



## Geranium , 1865

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Any of numerous plants or flowers of the allied genus *Pelargonium*, usually having red, pink, or purple flowers and leaves with a pungent odor.

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Builder: Newburgh, New York

Length: 128' 6"

Beam: 23' 3"

Draft: 8' 3"

Displacement: 356 tons

Cost: \$13,500

Commissioned: 1865 (USLHS)

Decommissioned: 29 November 1909

Disposition: Sold

Machinery: Single beam steam engine; 210 BHP; one coal-fired return tubular boiler; side paddle wheels.

Performance & Endurance:

Max: 10.0 knots

Cruising:

Deck Gear: Wood derrick

Complement: 18

Armament: None (USLHS)

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**Tender History:**

The *Geranium* began life as the privately-owned side-wheel steam tug *John A. Dix* in 1863. She was built at Newburgh, New York, in 1863 and was purchased by the Navy at New York City on 5 September 1863. She was commissioned as USS *Geranium* at New York Navy Yard on 15 October 1863 under the command of Acting Ensign G. A. Winsor.

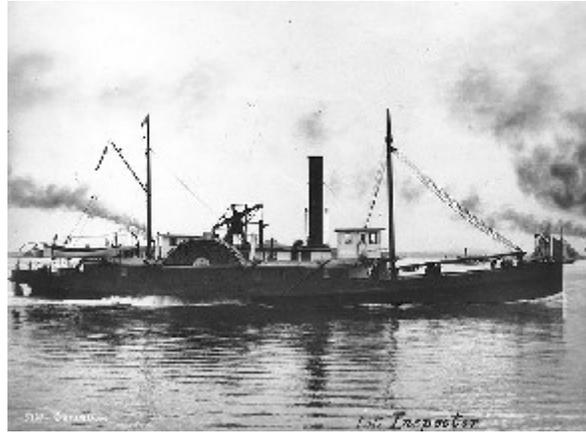
*Geranium* departed New York 20 October for duty off Charleston, S.C., with Rear Admiral J. A. Dahlgren's South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Arriving 4 November, for the next 6 months she operated as a picket boat and was frequently employed as a dispatch boat and light transport to such diverse stations as Ossabaw Sound, S.C., and St. John's River, Fla. Occasionally, she transported Admiral Dahlgren during visits to various ships of his squadron. Between 3 and 10 July 1864, *Geranium* participated in a diversionary expedition up the Stono and North Edisto Rivers south of Charleston to divert Confederate attention from the Charleston blockade and to cut the important Charleston and Savannah Railroad. She supported the movement of troops under General Birney up the North Edisto River, towing and transporting supplies for the expedition. On 3 July she contacted and engaged a strong Confederate battery at the mouth of the Dawhoo River, a bombardment which Admiral Dahlgren reported was "done very handsomely." After completing demonstration operations, she supported the withdrawal of Federal troops from the tidewater islands south of Charleston.

Continuing her picket, dispatch, and transport duties from 12 to 17 February 1865, *Geranium* participated in joint Army-Navy operations at Bull's Bay north of Charleston, and on the 16th and 17th she supported diversionary amphibious landings which hastened the Confederate evacuation of Charleston the following day. Admiral Dahlgren then ordered her to the mouth of the Santee River, where she supported naval operations against Georgetown, S.C., before departing 28 February on a reconnaissance mission up the Santee. With launches *Lilly* and *Eva* in tow she ascended as far as Black Oak Island and gained valuable information about the depth and navigability of the river. As a result of this intelligence, General Sherman's troops could be supplied from transports on the Santee rather than solely by railroad. *Geranium* remained along the South Carolina coast until after the end of the war. Departing Charleston 17 June, she steamed with *Iris* and *Pawnee* (Admiral Dahlgren embarked) and arrived Washington 21 June. *Geranium* decommissioned there 15 July and was sold 18 October to the Treasury Department for use in the Lighthouse Service, along with the USS *Iris*.

She was assigned to the 8th Lighthouse District as an inspection tender. She was based out of New Orleans. She was rebuilt and lengthened to 155 feet by William E. Woodall & Company in 1879 for \$14,500. She was transferred to the 4th Lighthouse District in 1884 and she was transferred to the 2nd Lighthouse District in 1890. In October 1892 her boiler was replaced. In 1907 she was transferred to the 1st Lighthouse District.

She was condemned on 29 November 1909 at Portland, Maine. She was sold on 19 January 1910.

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Caption: "3207 Geranium, 1st Inspector"; no date; Photo No. 3207; photo by N. L. Stebbins of Boston, Massachusetts.

Courtesy of the Naval Historical Center; #NH96608

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**Sources:**

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

Douglas Peterson. *United States Lighthouse Service Tenders, 1840-1939*. Annapolis: Eastwind Publishing, 2000.

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