



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

CUYAHOGA, 1927

WIX / WMEC / WSC-157

Builder: American Brown Boveri Electric Corporation, Camden, New Jersey

Length: 125'

Beam: 23' 6"

Draft: 7' 6"

Displacement: 232 tons

Cost: \$

Commissioned: 3 March 1927; 17 February 1941

Decommissioned: 27 May 1933 & transferred to USN; 1978 (see below)

Disposition: Lost in collision on 20 October 1978

Propulsion: 2 x 6-cylinder; 300-HP; later replaced with 2 General Motors diesels; 800-HP; twin propellers

Performance & Endurance:

Max: 10.0 knots (1927); 13.0 knots (1945)

Cruising: 8.0 knots; 3,500 mile range (1945)

Complement: 30 (1930); 46 (1945)

Electronics: SF-1 radar; QCO-1 sonar (1945); SPS-23 radar, no sonar (1960)

Armament: 1 x 3"/23 caliber dual-purpose gun; 2 depth charge racks (1942); 1 x 40mm/60; 2 x 20mm/80; 2 x Mousetraps (1945); 1 x 40mm/60 (1960)

Class History:

This class of vessels was one of the most useful and long lasting in the service with 16 cutters still in use in the 1960's. The last to be decommissioned was the Morris in 1970; the last in service was the



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Cuyahoga, sunk in 1978. They were designed for the outer line of patrol during Prohibition, trailing mother ships. They gained a reputation for durability only enhanced by their re-engining in the late 1930's; their original 6-cylinder diesels were replaced by significantly more powerful 8-cylinder units that used the original engine beds and gave the vessels 3 additional knots. All served in World War II, but two (the Jackson and Bedloe) were lost in a storm in 1944. Ten were refitted as buoy tenders during the war and reverted to patrol work afterward.

Ship's History:

The USCGC Cuyahoga, which was homeported at the Reserve Training Center at Yorktown, Virginia celebrated 50 years of commissioned service on 3 March 1977. She was the oldest operational commissioned ship in all of the United States sea services at that time. Cuyahoga (WIX-157) was built at the American Brown Boveri Corporation in 1926. She was launched 27 January 1927 and placed in commission 3 March 1927 at Camden, New Jersey. She was 125 feet long, had a beam of 23 feet 6 inches and a draft of 9 feet. Her total displacement was 276 tons. Her hull was steel and she had two diesel engines and twin screw propulsion which gave her a maximum speed of 13 knots and maximum cruising range of 4,900 miles.

On 29 May 1933 Cuyahoga arrived at the Washington Navy Yard following her six years of chasing rum runners to assume the duties with the Navy as a tender for the Presidential Yacht USS Potomac. She was returned to Coast Guard jurisdiction on 17 May 1941 and recommissioned by the Coast Guard at the Washington Navy Yard on that day. She was assigned her new permanent station at Baltimore, Maryland and arrived there on 20 May 1941.

On 17 January 1942 her permanent station was changed from Baltimore to Norfolk, Virginia, where she reported to Commander Defense Area Group for duty. During the war the Cuyahoga was on escort duty attached to Commander Eastern Sea Frontier and Commander Caribbean Sea Frontier. From October 1942 to June 1945 she spent the majority of her time in the Caribbean Sea, usually escorting vessels between Guantanamo Bay, Trinidad and Paramaribo. During the war the Cuyahoga was armed with one 3"/23 caliber anti-aircraft gun and two depth charge racks.

Following the war, the Cuyahoga once more operated out of Norfolk until May of 1946 when she, along with the Calypso, was placed "In Commission-Reserve" status due to personnel shortages. In April 1947 the Cuyahoga was transferred from Norfolk to the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland and worked with the Field Testing and Development Unit except for occasional engineering and other operational activities.



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

From 1957 to 1959 she was assigned to New London, Connecticut for training officer candidates. Later in 1959 she assumed her station at Yorktown, where she continued to provide training for officer candidates. She was the last of her class still in commission at the time of her loss.

THE LAST VOYAGE:

At about 2100 hours on 20 October 1978, in an area about 3 1/2 miles northwest of Smith Point, which marks the mouth of the Potomac River as it empties in the Chesapeake Bay, catastrophe occurred.

The Argentine coal freighter Santa Cruz II, a 521-foot bulk carrier, hit the Cuyhoga on her starboard side between amidships and the stern. A consensus of accounts indicated that the cutter was dragged backwards for a minute and then fell away from the tanker, rolled on her side, and sank within a couple of minutes. The Santa Cruz rescued 18 survivors from the water and stayed on the scene until help arrived. The remaining 11 men embarked on the Cuyhoga were lost. Four days after the accident, a Marine Board of Inquiry convened in Baltimore, Maryland, at the Marine Safety Office to investigate the accident.

After some delay due to heavy seas and high winds, two massive floating cranes were used to raise the Cuyhoga, which was in 57 feet of water. After an initial inspection, the ship was placed on barges and towed 65 miles to Portsmouth for a full inspection.

Lost shipmates:

MKCS David B. Makin

YN1 William M. Carter

SS1 Ernestino A. Balina

SA Michael A. Atkinson

FA James L. Hellyer

SA David S. McDowell

OC James W. Clark

OC John P. Heistand

OC Edward J. Thomason

OC Bruce E. Wood



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

LI Wiyono Sumalyo, Indonesian Navy

Survivors of the collision were:

CWO Donald K. Robinson

BM1 Roger E. Wild

QM2 Randy V. Rose

MK2 Stephen D. Baker

SN Kevin J. Henderson

SA Jeffery I. Fox

SA Michael E. Myers

OC Arne O. Denny

OC Peter S. Eident

OC Earl W. Fairchild, Jr.

OC Michael E. Moser

OC Frederick J. Riemer

OC Joseph L. Robinson

OC Robert P. Rutledge

OC Timothy C. Stone

OC Earl C. Thomas

OC Lawrence V. Williams

LT Jonathan Arismita, Indonesian Navy

The Marine Casualty Report, number USCG 16732 / 92368 and dated 31 July 1979, concluded:

The Commandant has determined that the proximate cause of the casualty was that the commanding officer of the USCGC CUYAHOGA failed to properly identify the navigation lights displayed by the M/V



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

SANTA CRUZ II. As a result he did not comprehend that the vessels were in a meeting situation, and altered the CUYAHOGA's course to port taking his vessel into the path of the SANTA CRUZ II.

The Cuyahoga was later sunk off the coast of Virginia as an artificial reef.

Photographs:

Cuyahoga, 11 February, 1945

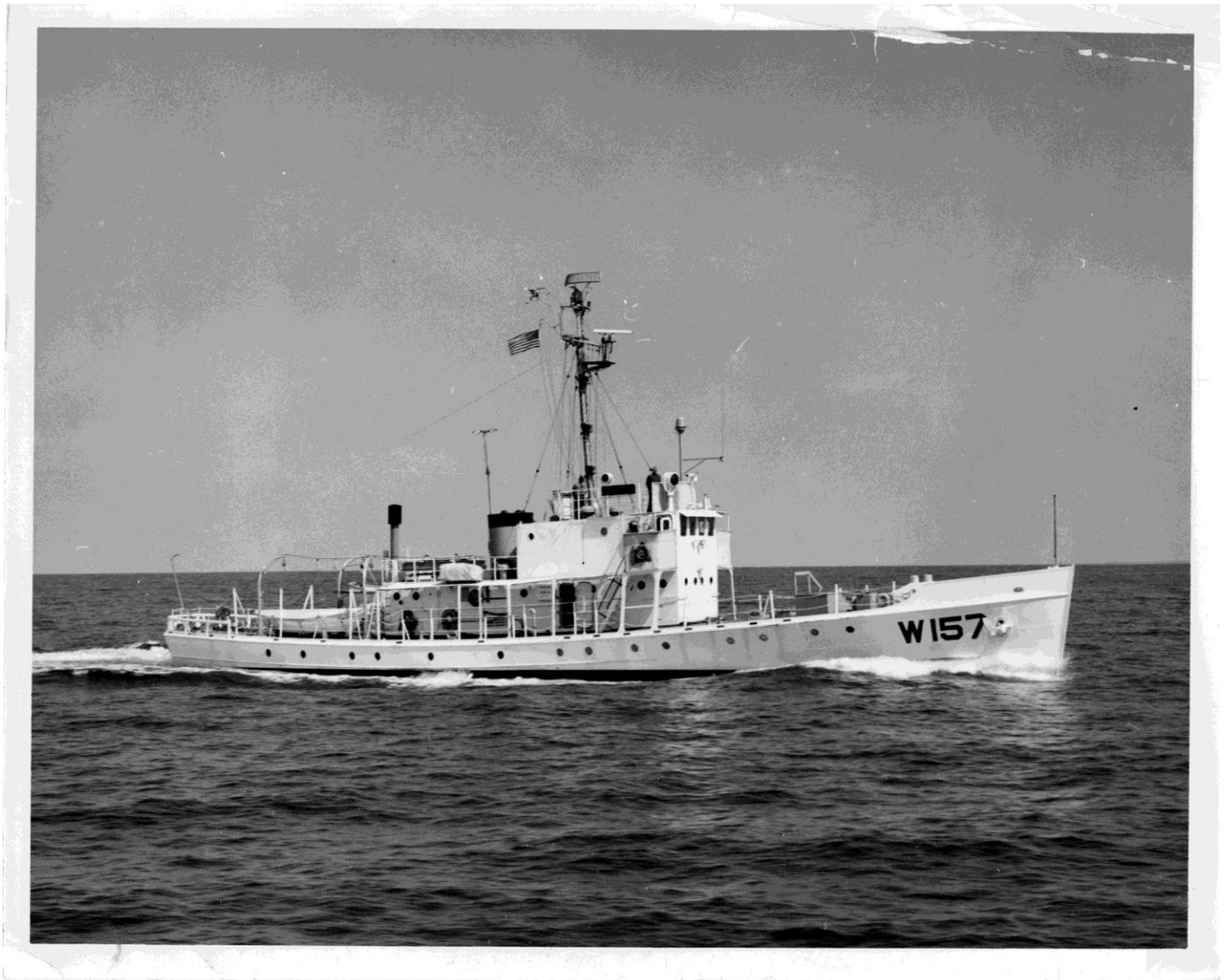




U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Cuyahoga, Circa 1960





U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Cuyahoga Wreckage



Sources:

Donald Canney. U.S. Coast Guard and Revenue Cutters, 1790-1935. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995.

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Robert Scheina. U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

Robert Scheina. U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

U.S. Coast Guard. Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard: 1790 - December 31, 1933. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934; 1989 (reprint).