

# African-Americans in the Revenue Cutter Service

Second Article in the *Diversity Series* Provided by Maia Jefferson, FSO-DV, 15-3

From the United States Coast Guard website

Today's U.S. Coast Guard is an amalgamation of five predecessors: the Revenue Cutter Service; the Life-saving Service (this and the Revenue Cutter Service merged in 1915); the Lighthouse Service (absorbed in 1939); and the Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection, itself a merger of two agencies (added to Coast Guard in 1946).



USS *Pickering*, circa 1790. Drawing courtesy of USCG archives

The Coast Guard traces its primary root to the Revenue Cutter Service, which was a "military" organization from its inception and which element has modeled the character of the Coast Guard probably more than any other.

The first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, proposed the Federal government accept public responsibility for safety at sea. On August 7, 1789, President George Washington approved the enabling Ninth Act of Congress. To counter the smuggling and other illegal activities rampant at this time, Hamilton proposed a seagoing military force to support national economic policy. Mere legal-paper status was not enough to combat criminal activity: on August 4, 1790, the Revenue Cutter Service's predecessor, the Revenue Marine, was born.

The enabling legislation, the Organic Act, provided for establishment and support of ten cutters (vessels 65 feet in length or more, that can accommodate a crew for extended deployment) to enforce the customs laws. Hamilton also requested a professional corps of commissioned officers.

The first commissioned officer was Hopley Yeaton, commanding officer of the Revenue cutter *Scammel*. Yeaton, a veteran of the Continental Navy, owned a slave named Senegal who served Yeaton on many cruises. Alexander Hamilton's request for "ten boats" for the protection of revenue specified each be armed with swivels, small cannons on a revolving base that could be turned and fired in every direction.

Historical records of the Service reveal that the practice of officers using slaves as stewards, cooks and seamen on board Revenue cutters appears to have been a common one. A Service regulation dated November 1, 1843 officially banned this practice by prohibiting any slave "from ever being entered for the Service, or to form a complement of any vessel of the Revenue Marine of the United States."

Before 1843, Revenue cutter captains' use of slaves and other African Americans had been restricted. Captain W.W. Polk, USRCS, commanding the Revenue cutter *Florida*, wrote Treasury Secretary Samuel D. Ingham on June 22, 1831:

*"In the general instructions for the government of the Revenue Cutter service of December last, by one paragraph is prohibited the employment of persons of color, unless by the special permission of the Secretary of the Treasury*

*I beg leave here to observe that I have never owned a slave in the Cutter Service. I have however a colored boy, a native of N. York and of course free, he was given to me by Capt. M.C. Perry of the Navy. He is now bound to me under Laws of Delaware until age 21.*

*If it would not be incompatible with the rules laid down by the Hon. Secretary I have respectfully to suggest that I may be permitted to employ the boy as a servant on board. He is an expert sailor for his age and competent to the duty of a boy of the first class. I would further respectfully ask if the Commanders of Cutters are permitted to employ apprentices, and if so how many."*

Secretary Ingham replied six days later that there "will be no objections to your retaining your servant Boy and shipping colored persons as cooks and stewards." The following month, Acting Secretary Asbury Dickens assured Captain Richard Derby, USRCS, commanding the Revenue cutter *Morris*, that he had "permission of the department to employ free colored persons as cook and steward of the *Morris*."

Since 1794, the Revenue Marine Service had been carrying out the important mission of preventing importation of slaves into the territorial limits of the United States. Although the law of March 22, 1794, prohibiting the slave trade between the United States and foreign countries, did not specifically direct the revenue cutters to aid in its enforce-

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(Continued from page 12)

ment, "they were nevertheless instructed to do so; and their connection with efforts to suppress the traffic, begun under this Act, did not cease until the occasion for such efforts had entirely disappeared."

Illustrating this mission, the revenue cutters stationed at South Atlantic coast ports and operating under the authority of the Acts of March 2, 1807 and March 3, 1819, captured numerous vessels with almost 500 persons to be sold as slaves

The following entry in the Service's annual report for 1846 was typical: "Several captures of piratical vessels, which at the time infested the Florida keys, were made by Captain Jackson and others, and, having full cargoes of slaves destined for Amelia Island, were carried into American waters and confined."

While the status of African Americans in the United States was changed for all time by Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, the position of African Americans within the Revenue Cutter Service remained for the most part unchanged, with the dramatic exception of Captain Michael A. Healy.

