

RUDDER

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Official photograph of the U. S. Navy by courtesy of the Mariners' Museum

Three Mast Bark Elliott Ritchie Ex-Harriet Lane

By CLARENCE N. ROGERS

BLACKENING skies and a tumbling barometer foretold what was ahead for the American bark, Elliott Ritchie. With Captain Perkins in command she had loaded lumber in her holds and on her deck at Brunswick, Georgia, and sailed around the first of May, 1884, for Buenos Aires, only to be caught almost immediately in a series of gales. As the days went by more bad weather ensued with little or no prospect of relief, and after struggling hard all through the night of May 12, morning found the vessel taking water. By noon Captain Perkins gave up the fight, for by now everything was torn and flying and the battered old hull trembled under each onslaught until it was obvious she was nearing the finish. Thus the old vessel found a fitting end to her strangely varied career. The blue waters of the Caribbean Sea cover the old hulk, a ship that lived in a few years more than most ships do in a lifetime.

Back in 1855 agitation began in Washington for the construction of a steamship for the United States Revenue Service. Most craft in the nautical arm of the Treasury Department were light graceful topsail schooners, which were much in favor. Nevertheless the backers of the measure asking for a steamboat won their day over the opposition of the Secretary of the Treasury, and in 1857 a bill was passed allowing an appropriation of \$150,000 for the construction of such a craft. A contract was let to the William Webb yards of New York, builders of many famous paddle steamers.

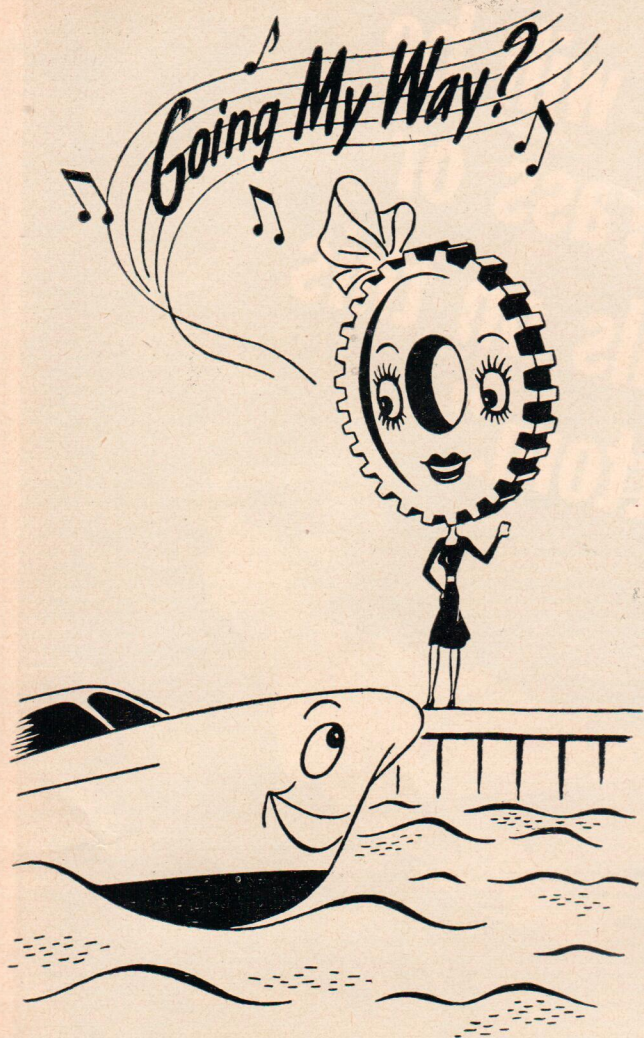
The vessel was built and launched as the Harriet Lane in November, 1857, and entered service that year under the flag of the Revenue Service. Secretary of the

Treasury Howell Cobb suggested that the vessel be named for President Buchanan's niece, and William Webb provided the bottle of wine for the christening. The ship measured about 600 tons, was brigantine rigged, and powered with a steam engines built by the Allaire Works. She had large paddle boxes typical of her period.

The Lane received orders on November 30, 1857, to sail under command of Captain John Faunce for patrol duty off the Carolina coast. The first cruise resulted in the Lane's capturing the slaver Wanderer. Three years later while the Prince of Wales was making a visit to the United States the government placed the fine cutter Harriet Lane at the disposal of the royal party.

