

# THE JETTIES



Vol. 20 Issue 3, A publication of Flotilla 38, 1-NR, Newburyport, MA. June – July 2001

## CELEBRATING NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS AS THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE COAST GUARD

*Matt McDonald, FSO-PB*

In the years just after the creation of the United States of America, the fledgling republic was facing serious financial troubles. Widespread smuggling to avoid payment of import taxes was used to great effect against Great Britain during the war for independence. However, the continuation of this practice after the war kept much needed funds out of the United States Treasury. The loss of revenue was serious enough that in 1790 Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton petitioned congress to acquire twelve small schooners. He proposed that these vessels should cruise the waters of the East Coast and ensure that inbound cargoes were offloaded in approved ports of entry where the appropriate tariffs could be assessed and collected.

Thus the Revenue Cutter Service can trace its origins to an Act of Congress that became law on 4 August 1790, authorizing President George Washington to have built and fitted out "so many boats or cutters, not exceeding ten, as may be necessary to be employed for the protection of the revenue." Of course then as now once the president had an appropriation authorized by Congress the number of ships grew to twelve and there were some cost overruns that were cause for congressional concern.

The Congress authorized the president to have cutters built and put into service; it did not authorize him to establish a cutter service as such. Presumably the absence of an official name for the cutters and their personnel can be attributed to this fact. The 63<sup>rd</sup> section of the act declared ".....that the officers of the Revenue Cutters are to be deemed officers of the Customs." Cutter captains were therefore answerable to, and received their sailing orders directly from the customs collector of the respective port to which they were assigned. The group of cutters came to be known as the United States Revenue Marine.

It is also of worthy of note to recall that after the Revolution the Continental Army and Navy were disbanded, leaving the United States without either until the creation of the Navy in 1798. Because the Revenue Marine was the only military force of the United States from 1790-1798, the USCG, the direct descendant of the Revenue Marine holds the distinction of being the oldest continuously serving branch of the five armed services. *(Continued on page 2).*

*Pictured below.*

*A model of the Revenue Cutter Massachusetts, the first vessel of what would become the U.S. Coast Guard. Built and launched in Newburyport, Massachusetts.*

## NEXT FLOTILLA MEETINGS

**THUR 7 JUNE 01 at 1900**  
on-board the USCG CUTTER RELIANCE  
berthed at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard

**FRIDAY 13 JULY 01 starting at 1800**  
Plum Island Boathouse  
(Annual Summer Family Cookout)



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## Birthplace of the Coast Guard (Continued from page 1)

A newly built revenue cutter was assigned to each of the twelve major ports on the East Coast. The Revenue Cutter *Massachusetts*, first of the original twelve to be placed in service, was built on the banks of the Merrimack River at the former MacKay's Shipyard in Newburyport. It can therefore be claimed that Newburyport, Massachusetts is indeed the birthplace of the United States Coast Guard. The *Massachusetts* was 60-feet long on its deck, displaced approximately 70 tons, had a beam of 17-feet 8-inches and a draft of 7-feet 8-inches. The crew was composed of 4 officers, 4 enlisted, and 2 cabin boys.

With the passage of time the Revenue Marine had additional duties assigned, some of which they had performed on occasion. The first of these were of a military nature. In 1797 concerns with the threatening international situation caused the cutters to be assigned to coastal defense and commerce protection in their cruising areas. In 1799 the president ordered that the cutters of the Revenue Marine be placed under the operational command of the newly formed Navy and eight of them served with distinction during the quasi-war with France. Subsequent military conflicts including the War of 1812, the first Seminole War, the Mexican War, the Civil War and the Spanish American War all brought the cutters under Navy Department control.

An example of non-military missions for the cutters can be found in their being authorized in 1799 to enforce health quarantine measures. Fear of contagious disease that might be transmitted in commercial vessels prompted this action and it periodically became an important duty. Yet another example of non-military duties can be found dating from 1807 when foreign slave trading was banned and the Revenue Marine was tasked with stopping this evil.

