

U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER WHITE HOLLY
(WLM 543
WAGL 543
U.S. Navy Yard Lighter YF 341)
U.S. Coast Guard Buoy Tenders, 133' Class
U.S. Coast Guard 8th District Base, 4640 Urquhart Street
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HAER No. LA-15

HAER
LA-15

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER WHITE HOLLY

HAER No. LA-15

RIG/TYPE OF CRAFT: Cutter, originally yard lighter

TRADE: Buoy tending (government)

OFFICIAL NUMBER: WLM 543 (Formerly U.S. Navy Yard Lighter YF 341; WAGL 543)

PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS: Length: 133'-7"
Beam: 30'-8"
Depth: 8'-6"

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: Keel laid on August 3, 1943; launched on April 8, 1944

DESIGNER: U.S. Navy

BUILDER: Basalt Rock Company, Inc., Napa, California

PRESENT OWNER (2000): Canvasback Missions, Inc., Benicia, California

PRESENT USE (2000): Under restoration as a medical ship for health care and education for Pacific Islanders.

SIGNIFICANCE: WHITE HOLLY was originally constructed as a yard lighter YF 341 for the U.S. Navy YF 257 class. This class of vessel provided logistical support to naval operations during World War II. Following the war, the U.S. Coast Guard acquired eight of these vessels to perform service for their aids to navigation as buoy tenders.

PROJECT INFORMATION: The United States Coast Guard Recording Program is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program to document historically significant engineering and industrial works in the United States. The HAER program is administered by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic

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American Engineering Record Division (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, E. Blaine Cliver, Chief. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Buoy Tenders, 133' Class Recording Project was sponsored during 2000 and 2001 by the USCG, Sheri Imel, liaison.

The project was prepared under the direction of HAER Maritime Program Manager Todd Croteau. The team consisted of Howard Jefferson (University of the District of Columbia) and Pete Brooks, architects; Candace Clifford and Kevin Foster, historians; and Jet Lowe, photographer. Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, NCSHPO, edited the report.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE U.S. COAST GUARD BUOY TENDERS, 133' CLASS, SEE:

HAER No. DC-56	U.S. Coast Guard Buoy Tenders, 133' Class
HAER No. AL-187	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WHITE PINE
HAER No. LA-14	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WHITE SUMAC
HAER No. LA-15	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WHITE HOLLY
HAER No. MA-150	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WHITE HEATH
HAER No. ME-63	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WHITE LUPINE
HAER No. RI-56	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WHITE SAGE

DESCRIPTION

The Basalt Rock Company, Inc. in Napa, California, constructed the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) WHITE HOLLY in 1943. According to her "Ship's Characteristics Card" dated January 3, 1966, she was 133'-7" in overall length, 132' in length between perpendiculars, 30'-8" in extreme beam, 12'-4" in depth of hold, 8'-6" in draft forward fully loaded, and 5'-3" in draft forward with a light load. Her one mast was 56'-3" high. The vessel displaced 600 tons and had a maximum speed of 10 knots, fully loaded. Her hull, decks, bulkheads, frames, and superstructure were constructed of steel.

Auxiliary boats in 1966 included a cargo boat, aluminum outboard, and three seven-man rubber lifeboats. In 1966, she had her original diesel engines, which were opposed piston Fairbanks-Morse Diesels built by Union Diesel Engine Company in Oakland, California, with two propellers, 300 horsepower each, and two auxiliary diesel generators. In 1972, WHITE HOLLY underwent a major renovation at Curtis Bay, Baltimore, Maryland, and her machinery was modernized in 1975. These modifications included updated equipment to improve her aids to navigation (AtoN) capabilities.

Before decommissioning, WHITE HOLLY's length, beam and draft remained the same. Cruising capacity was 10.5 knots with a range of 1,810 nautical miles.¹

In 1999, WHITE HOLLY's engine was a Caterpillar D353 Diesel reduction (4 to 1), for each screw, which are constant pitch propellers.² There were two Detroit 671 Diesels for the 6 KW electric power generators, as well as one Detroit 671 Diesel for the hydraulics. The engine room controls were on an open panel centered in the engine room. She had chill water air conditioning systems (essentially radiators in boxes), which could also use hot water from the hot water boiler in the engine room.