## CAPTAIN MICHAEL A. HEALY, U.S. REVENUE CUTTER SERVICE

Captain Michael A. Healy, the only African American to have a command or commission in any of the Coast Guard's predecessor services, commanded the cutter *Bear* from 1887 to 1895. Healy retired as the third highest-ranking officer from the Revenue Cutter Service.

One of ten children born in Macon, Georgia, to an Irish immigrant and a slave of mixed blood, Healy habitually ran away from school. At the urging of his brother, who felt sea life would discipline the youngster, the 15-year-old Healy was hired as a cabin boy aboard the clipper *Jumna* in 1855. He applied to and was accepted by the Revenue Cutter Service in March of 1865, was promoted to Second Lieutenant in June 1886, and to First Lieutenant in July 1870.

As First Lieutenant, Healy was ordered aboard the cutter *Rush*, to patrol Alaskan waters for the first time. He became known as a brilliant seaman and was considered by many the best sailor in the North. A feature article in the January 28, 1884 *New York Sun* stated: "*Captain Mike Healy is a good deal more distinguished person in the waters of the far Northwest than any president of the United States or any potentate in Europe has yet become.*"

Healy distinguished himself when he took command of the cutter *Bear*, considered by many the greatest polar ship of its time, in 1886. The ship was charged with "seizing any vessel found sealing in the Bering Sea." By 1892, the *Bear*, *Rush* and *Corwin* had made so many seizures that tension developed between the United States and British merchants. Healy was also tasked with bringing medical and other aid to the Alaska Natives, making weather and ice reports, preparing navigation charts, rescuing distressed vessels, transporting special passengers and supplies, and fighting violators of federal laws. He served as deputy U.S. Marshal and represented federal law in Alaska for many years.

On one of *Bear's* annual visits to King Island, Healy found a native population reduced to 100 people and begging for food. After ordering food and clothing, Healy worked with Dr. Sheldon Jackson of the Bureau of Education to import reindeer from the Siberian Chukchi, another Eskimo population. During the next ten years, Revenue cutters brought some 1,100 reindeer to Alaska. The Bureau of Education took charge of landing and distributing the deer, and missionary schools taught the natives to raise and care for the animals. By 1940, Alaska's domesticated reindeer herds had risen to 500,000.

The Coast Guard named an icebreaker for Michael Healy, in acknowledgment of his inspiring commitment to the Service, including his invaluable assistance to Alaska Natives.



Photo courtesy of [uscgarchives.gov](http://uscgarchives.gov)

**This article courtesy of the United States Coast Guard website**

## Coast Guard Station Yankeetown Receives New Officer-in-Charge



Captain Holly L. Najarian, commander of Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, Florida, oversees Chief Warrant Officer Robert B. Whitmore transfer of command of Coast Guard Station Yankeetown to Chief Petty Officer Eric B. Tookey during a ceremony at the station Wednesday, Aug. 3, 2016. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Ashley J. Johnson

YANKEETOWN, Fla. — Members of Coast Guard Station Yankeetown held a change-of-command ceremony Wednesday at the station.

Chief Warrant Officer Robert Whitmore transferred command of the station to Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Eric B. Tookey during the ceremony.

During Whitmore's tour at Station Yankeetown, he and the 26 crewmembers stationed there were responsible for 3,500 miles of Florida coastline spanning six counties.

During the ceremony, Whitmore spoke about his year at the station and commended his crew for their work.

"My accomplishments are not solely mine," he said. "The station excelled because of each and every one of you."

Under Whitmore's direction, the station's crew conducted 67 search and rescue cases, and performed 193 maritime law enforcement boardings. Additionally, the crew was involved in numerous community outreach programs such as mentoring Navel Sea Cadets and working alongside multiple Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotillas.

The change-of-command ceremony is a time-honored tradition, formally restating the continuity of command to the officers and crew. It is a formal ritual conducted before the assembled company of the command, which serves as a visible symbol of the transfer of total responsibility, authority and accountability from one individual to another.

