



## USS *Muskeget*, 1942

YAG-9; AG-48; WAG-48, ex-*Cornish*

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**USS *Muskeget*, 17 February 1942 (Photo courtesy of D.M. McPherson).**

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Muskeget is an island located just west of Nantucket Island and south of Cape Cod.

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**Builder:** Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, Sparrows Point, Maryland

**Length:** 233' 6" overall

**Beam:** 40' 2"

**Draft:** 24' 3"

**Displacement:** 1,827 tons

**Cost:** ?; U.S. Navy acquisition, conversion cost \$250,000

**Commissioned:** 1923 (merchant fleet); 2 January 1942 (US Navy); 30 June 1942 (US Coast Guard)

**Decommissioned / Disposition:** Lost at sea on or about 9 September 1942

**Machinery/Propulsion:** Hooven, Owens, Rentschler Company triple-expansion steam engine; 2 x Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation single-ended Scotch boilers, 190 psi; 1,300 SHP; single propeller.

**Performance:**

**Maximum speed:** 11.0 knots

**Cruising speed / endurance:** 9.0 knots, 15,000 mile range

**Complement:** 34 merchant seamen (1923); 121 total: 9 commissioned officers, 107 enlisted men, 1 Public Health Service officer, 4 U.S. Weather Service employees (1942).

**Electronics:**

**Radar:** None

**Sonar:** QCL-8

**Armament:** 1 x 4"/50 (single-mount); 1 x 3"/50 (single-mount); 4 x 20mm (single-mount); 2 x depth charge tracks; 4 x "Y" guns; 2 x mousetraps.

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**CUTTER HISTORY:**



The *Muskeget* was the former freighter *Cornish* that was owned and operated by Eastern Steamship Lines, Incorporated, of Boston, MA. She served in the cargo trade on the Great Lakes. The U.S. Navy acquired *Cornish* "under charter" on 29 December 1941, and had her converted from a freighter by the Sullivan Drydock & Repair Company, of New York, NY. She was commissioned as YAG-9 on 3 January 1942.

(Left: BM1c Albert A. Kelsch, on board *Muskeget* in a signed photo he sent to his mother sometime before August 1942; click on image to see the full-size photo--see below for a photo of the telegram BM1 Kelsch's mother received after *Muskeget* was declared missing.)

She was assigned to the Third Naval District and performed patrol duty off New York until reclassified AG-48 and named *Muskeget* on 30 May. One month later, 30 June, the miscellaneous auxiliary was "loaned" to the Coast Guard, who reclassified her as the WAG-48. She was "commissioned as

a vessel in Coast Guard service" on 1 July 1942. She was then assigned to her permanent station of Boston and reported for duty with the Weather Observation Patrol. While in port she fell under the authority of the First Naval District's DCGO (District Coast Guard Officer), although while at sea she fell under the command of CINCLANT (CTF 24).

