

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

CDR Timothy R. Dring, USNR-Retired

U.S. Life-Saving Service Heritage Association

2017

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- The origins of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary are based on four key principles:
 - The post-World War I development of responsible, competent citizen boaters in America
 - Traditional American volunteerism, particularly during times of national need or crisis
 - The urgent security needs of America at the start of World War II; particularly after the Pearl Harbor attack
 - Lack of sufficient active-duty U.S. Coast Guard personnel and resources needed to simultaneously conduct both overseas military missions, as well as their traditional non-military roles and missions in American ports and coastal areas, as well as on inland waterways
- Add to this the fact that the regular Coast Guard was not really well equipped or prepared to enforce the Motorboat Act of 1940, and was very definitely not adequately resourced to provide training to the boating public on the law's safe boat operation and equipment requirements.
- From the beginning, therefore, there was at least a role for a Coast Guard Auxiliary in carrying out this function alone, if not other appropriate tasks.

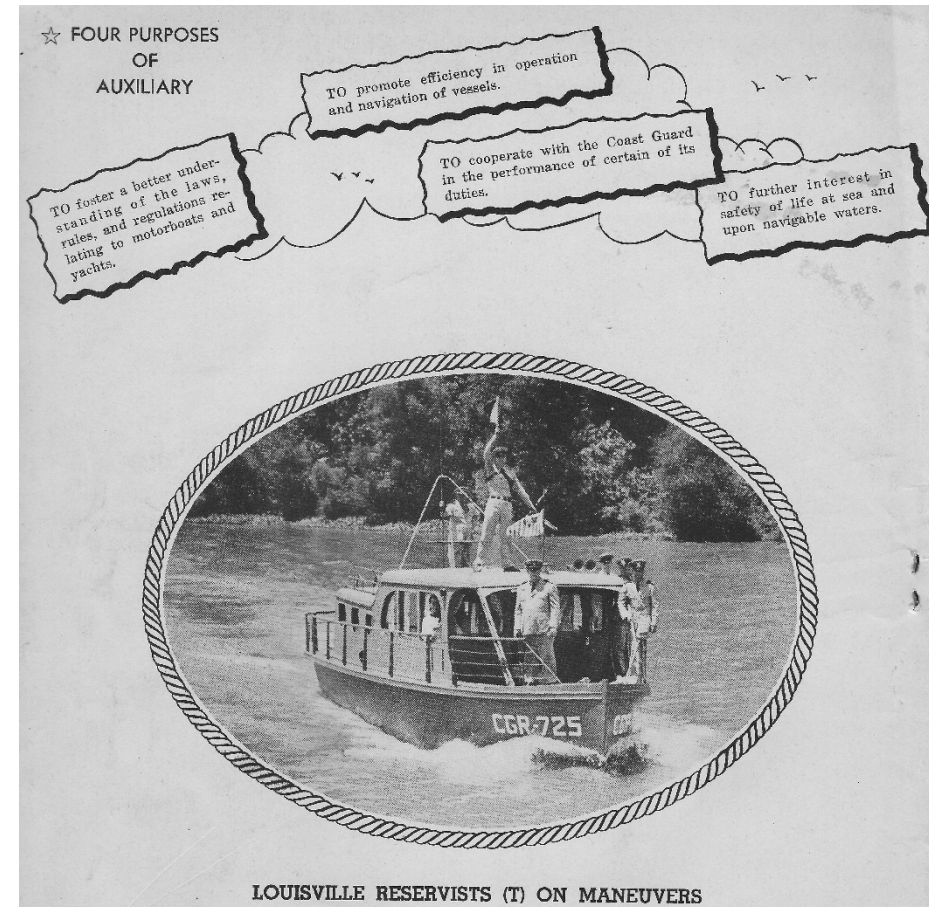
The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Unlike the other military services, until the World War II years, the Coast Guard had no standing force of reserves or auxiliaries that could be mobilized for the war effort, and there were limited numbers of small craft available for waterside patrols of harbors and/or waterways, as well as for the protection of critical waterfront assets.
- The Coast Guard's Captain-of-the-Port staffs for key U.S. seaports did not include sufficient personnel or patrol craft to cover their respective areas of responsibility.
- In June 1939 and later in February 1941, active duty Coast Guard personnel and resources were significantly increased with the creation of the new Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Coast Guard Temporary Reserve (TR).
 - By DEC 1940, there were about 3000 members and 2700 boats organized into 150 separate CGAUX flotillas.
 - By JUL 1942, there were about 11500 members and 9500 boats organized into 400 separate CGAUX flotillas.
- Many Auxiliarists were converted to Temporary Reservists if basic requirements were met.
- The Coast Guard was also authorized to requisition privately-owned boats for wartime patrol use as an emergency expedient pending the construction of additional new harbor patrol craft such as the 38ft. cabin picket boat.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- During the war years, there were three general categories of personnel and small craft in operation by the Coast Guard for coastal and harbor port security and patrol missions:
