

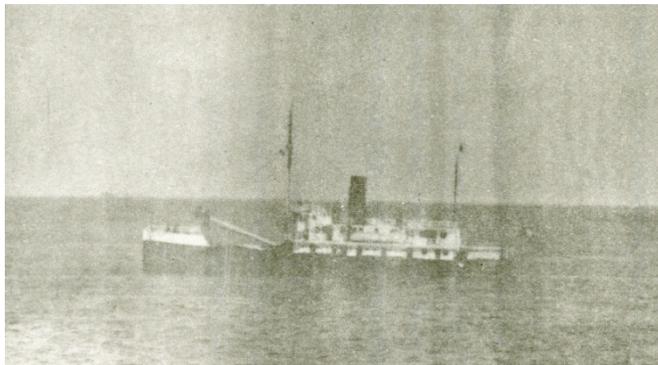


U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Acacia, 1927

(ex-General John F. Story)

WAGL-200



Acacia: A tropical American thorny shrub or small tree; fragrant yellow flowers used in making perfumery.

Builder: Fabricated Shipbuilding Corporation & Coddington Engineering Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Length: 172' 6"

Beam: 32'

Draft: 11' 6"

Displacement: 1,130 tons

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

Commissioned: 1920 (U.S. Army); 14 April 1927 (USLHS)

Decommissioned: N/A

Disposition: Sunk by U-161 on 15 March 1942

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

Performance & Endurance:

Max:

Cruising: 11.0 knots; 1,692 mile range

Deck Gear: 20-ton capacity boom

Complement: 33 (pre-war); 44 (1942)

Armament: None

Electronics: Telegraph; radio direction finder

Class History:

Acacia was a *Speedwell*-class mine planter 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.

Tender History:

Acacia was assigned to the San Juan area April 21, 1927. The ship's field of operations included Puerto Rico and adjacent islands, Virgin Islands, Guantanamo Bay, and Cuba. Although the ship was designated as a lighthouse tender she was also used to perform construction and repair of stations, small structures, piers, etc. in addition to her work of tending aids to navigation. After the San Felipe hurricane on September 13, 1928, the crew nicknamed themselves "The *Acacia* Construction Company" because of the number of repairs they performed. She ran aground off Fajaro, Puerto Rico, in September 1932 during a hurricane but was safely refloated.

The ship's main mission was in to place and repair aids to navigation equipment, in which they maintained approximately 255 during her time in service. The crew

supported shore lights, unwatched lights, lighted buoys, unlighted buoys and beacons, and radio beacons on both the Panama Canals Atlantic and Pacific sides, the western Caribbean, Morro Puercas and the Jicarita Island Lights. In addition, the *Acacia* rendered numerous salvage services involving vessels and persons in distress. The most notable was the rescue of the Brazilian training ship *Ainirante Saldanha*. The vessel and its crew were given up for lost after the ship had run aground off San Juan Harbor Entrance July 25, 1938. The *Acacia* rescued her crew, and the rescue created a celebration in Brazil and gained the attention of international officials.

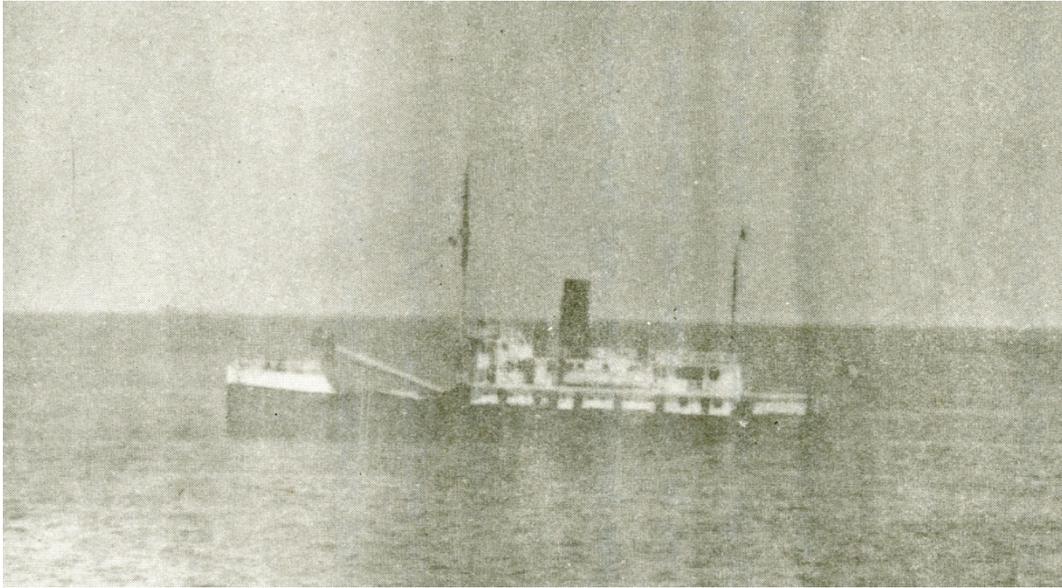
In June, 1938, Boatswain Ora Doyle took command of the tender from Master John A. Anderson, who transferred to command the *Manzanita*. In late 1939 *Acacia* and the cutter *Unalga* towed the seized Italian tanker *Colorado*, which had its engine room damaged through sabotage by its interned crew, from San Juan to Galveston, Texas for repairs, one of the longest towing operations in Coast Guard history to that time.

