



McLane, 1845

Louis McLane was appointed to be the 10th Secretary of the Treasury by President Jackson. He began his term in office on August 8, 1831, after the resignation of Samuel D. Ingham. He ended his term in office on May 28, 1833.

President Jackson was increasingly inclined to oppose the Second Bank of the United States. Though McLane's views on finance did not agree with those of the President, Jackson respected McLane and in making the appointment overlooked this potential conflict. During thirteen years in Congress (from 1816 until 1829), McLane had championed the cause of the Bank and had denied the power of Congress to interfere with its operations.

As Secretary of the Treasury, he urged Congress to renew the Bank's charter when the measure was introduced in 1832, although Jackson was opposed to renewal. The bill to recharter the Bank, passed that year by Congress, was vetoed by the President. Jackson ran for reelection that year on the Bank issue and he interpreted his resounding triumph at the polls as public disapproval of the Bank. He pressured McLane to remove government deposits from the Bank, because the Secretary of the Treasury was the only person authorized to do so. Though McLane refused to withdraw the deposits, he wanted to avoid further conflict with Jackson and readily agreed to move to the position of Secretary of State when that office became available in 1833.

Louis McLane was born in 1786. He died in 1857.

TYPE/RIG/CLASS: Three-masted barquentines (except *McLane*, *Polk*, and *Walker*); other alterations may have been made.

BUILDER: Cyrus Alger, Boston, Massachusetts

DATES OF SERVICE: 1845-1847

DISPOSITION: Sold December 1847; became a lightship

DISPLACEMENT: 343-409 tons

LENGTH: 160 feet

BEAM: 24 feet

DRAFT: 9 feet, 3 inches to 9 feet, 9 inches

PROPULSION: Hunter's wheel, altered to side wheel

MACHINERY: 2 high-pressure horizontal, 24-inch diameter x 36-inch stroke

COMPLEMENT: 58 (*Legare*)

ARMAMENT: 4 x 32-pounders

Cutter History:

In the 1830s and 1840s the sea services were searching for an alternative to the cumbersome and highly exposed side paddle wheels. John Ericsson and Richard Loper had patented screw propellers, and Navy Lieutenant William Hunter proposed horizontally mounted paddle wheels, which rotated merry-go-round style within the hull, below the waterline. Apertures in the hull sides allowed the paddles to act on the surrounding waters. Hunter had succeeded in interesting the Navy in his idea, and the Revenue Service followed suit. In all, eight steamers were begun for the Revenue Service, four with Hunter's system (*Bibb, Dallas, McLane, and Spencer*), two with Ericsson's (*Jefferson, Legare*), and two paddle-wheel vessels (*Polk, Walker*). All eight were also built of iron – a very early use of that metal. Steam vessels were thought to be of particular use in the narrow waterways of the southern coasts, in pursuit of smugglers.

All eight vessels provided unmitigated failures. Lieutenant Hunter had not taken into full account the waste of power when the paddles encountered and worked against water entering the paddle-wheel casings. In addition, the vessels were coal hungry (the Navy's three Hunter's wheel vessels had the same problem).

The machinery of Ericsson's vessels proved overly complicated, and the side-wheel ships suffered from delays, lack of iron, faulty plans, and bad weather. Originally slated to cost \$50,000 each, over \$2 million was eventually spent in original construction and the massive modifications required subsequently in attempts to rectify the problems.

The eight vessels had extremely short service lives. Only the Coast Survey seemed to profit from the debacle, receiving five of the ships when they were cast off by the Revenue Service. Two became lightships and one was converted into a barque.

Originally to have horizontal wheels, the *McLane* was converted to side wheels before launch. Her tonnage was 368 77/95 (CH), and gearing gave her wheels 65 revolutions for each 100 of the engine's. Trials showed that her side wheels were 50 percent more efficient than Loper's propellers and that she did not perform well under sail. She was ordered to the Gulf in May 1846, despite nearly useless boilers. She operated in Mexican waters in a crippled state until sent back to New Orleans, Louisiana, in December 1847. Ironically here commander had been W.A. Howard, who had originally promoted the Hunter's wheel group of vessels. She was sold 3 December 1847 and converted to a light vessel at Merrill's Shell Bank, Louisiana.

Photos (click on caption to view image):

["Merrill's S. Bank Lightship, 1847"](#)--iron boat of 400 tons--L.S. not numbered--discontinued Aug 10, 1860; replaced by a screw pile Lt. House in 1860; 'W' on history sheets." 8th Dist [7M.] Photograph; no photo number; 1847; photographer unknown.

Sources:

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

U.S. Coast Guard. *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard: 1790 - December 31, 1933*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934; 1989 (reprint).