 - Active duty USCG personnel (“regulars”) with full military and maritime law enforcement training and operational authority, operating standard USCG small boats, such as a motor lifeboat, surfboat, and/or cabin picket boat with a “CG” boat number
 - Temporary Reserve (“TRs”) USCG personnel (unpaid) with military and maritime law enforcement training, with some operational authority, operating either regular, standard USCG small boats, or requisitioned private small craft (some of which were armed) given a “CGR” boat number
 - Coast Guard Auxiliary (CGA) personnel (unpaid) with some military and/or maritime law enforcement training, and limited to no operational authority, operating requisitioned private small craft (usually not armed) given a “CGA” boat number
- As both the Temporary Reserves and Coast Guard Auxiliary were administered by the individual naval districts, there was variability in training and in operation authority from district to district depending on local needs.
- In general, the 1st and 2nd Naval Districts were more liberal in their use and authorization of both Temporary Reservists and Auxiliarists compared to other districts, and in a number of cases, allowed them to conduct actual underway combat patrols in fully-armed vessels and boats.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Some examples of Auxiliary/TR missions and accomplishments from a national perspective:
 - Coastal Picket patrols offshore in small vessels along the U.S. Atlantic coast under all conditions of weather and sea
 - Rescue of survivors of torpedoed ships off of Florida's Atlantic coast, particularly where no active Coast Guard resources were available, yet where there were still German submarines operating
 - Augmentation of Coast Guard Captain-of-the-Port commands to provide port security and firefighting response capability
 - Augmentation of regular Coast Guard lifeboat station crews, particularly for boat/equipment maintenance and beach patrol purposes, since most active duty surfmen were needed for amphibious landing craft coxswain duties overseas
 - Augmentation of regular Coast Guard aids-to-navigation maintenance
 - Management of the harbor pilot organizations for individual ports and harbors
 - Military security and search/rescue patrols along inland waterways (such as the Western Rivers and large lakes) where there was no pre-existing active duty Coast Guard presence; particularly critical for waterways having a lock/dam system of river navigation
- In many U.S. coastal areas, as well as on many inland waterways, the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Temporary Reserves were the only Coast Guard presence during the World War II years, and provided a critically important search/rescue and port security capability in these otherwise unserved areas.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

