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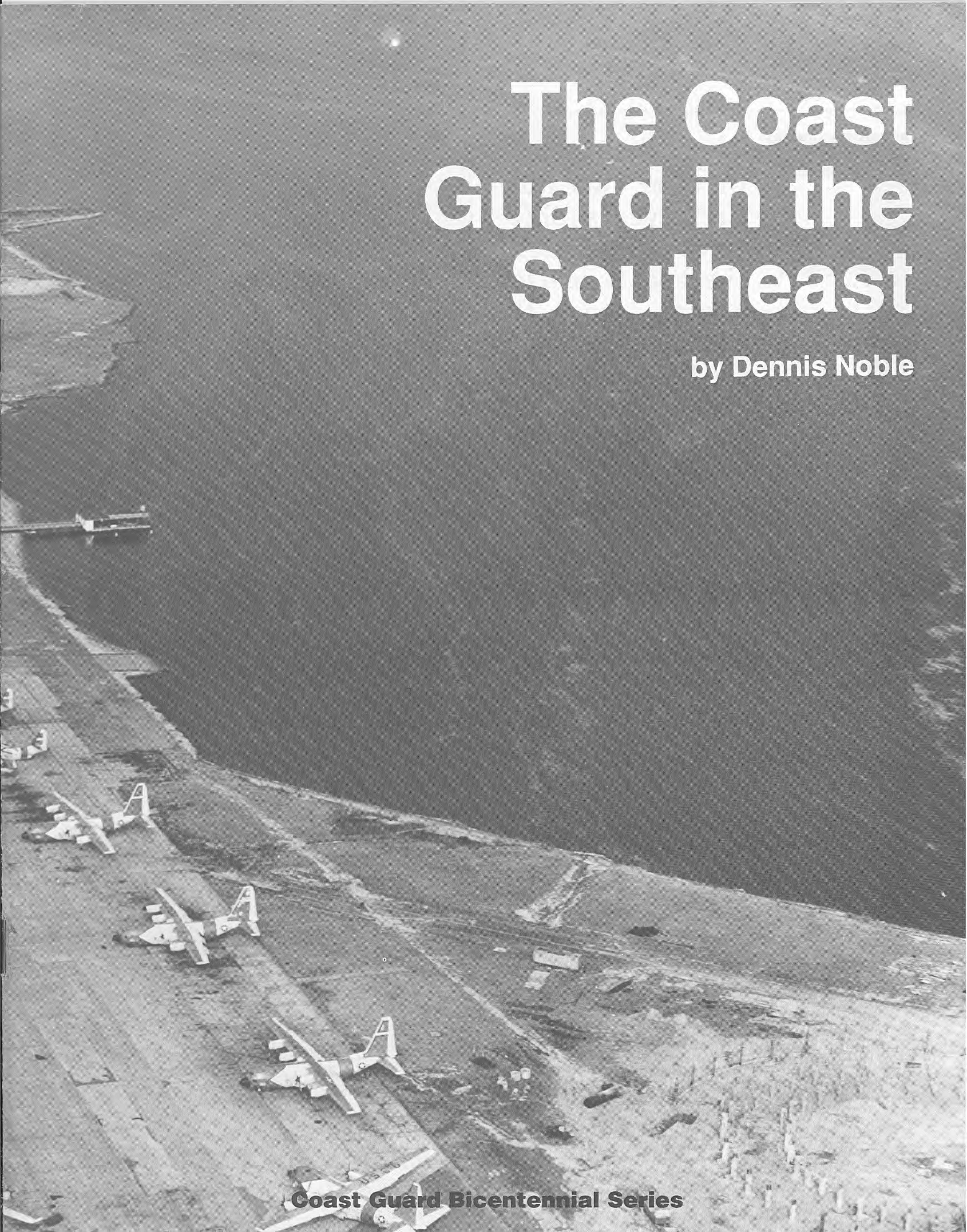
The Coast Guard in the Southeast

by Dennis Noble



Coast Guard Bicentennial Series

For over two hundred years ships have sailed along the coasts of Delaware to the Chesapeake Bay to the low-lying sandy shores of Georgia. Within this area, lies a stretch of coastline that was greatly feared by even the most seasoned sailors for the hundreds of wrecks on its shores: the Outer Banks of North Carolina, called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic."

In the late 1700's, the United States' government realized the hazards of sailing along the southeast Atlantic and formed four small maritime organizations that were devoted to law enforcement, rescue, and safety for those who ventured out onto the sea. In time, these four services were combined into what is now the U.S. Coast Guard.

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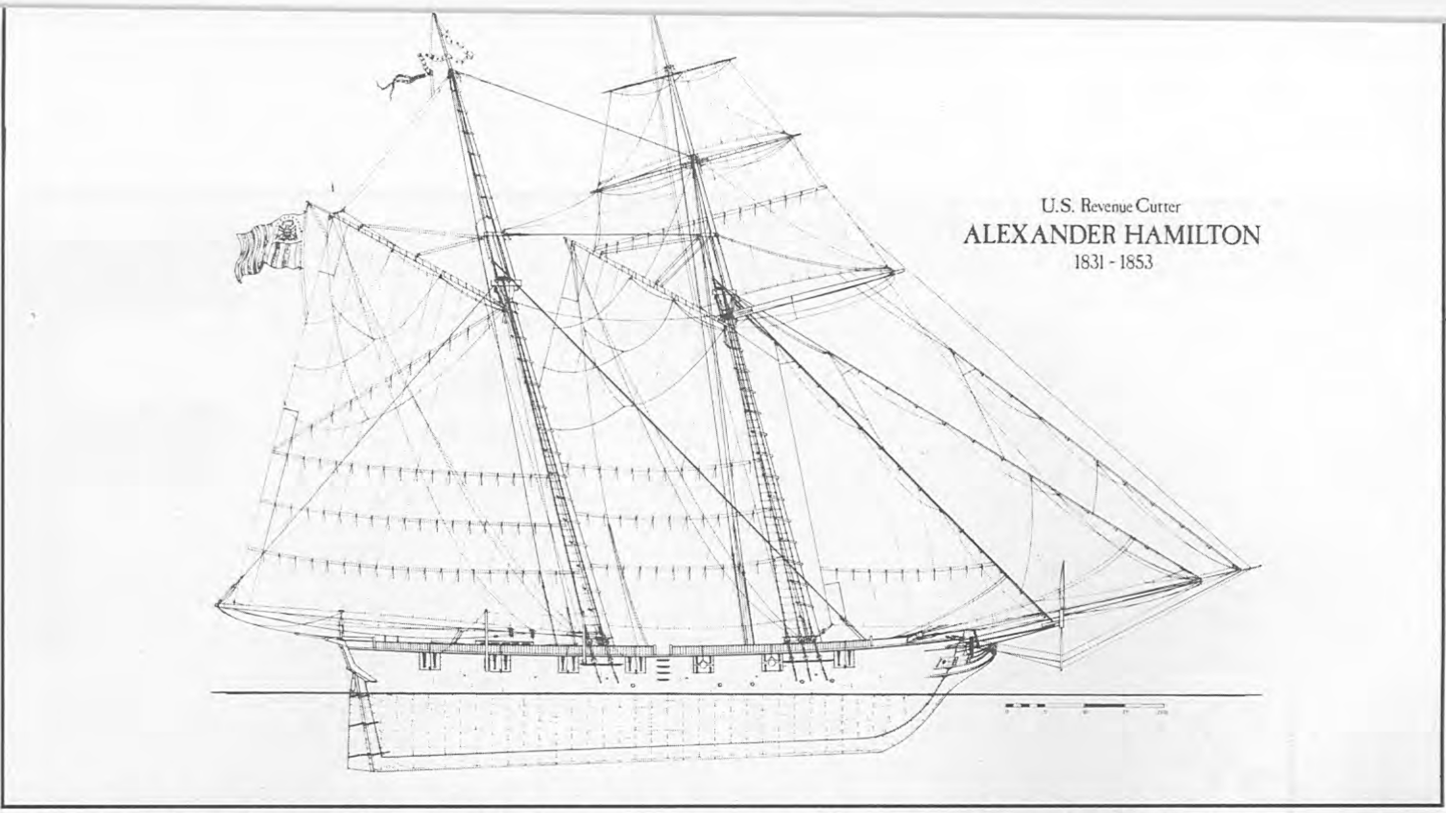
Edited and Designed by Victoria T. Bracewell for Commandant's Bulletin # 4-89
Cover Photo:Air Station Elizabeth City, N.C.

A Coast Guard crew fires a Lyle cannon line thrower used for

shore-to-ship breeches buoy rescues for more than 80 years.



The Revenue Cutter *Alexander Hamilton*, Charleston, S.C. In a gale on the evening of December 9, 1853, *Alexander* was torn from her moorings, driven onto the shoals and went down with all hands lost except one seaman.

