



Kimball, 1927

WSC / WMEC-143

A young lawyer from Maine, Sumner I. Kimball (1834-1923) was appointed as the chief of the Treasury Department's Revenue Marine Division in 1871. He had joined the Treasury Department as a clerk 10 years earlier and had proven his abilities as a manager. Using his hard-earned political know-how, and a good dose of Yankee common sense, Kimball proceeded to completely overhaul the Revenue Marine and the hodge-podge system of lifesaving stations along the nation's coast that were also under the control of the Revenue Marine Division. His impact on both organizations would prove to be immeasurable.

After the Civil War, the Revenue Marine, and the executive branch agencies generally, came under intense Congressional scrutiny. Economy was the name of the game during this time and expenditures were scrutinized across the board. Hence, Kimball decided to order the construction of new cutters not with iron hulls, which entailed considerable expense, but with proven wood hulls. The total number of petty officers and enlisted men was substantially cut and their pay reduced. Kimball also carried out a vigorous "housecleaning" of incompetent Revenue Marine officers and saw to it that discipline was tightened. A special object of his censure was the use of cutters as personal yachts by local Custom officials, a wide-spread abuse during that time. Kimball also put into effect a merit system to determine promotions. He also made one other great contribution to the quality of the Revenue Marine by establishing, in 1877, a School of Instruction, to train young officers. From this move developed today's Coast Guard Academy, which still trains the majority of the Coast Guard's career officers. But his greatest impact came with his work with what would become the U.S. Life-Saving Service.

Since 1848 Congress had been funding strictly volunteer stations, paying for the station and its equipment but relying on the local community to provide unpaid crews when needed. Kimball drew up regulations that set standards for personnel performance, physical standards and station routines. He convinced a parsimonious Congress to increase the funding of the Service to provide for full-

time, paid crews, led under the direction of an appointed keeper. New stations were constructed around the coast and were equipped with the finest lifesaving equipment available. In 1878, this growing network of stations was organized as a separate agency of the Treasury Department and was named the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Kimball was chosen as the General Superintendent of the new service. He served in that capacity during the entire existence of the Life-Saving Service until it was merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to form the new U.S. Coast Guard.

CLASS: Active Class Patrol Boat

BUILDER: American Brown Boveri Electric Corp., Camden, NJ

COMMISSIONED: 7 May 1927

LAUNCHED: 25 April 1927

DECOMMISSIONED: 31 December 1968 and sold 24 February 1970

DISPLACEMENT: 232 tons

PROPULSION: 2 x 6-cylinder, 300 hp engines

LENGTH: 125 feet

BEAM: 23 feet, 6 inches

DRAFT: 7 feet, 6 inches

COMPLEMENT: 22 (1958)

ARMAMENT: 1 3"/27 (1927); in WWII two depth charge racks were added

Class History:

This class of vessels was one of the most useful and long-lasting in Coast Guard service with 16 cutters still in use in the 1960s. The last to be decommissioned

from active service was the *Morris* in 1970; the last in actual service was the *Cuyahoga*, which sank after an accidental collision in 1978. They were designed for trailing the "mother ships" along the outer line of patrol during Prohibition. They were constructed at a cost of \$63,173 each. They gained a reputation for durability that was only enhanced by their re-engining in the late 1930's; their original 6-cylinder diesels were replaced by significantly more powerful 8-cylinder units that used the original engine beds and gave the vessels 3 additional knots. All served in World War II, but two, the *Jackson* and *Bedloe*, were lost in a storm in 1944. Ten were refitted as buoy tenders during the war and reverted to patrol work afterward.

Cutter History:

The Kimball was built by the American Brown Boveri Electric Corporation in Camden, New Jersey. She was commissioned on 7 May 1927 and was initially stationed at Norfolk, Virginia, arriving there on 13 May 1927. On 31 March 1928 she was transferred to Fernandina, Florida where she remained for nearly five years. Then on 1 May 1933 she moved to a homeport at Pascagoula, Mississippi.

On 14 November 1938 Coast Guard Headquarters ordered the cutter decommissioned for transfer to the U.S. Maritime Service. On 30 December 1938 she was decommissioned at the Coast Guard Yard and was recommissioned and assigned to duty with the U.S. Maritime Service on 18 May 1939, with a permanent station at Hoffman Island, New York.

Returning to the Coast Guard on 18 May 1942, the cutters was assigned a homeport at New York City under the operational control of the District Coast Guard officer, Third Naval District. Following orders on 30 June 1942 assigning her to duty on the Eastern Sera Frontier her berth was moved to Stapleton, New York. She performed search and rescue, assistance, and escort work all along the Eastern seaboard throughout World War II.

She was at Two Harbors, Minnesota from 1946-47 and was placed in storage at Cleveland, Ohio, due to lack of personnel from 1947 to 1950. From 1950 to 1958 she served out of Ketchikan, Alaska. She served briefly in Venice, Louisiana in 1958 and spent her final years sailing from Brownsville, Texas. She was decommissioned in 1968.

Sources:

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