



Champlain, 1929

Later-HMS *Sennen*, Y-21
WPG-319

The cutter *Champlain* was named for a lake located in northeast New York, northwest Vermont, and southern Quebec, Canada. It was the site of important battles in the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812.

Builder: Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, Quincy, Massachusetts

Builder's Number: CG-47

Launched: 11 October 1928

Commissioned: 24 January 1929

Decommissioned: Transferred to Great Britain on 12 May 1941

Disposition: Returned to U.S. on 27 March 1946; sold on 25 March 1948

Displacement: 2,075 tons

Dimensions: 250' oa (236' bp) x 42' x 12' 11" draft (mean)

Machinery: 1 turbine-driven electric motor (General Electric), 2 boilers, 3,350 shp, 14.8 knots (cruising), 17.5 knots max

Propellers: single, 4 blades

Complement: 97 (1940)

Armament: 1 x 5"/51; 1 x 3"/50; 2 x 6-pdrs (1929)

Cost: \$900,000 each (hull & machinery)

"Lake"-Class Design:

The 250-foot class cutters were designed by the Coast Guard and were, in many respects, modernized 240-footers. Captain Q.B. Newman, USCG, designed its innovative turbine-electric-drive power plant, which developed an amazing 3,350 shp. These were the first to have alternating current, and a synchronous motor for propulsion. The whole ship ran off the main turbine. The auxiliary generators were tied into the main generator electrically, after sufficient speed was attained. At that point, no steam was required to drive the turbines on the auxiliary generators. The propulsion plant achieved remarkable efficiency. The counter stern and plumb bow of the older class had given way to the flared stem and cruiser stern. These features were an attempt to improve sea qualities over the 240-foot class, particularly to eliminate the heavy shocks common in the North Atlantic Ice Patrol.

Initially this class was made up of ten cutters, all of which were transferred to Great Britain under Lend-Lease in 1941. They were to be replaced in the USCG inventory by the 255-foot Owasco-class vessels, laid down in 1943. Three vessels were lost while in British service, one was not returned, and the remainder turned back to the Coast Guard in 1946. Initially, the Coast Guard planned to renovate the *Champlain*, *Itasca*, *Mocoma*, and *Tampa* and return them to service. The remaining two vessels, the *Chelan* and *Tahoe*, were stripped of parts for use in the restoration of the other four ships. Due to economic constraints following the war, however, only the *Mocoma* and *Tampa* were placed in commission.

Types of Work Done by the Lake-Class Cutters:

Prior to their transfer to Great Britain, most of the cutters performed an equal amount of boarding work, with the exception of *Tahoe*, whose record of 809 vessels boarded was over twice the group average for the period, and of *Itasca*, whose 528 boarding were 50 percent above the average. *Shoshone* reported two and a half times the average number of vessels reported by the group for infractions of navigation laws, and *Tahoe* twice the average.

Sebago led in derelicts destroyed, and *Chelan* in regattas patrolled. *Cayuga* and *Mendota* did the greatest amount of anti-smuggling patrol work, while *Itasca* and *Mendota* led in time devoted to assistance work. *Mendota* and *Pontchartrain* spent over twice the average number of hours in winter cruising, while *Shoshone*, *Itasca*, and *Chelan* did all of the Bering Sea Patrol work done by the group. *Champlain* and *Chelan* led in the International Ice Patrol activity, and *Cayuga* devoted more time than any of the rest to USCG Academy cadet practice cruises. *Tahoe* gave the greatest amount of time of any in the group to icebreaking.

