



## Jefferson, 1845

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Thomas Jefferson was born at Shadwell, Albemarle County, Va., 13 April 1743 and graduated from William and Mary College in 1762. He was admitted to the bar 5 years later. In 1769 he was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses where he soon became a leader of the patriot faction and helped form the Virginia Committee of Correspondence. Jefferson was sent to the Continental Congress in June 1775, and a year later he was entrusted with writing the Declaration of Independence. He returned to the Virginia legislature in October 1776 where he labored to reform the new state on democratic principles. He succeeded Patrick Henry as governor in 1779 and held that office until 1781.

Jefferson succeeded Franklin as Minister to France in 1785 and, after his return in 1789, became the Nation's first Secretary of State. Growing differences with Alexander Hamilton prompted him to resign from Washington's cabinet 31 December 1793, and he subsequently led growing opposition to the Federalist party. From 1797 to 1801 he was Vice President and he defeated John Adams in the presidential election of 1800. Highlights of his presidency included the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the Navy's victory over the Barbary pirates. He was succeeded in 1809 by James Madison.

In retirement Jefferson exerted great political and intellectual influence as he worked to establish the University of Virginia. His brilliant career was brought to a fitting close when he died 4 July 1826, the 50th anniversary of his immortal Declaration of Independence.

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TYPE/RIG/CLASS: Three-masted barquentine

BUILDER: Charles Knapp, Pittsburgh, PA

DATES OF SERVICE: 1845-1849

DISPOSITION: To Coast Survey on 27 June 1849

DISPLACEMENT: 343 tons

LENGTH: 160 feet

BEAM: 24 feet

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

PROPULSION: Propeller

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

COMPLEMENT: 58 (*Legare*)

ARMAMENT: 1 long 18-pdr

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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.

The Jefferson was built in Pittsburgh and assembled at Oswego. She measured 343 12/95 tons (CH). She had John Ericsson's propellers, which included twin six-bladed screws, but these were replaced by Loper's propellers in September of 1845. She operated on the Great Lakes, and was laid up during winters, until late 1848, when she was sent to New York for transfer to the Coast Survey effective on 27 June 1849. She received part of the *Polk's* machinery when she was being modified for transfer to the survey.

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**Sources:**

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