



Mojave, 1921

WPG-47

Any Indian of the Yuman tribe on the Colorado River in Arizona, California, and Nevada.

Builder: Union Construction Company, Oakland, California

Commissioned: 12 December 1921

Decommissioned: 3 July 1947

Disposition: Sold

Length: 240'

Beam: 39'

Draft: 13' 2"

Displacement: 1,506 tons (1921); 1,955 (1945)

Propulsion: 1 GE electric 2.040 kVa motor with turbo generator, 2 Babcock & Wilcox cross-drum 200 psi boilers; single propeller

Performance:

Max: 16.2 knots (1921); 15.5 knots (1945)

Economic: 9.0 knots; 5,500 mile range (1945)

Complement: 88 (1930); 122 (1945)

Armament:

1921: 2 x 5"/51 single mounts; 2 x 6-pounders; 1 x 1-pounder

1942: 2 x 5"/51 single mounts; 1 x 3"/50 (single); 2 x .50 caliber machine guns; 4 x "Y" guns; 2 depth charge tracks.

1945: 2 x 3"/50 single mounts; 4 x 20 mm/80 (single); 2 x depth charge tracks; 4 x "Y" guns; 2 x mousetraps.

Electronics:

Radar: SF-1; SC-3 (1945)

Sonar: QCL-2 (1945)

Class History:

by John Tilley

The four 240-foot cutters were conceived as the first true "multi-mission" Coast Guard cutters, equipped for police work in territorial waters, ice patrol, search and rescue, derelict destruction, and towing. Each ship had a remarkably heavy armament of two 5-inch guns, with a provision for the wartime installation of a third, and a 3-inch anti-aircraft gun. A turbo-electric drive system gave the cutters a top speed of sixteen knots, which seemed plenty for the Coast Guard's peacetime missions. The four ships were built by the Union Construction Company of Oakland, California. The entry of the United States into the Second World War sent the Coast Guard on a search for hulls that could be turned into convoy escorts. The 240-foot cutters were fitted out with depth charges, additional guns, sonar, radar, and any other gear that could be crammed into them. The *Modoc* and two of its sisters, *Mojave* and *Tampa*, were assigned to the treacherous Greenland Patrol; the fourth ship in the class, the *Haida*, spent the war in Alaskan waters. All four were decommissioned and sold in 1947.

Additionally, Robert Scheina notes that:

"The 240-foot cutters followed the traditional cutter hull form, having a plumb bow and counter stern. These features proved particularly undesirable while on International Ice Patrol. Heavy seas coming up under the counter caused severe shocks. The wardroom in this class was well forward; thus, the deck sloped upward. This feature was known as the 'Honeywell Hill,' in honor of the principal architect of the class." (1)

Cutter History:

The *Mojave* was launched by the Union Construction Co., Oakland, Calif. on 7 September 1921 as a Coast Guard cutter. She was sponsored by Miss Elizabeth Haske of Oakland and commissioned at Oakland on 12 December 1921.

First of the new *Mojave* class cutters that joined the fleet in 1921 for general duty, *Mojave* introduced the new principle of turboelectric drive. Assigned permanent station at Honolulu, she served with the Bering Sea Patrol, and assisted in enforcing the ban on deep-sea sealing. Upon completion of her Bering Sea tour *Mojave* transferred to Boston and, in company with cutters *Modoc* and *Tampa*, took up Grand Banks ice patrol duties.

Mojave and her sister ships were gradually replaced by the new class of 2,200-ton cutters in 1930, although *Mojave* continued to operate out of Boston until 1933. She also occasionally took part in Coast Guard operations against the rumrunners between 1925 and 1930.

Weather patrols were instituted in 1940, and *Mojave* assumed rotating duty in 1941 as one of the Atlantic Ocean observation stations. This duty involved 21-day patrols in areas 10 miles square between Bermuda and the Azores. Prior to 1940 merchant ships had provided weather observation reports, but these had been curtailed when the outbreak of war forced ships of belligerent nations into radio silence.

For this reason the cutters operating out of Boston were relieved of their usual patrol and cruising duties so as to assume full-time weather patrol. When the cutters were transferred to the Navy 1 November 1941 the schedules of the weather patrol ships *Mojave*, *Hamilton*, *Spencer*, *Bibb*, and *Duane* were not affected.

Only when war developments increased demand for these large cutters elsewhere were they replaced by other, smaller craft taken over by the Coast Guard for such duties as weather patrol. By the end of the war there were 11 Coast Guard ocean stations in the Atlantic, acting as plane guards and radio beacons as well as weather reporters.

Mojave was assigned to the Greenland patrol in 1942, where she took part in convoy escort and rescue operations. While acting as escort for the slow group of Convoy SG--6 which had departed Sydney, Nova Scotia 25 August, she assisted in the rescue of 570 men from the torpedoed army transport *Chatham*. The escort and antisubmarine accomplishments of the cutters were truly vital to the winning of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Returned to the Treasury Department 1 January 1946, *Mojave* was caught up in the postwar demobilization. She decommissioned in 1947 and was sold in February 1948.

Mojave received one battle star for World War II service.

From: *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. IV, p. 407

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

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