Cutter History:

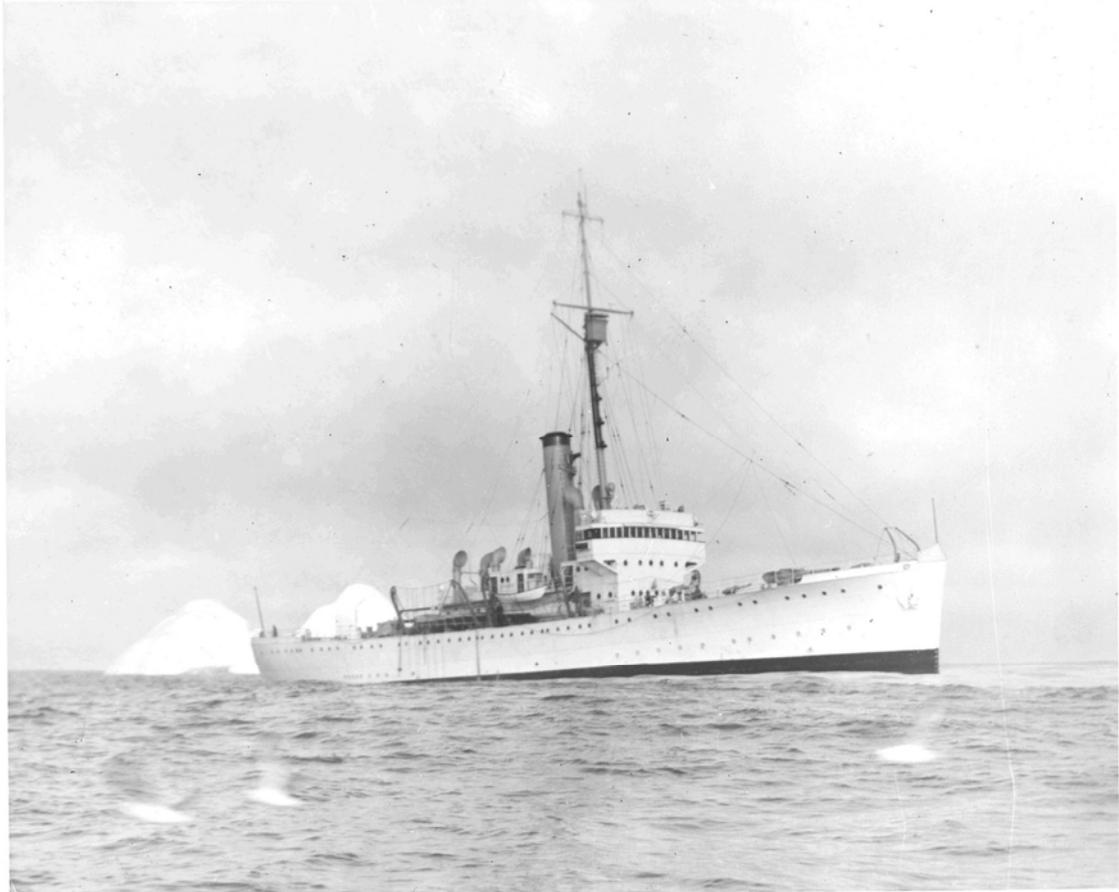
The new Coast Guard Cutter *Champlain* was built by the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation of Quincy, Massachusetts. She was launched on 11 October 1928 and commissioned on 24 January 1929. She was stationed at Stapleton, New York after entering service.

At 0928 on 24 January 1935, while *Champlain* was standing up the Jersey coast about 11 miles east-northeast of Cape May, she received intercepted information that the Norwegian freighter *Talisman* was in a collision with the Ward Line steamer SS *Mohawk* about four miles off Sea Girt New Jersey. The cutter proceeded at full speed informing the United Fruit Company SS *Limon*, which was standing by the disabled merchantmen, that she would arrive at 0200. At 2244 the *Mohawk* reportedly had her starboard boats in the water and was over on her side. The *Mohawk* was a \$2,000,000 vessel with a crew of 107 and 54 passengers. The *Limon* reported at 0035 that one boat and the captain of the *Mohawk* were unaccounted for and asked the Coast Guard cutter to take over some 22 survivors which were then on board the *Limon*. At 0114 the Coast Guard Cutter *Algonquin* reported picking up five boats with 37 passengers and 47 crew. The *Champlain* arrived on the scene at 0148 and immediately began receiving, via Coast Guard small boats, the survivors from the *Limon*. In all, 21 of the crew and 1 passenger were made comfortable and fed, and at 0412, leaving the Coast Guard Cutter *Icarus* to search for more survivors, the *Champlain* laid course for New York where the survivors were transferred to the Marine Hospital.

