



*U.S. Coast Guard History*

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## *Gallatin, 1968*

(WHEC-721)

**Motto:** *Virtus Cum Ingenio* (“Power with Ability”)

**Nicknames:** “Gallop’in’ Gallatin”; “Good Ship Gallipop”; “Taz” (short for Tasmanian Devil--all 378's were nicknamed for Warner Brothers characters prior to the FRAM program--see FRAM below); “Station Gallatin” (posted by the duty section crew of CGC *Dallas* when the *Gallatin* failed to get underway due to propulsion problems after *Dallas* had completed two trips in 1996).

**Namesake:** Albert Gallatin (1761-1849) held offices as U.S. Representative and Senator from Pennsylvania, ambassador to France and the Court of Saint James (Great Britain), and President of the National Bank. Gallatin was the fourth Secretary of the Treasury, serving under presidents Jefferson and Madison. He founded New York University and helped negotiate the Treaty of Ghent to end the War of 1812. WHEC-721 was the sixth cutter to bear his name.

**Awards:** The cutter’s awards included the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Treasury Secretary’s Award for Outstanding Achievement, several Coast Guard Unit Commendations, U.S. Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, several Coast Guard “E” Ribbons, Bicentennial Unit Commendation, a number of National Defense Service Medals, Humanitarian Service Medal, several Coast Guard Special Operations Service Ribbons, and the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon with 1 silver and 3 bronze stars.

**Characteristics:**

Builder: Avondale Shipyards Inc. (Northrop Grumman), New Orleans, La.

Keel laid: April 17, 1967

Launched: November 18, 1967

Commissioned: December 20, 1968

Cost: \$10,926,747

Decommissioned: March 31, 2014

Disposition: Transferred to the Nigerian Navy on May 7, 2014, and re-commissioned as the NNS *Okpabana*.

Length: 378' overall, 350' waterline

Beam: 42'

Draft: 13' 6"(design)

Displacement: 2,716 tons (approx.)

Hull: V-shaped bow design, aluminum with welded steel, two compartment floodable length and anti-rolling tank

Speed: maximum sustained, 29 knots; cruising 20 knots

Endurance: 2,000 miles at 29 knots; 9,600 miles @ 20 knots.

Range at 20 knots: 12,000 nautical miles

Power: 36,000 shaft horsepower

Fuel capacity: 732 tons diesel, 18 tons JP5 (aviation fuel)

Fresh water capacity: 16,000 gallons; 7,500 gallons/day evaporation

Auxiliary power: 3 generators @ 500 KW each

Main propulsion: two controllable pitch propellers; diesels, 3,500 hp per shaft; gas turbines, 18,000 hp per shaft

Control: pilothouse, engine-room control booth, and localized

Armament: pre-FRAM – one 5-inch/38 caliber dual-purpose gun forward; two Mk 67 20mm cannons; post-FRAM – one Otobreda 76 mm (3-inch) cannon on an elevated platform, two 25 mm Mk 38 antiaircraft cannons; later addition -- one stern-mounted Mk-15 20 mm Phalanx Close In Weapons System (CIWS) -- a radar-guided anti-ship-missile gatling gun.

Crew capacity: 15 officers, 149 enlisted; later increased to 173 personnel.

**Class History:** "High endurance" cutters of the *Hamilton*-class succeeded older cruising cutters for ocean service. The basic criterion for a high-endurance cutter (designated WHEC) was ability to operate continuously at sea for 30 days or more, so that they could maintain established ocean and weather stations as well as perform coastal missions. At the time the WHECs were designed, the Coast Guard had been relying on surplus World War II-era U.S. Navy vessels for its largest cutters.

The *Hamilton*-class of twelve WHEC cutters met design criteria for inter-operability with U.S. Navy warships, including weapons systems and speed. They achieved the speed by using CODOG (combination diesel or gasoline) a technology that permitted them to cruise at economic speeds under diesel power or pursuit speeds using gasoline-fueled aircraft turbines for power. When they were built, only one class of warship in the world used a similar system, a West German frigate design. This technology has since become standard for high performance vessels.

In addition to the main propulsion system, the ships in this class had a retractable and fully rotatable General Electric bow thruster that boosted their maneuverability and permitted them to operate at up to five knots without using the main propulsion system.