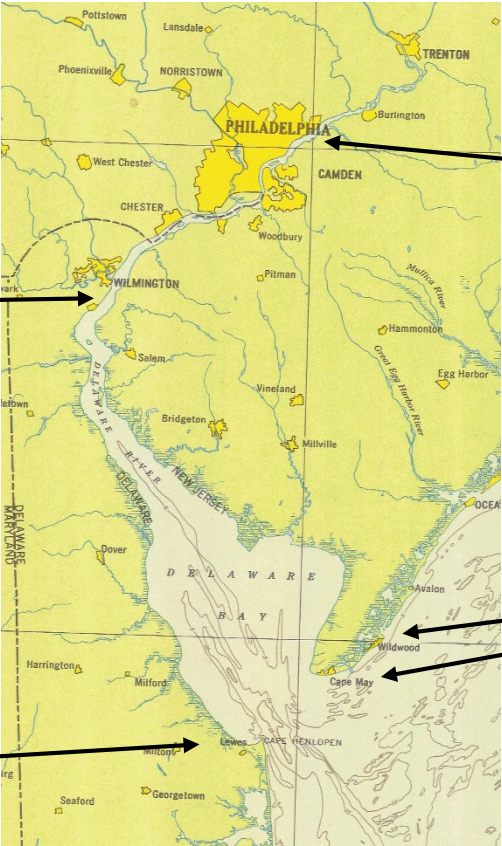
- The Auxiliary's/TR's roles, missions, and accomplishments in the Delaware River/Bay region (the former 4th Coast Guard/Naval District) during World War II were somewhat unique in that, in some types of operations, it served as a model for similar operations in other areas of the U.S.
- These missions were less focused on offshore/nearshore operations, and more on port/harbor security and beach patrol due to the number of war-critical industries and pier facilities along the nearly 134 miles of Delaware Bay and River waterfront between the ocean entrance and Trenton, NJ (head of navigation); this was combined with a lack of pre-existing active duty Coast Guard port security resources.
- The Navy and Coast Guard had a critical need to establish and maintain continuous waterside and pierside patrols along the extensively developed upper bay and river waterfront.
- Fortunately, in the Delaware Bay/River region, there already existed a sizeable pre-war population of competent civilian boaters with well-maintained and suitable small craft that were available for mobilization into the Auxiliary and Temporary Reserve.
- These Auxiliarists and Temporary Reservists were quickly organized, trained, and deployed to fill in the critical gaps in Coast Guard waterfront security.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Primary Delaware River and Bay region Coast Guard Auxiliary flotillas of the 4th Naval District:
 - Flotilla 21-Quaker City, PA
 - Flotilla 22-Essington, PA
 - Flotilla 23-Dredge Harbor, Delran, NJ
 - Flotilla 24-Delaware City, DE
 - Flotilla 25-Farragut Yacht Club, Camden, NJ
 - Flotilla 26-Trenton, NJ
 - Flotilla 34-Maurice River, NJ
 - Flotilla 41-Wilmington, DE
 - Flotilla 51-Reading, PA
 - Flotilla 52-Lancaster, NJ
 - Flotilla 53-Harrisburg, PA
- Note: There were other flotilla organizations located in the coastal areas, but these were not involved in operations in the Delaware River area, and are outside the scope of this presentation.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Active USCG facilities/commands in the Delaware Bay/River region at the start of World War II in 1941:





The map shows the Delaware River and Bay region, including Philadelphia, Camden, Wilmington, and Cape May. Callouts point to specific USCG facilities: Edgemoor (ATON Depot), Philadelphia (Port Office staff and tug Naugatuck), Lewes (Lifeboat Station), and Hereford Inlet, Cold Spring Inlet, and Cape May Point (Lifeboat Stations).

USCG ATON Depot Edgemoor

USCG Captain of the Port Office staff, plus one harbor boarding craft, CG-5882, and 110ft. ice-breaking tug USCGC *Naugatuck*

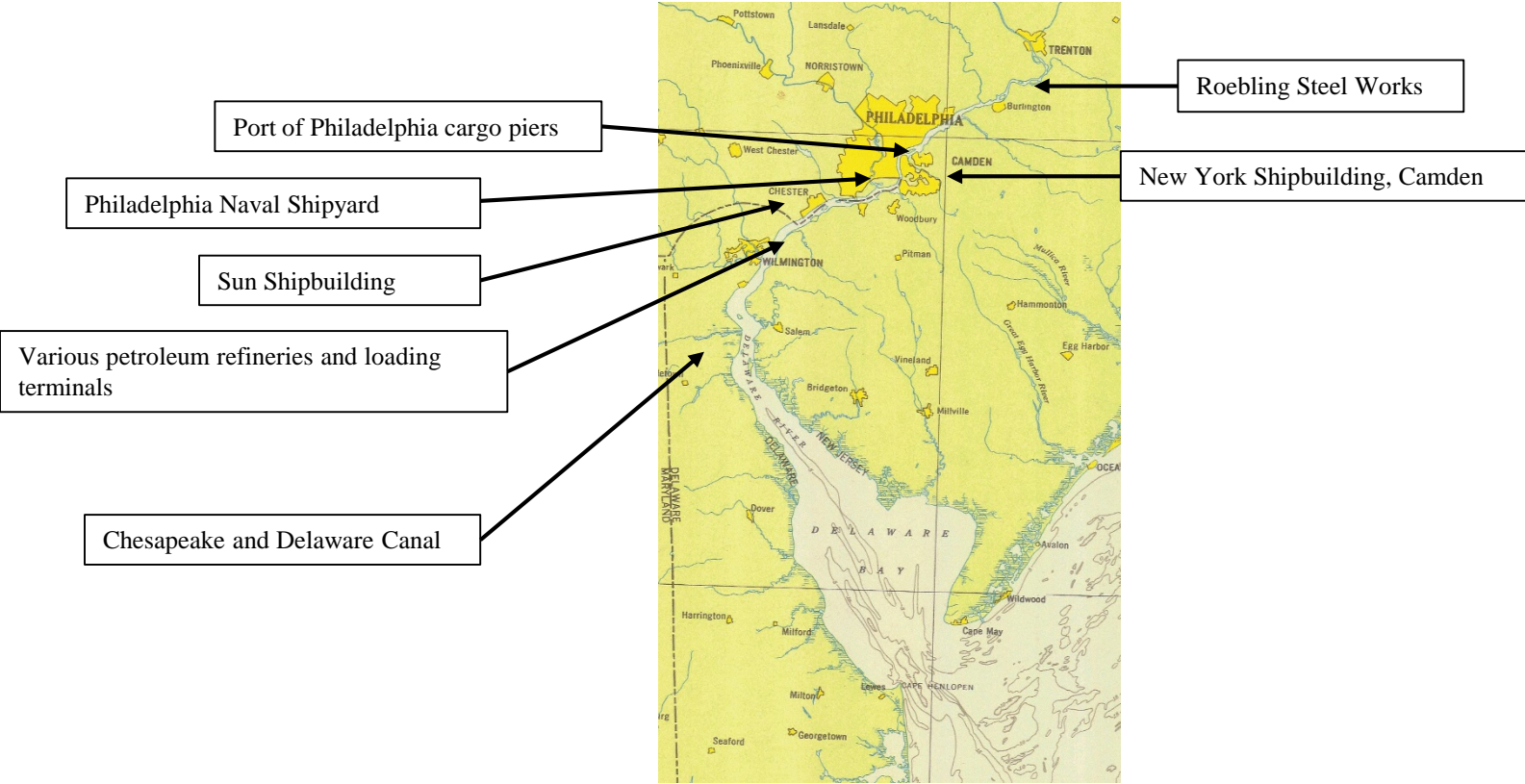
USCG Lifeboat Station Lewes

USCG Lifeboat Stations Hereford Inlet, Cold Spring Inlet, Cape May Point



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- A small sampling of critical defense/industrial sites requiring waterside protection:



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Original estimates of resources needed to cover the Port of Philadelphia and the upper Delaware River included a need for:
 - Nine larger patrol boats
 - Three tugs
 - Fourteen picket boats
 - **None of these types of craft were available until well into the war years**
- Starting in OCT 1941, a small port security force of 12 active duty personnel was created as an emergency response unit, but no other personnel were yet available for port security patrols.
- A number of incidents in different ports of attempted sabotage of outbound cargoes/ships was a clear signal of the increased risk to wartime shipping and port facilities.
- There was a shortage of active duty Coast Guard personnel due to the personnel needs of new cutters and craft being commissioned, plus the need for personnel to help man ships of the Navy, especially troop transports and amphibious landing craft.
- U.S. entry into the war resulted in an immediate and urgent need for port security force supplementation by either active duty Coast Guard personnel, or by a combination of Temporary Reservists and Auxiliarists.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Typical port security duties included the following:
 - Controlling the entrance/movement/anchorage assignment of merchant shipping, fishing vessels, and recreational craft
 - Supervision of munitions loading
 - Sealing merchant vessel radio equipment to prevent unauthorized transmissions
 - Guarding piers, warehouses, cargo, loading facilities, and in some cases individual merchant ships
 - Issuance of licenses to allow vessels to operate in local waters
 - Issuance of identity cards to seaport employees
 - Fire patrols and fire-fighting operations
 - Anti-sabotage and anti-espionage patrols
 - If no other resources available locally, search and rescue operations