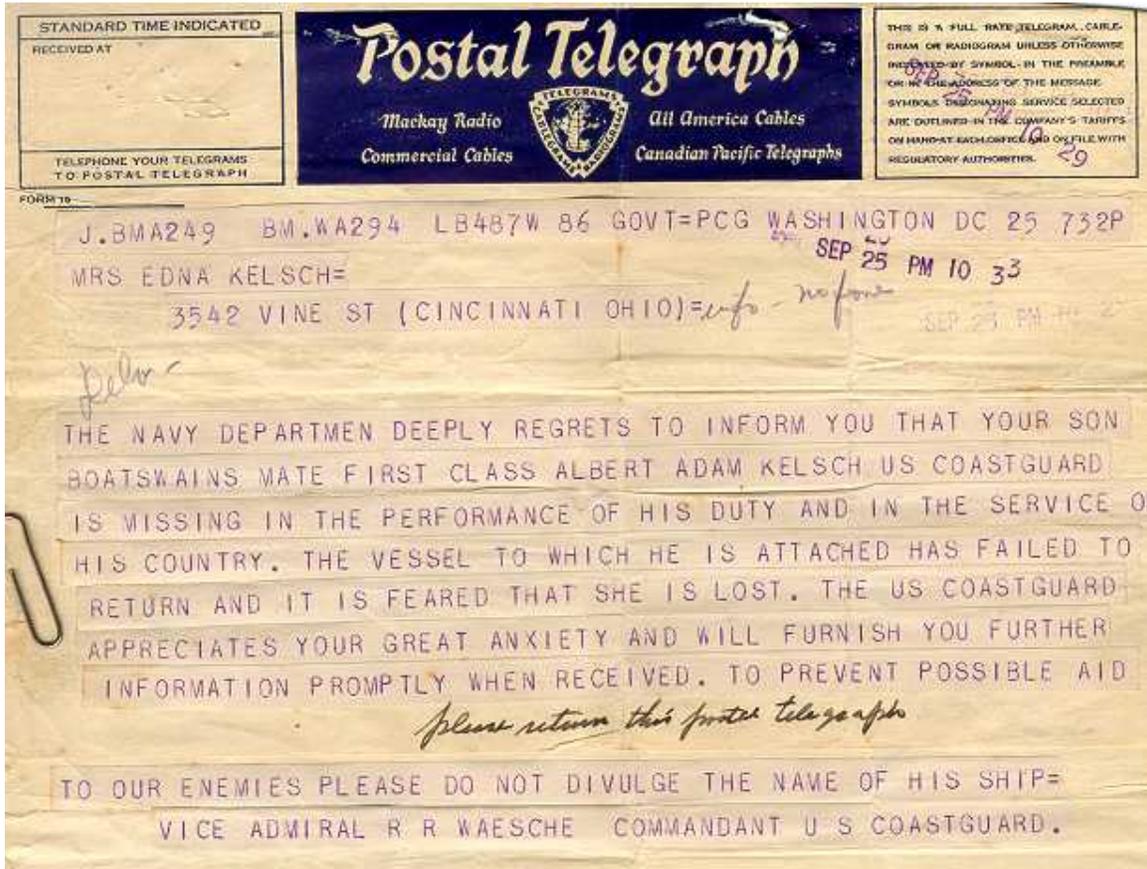
Her first assignment was to patrol Weather Station No. 2 from the 6th to the 27th of July, 1942. She departed for her next patrol, on the same weather station, on 24 August 1942.

Her official Coast Guard history from this point reads:

"USS MUSKEGET DISAPPEARS WITHOUT TRACE: The U.S. Weather Observation Station Ship MUSKEGET (ex-CORNISH) departed Boston on the afternoon of 24 August, 1942, en route to Weather Station No. 2, 53°N - 42° 30'W. The first weather report from the vessel originated 28 August, 1942 while en route to her station. On 31 August, 1942 she reported on weather conditions. The last report on the weather was received from her 9 September, 1942, when she was awaiting the arrival of her relief, the USCGC MONOMOY. On 11 September 1942, the MONOMOY reported she was unable to effect relief of the MUSKEGET due to failure to establish communications. Enemy submarines were reported active and a message was transmitted by the MONOMOY for action of the MUSKEGET but the weather patrol vessel again failed to answer her call. Repeated efforts were made by the MONOMOY to contact the vessel without success. On 13 September 1942, the MONOMOY arrived at Weather Station No. 2 and cruised on station for 9 days. On 15 September 1942, upon a report from the MONOMOY of inability to communicate with the MUSKEGET, all aircraft and ships in the vicinity were directed to search for and report any positive results. This search on 16 September proved fruitless.

ENEMY SUBS IN VICINITY: On 1 October 1942, having been relieved of patrol, the MONOMOY departed the weather station en route to Boston. Arriving there on 12 October 1942, she reported that from 20 to 35 enemy submarines were daily within striking distance of Weather Station No. 2. The area between Halifax, N.S., Cape Race, N.F., and Iceland, within which Weather Station No. 2 was located, was a seething and continuous mass movement of convoys and enemy submarines with, as a general rule, two or more convoys daily shadowing the enemy submarines found operating there.