Until 1832, rendering assistance to vessels in distress was not a specific obligation of revenue cutters. If they chanced upon a vessel in distress the sailors would render whatever aid they could in the best tradition of those who use the seas. In 1832, however, Treasury Secretary Louis McLane directed several of the cutters to cruise actively during winter months solely for the purpose of aiding ships in distress. Thus began the practice of the service's concern with saving life and property from the perils of sea travel.



### *The predecessor agencies of the United States Coast Guard*

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## OUR "NEW LOOK"

Hopefully you are not too disappointed with the lack of color in this edition. After two and a half years of wearing out home printers or "borrowing" resources from some members' places of employment we had to move on. At the request of *The Jetties* staff, the flotilla membership has budgeted funds to have the newsletter commercially copied. Unfortunately, to have color copying done by a vendor is cost prohibitive so our new look is in black and white. However, there is still some good news.

You may have noticed some minor differences in the format and layout of this edition. That is because we are using new software to lay out the final draft that we send out to be copied. This new software also allows us to export *The Jetties* as a "portable document file" that can be efficiently distributed by e-mail. So those of you with an e-mail address will also be receiving a back-up electronic copy of *The Jetties* from the FSO-CS. We hope that you enjoy both formats. Sincerely, your print and electronic media staff: Matt McDonald, John McDonald, Frank Keslof, Mike Keslof.

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## THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD BALL



## AT NEWBURYPORT'S YANKEE HOMECOMING



Now that you've read the feature article about how Newburyport became the birthplace of the Coast Guard with the launching of the *Revenue Cutter Massachusetts*, make plans to celebrate the event with us. A traditional weeklong event that has been taking place for many years in Newburyport is "Yankee Homecoming." Caught up in eight days of parades, fireworks, road races, parties, children's events and other festivities, most of the community has forgotten the historical event that originally sparked the idea of Yankee Homecoming and was its centerpiece. That is, the birth of the United States Coast Guard and the fact that Newburyport is its "hometown."

In order to "refocus" tradition this year, Flotilla 38 and the Yankee Homecoming Committee will re-introduce the *Coast Guard Ball* during Yankee Homecoming Week. We hope to see everyone there to honor this tradition and we are expecting a number of dignitaries to include Rear Admiral George Naccara, USCG, Commander, First Coast Guard District. The ball will be held on the Tuesday of Yankee Homecoming Week, which is "Military and Public Service Day." On military day there are tours and festivities at the Coast Guard Station and other displays and events around the city by all branches of the armed forces and local emergency service agencies. The Coast Guard Ball will be the crowning event of military day. Details as follows:

**Date: 31 July 2001 ↓ Time: 2000 to 2400 ↓ Light buffet with coffee, desserts, cash bar**  
**Newburyport Lodge of Elks, 25 Low Street**

**Dancing to music by "The DEC Band" (21-piece orchestra)**

**Attire: Military - dinner dress white or dinner dress blue/alpha; Civilian - "black tie" (optional)**

**Tickets \$25. per person (there will be tables of 8)**

**To reserve tickets, contact "Linda" at 800-332-9722 extension 634**

Help is still needed to stage this event, if you can lend a hand to one of the committees contact Anita Rossi:  
(Office) 800-516-0177 (Home) 978-462-9881 (E-mail) icw@mediaone.net

You can help with: set-up/clean up, traffic control, invitations, food, center pieces, decorations, tickets and more.

**TRAFFIC NOTE:** The Yankee Homecoming Road Race will be taking place on streets throughout the city the evening of the ball and the finish line is near the Elks Lodge. Here is the "back way in" to avoid the traffic detours. Avoid downtown and the main streets in Newburyport, the best approach is via Interstate-95 exit 56; exit sign reads "Scotland Road-Newbury-State Police Barracks. Proceed past the State Police Barracks into the industrial park and through the first traffic lights. The second set of traffic lights is at Low Street, take a right and the Elks will be on your immediate right.

