



# Mackinac, 1949

WHEC-371

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The *Mackinac* was named for an island in northern Michigan in the Straits of Mackinac, the word "mackinac" being derived from the Ojibwa Indian word *michilimackinac* meaning "island of the great turtle."

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## Radio call sign: NICC

Builder: Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Puget Sound, WA

Commissioned: 24 Jan 1942 (USN);  
Apr 1949 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 28 Dec 1967; transferred to USN 21 Jul 1968; expended as a target

## PARTICULARS, AS OF 1965:

Length: 311' 7" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 12' 8" max

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,515.2 fl

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

SHP: 6,000

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 18.0 kts, 9,900 nautical mile range

Performance, Economic: 12.0 kts, 19,980 nautical mile range

Fuel Capacity: 166,525

Complement: 10 officers, 2 warrants, 137 men

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29A

Sonar: SQS-1

Armament: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 12 Mod 1; 1 x Mk 52 Mod 3 director; 1 Mk 26 Mod 3 fire control radar; 2 50 caliber MG's; 4 x Mk 6 Mod 2 DC projectors; 1 Mk 10 Mod 1 A/S projector;

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**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."

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 as well as an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

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### **Ship's history:**

The *Mackinac* was stationed in New York for the duration of her years in the Coast Guard. The ship was used for ocean station, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations in the Atlantic Ocean. Under the authority of the Chief of Naval Operations, 8 July 1948, the *Mackinac* was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard on a loan basis for the support of the Service's ocean station program. She was accepted at the storage basin at Orange, Texas, on 21 April 1949, when taken under tow by the cutter *Tampa* and then delivered to the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland, for conversion to ocean station duty.

She was formally commissioned into the Coast Guard on 11 May 1949 and was redesignated WAVP-371. After her conversion was completed on 18 July 1949, she was stationed in New York for the remainder of her career, her first homeport being at Brooklyn until she was moved to St. George, Staten Island, on 17 September 1953. Her first commanding officer was CDR William L. Maloney, USCG.

Being one of a number of cutters based on the East Coast that rotated manning the four ocean stations in the Atlantic, she would patrol a 210-square mile patch of ocean far from land for three week-stretches at a time without being allowed to leave the area until physically relieved by another cutter or in the case of a dire emergency. While on patrol, she acted as an aircraft check point at the point of no return, a relay point for messages from ships and aircraft, as aircraft the latest weather information, a floating oceanographic laboratory, and as a rescue ship in event of a downed aircraft or vessel in distress. On 13 November 1953, the *Mackinac* assisted M/V *Empire Nene* at 41°53'N, 43°47'W.

In 1966 she was redesignated as a high endurance cutter, WHEC-371. She won the Eastern Area vessel performance award for the fiscal year 1967. She was decommissioned on 28 December 1967, stored at the Coast Guard Yard for a short period and was then returned to the Navy. The *Mackinac* was struck from the Naval Register upon her return to the Navy. She was expended as target off the Virginia coast on 23 July 1968 by Naval Academy Midshipmen. Her formal history noted:

Eventually the MACKINAC was decommissioned on December 28, 1967, and stored at the Coast Guard Yard. Shortly thereafter the Navy reclaimed the 26-year old cutter that spent most of her service in the Coast Guard, making her destiny for burial at sea as target practice by Naval Academy Midshipmen. She was sunk off the Virginia coast on July 23, 1968, in 1800 fathoms, at position 36-22N; 73-09W. In spite of the deadly gunfire from four ships--the cruisers NEWPORT NEWS and SPRINGFIELD, and the destroyers NEW and KING--with the KING's first Tartar missile scoring a direct hit, the MACKINAC which had weathered years of hard service in war and peace, gave the marksmen a tough resistance. Her hull remained intact as she slipped down to the bed of the sea.

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**Photographs** [click on description/caption to view image]:

[Mackinac, no date/caption \[1960?\]](#)

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**Sources:**

*Mackinac*, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office.

*Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. IV (1969), pp. 184-185.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR.

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

*Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Mackinac*, 11 August 1965.

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