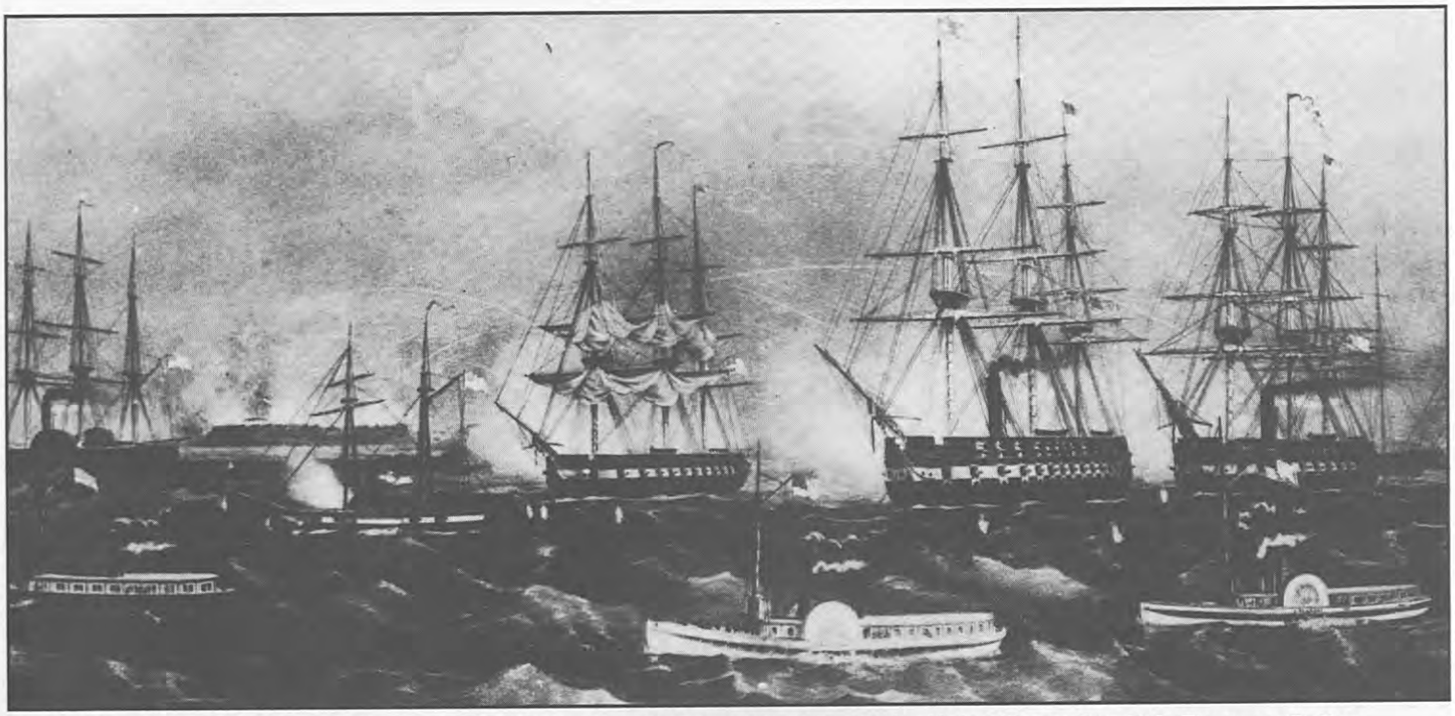
Prior to the American Revolution, the colonists balked at what they felt were undue taxes imposed upon goods entering North America. One of the ways to escape this oppressive tariff was by smuggling. Once open war between England and the colonies began, smugglers were considered patriots by robbing King George of his badly needed revenue. When the war was over however, the new nation found itself in a quandary. Congress badly needed revenue and one of the ways to raise this money was by placing tariffs on imported goods. Many smugglers saw little difference between the tax imposed by King George and the Congress of the United States, so they continued their illegal trade. On April 23, 1790, Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, presented a bill to Congress calling for the establishment of a United States Revenue Marine Service. The minuscule service, consisting of only ten small cutters, would help prevent the loss of badly needed revenue. Hamilton also wished the masters to be granted naval commissions, but as there was no U.S. Navy at the time, the men became "officers of the customs." Upon Congressional approval of the plan on August 4, 1790, the first ten cutters were constructed and then stationed at strategic locations along the Atlantic sea coast. The cutters were built to be fast to overtake ships at sea; sturdy enough to sail off the coast and endure foul weather; and shallow so they could pursue ships up rivers. In the Southeast, the *Virginia* at Norfolk,, Virginia, and the *Active*, at Baltimore, Maryland, were to patrol "Chesapeake Bay and the coasts adjacent to it." The *Diligence* sailed from Wilmington, North Carolina, and patrolled the "sounds & coasts of that state." The *South Carolina*, at Charleston, worked the Atlantic coastline of her namesake state, while the *Eagle*, at Savannah, Georgia, patrolled Georgia's coastal region. None of the cutters were over forty-eight feet in length.

...smugglers saw little difference between the tax imposed by King George and the Congress of the United States.

The cutters diligently followed their orders to board and check manifests and seized those ships engaged in smuggling. One historian of the early years of this nation noted that the "Service probably accounted for some of the post 1792 increase in the recorded trade of the nation, for the [S]ervice did help to prevent smuggling and did help to collect the revenue."

It was not long before other duties were assigned to the cutters. In 1794, for example, Baltimore officials feared yellow fever might be brought into the city via vessels returning from the West Indies and requested help in establishing a quarantine. The *Active* steadfastly enforced the quarantine law. Shortly after, the Service also took on its first military duty when, during the Quasi-War with France (1797-1801) revenue cutters assisted the newly created U.S. Navy fight the French. In the war, American ships captured twenty ships flying the French flag. Of these, sixteen ships were taken by the revenue cutters unaided and they assisted in the capture of two more. The use of the small cutters during the Quasi-war marked the beginning of the tradition of military service for the U. S. Coast Guard.

In addition to law enforcement and



The bombardment of Forts Hatteras and Clark on August 28 and 29, 1861, by the Union Navy. The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service cutter *Harriet Lane*, third ship from the left, also has the credit of firing the first naval shot of the war.

military duties, the Service also played a humanitarian role. In 1836, the cutters were ordered to undertake "winter cruising" in the stormy Atlantic, when sailing ships were most likely to be in need of assistance. The tradition of humanitarian help was a strong one throughout the years. On August 1, 1892, for example, Seaman George Nobles, on board the cutter *Morrill*, saw a boy fall into the water near the Customs House at Charleston, South Carolina. Nobles dove repeatedly to locate the boy, who had become entangled in debris on the bottom. His successful saving of the boy's life earned him the Gold Life-Saving Medal, the highest award for lifesaving.

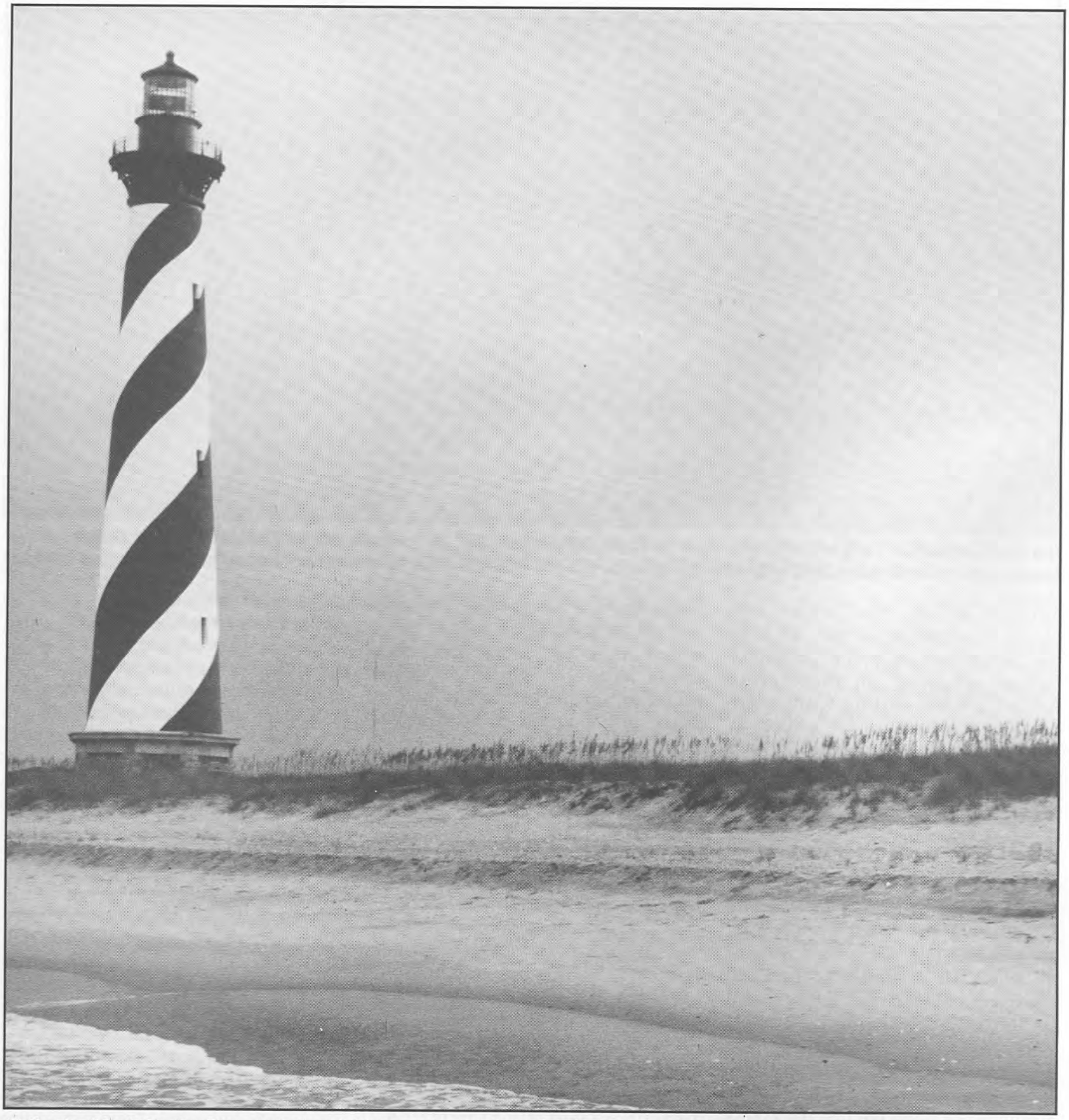
The American Civil War saw the Service again engaged in military operations. The *Harriet Lane* had the distinction of firing the first naval shot of the war in April 1861 and four months later, in August 1861, she participated in the first joint Federal amphibious operation. The object of the engagement was to capture the strategic Confederate forts at Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina, a vital opening for Rebel privateers and blockade runners.

