



Mayflower, 1943

PY-1; WPG-183
ex-Ogden Goelet, ex-Butte

A species of shrubs and trees of the arbutus genus with white or pink flowers and scarlet berries. A ship named Mayflower brought the first pilgrims to New England in 1620.

Builder: J & G Thompson, Clydebank, Scotland

Commissioned: 1896 (private); 1898 (USN); 20 October 1943 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 1 July 1946, sold

Length: 320' 7" (full length)
288' (less bow sprit)

Beam: 37'

Draft: 17' 7"

Displacement: 2,690 tons (1898); 2,750 (1943)

Propulsion: 2 triple-expansion 4-cylinder, double-acting steam engines; 2,400 SHP; twin propellers

Performance:

Max: 12 knots (1943)

Economic: 9 knots (1943); 5,000 mile range

Complement: 1153 (1945)

Armament: 6 x 6-pounders (1898); 1 x 5"/51; 2 x 3"/50 (single); 6 x 20mm/80 (single); 2 depth charge tracks; 4 x K-guns; 1 x Hedgehog.

Electronics:

Radar: SC-2, SG, SG-1, SL, SQ-2 (portable set), SN (portable set)

Sonar: Echo ranging, J. P. Listening

History:

The second *Mayflower*, a luxurious steam yacht built in 1896 by J. and G. Thompson, Clyde Bank, Scotland, and initially named for her owner, Ogden Goelet, she was purchased by the Navy from the estate of Ogden Goelet and commissioned at New York Navy Yard on 24 March 1898, under the command of CDR M. R. S. McKensie, USN.

Acquired by the Navy for the impending war with Spain, *Mayflower* joined Admiral Sampson's squadron at Key West, Florida, 20 April. Two days later the American warships sailed to blockade Havana. En route *Mayflower* captured the Spanish schooner *Santiago Apostol*. She also took a number of fishing boats and coastal trading vessels. On 11 May she boarded a large British merchant steamer, which also carried the name *Mayflower*, and sent the blockade runner to the United States under a prize crew. On the 14th Alfonso led two Spanish gunboats out of the harbor hoping to break through the American blockade. *Mayflower's* guns engaged the Spanish warships and drove them back to shelter under the guns of Morro Castle. For the rest of the war *Mayflower* guarded the ports of Santiago De Cuba and Cienfuegos.

Early in 1899 the yacht steamed to New York where she decommissioned 2 February to be fitted out for special service in Puerto Rican waters. She recommissioned 15 June 1900, CDR Duncan Kennedy in command. At San Juan she served as headquarters for the government of the island being formed by the first American Governor Charles H. Allen.

In 1902 *Mayflower* twice served as Admiral Dewey's flagship. In November 1903 Rear Admiral Coghlan flew his flag when off Panama during the revolution which established Panamanian independence and pointed toward the construction of the Panama Canal. She sailed to Europe in the summer of 1904 and in the fall carried Secretary of War William Howard Taft on an inspection tour of the West Indies. *Mayflower* decommissioned at New York 1 November 1904 for conversion to a presidential yacht.

Recommissioned 25 July 1905, CDR Cameron McRae Winslow in command, she immediately sailed for Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York, to prepare for the peace conference which ended the Russo-Japanese War. President Roosevelt introduced the Russian and Japanese delegations on board *Mayflower* 5 August. The ship continued to play a prominent role in support of the negotiations which won President Roosevelt the Nobel Peace Prize.

After duty as a dispatch boat protecting American interests in Santo Domingo in 1906, *Mayflower* served as presidential yacht until 1929. She was the scene of many diplomatic and social events during these years. Many members of the

world's royal families visited the yacht and numerous persons of great prominence signed her guestbook. President Wilson selected *Mayflower* as the setting for much of his courtship of Mrs. Edith Bolling Galt.

President Hoover decided to dispense with *Mayflower* as an economy measure, and she decommissioned 22 March 1929. She was badly damaged by fire while tied up at the Philadelphia Navy Yard 24 January 1931. The yacht was sold 19 October 1931 to Leo P. Coe, agent for Frank P. Parish, a wealthy financier known as "the boy wizard of La Salle street (Chicago's Wall street)." The following year while he was having the ship restored to her original luxurious splendor, by Henry J. Gerlow Inc., of New York City, Parish's fortunes turned forcing him to sell the yacht shortly before he fled from the country to escape from prosecution and elude irate investors. During the depression years, a number of successive owners tried to promote a wide variety of projects for the ship including use in the South America coastal trade, restoration as a historic relic, use as a floating dance salon, and even sale to the Japanese Government to be scrapped as Japan sought still to strengthen her war machine. However, a complex web of legal difficulties, a shortage of money, and marginal business conditions frustrated these enterprises while the ship idled in Atlantic ports from New York to Jacksonville, Florida, awaiting an opportunity for future service.

After America entered World War II, the War Shipping Administration purchased *Mayflower* from Broadfoot Iron Works Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina, 31 July 1942 and renamed her *Butte*. Transferred to the Coast Guard, 6 September 1943 the ship recommissioned as *Mayflower* (WPE-183), 19 October 1943. She patrolled the Atlantic coast, guarding against German U-boats and escorted coastal shipping besides serving as a radar training ship at Norfolk and Boston. Decommissioned 1 July 1946, *Mayflower* was sold at Baltimore to Frank M. Shaw 8 January 1947 for use in the Arctic as a sealer. However, while sailing for sealing waters between Greenland and Labrador, early in March, *Mayflower* was damaged by fire off Point Lookout and forced to return to Baltimore.

Collins Distributors Inc., purchased the ship early in 1948, installed new boilers in her at New York, and documented her as *Malla* under the Panamanian flag. She was subsequently fitted out at Genoa, Italy, ostensibly for coastwise trade in the Mediterranean. After sailing secretly from Marseilles, she arrived Haifa, Palestine, 3 September. On board were Jewish refugees. Most were former passengers of the ill-fated *Exodus* which had been turned back from Palestine the previous summer. Her ultimate fate is unknown.

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.

