

U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Dexter, 1946



ex-USS *Biscayne*
WAGC-18; WAVP / WHEC-385
Radio call sign: NODC

The *Dexter* was named for Secretary of the Treasury Samuel Dexter, who was appointed to that position by President John Adams in 1801.

Builder: Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Puget Sound, WA

Commissioned: 3 Jul 1941 (USN);
20 Sep 1946 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 18 Jan 1968; transferred to USN 9 Jul 1968; expended as target

PARTICULARS, AS OF 1965:

Length: 310' 9" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 12' 8" max

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,442

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

SHP: 6,150

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.35 kts, 8,680 nautical mile range

Performance, Economic: 10.3 kts, 17,900 nautical mile range

Complement: 10 officers, 2 warrants, 66 men

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29D
Sonar: AN/UQN-1D

Armament: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 30 Mod 37; 1 x Mk 52 Mod 2 director; 1 Mk 26 Mod 3 fire control radar

Class History:

The *Casco* class ships were built as small seaplane tenders by the US Navy. They were designed to operate out of small harbors and atolls and had a shallow draft. The fact that the class was very seaworthy, had good habitability, and long range made them well suited to ocean-station duty. In fact, an assessment made by the Coast Guard on the suitability of these vessels for Coast Guard service noted:

"The workmanship on the vessel is generally quite superior to that observed on other vessels constructed during the war. The vessel has ample space for stores, living accommodations, ships, offices and recreational facilities. The main engine system is excellent. . . .The performance of the vessel in moderate to heavy seas is definitely superior to that of any other cutter. This vessel can be operated at higher speed without storm damage than other Coast Guard vessels." [Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.]

Once they were accepted into Coast Guard service, a number of changes were made in these ships to prepare them for ocean-station duty. A balloon shelter was added aft; there were spaces devoted to oceanographic equipment and a hydrographic winch and an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Cutter History:

Dexter had originally been named USS *Biscayne* (AGC-18). She was turned over from the Navy to the Coast Guard at the Coast Guard Yard on 29 July 1946. From 20 September 1946 to December 1952 she was stationed at Boston, Massachusetts, where she was used for law enforcement, ocean station, and search and rescue operations. Her first Coast Guard commanding officer was CDR A. G. Morrill, USCG. She first arrived at her new homeport on 17 October 1946.

On 30 November 1946, *Dexter* was in Argentia, Newfoundland, underway to her first Ocean Station duty at Ocean Station Charlie. By 28 December, she was back in Boston. For the next few months, she was on Ocean Stations Charlie and Alfa, taking time out in October 1947 for underway training near Berkley Station at Norfolk, Virginia. She served on Ocean Station Able from 30 October 1947 to 10 December 1947 and responded to a request for assistance by SS *Louisburg* on 4 November 1947, which was flooding. *Dexter* transferred a life raft and damage control timbers to the vessel and escorted her safely to St. John's. *Dexter* then returned to Able.

On 4 November 1948, while underway from Ocean Station Alfa, *Dexter* assisted the fishing vessel *Pan Pades Andros*, which was disabled about 30 miles southeast of Sable Island. Following this assistance case *Dexter* was put under repair status until 12 February 1949, when repairs were completed and she was in port on standby.

On 14 February 1949 she relieved USCGC *Winnebago* from duty on Ocean Station Delta, and in turn was relieved by USCGC *Androscoggin*. On 27 April 1949 she relieved USCGC *Ingham* on Ocean Station Echo and two days later was underway to Bermuda with an injured crew member. She resumed station on 3 May 1949. On 21 May 1949 she assisted the fishing vessel *Sea Hawk* and the following day turned her over to the USCGC *Legare*, and returned to Boston for repairs.

On 30 July 1949, *Dexter* assisted the destroyer HMS *Livermore* while at sea. On 9 September, she was forced to proceed south of Sable Island to avoid the center of a hurricane. She proceeded on to Ocean Station Bravo and relieved USCGC *Humboldt* on the 12th. On 30 September, she was relieved on Ocean Station Bravo by the Canadian ship *St. Sephen*. In October 1949, she participated in gunnery exercises in the Newport area.

