the occupation of the three Aleutian Islands was of little importance save that it afforded Japan a series of bases of operation against our northwestern Pacific sea routes. Only after a thorough infiltration of the island chain would our mainland be seriously threatened. Nevertheless, the psychological effect upon the country was significant. The enemy occupied American soil and as long as she could retain those positions there was always the possibility of further intrusions. Geographically, the difficulty of the terrain operated to the advantage of the invaders. The Aleutian chain stretches for over a thousand miles westward into the Bering Sea, from the tip of the Alaskan Peninsula to the Komandorski Islands of Russia. Volcanic peaks cover some of the islands, while rugged craigs, inaccessible approaches, and tundra surfaces, buried under snow or mud, contributed toward an easy defense, once a position was occupied. At Attu, for example, the Japanese burrowed themselves among the rocky boulders; machine gun nests ingeniously concealed among the high, stormy, mountain peaks covered all important approaches. Futhermore, the weather in this region was almost unbelievably difficult. Rains, snow, dense pea-soup fogs, and severe squalls ofttimes rendered normal air operations impossible. As one observer cleverly expressed it, "the weather is bad ninety per cent of the time and the other ten per cent it is not good." In the world's foggiest region, rain and drizzle in the summer and snow and ice in the winter combine with the whirling fog to make accurate observations virtually impossible. Sudden unpredictable winds, known as "williways," sweep down the mountains at a velocity sufficiently great to stop all military movements. All these facts were more generally known by the Japanese than by our own forces. Throughout the campaign they made the most of every advantage. To be sure weather plays no favorites, but pure circumstance proved to be of vital significance in strengthening their position. They were the first on the spot, able to thus familiarize themselves with local obstructions and navigational difficulties in waters that had no navigation facilities or radio aids to guide either friend or foe. Bad weather had saved the day for them on the two attacks of Dutch Harbor; it constantly impeded our aerial observations, interfered with our continuous bombing of Kiska, and slowed down our later landing operations; it likewise enabled the Japanese to maintain their acquired strongholds much longer than would otherwise have been possible. We had no precedents to guide us in the Aleutians. Mother experience proved our best teacher in this new type of modern warfare.

PREPARATION FOR THE OFFENSIVE

The Japanese settled on undefended Kiska and Attu after their initial repulse at Dutch Harbor. However, exact knowledge of the occupation did not come until clearing weather had permitted successful reconnaissance of the islands to the eastward. Suspicion was aroused after 7 June, when the usual weather reports failed to come in from our weather station at Kiska. On the 10th following, a PBY scouting plane revealed two ships at Kiska Harbor and numerous boats and small landing craft at Attu. It was later learned that a small landing

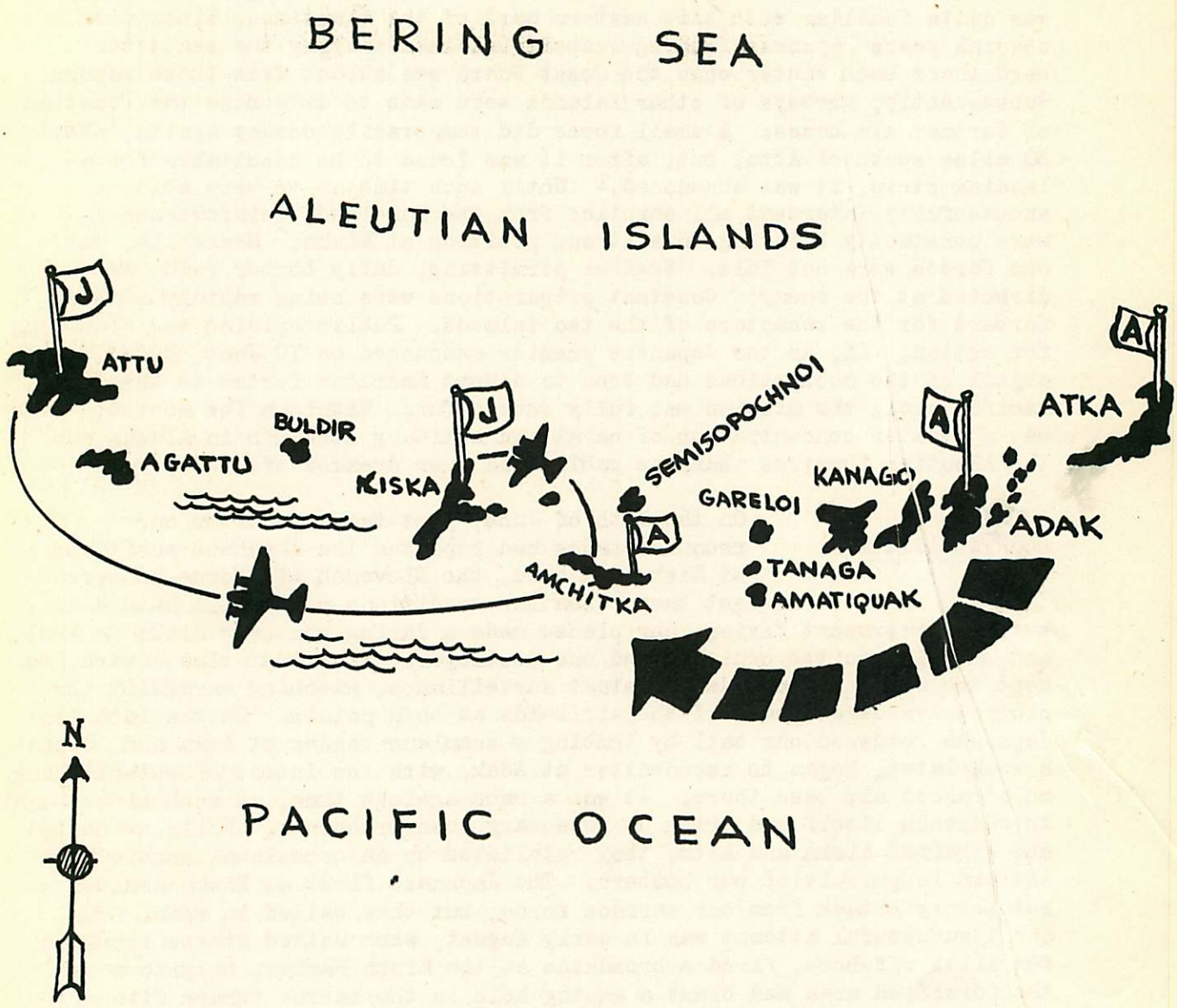

BERING SEA
PRIBILOF IS.
ATTU I.
NEAR IS.
SEMICHI IS.
AGATTU I.
KISKA I.
SEMISOPOCHNOI I.
RAT I.
AMCHITKA I.
KANAGA I.
ATKA
AMLIA
TANAGA
ADAR I.
ANDREANOF ISLANDS
IS. OF FOUR MOUNTAINS
COLD BAY
UNIMAK
AKUN
DUTCH HARBOR
UNALASKA
UMMAK
FOX ISLANDS
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
N
S
PACIFIC OCEAN

party had slipped into Attu under cover of the fog, seized the radio station there before it could broadcast an alarm, and imprisioned some 90 Aleut natives and a white trader inhabiting the village. The enemy was quite familiar with this eastern part of the Aleutians, since for several years Japanese fishing vessels had been raiding the sea otter herd there each winter when the Coast Guard was absent from those waters. Subsequently, surveys of other islands were made to determine the location of further air bases. A small force did temporarily occupy Agattu, about 30 miles south of Attu, but, after it was found to be unsuitable for a landing strip, it was abandoned.[1] Until such time as we were able to successfully intercept all supplies from the homeland, reinforcements were constantly building up a strong position at Kiska. Meanwhile, our own forces were not idle. Weather permitting, daily bomber raids were directed at the enemy. Constant preparations were being rapidly pushed forward for the recapture of the two islands. Public opinion was clamoring for action. If, as the Japanese premier announced on 10 June, 1943, the object of the occupations had been to divert American forces to the North Pacific area, the mission was fully successful. Within a few months, there was a greater concentration of naval and military strength in Alaska and the Aleutian theatres than the public had ever dreamed of.

AMERICAN COUNTER-ATTACK

On the 12th of June, just two days after our reconnaissance had reported the Japanese positions at Kiska and Attu, the Eleventh Air Force bombers got busy. Weather conditions were still hazardous but, by instrument flying, our planes made a daring run over Kiska to bomb and set fire to two cruisers and one destroyer. From that time onward, we kept the enemy bases under constant surveillance, watching carefully the progressive development of the airfields at both points. On the 14th the Japanese returned our call by bombing a seaplane tender at Atka and, about a week later, began to reconnoiter at Adak, with the intent of establishing an advanced air base there. It was a race against time, as each side sought to entrench itself and bring up necessary reenforcements. While we bombed and straffed Kiska and Attu, they retaliated by an occasional sortie from the air in pursuit of our bombers. The Japanese fleet at Kiska awaited a retalitory attack from our surface force, but they waited in vain. The one unsuccessful attempt was in early August, when United States warships, ten miles offshore, fired a broadside at the Kiska Harbor, only to miss the fortified area and blast a gaping hole in the barren tundra five miles away. This incident was later referred to as the unproductive "Spring Plowing." Our submarines, however, were more successful. On 4 July, they

1. The Aleutian chain is divided into four island groups: the Fox Islands, the Andreanof Islands, the Rat Islands, and the Near Islands. Kiska, with the second largest harbor in the Aleutians, is the principal member of the "Rat group." Attu and Agattu are located in the eastern most Near Island group. Consult the map, p. 72.


