



## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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### *McCulloch, 1946*



WAVP / WHEC-386

Call Sign: NODA

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Hugh McCulloch was appointed to be the 27th Secretary of the Treasury. He served under President Abraham Lincoln and President Andrew Johnson from March 9, 1865 until March 3, 1869. He also served as the 36th Secretary of the Treasury from October 31, 1884 until March 7, 1885 under Presidents Chester A. Arthur and Grover Cleveland.

McCulloch was appointed to be Secretary of the Treasury a second time in 1884 by President Chester Arthur. During his six months in office at that time, he continued his fight for currency backed by gold, warning that the coinage of silver, used by then as backing for currency, should be halted.

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Builder: Lake Washington Shipyards, Houghton, WA

Commissioned: 17 May 1944 (USN); transferred to USCG 27 May 1946  
25 November 1946 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 21 June 1972; returned to USN; then transferred to South Vietnam

#### **PARTICULARS, AS OF 1966:**

Length: 310' 1/4" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 12.5' full load

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,470.3 tons, full load

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

BHP: 6,400

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.6 kts, 9,700 nautical mile range

Performance, Economic: 11.7 kts, 16,000 nautical mile range

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 138 men

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

Sonar: SQS-1

Armament: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 30-65; 1 x Mk 52-3 director; 1 x Mk 26-01 fire control radar; 2 .50 caliber MG's; 1 x Mk 4 Mod 0 hedgehog A/S projector; 1 x Mk 11 Mod 0 A/S projector; 2 x Mk 32 Mod 5 torpedo tubes (3 tubes per unit);

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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." [Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.]

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 and an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

## **Cutter History:**

This cutter was originally named *Wachapreague*. *McCullough* was homeported in Boston, MA from 16 November 1946 to July 1966. From July 1966 through 21 June 1972, the ship was stationed in Wilmington, NC. At both stations, the cutter was used for ocean station, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations.

While patrolling ocean station "Bravo" off the Labrador coast in January 1959, raging winter cold seas cracked the *McCulloch*'s main decks and swept one crewman overboard. In spite of that harried experience, she managed to reach Argentia without further mishap. On April 22, 1966, the *McCulloch* was awarded a Unit Commendation with ceremonies held at Boston. That entitled her crew of 144 to wear the Unit Commendation Bar. The crew was cited for outstanding service during the Cuban Exodus while assigned to stand watch and rescue refugees in the Florida Straits during October and November 1965. In early November 1965, the *McCullough* rescued 280 Cuban refugees from small craft in the Florida Strait and carried them to Key West, FL.

During this patrol *McCulloch* was under the command of Commander Frank Barnett, USCG, who was in tactical command of 12 cutters and four planes assigned to the Cuban Patrol. He was responsible for the safety of thousands of Cubans who chanced the hazardous 90-miles rough passage from Camarioca Cuba to Key West Fla., many in overcrowded and unseaworthy craft, most of them handled by totally inexperienced persons.

On 17 June 1970, the cutter helped fighting a fire on M/V *Tsui Yung* in Wilmington, NC. While stationed at Wilmington N. C., the *McCulloch* continued her assignments on ocean station patrol and search and rescue as well as special missions until her final days.

In April 1972, the *McCulloch* with two sister cutters, the USCGC *Absecon* (WHEC-374) and *Chincoteague* (WHEC-375), was deployed as Coast Guard Squadron II, with crews comprised mainly of reservists. They were originally scheduled to sail to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands, but were diverted to the Navy base at Apra Harbor, Guam. Eventually the three sisters were transferred to the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. After her transfer to South Vietnam, the ship was renamed *Ngo Kuyen*.

After Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese army, the *Ngo Kuyen* fled to the Philippines. A U.S. Coast Guard team inspected the surviving WHEC's on 22-23 May, 1975, including the former *McCulloch*. One of the inspectors noted: "These vessels brought in several hundred refugees

and are generally rat-infested. They are in a filthy, deplorable condition. Below decks generally would compare with a garbage scow."<sup>1</sup>

After the *McCulloch* was cleaned, repaired, and returned to service the U.S. Navy transferred her to the Philippine Navy. The Philippine Navy commissioned her as the RPS #8 *Gregorio de Pilar* on 7 February 1977. She served until April 1990 when she was decommissioned [and scrapped?]

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**Photographs:**



CGC *McCulloch*, 29 September 1965, no caption.  
Photo number CGY092965-08; photographer unknown.

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<sup>1</sup> Olsen, A. L., Jr., Commander. Senior Coast Guard Officer, Philippines. *Report: "Ships returned from Viet Nam: Preliminary Inspection Ex-WAVP/WHEC"*, 1975, p. 2, copy in 311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.



CGC *McCulloch*, 31 October 1969, tied up at Coast Guard MSO Wilmington, no caption. Photo number 5CGD-103169-01.

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**Sources:**

*McCullough*, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office

*Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. IV (1969), pp. 268-269.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR, copy in 311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

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

*Ship's Characteristics Card*: USCGC *McCullough*, 28 June 1966.

