



The Cutter

The Newsletter of the Foundation for Coast Guard History

Newsletter 9 Autumn 2002

% Coast Guard Museum/NW
1519 Alaska Way South, Seattle, WA 98134

5006-236th Avenue N.E.
Redmond, WA 98053-8412

FOUNDATION WEB SITE

After many attempts to launch the web site, we have finally succeeded. You can visit at www.fcgh.org. There you can sign onto the quarterdeck, enter your comments, read about the historical events of the current month, initiate or renew your membership, read the latest newsletter, have the newsletter sent to you directly, send us your suggestions, peruse the reading list, and many other features. Our great thanks to Ken Laesser, EMCM, USCG Ret. our web master for his dedication, imagination and plain hard work. It is people like Ken who make this Foundation a success.

HOLIDAY READING LIST

Do you have friends or relatives who do not know what to get you for the holidays? How about a book? Members of the Foundation have written several excellent books and in our annual awards program, we have recognized others for their outstanding quality. Here is a list of suggestions that you can leave around to assist your family in choosing an appropriate gift for you.

The U.S. Lifesaving Service: Heroes, Rescues, Architecture by Shanks, York, Woo

Wonderful flying Machines: A History of U.S. Coast Guard Helicopters by Beard

(Continued on page 2)

YEAR IN REVIEW

Most notable, in terms of the longevity of the Foundation, the IRS has granted us independent non-profit status. Previous contributions were tax deductible under our relationship with the CG Museum/NW. Current contributions are likewise tax deductible due to our tax-exempt status in our own right. (I.D. 26-0024207)

Our awards program continued to recognize individuals and units that have preserved and publicized our rich heritage. This year we recognized three individuals for their museum work with a Heritage Award: Paul H. Johnson, Captain David H. Webb and William D. Wilkinson. We also recognized authors of six books included in the adjacent list. Two active duty units were chosen from the many who submitted examples of their work. Several Special Recognition awards were presented to individuals and organizations that did not fit into any of the categories above, but deserved attention.

As we become better known and as we encourage many to join our efforts, we become more aware of a growing movement to preserve and share our history. In the next few years, our Awards Program will continue to expand to recognize many more of those who share our goals.

Also during 2002, members of the Foundation joined with others in raising the awareness of senior leadership in Coast

awareness of senior leadership in Coast Guard Headquarters of the need for a viable History Program. The few people in the history program budget have been laboring for years, even decades, without adequate funds, space or support. In typical Coast Guard fashion they have performed and produced beyond any reasonable expectation, without sufficient resources. We are proud to announce that the situation is changing. It will not be totally rectified in one year, but over a period of budget cycles vast improvements will be made. As soon as budgets are approved we will report the details.

Our major expenditure this year was for the oral/visual history of one of our heroes, RADM Peter V. Colmar, now 93. As reported in the last newsletter, his career spans from Prohibition to rocket science. He influenced major changes in the Coast Guard and in navigation for the entire world. A video of his life is being edited and will be available in 2003.

MAIL

Now that we have a web site, we will not use hard copy to send the newsletter to all of our mailing list. Each time a newsletter is published, the web site will automatically send it to each of you who has an e-mail address. This will save us postage and labor. If you prefer a hard copy, we will continue to send it to you. If you prefer an e-mail copy, please be sure we have your current e-mail address. Mail messages to: "ken@fcgh.org" with "Newsletter" in the subject box.

HISTORICAL NOTE

On December 22, 1837 the Congress passed the first bill authorizing public vessels, specifically the Revenue Cutters, to go to the aid of distressed mariners.

Book Suggestions continued from page 1.