BERING SEA
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
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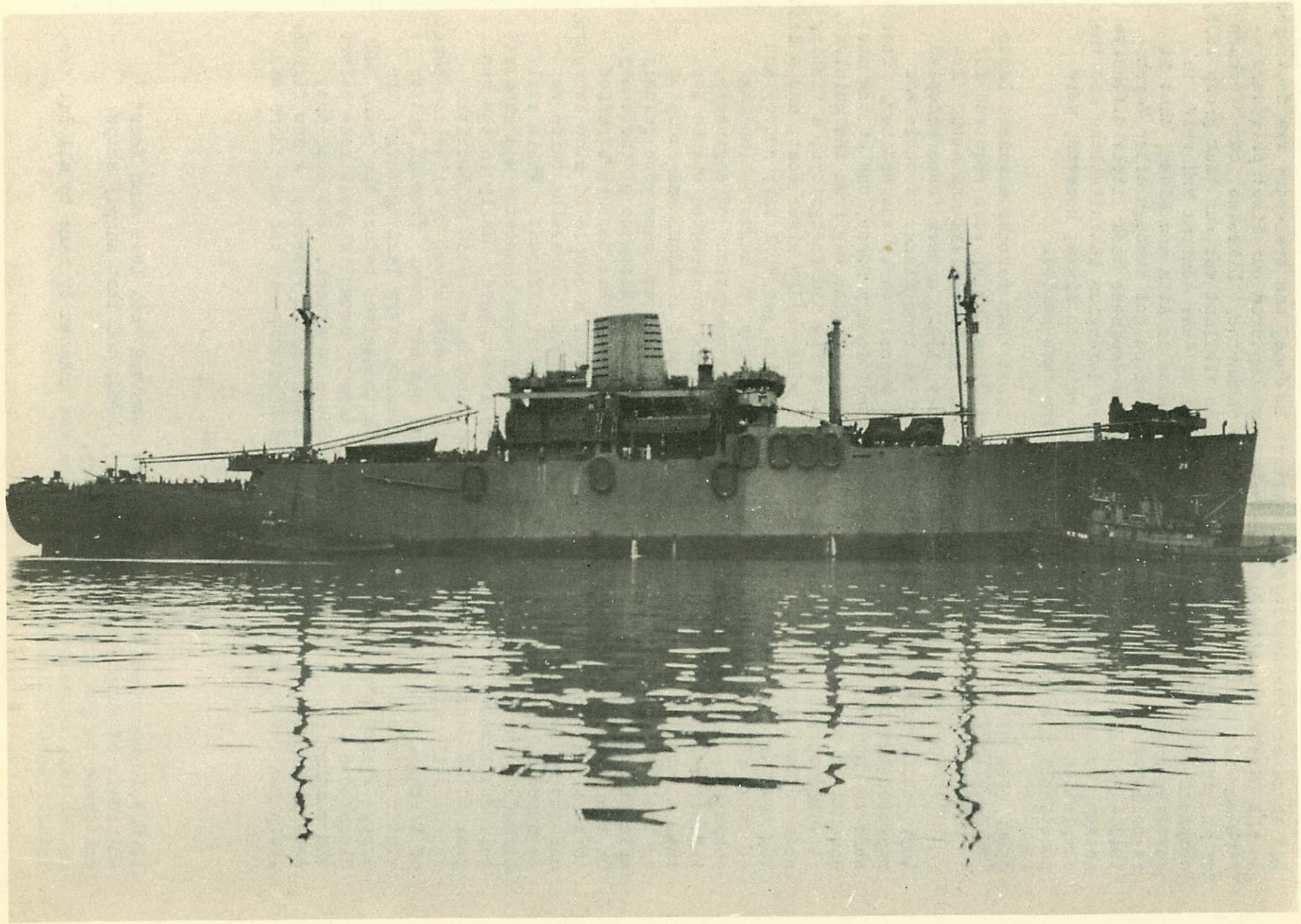
got three or four destroyers. Earlier in June, one transport was destroyed in the harbor. On the 31st of August, we captured our first prisoners -- five survivors of a torpedoed Japanese submarine. Likewise, our blockade of the islands was proving effective. So vigilant was our task group 16.6, composed of six vessels under the command of Rear Admiral McMorris, in covering enemy approaches and reinforcements to Attu and Kiska, that it is believed that very few, if any, cargo ships got through after March, 1943.[1] During the spring of that year the Japanese took little offensive action, concentrating their activities on defensive installations and the completion of their airdromes. Our own raids on Kiska, however, were constantly increasing in tempo during the same period.

OCCUPATION OF ATKA AND AMCHITKA

It soon became evident that further advanced bases to the westward of Dutch Harbor were required for effective operations against Kiska and Attu. Accordingly, in August, 1942, a task force occupied Adak, which was only slightly over 200 miles from Kiska. Trouble was expected but it came only in the form of opposition by the weather. There were no Japanese on the island. The expeditionary force, one of the most unusual to ever sail the Alaskan seas, came all the way from the mainland. It was composed of "lumbering transports, a few old freighters, a fishing scow or two, several converted barges, a side-paddle river boat, and a little tug hauling a four-masted schooner loaded with gas." A Navy convoy and scouting PBY's brought them safely in on Sunday, 30 August; landing operations were immediately begun. By joint operations of engineers, infantrymen, and artillerymen, an airfield was constructed within less than a fortnight. Atka, about sixty miles east of Adak, was occupied on the 20th of September, where another airfield and base were quickly established. They were now within easy striking distance of the enemy. On the first air attack from Adak, 14 September, our bombers straffed three midget submarines and a flying boat, sank a couple of mine sweepers, and scored several hits on cargo ships at Kiska. Harassing raids were returned by the Japs, but they were not very significant. While still defending the new positions, roads and docks were completed and quonset huts constructed. We were now ready to move onward. Early in the new year on 12 January, 1943, an unopposed landing was made at Amchitka Island still almost 300 miles from Attu but only about 69 miles southeast of Kiska.[2] As at Adak, the weather was against them. Through bitter winter cold and rain, with winds threatening every landing barge, the troops worked night and day to entrench themselves before the enemy had discovered the move. They had twelve days to establish positions before the weather permitted the Japanese bombers to attack. But soon they were in a position to take the initiative. By 18 February, a new fighter strip was ready; with the Warhawks and Lightnings in the air there was

1. O.N.I. reported that the Japanese received "not less than four" shiploads of supplies during January, 1943, and that supply ships continued to get through in February.
2. See map, opposite page. Amchitka was unknown by name to all but the intelligence officers.

USS ARTHUR MIDDLETON, APA 25 (EX-AFRICAN COMET)

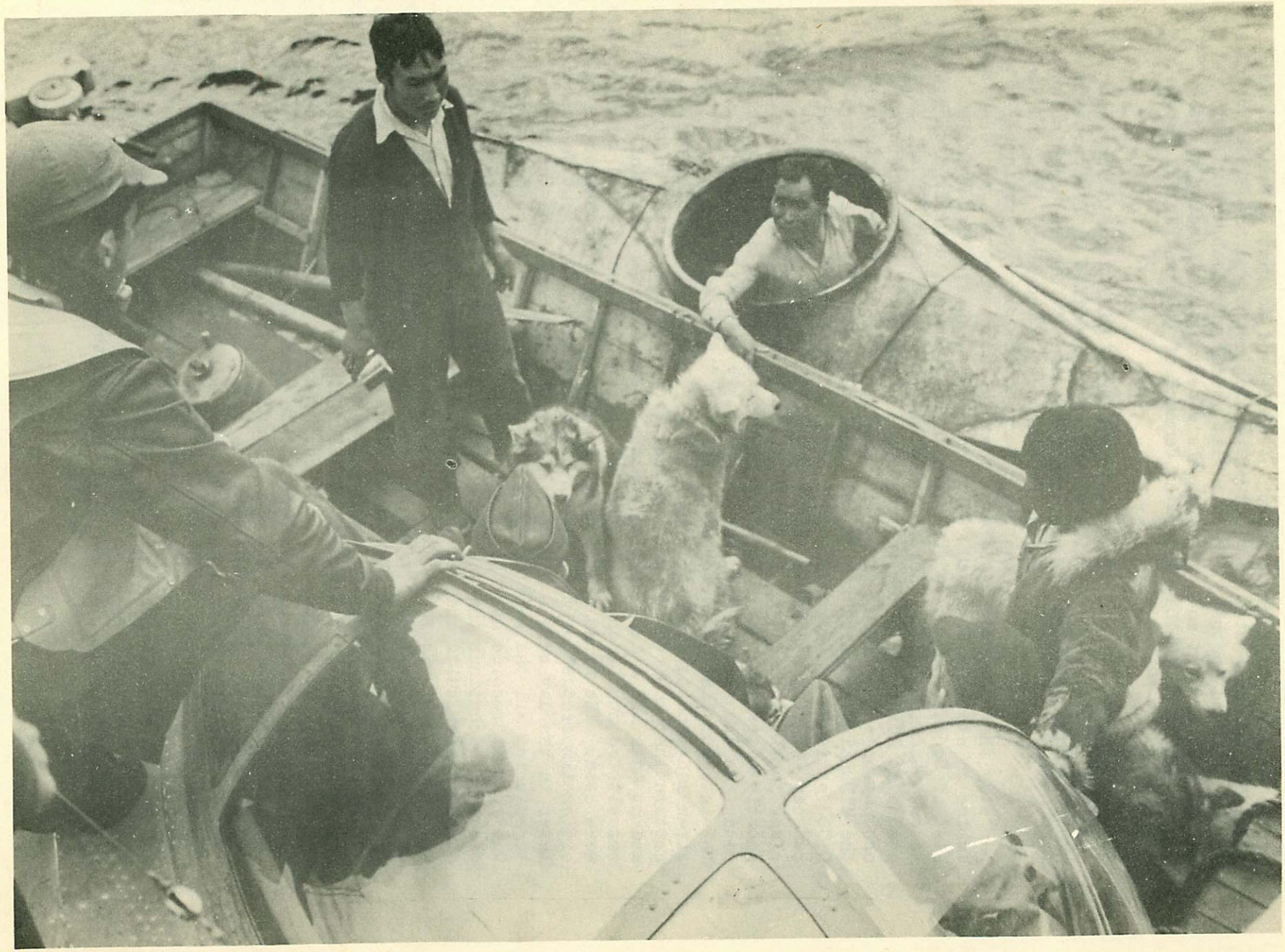


little danger from enemy bombers. It had been an amazing feat of skill and endurance for both the fleet of landing craft and the 2,100 troops who had planted another base on a flat, muddy, uninhabited island. Among the transport and cargo vessels effecting the landing was the U.S.S. ARTHUR MIDDLETON, under the command of Captain Paul K. Perry, USCG.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE U.S.S. ARTHUR MIDDLETON

The U.S.S. ARTHUR MIDDLETON was a Navy amphibious transport, staffed by officers and men of the Coast Guard. She was commissioned at San Francisco on 7 December, 1942 and sent to San Diego for routine practice training. During her stay there, concentrated maneuvers in landing operations were staged. Taking on stores at Oakland, California, she departed San Francisco on the 21st of December en route for Dutch Harbor, where she arrived eight days later. Accompanied by the U.S.S. CUYAMA, LAWRENCE, and WORDEN, she proceeded to Kuluk Bay, Adak Island, where preparation were under way for the occupation of Amchitka. From 31 December, 1942 until 11 January, 1943, the MIDDLETON prepared for her mission, taking aboard 102 officers and 2,060 enlisted Army troops. As a part of the expeditionary force, she reached Constantine Harbor, Amchitka, on the morning of the 12th. The bleak lonely island, the lowest of the entire Aleutian chain, was sighted shortly after daybreak. Warnings of possible opposition had steeled all hands for the worst. When the ship quietly slipped through the small inlet into Constantine Harbor, the order to "lower away all boats," was given and landing operations were begun. The landings followed the typical pattern that had been so well learned from the experiences in the Solomons and at Adak and Atka. Higgins boats, the 36-foot landing craft that had met with so much success in previous operations, and 50-foot tank lighters were used. The first "wave" moved in on the shallow, rocky beach in a biting temperature of two degrees below freezing. All went well until later in the day when a fierce williway whipped down upon the harbor, threatening all the landing craft that were caught in the buffeting gale. One account records how the barges were so depleted that it became necessary to continue the unloading by hand. To save the boats, "men donned rubber suits and waded out to their armpits in the harbor to serve as human docks. They unloaded barges and passed supplies back, hand over hand, to keep them above water and the scum of oil from the two ships." Thus the work went steadily forward as the wind increased to a gale velocity before nightfall. Despite every precaution, most of the landing barges had been wrecked during the storm. At 2307 of the first day, the MIDDLETON unfortunately went aground on her port quarter, although her boats continued unloading operations in the harbor. She remained stranded, undergoing salvage operations until the 6th of April, to depart shortly thereafter for Dutch Harbor. Throughout that period, she again and again withstood Japanese air attacks from float-type Zeros based at Kiska. Helplessly aground, presenting an outstanding target to the enemy, she repelled the repeated assaults on the area without suffering a single hit or scoring any hits on the attacking planes. After eighty-four days aground the MIDDLETON was escorted to Dutch Harbor, where she remained for repairs until 17 June, 1943. She was then returned to the drydocks at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, Bremerton, Washington.

ALEUTS EXCHANGE THE TIME OF DAY WITH COAST GUARD FLYERS WHO ARRIVED IN A PBY



OUTSTANDING COAST GUARD RESCUE

During the first day of landing activities at Amchitka the transport was able to rescue six officers and some 169 men from the U.S.S. WARDEN which had been wrecked by the heavy seas. When the distress call came, a Coast Guard landing boat, under Lieutenant Commander R.R. Smith, of New Orleans, was rushed to the scene with instructions to investigate the wreck and render every possible assistance. More help soon became necessary. The Coastguardsmen pulled their boats near to the vessel and passed lines aboard to enable the men to slide down into the rescue craft. All this was accomplished amid "mountainous seas that threatened to swamp the landing boats" in each successive wave. On their way back to the MIDDLETON, they picked up two other survivors, struggling against death in the freezing water. For their gallant heroism four of the Coast Guard personnel subsequently received Navy and Marine Corps Medals for outstanding performances of duty.

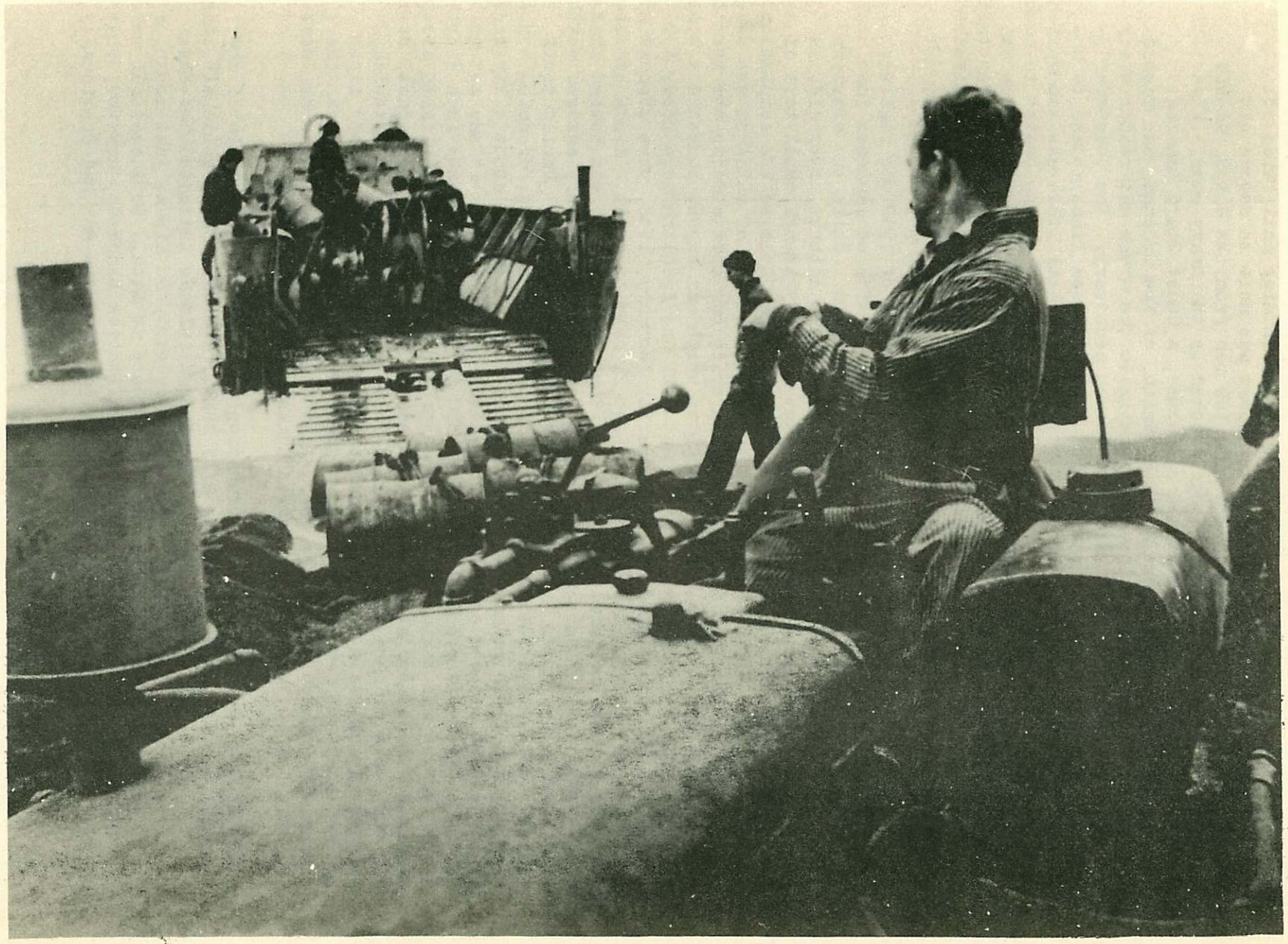
BOMBING ATTACKS ON KISKA AND ATTU

During the spring and summer of 1943 our fighters and bombers made repeated raids on Japanese installations at Kiska and Attu. While the missions were not usually large-scale attacks, they did, in the words of the O.N.I. reports, "extract a steady though small toll of Japanese troops and equipment." Furthermore, they delayed the completion of the enemy airfields and thus reduced the frequency of raids on our own bases. The garrison at Kiska, being nearer to our airfields in the Aleutians, suffered a great deal more than did Attu, which was beyond convenient bomber range until after the fighter strips at Atka and Amchitka were ready for operation. The nine raids on Kiska during February, 1943, were stepped up to a total of 122 for March and the first 21 days of April. Kiska had become the terminal of a regular bomb delivery service. It was bombed almost daily, with as many as six to fifteen attacks per day. Only adverse weather conditions interrupted the regular grind of air assaults. During April alone, no less than 144 air attacks were launched on Kiska, dropping bombs ranging from 2,000 pounds on down. During the same month about sixty tons of bombs were dropped on Attu in five different assaults. It was not unusual for Kiska to receive as many as 500 to 600 tons of bombs in a single month. After the taking of Attu, a destroyer patrol was established around Kiska and the bomber attacks accelerated. During one week in August, over 260 tons were dropped over the island in 51 heavy air raids. Likewise, surface attacks were generally increased, in order that the enemy might be "softened up" for the impending invasion. When it finally came, the Japanese had taken the hint. They had abandoned their positions at least ten days before the American and Canadian troops arrived.

PREPARATIONS FOR ATTU

With the occupation of Amchitka, the battle of the Aleutians really began. Aerial photographic missions over the two enemy-held islands indicated the construction of a fighter strip on Kiska, just south of Salmon Lagoon. Another strip was in progress at Attu. So successful were our constant attacks and the increasing effective blockade, however, that neither of these fields were ever completed. But the war had continually

COAST GUARDSMEN FROM A CUTTER UNLOAD A LANDING BARGE OF SUPPLIES AT ALEUTIAN ISLAND BASES



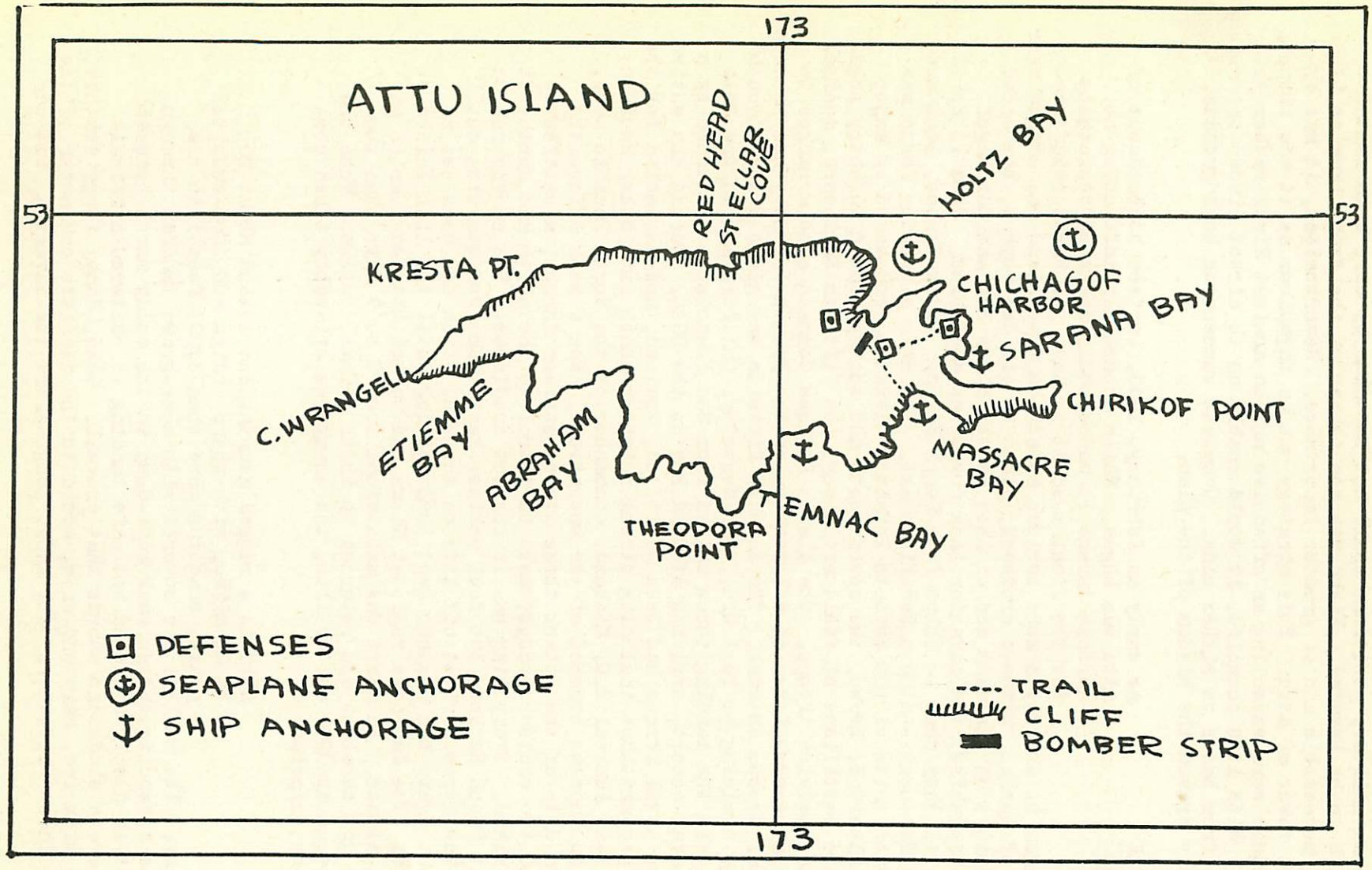
proved that military positions could not be taken by air; both islands would have to be invaded. Kiska was the nearer of the two; likewise it was more accessible and of greater importance. Nevertheless, it was by-passed in favor of Attu. This strategy was as ingenious as it was simple. The Japanese were expecting an offensive action against Kiska rather than on Attu. With Attu occupied, it would enable us to direct pincer operations on Kiska from bases on either side. Complete success on both grounds, ultimately proved the wisdom of the plan.

TASK FORCE ASSEMBLED

As early as February, 1943, surface bombardment of Attu was begun. While apparently inflicting no serious damage it undoubtedly weakened resistance for the final assault in May. As naval reinforcements began to arrive, a more serious attack on the island was staged near the end of April. Sixteen cruisers, aided by six destroyers, bombarded installations on the east end of Attu in the Holtz Bay and Chichagof areas. Meanwhile, the invasion task force was assembled. From 15 April to 30 April they came -- ships from Pearl Harbor, Dutch Harbor, Adak and from the far-away southern Pacific coast. The main attacking force was composed of units of the Seventh Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Albert E. Brown, the seventeenth and thirty-second infantry regiments, two battalions of field artillery, the Fiftieth Engineers, medical units, and service troops. The Alaska Defense Command also arranged to organize a reserve force of a battalion of the Fourth Infantry and certain additional troops on Adak. The Seventh Division was given a three months intensive training at Fort Ord, near Monterey, California. On the 24th day of April the landing force sailed from San Francisco, protected by a strong naval escort, arriving at Cold Bay on the 30th. During the entire month the naval forces had been outfitted, trained, and assembled for the attack, preparations including strong reinforcements from other Pacific areas. Rear Admiral T.C. Kinkaid, commander of the North Pacific area, was put in supreme command of the operations. For a week before the scheduled date of the attack three strong surface forces, a battleship group and two cruiser groups, were on patrol to the north and northwest of the island. Everything was in perfect readiness. The convoy rendezvoused at Dutch Harbor, but foul weather kept them from starting until 4 May. The force arrived off Attu on the 7th, which had been set as D-Day, but again bad weather kept them waiting until the 11th before moving in. The Japanese radio at Kiska had warned Attu earlier of an expected attack. An alert was maintained from 3 to 9 May; then the Japanese got careless and returned to their normal routine. When the attack began at 0200 on the 11th, the enemy was evidently taken completely by surprise.

ATTU

Attu is a rugged mountainous island about 20 by 35 miles, with sharp craigs and snow-summited peaks, reaching more than 3,000 feet into the stormy sky. Its valleys are covered with moss-grown tundras through which the advancing troops sank knee-deep in the muddy marsh beneath. The coast is deeply indented but safe landing is rendered difficult by the severe winds and storms that prevail. Cold, damp, foggy weather, combined with ice, rain and snow, added to the desolate character of the island. These facts were well known long before the invasion, but our


173
ATTU ISLAND
RED HEAD
ST ELLAR COVE
HOLTZ BAY
53
53
KRESTA PT.
CHICHAGOF HARBOR
SARANA BAY
C. WRANGELL
ETIEMME BAY
ABRAHAM BAY
CHIRIKOF POINT
MASSACRE BAY
THEODORA POINT
EMNAC BAY
DEFENSES
SEAPLANE ANCHORAGE
SHIP ANCHORAGE
TRAIL
CLIFF
BOMBER STRIP
173

forces had no detailed knowledge of the interior. Although the shoreline had been carefully mapped, there had been no accurate surveys of the variable terrain, save such observations as our reconnaissance planes had been able to make since the enemy occupation. It would be hard to imagine a worse place to invade or one more easily defended.