The hull was longitudinally framed with deep web frames at about 5' intervals. They appeared to be predominantly welded, with some riveted sections. The topgallant forecastle on WHITE HOLLY had been extended aft one frame, flared out a bit more, and extended upward several feet. The bulwarks had been partially filled in, replacing the original pipe rails. She had pipe rails port and starboard on the buoy deck. There were flush decks forward with a large hatch set flush with the gently crowned deck. The large hatch was centered on the deck with a smaller access way hatch a few feet forward. WHITE HOLLY also had the superstructure extended aft a frame, making for a smaller quarterdeck.

¹ "Welcome Aboard-USCGC White Holly WLM-543," undated brochure. Found in ship's files.

² The following description comes from Kevin Foster's notes, 30 September 1999.

A heavy-duty A-frame boom, which replaced the original single-mast and boom derrick, was used to handle buoys and their anchors. WHITE HOLLY had a partial geared base to the boom.

WHITE HOLLY had a weather deck broken by a topgallant forecastle raised about 4' above the main deck. The open foredeck was surrounded by a partial bulwark and pipe rails. The main deck continued at the same level aft through the superstructure onto the small fantail area, aft of the superstructure. Originally, the vessel had a larger fantail (turtle deck), but the crew's quarters were extended further aft, decreasing the size of the fantail.

The superstructure consisted of a single-deck-height house surrounded by a raised pilothouse, and commander's stateroom forward. The engine room casing extended up through the top of the house, topped by skylights, with the funnel amidships forward. Hoses for dewatering pumps were contained in plastic tubing mounted on the centerline above the engine room skylights.

The controls for the boom were located forward of the pilothouse immediately behind the mainmast and boom. The winches for operation of the cargo boom were located in the forward section of the house.

The quarters of WHITE HOLLY included a galley with a range and ovens on the interior side and sinks to port. The captain's cabin was aft of the bridge, extended across the full width of the bridge.

HISTORY

WHITE HOLLY was commissioned on June 4, 1944, as YF 341, a U.S. Navy lighter. Her keel was laid at the Basalt Rock Company in Napa, California, on August 3, 1943. She was launched eleven months later on April 8, 1944. After World War II, YF 341 and seven sister vessels were acquired by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1946. The fourth vessel in her class, WHITE HOLLY was commissioned into the Coast Guard as WAGL 543 on December 1, 1947, and on December 5, she was taken to Seattle.

Once commissioned into the Coast Guard, her colors were switched from Navy grey to Coast Guard black and white. On December 22, 1947, WHITE HOLLY was homeported in Ketchikan, Alaska, where she primarily served aids to navigation (AtoN) in the Seventeenth Coast Guard District and provided logistic support to isolated Coast Guard units. Because of her shallow draft and extreme maneuverability, WHITE HOLLY operated primarily in southeastern Alaska, from Dixon Entrance north to an area between Juneau and Sitka where the water

passages are narrow, shallow, and constantly bending.³

In addition to her AtoN duties, WHITE HOLLY performed many assists and rescues. WHITE HOLLY's motto, "GOTCHA COVERED," which is prominently displayed on the vessel, "describes the confidence and pride taken by the crew in the prompt response to any job we are assigned." This can be seen in her activities. In addition to aiding numerous vessels in distress, other more notable events included providing medical assistance in Sitka, Alaska, November 16-17, 1950; fighting a fire in Wrangell, Alaska on March 22, 1952; transporting the National Guard from Metlakahtla to Ketchikan, Alaska on October 5, 1953; and transporting aviation fuel to the mouth of Chickmin River in support of relief efforts for an avalanche disaster 43 miles northwest of British Columbia.⁴

In November 1971, WHITE HOLLY began a two-month, 8,000-mile voyage to her new homeport in New Orleans, Louisiana, to replace her sister ship, WHITE ADLER, which sank after a collision with MV HELENA on December 7, 1968.⁵ The vessel was outfitted with supplemental communications and navigational equipment for her voyage. Most of the twenty-two man crew were transferred with the ship. As a tribute to her service in Alaskan waters, a proclamation was made in the House of Representatives by the Honorable Nick Begich on November 18, 1971, soon after the mayor of Ketchikan had proclaimed November 11, 1971 as WHITE HOLLY Day. The proclamation stated:

Whereas, the U.S. Coast Guard had ordered the transfer of the good ship WHITE HOLLY from its natural and historic role as guardian of the last frontier, and

Whereas, the good ship WHITE HOLLY has played a spectacular role in policing of international waters against foreign fishery encroachment, has assisted in many search and rescue operations involving America's finest fishermen, hunters, loggers and miners, has maintained aids to navigation in some of the most hazardous waters of the world, and

Whereas, Alaska now has attained statehood, the U.S. Coast Guard has mechanized much of its search and rescue operations by using aircraft to speed up its services to the outlying areas, and

Whereas, the officers and enlisted personnel of the good ship WHITE HOLLY have become outstanding examples of the U.S. Coast Guard, have brought its services and relationships closer to the people of greater Ketchikan than to those of any other

³ Undated Coast Guard memo from Dave Cipra to Joe Leahy, on file in the USCG Historian's Office, Washington, D.C.

