



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

# U.S. Coast Guard Missions: A Historical Timeline

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## Law Enforcement

### **Establishment of "system of cutters" to enforce customs' laws, 1790**

Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, to create a maritime service to enforce customs laws (1 Stat. L. 145, 175; 4 August 1790). Alternately known as the *system of cutters*, *Revenue Service*, and *Revenue-Marine* this service would officially be named the *Revenue Cutter Service* (12 Stat. L., 639) in 1863. This service was placed under the control of the Treasury Department.

2 March 1799- Congress authorized revenue cutter officers to board all ships of the United States within four leagues of the U.S., if bound for the U.S. and then search and examine them, certifying manifest, sealing hatches and remaining on board until they arrived in port. They were also authorized to search ships of other nations in United States' waters and "perform such other duties for the collection and security of the Revenue" as directed by the Secretary of the Treasury

2 March 1807- Congress outlawed the importation of slaves into the United States. The Revenue Marine enforced the law on the sea.

### **Post-War of 1812 enactments:**

Congress authorized the revenue cutters to enforce the slave trade restrictions, combat pirates, enforce quarantine and neutrality laws, prevent plundering, and remove dangerous wrecks from navigable waters.

3 March 1819- Congress authorized the revenue cutters to protect merchant vessels of United States against piracy and to seize vessels engaged in slave trade. The cutters *Louisiana* and *Alabama* were built shortly thereafter to assist in the government's efforts against piracy.

31 August 1819-The cutters *Alabama* and *Louisiana* captured the privateer *Bravo* in the Gulf of Mexico. The *Bravo's* master, Jean Le Farges -- a lieutenant of Jean Lafitte -- was later hanged from the *Louisiana's* yardarm. The cutters then sailed for Patterson's Town on Breton Island to destroy the notorious pirates' den there.

29 June 1820 the Revenue cutter *Dallas* captured the 12-gun brig-of-war *General Ramirez*, which was loaded with 280 slaves, off St. Augustine.

### **Acquisition of Alaska, 1867**

Revenue Cutter Service charged with the enforcement of federal law in the Alaskan territory.

### **Passage of the *Posse Comitatus* Act, 1878**

The 45th Congress enacted a rider on an Army appropriations bill that became known as the *Posse Comitatus* Act (Chapter 263, Section 15, U.S. Statutes, Vol. 20). This act limited military involvement in civil law enforcement, leaving the Revenue Cutter Service as the only military force consistently charged with federal law enforcement on the high seas and U.S. waters.

### **Passage of the Espionage Act, June 1917**

The Coast Guard is given powers to prevent sabotage at the nation's harbors.

### **National Prohibition Enforcement Act, 1919**

On 28 October 1919 Congress passed the National Prohibition Enforcement Act, otherwise known as the Volstead Act. The Volstead Act authorized the enforcement of the 18th Amendment, ratified on 29 January 1919. The Act authorized the Coast Guard to prevent the maritime importation of illegal alcohol. This led to the largest increase in the size and responsibilities of the service to that date.

### **Notable Prohibition Incidents**

On 3 July 1927 Ensign Charles L. Duke, in command of CG-2327, boarded the rumrunner *Greypoint* in New York harbor and single-handedly captured the vessel, its 22-man crew, and its cargo of illegal liquor.

On 20 March 1929 the Coast Guard captured the rum-running schooner *I'm Alone* of Nova Scotia, sparking an international incident. She had successfully plied this trade for over four years when she appeared off the Texas coast and was picketed by the cutter *Wolcott* in the spring of 1929. Boatswain Frank Paul marked her at 10.8 miles from shore and signaled her to heave to. Several blanks were fired and this brought the vessel to a stop. Captain Randall of the schooner allowed the Boatswain on board, there was a discussion, but when he returned, *I'm Alone* continued on her way. The chase resumed and shots were fired into her rigging. On the second morning, some two hundred miles south of the U.S., the cutter *Dexter* came up to assist and proceeded to fire into the runner, sinking the vessel. One of her crew was drowned. Repercussions were heard immediately from Canada, Britain, and France, as the drowned seaman was French. The initial complaint was that of the position of the schooner at the point of contact. Her captain maintained she was only a 7-knot vessel and she was anchored about 15 miles out in safe waters. The second infraction was that the pursuit was not a continuous one, the intervention of *Dexter* muddied this question. Since the speed of the suspect vessel is a consideration in determining how far out it might be seized, it should be noted that *I'm Alone* managed to stay ahead of *Wolcott*, a nearly new cutter capable of at least 11 knots, for over 24 hours. As *I'm Alone* was sunk, the captain's statement that her engines were in need of repair also could not be proven. In any case, the international round of diplomatic niceties did not cease until 1935 when the United States backed off and compensation was paid to the crew of the schooner.

### **Whaling Convention Act passed, 1932**

The Coast Guard was assigned the responsibility for enforcing the Act.

### **Anti-Smuggling Act, 1935**

On 5 August 1935 Congress passed the Anti-Smuggling Act, which broadened the jurisdiction of Coast Guard.