The most unusual cutter of the Service during the War-Between-the-States was the *Naugatuck*. The ship was an ironclad semi-submersible, which could be ballasted to sink almost three feet. Thus ballasted, she would engage the enemy with only a Parrott gun mounted on her armored turret above the water.

The *Naugatuck* also led a naval assault up the James River to shell the Rebel capital, Richmond, Virginia, into submission. She was engaged in a four hour long duel between a Confederate battery on Drewry's Bluff. The cutter's Parrott gun exploded, but she "continued in her position during the entire action, fighting her broadside guns."

> *After some delays, the School of Instruction, the predecessor of the Coast Guard Academy, was well established in training professional officers.*

By the 1870s, as technology continued to favor steam over sail, it became evident to some far-seeing officials within the Service and the Treasury Department, that young officers needed to be exposed to formal training in both ships and technology. Prior to this time, officers usually had merchant marine or Navy experience. Typically, they came into the Revenue Cutter Service and worked their way up to Captain by serving on numerous cutters. At first glance, this may seem the ideal method of obtaining well-qualified men for sea duty. The method, however, did have one shortcoming. Officers were appointed to their posts by political appointees. Captains George W. Moore, James H. Merryman, and John A. Henriques urged Sumner I. Kimball, then civilian head of the Revenue Marine Division in the Treasury Department, to establish a School of Instruction for officers. Thus, future officers were removed from the political arena. Kimball was enthusiastic and on July 31, 1876, an act was passed to fill vacancies with cadets in the rank of Third Lieutenant. In 1877, the cutter *Dobbin* was selected as a floating school for Service cadets. Cruising the Atlantic in the summers and wintering at New Bedford, Massachusetts, cadets spent two years of instruction on board the ship.



Authorized in 1794, the Cape Hatteras Light was not established until 1803. The original light was razed and the present light was lit in 1870. At 190 feet its one the nation's tallest brick lights. The black and white bands act as a daymark.

After some delays, the School of Instruction, with the cutter *Chase* now the training ship, was moved to Arundel Cove in Curtis Bay, Maryland, located just south of Baltimore. Arundel Cove was the Service's shipyard facility, established in 1899 by LT. John C. Moore. In 1906, the first permanent dormitory ashore was built for cadets at Arundel Cove. The School of Instruction continued to grow, as did the industrial work at the Cove. Eventually, Arundel Cove became the Coast Guard Yard. The school remained, until in 1910, the entire school was moved to Fort Trumbull, Connecticut. In time, the School of Instruction would become the U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut.

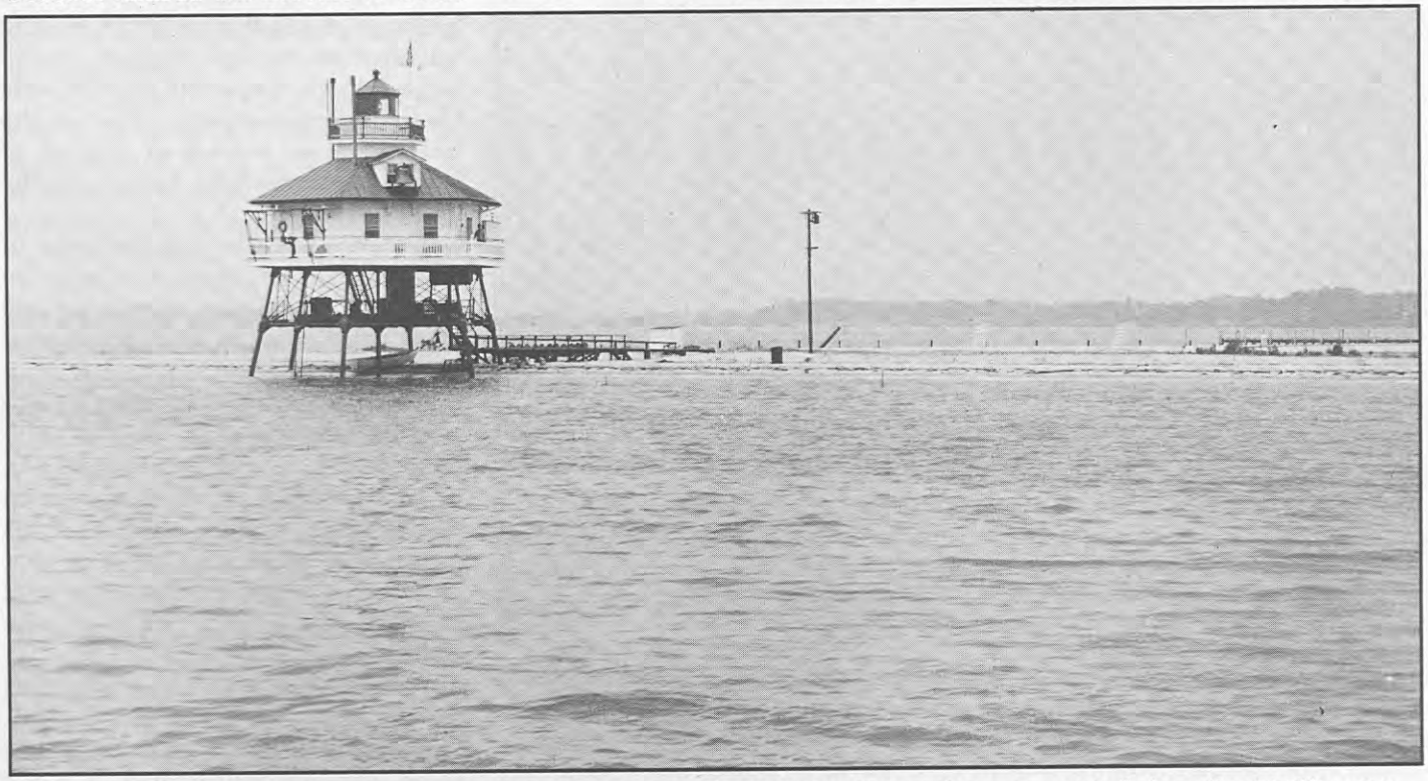
By the second decade of the twentieth century, the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service had gained a reputation among the United States' maritime community as the enforcer of federal laws. It was also known as an organization that responded quickly to the nation's military needs, provided trained professional officers, and profoundly dedicated to humanitarian efforts. Yet even these honors would not deter the tremendous changes that would take place in the Service's near future.

The U.S. Lighthouse Service was the next maritime organization that would eventually make up the modern day U.S. Coast Guard. The Lighthouse Service in the Southeastern Region came about because of the importance of maritime trade. Mariners, approaching their destinations, needed aids to navigation in order to safely make port. The first lighthouse was established in 1716 in Boston Harbor.

The Southeastern coastline of the United States required a different type of light structure than in New England. The region's low, sandy beaches caused the Service to build taller lighthouses so that mariners could see them sufficiently far at sea. Although the records are somewhat hazy, the first lighthouse in the region is believed to have been established at Tybee Island, Georgia, in 1748. One other type of light was required in the region, again, due to the special topography of the area. The Chesapeake Bay has slow moving currents, a soft bottom, and is protected from the full force of the sea. A heavy lighthouse would sink in this region, thus the screw-pile lighthouse was developed and built along the Cheaspeakes's shores. The structure has a light weight wooden building on iron stilts, the legs of which are tipped with screw-like flanges. The legs are turned instead of pounded into the bottom sand or mud. In the late 1800s as many as 100 screw-pile lights were in service, mostly in the Carolina Sounds and the Chesapeake Bay, but a few others were scattered along the Gulf of Mexico. The Lighthouse Service also designed an exposed, screw-pile lighthouse specifically for the Florida Keys.

> *Many of the principal light keepers throughout the nineteenth century were women, often taking charge after the death of a husband or relative.*

The life of a lighthouse keeper, contrary to myth and legend, was far from romantic. The technology of the day used the simplest equipment to both provide illumination and to keep costs low. Oil from whales, lard, rapeseed and, finally, petroleum products were used in succession throughout the nineteenth century for illuminates.



Drum Point Light, Maryland. This screw-pile light was saved from destruction and transferred to Calvert County Museum.

A Coast Guardsman and his dog patrol a remote stretch of coastline alert for enemy spies or saboteurs landing on U.S. shores. Two thousand dogs, most donated by clubs and private individuals, were trained at Hilton, S.C., where horses were also trained for patrol.

The flame for the light itself was provided by a lamp with a wick. The duty of the keeper was to insure that the lens was soot-free and the wick well trimmed, as a poorly trimmed wick provided a very poor light. The constant attention to wicks led lighthouse keepers to earn the nickname "wickie." In actuality, the elemental technology of the nineteenth century caused wickies to spend long, lonesome nights monitoring a lamp. Perhaps this is one of the most significant reasons that former keepers when asked to describe their lives, always comment on their isolation and loneliness.

The picture of the lighthouse keeper that leaps into most imaginations is that of an old grizzled "salt" who "swallowed the anchor," and has come ashore to live. There is some truth to this mental image; many keepers were indeed former mariners. There were, however, a great deal of women who carried on the roles of the Service. Some wives served as assistant keepers and, according to F. Ross Holland, one of this country's leading authorities on lighthouses, many women in the nineteenth century were the principal keepers. One of the more unusual stories of women at lights concerns Elba Island on the Savannah River.

Florence Martus was the sister of George Martus, who worked the range lights at the mouth of the Savannah River. In 1887, the legend goes, a young Navy lieutenant from Massachusetts fell in love with eighteen-year-old Florence. As the years passed and he did not return, she began to wave a handkerchief, given to her by the officer, at all the ships passing the island with the hope that some sailor would tell her lover that Florence still cared. At night she waved a lantern.

