

= Edward M. Cotter (fireboat) =

Edward M. Cotter is a fireboat in use by the Buffalo Fire Department at Buffalo , New York , United States . Originally named William S. Grattan , she was built in 1900 by the Crescent Shipyard of Elizabeth Port , New Jersey . Due to age she was rebuilt in 1953 and renamed Firefighter upon her return to service . The following year she was renamed Edward M. Cotter . Her namesake , Edward Cotter , was a Buffalo firefighter and leader of the local firefighters union who had recently died .

Edward M. Cotter is considered to be the oldest active fireboat in the world and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1996 .

Along with her firefighting duties , during the winter Edward M. Cotter is used as an icebreaker on Buffalo 's rivers . Edward M. Cotter mounts five fire monitors that are capable of pumping 15 @, @ 000 US gallons per minute (0 @. @ 95 m³ / s ; 12 @, @ 000 imp gal / min) . She can often be seen sailing out of her berth and south @-@ west to Lake Erie , returning north through the breakwall and firing her fire monitors .

= = Construction = =

The ship that was to become Edward M. Cotter was built in 1900 by the Crescent Shipyard of Elizabeth Port , New Jersey . She was originally named William S. Grattan after the first paid fire commissioner for the city of Buffalo . Construction was started on March 24 , 1900 and she was christened on September 5 , 1900 by Virginia Pearson , the young daughter of one of the city 's fire commissioners . The final construction cost for the ship was \$ 91 @, @ 000 .

The completed ship was 118 ft (36 m) in length , had a beam of 24 ft (7 @. @ 3 m) , and drew 10 ft 10 in (3 @. @ 30 m) . A 1 @. @ 5 in (38 @. @ 1 mm) -thick belt @-@ line of Swedish steel was included around the hull for icebreaking duties . William S. Grattan was powered by two Babcock & Wilcox coal @-@ fired boilers with steam engines rated at 900 horsepower (670 kW) . A single propeller provided propulsion . The rated speed of the ship was 13 knots (24 km / h ; 15 mph) .

The ship was also equipped with three double action steam pumps that supplied water at 9 @, @ 000 US gallons per minute (0 @. @ 57 m³ / s ; 7 @, @ 500 imp gal / min) to the three fire monitors used for firefighting . Two of the fire monitors were mounted on the forward section of the ship and one was on the stern section .

= = History = =

At the beginning of the twentieth century , Buffalo 's waterfront was an extremely busy center of commerce . Grain elevators , warehouses and shipping traffic had overtaxed the two existing fireboats : John T. Hutchinson (Engine 23) and George R. Potter (Engine 29) . Also , the city of Buffalo had shoreline hookups to allow the fireboats to serve as floating pumping stations supplying high pressure water to a fire hydrant system that covered the downtown area . The decision was made by city officials to order a third boat that would also have icebreaking capability along with her normal firefighting duties .

Upon completion she traveled up the Atlantic coast , down the St. Lawrence River , across Lake Ontario , through the Welland Canal and finally across Lake Erie in an uneventful trip that took 14 days . She was met 3 miles (4 @. @ 8 km) out of the harbor by her sister fireboats and escorted in .

= = = 1928 fire = = =

On July 28 , 1928 William S. Grattan responded to the oil barge James F. Cahill , loaded with 5 @, @ 000 barrels of crude oil , that was aflame . After burning 17 hours , the barge 's mooring lines gave way and the barge began to drift . William S. Grattan 's crew attempted to attach tow lines to the drifting barge but it struck a dock at an oil company where the empty oil tanker B.B. McColl was moored . The fumes on the B.B. McColl ignited causing an explosion and fire that engulfed William

S. Grattan . Captain Thomas Hylant along with his crew abandoned ship and swam through the flames to shore . Chief Engineer Thomas Lynch of William S. Grattan lost his life and seven other crew members were injured . The unattended boilers on William S. Grattan soon ran dry and exploded , leaving the ship burned out and heavily damaged .

