



# *Androscoggin*, 1946

WPG/WHEC-68

**Call Sign: NRUR**

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The *Androscoggin* was named after Lake Androscoggin, Maine.

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Builder: Western Pipe & Steel Co., San Pedro, CA

Commissioned: 26 September 1946

Decommissioned: 27 February 1973; sold 7 October 1974 for scrap

Length: 254'oa; 245'bp

Navigation Draft: 17'3" max (1966)

Beam: 43'1" max

Displacement: 1,978 fl (1966); 1,342 light (1966)

Main Engines: 1 Westinghouse electric motor driven by a turbine.

SHP: 4,000 total (1945)

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.0 kts, 6,157-mi radius (1966)

Performance, Economic: 10.0 kts., 10,376-mi radius (1966)

Fuel Capacity: 141,755 gal (Oil, 95%)

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 130 men (1966)

Electronics:

Detection Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29, Mk 26, Mk 27 (1966)

Sonar: SQS-1 (1966)

Armament: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 12m Mod 6; 1 x Mk 52 Mod 3 director; 1 x 26-4 fire control radar; 1 x Mk 10 Mod 1 A/S projector; 2 x Mk 32 ASW TT

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**Class history:** "The bow and the stern for each other yearn, and the lack of interval shows..."

Myths have long shadowed the design history of the 255-foot class. These cutters were to have been much larger ships, and two theories persist as to why they were shortened. The first is that these cutters were built to replace the ships given to Great Britain under lend lease, and Congress stipulated that the Coast Guard had to build these replacement cutters to the same size and character as those provided to the British. The second is that their length was determined by the maximum length that could pass through the locks of the Welland Canal from the Great Lakes to the St. Lawrence River. The Great Lakes shipbuilding industry brought pressure on Congress to ensure that it had the potential to bid on the contract. The first theory seems to be correct, but the second cannot be ruled out.

The Coast Guard had prepared a design for a 316-foot cutter that was to have been an austere 327. This design was cut down into the 255-foot ship. To accomplish this, everything was squeezed down and automated to a degree not before achieved in a turbo-electric-driven ship.

The machinery design of the 255s was compact and innovative, but overly complex. It had pilothouse control, variable-rate (10 to 1) burners, and automatic synchronizing between the turbo-generator and the motor. Westinghouse engineers developed a system of synchronization and a variable-frequency drive for main-propulsion auxiliary equipment, which kept the pumps and other items at about two-thirds the power required for constant-frequency operation. The combined boiler room/engine room was a break with tradition.

The turbo-alternators for ship-service power exhausted at 20 psi gauge pressure instead of into a condenser. This steam was used all over the ship before finally going to a condenser. Space, heating, galley, cooking, laundry, freshwater evaporation, fuel, and feed-water heating were all taken from the 20 psi backpressure line.

The 255-foot class was an ice-going design. Ice operations had been assigned to the Coast Guard early in the war, and almost all new construction was either ice-going or ice-breaking. The hull was designed with constant flare at the waterline for ice-going. The structure was longitudinally framed with heavy web frames and an ice belt of heavy plating, and it had extra transverse framing above and below the design waterline. Enormous amounts of weight were removed through the use of electric welding. The 250-foot cutters' weights were used for estimating

purposes. Tapered bulkhead stiffeners cut from 12" I-beams went from the main deck (4' depth of web) to the bottom (8" depth of web). As weight was cut out of the hull structure, electronics and ordnance were increased, but at much greater heights. This top weight required ballasting the fuel tanks with seawater to maintain stability both for wind and damaged conditions.

The superstructure of the 255s was originally divided into two islands in order to accommodate an aircraft amidships, but this requirement was dropped before any of the units became operational. Construction of this class received a low priority, and none of the cutters served in the war. Following completion of the preliminary design by the Coast Guard, the work was assigned to George G, Sharp of New York to prepare the contract design.

The number of units – 13 of them – had an interesting origin. Three were to have been replacements for over-aged cutters, the *Ossipee*, *Tallapoosa*, and *Unalga*; ten units were to be replacements for the 250-foot class transferred to Great Britain under lend-lease. For economy, all 13 units were built to the same design.

[Click here to read a memo regarding one Coast Guard officer's opinion of this class of cutters.](#)

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### **Cutter History:**

The USCGC *Androscoggin* was built by the Western Pipe & Steel Company of San Pedro, California. She was commissioned on 26 September 1946. She was stationed at Boston, MA, in 1947 and 1948. She was used primarily on ocean station duty in the North Atlantic. From 1948 to 3 July 1949, she was stationed at New York. She was decommissioned and stored at the Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, Maryland, from 31 October 1949 to 8 May 1950. On 8 May 1950, she received the crew from cutter *Mocoma*, was recommissioned, and stationed at Miami Beach, FL, until 27 February 1973.