Years later, Florence revealed that the story was just a romantic legend. She started to wave at the passing ships, always accompanied by a pet dog, as a way to greet lonely sailors either returning to port or setting out again to sea. Still, the "waving girl of the Savannah River" was anxiously looked for by appreciative seamen as they passed the island. For forty-four years Florence continued her greetings. Today, on the Savannah waterfront, a statue of Florence Martus, in her pose of greeting ships, is dedicated to her memory.

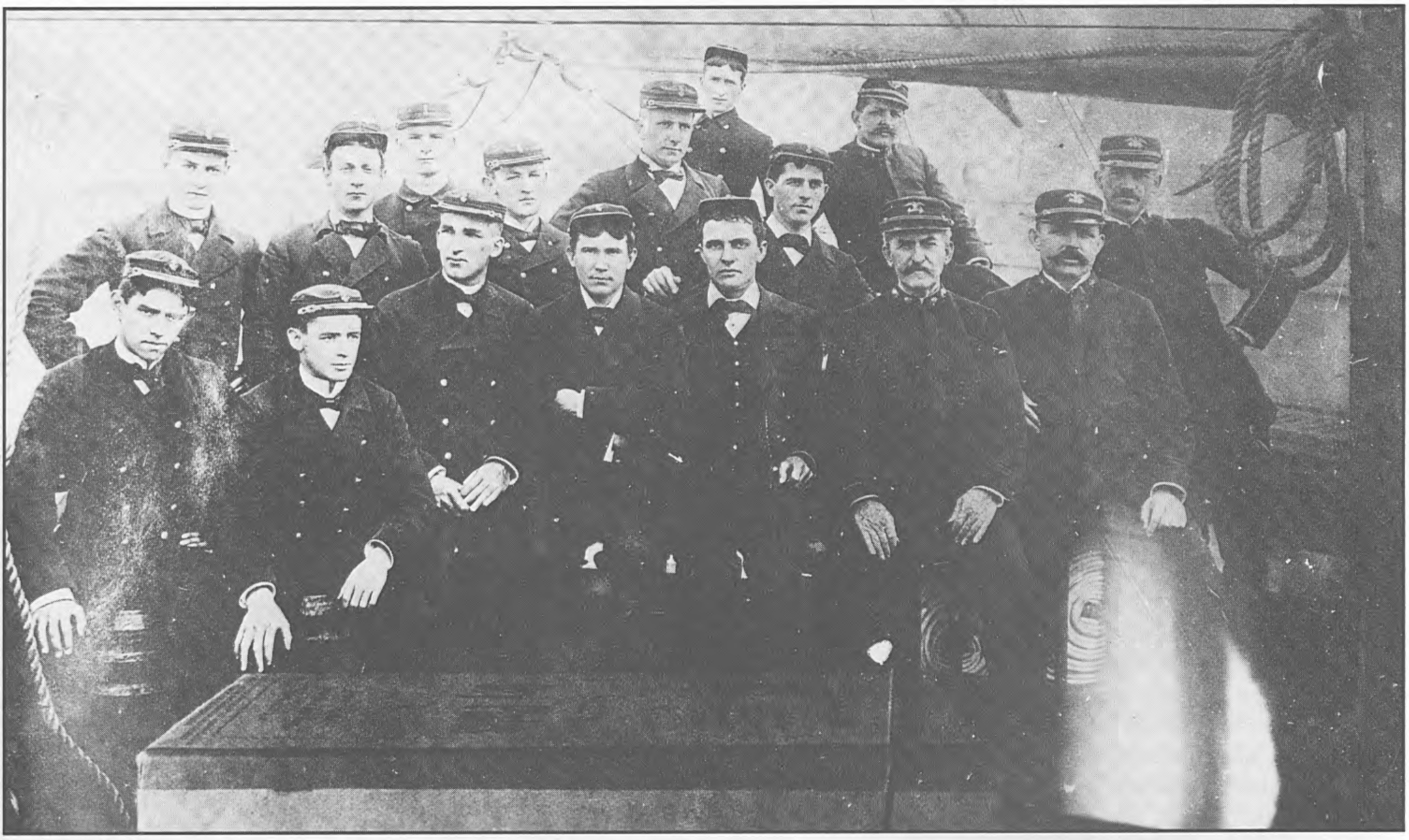
While lighthouse duty was lonely, life on lightships was both lonely and dangerous. Lightships were located at areas where 19th Century technology could not build a light structure. Crews on the vessels faced two dangers: storms that could blow the ship off station, and perhaps even capsize it, and risked possible collision by another ship making its way through foul weather. *Diamond Shoals* Lightship, thirteen miles east southeast of Cape Hatteras Light, for example, during the period from June 1824 to August 1827, had her moorings snapped three times in storms. During the last storm of August 1827, she was driven ashore six miles from Ocracoke Inlet.

On August 6, 1918, during World War I, the *Diamond Shoals* Lightship was sunk, but not as a result of nature. A German submarine was spotted attacking a merchant ship. The radio operator on board the lightship bravely radioed a warning to all shipping in the area. The U-boat picked up the transmission and the U-boat's commander turned his attention to the defenseless target. Fortunately, the light vessel's crew was given time to abandon ship before she was sunk.

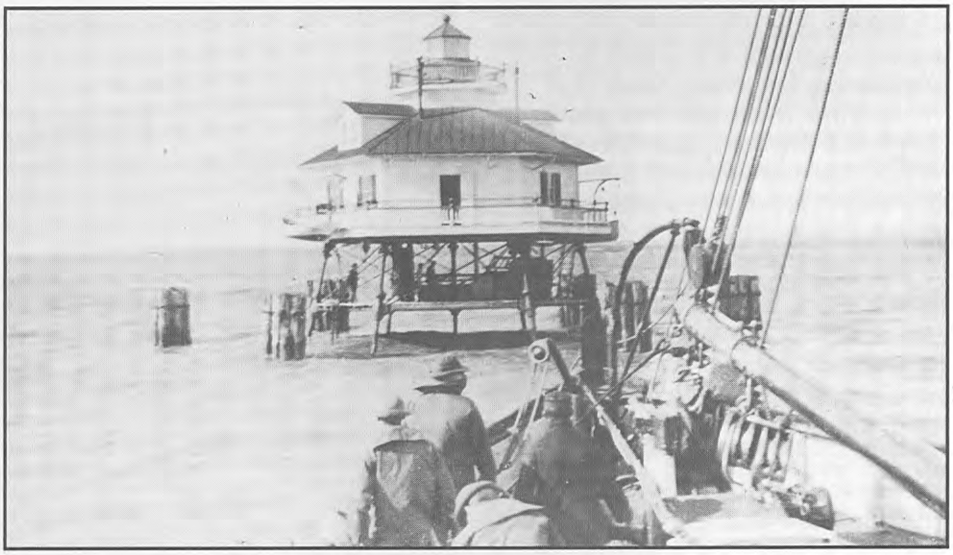
By the 1930s, the U. S. Lighthouse Service claimed up to fifty-eight lighthouses, a number of lightships, and an additional fleet of ships, called tenders, operating on rivers and along the Atlantic coast.

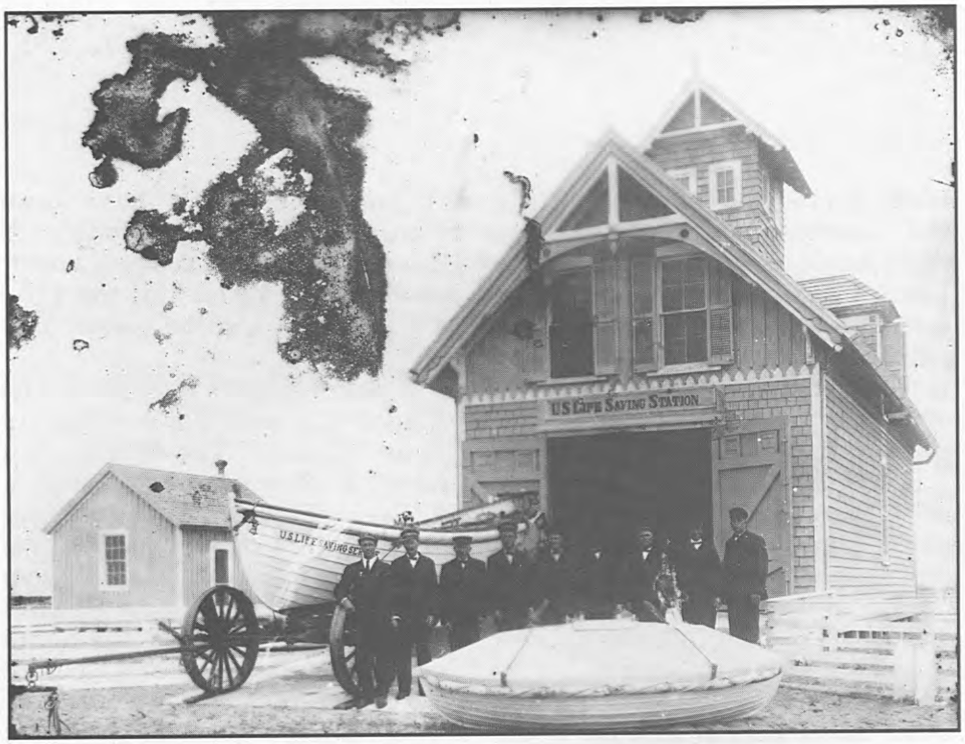
The modern day U.S. Coast Guard has a well deserved reputation for lifesaving. The organization that is probably most responsible for this reputation was the U.S. Life-Saving Service.

One of more than 5,000 pleasure craft used by the Coast Guard to patrol the coastal waters of the U.S. during World War II. Sailing vessels were used because they moved with ghostly silence through water and thus were better suited for listening than motor vessels.