Story courtesy of *Coast Guard News*



# Auxiliary National Conference (NACON) in Phoenix, AZ

This year's National Conference was held at the Arizona Grand Resort in Phoenix, Arizona. There were ten C-School training opportunities available to Auxiliarists, many training workshops, and of course, the biennial elections

Our new National Commodore for the two-year term beginning 1 November 2016 is COMO Richard Washburn, previously the Vice National Commodore. Other election results are:

Vice National Commodore - COMO Larry King

Deputy National Commodore Atlantic East and Operations – COMO Alexander Malewski

Deputy National Commodore Atlantic West and RBS – COMO Edward Monaco

Deputy National Commodore Pacific Area and Mission Support – COMO Bert Blanchette

Also, NACO(e) Washburn has announced the appointment of COMO Linda Merryman as Deputy National Commodore Information Technology and Planning.

District 7's own Terry Barth has been reappointed as National Executive Assistant to NACO(e) Washburn.

Division 15 was well represented at the C-Schools and conference, with attendees including Diane Berman, Vince Maida, Bob Fabich, and Frank Hof from Flotilla 15-1; Randy and Mary Patton from Flotilla 15-3; and Jim Nastelli and Kitty Dolan from Flotilla 15-8. Next year, the National Conference will be held in ORLANDO!



Kitty Dolan, front left, and Jim Nastelli, front right, both members of 15-8 in the AUX-04 class. Photo by Mel Borofsky



Vince Maida, 15-1, attending the AUX-10 class. Photo by Mel Borofsky



L to r: Rear Admiral Paul Thomas, USCG, and National Commodore Mark Simoni, presents D7Commodore Bob Weskema with several awards for newsletters, photos and videos by District 7 members. Photo by Mary Patton



Rear Admiral Paul Thomas, USCG, presents Randy Patton with the Auxiliary Achievement Medal.

Photo by Mary Patton



**Seventh District Fall Training &  
Business Meeting**  
***"INFORMED, ENGAGED & VALUED"***  
**Florida Hotel & Conference Center,  
Orlando FL**  
**21 – 25 September 2016**

Auxiliarists should consider attending the upcoming D7 Training Conference September 21-25 in Orlando. This conference is a great opportunity for members to obtain additional training and meet Auxiliarists from across District 7. There will be training workshops all day Saturday

Shown below is a partial list of some of the fine raining being offered. A complete list of the training and workshops offered is available at: <http://www.exhibitservices.net/#!d7-dtrain-2016/c1kme>

**Friday, 23 September, 2016**

**Uniform: Tropical Blue**

1315-1610 OPENING CEREMONIES & DISTRICT BOARD BUSINESS MTG

**Saturday, 24 September 2016**

**Uniform: Tropical Blue**

0730-1150 Registration Desk

0730-1700 DIRAUX Office

**Per Policy: ID's will only be issued IF Mandatory Courses are completed – no exceptions**

0800-1700 Telecommunications Course

0800-0850 "Go To Meeting"

0800-0950 Member Recognition

0800-1050 Flotilla Leadership Nuts & Bolts

1100-1150 How to Organize Boating Safety Week

0900-1050 IS Workshop

1000-1150 Quick Start To AUX Newsletter

1100-1150 American Waterway Watch

1300-1350 Navigation info

1300-1550 ANSC 7035/7056 Change of Member Status

1300-1450 2016 Operation Overview

1300-1550 Sanitation Workshop & Program Intro (AUX FS)

1500-1650 IS Workshop

1600-1650 CFVE (Commercial Fishing Vessel Examinations)

1600-1650 Getting from Your Dealers

1600-1650 Legal INFO

**Sunday, 25 September 2016**

**Dress: Civilian Casual**

0800-1200 Disaster Preparedness for Emergency  
Response Team

0800-1200 TCO (continued from Saturday)

# Let's Talk Uniform Head Gear

by Mary Patton, SO-PB



This is the **ONLY** ball cap authorized for the Auxiliary. If you have a ball cap with your flotilla's location on it, please do not wear it. The 'location' hats were discontinued as of December 2012.



The Combination Cap band shown above is for use by the **U.S. COAST GUARD**, with the Coast Guard Insignia. Notice at the top of the insignia backing, the dip in the center (arrow). The Auxiliary insignia backing is **rounded** at the top. See bands at left.



The two Combination Caps shown above are **AUXILIARY** hats—the device backing is **rounded** at the top, no dip.

## Editor's Note:

The proper hat bands may be purchased from the Coast Guard Auxiliary Assn. Their web address is:

<http://auxiliarycenter.mybigcommerce.com/uniforms-hats-caps/?sort=featured&page=2>

Men's hatbands are \$8.05 and the women's hat band is \$26.80.



