



Marion, 1927

WSC-145

The cutter was named for Francis Marion, who was born in 1732 at Winyah, a plantation in St. John's Parish, Berkeley County, S.C., near Georgetown. He gained his first military experience fighting Cherokee Indians in 1759 and 1761, during the French and Indian Wars. Elected to the South Carolina Provincial Congress in 1775, he was soon commissioned captain and helped defend Patriot positions in Charleston Harbor in 1776. Marion participated in the unsuccessful American campaign to take Georgia in 1779. When the British took Charleston in the following year and overran most of the State, Marion was commissioned a brigadier general and distinguished himself in organizing and leading a guerrilla band which soon won fame harassing British units and intimidating Tories. When the perplexed red coats sent their reliable troubleshooter Colonel Tarleton in pursuit of Marion, the crafty American won the sobriquet, "the Swamp Fox," by slipping through the Carolina marshlands. He subsequently joined General Green and assisted in the skillful series of tactical maneuvers which exhausted the British Army under Cornwallis, ultimately causing him to abandon the Carolinas and head toward his doom at Yorktown.

After peace returned, Marion served in the State senate until retiring from public life in 1790. He died 27 February 1790.

CLASS: Active Class Patrol Boat

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

COMMISSIONED: 6 April 1927

LAUNCHED: 15 March 1927

DECOMMISSIONED: 15 February 1962 and sold 8 March 1963

DISPLACEMENT: 232 tons

PROPULSION: Two 6-cylinder, 300 Horse Power engines

LENGTH: 125 feet

BEAM: 23 feet, 6 inches

DRAFT: 7 feet, 6 inches

COMPLEMENT: 3 officers, 17 men

ARMAMENT: 1 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:

The second Coast Guard cutter named *Marion* (WSC-145) was launched 6 April 1927 by American Brown Boveri Electric Corp., Camden, New Jersey, and was commissioned 23 April 1927. She was originally assigned the home port of New London, Connecticut.

After patrol out of New London, *Marion* was assigned oceanographic research north to Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, to seek information on currents and characteristics of the northern waters and to find the sources of the icebergs which found their way to the Grand Banks and the North Atlantic steamer lanes. After extensive alteration for cold weather operations, *Marion* left Boston Navy Yard 11 July 1928, under the command of LCDR Edward H. Smith, who also commanded the expedition. This 8,100-mile cruise established that the majority of icebergs originated in western Greenland, and indicated that the number of icebergs which would reach the Grand Banks could be reasonably predicted.

Marion resumed east coast patrol duty until Executive Order 8929 of 1 November 1941 transferred the Coast Guard to the Navy. She then took up wartime patrol

and escort duties under the command of the Caribbean Sea Frontier [CARIBSEAFRON] out of Charlotte Amalie, Virgin Islands. On 14 October 1943, off Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, she rendezvoused with cutter *Dow*, badly damaged by squalls throughout a passage from Baltimore. When it was necessary to abandon *Dow*, *Marion* made a lee and six-man life rafts ferried *Dow's* entire crew of 37 to safety without loss of life.

Marion was returned to the Treasury Department 1 January 1946 and operated as patrol and tender boat out of Norfolk. Here she conducted law enforcement and search and rescue patrols. In June 1955 she towed the *Siboney* from 300 miles east of Norfolk to safety.

She was decommissioned 15 February 1962 and was sold 8 March 1963 to Robert F. Solomon of Norfolk, Va., and renamed *Top Cat*.

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- [Click here to access the journal of ENS W. E. Prindle, written while aboard the *Marion* in 1942 while on escort duty.](#)
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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.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