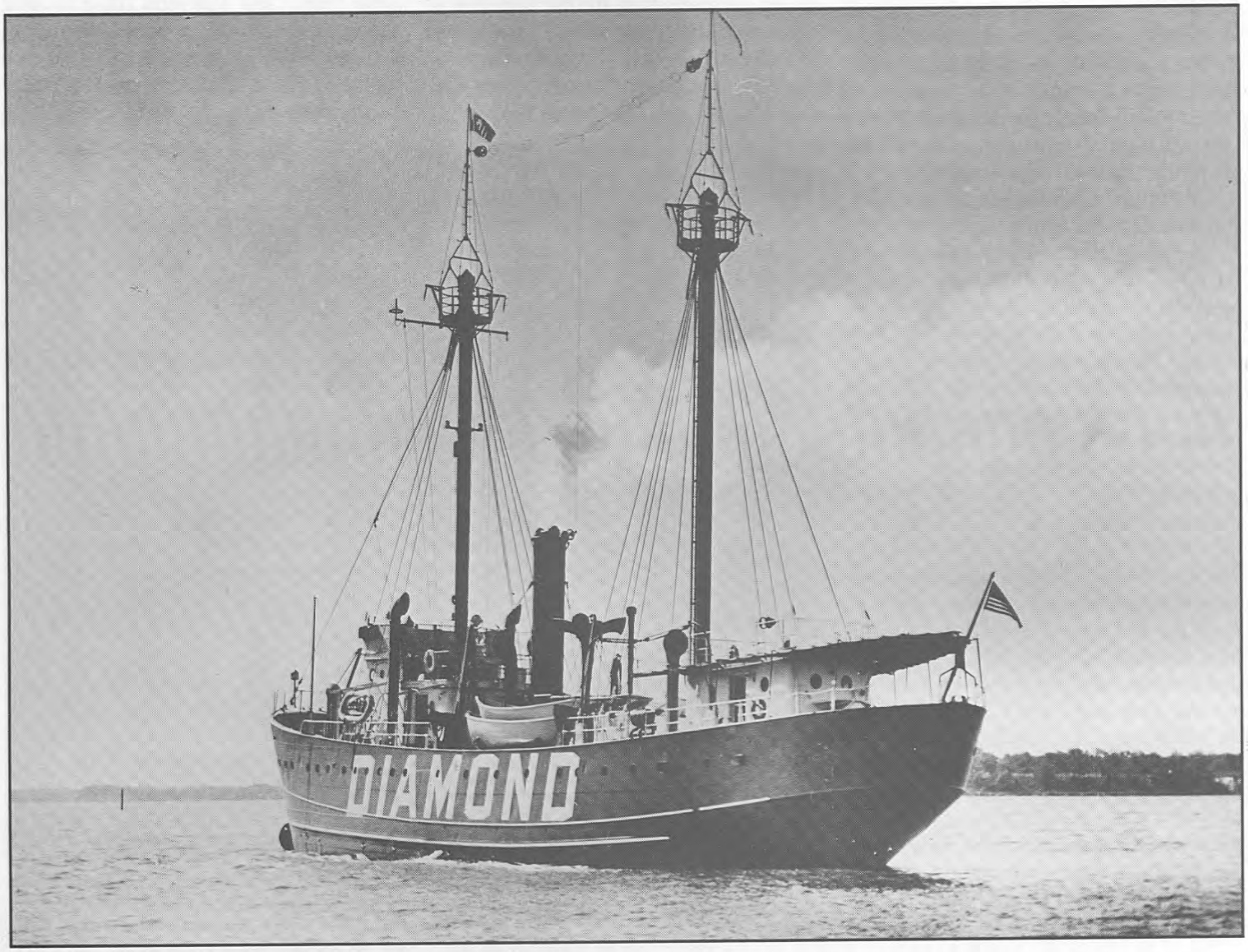


Top: The Class of 1896, School of Instruction (forerunner of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy). *Right:* A U.S. Lighthouse tender approaches the screw-pile light at Laurel Point, N.C. Tenders provisioned lights and repaired aids to navigation. *Bottom:* John Allen Midgett many years after his famed rescue of the Mirlo in 1918. Midgett and his crew took their boat through a burning sea to save 42 crewmen.




U.S. LIFE SAVING STATION
U.S. LIFE SAVING ST

Left: A U.S. Life-Saving Station along North Carolina's Outer Banks, probably in the late 1800s. The size of the crew depended on the number of oars needed for the largest boat at the station, usually a two- to four-ton lifeboat. Pictured with this crew is the smaller surfboat and the lifecar, the boat-like device in the foreground. *Below:* The Diamond Shoal Lightship.



U.S. Life-Saving Service

Storm Warriors and Soldiers of the Surf

The Service gained its greatest reputation from the activities of the crews that were stationed along the Outer Banks of North Carolina, commonly known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic."

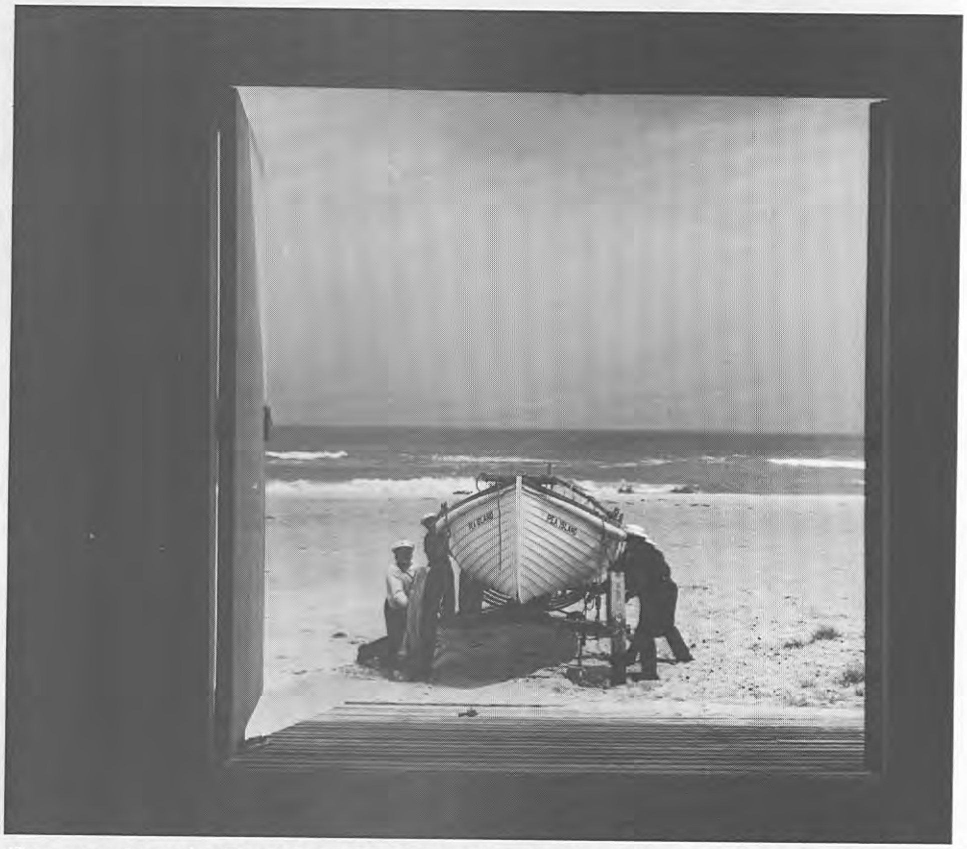
The Life-Saving Service has its origins in volunteer organizations that launched small boats from shore-based stations to aid ships wrecked on or near the beach. In the days of sail, a captain did not dare risk putting his ship close to the beach in heavy seas. With only the wind for power, a vessel could very easily be trapped in the pounding surf. Small boats were considered the best method with their easy maneuverability for approaching wrecks near the shore.

In 1848, the federal government entered the shore business when it established stations along New York's Long Island and the New Jersey coastlines. These stations were generally manned by volunteers and slowly spread southward and northward along the Atlantic coast. By the 1850s there were some stations along the graveyard of the Atlantic. It was not, however, until 1871, when Sumner I. Kimball began to reorganize the Service that a truly dependable rescue organization came into being Kimball was made General Superintendent of the Service in 1878, and, under his leadership, stations were established on the East and West Coasts, the Gulf of Mexico, and on the Great Lakes.

The Service used two methods to rescue ships wrecked near the shore: a 700 to 1,000 pound surfboat or a two to four ton lifeboat was rammed into the seas and the crewmen, called surfmen, would row to the ship. If the seas were too high even for small boats, and the ship was close enough, the lifesavers would use a device called a Lyle gun to shoot a line to the wreck. A heavy hawser would be connected between the two points and a device, which looked like a life ring with canvas pants attached, known as a breeches buoy, would be pulled by a pulley system to the sailors.

The story of the Life-Saving Service on the Outer Banks dominates the history of the Service, even though many other locations have had a long relationship with the organization. Most notable among the Outer Banks lifesavers is the renown Midgett family, who have patrolled the beaches of the Outer Banks since at least the 1790s. Even among other heroic families of Hatteras, the Midgetts are considered mighty men. Claiming one hero in a family is usually considered legendary. Yet, over the years ten men of the mighty Midgetts have been awarded Life-Saving Medals of Honor, a record that remains unsurpassed in the history of the Life-Saving Service and the current day Coast Guard.