Ominous clouds of the Civil War were gathering and in March of 1861 President Lincoln dispatched a force to relieve Fort Sumter. The Harriet Lane was among this fleet. Captain Faunce sailed past the Battery in New York at ten o'clock on the morning of April 8, outbound for Charleston. At 4:30 on the morning of the twelfth the first gun of the Civil War boomed from the battery on James Island. Meanwhile during the night the remainder of the supporting vessels arrived off the bar. A steamer was observed at 11:20 a.m., without ensign flying, and a shot was fired from the Lane across the bows of the approaching vessel. The latter ship proved to be the Nashville, inbound with passengers and freight from New York, and she was allowed to proceed. This shot from the thirty-two pound gun of the Harriet Lane was the first fired from a United States vessel in the great rebellion.

(Continued on page 60)



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ELLIOTT RITCHIE (Continued from page 30)

The Harriet Lane sailed north to Annapolis where she picked up the Constitution (Old Ironsides) and convoyed her to New York Harbor, arriving April 25, 1861. Still flying her Revenue ensign, the Lane next went to Pig Point on the Nansemond River and engaged the Confederate batteries on June 5, 1861. During the joint action against Hatteras Inlet the Lane struck bottom due to conflicting orders from the flag officer. It was necessary to jettison four of the ship's guns before she could be taken off the bar. Leaking badly from strain, she was ordered to New York after calling at Norfolk, Virginia. Here Captain Faunce was ordered to the Brooklyn Navy Yard with instructions to turn the vessel over to the Navy Department. So on September 17, 1861, the career of the Harriet Lane as a revenue cutter came to a close.

In 1862 the Lane, now fitted out as a war vessel, was ordered to Key West. Passing Cockpit Point the Confederates gave her a blast with their shore batteries that blew her pilot house to bits. Eventually she was assigned to Farragut's units, moving on to Galveston, Texas, in time to participate in that port's capture from the Confederates on October 19, 1862. Her duties for the remainder of the year were assisting in the blockade of that port.

The first of the new year found the Federal ships in Galveston Harbor relaxed from their vigil. Commander Wainwright had under his jurisdiction a fleet of vessels consisting of the Harriet Lane the flagship, Westfield, Clifton, Owasco, Sachem, and a sailing ship named Coryphaeus. On shore three companies of Massachusetts units under command of Colonel Burrill established headquarters, having just arrived from New Orleans on the steamer Saxon. The Confederates, under the command of General Magruder, were massing for an attack. In spite of the seriousness of attacking against such odds, General Magruder felt the capturing of the port well worth the sacrifice it might entail. Moving his men up from the rear during the night, he made preparations to attack from land and sea. At a given signal the Confederate land forces opened up with a withering fire on the bridge and strategic points held by the Federals. By sea four vessels manned by the Confederates approached the anchored Federal fleet. These four ships, under orders from General Magruder, were the Bayou City, mounting a sixty-eight pound rifle cannon and carrying 200 Texans from Sibley's Brigade; the Neptune, a stern wheeler carrying two howitzers and 150 sharpshooters from Colonel Bayley's Seventh Texas Corps; and two paddlers, the Lady Gavina and John F. Carr, acting as tenders. These ships were protected by hundreds of bales of cotton piled around the paddle boxes and decks. This formidable fleet descended upon the Harriet Lane, and the Owasco and the game little Sachem promptly went to her aid. By morning Galveston celebrated New Year's Day with a Confederate victory. The Harriet Lane had been captured after a terrific fight. The Westfield had been blown up to prevent her capture, and the other ships hauled anchor. Outside the Federal fleet tightened its blockade of the coast.

For a time the Harriet Lane remained in disuse. Meanwhile the (Confederate) War Department transferred her to the Secretary of the Navy. A Lieutenant Barry, C.S.N., was placed in command. He made an exhaustive survey of the ship, reporting his adverse findings as to her adaptability as a cruiser, with the result that she was returned to the jurisdiction of the War Department.

Her next role was that of a blockade runner. It was not until April 30, 1864, that the Harriet Lane, loaded with cotton and in company with three other blockade runners, took advantage of adverse weather conditions and slipped out of Galveston via the southwest channel. Safely reaching the gulf, the four ships headed for Havana. The well known Maine steamer Katahdin, now fitted out as a war vessel, was doing patrol duty along the coast. She sighted the blockade runners and gave chase, but was soon left far behind. The Harriet Lane reached Havana safely, but new troubles beset her. The Spanish authorities would not release her, so there she remained to the end of the war, neglected and all but forgotten.

However as soon as peace came the U. S. Navy Department secured the vessel through diplomatic channels, and it was a fitting compliment to Captain Faunce, her old skipper, that he should be ordered with a full complement of officers and men to Havana to receive the battered rusty hulk that was once his proud vessel. A steamer was dispatched from New York with workmen ranging from ship's carpenters to boilermakers to repair the Harriet Lane. The revenue cutter McCulloch was dispatched from New Orleans with orders to proceed to Havana and convoy her on her trip to New York.