She, along with her entire class of cutters, were transferred to the Royal Navy under the auspices of Lend-Lease in 1941. *Champlain* transferred on 12 May 1941 and she was renamed HMS *Sennen* and given the signal number Y-21.

She was returned to the Coast Guard on 27 March 1946. Here her former name, *Champlain*, was restored and she was given the hull number and designation WPG-319. She was then placed into storage at the Coast Guard Yard in "Out of Commission in Reserve" status. *Champlain* was sold on 25 March 1948 to Hughes Brothers, Inc., of New York.

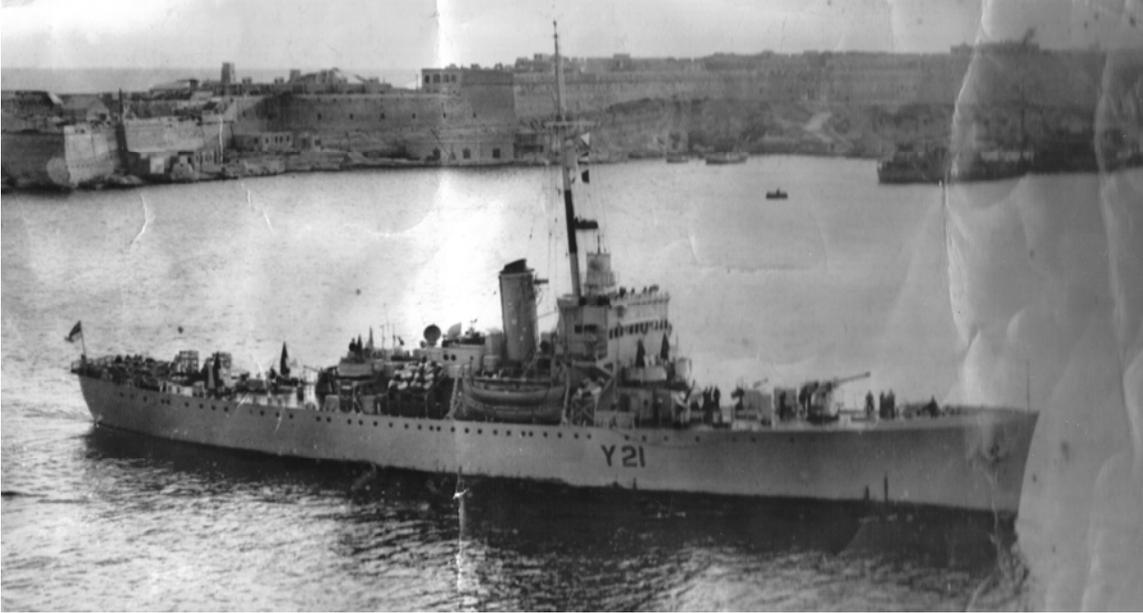
Photographs:



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

The USCGC *Champlain* on the International Ice Patrol, circa mid-1930s.

Official U.S. Coast Guard photograph.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

A photo of HMS *Sennen* circa 1943/44 entering Valetta Harbor, Malta.
Photo provided through the courtesy of John Chopping,
whose father served aboard her during the cutter's stint in the Royal Navy.

Not an official U.S. Coast Guard photograph.

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).

Scheina, Robert L. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft in World War II*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982).

Scheina, Robert L. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft, 1946-1990*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990).

United States Coast Guard, Research and Statistics Section, Operations Division. *The Accomplishments of the Coast Guard Cutters transferred to the United Kingdom*. (Washington, DC: United States Coast Guard, 1941).