Other design features included large and more comfortable living spaces to permit longer times at sea; a hull design that drew on the British-favored “V” cross section rather than the “U” cross-section then favored for U.S. Navy vessels; and wet and dry labs to support oceanographic and meteorological research while on station. The longer sea-time capability enhanced the value of cutters as ocean navigational aids and weather stations. The new hull design was the result of extensive tank testing of four 20-foot wooden hull models, which led to a hull expected to survive and stay afloat longer after suffering damage. The original design also included an 80-foot landing pad that could accommodate the large boat-hulled amphibious helicopters then used by the Coast Guard for air-sea rescues. It was also equipped with a weather balloon shelter that also served as a “nose shelter” for the large helicopters.

In order to maintain their inter-operability with U.S. Navy warships, the entire class underwent Fleet Retention and Maintenance (FRAM) renovation after two decades, which increased their Coast Guard service life to 44 years and added new aviation, electronic and gunnery capabilities. One aviation modification visible in profile was the expandable hangar, which rolls out onto the landing pad to permit smaller helicopters to be completely sheltered from heavy weather and to be maintained at sea, shortening the usable length of the landing pad. Another visible change was the enclosure of the sixth bay of the open walkways that originally stretched from just aft of the bridge to the afterdeck, which changed the original sleek lines of the class. Other visible changes in profile included the elevation of the forward gun platform, as well as the addition of an electronics dome atop the bridge and forward of the mast. Later, a Phalanx CIWS anti-ship-missile system was mounted on the stern rail.

**Cutter History:** WHEC-721 was the seventh of twelve 378-foot *Hamilton*-Class Cutters constructed for the Coast Guard. *Gallatin* was stationed at Governor’s Island, New York, from 1968 until 1996, when the cutter transferred homeport to Charleston, South Carolina.

**Search and Rescue:** On 4 January 1969, she towed the disabled F/V *Sea Ranger* 200 miles southwest of Key West, Florida. On 21 February 1969, she rescued 11 from the Swedish M/V *Farida* 210 miles east of Morehead City, North Carolina. The *Farida* was later salvaged by dewatering. On 11 January 1982, she rescued 106 Haitians from a sinking 35-foot sailboat. July 1994, *Gallatin* rescued 15 Haitian migrants.

Ocean Station tours, 1969-1974 (Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Hotel): From 23 April to 16 May 1969, *Gallatin* served on Ocean Station (OS) Bravo. From 15 June to 8 July 1969, the cutter served on OS Charlie. Again, that year, from 17 August to 19 September 1969 *Gallatin* served on OS Delta and again on that station from 4-27 November 1969. The cutter was on OS Echo from 19 January to 11 February 1970 and then from 10 April to 3 May 1970 on OS Charlie. From 11 June to 4 July 1970 and again from 17 October to 18 November 1970 *Gallatin* was on OS Bravo. From 20 March to 12 April 1971, the cutter served on OS Charlie. *Gallatin* was serving on OS Delta from 1 to 24 June 1971. From 30 July to 25 August 1971 the cutter served on OS Bravo; 3 to 12 October 1971 on OS Hotel; from 16 October to 11 November on OS Charlie; from 21 December 1971 to 16 January 1972 on OS Delta; from 6 to 30 March 1972 on OS Charlie; from 31 May to 24 June 1972 on OS Bravo; 30 July to 24 August 1972 on OS Echo. The following year, *Gallatin* saw service on OS Charlie from 3 to 27 January 1973; 18 March to 11 April on OS Echo. *Gallatin* last served on Ocean Station duty between 30 January and 20 February 1974 on OS Bravo.

Gender Integration: *Gallatin* made maritime history when the cutter was chosen, along with another 378-footer on the West Coast, to be the first cutters to have women permanently signed on board as crew. In the fall of 1977, the first of 12 enlisted women and 2 officers reported on board for service. This was the first time in U.S. history that a military service assigned women to sea duty on an unrestricted basis.