Sometime later she was sold out of service to Elliott Ritchie of Boston, Massachusetts. She was again rebuilt, her boilers and engines removed, and she emerged as a three-mast bark under



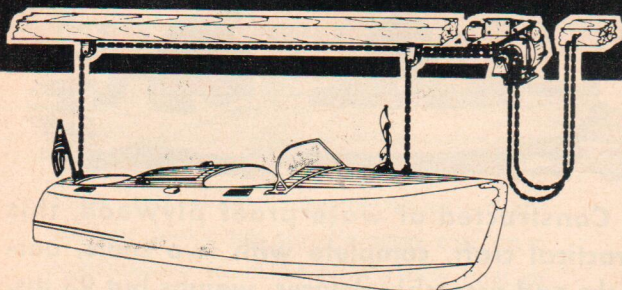
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The Elliott Ritchie's brief specifications were: 180 feet overall, 30.2 feet beam, and a depth of 18.4 feet. She grossed 615 tons. She was framed of live oak, white oak planked, iron and copper fastened, and was strapped with iron over her frames for stiffening. She was rebuilt in 1869 at East Boston, Massachusetts.



CHART LORE (Continued from page 32)

coast to the north, and the coast to the south, and you would keep them in that order. Each portfolio also would be in three sections: general charts N or S 1, 2, 3, etc.; the coasting charts 1-1, 1-2, N1-1, N1-2 and S1-1, S1-2, etc., while the harbor charts would be in the same sequence. With this system it is always easy to add charts without disturbing the consecutive numbering.

The best practice is to keep the charts at home when not in use. There they are handy for study, to settle arguments and to correct. Correcting and checking charts is an item sadly neglected by small boat men. It should be part of the service of every yacht club to subscribe for the Notices to Mariners. A letter to the commandant of your Coast Guard district will get you weekly notices of changes, destruction or placing of new aids in your district. Important information can also be gotten from the U. S. Army Engineers. The notices can be obtained for nothing and should be kept on file so that the charts can be taken down some rainy day and brought up to date.

In return the club members can relay any information about local waters that may be of interest to government agencies. The Coast Guard wants quick information on aids to navigation that are not functioning, have been dragged out of position, or otherwise injured. The Army Engineers want to know about obstruction to channels, changes in depths, etc., on federal waterways especially in areas that are seldom visited. The Coast and Geodetic Survey is interested in soundings, tall buildings, water tanks, etc., that make good landmarks, and in the harbor facilities of the smaller towns and villages.

Within one year a small Florida club, through the cooperation of government agencies, got the following placed on local charts: the location of a privately dredged channel, the charting of a light on a tower that was an aid in running an unlighted channel, and the erection of a marker on a bar thrown up by shell dredges. A dangerous snag was removed by the U. S. Engineers when we called their attention to it. Tugboats sometimes knock down and displace aids to navigation with their barges, dredges raise spoil banks, and vessels sink in the most inconvenient places. Quite frequently, unless some small boat man reports them, they will remain unmarked and uncharted until they cause some serious damage.

Correcting charts is not difficult. Dividers, parallel rulers, a fine pen and a razor blade for making eradications are the only things needed. Red as well as black ink is handy but not essential. The fixes given in the Notices to Mariners are exact, and generally three bearings are given. Buoys are indicated as little diamonds, the dot and not the diamond being the exact location of the buoy. That way the buoy can be upright, on its side or upside down so it will not obscure some other plotted object. If one is using only black ink leave the red buoys outlined, fill in black buoys solid. Lights shown are as stars. A study of the chart will show what symbols to use. Aids that had been temporarily placed but are now out of use mark "Destroyed" or "Out of place" in pencil so the note may be rubbed out when the aid is restored. A little work on your charts may save you a lot of uneasiness, if not actual danger.

There are other things you can place on your charts that will be a great help: the approximate position of houses ashore which are used by you as landmarks, items used as ranges, the approximate position of channels not shown on charts, fishing grounds and holes, the depths over spoil banks which generally are left blank on charts since they are subject to change. Put in all unofficial data in pencil, as you might wish to correct it later.

Do these things as you go along, or at night after the hook is down and the day's run is still fresh in your mind. You must remember that it may be some time before you come that way again if you are off your usual stamping grounds. Strange as it may seem, it is the man who cruises most who is liable to forget, as there are too many places to be kept in mind. Once,