



Ossipee, 1915

WPR-50

The cutter *Ossipee* was named for a river in eastern New Hampshire.

Builder: Newport News Shipbuilding

Launched: 1 May 1915

Commissioned: 28 July 1915

Decommissioned: 6 December 1945

Disposition: Sold; 18 September 1946

Dimensions:

Displacement (tons): 964

Length: 165' 10" overall

Breadth: 32'

Draft: 11' 9"

Machinery: Steam reciprocating, 1,500 SHP; single propeller; 12.3 knots maximum with a 2,000 mile range; cruising speed of 7.5 knots and a 4,265 mile range.

Armament: 4 x 6-pounders (1915); 2 x 6-pdrs; 2 x 3" 50-cal (single-mounts) (as of 1930); 2 x 3"/50 (single-mounts); 1 x 3"/23; 2 x depth charge tracks (as of 1941); 2 x 3"/50 (single-mounts); 2 x 20mm/80 (single-mounts); 2 x Mousetraps; 4 x K-guns; 2 x depth charge tracks (as of 1945).

Complement: 9 officers, 65 enlisted

Cost: \$225,000

Class History:

The Tallapoosa-Class cutters, the *Tallapoosa* and *Ossipee*, were designed as cruising cutters, capable of extremely long voyages for vessels of their size. Their hulls were reinforced for light ice-breaking. The *Ossipee* was actually classified as a "river gunboat" while the *Tallapoosa* was classified as a "patrol gunboat."

Cutter History & Record of Movements:

Sallie Fleming McAdoo, daughter of Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo christened this vessel.

10 July 1915: Accepted by Government. Launched at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company.

10 July 1915: Left Newport News in tow of *Apache*. Arrived at Coast Guard Depot on 11 July.

19 July 1915: Officers and crew of *Woodbury* arrived at Coast Guard Depot and transferred to *Ossipee*.

23 July 1915: Placed in commission at Coast Guard Depot.

13 August 1915: Left Depot for cruise to compensate compasses. This duty completed 17 August.

16 August 1915: Coast Guard Depot directed *Ossipee* to return to station.

17 August 1915: Headquarters at Portland, Maine, cruising district from Eastport, ME to Cape Ann, MA

22 August 1915: Left Depot for station.

30 October 1915: Authorized to proceed to Boston, when necessary, for stores.

10 November 1915: Winter Cruising Orders--Eastport, ME to Cape Ann, MA.

25 April 1916: To act as convoy to power boats of Portland Power Boat Association on their annual cruise to Boston, 12 July 1916.

22 November 1916: Winter cruising orders--Eastport, ME to Cape Ann, MA.

6 April 1917: Transferred to the Navy Department

Service in World War I:

The Coast Guard Cutter *Ossipee*, Captain William H. Munter, commanding, was en route from Portland, ME to Boston, MA on 6 April 1917, when Congress declared that a state of war existed between the United States and the German Empire. On arrival at Boston, the cutter received orders to proceed to the mouth of the Kennebec River, ME and Captain Munter was assigned to the commander of that defensive area with additional duties connected with the patrol of the river mouth and the adjacent coastline. Returning to Portland, ME where she arrived on the 7th a stay in port of a few days was made, and on the 11th, *Ossipee* proceeded to her station arriving there the same day and continued to guard that area and patrol outside until the 18 April when she was ordered to report to the Commandant of the Navy Yard at Portsmouth, NH.

Arriving at that point on the same day, orders were received assigning *Ossipee* to duty with the Nantucket Detachment, Patrol Force. After coaling at Melville, RI and painting the ship the regulation war color, she left Newport, RI and proceeded on the 23 April to her new station where she arrived the same day. The cutter continued on patrol duty in this new area until 5 May, when orders were received to proceed to Portsmouth, NH for the purpose of providing the vessel with a more suitable battery. While at Portsmouth the old battery of four six-pounders were removed and a new battery of four 3-inch guns was installed and ammunition for same placed on board. This having been accomplished, *Ossipee* left Portsmouth, NH on 7 June and resumed her duties with the Nantucket Detachment, Patrol Forces and continued on patrol in that area for some time until orders were received to prepare for duty overseas in the war zone.

Ossipee was prepared and outfitted for this important duty at the Boston Navy Yard on 15 August she sailed for Gibraltar. She arrived there on the 30 August. The commanding officer reported to the US Patrol Commander and paid an official call on the Senior British naval officer of that port. Here the cutter was assigned to duty with Squadron Two of the patrol forces based at Gibraltar. On 3 September she joined her first convoy as a "Danger Zone Escort." This duty generally lasted several days. On outbound convoys, the Danger Zone Escort would escort the convoy to a meeting with the "Ocean Escort" at sea. The Danger Zone Escort would return to base while the convoy proceeded to its destination under the protection of only one warship, the Ocean Escort. On inbound convoys the Danger Zone Escort relieved the Ocean Escort from duty and accompanied the convoys into the ports of destination, generally when the convoys were within a short distance of their port of destination. *Ossipee* served as a Danger Zone Escort from the time of her arrival at Gibraltar until 30 October, with the exception of three special service cruises of short duration.

On 30 October the cutter again left Gibraltar, this time as the Ocean Escort for a convoy bound to England. This was the tenth convoy with which she had been associated, but the first for which she was the Ocean Escort. The convoy having arrived safely in British waters, *Ossipee* proceeded to Plymouth, then later to

Devonport, where she arrived on 8 November. On the 13th *Ossipee* left for Gibraltar with another convoy acting as the Ocean Escort, and arrived at her destination on the 27th. She continued to make alternate cruises from Gibraltar to British waters and from British ports to Gibraltar until the war came to an end. There two exceptions, however, when she escorted convoys between Gibraltar and Bizerte, Tunisia. In the case of both, *Ossipee* served as the Ocean Escort.

While most of the convoys on which *Ossipee* served as Ocean Escort, were not attacked. There was one exception. Leaving Milford Haven, Wales on 13 December with a convoy bound to Gibraltar, good progress was made until the morning of the 15th when at 9:10 a.m. a German U-boat torpedoed the merchant steamer *Bernard*. This ship, which belonged to "Column YA," was out of position. In proceeding toward her proper position she was struck in the starboard quarter by a torpedo. *Bernard* was on *Ossipee*'s starboard quarter, just abeam the commodore's ship. The latter was the leading ship in the right column. *Ossipee* sounded "general quarters." In an attempt to drop depth charges on the invisible enemy, the cutter made full speed and the helm was cut hard to port. *Ossipee* was assisted in this work by some of the Danger Zone Escort ships while others rescued the survivors from *Bernard*, which sank at 10:01 a.m. While a search was made for the track of the torpedo and for signs of the wake of the submarine, nothing was seen. The convoy in the meantime, under the direction of the commodore, had zigzagged to the left by using starboard helm and was already some distance away. "Secure" was sounded at 10:20 a.m. and *Ossipee* and the Danger Zone Escort vessels that had been searching for the enemy U-boat proceeded at full speed to rejoin the convoy.

The same day about 5:06 p.m., another attack was made on this convoy, the wake of the torpedo being seen in the midst of the ships in convoy about seven hundred yards distant. The torpedo continuing its course passed almost directly under the stern of *Ossipee*. It passed about twenty-five yards astern of the the commodore's ship and harmlessly through the convoy. The general alarm having been sounded, *Ossipee*'s crew stood to general quarters at the first sign of the enemy torpedo. A slick, apparently that of the submarine, was seen about seventy-five yards off the starboard beam of the cutter. The ship was turned rapidly and running over the spot, two depth charges were dropped. At no time did the submarine make an appearance. The search was diligently made until 5:45 p.m. Full speed was ordered and *Ossipee* overtook the convoy and the course was continued to Gibraltar without further incident. The Danger Zone Escort joined with the convoy on 21-22 December and the whole fleet arrived at the base on the latter date.

During the stay at Gibraltar, new and improved releasing gear was installed on the cutter. This was intended to make the cutter more effective in combatting U-boats with depth charges. A few weeks prior, Lewis guns had been supplied. *Ossipee* continued cruising between Gibraltar and British ports until 10 March 1918, when she was sent with a convoy from Gibraltar to Bizerte. The squadron

arrived on 16 March. Leaving on 16 March with her nineteenth convoy bound to Gibraltar, the convoy was attacked at 6:30 p.m. on the 17th. The steamer *Ivydene* was torpedoed and sunk and again at 1:25 a.m. on 18 March, the steamer *John H. Barry* was torpedoed and also sunk. *Ossipee*, being with the convoy, but some distance from the ships attacked did not see either of these. It was learned, however, that these two ships had been sunk and that survivors were on board several vessels of the Danger Zone Escort. At 6:37 p.m. of the same, the convoy was subjected to a third attack and the merchant ship *Saldhana* of "WC" column was torpedoed and sunk, the survivors being picked up by the tug *Alice*. On this occasion the general alarm was sounded and all hands called to general quarters on *Ossipee*. The cutter proceeded at full speed to the place where the submarine had disappeared and dropped two depth charges as closely to the spot as could be ascertained in the darkness, but with no apparent result. "Secure" was sounded at 7:17 p.m. and the convoy continued on its way to Gibraltar arriving at that port without further loss on the 21 March.

After being drydocked at the base, *Ossipee*, on 26 April resumed her voyages from Gibraltar to British waters and returned as the Ocean Escort for different convoys bound in those directions. On 29 April, a signal was received from the commodore's ship stating that a submarine had been sighted. *Ossipee* proceeded at full speed and called all hands to general quarters. A second signal was received stating that the U-boat was three miles astern of the convoy and that it had submerged. The cutter proceeded to steam for the enemy's wake and dropped seven depth mines as nearly as could be ascertained around the spot where he had disappeared and zigzagged at full speed all around his supposed position, but apparently without result. On 1 May the Danger Zone Escort joined up with the convoy and on the 3rd *Ossipee* proceeded to Pembroke Dock, Wales, where she arrived the same day.

On 14 May the cutter left Pembroke Dock and joining up with a convoy at Milford Haven, left for Gibraltar. The Danger Zone Escort was present until the 16th. This was the twenty-first convoy with which *Ossipee* had been connected since her arrival overseas. Continuing on her voyage the Danger Zone Escort from Gibraltar joined the fleet on 21 May and all of the ships arrived safely at the base on the 23rd. No enemy attack was made during this cruise, nor did *Ossipee* encounter any more submarines until 18 October. While on the voyage from Gibraltar to British waters with convoy HG-133, the thirteenth she had accompanied as Ocean Escort, was attacked. USCGC *Seneca* and the commissioned merchant steamer *City of Oxford* were also acting as ocean escorts with this convoy. At 1:47 p.m. that day *City of Oxford* signaled that she had sighted a torpedo wake crossing the convoy and that the torpedo had passed close to her stern. The general alarm was sounded and all hands being at quarters, *Ossipee* proceeded at full speed to the vicinity of the spot where it was supposed that the submarine had fired the torpedo. One depth charge was dropped, but no signs of the submarine, its wake, or the wake of the torpedo was

seen. *Seneca*, being with this convoy, had also joined in the search for and attack on the submarine, but after four depth charges were released by that ship it was not believed that any damage was done to the enemy as no evidences were thrown up by the exploding depth charges. Captain Wheeler in his official report of this attack states that, while then was little doubt that *City of Oxford* did see the torpedo, it appeared that it had been fired at long range, making it very difficult to locate the enemy. However, no damage had been done to any vessel of the convoy or the ocean escort. On the 19th the Danger Zone Escort joined the convoy and three days later, on 22 October, the fleet arrived safely in home waters. *Ossipee* and *Seneca* proceeded Pembroke Dock, Wales in company where they arrived later on the 22nd, having anchored in Dale Roads on the 21st.

Ossipee remained at Pembroke Dock until the 26th, when she proceeded to Falmouth, England. She joined another Gibraltar-bound convoy on the 27th. On 28 October at 5:22 p.m. a gun flash was sighted on the port beam of the convoy. All hands were called to quarters and under full speed, the cutter proceeded to the vicinity where the flash was seen and dropped two depth charges near the spot. No evidence of a submarine was found, but it was always deemed necessary and good policy to drop one or more depth charges for the purpose of reminding the enemy that his presence was known even if his position was not. There can be no doubt but that similar actions had caused the enemy on more than one occasion to either postpone or eliminate the contemplated attack on the convoy. Releasing these two canisters 5:35 p.m. and seeing nothing of the enemy, "secure" was sounded and *Ossipee* rejoined the convoy which proceeded to its rendezvous with the Gibraltar Danger Zone Escort on the 31st. Nothing further of interest happened and the fleet arrived safely at Gibraltar on 2 November. *Ossipee* remained until the 8th when she left on a return voyage to British waters with the last convoy with which she was to be associated with during the period of hostilities.

Sailing that day with her 32nd convoy, the fleet was joined by the Danger Zone Escort, which however, left in a few days and on 16 November arrived safely in British waters. On the day of the Armistice, 11 November, at noon, *Ossipee*, with her convoy at 39° 51' x N 11° 50' W, turned on the regular navigation lights indicating that news had been received of the cessation of hostilities. The convoy having dispersed on arrival of *Ossipee* proceeded to Devonport, England.

While this cutter was within the war zone, she was associated with thirty-two convoys and she had convoyed 596 vessels. In 23 of these, she served as the ocean escort. She also made three special cruises. *Ossipee*, or other ships of the convoy, observed submarines, or evidences of their presence, eight times and the convoys were actually attacked seven times with the loss of four merchant ships sunk. *Ossipee*, herself, was attacked once, barely escaping destruction as the torpedo missed her by 15 to 20 feet.

7 February 1919: Returned to United States from European waters. Later assigned to Portland, ME.

28 August 1919: Returned to Treasury Department by Executive Order

8 February 1920: Portsmouth Navy Yard for repairs

11 March 1920: Repairs completed

29 March 1920: At Navy Yard, Portsmouth, to install radio compass, departed 2 April.

16 April 1920: Boston Navy Yard--hailed out--departed 29 April

16 June 1920: Left Portland for International Ice Patrol.

21 June 1920: At Halifax for radio repairs.

1 July 1920: Ordered to Boston for radio repairs. Arrived 3 July

21 July 1920: Portland, ME--resumed station

13 October: 1920 Boston, MA, for repairs. Departed 14 October for Portsmouth, NH

14 October: 1920 Portsmouth Navy Yard for repairs. Completed 27 November

16 April 1921: Arrived at Portland.

21 June 1921: Arrived South Portland, Maine, at the Cumberland Shipbuilding Company's Plant and hauled out.

5 July 1921: Completed repairs.

19 July 1921: Boston, MA, for repairs. Completed 5 August 1921

22 August 1921: Portsmouth Navy Yard. Departed 23 August 1921

3 September 1921: Provincetown, MA--transfer men to *Dash*.

4 September 1921: Boston, MA--Inspection trips by Chairman, International and Foreign Commerce Committee.

9 September 1921: Party disembarked at Boston

13 September 1921: Returned to Portland.

29 September 1921: Boston, calibration of compass

5 October 1921: Returned to Portland

3 December 1921: Bangor and Buckport, ME clearing Penobscot River of ice.

29 December 1921: Boston, repairs on radio

29 June 1922: South Portland, ME--marine railway

7 August 1922: Marblehead, ME patrolling regatta.

1 January 1923: Permanent station at Portland, ME

4 September 1924: Portland for annual overhaul

23 April 1928: Ordered to depot for repairs

1 July 1937: Stationed at Sault Ste. Marie, MI still stationed there on outbreak of World War II

1 November 1941: Coast Guard was transferred to the Navy Department by Executive Order

World War II Service:

On 2 December 1942 the cutters *Ossipee* and *Crocus* along with motor lifeboats from Lorain and Cleveland stations proceeded to the assistance of the barge *Cleveco*, reported in distress 10 miles off Avon Point. The barge was in tow of the barge *Admiral* when the latter suddenly sunk. The Captain of the Port dispatched a plane to the scene and located *Cleveco* about ten miles east of Cleveland. *Ossipee*, advised of the correct position, located the barge with 19 men on board. A heavy northwesterly gale with a snowstorm prevented *Ossipee* from taking the barge in tow but she stood by to remove the crew if necessary. On 3 December, *Cleveco* foundered. Eight bodies of crewmen were recovered.

During April 1943 *Ossipee* engaged in routine patrols in Lake Erie and at Cleveland also made practice cruises and performed routine duties. During August 1943 she was on training cruise and gun target practice. During October 1943 she was engaged in routine training operations on Lake Erie and on the Detroit and St. Claire Rivers. On 22 October 1943, the US Engineer derrick barge *Tonowanda* and two dump scows went ashore east of Cleveland harbor during a storm and *Ossipee* was dispatched to stand by and assist. *Ossipee* and other Coast Guard equipment re-floated the vessels the next day and *Ossipee* later towed the scows to Cleveland. During December 1943 she was on training operations on Lake Erie.

Early in June 1945 she conducted drills and exercises in Lake Erie, later in the month towing the Navy *YF-737* to Chicago, and returning to Cleveland. Early in July she towed a pontoon for *LST-512* from Buffalo to Rochester, NY and returned from Buffalo to Erie. VJ Day found her still on duty in the 9th (Cleveland) Naval District where she remained until 18 September 1946 when she was declared surplus and sold by the Maritime Commission to Mr. Harold H. Neff, East Cleveland, OH.

Photographs (click on description to access image):

[USCGC *Ossipee*; launching, 1 May 1915.](#)

[USCGC *Ossipee*; circa 1927.](#)

[USCGC *Ossipee*, circa 1943.](#)

Sources:

Cutter files, USCG Historian's Office.

Canney, Donald L. *U.S. Coast Guard and Revenue Cutters, 1790-1935*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

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