

SHIPS NAMED “KEARSARGE”

AND

THE MOUNTAIN FOR WHICH THEY WERE NAMED.

The Sloop of War, KEARSARGE.

The first KEARSARGE was launched on 11 September 1861 by the Portsmouth Navy Yard, Portsmouth, NH; sponsored by Mrs. Henry McFarland, wife of the editor of the Concord Statesmen; and commissioned 24 January 1862, Captain Charles W. Pickering in command.

The Sloop of War KEARSARGE departed Portsmouth 5 February 1862 for the coast of Spain to join in the blockade of Confederate raiders. Captain John A. Winslow, took command of the KEARSARGE on April 8, 1863, while she remained in European waters searching for raiders. Arriving in Cherbourg, France on 14 June 1864, she found the Confederate Ship ALABAMA in port. On June 19, ALABAMA stood out of Cherbourg Harbor for her last action. Careful of French neutrality, KEARSARGE'S new commanding officer, Captain Winslow, took the sloop of war well clear of territorial waters, then turned to meet the Confederate cruiser. ALABAMA fired first but the battle quickly turned against her and within an hour the ALABAMA had been reduced to a sinking wreck and her Captain Raphael Semmes struck his colors and surrendered.

KEARSARGE rescued the majority of the ALABAMA'S survivors; but Captain Semmes and 41 others were picked up by a British yacht. Captain Winslow was promoted to Commodore and the New York Chamber of Commerce honored him, the KEARSARGE, and her crew, mainly men from New Hampshire, for their victory.

The KEARSARGE returned to sea and the coast of Spain in April 1865 in search of Confederate ships. After cruising the Mediterranean and the English Channel south to Liberia, the KEARSARGE returned to the Boston Navy Yard in August 1866.

In January 1868 KEARSARGE sailed to serve in the South Pacific and along the coast of South America to protect American interests for the next four years. She later performed similar duties in the Asiatic waters of Japan, China and the Philippines. During this time she carried Professor Hall's scientific party from Nagasaki, Japan, to Vladivostok, Russia, to observe the transit of Venus.

The last assignment for the KEARSARGE was protecting American interests in the West Indies, off Venezuela and along the Central Americas. On February 2, 1894, on Roncador Reef off the coast of Nicaragua, the KEARSARGE was wrecked. Having attained the rank of Rear Admiral, Winslow's years of service continued long after the famous sea battle. He died in Boston on September 29, 1873.

USS KEARSARGE (BB-5)

The second KEARSARGE, a battleship, named by act of Congress to commemorate the famed sloop of war, was launched 24 March 1898 by the Newport News Shipbuilding Company. She was sponsored by Mrs. Herbert Winslow, wife of Lieutenant Commander Herbert Winslow, USN, the only surviving son of John A. Winslow, commander of the first KEARSARGE during her famous battle with the ALABAMA. This battleship was commissioned 20 February 1900, Captain William M. Folger in command.

USS KEARSARGE became the flagship of the North Atlantic Fleet cruising down the Atlantic seaboard and in the Caribbean. She sailed into Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where, on December 10, 1903, the United States took formal possession of the Guantanamo Naval Reservation. From there she led the North Atlantic Battleship Squadron on goodwill calls to many European ports. In December 1907 the USS KEARSARGE, now commanded by Captain Herbert Winslow, following in the path of his illustrious father, became a part of the famous “Great White Fleet” of battleships sent around the world by President Theodore Roosevelt. The cruise, lasting more than a year, was an overwhelming success, showing the flag and spreading good will. This dramatic gesture impressed the world with the power of the U.S. Navy.

The USS KEARSARGE was at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for modernization for several years. On 17 September 1915, she left there to land a detachment of Marines at Vera Cruz, Mexico. She joined the Atlantic Reserve Fleet in February 1916 and served as a training ship for Massachusetts and Maine Naval Militia until World War 1, then trained armed guard crews and naval engineers. In May 1919, she embarked Naval Academy Midshipmen for 3 months training in the West Indies. The second USS KEARSARGE was decommissioned 10 May 1920, for conversion to a crane ship and a new career.

Designated AB-1 August 5, 1920, the KEARSARGE received an immense revolving crane with a rated lifting capacity of 250 tons and rendered invaluable service for the next 20 years. One of the many accomplishments was the raising of the sunken submarine SQUALUS off the New Hampshire coast.

