



# *Ilex*, 1924

WAGL-222

*ex-General Edmund Kirby*

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*Ilex*: Any of various trees or shrubs of the genus *Ilex*; holly.

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Builder: Fabricated Shipbuilding Corporation and Coddington Engineering Company, Milwaukee, WI

Length: 172'

Beam: 32'

Draft: 11' 6"

Displacement: 1,130 tons

Cost: \$540,000; conversion cost was \$55,481.50

Commissioned: 1919 (U.S. Army); 1924 (USLHS)

Decommissioned: 17 April 1947

Disposition: Sold

Machinery: 2 Allis Chalmers compound, inverted, reciprocating steam engines; 2 Page & Burton water-tube boilers; 1,000 SHP; twin propellers.

Performance & Endurance:

    Max: 11.0 knots

    Cruising: 10.0 knots; 1,800 mile range (1944)

Deck Gear: 20-ton capacity boom

Complement: 27 (1930); 44 (1942)

Armament: 2 x 20mm/80 (1944)

Electronics:

    Radar: BK detection radar

    Sonar: WEA-2

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## **Class History:**

*Ilex* was a *Speedwell*-class mine planters originally built for the U.S. Army in 1918 and 1919. Six were transferred to the U.S. Lighthouse Service at no cost in 1922. The original intent was for these vessels to serve a dual purpose: mine-planter in case of a war, and lighthouse tender during peacetime. Unfortunately, this conversion proved to be impracticable and too expensive and they were modified exclusively for service as tenders at a cost of between \$41,022 to \$110,963. Each had a turtleback forecastle installed and their anchors were mounted high to prevent the ship from being hung up on a buoy she was servicing. A steel main deck was added forward; new windows were installed in the pilothouse, and a new refrigerating plant was added. All vessels were then commissioned from 1923 to 1927 with new names.

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## **Tender History:**

*Ilex* was assigned to the 1st Lighthouse District and was based out of South Portland, ME, where she serviced aids to navigation. During World War II she was still based out of South Portland and serviced anti-submarine nets in addition to aids to navigation duty. In 1942 after the Coast Guard was taken over by the Navy, she received the hull number and designation WAGL-222. On 5 May 1943 she rescued 35 from the grounded freighter *Hartwelson*. At some point during the war she operated out of Galveston, Texas, before returning to Portland. She was decommissioned in 1947 and was sold to a Canadian citizen. She was beached and burned in 1948.

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## **Sources:**

Douglas Peterson. *United States Lighthouse Service Tenders, 1840-1939*. Annapolis: Eastwind Publishing, 2000.

Scheina, Robert L. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft in World War II*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982).

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