### **Camarioca Boatlift, 1965**

First large-scale exodus of Cuban immigrants attempted to enter the U.S. Migrant interdiction becomes a policy concern.

### **200-mile Fishery Zone created, 1976**

Coast Guard operations regarding the regulation of fisheries in U.S. waters was increased greatly by the new Zone.

### **Marinel Boatlift, 1980**

Boats with Cuban migrants on board begin departing Mariel, Cuba. The first two boats arrive in Miami the same day, marking the largest Cuban migration to the U.S. Cuban leader Fidel Castro then declared the port of Mariel "open", increasing the number of boats involved in the exodus and giving the exodus its name. By the time the boatlift came to an end, over 125,000 Cubans had made the journey to the United States. It was the largest search and rescue operation conducted by the Coast Guard since World War II and gave the service an indication of the increasing role the service would play regarding migrant interdiction in upcoming years.

### **Formation of Law Enforcement Detachments, 1982**

On 9 August 1982 the Department of Defense approved the use of Coast Guard law enforcement detachments on board US Navy vessels during peacetime. The teams conducted law enforcement boardings from Navy vessels for the first time in U.S. history.

### **National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS) began operations, 1983**

The NNBIS began operations on 17 June 1983 under the direction of Vice President George Bush and the executive board consisting of the secretaries of State, Transportation, and Defense, the Attorney General, the Counselor to the President, the Director of the CIA, the Director of the White House Drug Abuse Policy Office. Coast Guard anti-narcotic operations were reinforced when needed by military forces. The new system provided a coordinated national and international interagency network for prioritizing interdiction targets, identifying resources, recommending the most effective action, and coordinating joint special actions.

### **National Narcotics Act, 1984**

The National Narcotics Act led to Coast Guard participation in the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System, under Attorney General policy guidelines.

### **Notable Interdiction Incidents**

On 1 January 1985 CGC *Citrus* was rammed by the M/V *Pacific Star* during a boarding incident. The *Pacific Star* then sank after being scuttled by her crew. There were no casualties. The seven crewmen were arrested on drug charges.

On 17 September 2004 the Coast Guard made the largest cocaine seizure in its history (to date) when Coast Guard and Navy forces located and seized 30,000 pounds of cocaine aboard the fishing vessel *Lina Maria* approximately 300 miles southwest of the Galapagos Islands. LEDET 108, embarked aboard the USS *Curtis*, made the seizure. A second Coast Guard and Navy team intercepted the *Lina Maria's* sister ship, the fishing vessel *San Jose*, 500 miles west of the Galapagos, and discovered and seized 26,250 pounds of cocaine.

## **National Security**

### **Quasi-War with France, 1799-1801**

The Revenue Marine was first charged with protecting the nation's coasts and its interests on the high seas

### **Seminole Wars, 1836-1842**

Revenue cutters conducted combined naval and land operations for the first time, adding to their national defense responsibilities one task that proved their versatility.

### **War with Mexico, 1846**

16 May 1846-Eleven cutters were assigned to cooperate with Army and Navy in the Mexican War. Cutters *McLane*, *Legare*, *Woodbury*, *Ewing*, *Forward*, and *Van Buren* were assigned to the Army. Cutters *Wolcott*, *Bibb*, *Morris*, and *Polk* were assigned to the Navy.

### **Civil War**

12 April 1861-The Revenue cutter *Harriet Lane* fired the first shot from a naval vessel in the Civil War. The cutter fired across the bow of the merchant vessel *Nashville* when the latter attempted to enter Charleston Harbor without displaying the national flag.

### **Spanish-American War, 1898**

The Navy tasked the US Life-Saving Service with coast watching. On 11 May 1898 USRC *Hudson* towed the crippled USS *Winslow* from certain destruction under the Spanish forts at Cardenas, Cuba during the Spanish-American War. Congress later conferred a Gold Medal of Honor on her commanding officer, Revenue First Lieutenant F. H. Newcomb. His officers and crew were awarded Silver and Bronze Medals.

### **World War I, 1917-1918**

Cutters are first assigned to escort of convoy duties in European waters, a role they fulfill admirably and again carry on in World War II.

### **Notable Incidents**

On 16 September 1918 CGC *Seneca's* crew attempted to bring the torpedoed British collier *Wellington* into Brest, France. Eleven of *Seneca's* crew, sent as a boarding party aboard the collier, were lost when *Wellington* foundered in a gale.

On 26 September 1918 the Imperial German Navy submarine *UB-91* torpedoed and sank the CGC *Tampa*. *Tampa* had been escorting a convoy bound for Milford Haven, Wales. All hands were lost: 111 Coast Guardsmen, as well as four U.S. Navy, 11 Royal Navy, and five civilian passengers were killed. The bodies of two of the Coast Guard crew were recovered and buried in a small church yard in Lamphey, Pembrokeshire, Wales, Great Britain. One body was returned to the family in the U.S. after the war while one, who was never identified, is still interred in Lamphey's church yard to this day. Local residents continue to care for the grave.

### **Espionage Act, June 1917**

The Coast Guard was given powers to prevent sabotage at the nation's harbors.

### **President Franklin Roosevelt's Declaration of Neutrality, 1939**

Navy assets were insufficient to carry out the patrol effectively, and the Coast Guard consequently added cutters to the Neutrality Patrol.

### **World War II, 1941-1945**

Many of the Coast Guard's missions are augmented and expanded during the conflict. New missions and responsibilities are added as well, including the operation of Long Range Aids to Navigation facilities, the addition of the responsibilities of merchant vessel inspection and documentation, and the licensing of merchant marine personnel.

### **Notable Incidents**

On May 1942 CGC *Icarus* sank the U-352 off Moorehead City, North Carolina, and took 33 prisoners-of-war, the first German prisoners taken in combat by any U.S. force in World War II.

On 27 September 1942 Douglas A. Munro, Signalmans 1/c, USCG, gave his life evacuating Marines of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, at Matanikau Point, Guadalcanal. President Roosevelt posthumously awarded Munro the Medal of Honor, the only Coast Guardsman to be awarded this decoration.

On 22 February 1943 CGC *Campbell*, under the command of CDR James A. Hirshfield and assigned to the international escort group A-3 that was escorting Convoy ON-166 through the North Atlantic, engaged numerous submarine contacts during a running battle across the sea. *Campbell's* attacks damaged at least two U-boats. The cutter also rescued 50 survivors from a

torpedoed Norwegian freighter. Then, on 22 February 1943, as *Campbell* returned to the convoy after rescuing the Norwegians, it detected a radar contact closing the convoy. *Campbell* raced toward the target and soon made visual contact. It was the surfaced *U-606*, earlier disabled by a depth charge attack delivered by the Free Polish destroyer *Burza*. The *Campbell* closed to ram while its gunners opened fire. The big cutter struck the U-boat with a glancing blow and one of the submarine's hydroplanes sliced open the *Campbell's* hull, flooding the engine room. The crew dropped two depth charges as the submarine slid past, and the explosions lifted the U-boat nearly five feet. Hirshfield later noted, "I felt sure he was ours." The *Campbell* illuminated the U-boat with a spotlight and the gunners continued to fire into the submarine's conning tower and hull. Hirshfield was hit by shell fragments but remained at his station. When he realized the Germans had given up, he ordered his men to cease firing. The *Campbell* then rescued five of the *U-606's* crew. Due to the collision, *Campbell* was towed to safety, repaired, and returned to service. CDR Hirshfield was awarded the Navy Cross for this action.

On 6 June 1944 ninety-nine Coast Guard cutters, Coast Guard-manned warships and landing craft participated in the landings at Normandy, France. CAPT Miles Imlay took command of one of the assault groups attacking Omaha Beach during the invasion. He directed the invasion from the flotilla's flagship USS *LCI(L)-87*. *LCI(L)s 85, 91, 92, and 93* (Coast Guard-manned) were lost at the Omaha beachhead that day. Sixty cutters sailed in support of the invasion forces, acted as search and rescue craft for each of the landings. A Coast Guard manned assault transport, the USS *Bayfield*, served as the command and control vessel for the landings at Utah beach.

#### **Korean War, 1950-1953**

On 18 January 1953 a Coast Guard PBM seaplane crashed during takeoff after having rescued 11 survivors from a ditched U.S. Navy aircraft shot down off the coast of mainland China. A total of nine servicemen lost their lives in this crash, including five Coast Guardsmen.

#### **Vietnam War, 1965-1973**

On 9 February 1968 Coast Guard cutters *Androscoggin*, *Minnetonka*, and *Winona*, along with 82 footers and Navy assets, on patrol in Vietnamese waters, thwarted a Communist attempt to run four trawlers through the *Market Time* blockade off the coast of South Vietnam. The cutters sank three of the trawlers and forced the fourth to return to Hainan Island without landing her cargo. The defeat of this attempted re-supply was hailed as "the most significant naval victory of the Vietnam campaign."

#### **Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, 1990**

President George W. Bush, on 22 August 1990, authorized the call up of members of the selected reserve to active duty in support of Operation Desert Shield. Three port security units (PSUs), consisting of 550 Coast Guard reservists are ordered to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Desert Shield. (This was the first involuntary overseas mobilization of Coast Guard Reserve PSUs in the Coast Guard Reserve's 50-year history). Coast Guard LEDETs also served in theatre along with oil-spill responders.

#### **Terrorist attacks on the U.S., 2001**

On 11 September 2001, terrorists from Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network, hijacked four commercial aircraft, crashing two into the World Trade Center in New York and one into the Pentagon in Washington, DC (the fourth aircraft crashed around Shanksville, PA when passengers on board tried to regain control from the terrorists). USCG units from Activities New York were among the first military units to respond in order to provide security and render assistance to those in need. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks President George W. Bush proposed the creation of a new Cabinet-level agency, eventually named the Department of Homeland Security. The Coast Guard was foremost among the agencies slated to become a constituent of the new department. On 25 November 2002, President Bush signed HR 5005 creating the Department of Homeland Security. Soon after, Tom Ridge, former governor of Pennsylvania, was confirmed as the department's first Secretary. On 25 February 2003, Transportation Secretary, Norman Mineta transferred leadership of the U.S. Coast Guard to

Secretary Ridge, formally recognizing the change in civilian leadership over the Coast Guard and ending the Coast Guard's almost 36 year term as a member of the Department of Transportation. As a result of the attacks, homeland security moves to the fore-front of the service's primary missions.

3 July 2002- The first of the Coast Guard's Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSSTs), MSST-91101 was commissioned in Seattle, Washington on 3 July 2002. MSSTs were created in response to the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on 11 September 2001. MSSTs are domestic, mobile units that possess specialized training and capabilities to perform a broad spectrum of port safety and security operations. They were designed to offer operational commanders with a quick response capability that would meet changing threats in the nation's harbors, ports, and internal waterways and to enforce moving and fixed security zones to protect commercial high interest vessels, U.S. Navy high value assets, and critical waterside infrastructure. Twelve MSST units were planned for deployment around the nation.

### **Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003**

Coast Guard units deployed to Southwest Asia in support of the US-led coalition engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom early in 2003. At the height of operations, there were 1,250 Coast Guard personnel deployed, including about 500 reservists. This included two large cutters, a buoy tender, eight patrol boats, four port security units, law enforcement detachments and support staff to the Central (CENTCOM) and European (EUCOM) Command theaters of operation.

## **Marine Safety**

### **First Lighthouse, 1716**

The Boston Lighthouse on Little Brewster Island in Boston Harbor, the first lighthouse established in America, was first lit in 1716.

### **Federal control of lighthouses, 1789**

An Act of Congress (1 Stat. L., 53), only the ninth law passed by the newly created Congress of the United States and the first one to make any provisions for public work, created the Lighthouse Establishment as an administrative unit of the Federal Government, when it accepted title to, and joined jurisdiction over, the lighthouses then in existence, and provided that "the necessary support, maintenance and repairs of all lighthouses, beacons, buoys and public piers erected, placed, or sunk before the passing of this act, at the entrance of, or within any bay, inlet, harbor, or port of the United States, for rendering the navigation thereof easy and safe, shall be defrayed out of the treasury of the United States.'

### **Explosion of the steamboat *Pulaski*, 1838**

The lack of a shore organization convinced Congress to create the Steamboat Inspection Service instead of giving the new regulatory functions to the USRCS.

### **Steamboat Act of May 30, 1852**

The 1838 law proved inadequate as steamboat disasters increased in volume and severity. The 1847 to 1852 era was marked by an unusual series of disasters primarily caused by boiler explosions, however, many were also caused by fires and collisions. These disasters resulted in the passage of the Steamboat Act of May 30, 1852 (10 Stat. L., 1852) in which enforcement powers were placed under the Department of the Treasury rather than the Department of Justice as with the Act of 1838. Under this law, the organization and form of a federal maritime inspection service began to emerge. Nine supervisory inspectors responsible for a specific geographic region were appointed. There were also provisions for the appointment of local inspectors by a commission consisting of the local District Collector of Customs, the Supervisory Inspector, and the District Judge.

### **Act of February 28, 1871**

This act retained the useful function of the prior acts and added new requirements which provided a comprehensive Marine Safety Code, on which our present marine safety code has been built. The organization created by the *Act of 1871* became known as the Steamboat Inspection Service. This new law sought to protect the crew as well as the passengers and applied to all steam vessels. Furthermore, it established a Supervisory Inspector General directly responsible to the Secretary of the Treasury, extended licensing requirements to all masters and chief mates, provided for the revocation of licenses, authorized periodic inspection and gave the Board of Supervisory Inspectors the authority to prescribe nautical *Rules of the Road*. On February 14, 1903, congressional action transferred the Steamboat Inspection Service to the newly created Department of Commerce and Labor. It remained here until its functions were transferred to the Coast Guard during World War II. Prior to that time, it was merged with the Bureau of Navigation, itself created in 1884 to oversee the regulation of merchant seamen, on June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. L., 415). This "new" organization was named the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation and remained within the Department of Commerce.

### **Bureau of Navigation established 1884**

The Bureau of Navigation was placed under the control of the Treasury Department (23 Stat. L., 118).

### **International Marine Conference, Washington, 1889**

Congress became involved with safety at sea issues and passed anchorage laws. Congress charged the Revenue Cutter Service with enforcing them. The first is New York harbor and the cutter *Manhattan* was detailed to enforce the new laws (Act of March 6, 1896, 29 Stat. L., 54). 15 June 1904- Nearly 1,000 lives were lost when the steamboat *General Slocum* caught fire in the East River in New York. The disaster led to improved safety regulations and life-saving equipment.

### **Motorboat Act passed, 1910**

Congress gave the Revenue Cutter Service jurisdiction over the new regulations, this is the beginning of what would become the Coast Guard's regulatory responsibilities over pleasure boating in the U.S.

### **Sinking of the *Titanic*, 1912**

Congress authorized the International Ice Patrol.

### **President Woodrow Wilson creates the Interdepartmental Board on International Service of Ice Observation, Ice Patrol, and Ocean Derelict Destruction, 1916:**

The Board was directed to prepare a systematic program of scientific observations to be carried out by the cutters serving on the International Ice Patrol, thus inaugurating the practice of oceanography with the USCG.

### **Explosion of the *SS Mont Blanc*, 6 December, 1917**

Congress empowers the Coast Guard to control shipping in major U.S. ports. Combined with the Espionage Act powers, the Coast Guard creates "Captain of the Ports" in major U.S. ports.

### **Winter of 1933-34**

Severe icing blocked navigation in the nation's northeast rivers. Coast Guard cutters were pressed into service to clear channels for oil barges; first icebreaking attempts by the service.

### **Act of May 27, 1936 (Public Law 622)**

The passenger vessel *Morro Castle* caught fire off the coast of New Jersey in 1934, causing the loss of 124 persons. That disaster paved the way for the Act of May 27, 1936. The law, known as Public Law 622, reorganized and changed the name of the Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection Service to Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation (49 Stat. L., 1380).

The Bureau remained under Commerce Department control. Public Law 622 also required structural fire protection on passenger vessels and required plans for passenger vessels to be approved by the Bureau prior to any vessel's construction.

### **Lighthouse Service merged with Coast Guard, 1939**

(53 Stat. L., 1432).

### **Dangerous Cargo Act, 1940**

Port Security responsibilities are undertaken again for the first time since World War I when President Franklin Roosevelt invoked the Espionage Act of 1917. The Coast Guard was to govern anchorage and movement of all vessels in U.S. waters and to protect vessels, harbors, and inland or coastal waterways of the U.S. The Dangerous Cargo Act gave the Coast Guard jurisdiction over ships with high explosives and dangerous cargoes.

### **Motorboat Act of 1940**

The Motorboat Act of 1940 was enacted to cover safety requirements for every vessel propelled by machinery and not more than 65-feet in length, with the exception of tugboats and towboats of this length propelled by steam, which were covered under other laws. In addition to covering safety equipment, running lights, and reckless or negligent operations, this law gave the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation the authority to examine the operators of these boats and issue licenses provided they carried passengers for hire.

### **Executive Order 9083**

On February 28, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt, as a wartime measure, signed Executive Order 9083, which transferred the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation temporarily to the control of the U.S. Coast Guard. This transfer was made permanent by Reorganization Plan Number 3 on July 16, 1946. This marked the first time in the nation's history that all functions of maritime safety came under one agency.

### **Executive Order 9083 and Reorganization Plan No. 3 1946**

Bureau of Marine Inspection was abolished and became a permanent part of the Coast Guard under Treasury Department control.

### **Small Passenger Vessel Act of May 10, 1956**

Due to an increase in small boat accidents, the *Small Passenger Vessel Act of May 10, 1956* was passed into law. The requirements of this act became effective on June 1, 1958, and provided that all vessels, regardless of size or propulsion, carrying more than six passengers for hire, be inspected by a Marine Inspector of the Coast Guard, and meet associated safety requirements. These requirements not only cover life saving and fire-fighting equipment, but also machinery and electrical installations, hull strength and stability considerations. This law required that operators be licensed by the Coast Guard and minimum manning requirements be met. Additionally, the route or routes on which the vessel may operate and the maximum number of passengers which may be carried are established by the Coast Guard.

### **Bridge Administration, 1967**

In 1967 the Army Corps of Engineers transferred the administration of the Federal Bridge Program to the Coast Guard.

### **Federal Boat Safety Act passed, 1971**

This act sets forth certain safety and documentation requirements for small craft. The Coast Guard's regulatory authority over recreational boats is increased.

### **Last Lightship**

On 29 March 1985 the last lightship in service with the Coast Guard, the USCGC *Nantucket I*, was decommissioned. This ended 164 years of continuous lightship service by the Government. *Nantucket I* was the last of the U.S. lightships and the last of the Nantucket Shoals lightships that



watched over that specific area since June of 1854. Launched as WLV-612 in 1950 at Baltimore, the ship also stood watch as the light vessel for San Francisco and Blunts Reef in California, at Portland, Oregon, and finally at Nantucket Shoals. The CGC *Nantucket I* also served as a "less-than-speedy" law enforcement vessel off Florida for a time.

## **Search & Rescue**

### **Winter cruises authorized, 1832**

Secretary of the Treasury Louis McLane ordered revenue cutters to conduct special winter cruises along the coast to assist mariners in need. Congress codified the practice in 1837.

### **Loss of the Austrian brig *Terasto* (1840s)**

William A. Newell witnessed the sinking of the *Terasto* and the death of her 13-man crew. He became a congressman and pushed for the creation of a federal government supported life-saving service, beginning in 1848.

### **First Life Car Use**

On 12 January 1850 the wreck of *Ayrshire* on Squan Beach, New Jersey, occurred. In the first use of a life car in the U.S., 201 of 202 persons on board were saved.

### **Loss of the steamer *Metis*, 1872**

The *Metis*, after being struck by a coastal schooner off the coast of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, sank with a heavy loss of life. But Lifesaving Service and lighthouse personnel, along with the cutter *Moccasin*, rescued the survivors. The rescue signified the growing interaction among the three services, which played a factor in their later mergers.

### **Loss of the *Nuova Ottavia*, 1876**

On 1 March 1876 the *Nuova Ottavia*, an Italian vessel, grounded near the Jones Hill North Carolina Life-Saving Station. The rescue attempt by the crew of that station resulted in the loss of seven surfmen, the first deaths in the line of duty since the service began using paid crews in 1870. Among the dead was African-American Surfman Jeremiah Munden, the first African-American surfman to die in the line of duty.

### **Loss of the USS *Jeannette*, 1879**

Inauguration of the Bering Sea Patrol; USRC *Corwin* charged with locating the lost vessel.

### **Gold Lifesaving Medal Rescue, 1889**

On 28 November 1889 the crew of the Evanston, Illinois Life-Saving Station earned the Gold Lifesaving Medal for the rescue of the crew of the steamer *Calumet*. Most of the crew consisted of students from Northwestern University.

### **Pea Island Gold Lifesaving Medal Rescue, 1896**

On 11 October 1896 the crew of the Pea Island (North Carolina) Life-Saving Station, under the command of Keeper Richard Etheridge, performed one of their finest rescues when they saved the passengers and crew of the schooner *E.S. Newman*, after that ship ran aground during a hurricane. Pushed before the storm, the ship lost all sails and drifted almost 100 miles before it ran aground about two miles south of the Pea Island Lifesaving Station. Etheridge, a veteran of nearly twenty years, readied his crew. They hitched mules to the beach cart and hurried toward the vessel. Arriving on the scene, they found Captain S. A. Gardiner and eight others clinging to the wreckage. Unable to fire a line because the high water prevented the Lyle Gun's deployment, Etheridge directed two surfmen to bind themselves together with a line. Grasping another line, the pair moved into the breakers while the remaining surfmen secured the shore end. The two surfmen reached the wreck and tied a line around one of the crewmen. All three were then pulled back through the surf by the crew on the beach. The remaining eight persons were carried to shore in this fashion. After each trip two different surfmen replaced those who had just returned.

For their efforts the crew of the Pea Island Life-Saving Station were awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal in 1996.

#### **Overland Rescue, 1897**

On 17 December 1897 the Overland Expedition, consisting of three officers from the Revenue Cutter Service, departed from the cutter *Bear* off Nunivak Island to rescue 300 whalers trapped in the ice at Point Barrow, Alaska. The rescuers were First Lieutenant D. H. Jarvis, Second Lieutenant E. P. Bertholf (later a commandant), and Surgeon S. J. Call. The rescuers had to travel over 1,000 miles overland to reach the whalers. On 29 July 1898 *Bear* took 97 survivors of whaling vessels who had been rescued by the Overland Expedition, and transported them to San Francisco.

#### **Priscilla Wreck, 1899**

On 18 August 1899 Surfman Rasmus S. Midgett of the Gull Shoal Life-Saving Station in North Carolina single-handedly rescued 10 people from the grounded barkentine *Priscilla*. Midgett was awarded the Gold Life-Saving Medal for his heroic actions.

#### **Mirlo Wreck, 1918**

On 16 August 1918 Keeper John Allen Midgett and the crew of Station No. 179 at Chicamacomico, North Carolina rescued the crew of the mined British tanker SS *Mirlo*. All but one of the crew were named Midgett and each received the Gold Lifesaving Medal for their actions in saving the crew amid burning oil and wreckage.

#### **Star of Falkland Grounding, 1928**

On 23 May 1928 CGC *Haida* and the USLHT *Cedar* rescued 312 passengers and crew from the sailing vessel *Star of Falkland* near Unimak Pass, Alaska after the *Star of Falkland* had run aground in the fog during the previous evening. Both the cutter and the tender managed to save all but eight from the sailing vessel. This rescue was one of the most successful in Coast Guard history and was also one of the few instances where the Coast Guard and one of its future integrated agencies worked together to perform a major rescue.

#### **Dorchester Rescue, 1943**

On 13 February 1943 a U-boat torpedoed the transport USS *Dorchester* off the coast of Greenland. Two of her escorts, CGCs *Comanche* and *Escanaba*, responded. The crew of *Escanaba* used a new rescue technique when pulling survivors from the water. This "retriever" technique used swimmers clad in wet suits to swim to victims in the water and secure a line to them so they could be hauled onto the ship. Although *Escanaba* saved 133 men (one died later) and *Comanche* saved 97, over 600 men were lost, including the famous "Four Chaplains" who gave up their lifejackets to those that did not have one and all four went down with the ship.

#### **First Helicopter SAR Mission, 1944**

On 3 January 1944 CDR Frank Erickson flew a cargo of blood plasma in a Coast Guard HNS-1 helicopter from Brooklyn to a hospital in Sandy Hook, New Jersey in the first recorded lifesaving flight conducted by a rotary-winged aircraft.

#### **Fort Mercer and Pendleton Rescue, 1952**

On 18 February 1952, during a severe "nor'easter" off the New England coast, the T-2 tankers SS *Fort Mercer* and SS *Pendleton* each broke in half. Coast Guard vessels, aircraft, and lifeboat stations, working under severe winter conditions, rescued 70 persons from the foundering ships. Five Coast Guardsmen earned the Gold Lifesaving Medal, four earned the Silver Lifesaving Medal, and 15 earned the Coast Guard Commendation Medal.