Drug Interdiction: On 23 November 1977, *Gallatin* seized the vessel *Sea Crust* 230 miles southwest of Cape Fear for smuggling marijuana. On 5 June 1979, *Gallatin* seized the F/V *Charlie M* 130 miles southwest of Puerto Rico for carrying 17 tons of marijuana. On 14 January 1982, *Gallatin* seized the *Merilyn* when a boarding team located one pound of marijuana. On 7 February 1982, the cutter seized the *Equator* for attempting to smuggle four tons of marijuana. A number of other narcotics seizures then took place: on 8 March 1984 an unnamed fishing vessel was seized off Georgia for marijuana possession; on 18 March 1984, *Gallatin* seized yacht *Push Push* in the Windward Passage for smuggling 1,000 pounds of marijuana; a boarding team located 1,800 pounds of cocaine in an un-named P/C in the Windward Passage; on 2 April 1984 the cutter seized the *Chinook* for smuggling one ton of marijuana; on 3 July 1984 *Gallatin* seized a 70-foot M/V 670 miles northeast of Puerto Rico after a boarding team located hidden marijuana; on 13 January 1985 *Gallatin* seized the F/V *Maria Elena* 300 miles north of Puerto Rico for smuggling 18 tons of marijuana. On 14 January 1985 the cutter seized the *Luzdary* for smuggling 6 tons of marijuana; 19 February 1985 *Gallatin* seized the *Sabrina II* carrying on ton of marijuana; 21 February 1985 the cutter seized *Maces Bay* for smuggling 25 tons of marijuana; 22 February 1985 *Gallatin* seized the P/C *Lisa and Leslie* for smuggling seven tons of marijuana; on 19 November 1985 the cutter fired on and sank the Colombian M/V *El Toro* after the motor vessel was intercepted and captured attempting to smuggle 28 tons of marijuana 173 miles off Colombia. On 9 September 1987, *Gallatin* seized the tug *Wamanbay* 400 miles east of Fort Pierce, Florida when a boarding team located 20 tons of marijuana on board the tug. On 1 December 1988, a boarding team boarded a fishing vessel 130 miles southwest of

Grand Cayman Island and removed suspected mutineers from the ship, while 1995 saw *Gallatin* conduct a successful 313-pound drug bust. *Gallatin's* 1984 seizure of 1,800 pounds of cocaine is considered one of the largest drug busts in the history of the Coast Guard.

Migration Interdiction Operations: August 1994 saw *Gallatin* serve as command vessel for Operation Able Vigil, the largest AMIO response operation since the Mariel Boat Lift of 1980. *Gallatin* rescued or coordinated the rescue of over 27,000 Cuban migrants in a one-month period, earning *Gallatin* the Coast Guard Unit Commendation. In 1995, *Gallatin* interdicted over 500 Dominican Republic migrants as part of Operation Able Response.

FRAM and Homeport Change: *Gallatin* was modernized under the FRAM program at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine. The modernization included new armament, gunfire control (Mk-92), telescoping helicopter hangar as well as communications equipment and other electronic upgrades and defensive equipment. The FRAM overhaul was completed in 1991. After the closure of Governors Island, in 1996, *Gallatin* transferred to the port of Charleston, South Carolina.

Other Operations: In the fall of 1993, *Gallatin* served as Commander Task Unit 44.7.4 for Operation Able Manner and coordinated plans for Operation Support Democracy. 1995 saw *Gallatin* participate in fisheries patrols in the North Atlantic. In 1996, *Gallatin* became the first U.S. Coast Guard cutter to participate in the U.S. Navy-sponsored Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) exercise, which included 48 ships, 12 air squadrons and 14 countries. In 2000, *Gallatin* participated in Operation New Frontier, an evaluation of the use of armed helicopters and high-speed small boats to stop “go-fast boats” smuggling narcotics to the United States, marking a new era in Coast Guard maritime law enforcement efforts.

*Gallatin's* final years in commission reflected the same unwavering service to the nation demonstrated throughout the cutter's long and proud career. Following Superstorm Sandy, *Gallatin* participated in the search for the sailing vessel HMS *Bounty*, and then assisted with relief efforts off the New England coast. *Gallatin* also worked with partner nations to detect and interdict contraband, seizing over 5,500 kilograms of cocaine worth nearly 200 million dollars. The cutter also enforced immigration laws, protected valuable natural resources, and countered threats to U.S. maritime and economic security worldwide.

**Sources:**

Cutter File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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