ATTU DEFENSES

The Japanese had seized Attu in June, 1942. After an almost complete evacuation in September, they reestablished themselves sometime in the following October, when they seriously began to develop and fortify their positions. Several reinforcements were received during the ensuing months. The last attempt of a home force to get through to the Aleutians had been checkmated by our patrol force in the spring of 1943. In an inconclusive encounter on the 26th of March, a small naval task force intercepted a superior Japanese fleet about 50 miles off Komandorski Island in the south Bering Sea. After a four-hour engagement, in which several enemy vessels were damaged, the convoy was scattered and forced to turn back. No further attempt to send supplies or men to the Aleutians seems to have been made, so the Attu garrison was left to shift for itself. The terrain and weather both operated to their advantage and they made the most of it. The portion occupied was divided into two main defense areas: Holtz Bay and the Chichagof sector, incorporating Massacre Bay, Sarana Bay, and the native village.[1] The airfield at the East Arm of Holtz Bay had progressed quite slowly. Despite the speeding up of construction in April, it was still far from finished. Most of the defenses were on the high ground at the north end of Massacre Bay, extending 3,000 to 4,000 yards inland. There were no beach defenses in that area. Beaches along Holtz Bay were well defended but they did not extend to the coast northward of the Bay. Thoroughly camouflaged positions, caves and fox holes dotted the entire landscape of the northeastern part of the island. At the time of the battle the Japanese force at Attu numbered in the neighborhood of 2,000 to 2,500 men.[2]

THE BATTLE OF ATTU

Under a closely coordinated land, sea, and air attack, forces were landed on Attu Island during the afternoon of 11 May, 1943. The plan of attack called for four landings: (1) at Red Beach on the West Arm of Holtz Bay, (2) at Massacre Bay in the Chichagof sector, and subsidiary landings at (3) Austin Cove on the undefended coast north of Holtz Bay, and (4) at Alexei Point, east of Massacre Bay. The plan of strategy was to force the Japanese army into the Chichagof area and divide it into two segments. The main landings were begun at 1530 and went forward, with remarkable precision and expediency, despite the most unfavorable weather conditions. Months of past training and experience had perfected to a high degree the combination of skill and fine cooperation in amphibious operations that was so ably demonstrated at Attu. Strong naval

1. See map of Attu, opposite page.
2. The Navy's first estimate was around 3,000. This number was later corrected to 2,100.

WILLIAM EDWARDS AND DAUGHTER

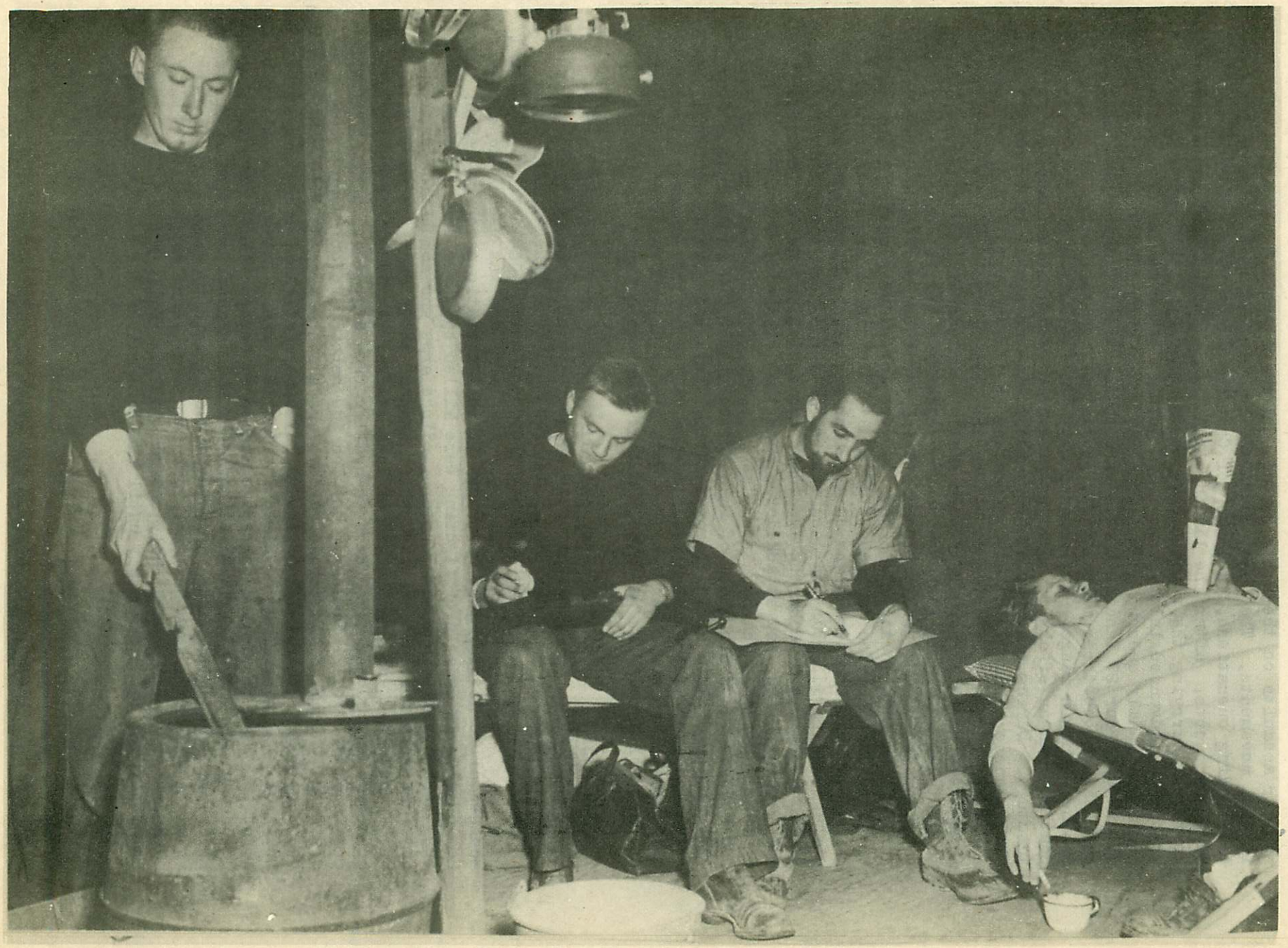
EDWARDS, A SCOTCHMAN MARRIED TO AN ESKIMO WOMAN, CONTRIBUTED HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE, CUSTOMS AND HABITS OF THE ESKIMO INDIANS AT UNGAVA BAY TO COAST GUARD AND NAVY OPERATIONS

and air assaults on the Holtz Bay and Chichagof areas accompanied the initial movements. The Coast Guard was represented at Attu only in the landing operations. A number of Coastguardsmen were attached to Navy transports. After the landings had been effected boat crews were kept busy carrying the wounded back to the ships. Within three hours, troops had advanced inland some 3,000 yards. Later in the day, a beach head was finally secured at Massacre Bay, after much fierce fighting, in which 10 of our 27 landing barges were sunk. The two main American forces were then about three miles apart, separated from each other by a ridge in the mountain range. For several days the fiercely-contested struggle continued in an effort to enlarge the gained positions and advance for a juncture. During this period there was little change in basic positions. The Japanese assumed that assistance was on its way but, if so, it never arrived. The only effort made was in the form of two abortive air attacks from Kiska on the 22nd. Both were easily repulsed with disastrous results to the enemy. On the 14th the weather cleared a little, enabling a greater air support for the ground troops. Steady advances were made thereafter, until, in a final push, 17-18 May, our two forces were united. The battle was already won. The Japanese withdrew to the ridges around Chichagof Harbor. Their counter-attack on the 19th was repulsed and many of its numbers destroyed. Our own casulties to date had been remarkably light. Within a brief two weeks the Americans had encircled the bay, occupied the landing strip, and attacked the pass that connected Holtz Bay with Chichagof Harbor. The pass was taken; by the 25th the Massacre Bay force had reached the south shore of Lake Cories only 3,000 yards inland from the village of Attu on Chichagof Harbor. Tokyo had already admitted that Attu was lost. The final drive down the valley to the Japanese stronghold at Attu village was begun. By the 30th all organized resistance had completely collapsed. It was simply a task of cleaning up.

THE JAPANESE COUNTER-ATTACK 29 MAY, 1943

The most spectacular phase of the entire battle was the desperate counter-attack launched by the Japanese on 29 May, in a last hopeless charge. All those remaining alive were gathered together for a final assault. Every available man was used, the sick and wounded alike joining their comrades in that dramatic march to death; those not physically capable of fighting were killed by their own officers lest they become weak and invite capture. Since arms and ammunition were running out, men were forced to use makeshift weapons while many fought with spears or bayonets fastened on the end of long sticks. At 0400 this motley army of upward to 500 men moved down the valley from Southwest Peak. They were commanded by Colonel Yamasaku, who led the heroic if foolhardy attempt to clear the Chichagof and Sarana valleys and capture the American gun positions. Down the foggy, rainy mist of the valley came that ghost-like army in a frenzied zeal to kill or be killed to the last man. Taken momentarily by surprise, many of our troops were slaughtered before reinforcements could be brought up. Steadily and deliberately the Japanese advanced in the face of overwhelming odds, often charging directly into the sweeping gun-fire. It was more like a fanatical mob rush than a military advance, as the half-crazed Japs rushed blindly onward, yelling "Kill, Kill!" For seven hours they fought desperately until the remnants of the little army were

COAST GUARDSMEN TAKING IT EASY IN CAMP IN THE ALEUTIANS



eventually trapped in a gully. Even then the fifty-odd who remained alive huddled together to fight on to their death. Many took their lives with their own hand grenades. It was typical of that reckless, fighting spirit for which the Japanese had become so notorious. Only four prisoners were taken, these being the first since the beginning of the Attu campaign.

THE COST OF VICTORY

The battle of Attu was terminated in that last bloody encounter. The next few days were spent in locating snipers and in blasting the last Japanese from their isolated fox-holes. Immediately construction was under way to prepare the island for the approaching Kiska campaign. It had been a brilliant if costly victory. As of the end of June, 1943, our total losses at Attu were officially reported as 552 killed, 1,140 wounded and 85 missing; the enemy: 2,350 killed, 24 prisoners. As the month progressed, the flush of victory was soon lost in the hurried labors of new preparations. Attu was speedily made ready for an advance base against both Kiska and Japan proper. Already the fighter strip was nearing completion. By the beginning of July the occupation forces totaled 1,880 Navy and 14,900 Army troops. On 10 July, nine United States planes took off from their new Attu base to bomb Paramashiru. Two of the Liberators failed to return.

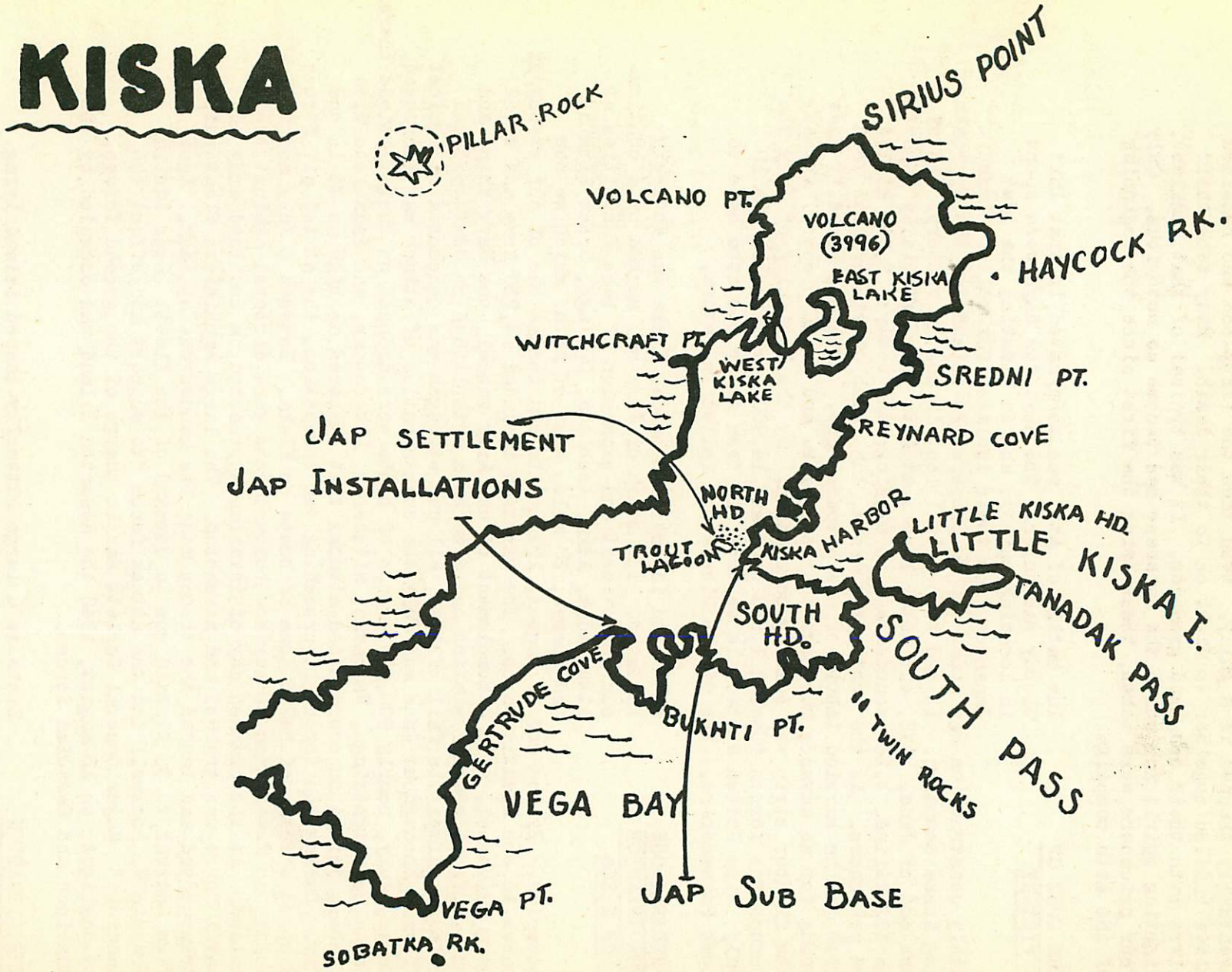
PREPARATIONS FOR INVASION OF KISKA

With Attu in American hands, Kiska was entirely isolated. The month of June was marked by a continuous improvement and expansion of base facilities at Attu, Adak, Atka, Amchitka, Oglinga, Great Sitkin, and Shemya, 30 miles east of Attu, which we now occupied. By the end of August, 1943, Attu had become one of our strongest bases in the Aleutian area. The garrison included 14,750 Army and 4,562 Navy personnel, with a complement of one Army vessel, one Navy ship, and an L.S.T. A weather station had also been established on Semisopochnai Island. After the fall of Attu, all our strength was concentrated against Kiska. Throughout June and July the concentration of attack was increased. During July, nearly 900,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on installations there. In August Lightnings, Warhawks, Mitchells, Liberators, and dauntless dive bombers joined in coordinated attacks that umbered as high as 24 in one day. During the fortnight preceding the occupation, the allied air forces dropped a total of 547.5 tons of bombs on Kiska. Between 6 July and 15 August no fewer than 15 surface bombardments were directed against the island. As the planned day of invasion approached, a combined army and naval force was trained and assembled. The large amphibious fleet which transported and landed the troops made its rendezvous at Adak. Again Vice Admiral T. C. Kinkaid was in command of the fleet; Rear Admiral Francis W. Rockwell led the attack force "to support and effect the landing;" Major General Corlett was in charge of the ground forces. At daylight, on 15 August, 1943 the deserted island was occupied by the American and Canadian forces.

THE SITUATION OF THE JAPANESE AT KISKA

Kiska is a large butterfly-shaped island lying about 600 miles southwest of Dutch Harbor and some 180 miles southeast of Attu. The island, 5 by 25 miles in size, was potentially an excellent bomber station, although it was used by the Japanese

KISKA


PILLAR ROCK
SIRIUS POINT
VOLCANO PT.
VOLCANO (3996)
EAST KISKA LAKE
HAYCOCK RK.
WITCHCRAFT PT.
WEST KISKA LAKE
SREDNI PT.
REYNARD COVE
JAP SETTLEMENT
JAP INSTALLATIONS
NORTH HD
TROUT LAGOON
KISKA HARBOR
LITTLE KISKA HD.
LITTLE KISKA I.
TANADAK PASS
SOUTH HD.
SOUTH PASS
GERTRUDE COVE
BUKHTI PT.
TWIN ROCKS
VEGA BAY
VEGA PT.
JAP SUB BASE
SOBATKA RK.

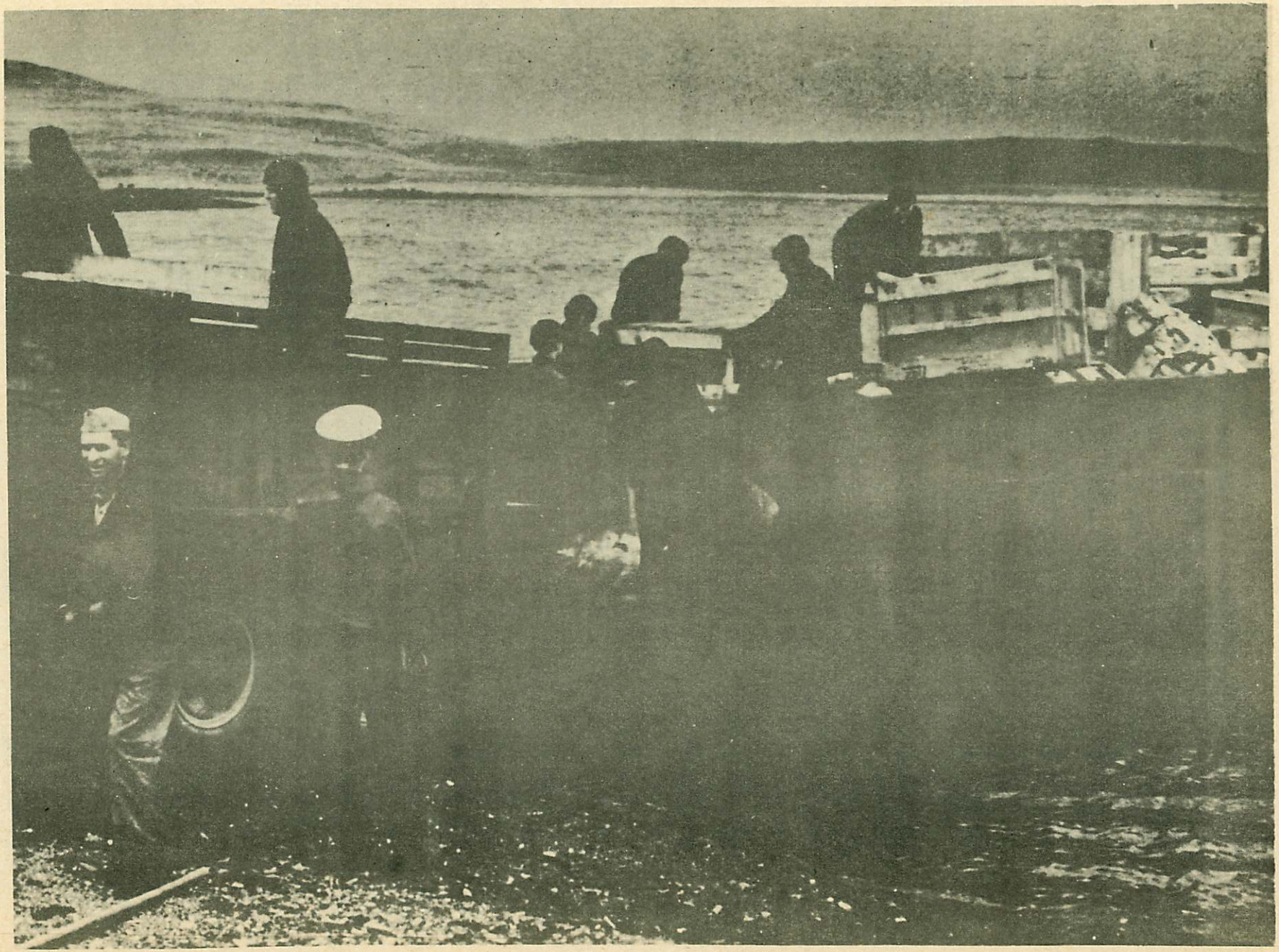
primarily as a submarine and seaplane base. Its main harbor, on the eastern side near Trout Lagoon, is protected by Little Kiska Island and by North and South Heads lying on either side. The Japanese settlement was located there, at Trout Lagoon, with heavy anti-aircraft batteries and radar installations; likewise, the submarine base was situated at this point. Strong positions were found also at Little Kiska, North Head, and Gertrude Cove, farther down on Vega Bay.[1] By 28 July, 1943, the 3,700-foot landing strip at Trout Lagoon, capable of accomodating four-engined bombers, had been completed. The estimated Japanese strength at Kiska was about 9,000. As the destroyer blockade of the island was tightened, the enemy began to consider abandoning its position. As early as 10 July, 1943, a Navy PBY sighted four small cargo vessels between Kiska and Japan. Two were sunk, the others damaged. This suggestion of plans for evacuation was substantiated by reconnaissance observations from 22 June onward, revealing unusual movements on the island, which must have represented a carefully planned program of departure. On the 27th of July there were 31 submarines in the harbor; on the 28th the Kiska radio went off the air. The submarines apparently were used for a gradual evacuation, which had been effected about ten days previous to our occupation.

THE OCCUPATION OF KISKA

The landing on D-Day was accomplished without mishap, under cover of heavy bombardment from the ships. Since resistance was anticipated, every precaution had been taken to assure complete coordination of movement. The amphibious landing parties, composed of both Army and Navy personnel, worked together as a single unit. They were not merely soldiers and sailors but "amphibians," each man carrying the insignia of the amphibian forces upon his shoulder. When they found the huts and garrison deserted, some sort of trap was expected. There had been no previous cases of them deserting an acquired position. It seemed almost incredible that the Japanese had fled without even attempting a defense. Nevertheless, there was every indication that they had left in some haste. An effort had been made to destroy all supplies, fortifications and installations that had not already been demolished by the constant attack of previous months. Kiska had received over 4,000,000 pounds of bombs in bomber poundings. All roads and equipment were wrecked. Tanks, trucks, midget submarines, and surface craft were strewn around the harbor. Practically every object, including skillfully camouflaged positions, was bullet-ridden. For the benefit of the new occupiers, personnel quarters were decorated with caricatures of President Roosevelt and incidents of the Attu campaign. The invitation, in mixed German and English, left scrawled upon the walls, to "Remember Kiska" was not entirely in apropos. It had been a fully successful campaign, representing a triumph for naval bombardment as well as an achievement in strategy. Furthermore, it gave the United States an unbroken string of naval and air bases stretching from Alaska to Attu, -- a vital bridge on the road leading to Japan.

1. See map, opposite page.

COAST GUARDSMEN FROM A CUTTER BRING ASHORE SUPPLIES AT IMPORTANT ALEUTIAN ISLAND BASES



CONSOLIDATION OF GAINS

After the occupation of Kiska the remainder of the year was spent in the development of positions and in the consolidation of gains. The waters around Kiska Island were cleared of mines, the incompleted runway finished. At 2400 on 22 August, the amphibious phase of the Kiska operations was pronounced closed. The command then passed on to the Army. Two days later 500 naval construction personnel began an airfield at little Tonaga Island in the Adreanofs. As there was little probability of another major engagement in the Aleutians, a general reduction of the North Pacific Forces was gradually effected. The main surface fleet was reduced to Cruiser Division One, supported by escort craft and essential destroyers. The Seventh Army Division, together with a number of unessential auxiliary services, was removed to the Hawaiian area. Adak still remained the advanced base, around which all other positions were consolidated. Kiska, with a small garrison of men, was reduced to a secondary position. During the remainder of the year and throughout 1944, the North Pacific Force continued to carry out its regular assigned mission: namely, training in amphibious operations, routine surface and air patrols, and periodic raids on the Kuriles. The Eleventh Air Force, with its many strong bases in the Aleutian chain, became one arm of an octopus-like air monster, whose branches reached out from the four corners of the globe to close in on the Japanese Empire. The other arms of the gigantic pincer included the Seventh Air Force in Hawaii, the Thirteenth in the Solomons, the Fifth in New Guinea, and the Tenth in India. In two typical raids of July and August, 1943, B-24 and B-25 planes rained approximately 115,000 pounds of bombs on Japanese installations. By June, 1944, all torpedo boats had been withdrawn from the Alaskan theatre. The Naval Air Station at Dutch Harbor was reduced to a Naval Air Facility, Annette Island and Yakutat put on a nominal caretaker basis. Rear Admiral F.E.M. Whiting was made Deputy Commander of the North Pacific Force. Service personnel in the Western Aleutians totaled 60,192, i.e., 14,347 Navy, including 6,272 Seabees, and 45,845 Army. The number of airplanes in the area increased from 187 in May to 212 in June.

CONCLUSION

The Aleutian Campaign was closed as far as combat operations were concerned. The enemy had been forced out; Alaska and the Western Seaboard were no longer threatened. However, in the broader sense, the fight was to continue as long as an enemy base remained to be bombed. As an integral part of the Pacific war, the campaign ranks as a major accomplishment. No more fitting estimate of its significance could be given than that presented by Major General Eugene M. Landrum, who led the American troops to victory at Attu. His expression of satisfaction in concluding a long series of operations, difficult and hard-won, was shared by all those who had helped to make the final victory possible. Upon leaving the Aleutian theatre for a new assignment, General Landrum thus summarized the events of the campaign:

> Contrary to popular opinion, the Aleutian campaign had its inception prior to the Japanese attack on Dutch Harbor. In successive steps our ground forces occupied and secured bases on which were constructed airfields, docks, warehouses and other facilities.

COAST GUARDSMEN RELAXING ABOARD A COAST GUARD CUTTER SOMEWHERE IN THE ALEUTIANS

The navy has played an indispensible part in the prosecution of the campaign. Time was a vital factor--and the sea, weather and terrain conditions existing in this theatre presented difficulties that must be experienced to be understood....

The campaign so far has driven the Japanese out of our territory and has furnished us with a chain of bases that adds immeasureably to the security of Alaska, the west coasts of Canada and the United States, and gives to our forces the initiative in the North Pacific Area. We can rest assured that these advantages will be retained and exploited to the discomfort of our enemies.

The campaign has further proven that the American soldier can soundly whip the Japanese, and that the Japanese, when placed under unfavorable conditions, will evacuate strong positions.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Chronology
Appendix II - Duties of the Coast Guard in Alaska
Appendix III - Aids to Navigation in Alaska, 1940 - 1945
(A) Aids to Navigation in Alaska, 1940 - 1944.
(B) Aids to Navigation Projects in the Seventeenth Naval District, as of 10 July, 1945.

APPENDIX I

Chronology

(A) Steps in the Development of Coast Guard Operations in Alaska.

1865 - 1915	The Revenue Cutter Service, as the antecedent of the modern Coast Guard, extended its operations in the territory.
1880	Beginning of the regular Revenue Cutter patrol of Alaskan waters; the cutter CORWIN assigned to police patrol.
1885	The BEAR transferred from the Navy to the Revenue Cutter Service; she was retired from Alaskan service in 1926, being replaced by the NORTHLAND.
January, 1915	The United States Coast Guard was born, with the union of the Life-Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service to form the modern Coast Guard: The Thirteenth District included all the west coast and Alaska; first Coast Guard station in Alaska established at Nome.
1922 - 1923	The Thirteenth District reorganized; it was restricted to northern Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.
1 July, 1939	The Lighthouse Service incorporated into the Coast Guard; the Twelfth Coast Guard District, or "Juneau District," established.
1 November, 1941	The Coast Guard was transferred to the Navy Department for the duration of the war; the Thirteenth Naval District was divided into two sectors: the Northwestern Sector and the Alaska Sector.
15 March, 1944	The Seventeenth Naval District was created: Coast Guard headquarters established at Ketchikan, Alaska.