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Coast Guard Temporary Reserve and Auxiliary patrols on the Delaware River for the 4th Naval District formally commenced in August of 1942
 - River area waterside patrols were divided into lower river, middle river, and upper river zones
 - Patrols were conducted 24 hours per day every day all year long, except when the Delaware River was iced over and icebreakers were not available
 - Boat crews were required to provide their own food service from home, their own maintenance of their boats, and their own foul weather clothing; no reimbursement of costs was provided
 - It was not until later around 1943-44 that meal service and standard foul weather gear were supplied by the Coast Guard, along with reimbursement of repair costs
- By early 1944, a total of 661 Temporary Reserve personnel were operating a total of 13 CG or CGR boats on river patrol duties, plus the patrols provided by the Auxiliary using their own CGA boats.
- In addition to the port security patrols, the Auxiliary was tasked with conducting their normal peacetime recreational boating safety operations, including inspections.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Principal bases of operation:
 - Pier 181, Port Richmond, Philadelphia, PA (at the foot of Ontario Street)
 - Camden, NJ (Naval Militia Armory)
 - Essington, PA (at the West Basin of the Corinthian Yacht Club)
 - Port of Wilmington, DE
 - Coast Guard Base Cape May, NJ
- Support Facilities
 - Coast Guard Barracks, 3rd and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, PA
 - Coast Guard Auxiliary Training Base, 1011 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



Pier 181 North, Port Richmond

Petty Island

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Corinthian Yacht Club, Essington, PA



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Patrol craft identified from available records:
 - Converted private motorboats/commercial boats:
 - 28 to 68ft. long CGR's 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 634, 635, 637, 638, 639, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 876, 877, 878, 883, 888, 889
 - CG's 1168, 1170, 7227/65005, 7260/44015, 7281/62006, 26092, 8103/38025, 42032 (ex-*Jino Too*), 43002 (ex-*Flamingo*), 43007 (ex-*Misubi II*), 44001 (ex-*Barbuzet*), 46020 (ex-*Pheasant*), 46029 (ex-*Bamboo*), 46092
 - Former large yachts:
 - YP-259, YP-335, YP-341
 - CG-79001 (former *Florence V*)
 - Standard USCG boats:
 - Old 75ft. CG patrol boats: CG's 130 and 148
 - Old 36ft. double-cabin picket boat CG-2312 (taken out of service by 1942)
 - New 38ft. cabin picket boats: CG's 4271/38475, 8409/38613, 8423/38627
 - New 64ft. harbor tugboats: CG's 64304 and 64305

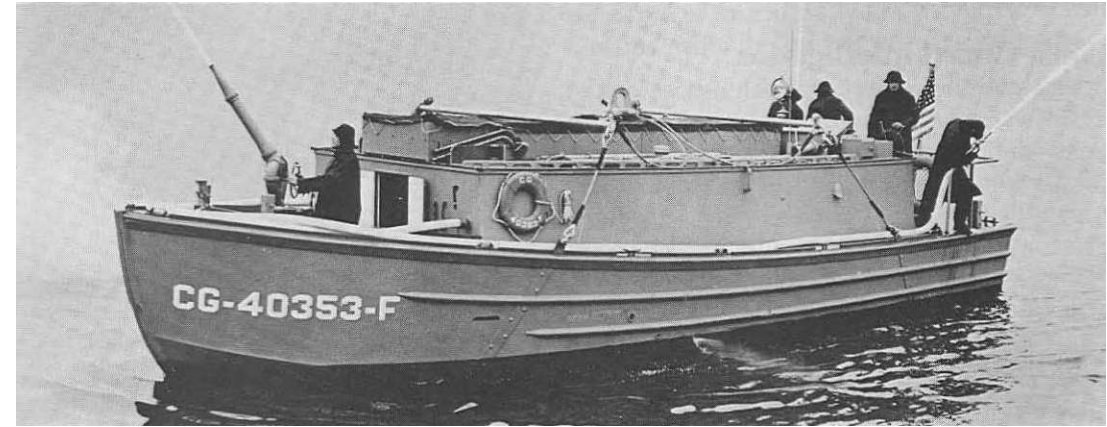
The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- In addition to the boat patrols, due to the shortage in regular Coast Guard personnel for landside waterfront security patrols, additional resources were obtained by employing Temporary Reservists as so-called “Coast Guard Police” which became the “Volunteer Port Security Force”, with the first one in the U.S. created for the Port of Philadelphia.
- Philadelphia’s Volunteer Port Security Force (VPSF):
 - Created in May of 1942, with initial operations starting in December 1942
 - Staffed by total of 3219 TR officer and enlisted personnel, including women, in 26 platoons plus headquarters staff
 - Provided own meal and supply/logistics services
 - Covered all non-military piers and terminals, plus non-Allied flagged ships
 - Duties included security patrols, fire watches, and firefighting; total of about 500 fires were discovered and successfully extinguished with little or no damage (some were suspected cases of arson or sabotage)
 - One patrol unit discovered and reported a time bomb
 - A patrol unit found German stowaways on a neutral merchant ship from Spain
- As a result of the success of Philadelphia’s VPSF, additional VPSF units were created in 22 other U.S. ports.

