

U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Barataria, 1948



WHEC-381
Radio call sign: NBXL

Barataria was named for Lake Barataria, a body of water in Louisiana that served as a base of operations of the famed corsair Jean LaFitte.

Builder: Lake Washington Shipyards, Houghton, WA

Commissioned: 13 August 1944 (USN)
Accepted on loan basis by USCG 17 Sep 1948
10 January 1949 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 29 August 1969

Disposition: Sold for scrap

Length: 310' 9" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 13'1" max (1964)

Beam: 41' 2-3/8"max

Displacement: 2,522.4 fl (1966); 1,786.6 light (1966)

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

BHP: 6,000

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.35 kts, 9,646 nautical mile range (1966)

Performance, Economic: 11.9 knots; 18,040 nautical mile range (1966)

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 138 men (1966)

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29A
Fire control radar: Mk 26-3
Sonar: 264-1

Armament: 1 x 5"/38; 2 x 50 caliber Browning M2; Mk 13 Flare mortar; Mk 10-1 x 1 A/S rocket launcher; Mk 32-5 x 2 torpedo tube mounts; Mk 10-8 x 6 torpedo tubes; Mk 44 torpedoes (1966)

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, Suitability [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 as well as an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Cutter History:

Barataria was homeported in Portland, Maine, from 1 August 1949 to January 1968 and used for law enforcement, ocean station, and search and rescue operations in the Atlantic. She received the Navy Expeditionary Medal for the "Cuban operation" for services conducted from 11 to 26 January 1961.

She patrolled the America's Cup Race, at Newport, Rhode Island, in September, 1962. When the Cuban Missile Crisis developed in October, 1962, *Barataria* was conducting an ocean station patrol on Ocean Station Echo, in the shipping lanes east of Cuba. *Barataria* then made contact with a Soviet freighter transporting a cargo of missiles and the cutter was ordered to shadow the freighter and await the arrival of a US Navy warship which would conduct the boarding. The cutter remained at battle stations, Condition 2 and repeatedly attempted to establish communications with the Soviets. All attempts failed. A US Navy destroyer out of Norfolk arrived and the Navy crew conducted the boarding of the Soviet vessel.***

Barataria won the Commander Eastern Area Gunnery Excellence Award in 1963 and the Military Readiness Award in 1965. On 1 April 1967 *Barataria* departed her homeport of Portland, Maine to join four other cutters as "U.S. Coast Guard Squadron Three" destined to patrol the coastline of South Vietnam and prevent the infiltration by communist forces attempting to re-supply the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units in the south. The cutters arrived in the combat zone in early May. She was assigned to Commander, Cruiser-Destroyer Group, U.S. Seventh Fleet, the *Barataria* with her 163 officers and men became an integral part of Operation Market Time.

Barataria set a fast pace of effectiveness during her deployment in Vietnam waters. Underway 83 percent of the time, the cutter cruised over 67,000 miles without a major mechanical or electrical failure. Keeping a close watch on all moving craft in her surveillance area, *Barataria* detected, inspected, or boarded nearly 1,000 steel hulled vessels traversing her area, any one of which could have been a trawler trying to sneak supplies to the enemy. *Barataria* was called upon many times to use her main battery against shore-based enemy troops who were aggressively engaged with allied forces. Representative of the high state of readiness and training of the cutter's men is the fact that U.S. Army spotter planes reported all rounds on target, never once falling out of the target area. On one mission three direct hits were cored on point targets which had been spotted by aircraft. She returned to the US on 12 January 1968 and was reassigned to San Francisco.

She was used for law enforcement and search and rescue duties in the Pacific. On 24 March 1968, she sustained an engine-room explosion off Unimak Island. From 21 to 27 May 1969 she rescued the crew and stood by the Peruvian M/V *Yavari* 960 miles southwest of San Francisco; the vessel sank before a salvage tug could arrive. She was decommissioned in August of 1969 and sold for scrap to N.W. Kennedy Ltd. In Vancouver, BC.

***Information provided by *Barataria* crewman Richard Walters.

Photographs:



CGC *Barataria*, 17 January 1949



CGC *Barataria*, circa 1962.



CGC *Barataria* as she entered San Francisco Harbor after returning from duty in Vietnam, January 1968.



Barataria crewmen BMC Bill Heelan and SN Jim Jones as they take a break while refueling at sea in Southeast Asia. Photo provided courtesy of Jim Jones.



SN Jim Jones as he took time to have a photo of with the children of a Vietnamese village. SN Jones and others from the *Barataria* visited the village to converse with some of the Green Berets stationed there. Photo provided courtesy of Jim Jones.

Sources:

Barataria, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. I (1959), pp. 92-93.

"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.

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

Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Barataria, 10 May 1967.