(B) Chronology of the Aleutian Campaign, 7 December, 1941 - 22 August, 1943.

7 December, 1941	Hostilities began in the Pacific.
23 February, 1942	Japanese submarine shelled the coast of California.
3-4 June, 1942	The Japanese attacked Dutch Harbor.
14 June, 1942	Navy Department confirmed Japanese claims that landings had been made in the western Aleutian Islands.
20 June, 1942	Japanese submarine shelled Vancouver Island.
30 August, 1942	American forces occupied Adak.
14 September, 1942	Adak-based planes bombed Kiska.
20 September, 1942	American forces occupied Atka.
12 January, 1943	American forces occupied Amchitka; Coast Guard cutters patroled adjacent Aleutian waters against enemy submarines.
21 February, 1943	Planes from Amchitka bombed Kiska.
11 May, 1943	American forces landed on Attu.
29 May, 1943	Last Japanese resistance on Attu crushed.
30 May, 1943	Occupation of Attu completed.
10 July, 1943	First United States raid on Paramushiru.
15 August, 1943	Allied forces occupied Kiska.
22 August, 1943	Amphibious phase of the Kiska operations declared closed.

APPENDIX II

Duties of the Coast Guard in Alaska

For the Treasury Department:

1. Saving life and property.
2. Construction and maintenance of lights, buoys, signals, and general aids to navigation.
3. The boarding of vessels and the enforcement of Customs Revenues.
4. Transportation of customs officers.
5. Enforcing health laws relative to quarantine.
6. Aid, medical, dental, etc., to American fishermen.
7. Collecting and compiling statistics on marine disasters.
8. Assisting vessels in distress or in danger of stranding.
9. Removing derelicts and other obstructions to navigation.
10. Patrolling ice areas in the lower Bering Sea and in Arctic coastal waters; aiding to their destinations merchant vessels in ice areas.
11. Investigation of shipwrecks which are attended by loss of life.
12. Maintaining a close liaison with the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue.
13. Enforcement of the laws of the United States on the high seas and in certain navigable waters of the United States and Alaska.
14. Enforcement of the whaling treaty.
15. Certifying ships manifests.
16. Apprehending vessels departing before making a report of entry.
17. Conducting of the annual Bering Sea Patrol.

For the War Department:

1. The enforcement of navigation laws and other laws pertaining to anchorage and the movement of vessels in harbors and navigable waters of Alaska.
2. Removing obstructions to navigation.
3. Enforcement of the Oil Pollution Act.

For the Navy Department:

1. The maintenance of a close liaison and cooperation with the Navy and all naval units in Alaska.
2. The visitation of vessels; in such visitations every possible courtesy is extended.
3. Duties aiding the naval intelligence division. Coast Guard officers act in the capacity of Navy intelligence personnel when visiting Alaskan villages.

For the Department of Justice:

1. Dispensing justice in isolated villages in Alaska.
2. Performing, when required, the duties of United States Marshal and United States Commissioners.
3. The transportation of "floating courts" to various points in Alaska, whenever and wherever required.
4. Enforcement of immigration laws; assistance in the enforcement of laws pertaining to naturalization.

5. Aiding Federal and Territorial authorities in the apprehension of criminals.
6. Transportation of immigration inspectors and other departmental personnel when requested.

For the Post Office Department:
1. Carrying of mail in Alaska.

For the Department of the Interior:
1. Cooperation with the Governor of Alaska and other Territorial authorities.
2. Rendering medical and dental aid to the natives of Alaska.
3. The transportation of natives, teachers, educational and other supplies.
4. The enforcement of federal legislation relating to salmon, halibut, and other fisheries.
5. Affording protection to seal herds on the Pribilof Islands and in the Bering Sea; guarding the migration of those herds up the Pacific coast.
6. The inspection of Alaskan villages, with resultant recommendations for improvement and proper sanitary conditions.

For the Department of Agriculture:
1. The enforcement of game laws and laws relating to the protection of bird life. This activity is usually in isolated sections only.

For the Department of Commerce:
1. Boarding vessels and motorboats for the enforcement of navigation laws and laws governing motorboats.
2. The enforcement of regulations for the promotion of safety of life on navigable waters, issued for the control of water parades and regattas.
3. The transportation of steamboat inspectors.

For the Executive -- the employment of force by the Authority of the President:
1. Suppression of insurrection, -- especially armed expeditions in violation of the neutrality laws.
2. Enforcement of the Neutrality Act.
3. Compelling foreign vessels to depart because of violations of neutrality.
4. The enforcement of the rules and regulations relating to armed vessels.
5. Cooperation with Red Cross officials and other agencies in rendering aid to persons and property during periods of danger, distress, and natural calamities.

Miscellaneous Duties:
1. The investigation of suspicious craft, domestic and alien, - (as in the case of Japanese fishing fleets just prior to the outbreak of war).
2. The investigation of espionage, counter-espionage, and all forms of subversive activities.
3. Cooperation with the Public Health Service, Weather Bureau, and the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

4. The making of surveys and rendering reports on oceanographic matters, wildlife, regional industries, fishing, schools of fish, and so forth.
5. The transportation of government officials, nurses, civilians, missionaries, military personnel, and transients where other transportation facilities are difficult or unavailable; the transportation of destitute American seamen.
6. The administration of oaths in Alaska; performance of the marriage ceremony when required.
7. Special patrols: especially for the protection of the seal herd, sea otter, halibut, whales, walrus, and sea lions.
8. Special ice observations in the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean.
9. Sociological Surveys and census of natives and native villages.
10. Special hydrographic surveys and soundings.
11. Since 25 February, 1942, the maintenance of port security.
12. Since 28 February, 1942, certain functions of marine inspection.

APPENDIX III

(A) Aids to Navigation in Alaska, 1940 - 1944.

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Lighted Aids:----------					
Over 200,000 C.P.	3	3	3	3	4
50,000 to 190,000 C.P.	-	-	-	-	-
5,000 to 49,000 C.P.	9	9	9	9	9
1,000 to 4,900 C.P.	-	-	-	-	1
500 to 990 C.P.	1	1	1	1	1
200 to 490 C.P.	46	46	49	50	50
Below 200 C.P.	344	356	368	383	402
Lighted Trumpet buoys	-	-	-	-	-
" whistle "	9	9	10	13	16
" bell "	16	17	19	22	29
" gong "	-	-	-	-	-
" buoys	31	36	43	44	49
Total Lighted Aids	459	477	502	525	561
Lightship Stations.[1]	-	-	-	-	-
Fog Signals:					
Radio Beacons	9	9	9	12	16
Fog Signals (Air)	14	14	14	14	14
" " (Steam)	-	-	-	-	-
" " (Electric)	-	1	1	1	2
Compressed gas	1	1	1	1	1
Gravity and clockwork	-	-	-	-	-
Hand power	-	-	-	-	-
Submarine Signals	-	-	-	-	-
Lighted trumpet buoys	-	-	-	-	-
Unlighted " "	-	-	-	-	-
Lighted whistle "	9	9	10	13	16
Unlighted " "	-	-	-	-	-
Lighted bell "	16	17	19	22	29
Unlighted " "	2	2	2	1	1
Lighted gong "	-	-	-	-	-
Unlighted " "	-	-	-	-	-
Total Fog Signals	51	53	56	64	79
Unlighted Silent Aids:					
Buoys, metal	265	272	276	290	286
Buoys, wood (Spar)	49	47	45	45	43
Daymarks	181	182	179	184	178
Total Silent Aids	495	501	500	519	507
Gross Total	1,005	1,031	1,058	1,108	1,147
Net Total	980	1,005	1,029	1,073	1,102

1. Lights and fog signals on lightships are counted but not the stations.

(B) Aids to Navigation Projects in the Seventeenth Naval District, as of 10 July, 1945.

It is recommended that the following unwatched light characteristics be changed from flashing every 3 seconds (flash 0.3 second, eclipse 2.7 seconds) to flashing every 4 seconds (flash 0.4 second, eclipse 3.6 seconds) to comply with Standard Characteristics for Minor Lights used as lateral aids.

Village Point
Channel Island
McLean Point
Saltery Cove
Ship Island
Meyers Chuck
Beck Island
Steamer Point
Hat Island
Vank Island
Wrangel Breakwater
Vichnefski Rock
Midway Rock
Point Lockwood
Blunt Point Rest 34
Sukai Islets
Grand Point
Cape Fanshaw
Bill Point
Fisherman's Harbor Outer
Port Alexander
Port Walter
Tebenkof Bay
Washington Bay
Point Gardner
Point Cornwallis
Kake Harbor
Turnabout Island
Point Gambier
Windham Bay Narrows
Midway Island
Point Arden
Shelter Island
Battery Point
Killisnoo Harbor
Tenakee Rest
Rocky Island
Gustavas
Point Adolphus
Rock Point
Mellen Rock
Sukkwan Narrows
Goat Island
View Cove Harbor
Block Island
Klawak Island
Peep Rock
The Eckholms
The Twins
Kakul Narrows
Otstoia Island
Elbow Passage
Minnie Reef
Hill Island.