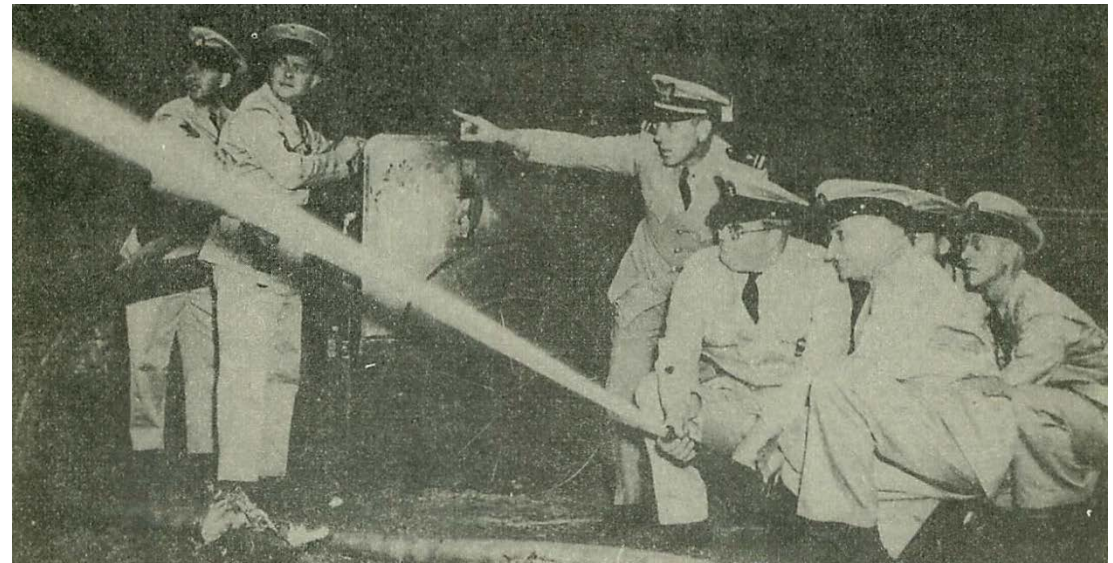
The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- In 1941, when the U.S. entered the war, there were a total of only three fireboats (all belonging to the Philadelphia Fire Department) to cover the entire Delaware Bay and River; one of these was an old steam-powered fireboat built in the 1890s, while the other two were of more recent construction.
- Given the increase in riverside manufacturing facilities and operations, and petroleum refining, along with the loading of merchant shipping on accelerated schedules, there existed a higher risk of serious fires along the waterfront.
- Along with other civilian seaports, the Port of Philadelphia was also the site for a significant amount of munitions loadings, both for warships, as well as cargo in merchant ships bound for Europe.
- In the face of these extreme risks, it was decided early on that additional fire-fighting resources (especially fireboats) were needed, which the Navy and/or Coast Guard would have to provide.
- Additional fireboats were initially obtained in July 1942 by the conversion of larger private boats and/or small merchant vessels (including CG's 86001-F, the former *A.J. Meerwald*, and 65006-F). By 1943, these were supplemented by purpose-built fireboats added to the Coast Guard's port security boat fleet. For the Delaware Bay/River area, a total of twelve additional fireboats were ultimately added, and deployed to cover all major river ports; not just Philadelphia.
- These fireboats were supplemented by teams of jeep-drawn fire trailers, equipped with simple fire pumps and hose sets.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- In 1944, two new wooden-hulled harbor tugs were added to the Coast Guard boat forces in the Delaware River area; CG-64304 and CG-64305. These tugs were capable of both fire-fighting and light ice-breaking operations, and significantly improved the area's response capabilities.
- Both tugs were stationed at the Pier 181, Port Richmond base, and covered all of the Delaware River as far north as Trenton, NJ, and as far south as Wilmington, DE.
- Although initially crewed entirely by regular Coast Guard personnel, in time much of the crew was replaced with Temporary Reservists and, on occasion, Auxiliarists.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- In 1944, a few of the Auxiliary flotillas created mobile radio communications units, primarily as a result of lessons learned from the devastating September 1944 hurricane, which destroyed many New Jersey coastal villages and towns, as well as local communications networks and facilities.



The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- Notable accomplishments for the Delaware Bay/River region Temporary Reserve/Auxiliary port security forces:
 - Temporary Reserve supplementation of regular Coast Guard security patrols at the U.S. Immigration Station in Gloucester, NJ starting in JAN 1944
 - Temporary Reserve/Auxiliary supplementation of underway security patrols onboard local ferries and steam passenger vessels starting MAY 1944
 - Successful Auxiliary training in surfboat drills at the Camden Naval Militia Armory
 - Early detection and extinguishment of nearly 600 separate fires on piers, ships, or small craft, preventing any major damage or losses
 - Temporary Reserve and Auxiliary personnel on underway security patrol rescue 24 women and children that had fallen overboard into the harbor as a result of a faulty boarding ramp at pierside (19 AUG 44)
 - Temporary Reserve and Auxiliary personnel provide rescue and relief services in response to devastating 14 SEP 1944 hurricane along the New Jersey coastline

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- By late 1943 and early 1944, newly-constructed, standard Coast Guard harbor patrol craft were made available in sufficient numbers to all of the naval districts such that the majority of the original requisitioned boats could be taken out of service and either returned to their original owners or scrapped, and fewer CGR and CGA boats were needed for patrols.
- Following the Allied invasion of Europe in June 1944, as well as Allied naval successes in the war against Axis submarines, the threat to domestic port facilities and shipping had generally diminished.
- By August of 1944, the Navy and Coast Guard had discontinued the majority of waterside patrols at inlets and in harbors, which allowed the personnel and boats involved to be redeployed.
- In some harbors, employment of anti-submarine and anti-boat nets and booms was discontinued, with the either the shipping gate left open, or the nets/booms pulled out.
- Coastal lookout towers were still manned.
- By November of 1944 in the Delaware Bay/River area, all waterside and landside port security patrols were significantly decreased, and discontinued all together in June of 1945.
- By the beginning of 1945, most of the Temporary Reservists were released from duty, and most of the Auxiliary flotillas resumed peacetime operations.

The World War II Origins of Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Delaware River/Bay Region

- So what were the key lessons learned from the wartime services of the Temporary Reserves and Auxiliarists?
 - Need for the Coast Guard to establish and maintain during peacetime a mobilizable reserve of fully trained and qualified officer and enlisted personnel; this was established at the end of the war starting in the late 1940s with the creation of the so-called ORTUPS units and continues today
 - Need for clearer delineation in terms of roles, responsibilities, training, and operating authority (e.g., in terms of maritime law enforcement authority) between active duty personnel, reservists, and auxiliary personnel
 - Need for the peacetime Coast Guard to have available on short notice adequate active and/or reserve personnel and resources to quickly mobilize to seaports for port security operations:
 - Prior to the Vietnam War, each of the major seaports had a Port Safety/Security Station (PSSTA) manned by a combination of regular and reserve personnel with a complement of assigned 40ft. and 30ft. utility boats
 - After the Vietnam War, the Coast Guard created Port Security Units (PSU) of reserve personnel, which were deployable forces with trailerable boats (25ft. Boston Whalers), communications equipment, and weapons
 - After 9-11, the Coast Guard created the Marine Safety and Security Teams (MSST) of active duty personnel, which could be air-transported to the scene quickly with trailerable boats (25ft. Response Boats-Homeland Security and/or Small) and communications equipment/weapons