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## FACE LIFT FOR RANGE LIGHT

*Matt McDonald, FSO-PB*

Readers may remember a previous article regarding the history and upcoming restoration of the Newburyport front range light. Built in 1873 the Newburyport range lights are one of the very few pairs left standing in the United States. With the spring here, work is about to commence on the restoration of the outer light.

The first step in this process will be a sandblasting of the inside of the tower to remove the coats of lead-based paint. A professional company will take care of this part of the project but there is room for volunteer labor by professional crafts people to help out with the restoration of the woodwork inside of the structure. The Lighthouse Preservation Society continues to offer dinner "at the top of the light" to help raise the \$75,000 needed for the restoration project. For more information about dining in catered elegance at the top of the inner light, contact The Lighthouse Preservation Society at 4 Middle Street in Newburyport, 978-499-0011.



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## RESCUE AT THE JETTIES

### EARLY START ON SAR SEASON

*BMC Don Holcomb, USCG*  
*Interview by Matt McDonald, FSO-PB*

As we all know the Coast Guard's motto is *Semper Paratus*, which translates as something like always ready *even for the unexpected* (editor). The crew aboard Station Merrimack's 47-foot motor lifeboat was certainly able to apply that motto on 2 May.

Out on a training exercise, the crew suddenly noticed people in the water near the jetties at the mouth of the Merrimack River. Three New Hampshire residents were returning from a morning of fishing when their boat was swamped on an outgoing tide. One of the fishermen is quoted as saying in the *Daily News* that when the boat went over "It pinned us right under, she flipped and we hung on." He went on to state that he and the other two men were in the water for about twenty minutes clinging to the side of their 16-foot motor boat.

The routine training quickly turned into a SAR incident. BMC Don Holcomb, USCG, Supervisor USCGSTA Merrimack River, noted that the coxswain, BM2 David Pierias, did an outstanding job. He maneuvered the motor lifeboat close to the people, enabling the crew to bring the hapless fishermen onboard. Once aboard, the fishermen were taken to the charter boat pier at the end of Plum Island where they were met by firefighters and EMT's. While none of the men were injured, they considered themselves to be quite lucky. Had they spent much more time in the 55-degree water their condition would have been quite serious.



*USCG Station Merrimack River's 47-foot motor lifeboat underway on the Merrimack River, Chief Holcomb at the helm.*

In my interview with Chief Holcomb I asked him what he thought might have caused the accident, and he said he really didn't know. However, one of the fishermen mentioned to him that it was the sea conditions. The chief said that this was certainly a contributing factor and noted that boaters should always be aware of the weather, the sea conditions, and the capabilities of their boats in all conditions. The 16-foot boat with 3 people in it was probably swamped by a small wave combined with the choppy seas. He also offered one more bit of advice "Boat smart... wear a life jacket."

The chief also stated that this is shaping up to be a very busy year for the two seven-person sections at Station Merrimack. Let's hope that all the SAR cases end as well as this one.

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## BRIDGE OPENING POLICY

It was recently reported by the *Newburyport Daily News* that we shouldn't have to worry about problems with the Route 1 bridge (Gillis Bridge) this summer. The bridge has been a source of problems and controversy for those going over it and those of us on the Merrimack River going under it in Newburyport harbor. When opened for boat traffic over the last couple years, it had a nasty habit of getting stuck in that position causing massive traffic jams on the highway.

The malfunctions, along with just the traffic backup from normal openings led to the policy of limiting bridge openings. Boaters could no longer radio or signal for an opening on demand, there were only certain times an opening could be requested.

The Massachusetts Highway Department said that the malfunctions were due to a faulty generator, which was replaced at the end of last summer at a cost of \$142,000. Therefore, the highway department is not expecting problems this boating season. However, starting on Memorial Day, boaters with tall masts will again have to time their passage under the bridge. *The Jetties* staff spoke by telephone with the bridge tender just before going to press to get the latest word on bridge opening policy.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, boaters can only request a bridge opening on the hour and on the half-hour between the hours of 0600 and 2200. If you need to have the bridge opened during the overnight hours you must call an hour in advance to make an appointment. This policy applies seven days a week for the summer months.

