



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

36-Foot Picket Boat (Open-Cockpit & Double-Cabin)

Number: 2200-2229 (Open); 2300-2372 (Double-Cabin)
Completed: All in service by 1925
Remarks:

Cost: \$8,800

Hull

Displacement (lbs): 10,000 lbs.
Length: 35'8" (Open); 34'6"-35'6"(Double)
Beam: 8'6" (Open); 8'9" (Double)
Draft: 30"

Machinery

Main Engines: 6-cylinder gasoline
BHP: 150-200 hp

Performance

Max Speed: 23-25 mph

Logistics

Complement: 3

Design

World War I was hardly over, and the Coast Guard restored to its peacetime status back in the Treasury Department, when a new problem of national scope emerged which would have a profound and permanent impact on the Coast Guard, its scope of responsibilities, and the cutters and boats that the service would develop and use. On 17 January 1920, the National Prohibition Act went into effect with its restrictions against the transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages. To the Coast Guard went the difficult and thankless role of enforcing this law on federal waters.

Since its founding, the Revenue Cutter Service had been charged with the responsibility of suppressing smuggling and enforcing federal laws within territorial waters. Moreover, Lifesaving Service station keepers had been given status as federal customs officers in order to suppress the looting of wrecked ships and the stealing of cargo. These responsibilities had been carried over into the new Coast Guard and were an important function of the service. From very early on in the enforcement of Prohibition, however, it became very apparent that these activities were going to increase many orders of magnitude beyond what the Coast Guard had anticipated, in contrast to the time period before the law was in effect. Complicating this was the fact that, up to the start of Prohibition, the Coast Guard was systematically reviewing the continued utility of some of the original

lifeboat/lifesaving station location, and had closed those stations deemed no longer necessary due to the increased availability and use of motor lifeboats and surfboats. As such, there were fewer active coastal stations available for enforcement duties.

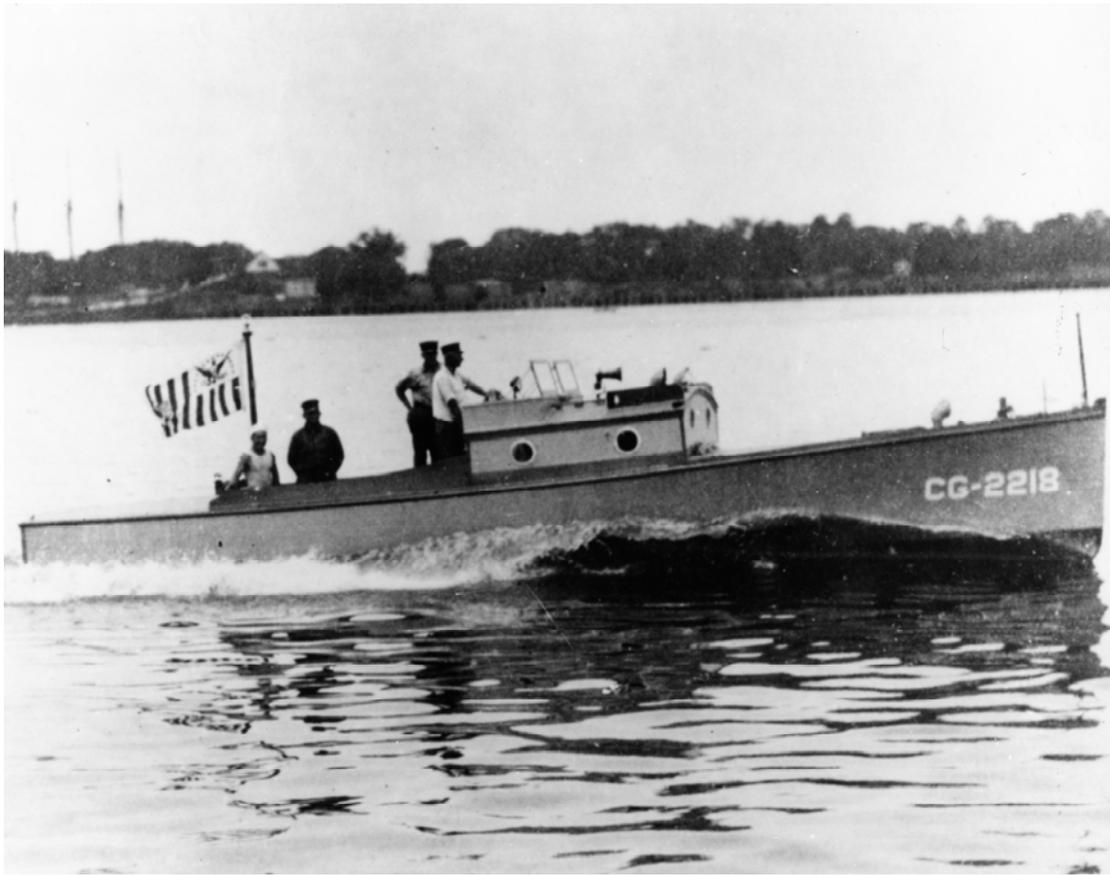
A major source of illegal liquor were fleets of foreign vessels (so-called “mother ships”) that cruised just outside U.S. territorial water limits (initially, 3nm., but later expanded to 12nm. by international treaty). From these vessels, contraband cargo was transferred to high-speed boats to make the run into shore for further transfer to motor vehicles for distribution. By early 1922, a well-defined “rum row” had been established off of the U.S. East Coast by the mother ships, with regular deliveries ashore to areas such as Narragansett Bay, Long Island Sound, Barnegat Bay, and Delaware Bay, by the “rum-runners” in their high-speed craft. It is interesting to note the parallels between the rum-runner alcohol smuggling problem of the 1920s, and the issues today with the smuggling of illegal drugs by high-speed boat.

The Coast Guard opted for a two-tiered response to this problem, consisting of larger, more capable cruising cutters operating offshore to find and track mother ships, and smaller high-speed patrol boats and picket boats operating inshore to intercept rum-runner boats before they could reach shore. The ships and craft participating in the offshore patrol would have to be more seaworthy and capable of remaining on station for extended periods, while the inshore patrol and picket craft could be smaller, but needed to be capable of greater speeds than the rum-runner boats in order to achieve an intercept²⁹.

While the cutters and patrol boats that were developed are outside of the scope of this book, the picket boats developed by the Coast Guard for intercept purposes are relevant as early examples of multi-mission craft that were sometimes used for rescue purposes. Concurrent with construction of patrol boats was the design and building of a total of 103 picket boats: thirty of which were single-cabin, open cockpit models of 35’8” overall length numbered CG-2200 through CG-2229, and seventy-three of which were double-cabin models of 36’ numbered CG-2300 through CG-2372. Initially, both were powered with the same type of engine (a single, 180 HP Consolidated Speedway MR-6 six cylinder gasoline engine), with a maximum speed of about 24kts. Average cost for each boat was about \$8,800.

Procurement procedures for these smaller craft varied by type. In the case of the single-cabin model, a brief outline plan was distributed to boatbuilding contractors with instructions that they retain their own naval architect to complete the boat’s final plans and specifications. With the double-cabin model, however, complete plans were drawn up and provided by the Coast Guard to prospective builders. Seven different yards were contracted for single-cabin boat construction, and six yards for double-cabin boat construction. In some instances, the same firm built both. In a few cases, these yards were also builders of patrol boats.

Images



36-Foot Open Cockpit Picket Boat



36-Foot Double Cabin Picket Boat

Sources

Boat Files, U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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