



## *Dallas, 1846*

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Alexander Dallas (1759-1817) served as Secretary of the Treasury under President James Madison beginning in 1814. Dallas succeeded in his efforts to establish the Second Bank of the United States, which was chartered by Congress in 1816. He retired that year after the new bank had been organized.

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TYPE/RIG/CLASS: Three-masted

BUILDER: Stillman, Statton, New York

DATES OF SERVICE: 1846-1848

DISPOSITION: To Coast Surver 1849; sold on 4 March 1851

DISPLACEMENT: 391 tons

LENGTH: 160 feet

BEAM: 24 feet

DRAFT: 9 feet, 3 inches to 9 feet, 9 inches

PROPULSION: Hunter's wheel, altered to side wheel

MACHINERY: 2 high-pressure horizontal, 24-inch diameter x 36-inch stroke

COMPLEMENT: 58 (*Legare*)

ARMAMENT: 1 x long 18-pounder

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### **Cutter History:**

In the 1830s and 1840s the sea services were searching for an alternative to the cumbersome and highly exposed side paddle wheels. John Ericsson and Richard Loper had patented screw propellers, and Navy Lieutenant William Hunter proposed horizontally mounted paddle wheels, which rotated merry-go-round style within the hull, below the waterline. Apertures in the hull sides allowed the paddles to act on the surrounding waters. Hunter had succeeded in interesting the Navy in his idea, and the Revenue Service followed suit. In all,

eight steamers were begun for the Revenue Service, four with Hunter's system (*Bibb, Dallas, McLane, and Spencer*), two with Ericsson's (*Jefferson, Legare*), and two paddle-wheel vessels (*Polk, Walker*). All eight were also built of iron – a very early use of that metal. Steam vessels were thought to be of particular use in the narrow waterways of the southern coasts, in pursuit of smugglers.

All eight vessels provided unmitigated failures. Lieutenant Hunter had not taken into full account the waste of power when the paddles encountered and worked against water entering the paddle-wheel casings. In addition, the vessels were coal hungry (the Navy's three Hunter's wheel vessels had the same problem). The machinery of Ericsson's vessels proved overly complicated, and the side-wheel ships suffered from delays, lack of iron, faulty plans, and bad weather. Originally slated to cost \$50,000 each, over \$2 million was eventually spent in original construction and the massive modifications required subsequently in attempts to rectify the problems.

The eight vessels had extremely short service lives. Only the Coast Survey seemed to profit from the debacle, receiving five of the ships when they were cast off by the Revenue Service. Two became lightships and one was converted into a barque.

*Dallas* was launched on 4 April 1846 after having been converted in mid-construction from Hunter's wheels to side wheels. She was built in Buffalo, New York, for service on the Great Lakes. In 1848 she transferred to the U. S. Coast Survey but was not put in service.

She was sold by an act of Congress on 4 March 1851.

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### **Sources:**

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