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## FLOTILLA 38 LAUNCHES INTO CYBER-SPACE

We were pretty busy in the publications section putting out information to the membership. However, Flotilla 38 needed to enter cyber-space and get current with electronic media. As most of you know, this is now being handled by new member Mike Keslof who was recently sworn-in as the FSO-CS (flotilla staff officer – communications services). Don't confuse this job with FSO-CM, the flotilla staff officer-communications who handles radio issues, that's Fred Beaulieu. Mike on the other hand is our webmaster and handles Internet communications.

Mike has already done a great deal of work on our website and we hope it will be a useful tool for both members and the public. If you haven't already done so, check out our website at [www.flotilla38.homestead.com](http://www.flotilla38.homestead.com). In particular, stay current by checking the member information pages, which are updated on a regular basis. You'll also find a section called "Nautical

Notes & Cruising" where we archive some of our great stories from the flotilla and division newsletters. You can see the great pictures that accompanied those articles in much better detail and in full color!



*Mike Keslof administered staff officer oath-of-office by Steve Tudal, FC*

To help out with public education, Mike also set up pages at the web site with full details on our public education classes and boaters can register right on-line via e-mail. The boating public has the same conveniences available for requesting information about vessel safety checks, the Coast Guard Academy Introduction Mission or they can inquire about joining the Auxiliary. Also check out some of the links to Coast Guard pages at the national level, tide chart information and weather information.

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## FURRY TENANTS HAVE RETURNED

*Photos by Mike Keslof, FSO-CS 38*



Well they are back! At least its probably the same parents but with a new family of babies. The foxes have again established headquarters at the boathouse for the second year in a row. They were seen early in the year but they really made an impressive de-

but during the Division 3 operations workshop which took place at the boathouse several weeks ago.

Many had a good look at them at the May flotilla meeting, in fact one strolled in the door during the meeting, probably looking for chow and wondering why we were taking so long to adjourn for refreshements. Their boldness might have



something to do with the fact that Ron Booth, VFC has been leaving them sliced apples and Mike Keslof used dog biscuits to entice them out for photos.

Last year they lived in the shed near the gate. This time they are residing outside the boat-house under the decking that carries the steel rails originally used to launch the old wooden 36-foot motor life boats. Note the rails in one photo where you can see one of them about to snack on a dog biscuit.



Speaking of the rails, Flotilla 38's Ed MacKenzie, VCO 1NR, can relate stories about riding those rails (or was it something about being ridden out on a rail?). Anyway, as a young Coast Guardsman, he remembers, with some trepidation, being launched down those rails and praying that the engine would start when the boat hit the water. He said it was a heck of a roller-coaster ride in a 36-foot motor life boat. Of course that was so many years ago that the entire Coast Guard fleet still had wood hulls.



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## FLOTILLA COMMANDER'S REPORT

*Steve Tudal, FC*

Members of 38 it is that busy time of the year again, the season has started for many people already. Last fall I bought a new boat with my son. We bought it late in the season and I was only able to go out on it twice before it was wrapped for the winter, so I am looking forward to this summer. In the past I've checked out the cost of docking prior to paying for a new boat. I didn't do that this time and had an unpleasant shock as a result. I could not believe that \$85.00 - \$110.00 per foot is the price range on the Merrimack River for a space at the dock, wow! Well being the frugal (a nice way of saying cheap) person that I am, I looked into several alternatives. It has been decided that the *Lady Liberty* will be on a mooring in Ipswich Bay. The Town of Rowley charges \$1.50 per foot for a mooring permit, even with cost of installing the mooring the math works for me.

