



## Agassiz, 1927

WSC / WMEC-126



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Named for Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz (1807-1873), an eminent paleontologist, glaciologist, geologist and naturalist who taught at the University of Neuchatel and later Harvard University.

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CLASS: Active Class Patrol Boat

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

LAUNCHED: 30 November 1926

COMMISSIONED: 12 January 1927

DECOMMISSIONED: 13 October 1969; transferred to the Merchant Marine Academy 16 October 1969

DISPLACEMENT: 232 tons

LENGTH: 125 feet

BEAM: 23 feet, 6 inches

DRAFT: 7 feet, 6 inches

PROPULSION: 1926: 2 x 6-cylinder Winston diesel engines  
1943: 2 x GM 8-268-A 800 bhp diesel engines

PERFORMANCE:

Max speed: 13.2 knots, 1945, 2,500 mile range  
Econ. speed: 8.0 knots, 3,500 mile range

COMPLEMENT: 3 officers, 17 men

ARMAMENT: 1927: 1x 3"/27

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**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.

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**History:**

The *Agassiz* was placed in commissioned service on 12 January 1927 under the command of Warrant Boatswain John A. Heikel. The cutter was first stationed at Boston, where she was assigned with five other cutters to form Division One, Squadron One of the Offshore Patrol Force, Boston. On 1 August 1933 she transferred to the Jacksonville Division based out of Fernandina, Florida. In 1936 she was at Curtis Bay, Maryland, and by 1940 at Charleston, South Carolina. She was assigned to the Caribbean Sea Frontier [CARIBSEAFRON] during the war. Her crew rescued 11 survivors from the torpedoed tanker *John D. Gill* on 12 March 1942.

After the war she was stationed at Morehead City, North Carolina until 1956. In January 1956 *Agassiz* assisted the disabled *Manitou* 275 miles southeast of Cape Henry, Virginia. That same month she assisted the disabled merchant vessel *Marvin McIntyre* 40 miles east of Cape Fear, North Carolina.

She changed homeport to Cape May, New Jersey in 1956. On 18 October 1961 she assisted the yawl *Septic Nerve*, which had grounded in Little Egg Inlet, New Jersey. In 1967 she assisted the disabled Canadian fishing vessel *Clara and Linda* about 160 miles east of New York during a storm. On 1 March 1968 she escorted to safety the distressed fishing vessel *Bright Star* beginning 25 miles south east of Cape May.

She was decommissioned on 13 October 1969 and was transferred to the Merchant Marine Academy three days later.

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**Photographs:**



*Agassiz*, 1957. No official caption/photo number.

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**Sources:**

Cutter History File, CG Historian's Office

*Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*. Washington, DC: USGPO.

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