For the next few months the *Dexter* had her regular Ocean Station patrols with no unusual happenings until 7 August 1950, when she went off Ocean Station Charlie temporarily to assist SS *Belfrey*, and proceeded to escort her toward St. John, Newfoundland, until the 11th, when she was relieved of the escort duty by USCGC *Spencer* and returned to Ocean Station Charlie.

On 26 November 1950 she assisted the DE-532 adrift off Cape Code. On 2 January 1951 she departed Boston, enroute to Ocean Station Hotel. In April of that year, she was temporarily off Ocean Station Echo for two days, while investigating a depth charge. On 11 June 1951 she temporarily departed Ocean Station Delta on a distress mission and reoccupied the station on the 14th. During November, she was forced to leave Ocean Station Alfa for a short while due to an urgent medical case.

On 19 February 1952, *Dexter* left Ocean Station Hotel to assist the SS *Helen Stevenson*, the vessel having cracked across the main port and starboard at the hatch. She escorted the vessel to within 10 miles east of St. Georges, Bermuda, and then returned to station. On 18 October 1952 she departed Ocean Station Alfa and proceeded to Boston. On 8 November, she departed Boston for the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland, arriving there on the 9th.

On 17 December 1952 *Dexter* was decommissioned at the Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, Baltimore, Maryland. Here, she was stored until her recommissioning on 30 June 1958. She departed for her new homeport of Alameda, California on 14 July 1958 under the command of CDR Bainbridge Leland, USCG.

Her new homeport was Alameda, California. Upon her arrival there, she assumed duty as the West Coast training vessel for the Coast Guard Reserve training component. She provided training at sea for Reserve recruits undergoing training at Alameda Training Station similar to that afforded East Coast Reservists at the Cape May Receiving Center, New Jersey. The *Dexter*, manned by a complement of 85 officers and men, had facilities for handling over 100 recruits at one time. Recruits spent approximately three weeks aboard the *Dexter* for indoctrination and one extended cruise beyond the waters of San Francisco Bay. She also made cruises to various ports of the Western United States, plus Hawaii, Alaska, and Mexico, in connection with training activities. She, in addition, participated as a SAR-patrol vessel for various sailing races and regattas, including the September 1958 America's Cup Race at Newport, Rhode Island and the Trans Pacific Yacht Races of 1959 and 1961. She also conducted SAR operations. On 18 July 1959, she towed the disabled F/V *Cloud Nine* until relieved by cutter *Blackhaw*. On 5 February 1965, she unsuccessfully searched for an F-4B aircraft near San Clemente Island. In early February 1966, she towed the disabled sloop *Allegro* from 360 miles south-southwest of San Diego, CA, to Asuncion Bay.

On 9 July 1968, *Dexter* was decommissioned. Subsequently, the cutter was transferred to the Navy, where she was used as a target and sunk in 1968.

Photographs:



CGC *Dexter*, 14 February 1949, no caption/photo number; photographer unknown.



Dexter, 12 August 1958; No. 80458:12 CGD/ah. Original caption: "Coast Guard Cutter Dexter Approaches New Homeport. SAN FRANCISCO, 11 August.--The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter DEXTER entered the Golden Gate at noon today enroute to the Alameda Coast Guard Base, her new homeport. The DEXTER will primarily run offshore cruises for the training of Coast Guard reservists. During World War II, the vessel was the Naval USS BISCAYNE, which served in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Pacific. Turned over to the Coast Guard in 1946, and re-named DEXTER, she served as a North Atlantic Weather Patrol vessel until 1953 when she was decommissioned. After reconditioning at the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, Maryland, she was recommissioned last June 30, and last month began the voyage to her new station in Alameda. Commander Bainbridge B. Leland, USCG, commands the DEXTER, which carries his staff of eight other officers, ten Chief Petty Officers and 65 enlisted men. Many of the DEXTER personnel will make their homes in the East Bay area."

SOURCES:

Dexter, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. 1, (1959), p. 126.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR, copy in 311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Robert Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 10-16.

Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Dexter, 23 April 1965.