⁴ Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 133.

⁵ Apparently the USCGC ZINNIA served in the interim period before being decommissioned.

portion of America, and

Whereas, other portions of the United States of America now need and deserve this humanitarian service long rendered to Alaskans by WHITE HOLLY, and

Whereas, the door to the First City of Alaska remains always open to the WHITE HOLLY's officers and crew who will wish to return here for later duty or retirement,

Therefore, in recognition of the service of this vessel and personnel, I proclaim Thursday, November 11, 1971 as WHITE HOLLY Day in greater Ketchikan and by virtue of the authority in me vested, requested all citizens of Greater Ketchikan to pay appropriate tribute to the good ship WHITE HOLLY and its personnel.

Done under my seal and signature this 5th day of November, 1971.

Her primary duties at her new location were to position and maintain buoys in an area extending from Gulfport, Mississippi, to the Mermentau River on the western border of Louisiana. WHITE HOLLY was responsible for over 190 buoys ranging from small 300-pound buoys marking the bends in the Mississippi river to 13,000-pound buoys placed off harbor entrances in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to her AtoN duties, WHITE HOLLY was available to perform search and rescue, law enforcement, and environmental protection duties.⁶

Existing buoys were maintained by lifting them onto the deck of WHITE HOLLY, unshackling them from their anchor chains, cleaning and repainting them. If extensive damage was found, a replacement buoy was used. Lighted buoys, now powered by solar panels, could require new batteries and an inspection to make sure the new light was operating correctly. Stray buoys that had broken from their anchor chains were often retrieved. In the Mississippi River, the current often pushed vessels into the buoy as they were making turns or passing one another.⁷

Working aids to navigation on the Mississippi River, one of the nation's busiest waterways, presented some unique challenges. Water levels on the river fluctuated with the seasons. In the spring, with melting ice and snow, the water level could rise 15', and during the summer, dry spells could lower the water below the 12' limit. To warn riverboat masters, buoys were placed to mark those areas of low water. The bends in the river required that the officer of the watch relay his position to any vessel around the bend in the river avoid potential collisions. When passing, the tender and the other vessel agreed to pass each other on one whistle indicating port side to port side, or on two whistles indicating starboard side to starboard side. The light marking mile 195 had special significance in that it marked the position of the WHITE ADLER

⁶ "Welcome Aboard-USCGC White Holly."

⁷ Chuck Kalnbach, "Up the River: Working aids to navigation on the Mississippi River a unique mission," Coast Guard News Release 91-86, 7 November 1986.

accident in which seventeen Coast Guard crew members lost their lives.⁸

In 1975, WHITE HOLLY was awarded the National Defense Transportation Association Military Unit Award.

The navigation system along the Gulf Coast is frequently disrupted by hurricanes and tropical storms. In 1985, a newspaper article ran a photograph of WHITE HOLLY relocating channel markers and reported that damage from Hurricane Elena to the navigational system was \$200,000. The operations commander of Coast Guard Group Mobile was quoted as saying, "One of the requirements that the Coast Guard has after any major storm, whether it be a hurricane, tornadoes in the area, even a major winter storm where you get a lot of surf and tidal surge, is to go out and position check each aid and ensure it's on its position and marking good water for the mariner for a safe transit."⁹

WHITE HOLLY was decommissioned in 1998. She was transferred, along with the WHITE SAGE to the Canvasback Missions, Inc., in 1999. This organization will be working with the Center for Disease Control, the National Institute for Health, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the government of the Marshall Islands, and using the ships primarily for health care and education.

⁸ Kalnbach, "Up the River."

⁹ Mike Casey and Dave Helms, "More coastal ship channels reopening," *The Mobile Press Register*, 8 September 1985.

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Site visit notes by Kevin Foster, 30 September 1999.

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