On March 15, 1942, while en route alone from Curacao, Netherlands West Indies to Antigua, British West Indies, the *Acacia* was sunk by gunfire from the German submarine *U-161* approximately 150 miles south of Port au Prince, Haiti. The entire crew of *Acacia* abandoned ship before she sank and all were rescued unscathed. She was the only U.S. tender sunk by enemy action during the war.

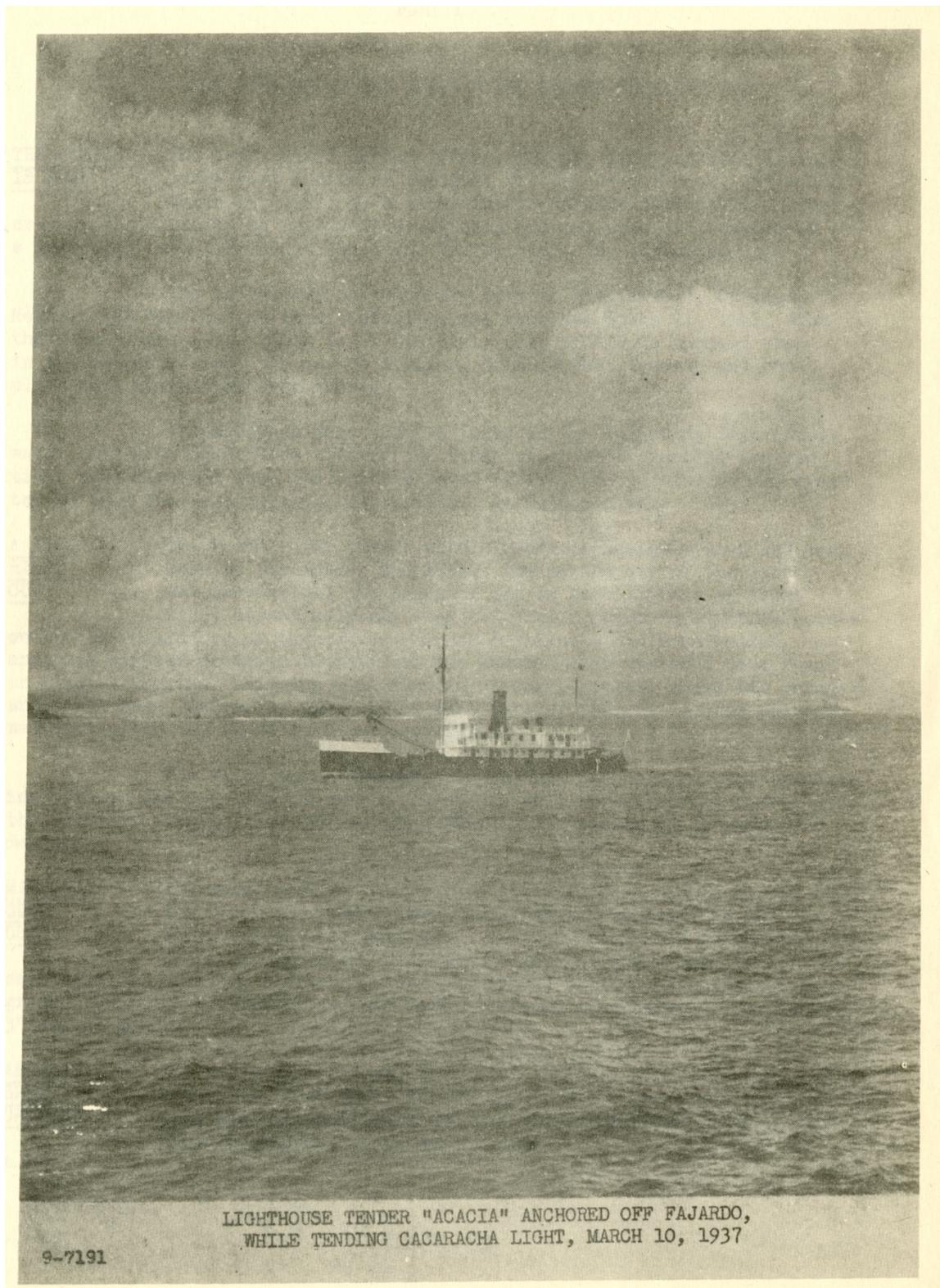
Photographs:



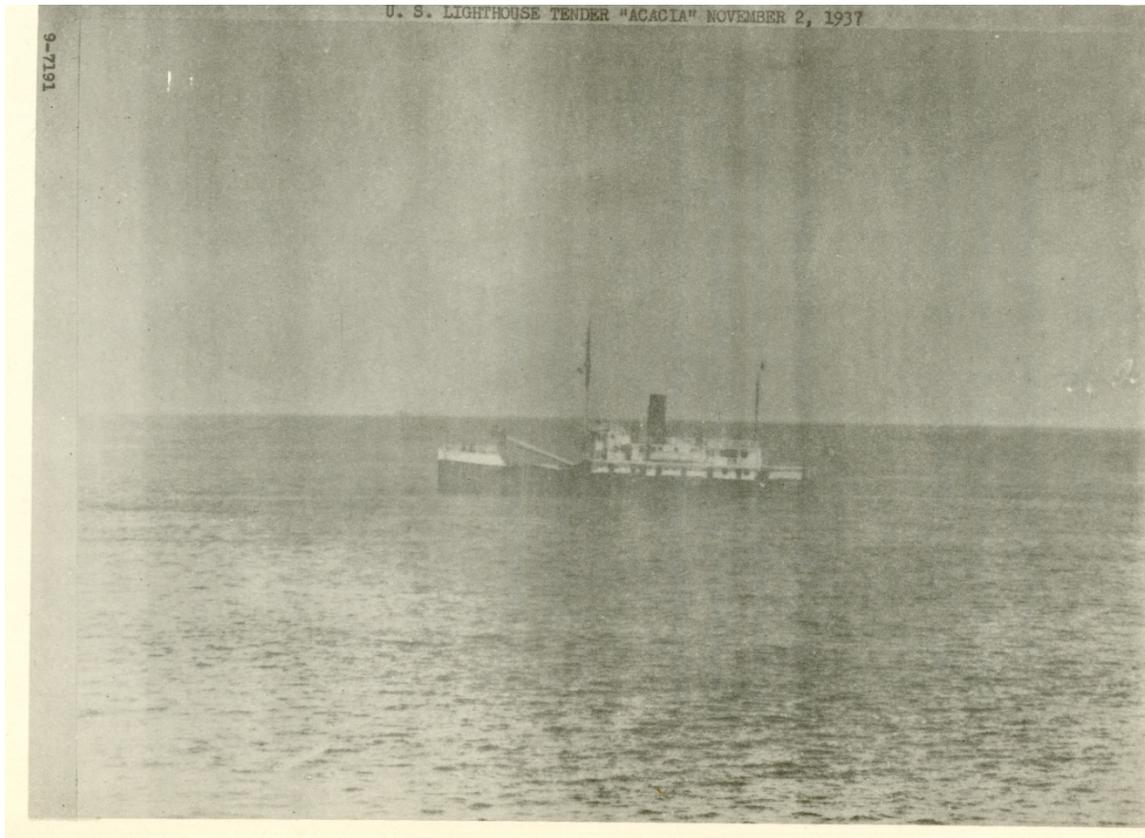
**“ACACIA in dry dock at Cristobal Canal Zone, Panama Looking NE – Distance 75 feet.
Taken April 19, 1937 by R. Garcia, Assistant Superintendent 9th District.”**



Close-up of next photo, scanned from *U. S. Coast Guard. History of the Coast Guard Cutter "Acacia."* Washington, D.C.: Statistical Services Section, U.S. Coast Guard, 1942.



Scanned from *U. S. Coast Guard. History of the Coast Guard Cutter "Acacia."*
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Scanned from *U. S. Coast Guard. History of the Coast Guard Cutter "Acacia."* Washington, D.C.: Statistical Services Section, U.S. Coast Guard, 1942; page 4.

Sources:

Acacia Tender File, Coast Guard Historian's Office

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

Richard D. White, Jr. "Aids to Navigation in Puerto Rico 1927-1942: History of the Buoy Tender *Acacia*." *Revista / Review Interamericana* IV (Winter 1974-1975), pp. 518-525.

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U. S. Coast Guard. History of the Coast Guard Cutter "Acacia." Washington, D.C.: Statistical Services Section, U.S. Coast Guard, 1942.