William S. Grattan sat boarded @-@ up for eighteen months while city and fire department officials decided whether to replace her at a cost of \$ 225 @,@ 000 dollars or rebuild her for \$ 99 @,@ 000 dollars , which was \$ 8 @,@ 000 dollars more than her original cost . The decision was made to rebuild and in 1930 she was rebuilt at the Buffalo Dry Dock Company of Buffalo , New York . During this refit some improvements were made to William S. Grattan . One improvement was that her boilers were converted from burning coal to burning oil . The engines were rebuilt and her firefighting system was updated and could now handle foam fire retardant . Also , the pilot house was raised to the upper boat deck level and a fixed turret tower with a fire monitor was constructed on the stern of the ship . A fourth fire monitor was added to the top of the pilot house of the ship as well . As part of her acceptance ceremony she participated in a race against the harbor tug Kentucky , which was considered to be one of the fastest tugs on the Great Lakes .

= = = 1953 refit = = =

In the early 1950s , it was noticed that William S. Grattan was showing signs of age . Her boilers were only able to operate at 40 percent capacity and an engine room steam leak in 1951 injured part of her crew . During November 1952 , William S. Grattan was sent to the Sturgeon Bay Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company of Sturgeon Bay , Wisconsin for a refit .

During this refit her boilers and steam engines were replaced by diesel engines , the pumps for the firefighting system were replaced , the single propeller was replaced with twin propellers , the fixed firefighting platform was replaced with a hydraulically operated platform and the twin funnels were replaced with lower dummy funnels . Upon her return in 1954 , she was renamed Firefighter . In 1955 she was renamed again in honor of Edward M. Cotter , a respected Buffalo firefighter and the leader of the local firefighters union , who had recently died . After the refit Edward M. Cotter mounted five fire monitors capable of pumping 15 @,@ 000 US gallons per minute (0 @.@ 95 m³ / s ; 12 @,@ 000 imp gal / min) .

= = = International firefighting = = =

On October 7 , 1960 Edward M. Cotter came to the aid of firefighting authorities in Port Colborne , Ontario , Canada . Two days previously , on October 5 , 1960 , a set of grain elevators caught fire at the eight @-@ story Maple Leaf Milling Company . The Port Colborne Fire Department did not have its own fireboat and they were unable to bring the fire under control . The Buffalo Fire Department was asked to send Edward M. Cotter to lend assistance . Escorted by a United States Coast Guard cutter , because she had never needed navigational equipment of her own , Edward M. Cotter proceeded across the international border . The voyage to Port Colborne took two hours with an additional four hours needed to bring the fire under control . This mission is said to have been the first instance that a United States fire boat had crossed an international border to help authorities in another country .

= = = Notable rescues = = =

In 1978 USS Little Rock , a retired United States Naval guided missile cruiser on display at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park , began taking on water and listing . Edward M. Cotter and several Buffalo Fire Department fire engines pumped water out of Little Rock for five days keeping the ship afloat and level while repairs were made . Edward M. Cotter also assisted the disabled United States Coast Guard cutter Ojibwa during the winter of 1983 . Ojibwa , while on Lake Erie , had lost her steering and was taking on water . Edward M. Cotter towed Ojibwa to her base in Buffalo and helped keep her afloat while repairs were made . Another rescue occurred on July 31 ,

1984 when Edward M. Cotter towed the Polish tall ship Zawisza Czarny off a sand bar during the ship 's visit to Buffalo .

= = Heritage = =

As commerce declined on Buffalo 's waterfront , Edward M. Cotter was transferred from the Buffalo Fire Department to the Public Works Department in 1992 for icebreaking duties . In 1996 Edward M. Cotter was designated a National Historic Landmark. and was transferred back to the Buffalo Fire Department in 1997 .

A non @-@ profit group named " Friends of the Cotter " , founded in 2005 , has been running fund @-@ raising events to overhaul Edward M. Cotter . Along with her normal duties Edward M. Cotter has been sent to various festivals and boat shows around the Great Lakes .

= = Other fire boats = =

Edward Cotter is one of a few fireboats to ply the Great Lakes :

William Lyon Mackenzie is operated by Toronto Fire Service and operates in Lake Ontario .

Curtis Randolph is operated by Detroit Fire Department and operates in the Detroit River