As you can see from the photo at left, not all Auxiliary Combination Caps have the correct hat band.

Let's endeavor to wear the correct uniform. We are, after all, representing the US Coast Guard when we wear our uniforms.



# Dolores Spain's Long and Interesting Career with the Auxiliary

(This story first appeared in the Summer 2014 edition of the *Charlie Noble*)

Photos accompanying this article are on page 20



Dolores Spain

In November, 1990, and again in November, 1992, James and Dolores Spain, along with Robert and Ruth Izzard from Flotilla 14-9, were selected to man the Coast Guard Light Station, Dry Tortugas, on Loggerhead Key for a 10 to 12 day mission. They had to have the qualifications of either coxswain or crew and watchstander.

The four Auxiliarists started out by staying at the Key West Coast Guard Station overnight and were briefed on the duties they would have at the light station. The next morning, after breakfast, they boarded the 60-foot *Activa* that would take them 70 miles to Loggerhead Key and light station Dry Tortugas. Also aboard were several U.S. Park Service personnel who needed to be dropped off at Fort Jefferson along with an author who would be staying at Fort Jefferson for a month writing about the birds on one of the Keys. One Coast Guard member was also aboard to show the Spains and Izzards how everything at the light station worked. He went over their daily duties, how to keep daily logs, and he checked the radios at the base of the lighthouse and in the main house. The Coast Guard member did not stay on the island, but returned to Key West on the *Activa*.

The Auxiliarists were to keep the generators running and mop up the oil that leaked from them daily with large 3' x 3' paper towels. They stood 12-hour radio watches, checked the fuel levels in the fuel tanks, and the level in the water tanks, checked the fire equipment, kept the grounds maintained, took visitors on tour, and kept the island secure from unauthorized persons docking or setting foot on the island.

Buildings on the island included the main house, with two bedrooms with double bunk beds, a kitchen and living room, bathroom and porch. Another

building had a larger sleeping area, without screened windows and a small kitchen and bathroom for extra personnel. There was also a small building that housed recreational equipment, a tool shed, and small laundry shed outdoors.

A small solar collector was outdoors that heated some water for warm showers. There was also a helicopter pad on the island, a 19' rigid hull vessel for the Auxiliarists to use for emergencies along with a catamaran vessel.

When the four Auxiliarists were off-duty, they swam in the Gulf, fished, snorkeled, and went shelling around the island beach. The area near the pier was a safe area for swimming, but the area on the other side of the island contained predatory barracuda fish. The sunsets on the island were spectacular.

The four also spent time completing member training tasks of charting distances from Loggerhead key to Fort Jefferson and Key West.

One day, they launched the 19' vessel to go to Fort Jefferson, which was two miles away, when they received a radio message from Coast Guard Station Key West to go to Ft Jefferson to receive a landline message. The landline message gave them instructions to be on the lookout for a particular vessel carrying drugs to the U.S. They were to climb the 254 steps to the top of the lighthouse and use binoculars to scan the waters for this particular vessel. They were told that a Navy vessel would be patrolling a 50 mile area to locate the vessel in question. If the vessel was spotted, they were to radio Station Key West and give them a coded message. However, the vessel was not spotted, but they heard on the radio that the Navy vessel was checking all

vessels in the area with their spotlights.

On the 1992 tour, they had to help replace two of the generators. They had to use the tractor and rig to get the generators to the generator building. They had help from two other Auxiliary members who were on the island along with two Coast Guard members. The two new Auxiliarists were on the island to put in new water lines to the pier.

Dolores says she will always remember those idyllic days spent on Loggerhead Key at Light Station Dry Tortugas assisting the Coast Guard.

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## Career update:

Over her 27+ years in the Auxiliary, Dolores has accumulated many ribbons/medals such as:

- 10 Sustained Auxiliary Service Awards
- 13 Auxiliary VE/MDV Service Awards
- Two Auxiliary PE Service Awards
- Three Coast Guard Meritorious Team Commendations
- RBS Device Award
- Presidential Unit Citation
- Four Coast Guard Unit Commendations
- Auxiliary Membership Service Award
- Transportation 9-11 Ribbon
- Coast Guard Bicentennial Unit Award

She has certifications as Instructor, Crew, MDV, VE and Watchstander. Unfortunately, due to fractures received in a bad fall two years ago, she had to give up her crew qual.

Dolores has been, and continues to be, a staunch supporter of the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary