

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD CUTTER

GEORGE M. BIBB

NAMED FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

KEEL LAID

AUGUST 13, 1937

The United States Coast Guard Cutter BIBB (WHEC 31) is one of six 327 foot cutters serving with the Coast Guard. Designed specifically for Coast Guard search and rescue work, she was built at the U. S. Navy Yard, Charleston, S. C. She was launched on January 14, 1937 and placed in commission on March 10, 1937. BIBB is a high endurance cutter with a displacement of 2640 tons and is powered by twin geared turbines.

At her first home port in Norfolk, Va., BIBB'S assigned duties included search and rescue, boarding for law enforcement, regatta patrols, Coast Guard Academy Cadet Cruises, and in 1939, she operated jointly with the Navy as part of a destroyer squadron to assist shipping in the North Atlantic. In 1940, when the Atlantic Weather Observation Service was established in cooperation with the Department of Commerce, BIBB was detailed to patrol the first weather observing station in the North Atlantic.

During the early years of WWII, BIBB was transferred to the command of the U. S. Navy, and with her increased armament, she assumed convoy and patrol duties in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, and the familiar waters of the North Atlantic. In the meantime, her search and rescue mission was not altogether abandoned, for in September 1942 she picked up 61 survivors of the SS PENIMAR and during one day, February 7, 1943, BIBB rescued 202 survivors from the SS HENRY MALLOEY and 33 survivors from the SS KALLIOPI.

In January 1945, after undergoing further conversion, BIBB steamed to the Pacific Theater to serve as a landing operations flagship in the Okinawa campaign. She took part in the amphibious operations on eight small islands of the mountainous Kerama Retto, about 15 miles south of Okinawa's southern tip, where the first landings by American troops were made on Japanese soil. In this area she survived 55 enemy air raids and was credited with shooting down at least one Japanese aircraft.

After the war, BIBB returned to the Coast Guard, underwent extensive reconversion, and resumed her peacetime duties. On October 14, 1947, while fighting full gale winds and heavy seas, she recovered all 69 survivors aboard the transoceanic air liner, BERMUDA SKY QUEEN, which had been forced to ditch in the Atlantic. A year later she sped into 40 foot seas to save 40 men from the sinking fishing schooner, CASPAR.

BIBB is named after the 17th Secretary of the Treasury, George M. Bibb. Her full complement is 13 officers and 146 enlisted men. She is now homeported in Boston, and her primary mission is to perform ocean station patrols and search and rescue duties. She also performs other Coast Guard duties, as assigned, such as law enforcement; removing or destroying menaces to navigation; observing, reporting and correcting defective aids to navigation; and promoting water safety. She maintains a high state of operational and military readiness in order to assist in carrying out the duties of the Coast Guard and the United States.