



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Rear Admiral Benjamin M. Chiswell
U.S. Coast Guard
Assistant Commandant, 1929-1931



Benjamin Maurice Chiswell was born at Dickerson, Maryland on 7 March 1875 and entered the Coast Guard as a cadet on 10 April, 1894. He received his commission as Third Lieutenant in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service in May, 1896.

Benjamin Chiswell became an early advocate of aviation for the Coast Guard and many consider him to be the father of Coast Guard aviation. While commanding the cutter *Onondaga*, at Norfolk, Virginia, he conceived of the idea of using an airplane to assist the cutter fleet with their frequent searches. He discussed his thoughts with his two junior officers, Ensign Elmer F. Stone and Lieutenant, Junior Grade Norman B. Hall, who both agreed it was an excellent idea. Chiswell was instrumental in getting Ensign Stone into the naval aviation training program at Pensacola, Florida and Lieutenant Hall to Hammondsport to study airplane and engine construction.

He was appointed as the first Assistant Commandant in 1929. Chiswell retired because of physical disability in October, 1934 after a career of 40 years in the Service. At the

time of his retirement he was the Coast Guard's senior captain. He received a tombstone promotion to rear admiral after he retired.

He crossed the bar on 26 July 1942 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on 29 July that same year. He was survived by his widow, the former Miss Mary Jennings Bellamy of Wilmington, North Carolina; three sons, Lieutenant Commander William Chiswell and Ensign Benjamin M. Chiswell, Jr., both of the Coast Guard and Captain Lawrence Chiswell, U.S. Army; two brothers and three sisters.