I am very excited about our upcoming June meeting; you will find more detail elsewhere in this issue of *The Jetties*. If you haven't been able to make the last meetings try to make this one. It isn't every day that we get to meet aboard a U.S. Coast Guard Cutter. My thanks in advance to our host CDR Mike Hamel, USCG and thanks to Frank Keslof, DSO-PB 1NR for his efforts in making this happen.

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## A FEW WORDS FROM THE VICE COMMANDER

*Ron Booth, VFC*

Well it looks like spring is finally here. I am sure you all have been doing some spring-cleaning, both on your boats and houses. That is what a group of us decided should be done as our first order of business at the boathouse and after a long snowy and windy winter it really needed it. The work detail was composed of Frank Shippee, Frank Keslof, Wayne Cedres, his daughter Tiffany and myself. BMC Don Holcomb, Supervisor, USCGSTA Merrimack River, provided us with a dumpster, which we filled beyond capacity. In fact we filled it to the point that Frank Keslof had to jump up and down on it to close the lid. Thanks to the work crew and with a freshly cleaned and polished boathouse we look forward to seeing many of our members at upcoming flotilla meetings.

In particular, we are looking forward to the annual summer family cookout scheduled for Friday 13 July 01. In July the meeting moves ahead a week so not to interfere with anyone's recreational activities planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday week. Also note that instead of the usual Thursday

As many of you know our rent-free summer tenants are back at the boathouse. This year's family of red foxes is drawing the usual attention of Audubon and nature photographers. Speaking of which, Mike Keslof, FSO-CS has taken some great photos, they were on display at the last flotilla meeting. If you weren't there to see them, some are in this issue of *The Jetties* and also on-line at the member info pages on our Website, check them out.

Vessel Examiners, it's that time and let's try to help Jim Maranto out by getting the inspections done earlier this year. Crew trainees, get on board, go on some patrols, get the feel of it. Don't forget that as a trainee you are eligible to go on patrol as part of the crew. You may also get lucky and have a Qualification Examiner on board some boats when you do a patrol; this is a great way to get some of your tasks signed off.

For you gourmets, Flotilla 38's annual summer family cookout at the boathouse will take the place of our July meeting. We have moved it to a Friday and advanced a week to avoid the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday week. Talk to me or Ron Booth, VFC at the June meeting about helping with the cookout. Also, remember the annual Coast Guard "birthday" lobster-fest at CG Station Merrimack River. This is on Saturday 4 August and tickets are limited. If you plan to go, contact Roberta Shippee, FSO-IS (978-388-3130) or Karen Simmons, VCP 3 (978-463-6669). I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable summer season and plan on seeing everyone onboard the *USCGC RELIANCE* in June.

meeting night, we move the cookout to Friday so you can relax and make it a great start to a summer weekend. Hope to see you there!

With the nice weather here and more of it on its way, underway boat crew training is about to resume. The boat crew trainees spent the cold winter months hitting the books and completing shore side tasks. Boat crew trainees and flotilla members alike are looking forward to a great season. Let's remember our first priority, **boat ing safety**, and boat smart from the start-wear your lifejacket.



*Ron Booth, VFC, lecturing at a recent public education session.*

*(Jetties staff photo)*



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## JUNE FLOTILLA MEETING ABOARD *USCG CUTTER RELIANCE* AT PORTSMOUTH NAVY SHIPYARD

For our June flotilla meeting we will be the guests of CDR Michael Hamel, USCG aboard his command the US COAST GUARD CUTTER RELIANCE. CDR Hamel was the guest speaker at our January flotilla meeting and at that time he invited us to visit the RELIANCE when the warm weather returned. The June flotilla meeting will be Thursday 7 June 01 and we will start a half-hour earlier at 1900 instead of 1930. You may arrive aboard the cutter as early as 1815 and enjoy the crew's hospitality, however please be aboard in time for the meeting to begin at 1900 sharp!