So many Midgetts have performed extraordinary feats that singling out one is difficult. The first known Midgett to be employed by the U. S. Life-Saving Service was L. Bannister Midgett in 1874. One member of the family succinctly explained why so many had entered the U. S. Life-Saving Service and the U.S.Coast Guard: *"Back then, there wasn't much to do down here. You could either set around and fish, or you could go out and save lives. The Midgetts chose to save lives."* From 1876 to 1972, seven Midgetts have won the Gold Life-Saving Medal. Probably no one better epitomizes what the U. S. Life-Saving



Crewmen from the Pea Island, North Carolina, Station transporting a surfboat. The Pea Isand Station was the only station in the Service that was manned entirely by blacks.

Swedish steamer *Carl Gerhard* stranded two miles off North Carolina's coast in 1929. Coast Guard shore units save 23.

Service stood for than Rasmus Midgett of the Gulf Shoal Station.

On the stormy night of August 18, 1899, the barkentine *Priscilla* struck the bottom, bounded off, and tossed on the towering waves, only to strike the bottom again with a terrible impact. The sea instantly flooded in on the stricken ship. The Captain's wife was the first to be swept overboard, followed by their young son. The frothing sea tore the boy from his father's arms sweeping him far overboard and in the next bizarre minute his lifeless body was swept back into the cabin. The remaining men, with their greater strength, were able to hold tight to the breaking ship.

As the seaman awaited their seemingly doomed end, Surfman Rasmus Midgett was patrolling the beach and spotted the *Priscilla* broached in the pounding surf. Midgett knew that by the time he returned to the station, summoned help and then returned, all of the ten remaining people on board would be dead. With little thought of his own life, the surfman timed the surf, ran in as far as possible, yelling, *"Next time-one man-jump! I'll take care of you! One man-only one!"*. One after another, a seaman would hurled himself into Midgett's arms and Midgett dragged them one at another through the raging sea to safety ashore. In this fashion, Midgett saved seven of the ten men. Realizing that the three remaining crewmen were too battered and weak from the heavy seas to go over the side of the *Priscilla.* Midgett fought his way through the pounding surf to the ship and then, using lines that were hanging from the ravaged rigging, pulled himself hand-over-

US LIFE SAVING STATION

Kill Devil Hills Life Saving Service Station on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, around 1900. Surfmen from this station helped the Wright brothers launch the first successful aircraft flight.

US COAST GUARD
CG36459

The 36-foot motor lifeboat was standard rough weather rescue craft in the Coast Guard from pre-WWII until 1962.

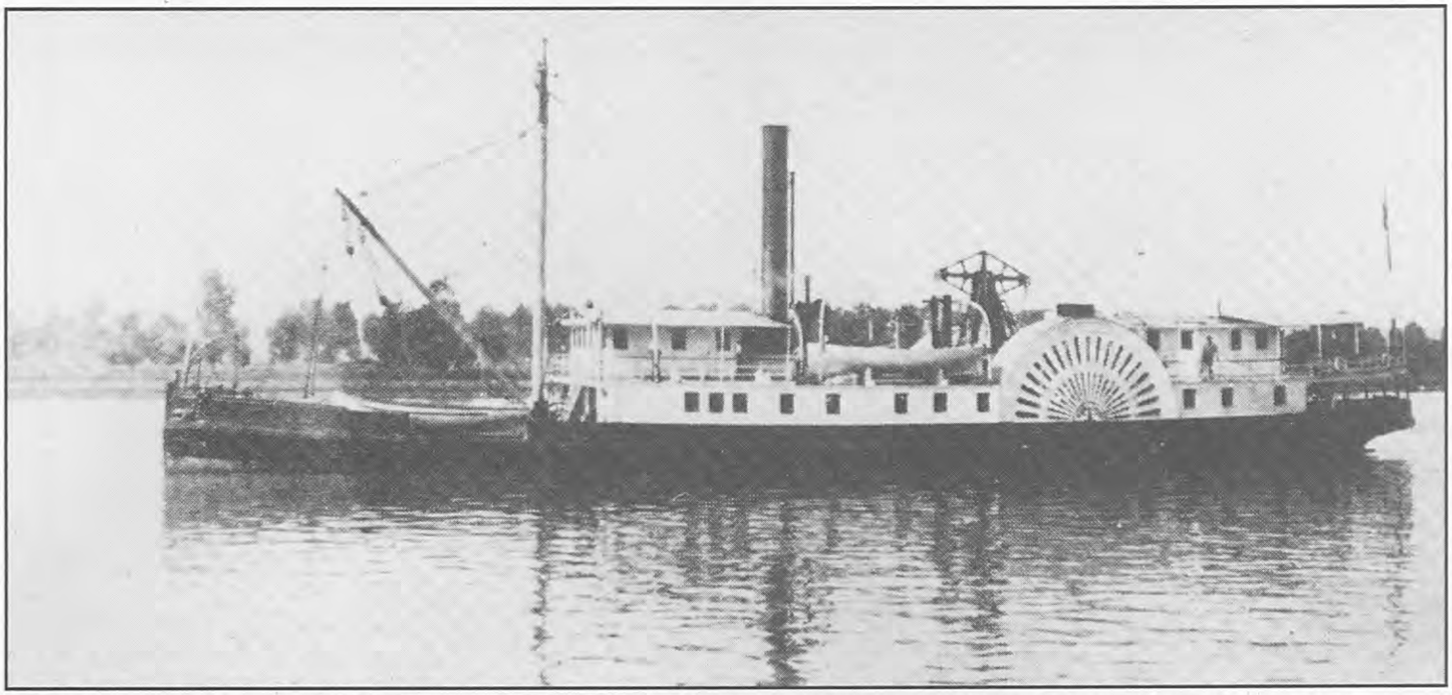
hand up to the deck. After locating the men, he slung one man over his shoulder, plunged back over the side, and somehow managed to bring the sailor to the shore. In an amazing feat of endurance, Midgett returned two more times until, finally, he had rescued all ten crewmen. For his superhuman effort, Rasmus Midgett was awarded the Gold Life-Saving Medal and the enduring respect and admiration of the maritime community.

The U.S. Life-Saving Service was a highly respected organization. Reporters called surfmen "storm warriors" and "soldiers of the surf". No matter how respected, or popular, there existed one flaw within the organization and by the second decade of the twentieth century it would surface and lead to a change that would radically alter the Service.

The last small organization that would eventually make up the U.S. Coast Guard in the Southeastern region is the U.S. Steamboat Inspection Service. When steam first became an important element of ship propulsion, there were a number of terrible disasters, with a large loss of life, due to faulty boilers. On June 14, 1838, for example, the steamboat *Pulaski* exploded in North Carolina, with the loss of approximately one hundred lives. This disaster, combined with others, led the Congress to hesitatingly, on July 7, 1838, to pass an act "for the better security of the lives of passengers" on steamships. Over the years, the federal government was extremely reluctant in enacting laws regarding safety at sea. This was due to a debate as to whether the government was the best way to handle safety laws or if private industry should do it themselves. The Service, operating under the Treasury Department, in fits and starts, slowly moved ahead enforcing safety at sea. In 1932, to the "probable relief of the Secretary of the Treasury," the Steamboat Inspection Service was moved to the Department of Commerce and Labor. Although there were additional disasters that pointed out weaknesses in the system, the Service continued to press forward in the field of maritime safety. By the 1920s, there were nine field inspection units located within the Southeastern region.

Throughout the beginning of the twentieth century there had been discussions of transferring the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service into the U.S. Navy, but the idea had been continually rejected. Then, as 1914 approached, it was determined that the U.S. Life-Saving Service had grown old and archaic. The lack of a retirement system and the low pay failed to attract younger men. It was not unusual for boat crews to have men in their sixties and seventies. Furthermore, the Service was originally designed to launch small pulling boats to rescue large ships in distress close to shore. By 1914, navigational devices had improved so that groundings were becoming rare, but the use of small gasoline powered boats was increasing and the organization, as it was constructed, was not set up to handle that type of work. In 1914, a proposal to combine the U.S. Life-Saving Service and the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service was put forth, and met with the approval of the heads of the two Services. On January 15, 1915, the two organizations were merged to form the U.S. Coast Guard.

The new U. S. Coast Guard continued the lifesaving traditions of its predecessor and was soon put to test. On August 11, 1918, at the height of World War I, the lookout at the Nag's Head Station, North Carolina, spotted a British tanker, the *Mirlo*, hit by a torpedo. The shout of the lookout began a rescue by the station crew, under the command of John Allen Midgett, that has become a legend in the annals of the Coast Guard. Twelve years later, in 1930, Midgett and his crew received one of Great Britain's highest honors, The Grand Cross, for their bravery.



The U.S. Light House Tender *Holly*. The tender serviced aids to navigation on the Chesapeake Bay from 1881 to 1931.

The citation for the award best sums up what took place that evening in 1918.

In a heavy northeast sea that caused the lifeboat to be

> *". . . tossed back upon the beach and the crew washed away from the oars time after time. Undaunted they returned to their task. After succeeding in getting their boat through the surf they were compelled to steer into a blazing inferno [, where the flames leaped at least 500 feet high,] and were in serious danger of being burned to death if not drowned. They picked up a number of the crew of the Mirlo and towed four of the ship's* **boats ... [T]hey anchored the ... [boats]** *beyond the breakers and then made four trips in their surf boat bringing the entire 42 survivors safely ashore."*

Four members of the boat crew were Midgetts.

The first major test of the new Service's law enforcement duties came about because of the Volstead Act, the Prohibition of liquor in the United States. From 1920 to 1933, the U.S. Coast Guard found itself in a war against smugglers of illegal spirits, known as the Rum War.

