



Woodbury, 1927

WSC-155

Levi Woodbury (1798-1851) was appointed to be the 13th Secretary of the Treasury by President Andrew Jackson in 1834. His term in office began on 1 July 1834. He continued in office under President Martin Van Buren. His term in office ended on 3 March 1841.

CLASS: Active Class Patrol Boat

BUILDER: American Brown Boveri Electric Corp., Camden, NJ

COST: \$63,173 each

COMMISSIONED: 11 May 1927

LAUNCHED: 2 May 1927

DECOMMISSIONED: 11 December 1946 and sold 6 July 1948/

DISPLACEMENT: 232 tons

PROPULSION: 2 x 6-cylinder, 300 hp engines

LENGTH: 125 feet

BEAM: 23 feet, 6 inches

DRAFT: 7 feet, 6 inches

COMPLEMENT: 3 officers, 17 men

ARMAMENT: 1 3"/27 (1927); in WWII two dc racks were added

Class History

This class of vessels was one of the most useful and long-lasting in Coast Guard service with 16 cutters still in use in the 1960's. The last to be decommissioned from active service was the *Morris* in 1970; the last in actual service was the *Cuyahoga*, which sank after an accidental collision in 1978. They were designed for trailing the "mother ships" along the outer line of patrol during Prohibition. They were constructed at a cost of \$63,173 each. They gained a reputation for durability that was 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.

Cutter History

USCGC *Woodbury*--a twin-screw, diesel-powered, steel-hulled Coast Guard cutter--was built in 1927 at Camden, N.J., by the American Brown Boveri Electric Corp., for the United States Coast Guard, and was fitted out to service navigational aids. Initially homeported at Norfolk, Va., *Woodbury* served at a succession of other ports prior to the entry of the United States into World War II: St. Petersburg, Fla., from 1929 to 1934 ; Gulf-port, Miss., in 1935 and 1936; Corpus Christi, Tex., in 1936 and 1937; and Galveston from 1937 to 1941. In the summer of 1941, when the Coast Guard was taken into the Navy for service during the national emergency, *Woodbury* was serving at Galveston.

Either late in 1941 or early in 1942, *Woodbury* was classified as a submarine chaser, WSC--155, and somewhat later was shifted to patrol and escort duties in the Chesapeake Bay region to strengthen Allied antisubmarine warfare forces in that area where German U-boats had recently been taking a heavy toll of American coastwise shipping.

On the night of 16 February 1942, *Woodbury* was patrolling off the entrance to Chesapeake Bay in a dense fog. Shortly after 2145, lookouts on board the cutter heard two explosions in quick succession ; and the ship's radioman soon picked up distress signals from a torpedoed vessel out in the murk. *Woodbury* accordingly altered course to pick up survivors.

The stricken vessel turned out to be the tanker *E. H. Btum*, and *Woodbury* rescued her entire crew of 40 men by 2245.

Shortly thereafter, *Woodbury* was transferred to the 8th Naval District. After brief inshore patrol work, the ship underwent an overhaul in which her armament was

increased and then was placed under the direct operational control of Commander, 8th Naval District, for convoy escort duties between the Mississippi Passes and her old home port, Galveston.

While thus engaged, *Woodbury* picked up a sound contact at 1815 on 8 August 1942, 30 miles south of the Mississippi delta. She delivered a depth charge attack and noted a large oil slick, but could not confirm her "kill." As *Woodbury* patrolled the vicinity the following day, she noted that the waters were covered with diesel and lube oil and pieces of granulated cork over an area two miles long. Whether or not the Coast Guard cutter had actually destroyed a U-boat was never determined when the Allies investigated. German records after the war.

Woodbury performed convoy escort work in the Gulf of Mexico, escorting coastwise shipping between ports on the gulf coast from Florida to Texas. She again delivered a depth charge attack on a suspected enemy submarine on 13 November 1942 ; but, since she was the sole escort for the convoy, she soon returned to her escort duties.

Her available records only span the time period from February to December of 1942, but it is reasonable to assume that she performed similar duties-- convoy escort and inshore patrol--for the remainder of World War II. Apparently decommissioned and sold in 1948, *Woodbury* was renamed *Humble AC--3*, and, under the aegis of the Humble Oil and Refining Co., served as a tug through the late 1950's. Later acquired by the firm of Caribbean Towing Inc., she was renamed *Challenge* in about 1963. She is listed in the 1979 American Bureau of Shipping register as still serving, as a tug, with that firm.

Sources:

Cutter History File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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