For the formal part of the meeting there will be introductions and a couple of business items for brief discussion. The flotilla commander will give a report and there will be an update on the Coast Guard Ball and the annual family cookout. Staff officers are asked to turn in a written report and forgo giving a full verbal report. Crewmembers of the RELIANCE will then conduct tours of the vessel; flotilla members not up to climbing through hatches may relax, enjoy the harbor views and socialize with the crew. Hopefully the weather will cooperate, but in any case it will be a very enjoyable and interesting evening.

***Directions to the Portsmouth Navy Shipyard.*** Traveling from the Newburyport area, proceed north on interstate 95 towards Maine. As you cross over the I-95 Piscataqua River Bridge, the first exit is the closest to the shipyard. **HOWEVER, THIS EXIT IS NOT RECOMMENDED.** It meanders through back streets with many turns and because some are one-way streets you can't return the same way. **THEREFORE,** it is recommended that you take the **SECOND** exit, which is Route 236, and proceed east into the "Kittery Route 1 traffic circle." After entering the traffic circle, go around to the opposite side past the Dairy Queen ice cream stand. Exit the traffic circle by taking a right after the Dairy Queen. This is Rodgers Road, you stay on this same street but note that the name changes to Shapleigh Road and it is still Route 236. You come to an intersection with a number of businesses and proceed straight through; this is now Route 103 towards Kittery Point. Right after passing through the intersection onto Route 103, be looking for the gate to the shipyard on your right. A map of the shipyard showing you how to get to the RELIANCE will be available from the police officer at the gate.

***Security Procedures.*** The shipyard is a secure military facility and you normally have to stop and fill out paperwork to get a pass. To expedite your entry we will provide the Department of Defense Police (in advance) with a list of vehicles and Auxiliarists attending.

You must call or E-mail Frank Keslof, **no later than Monday 4 June**, with the following information: the state and vehicle registration number of your license plate and the names of the people traveling in your vehicle. Frank's phone: 800-950-9266, ext. 5548 (or) E-mail: frank\_keslof@amr-ems.com. Everyone must present a photo identification (i.e. driver's license) at the gate.

***Military Protocol.*** The USCGC RELIANCE is a commissioned military vessel so you must observe military protocol when boarding:

- Stop at the top of the gangway, turn and face the stern, and salute the National Ensign.
- Face forward again; salute the officer-of-the-deck and request permission to come aboard.
- When leaving follow the reverse procedure, first salute the OOD, request permission to leave, then salute the flag on the stern.
- Even if you can't see the flag from where you're standing, salute in the direction of the stern.
- Remain covered (wearing your hat) except in the wardroom/dining room.
- New members and retired members may be in casual civilian attire (no jeans or t-shirts), other members are expected to be in uniform with proper headgear (no ball caps with tropical blue short).



***USCG CUTTER RELIANCE***  
(Official USCG photo)

### JUNE 2001 FLOTILLA CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5 PE	6 Boatcrew	7 Flotilla Meeting	8	9
10	11	12 PE	13 Boatcrew	14	15 Dist 1NR Mtg	16
17	18	19 PE	20 Boatcrew	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Boatcrew	28 Div 3 Mtg	29	30

### JULY 2001 FLOTILLA CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Boatcrew	12	13 Flotilla Cookout	14
15	16	17	18 Boatcrew	19	20 Dist 1NR Mtg	21
22	23	24	25 Boatcrew	26 Div 3 Mtg	27	28
29	30	31 Coast Guard Ball	Newburyport Yankee Homecoming Week 28 July – 5 August 2001			



In closing, a photo (left) to let you know what your publications staff went through this past winter up in Vermont just to get to the post office with your newsletters.

You see our fearless-of-the-weather ADSO-PB on the living room sofa. And yes that is snow half-way up past the living room window, its at eye-level and that's late March.

*The Jetties* is the official publication of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary,  
Flotilla 38, 1NR, Newburyport, Massachusetts.

*The Jetties* is published by Matthew McDonald, FSO-PB, 90 Kirk Meadow Rd., Chester, VT 01543.

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Members are protected from the dissemination of personal information by the Privacy Act of 1974.

**Submission deadline for the next issue is 15 July 2001**