On November 6, 1941 the KEARSARGE was designated CRANE SHIP NO. 1, giving up her illustrious name which was to be assigned to a mighty aircraft carrier. But she continued her yeomen service and made many contributions to the American victories of World War II. As CRANE SHIP NO. 1, her name was struck from Navy List 22 June 1955, and later she was sold for scrap.

USS KEARSARGE (CV-33)

Aircraft carrier CV-33, the USS KEARSARGE, was authorized by an act of Congress in 1942. Commissioned on March 2, 1946, with Captain Francis J. McKenna in command, the KEARSARGE was the third ship of the United States Navy to be so named. This ship had been launched on May 5, 1945, with Mrs. Aubrey Fitch, wife of Vice-Admiral Aubrey W. Fitch, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), as sponsor.

The USS KEARSARGE was 888 feet long and carried a crew of 3,000. Her home port was Norfolk and she was engaged in training operations and maneuvers along the East Coast and the Caribbean before joining the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean in June 1948. In 1950 the USS KEARSARGE was modernized to enable her to handle jet aircraft. In 1952 she joined the fast carrier Task Force 77 off the east coast of Korea where her planes flew nearly 6,000 sorties. KEARSARGE earned two battle stars during the Korean War and the nickname "Mighty Kay".

The carrier USS KEARSARGE, while operating with the 7th Fleet, kept watch over the Formosa Straits. In the fall of 1954 she stood by to assist the Nationalist Chinese in the evacuation of the Tachen Islands. In February 1955 she supported units of the fleet in the successful evacuation of 18,000 civilians and 20,000 military personnel from the islands.

During the summer of 1958 USS KEARSARGE was fitted out as an antisubmarine warfare support carrier and reclassified CVS 33. She rejoined the 7th Fleet in Southeast Asian waters as the Communists intensified their effort to overthrow Laos. The power and determination of the 7th Fleet was observed by the enemy and the crisis eased.

On August 1, 1962, USS KEARSARGE departed Long Beach for the Pacific missile range as a recovery ship in the Mercury orbital space flight of astronaut Walter Shirra. The USS KEARSARGE played her role in the space age by retrieving Shirra and his capsule and returning him to Honolulu. On May 18, 1963, the KEARSARGE repeated her earlier recovery by plucking astronaut Gordon Cooper and his capsule "Faith 7" after he orbited the earth 22 times.

In June 1964 the USS KEARSARGE was deployed on her ninth Far Eastern cruise, returning to operations with the 7th Fleet in Southeast Asia. Her service during the Vietnam War included being dispatched to the South China Sea following the attack on US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin in the summer of 1964. While US Navy planes destroyed North Vietnam oil and supply depots, KEARSARGE provided antisubmarine protection for the 7th Fleet. KEARSARGE earned five battle stars and a Meritorious Unit Commendation during the Vietnam War. The aircraft carrier KEARSARGE was decommissioned in 1970.

THE USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)

The Navy's newest ship is the fourth ship named for our Mountain. The mission of the USS KEARSARGE is the embarkation, deployment, and support of a Marine Landing Force. This WASP Class ship is 844 feet long with a beam of 106 feet and displacement of 40,500 tons. Two steam propulsion plants, developing a combined 70,000 horsepower, drive the ship to speeds in excess of 20 knots. This LHD carries a complement of nearly 2,000 troops and a ship's force of 98 officers and 983 enlisted men. The USS KEARSARGE has six fully equipped operating rooms and a 600 bed hospital for combat support, as well as for humanitarian missions.

These new LHD multipurpose amphibious assault ships are designed to accommodate the Harrier II Short Take Off/Vertical Landing (STO/VL) jet aircraft and the Navy's air cushion landing craft (LCAC). At the same time, the ships are equally adaptable to the full range of Navy / Marine Corps helicopters, conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles, along with all of the tanks, vehicles, artillery, ammunition, and other supplies necessary to fully support the assault. USS KEARSARGE will carry a mix of 30 Marine helicopters and jet attack Harriers on her flight deck, and 800 members of a Marine expeditionary unit's air-ground team of 2,000 Marines. She will provide true over-the-horizon striking power with the three air cushion landing craft carried in the well deck below. With her dynamic command and control system, the LHD is truly the most versatile amphibious ship ever built and qualified as a flag

command ship. The USS KEARSARGE is assigned for duty with the Atlantic Fleet with Norfolk, Virginia, as her home base.

The USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) is the third in a series of seven of this newest Navy amphibious ships to be built at the Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula. Nearly four years are required from the start of fabrication to the commissioning. Mrs. Alma Powell, ship's sponsor and wife of Joint Chief of Staff Chairman General Colin L. Powell, USA, christened the new ship as "KEARSARGE", May 16, 1992. As part of the Commissioning, Mrs. Powell gave the command: "Officers and crew of the KEARSARGE, bring this ship to life."

The USS KEARSARGE honors three previous ships named KEARSARGE, an historical lineage that extends to the Civil War. Captain David J. Montgomery, USN, assumed command in very impressive commissioning ceremonies.

Commander Craig W. Wilson, USN, a native of Nashua, is the Executive Officer. Seven other members of the crew are from New Hampshire and became Plankowners of the USS KEARSARGE.

In a time-honored tradition dating back to the days of wooden deck ships, the officers and men who serve on the USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) at the time of commissioning earn the title "Plankowner." Every member of the commissioning crew will hold this distinction for life, and each is entitled to "a clear, free, open, and unencumbered title to one plank of the deck" upon the ship's decommissioning. With this privilege lies a great deal of pride and responsibility. The members of this crew who come from a wide range of backgrounds and Navy experiences, were carefully selected to bring the KEARSARGE to life. As a team, they worked diligently for many months to prepare this majestic warship to the nation's service, and they will continue to set the standard for those KEARSARGE sailors who will follow them.

USS KEARSARGE plankowners have each received a plaque crafted from red oak trees from the sides of Mount Kearsarge in Warner, New Hampshire. The wood was cut on February 9, 1993 from a stand of mature trees located near the entrance of Rollins State Park at the base of Mount Kearsarge. The original USS KEARSARGE was built at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in 1861 from red oak from this mountain. White oak and other timbers for the frame of the original ship came from Hopkinton and other nearby towns, all in view of Mount Kearsarge.

The plaques were a gift to the crew of the USS KEARSARGE made possible by a cooperative effort of many agencies and individuals. The Navy had contacted the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development for the possibility of acquiring red oak from the same mountain and namesake of the original Kearsarge, to be used for plankowner plaques. John Twitchell, a forester from the Division of Parks & Recreation, was coordinator for the project, and with Howard Lewis and Ken Demarais of the Division of Forests & Lands, selected and harvested the trees.

The completed plaques were provided to the Navy without cost as a gift from New Hampshire and its industries; labor and expenses for the entire project were done on a volunteer basis. The Selectmen of Warner waived the timber yield tax on the harvested logs. Local farmer and horse logger, Peter Messer, of New London, pulled the logs from the woods to roadside. Scott Hill, log hauler, of South Newbury, trucked the logs to the sawmill. HHP Inc., a hardwood sawmill in Henniker, sawed the logs into boards and shipped them to Monadnock Forest Products, Inc. in Jaffrey where the wood was kiln-dried and the individual plaques made. These 6 x 12 inch blanks were then sent to Beaver Woodworkers in Milford for final milling and finishing before being turned over to the Navy for engraving.

MCT Cable, Merrimack County Telephone's sister company, documented the entire project from the felling of the trees to the finished plaques. Will James of Hi Tech Video in Grantham produced the film that are shown on local TV Channels 13 in Warner and 10 in New London as part of their Kearsarge Valley Magazine programs. Copies of this documentary film were presented to local Libraries and to the Warner Historical Society by the telephone company.

On December 16, 1993 Captain Montgomery, Commanding Officer of the USS KEARSARGE, was guest of honor at a luncheon in Concord, co-sponsored by Commissioner Steve Rice of the New Hampshire Department of Resources, and Economic Development and Norman Hanson, President of Monadnock Forest Products, Inc. Invited guests included representatives from the Governor and Council, several New Hampshire Departments, individuals and members of the companies involved in the Plankowner Plaque project. The luncheon was coordinated by Allison McLean, Information Officer of the Division of Parks & Recreation.