- The Coast Guard at War: Vietnam 1965-1975 by Larzelere
- Lighthouses and Keepers: the U.S. Lighthouse Service and Its Legacy by Noble
- Lighthouses, Lightships and the Gulf of Mexico by Cipra
- Forgotten Beacons: The Lost Lightships of the Chesapeake Bay by Hornberger and Turbyville
- United States Lighthouse Service Tenders: 1840-1939 by Peterson
- Lighthouses and Life Saving along the Maine and New Hampshire Coasts by Claflin
- Lighthouses and Life Saving Along the Massachusetts Coast by Claflin
- Nineteenth Century Lights: Historic Images of American Lighthouses by Clifford and Clifford
- Keepers of Valor, Lakes of Vengeance by Oleszewski
- Lighthouse Adventures: Heroes, Haunts and Havoc on the Great Lakes by Oleszewski
- Alaska and the U.S. revenue Cutter Service, 1867-1915 by Strowbridge and Noble
- Sand Pounders: An Interpretation of the History of the U.S. Life-saving Service, Based On Its annual Reports for the Years 1870 through 1914 by Bennett
- From Highland to Hammerhead: The Coast Guard and Cape Cod by Hathaway
- Intelligence in the Rum War at Sea, 1920-1933 by Ensign
- Lifeboat Sailors: Disasters, Rescues and the Perilous Future of the Coast Guard Small Boat Stations by Noble
- Coast Guard Action in Vietnam: Stories of Those Who Served by Scotti
- Lighthouses of Texas by Baker
- Women Who Kept the Lights: An Illustrated History of Female Lighthouse Keepers by Clifford and Clifford
- Keepers of the Lights: Lighthouse Keepers and Their Families, Door County Wisconsin 1837-1939 by Karges
- Commodore Ellsworth P. Bertholf: First Commandant of the Coast Guard by Kroll

HISTORICAL NOTES

The first lighthouse in North America was established on Great Brewster Island, Boston, in 1716 to aid shipping in reaching this most important port. In 1776, the British destroyed the light to deter shipping from reaching this most important port. The current light was erected on Little Brewster Island in 1783.

The first fog signal was a cannon established in Boston Harbor in 1719. Elsewhere, hand and clock-work operated bells and bell boats followed. The first air fog whistle was established in 1851 and the first steam whistle was established in 1857.

SNAIL MAIL

If you move and leave no forwarding address, the post office returns mail to us and we lose contact with you. Please, when you move, put us on the list of organizations to notify. We don't want to lose you.

HELP !

Please donate to the Foundation or to give holiday gift memberships to friends and relatives. I ask you to give as you are able, to help us record the story of our Coast Guard. The Coast Guard has played a continual game of "catch up" in recording our service's participation in WWI, WWII, Vietnam and even the more recent Gulf War. This time, we will try to keep in time with events. Please give as generously as you can. We need to record the Coast Guard's selfless and heroic service. All gifts and memberships are fully tax deductible.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Maritime commerce was the lifeblood of the colonies and lighthouses were important to that commerce. Eleven lighthouses were constructed by the individual colonies in addition to the light at Boston to attract commerce to their port. Today cities construct sports arenas for much the same reason. The colonial lighthouses were built with the proceeds of colonial lotteries. The operation and maintenance was provided by a tax on entering vessels.

One of the first orders of the new President, George Washington, was to the keeper of the Sandy Hook Light at the entrance to New York Harbor. He was directed to keep the light burning until provision could be made for its maintenance. Congress acted quickly. The ninth statute enacted under the Constitution enabled the national government to take over operation and maintenance of all 12 lights then in existence.

THE FIRST CUTTERS

At the direction of the Congress, on April 22, 1790, Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury made the first recommendation for revenue cutters to "contribute, in a material degree to the security of the revenue, much more than will compensate for the expense of the establishment." He recommended ten boats, two for the coasts, bays and harbors of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, one for the sounds between Long Island and Connecticut, one for the Bay of New York, one for the Bay of Delaware, two for the Bay of Chesapeake, and one each for the coasts bays and harbors of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

Congress, on August 4, 1790 passed an act establishing the first seagoing service of the new United States. Instead of providing as requested one Captain, one lieutenant and six Seamen for each boat, Congress provided a Master, First, Second and Third Mate plus 4 mariners and two boys. The salaries were reduced from those recommended by Hamilton. He suggested \$40 per month for the Captains, but Congress reduced that to \$30. With corresponding reductions for the remainder of the larger crew, the total expenditure for each boat remained at about the level recommended.

The Massachusetts and Scammel took the northern duty station; the Argus was assigned to Long Island Sound; the Vigilant, New York; the General Greene, Delaware Bay; Active and Virginia in the Chesapeake; the Diligence, North Carolina; the South Carolina in South Carolina; Pickering in Georgia.

The orders kept the cutters on the move within their stations so that potential smugglers would not know what ports to avoid.