The Rum War

1920 to 1933

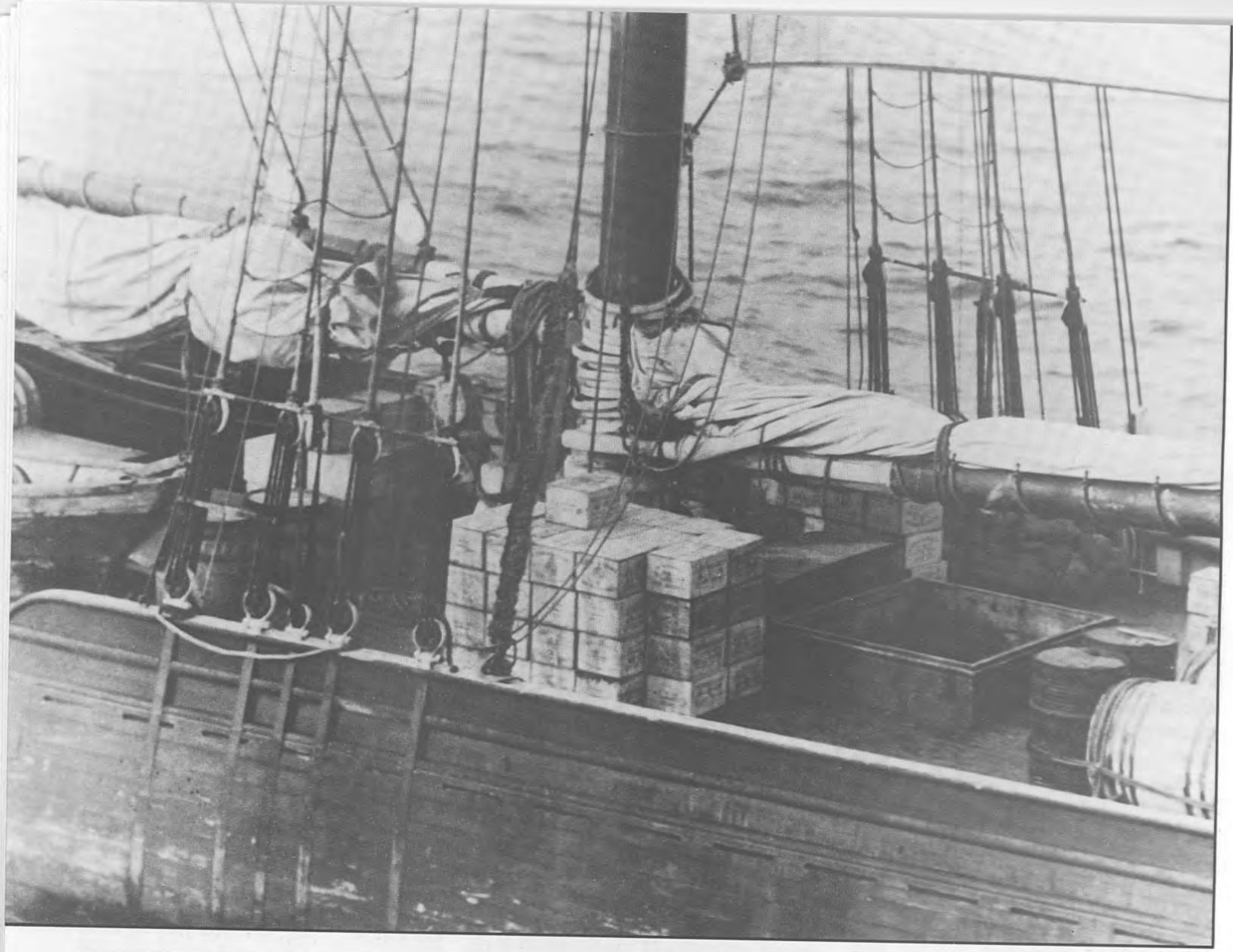
The large amount of smuggling caught the Coast Guard short of both ships and personnel. The first move in the war became a rapid build up of men and equipment. The U.S. Navy lent some aging four stack, flush deck destroyers to be crewed by Coast Guardsmen. In order to provide a patrol boat that could operate far offshore, the new 125 foot class patrol boats, known as "buck and a quarters", were built between 1926 and 1927. Seventy-five foot wooden patrol boats, called "six bitters," and considered a very seaworthy vessel, were also added to the Service's inventory.

The Coast Guard quickly adapted its strategy to take advantage of how the rum runners operated. Usually, large boats would load up with liquor in a foreign port and then remain outside of the United States' territorial limits. The area became known as "rum row." There, small, fast contact boats would have cargoes of booze loaded on board them for the run into a secluded location. The Service set up two lines of defense: the outer line made up of destroyers and buck and a quarters, would shadow the large cargo ships and report on the movements of contact boats to the inner line, made up of six bitters and other patrol craft.

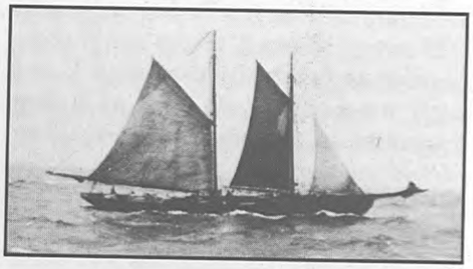
The greatest amount of smuggling took place in the Northeastern region because of the large population centers. There was, however, enough activities in the Southeastern region to keep Coast Guardsmen busy. The six bitter, CG-163, on patrol in the lower portion of the Chesapeake Bay in December 1932, spotted the 56 foot *Matilda Berry*, who suddenly increased speed and maneuvered to put a passenger liner between herself and the patrol boat. CG-163 sounded her siren and illuminated the Coast Guard ensign, but the speedboat would not hove to. The skipper of the patrol boat then ordered three shots fired at the escaping boat. Suddenly, the speedboat circled around the CG-163 laying down a thick smoke screen. Later, it was found that one of the shots had severed the steering ropes of the boat. She was now circling helplessly.

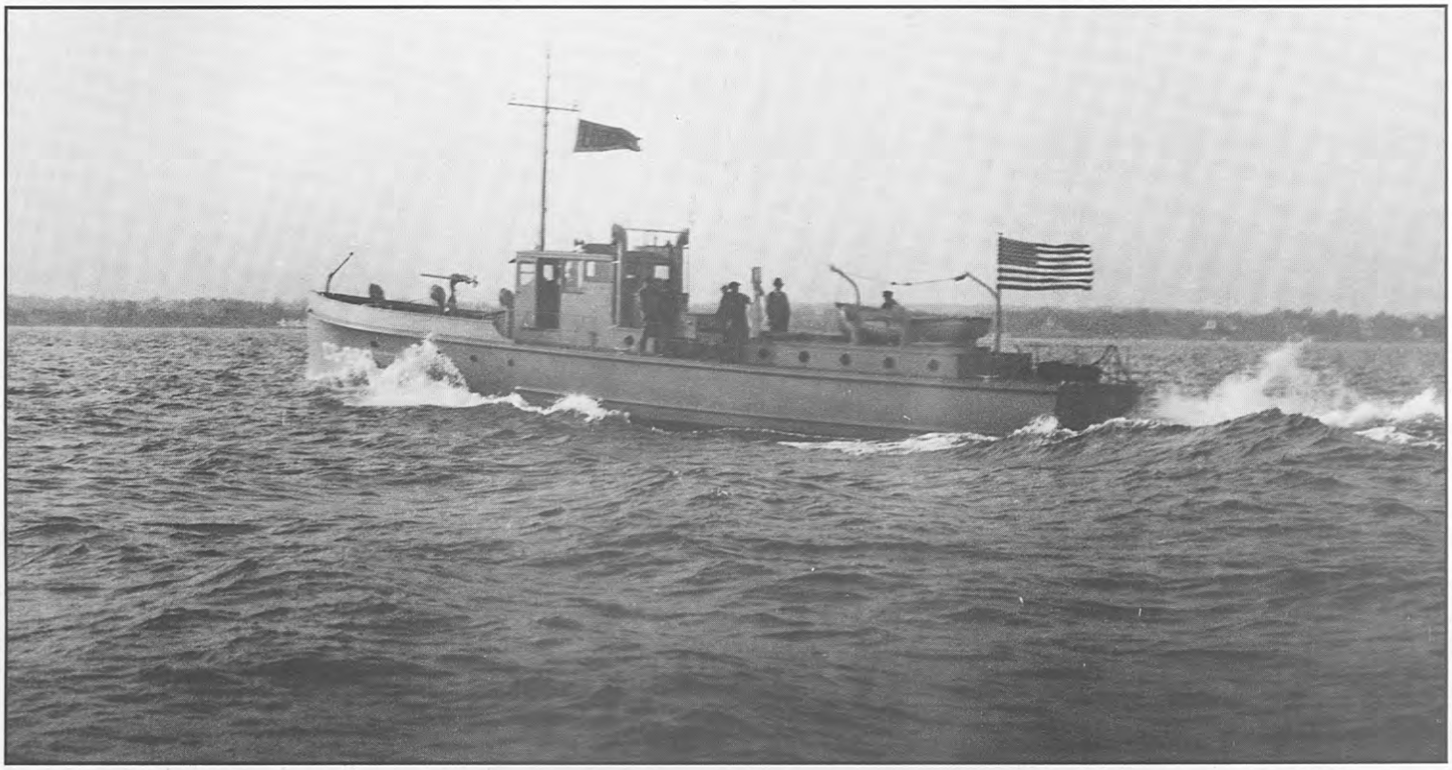
The smuggler knew he could not escape in his boat and so, as the CG-163 approached to put an armed boarding party on the crippled boat, the rum runner tried to launch a dory to escape. In his haste to get away, he fell over the side and drowned.