ENTIRE CREW PRESUMED LOST: After a year had elapsed, with no further information concerning the MUSKEGET or any of her 9 officers and 111 [sic] enlisted men, the entire personnel on board was declared to be officially dead. The MUSKEGET, which had operated on the Great Lakes, had been chartered by the Navy and turned over to the Coast Guard, having been commissioned in June [sic] 1942."



The telegram every family feared receiving. Sadly, the families of all of the crewmen on board *Muskeget* received such a telegram from the Navy Department, followed by a letter from the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, indicating that their loved one was missing in action. Knox informed them that the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Vice Admiral Russell Waesche, would "advise you when further information is available." Unfortunately, no such notification was with BM1 Kelsch's mother's papers, which were donated to the Coast Guard Historian's Office. It is apparent that it was quite some time before she learned of the official declaration, from the Coast Guard, of her son's death. In an official reply to a request for information that Mrs. Kelsch sent to Coast Guard Headquarters in 1948, the chief of the Military Morale Division of the Coast Guard noted that the "Secretary of the Navy found that his death was presumed to have occurred on 10 September 1943 [sic]. His death was in the line of duty and was not the result of his own misconduct." The officer who wrote the letter enclosed a certified copy of a "Finding of Death in lieu of a death certificate."

When she was overdue in reaching home port, *Muskeget* was presumed lost in action with no survivors. At the time of her sinking, she had 121 men on board: 9 commissioned officers, 107 enlisted men, one Public Health Service officer, and four civilian employees of the U.S. Weather Service. German naval records recovered after the war indicated that *U-755*, under the command of

Kapitänleutnant Walter Göing, reported torpedoing a U.S. auxiliary merchant cruiser in *Muskeget's* area of operation on 9 September 1942. It was probably this attack that caused the destruction of *Muskeget* and the loss of her entire crew. *U-755* was herself sunk in the Mediterranean by a Royal Air Force Hudson on 28 May 1943. Nine of the U-boat's crew of 47 survived the attack and were rescued by the Spanish.

On 10 September 1942, the Navy and Coast Guard declared *Muskeget's* crew as killed in action. On 26 October 1943, *Muskeget* was struck from the Navy list. American Legion Post 2543 in Plattsmouth, Nebraska, is named for one of the crewmen of *Muskeget* who was killed in action that day, 9 September 1942, Harold Wolever, Jr.

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**Crewman and passengers killed in action on USS *Muskeget*, CG, in September 1942**

**U. S. Coast Guard Personnel:**

Toft, C. E., LCDR

Clark, R.J., LT

Spooner, W.R., LTJG

Stehle, J.C., LTJG (R)

Aieta, J.V., ENS, (R)

Bauersfeld, P.M., ENS

Fuld, S.L., ENS (R)

Hunter, C.R., ENS (R)

Sullivan, T.M., ENS (R)

Osier, Leuign W., CMM

Mason, Carl S., CBM

Stanley, Joseph, CGM

Canfield, Cecil S., CMM

Hill, Charles H., CMM  
Stoda, Edward F., CWT  
Nordyke, Archie V., CCStd  
Syvertson, Harold T., CCStd  
Kelsch, Albert A., BM1c  
Morely, Warren H., EM1c  
Walker, ALen B., RM1c  
Williamson, Victor L., RM1c  
Williamson, Victor L., RM1c  
Hyles, Paul H., CM1c  
Bustard, Christopher C., MM1c  
Gray, Irvin P., MM1c  
Vinesky, Peter, WT1c  
Martindale, Frank W., Y1c  
McDonald, John W., PhM1c  
Floyd, Walter M., BM2c  
Johnson, Rolland C., BM2c  
Vrabel, Steve R., BM2c  
Profit, Walter, Jr., GM2c  
Smillie, Allan B., GM2c  
Mayer, Edward S., QM2c  
Siedlecki, Alexander J., QM2c (R)  
Mullen, Robert F., CM2c (R)