Captain Montgomery, assisted by Lieutenant Commander Martens, made presentations of Honorary Plankowner plaques to a number of the people present in recognition of their generous contributions. In addition, special presentations were made to the Town of Warner and to DRED. for their assistance.

Alderic O. "Dick" Violette, Chairman of MCT, Inc. and its subsidiary companies, exhibited a piece of timber from the original USS KEARSARGE that was salvaged from its shipwreck and given to the Pillsbury Free Library in the 1890's and now is kept at the Historical Society. He also exhibited photos he had taken at the Commissioning Ceremony. Dick has compiled an Album on the original KEARSARGE from information found at the Library, Historical Society and other historical sources. History of the USS KEARSARGE, from its launching on September 11, 1861 at the Portsmouth Shipyard and its memorable victory over the Confederate Ship ALABAMA during the Civil War to being shipwrecked on February 2, 1893, is well documented in this Album. He presented three copies to Captain Montgomery for the ship's library in addition to the documentary video about the Plankowner Plaques, titled, "From Mount Kearsarge to the USS KEARSARGE - An Odyssey of Wood". Dick has maintained contact with the ship's Public Affairs Department, responding to requests for photos of street signs showing "Kearsarge" and "Kearsarge Mountain. Road". Lt. David Page, Public Affairs Officer, has provided additional items and information. After the luncheon Captain Montgomery and Lieutenant Commander Martens visited Warner and the Kearsarge Mountain site where the red oak had been harvested.

The people of Warner should be proud of this latest activity that adds another episode to the history of Warner and of Mt. Kearsarge. Copies of the Albums, Commissioning Ceremony Books, Documentary Video Tapes, and other information on the USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) and the three other ships named KEARSARGE were presented to the Warner Historical Society and Pillsbury Free Library and Selectmen's Office. An exhibit of this information and momentos of the Commissioning of the USS KEARSARGE will be on exhibit, from time to time, on a rotation basis, at the business office of Merrimack County Telephone in Contoocook and Warner.

WHY THE SHIP WAS NAMED "KEARSARGE"

The best reference for proof that the first ship KEARSARGE was named for the mountain in Merrimack County is found in the History of Warner by Walter Harriman, published in 1879. General Harriman, a statesman and soldier, was a native of Warner. In the history he gives several forms of the name Kearsarge, from Carsaga to Kaysarge, variations of which go back two hundred years.

In his book Gen. Harriman indicates how the name "KEARSARGE" given to the sloop of war on September 11, 1861, was for the mountain in Merrimack County. The name had been suggested by Henry McFarland, the editor of the Concord Statesman in a letter to G.V. Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles accepted the name and Mrs. McFarland was chosen as the ship's sponsor.

In 1875 G.V. Fox, a summer resident of North Conway, claimed that the ship had been named at the suggestion of his wife for the mountain in Carroll County. He published the following statement in *Johnson's Cyclopaedia*: "Kearsarge Mount, a conspicuous mountain in Carroll County, New Hampshire. On suggestion of the wife of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, a daughter of Levi Woodbury, of New Hampshire, the Secretary, in 1891, named the vessel which sunk the Alabama in 1864 after this mountain. Another one of the same name in Merrimack County, New Hampshire, formerly called Kya-Sarga, has been erroneously claimed for this honor... G. V. Fox."

Much controversy resulted from the persistence of Mr. Fox and his friends. In the 1876-77 session the New Hampshire Legislature referred the matter to a special committee which resulted in finally having written testimony from Navy Secretary Gideon Welles that the matter had been brought before the Cabinet and settled by President Lincoln upon the testimony of Treasury Secretary Chase, a native of New Hampshire.

In 1879 Mr. McFarland published a pamphlet titled: "KEARSARGE MOUNTAIN and the CORVETTE named for it." In this publication he gives much history about the names of both mountains. He states that the Carroll County mountain was not called Kearsarge (or Kiarsarge) until after 1765 when the first settlers came from Merrimack County and that many of them continued to call it "Pequawket", after the Indian tribe there. This pamphlet contains a thorough study of the historical facts supporting the naming of the KEARSARGE for the mountain in Merrimack County.