She was now used primarily for law enforcement and search and rescue operations, but also served several ocean station tours. On 29 and 30 May 1952, she towed a disabled Navy PBM aircraft from 60 miles southeast of Miami to Miami, Florida. In 1956, she served on Campeche Patrol. In April and May 1956, she was assigned special duty relating to LORAN and visited Ecuador, Jamaica, Colombia, and Panama. In July 1956, she served on the annual reserve cruise to San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. From 17 April to 4 July 1959, she shared International Ice Patrol duty with the *Acushnet*. She sailed to Reykjavik, Iceland, in January 1960 on a special mission. In November 1961, she took part in a special mission involving the USAF and Air National Guard relating to the Berlin crisis.

In 1962, the *Androscoggin* served as Coast Guard schoolship at the Navy's Fleet Sonar School, Key West. In late August 1965, she evacuated Cuban refugees from Cay Sal to Key West. On 10 January 1966, she rescued the crew from the sinking M/V *Lampsis* and unsuccessfully attempted to save the vessel. On 3 February 1966, she stood by the distressed M/V *Aroin* until commercial tug arrived. On 19 February 1966, she rescued three Cuban refugees from Anguila Cay and transported them to Miami. On 25 May 1966, she embarked 12 Cuban refugees from Cay Lobos and transported them to Key West.

When returning from an Echo patrol, she was dispatched to Nassau to take part in the filming of the movie "Assault on a Queen," starring Frank Sinatra. In the final segments of the film, *Androscoggin*, through the miracle of special effects, saves the day by ramming and sinking a renegade submarine, thereby thwarting Sinatra's dastardly plan to rob HMS *Queen Mary* on the high seas.\*\*

The *Androscoggin* was assigned to Coast Guard Squadron Three, Vietnam, from 4 December 1967 to 4 August 1968. On 1 March 1968, she assisted in the destruction of an enemy steel trawler in a gun battle at the mouth of the Song Cau River. In May 1968, she rescued 27 Vietnamese from the South China Sea. In 1969, she assisted the Dutch M/V *Alida Gothern*. On 19 February 1970, she stood by the disabled M/V *Stellanova* until commercial tug arrived. On 29 April 1970, she provided medical assistance to USS *Dahlgren* off Bermuda. She was decommissioned on 27 February 1973.

\*\*Our thanks to former-*Androscoggin* crewman John Burmester for pointing this out.



Original caption states: "The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter ANDROSCOGGIN (WPG-68), one of the 255-foot class cutters, was commissioned October 4, 1945. Shown here leaving port bound for Argentina, Newfoundland, the ANDROSCOGGIN has served primarily as an Ocean Weather Stations vessel in the North Atlantic. In May 1950, she will replace the CGC MOCOMA in the 7th

Coast Guard District, with Miami, Florida, as her permanent station."; circa 1950; no photo number; photographer unknown.



Original caption states: "The 255-foot U.S. Coast Guard Cutter ANDROSCOGGIN, stationed at Miami, Fla., as a training and search and rescue ship, is now carrying specially trained U.S. Weather Bureau observers to gather upper-air weather information during her patrols in the Gulf of Mexico. The ANDROSCOGGIN makes a number of training cruises a year and performs search and rescue work in the South Atlantic and Gulf. In connection with law enforcement, she patrols the Campechi Banks, and are of fishing grounds off the town of Campechi in the Gulf used by hundreds of fishing vessels of the United States and Mexico."; 13 August 1958; Photo No. 5821; photographer unknown.



Movie still from the Paramount motion picture "Assault on a Queen."; 1966; not a Coast Guard photograph.

Note the early variation of the Coast Guard's "racing stripe".



"The *Andy* on Echo Patrol in the summer of 1965."; photo, taken from a slide, was provided courtesy of former-*Androscoggin* crewman John Burmester.



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"The *Andy* on Echo Patrol in the summer of 1965."; photo, taken from a slide, was provided courtesy of former-*Androscoggin* crewman John Burmester. He notes: "Some individuals pictured in the surf boat under sail, SO1 Rainey to the left of the rudder. SO3 Woodall (Woody), SO3 Price - to left with no shirt, Ensigns Park and Jones in center."



"The *Andy* on Echo Patrol in the summer of 1965."; photo, taken from a slide, was provided courtesy of former-*Androscoggin* crewman John Burmester.



"The *Andy* on Echo Patrol in the summer of 1965."; photo, taken from a slide, was provided courtesy of former-*Androskoggin* crewman John Burmester. He notes: "The MC at the Neptune party being abused by his victims was a BM2 named Boggs (on the deck with all the tattoos)."



Provided courtesy of former *Androskoggin* crewman William C. Bishop. He noted: "I believe this picture was taken after we left the ship yard in 66 or 67 steaming through the Chesapeake Bay after the midship superstructure was added before our deployment to Viet Nam in 67."

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### Sources:

Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981), pp. 1-3.

Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 18-26.

255' Cutter Sailors' Page, hosted by 255' cutter historian Doak Walker, RMC,  
USCG (Ret.):  
**[255wpg.11.net.com/](http://255wpg.11.net.com/)**

Cutter File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Ship's Characteristics Card.