Stefendel, Frank L., EM2c (R)  
Luthye, Henry J., MM2c (R)  
Webster, William D., MM2c  
Williamson, Delma R., MM2c  
Bruckner, Irving L., WT2c (R)  
Kowalski, Tadeus, WT2c  
Parker, Samuel T., Y2c  
Reinherz, Frank L., SK2c (R)  
Hvizdock, Martin T., SC2c (R)  
Shearer, Robert F., SC2c  
Astley, George L., Cox (R)  
Bradberry, Robert C., Cox  
Clark, John W., Cox  
Pawlusiak, Stanley E., Cox  
Burden, Alvin B., QM3c (R)  
Vail, Walton B., QM3c  
Farr, Erman R., SOM3c  
Martin, Ivan E., SOM3c  
Weiner, Murray F., SOM3c (R)  
Lien, Kenneth M., RM3c  
Lopez, Carlos A., RM3c  
Morgenstern, Leon, RM3c  
Peterson, Donald R., RM3c

Reynolds, William J., RM3c  
Altman, Albert J., Y3c  
Downey, John V., SC3c  
Anderson, Donald J., Sea1c  
Dexter, Norman R., Sea1c (R)  
Ether, John H., Jr., Sea1c  
Hartman, Roy, Sea1c  
Hawkridge, Earle F., Sea1c (R)  
Murray, Harold A., Sea1c (R)  
Ohlsen, Francis W., Sea1c  
Paine, Robert V., Sea1c  
Posnansky, Max H., Sea1c  
Robinson, William L., Sea1c  
Ruggeri, Anthony, Sea1c  
Stanley, George A., Sea1c  
Turanski, Joseph E., Sea1c  
Van Alstyne, George P., Sea1c  
Butler, John J., F1c (R)  
Maniscalco, August G., F1c  
Perry, Frederick E., F1c (R)  
Peterson, Roy E.L., F1c  
Robinson, James E., F1c (R)  
Tuccillo, Vincent J., F1c

Wolever, Harold R., Jr., F1c

Power, Edmund F., Sea2c

Graham, Ronald T., Sea2c

Trahan, James J.P., Sea2c

Trimboli, Stephen E., Sea2c

Ward, Ralph E., Sea2c

DeSilver, Carroll A., F2c (R)

Domanich, George, F2c (R)

Egan, John G., F2c (R)

Medeiros, Gebbert F., F2c

Nalbone, Samuel J., F2c (R)

Restaino, Aniello, F2c

Sarrasin, Gerald J., F2c (R)

Weyman, John W., Jr., F2c

Bryan, Herman A., AS (R)

Dauphin, Maurice L., AS (R)

Davis, Israel W., AS (R)

Gavey, Robert, AS (R)

Halligan, Thomas J., AS (R)

Kinkson, Clarence, AS (R)

Humes, Francis J., AS (R)

Kimber, Clifford R., AS (R)

Latta, William J., AS (R)

Towne, Francis I., AS (R)

White, Ralph C., AS (R)

Clark, Henry B., Jr., F3c (R)

Eggers, Vessie F., F3c (R)

Needs, Paul A., F3c

SilSBie, Harold C., Jr., F3c (R)

Velasco, Braulio M., F3c

Wahab, John, Jr., MAtt2c

Allen, Clifton R., MAtt3c

Greer, George, MAtt3c

Grimes, Charlie S., MAtt3c (R)

Mount, Grover J., Sea1c

Jones, Robert E., MAtt1c

Cranshaw, Charles E., MAtt3c (R)

**U.S. Weather Bureau Personnel:**

Brady, Luther H.

Fodor, Lester S.

Kubach, George F.

Weber, Edward

**U.S. Public Health Service Personnel:**

Dr. Haskell D. Rosenblum, MD, USPHS

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**Sources:**

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