



Legare, 1927

WSC / WMEC-144

Hugh Swinton Legare the 16th Attorney General of the United States. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, on January 2, 1797, he graduated from the College of South Carolina in 1814. For the next three years he studied law, then traveled in Europe, studying French in Paris, Roman law, philosophy, math and chemistry in Edinborough. Upon his return to South Carolina in 1820, he was elected to the South Carolina State Legislature. He served until 1822, and from 1824 to 1830 when he was elected State attorney general. In 1832, he was Charge d'Affaires at Brussels. Upon his return to the United States, he was elected to Congress. He served from 1837 until 1839. President Tyler appointed him Attorney General of the United States in 1841. He died in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 20, 1843, while attending ceremonies at the unveiling of the Bunker Hill Monument.

CLASS: Active Class Patrol Boat

BUILDER: American Brown Boveri Electric Corp., Camden, NJ

COST: \$63,173 each

COMMISSIONED: 17 March 1927

LAUNCHED: 14 February 1927

DECOMMISSIONED: 5 March 1968 and sold 29 November 1968

DISPLACEMENT: 232 tons

PROPULSION: 2 x 6-cylinder, 300 hp engines

LENGTH: 125 feet

BEAM: 23 feet, 6 inches

DRAFT: 7 feet, 6 inches

COMPLEMENT: 3 officers, 17 men

ARMAMENT: 1 x 3"/27 (1927); in WWII two dc racks were added

Class History:

This class of vessels was one of the most useful and long- lasting in Coast Guard service with 16 cutters still in use in the 1960's. The last to be decommissioned from active service was the *Morris* in 1970; the last in actual service was the *Cuyahoga*, which sank after an accidental collision in 1978. They were designed for trailing the "mother ships" along the outer line of patrol during Prohibition. They were constructed at a cost of \$63,173 each. They gained a reputation for durability that was only enhanced by their re-engining in the late 1930's; their original 6-cylinder diesels were replaced by significantly more powerful 8-cylinder units that used the original engine beds and gave the vessels 3 additional knots. All served in World War II, but two, the *Jackson* and *Bedloe*, were lost in a storm in 1944. Ten were refitted as buoy tenders during the war and reverted to patrol work afterward.

Cutter History:

USCGC *Legare*, a patrol craft of the 125-foot class, was built by American Brown Boveri Electrical Corp., Camden, New Jersey. She commissioned 17 March 1927 and patrolled out of New London, Connecticut as part of the Coast Guard's campaign against rumrunners. In 1929, the *Legare* pursued and seized a rumrunner, the *Flor Del Mar*, which was promptly abandoned by its crew. In 1931 she transferred to Pascagoula, Mississippi, to patrol the gulf coast.

In pre-World War II years *Legare* was stationed at Norfolk, Virginia. In accordance with Executive Order 8929 of 1 November 1941, she began to operate as part of the Navy. Fitted out to tend lighthouses, buoys, and other aids to navigation, she operated in inland and east coast waters. She also served on

coastal patrol and rescue duty.

While on patrol 19 March 1942 *Legare* received word of a submarine contact eight miles south of Hatteras. She steamed to the area, made contact, and attacked with all eight of her depth charges. Oil, debris, and air bubbles were observed on the scene, but the sinking of a submarine at this position on this date was not confirmed by captured documents examined after the war.

Legare picked up three survivors from SS *David H. Atwater* 2 to 3 April and steamed to Chincoteague with them. On 25 June she was ordered to patrol and convoy escort duty under the Caribbean sea frontier command, and so served until the end of hostilities.

Executive Order 9606 returned *Legare* to the Treasury Department 1 January 1946. She has since served as buoy tender out of Brownsville, Texas; New Bedford, Massachusetts; and Freeport, Massachusetts.

She was redesignated WMEC-144 in 1966 and was decommissioned in 1968.

Sources:

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

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

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