#### **Coast Guard Aircraft Lost off China, 1953**

On 18 January 1953 a Coast Guard PBM seaplane crashed during takeoff after having rescued 11 survivors from a ditched U.S. Navy aircraft shot down off the coast of mainland China. A total of nine servicemen lost their lives in this crash, including five Coast Guardsmen.

**Camarioca Boatlift, 1965**

First large-scale exodus of Cuban immigrants attempted to enter the U.S. Migrant interdiction becomes a policy concern.

**Mariel Boatlift, 1980**

Boats with Cuban migrants on board begin departing Mariel, Cuba. The first two boats arrive in Miami the same day, marking the largest Cuban migration to the U.S. Cuban leader Fidel Castro then declared the port of Mariel "open", increasing the number of boats involved in the exodus and giving the exodus its name. By the time the boatlift came to an end, over 125,000 Cubans had made the journey to the United States. It was the largest search and rescue operation conducted by the Coast Guard since World War II and gave the service an indication of the increasing role the service would play regarding migrant interdiction in upcoming years.

**Prinsendam Loss, 1980**

On 4 October 1980 a fire broke out on the Dutch cruise vessel *Prinsendam* off Ketchikan, Alaska. Coast Guard helicopters and the cutters *Boutwell*, *Mellon*, and *Woodrush* responded in concert with other vessels in the area and rescued all of the passengers and crew without loss of life.

**Marine Electric Loss, 1983**

On 12 February 1983 the 605-foot collier *Marine Electric* capsized and sank off Virginia during a gale. Three of the 34 crewmen on board were rescued by Coast Guard and Navy assets. This sinking and consequent loss of life contributed to the establishment of a permanent rescue swimmer program for the Coast Guard.

**Operation Able Manner, 1994**

On 4 July 1994 cutters assigned to Operation Able Manner, which commenced under presidential order on 15 January 1994, rescued 3,247 Haitian migrants from 70 grossly overloaded sailboats in the Windward Passage. They rescued a total of 15,955 during the month of July 1994.

**Operation Able Vigil, 1994**

On 19 August 1994 operation Able Vigil commenced during another massive influx of Cuban migrants fleeing Cuba. It was the "largest joint peace-time operation" in Coast Guard history, according to the Commandant.

**Hurricane Katrina, 2005**

On 29 August 2005 Hurricane Katrina made a second landfall in the U.S. near Empire, Buras and Boothville, Louisiana after first previously striking southeast Florida on 25 August. The rescue and response effort was one of the largest in Coast Guard history, involving units from every district, saving 24,135 lives and conducting 9,409 evacuations.

## Environmental Protection/Scientific Efforts

**Timber Reserve Act, 1822**

The Revenue Cutter Service was ordered to protect certain federal timber reserves in Florida.

**Acquisition of Alaska, 1867**

Revenue cutters conduct coast surveys and collect scientific data on the newly acquired territory.

**Initiation of the Bering Sea Patrol 1879**

Patrols the seal rookeries of the Pribilof Islands and prevents illegal pelagic sealing.

**Collection of marine animal specimens, 1883**

The Smithsonian Institution requested that Life-Saving Service crews who located any “unusual” maritime creatures or parts of creatures they found washed up on the beaches they patrolled to collect the specimens and send them to the Smithsonian.

**Preservation of Seals, 1894**

6 April 1894- President authorized the Revenue Cutter Service to enforce the Paris Award, which was concerned with the preservation of fur seals in Alaska. On 1 September 1894 an armed guard of Revenue Cutter Service personnel were placed on the Pribiloff Islands to protect seals.

**Oil Pollution Act, 1924**

7 June 1924- Oil Pollution Act of 1924 passed. It prohibited the intentional release of fuel oil into U.S. navigable coastal waters, defined as an area within three-miles offshore. U.S. Congress passed the Act with the primary goal of protecting aquatic life

**Alaska Game Law enforcement, 1925**

13 January 1925- Alaskan game law enforced by Coast Guard.

**Whaling Convention Act passed, 1932**

The Coast Guard was assigned the responsibility for enforcing the Act.

**US Navy terminates its participation in Ocean Weather Stations, 1946**

Coast Guard took up the duty and operated five open-ocean stations, providing meteorological, oceanographic, and search and rescue services for the next 30 years.

**Texas City Disaster, 1947**

16 April 1947- Texas City Fire incident took started with a mid-morning fire on board the French-registered vessel SS *Grandcamp* in the Port of Texas City. The fire detonated approximately 2,300 tons of ammonium nitrate and the resulting chain reaction of fires and explosions killed at least 581 people. The Texas City Disaster is generally considered the worst industrial accident in American history.

**Water Quality Improvement Act passed, 1970**

Congress broadened Coast Guard authority over pollution clean-up efforts.

**Federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Ports and Waterways Safety Act, 1972**

Acts gave the Coast Guard significant authority to deal with pollution enforcement. These laws set up cleanup and liability standards for spills and called for Coast Guard scrutiny of hazardous materials vessel construction and design. A national emergency contingency plan for oil spills was also instituted. As a result of these laws, Marine Environmental Response (MER) units were set up as the part of the Coast Guard organization concerned primarily with pollution response. These were the predecessors to the Strike Teams.

**Endangered Species Act, 1972**

The Act's enforcement provisions specifically cited “The Department in which the Coast guard is operating” as the cognizant authority.

**Creation of the 200-mile Fishery Zone, 1976**

Coast Guard operations regarding the regulation of fisheries in U.S. waters was increased tremendously by the new Zone.

**Argo Merchant oil spill, 1976**

This Liberian tanker grounded off Nantucket in December, carrying 7.3 million gallons of fuel oil. CGCs *Sherman*, *Vigilant*, *Spar* and *Bittersweet* were on the scene and prepared to use the ADAPTS system on the vessel. However, deteriorating weather, 30-knot winds and heavy seas, prevented removal of its cargo before the hull began to buckle. The bow was wrenched from the

hull and opened the cargo to the sea. This was the largest spill up until then in American waters. Northwestern winds dispersed the oil out to sea. The *Argo Merchant* accident and 14 more tanker accidents in or near American waters over the next 10 weeks caused great concern about tanker safety, leading to a large tanker safety movement.

#### **Exxon Valdez oil spill, 1989**

Oil spill leads to creation of Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA-90). In this act, Congress addressed tanker construction, personnel licensing and the emergency rapid-response capability. The act called for mandatory double hulls on new tankers and gradual phasing out of non-complying vessels. The licensing requirements for ship's officers were strengthened in the area of drug and alcohol testing. The rapid-response capability was expanded nationwide, and new emphasis was placed on oil pollution research. The act has given the Coast Guard its single largest legislative tasking in history. The major responsibility is the creation of response groups (known as Strike Teams) capable of responding to spills and other disasters.

#### **Polar Sea reaches North Pole, 1994**

17 July 1994- The *Polar Sea* departed from Victoria, British Columbia on operation Arctic Ocean Section 1994 and became the first U.S. surface vessel to reach the North Pole. She then transited the Arctic Ocean back to her homeport in Seattle, Washington.

#### **Executive Orders 13089 (1998) and 13158 (2000)**

Both executive orders charged the Department of Transportation to serve on a Task Force/FACA committee with the Coast Guard representing the department. The Coast Guard continued the responsibility to serve on the committee after it was transferred to DHS.

#### **Presidential Proclamation 8335, 2009**

Presidential Proclamation 8335 designated the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument and charged the Coast Guard with working with other agencies on the Monument Advisory Council. "The Advisory Council shall consist of three officials of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and one representative each from the Department of Defense and the United States Coast Guard."

#### **Deepwater Horizon Rig Disaster, 2010**

20 April 2010- Deepwater Horizon rig explosion and subsequent oil spill saw the Coast Guard coordinate responses and conduct clean-up operations on an unprecedented scale. Coast Guard Commandant was appointed as the National Incident Commander to supervise the response.

## **Other**

1 September 1942 Joseph C. Jenkins was given a temporary promotion to warrant officer (Boatswain); becoming the first African-American warrant officer in the Coast Guard.

14 April 1943 Joseph C. Jenkins graduated as ensign in the Coast Guard Reserve, becoming the first officially recognized commissioned African-American officer in the Coast Guard.

28 July 1944- LTJG Clarence Samuels became the first African-American to command a "major" Coast Guard vessel since Michael Healy and the first to achieve command of a Coast Guard vessel "during wartime" when he assumed command of the *Light Vessel No. 115*.

31 January 1948- Mrs. Fannie M. Salter, keeper of the Turkey Point Lighthouse in upper Chesapeake Bay since 1925 and the last woman keeper of a lighthouse in the United States, retired from active service. The first woman had been hired as a lighthouse keeper 150 years before. Salter's retirement temporarily closed the tradition of women serving as keepers at lighthouses.

5 April 1950- The Coast Guard announced that former enlisted women of the Coast Guard Reserve could apply for enlistment in the Women's Volunteer Reserve (SPARS). Enlistments were to be for a three-year period with written agreement to serve on active duty in time of war or national emergency.

15 January 1974- The first group of women ever enlisted as "regulars" in the U.S. Coast Guard began their 10-weeks of basic training at the Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May. Thirty-two women were in the initial group and formed Recruit Company Sierra-89.

26 July 1948- President Harry Truman ordered the integration of the armed forces of the United States with Executive Order 9981, signed 26 July 1948. By this time the Coast Guard had already opened up all of its rates to all qualified persons regardless of race. The Coast Guard noted "the importance of selecting men for what they are, for what they are capable of doing, and insisting on good conduct, good behavior, and good qualities of leadership for all hands. . .As a matter of policy Negro recruits receive the same consideration as all others."

4 April 1977-The Coast Guard designated its first female Coast Guard aviator, Janna Lambine. She was Coast Guard Aviator #1812.

12 April 1979- LTJG Beverly Kelley assumed command of the CGC *Cape Newagen*, thereby becoming the first woman to command a U.S. warship.

