



## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

# *Alexander Graham Bell, 1944*

WIX-184

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Born and educated in Scotland, Alexander Graham Bell was the son of Alexander Melville Bell, inventor of visible speech, an alphabet that used symbols to represent human sounds. The Bell family emigrated to Canada in 1870, and in 1871 young Alexander moved to Boston, Massachusetts as a teacher to the deaf. He worked on ways to translate the human voice into vibrations, and came up with the idea for the telephone. In 1875 Bell began working with Thomas Watson, a mechanically-inclined electrician and by 1876 Bell had uttered the first intelligible sentence over the phone: "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you." Later in his career Bell worked on a variety of inventions, including flying machines and hydrofoils. Bell was one of the co-founders of the National Geographic Society...

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Builder: Oregon Shipbuilding Company, Portland, Oregon

Length: 427'

Beam: 57'

Draft: 27' 8" (mean)

Displacement: 7,176 gross tons

Cost: Acquired from the War Shipping Administration

Commissioned: 27 October 1942 (commercial); 7 October 1944 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 28 December 1944

Disposition: Returned to the WSA; eventually scrapped in Philadelphia in 1962.

Machinery: 1 3-cylinder direct-acting, triple-expansion steam engine; 2,500 IHP; single propeller

Complement: 16 man security watch; crew assembled from available force at the Coast Guard Yard

Armament: ?

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### **History:**

*Alexander Graham Bell* was an EC2-S-C1 Liberty ship (Official Number 242455, Hull Number 583) built by the Oregon Shipbuilding Company of Portland, Oregon. She was commissioned by the Maritime Commission in October, 1942. She was damaged by enemy action in the Mediterranean and was turned over to the Coast Guard on 25 August 1944 for use for

experimental purposes in connection with the Experimental & Research Division of the Coast Guard and was delivered to the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland, on that same date. It was planned to use her in tests for "life rafts, boats, and other safety equipment and appliances, in use or contemplated for the American Merchant Marine. It is also the intent to use this vessel for certain investigations in connection with the Board to Investigate the Design and Construction of Welded Steel Merchant Vessels."

She had a skeleton crew of 16 men placed on board as security watch. Steam, water, and electrical connections were made to the dock. On 25 August 1944 Boatswain J. A. LaCasse reported on board for duty as ship's keeper under the direction of LT N. C. M. Johnson, and to train the crew in the handling of life rafts. At that time the rafts were stored in the Yard.

On 6 September 1944 LTJG John B. Joiner reported on board for duty and began checking and renewing rigging preparatory to handling rafts. On 7 October 1944 at 1400 the *Alexander Graham Bell* was placed in commission as a Coast Guard cutter. The commanding officer was LT N. C. M. Johnson; the executive officer was LTJG John B. Joiner; and the other officers were Boatswain J. A. LaCasse, and Machinist A. G. Baumeister. All machinery was tested and found to be in fair condition.

A detachment of 40 men reported on board from the Curtis Bay Training Station for temporary duty in connection with the life rafts. The galley was placed in commission as a sub-division of the Yard's general mess. A permanent crew of 49 men was authorized with 55 present. On 10 October 1944, CDR G. A. Tyler and a party from Coast Guard Headquarters reported on board with a party of 31 civilian representatives from various life raft manufacturers. At 1500 hours she was underway, standing out of the harbor with the assistance of a pilot and two commercial tugs. She dropped the pilot and cast off the tugs when she reached Hawkins Point. There was no reported difficulty in the handling of the ship.

At 0900 the following day, she anchored about one mile off Little Creek, Virginia. From this time until 1630 on 17 October, 1944, she was engaged in testing life rafts with the assistance of picket boats and amphibious boats from Little Creek and Virginia Beach Stations. No difficulty encountered with the exception of dropping and breaking of the No. 7 cargo boom due to creeping of winch due to mechanical failure. She shifted anchorage from time to time due to weather conditions.

At 1700 on 17 October 1944 she was underway, standing up the Chesapeake Bay enroute to the Coast Guard Yard. At 1830 she picked up a pilot and two tugs off Hawkins Point and was safely moored at the Yard by 1930. On 19 October through 7 November 1944 her crew was engaged in repairing, checking and restoring rafts preparatory to drop and floatation tests. On 8 November 1944 CDR Tyler and party came on board to conduct the drop tests. Ship and crew were engaged in these tests until 11 November. From 12 November until 10 December 1944 she engaged in floatation tests and then transferring the life rafts to the Coast Guard Yard. She received orders to prepare to be decommissioned on 22 December 1944 and was decommissioned on 28 December 1944 and was then turned over to the Maritime Commission.

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#### **Sources:**

Cutter Files, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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