He quoted many historians and sources of maps, accounts in many newspapers and had copies of letters of members of the crew stating they knew the ship was named for this mountain. He observes that it is strange that Mr. Fox did not initiate this controversy until after Admiral Winslow had died.

Both, the histories of Harriman and McFarland, cite incidents that confirm that Captain Winslow knew which mountain his ship had been named for. In 1865 a large hotel was built on the Wilmot side of Kearsarge Mountain and named "Winslow House" in his honor. Admiral Winslow was given a reception at which he presented the owner with bibles for each room. This building

was destroyed by fire and rebuilt on a larger scale. The Admiral, present at the opening of the second hotel on August 12, 1868, gave the owner another set of bibles, a stand of colors, and a picture of the battle. Many local, state and national notables were present at both events. Harriman wrote: "Nobody whispered that we were on the wrong mountain."

After Admiral Winslow's death, Mrs. Winslow fulfilled his request that, if a stone was to be placed at his grave, that it be taken from Kearsarge Mountain. A family friend, Nehemiah G. Ordway and associates of Warner, had a boulder transported to Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston where it was placed at the head of his grave. The bronze tablet affixed to the boulder bears the following inscription:

REAR ADMIRAL
JOHN ANGRUM WINSLOW
U.S. NAVY
BORN IN WILMINGTON N.C.
NOV. 19, 1811
DIED IN BOSTON MASS.
SEPT. 29, 1873
HE CONDUCTED THE MEMORABLE
SEA-FIGHT IN COMMAND OF
U.S.S. KEARSARGE,
WHEN SHE SANK THE ALABAMA
IN THE ENG. CHANNEL JUNE 19, 1864.

THIS BOULDER FROM
KEARSARGE MT. MERRIMACK CO. N.H.
IS THE GIFT
OF CITIZENS OF WARNER, N.H.
AND IS ERECTED TO HIS MEMORY
BY HIS WIFE AND
SURVIVING CHILDREN.

Many papers and rulings have been presented affirming that the naming of the KEARSARGE was indeed for the mountain in Merrimack County, including The Appalachian Club in 1877; and the New Hampshire Historical Society in 1879 (Mr. Fox presented a minority report in opposition to their ruling).

The old matter was re-opened after the shipwreck of the KEARSARGE in 1894 by articles in the press.

Mr. McFarland published a Second Edition of his pamphlet in 1906. In 1915 U.S. Senator Gallinger from New Hampshire, who had a summer home in Salisbury Heights, made a request of the United States Geographic Board for a statement on the proper naming of the two mountains. Their report was given to the 64th Congress in Feb. 1916 titled: "Mount Kearsarge and Mount Pequawket."

A recent account of the naming of the KEARSARGE was by William Marvel, a freelance writer from South Conway. who wrote a story published in the Historical New Hampshire, Spring & Summer 1986 issue titled: "The Pride of Portsmouth: The Cruise of the USS Kearsarge", a detailed account of the KEARSARGE from the time of her launching and subsequent actions at sea to being shipwrecked. He also addresses the controversy about the naming of the ship and defends the claim of G.V. Fox in several pages of his story. He concludes by stating: "The weight of evidence leans toward Mrs. Fox as the actual source, and as Welles pointed out in his corroboration of her story, she alone was qualified to state which mountain she associated with the ship." For all of that, the Navy records to this day state that the name KEARSARGE is derived from "a mountain in Merrimack County, New Hampshire".

After accounts of the cutting of Oak on Mount Kearsarge for Plankowner Plaques appeared in newspapers, the old controversy was reopened in a feature story by Nancy West in the New Hampshire Sunday News on March 7, 1993, titled: "Battle Over USS Kearsarge Naming Rages On" in which she states many of Marvel's previous claims and that he is continuing his research. Marvel has written several books about the Civil War. His next book will cover the KEARSARGE and ALABAMA.

The foregoing about the name KEARSARGE, the mountain, and the four ships named for it were taken from parts of accounts previously written or published and from information found at the Pillsbury Free Library and at the Historical Society in Warner, from The History of Warner and other publications.

The presentation to the Town of Warner of a framed picture of the four ships named KEARSARGE, a plaque of Appreciation and the Honorary Plankowner Plaques maintains a bond between the KEARSARGE and the town in the tradition that has existed since 1861.

The information for this story was compiled by Alderic O. "Dick" Violette.