The U.S. Coast Guard's activities greatly reduced the amount of liquor

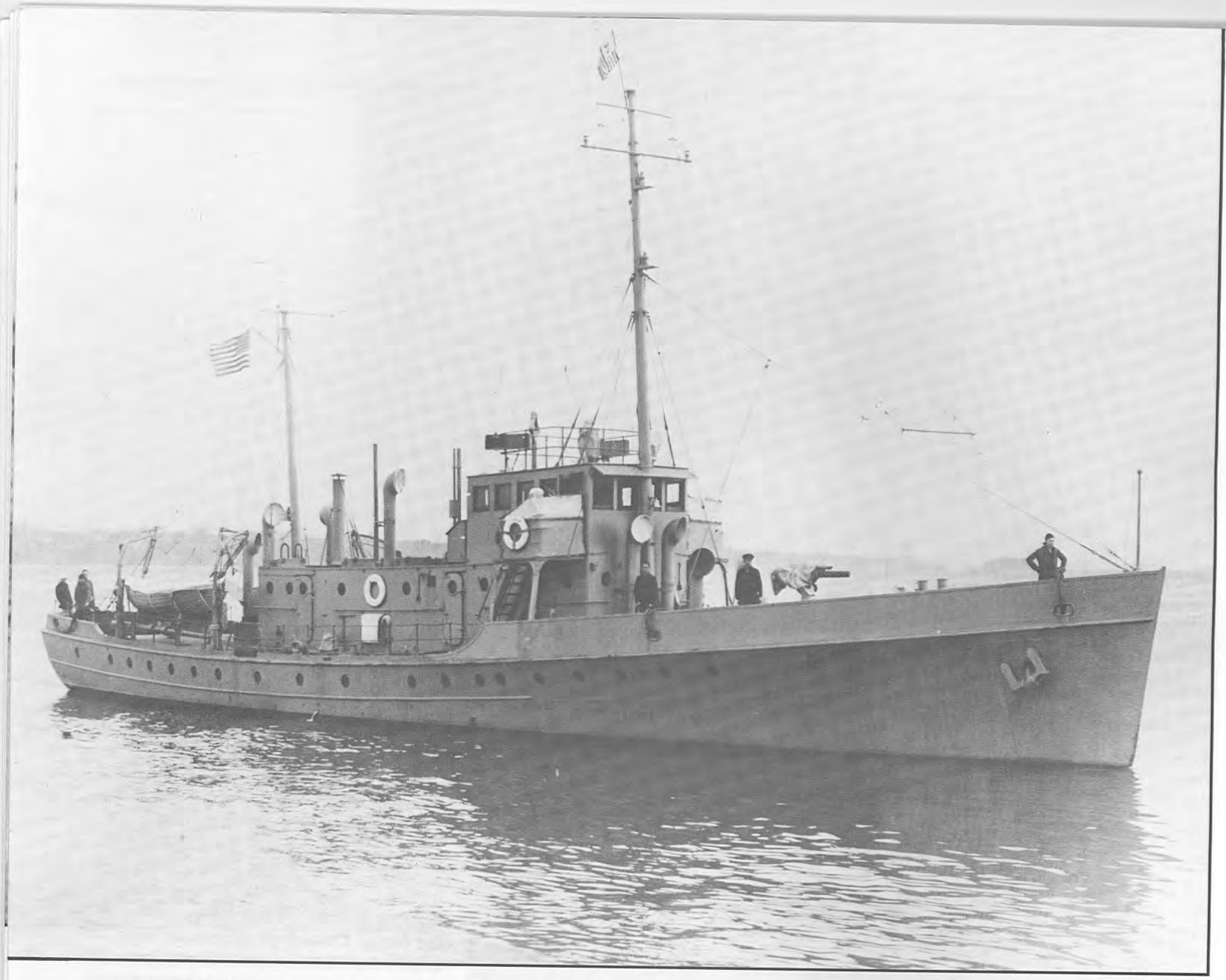


Top: This 1924 picture shows a large cargo of illegal liquor awaiting transportation to shore. The ship lies outside territorial limits of the United States, known as "rum row". *Middle:* A typical liquor-laden schooner, *Poseidon*, of St. Pierre and Miguelon, sighted off Beaufort Entrance, North Carolina, on December 7, 1927. *Bottom:* The Elizabeth City, N.C., Coast Guard air station was first authorized in 1938 and first put into operation in 1940. It is the first aviation unit permanently established in the southeast. AirSta Elizabeth City is also the location for some of the Coast Guard's aviation technical training for enlisted personnel.





Top: 75-foot wooden patrol boats known as "six bitters" were used in the second line of defense against rum runners. *Bottom:* Second Lieutenant Norman B. Hall, *second from left*, from the cutter *Onondaga* at Norfolk, was one of the pioneers of Coast Guard aviation. Hall, an engineer, helped in developing aero-navigation systems in 1916.



Top: **In 1933, the cutter *Tiger* made Norfolk her home port. She is one of the 125-foot patrol boats built between 1926 and 1927 to fight rum war at sea. Crewmen nicknamed the ships "buck and a quarters."** *Right:* **Elmer F. Stone was the first U.S. Coast Guard aviator and one of the pioneers in naval aviation. He is listed as naval aviator number 38. Stone began his aviation career in 1915 when he suggested to the commanding officer of *Onondaga* that aircraft could help in Coast Guard missions.**

entering this country by sea, but the flow was not completely cut off. The end of the Rum War came when prohibition was repealed in 1933. The Service did gain from the long battle. Before 1924, the Coast Guard was a little know organization, but its anti-smuggling work made it internationally known by the time of the repeal. Further, the Service was greatly expanded and had gained a newer inventory of patrol boats and cutters.

The need to locate smugglers far off-shore led to a "renaissance" of the Service's air arm. The first use of aircraft in the Coast Guard came about because of two lieutenants stationed on board the Onondaga at Norfolk, Virginia. Actually, the Service had been midwife to the birth of aviation when three surfmen at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, assisted the Wright Brothers with their aircraft. Surfman J.T. Daniels snapped the only photograph of the historic event.

In 1915, Lieutenants Elmer Stone and Norman Hall approached the Commanding Officer of the cutter *Onondaga*, Captain Benjamin Chiswell, about using aircraft in Coast Guard missions. The officers then convinced the Curtis Flying School at Newport

The Service's newest rotary wing aircraft, the HH-65A "Dolphin", prepares to make a basket hoist. One of the greatest improvements in shore-based search and rescue came with the development of the helicopter as a rescue tool.

News, Virginia, to instruct them in the skills needed for flying. Stone and five others were the first Coast Guardsmen to be assigned to the Naval Aviation School at Pensacola, Florida, in 1916. Hall, an engineer, was sent to the Curtis factory to study aeronautical engineering.

Although Congress authorized ten air stations for the Service, no money was appropriated and the air arm languished. Another false start came in 1920, when the first air station was established in Morehead City, North Carolina. The funds to continue the station were not forthcoming and the station was closed on July 1, 1921. Prohibition finally proved the wisdom of Stone's foresight. Aircraft could locate smugglers far at sea and this gave the air arm the needed boost to become an important part of the Coast Guard mission, although the development would be slow. The first permanent air station of the Service in the Southeastern region was authorized in 1938 and by 1940 Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina was in full operation

By the 1930s, as war clouds gathered in Europe, another major change was in the making for the Coast Guard in the Southeastern region. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a move to streamline government operations, transferred the Lighthouse Service to the U.S. Coast Guard on July 7, 1939. Shortly thereafter, World War II began. In 1942, another move to streamline the government saw the temporary move of the Steamboat Inspection Service, now called the Bureau of Navigation, and under the Department of Commerce, to the Coast Guard. The transfer became permanent in 1946.

The U.S. Coast Guard that emerged from World War II is, basically, the Service now operating in the southeastern United States. To be sure, there have been a number of changes, mainly because of technology. When the Lighthouse Service became a part of the Coast Guard, the Service began to immediately experiment in methods to relieve keepers from lighthouses. The off-shore oil drilling industry led to development of the Texas tower platform that spelled the end of lightships. Texas towers, in turn, were replaced by large navigational buoys. Solar power has also caused the removal of people from lights. In fact, the Service estimates that by 1990 all federal lighthouses in the United States will be automated, thus spelling the end of the wickie and a page in our maritime history.

Technology has also changed the nature of the shore based rescue service. Better ship building and navigational equipment has lessen the danger of running aground, even in the Outer Banks area. New high powered motor lifeboats are now capable of cruising faster and further than ever before. The most extensive change in shore based search and rescue, however, comes from the emergence of the helicopter as a rescue tool. With the rotary wing aircraft and new boats, it is now possible to have fewer stations, but provide even faster service to those in distress.

Rescue work remains a very large part of the work of the Coast Guard in the Southeast. In the period from October of 1985 to October of 1986, for example, Service units responded to 9,315 calls for assistance and saved 390 lives. Coast Guard Station Annapolis, Maryland, was the eighth busiest unit in the Service, with 682 responses and 29 saved lives. A case, on August 13, 1988, at the Indian River Inlet Station, near Wilmington, Delaware, proves that there still exists a need for small boat search and rescue stations. The 23 foot boat *Mako*, radioed a "Mayday" call, the international distress signal, to the Indian River Inlet Station. The owner stated that his pumps had failed and he and three other people were going into the water. In just four minutes, the Coast Guard Station had a 41 foot patrol boat at the scene picking up the four people.! It was a feat not possible even by the old surfmen in the Life-Saving Service.

Over fifty years have passed since the ending of the Rum War, and Coast Guard crews in the Southeast again find themselves in a war fighting against the smuggling of drugs by sea. The scope of the Drug War is readily realized when one realizes that in 1988 crews seized 19,400 pounds of marijuana and 17.7 pounds of cocaine for a street value of 30.35 million dollars.

In 1990, the.U.S. Coast Guard will mark two hundred years of service. Building on the strong foundations of its predecessors, and such people as Revenue Cutter Service Seaman George Nobles, Surfman Rasmus Midgett, Florence Martus, John Allen Midgett, and LT. Elmer Stone, the men and women of today's U.S. Coast Guard match and surpass these illustrious people in their dedicated service to the people of the Southeastern region of the United States.