

Drawing at top: Storm, symbol of eternal struggle between man and sea, buffets the ship Henry B. Hyde. Directly above: The U. S. S. Porpoise, lost in 1854.

In Port of Missing: 19 U. S. Ships

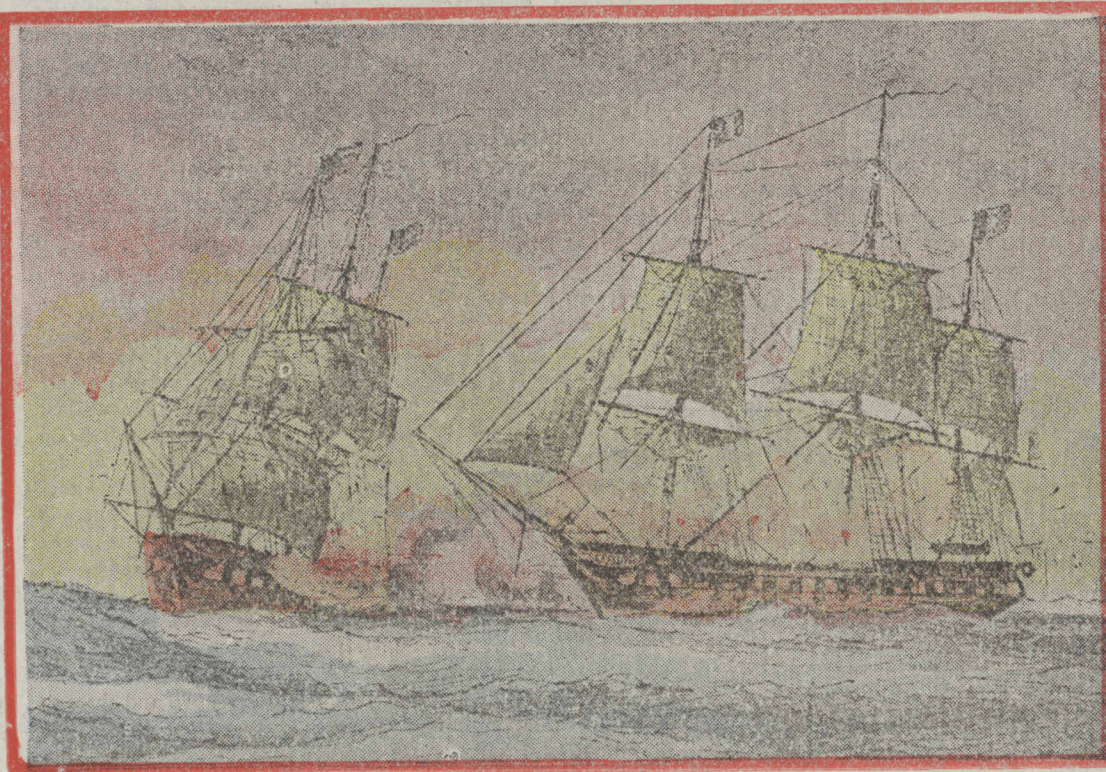
THE mystery of the disappearance of naval ships has been the cause of much concern in the United States navy department since the days of the Revolutionary war. A recent examination of the records in the department reveals that nineteen United States fighting craft have vanished without trace during the history of the American navy.

An exhaustive search has been made in each instance by the department, but not in a single case has any light been thrown on the mystery that shrouds the vanishing of these ships. Even in modern times stoutly built ships equipped with radio, means of communicating with the world, have vanished just as mysteriously as the frail wooden craft constructed years ago when wireless or radio was unknown.

Following the organization of the American republic our navy was called upon on a number of occasions to rout pirate ships which preyed on merchantmen in the Atlantic ocean. It is believed that one or two of the fighting vessels may have been sunk in skirmishes with buccaneers. Nothing ever has been found, however, to substantiate this belief. Between the years 1780 and 1829 ten naval ships were lost at sea.

One of the early ships which was a victim of the treacherous deep was the U. S. S. Insurgente. This fighting vessel, which carried 36 guns, was captured from the French by the U. S. S. Constellation in 1799 and was placed in the United States naval service. On July 22, 1800, it set sail from Baltimore, Md., with a crew of 340 men commanded by Capt. Patrick Fletcher. It was commissioned to proceed to the West Indies to rout buccaneers infesting the waters in that vicinity.

The ship was seen for the last time when it sailed out of Hampton Roads on its mission against the pirates. The ultimate



(Naval pictures by courtesy of U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings.)
The Constellation capturing the French Insurgente during the naval war with France in 1799. Pressed into service in the American navy, the Insurgente disappeared at sea in 1800.

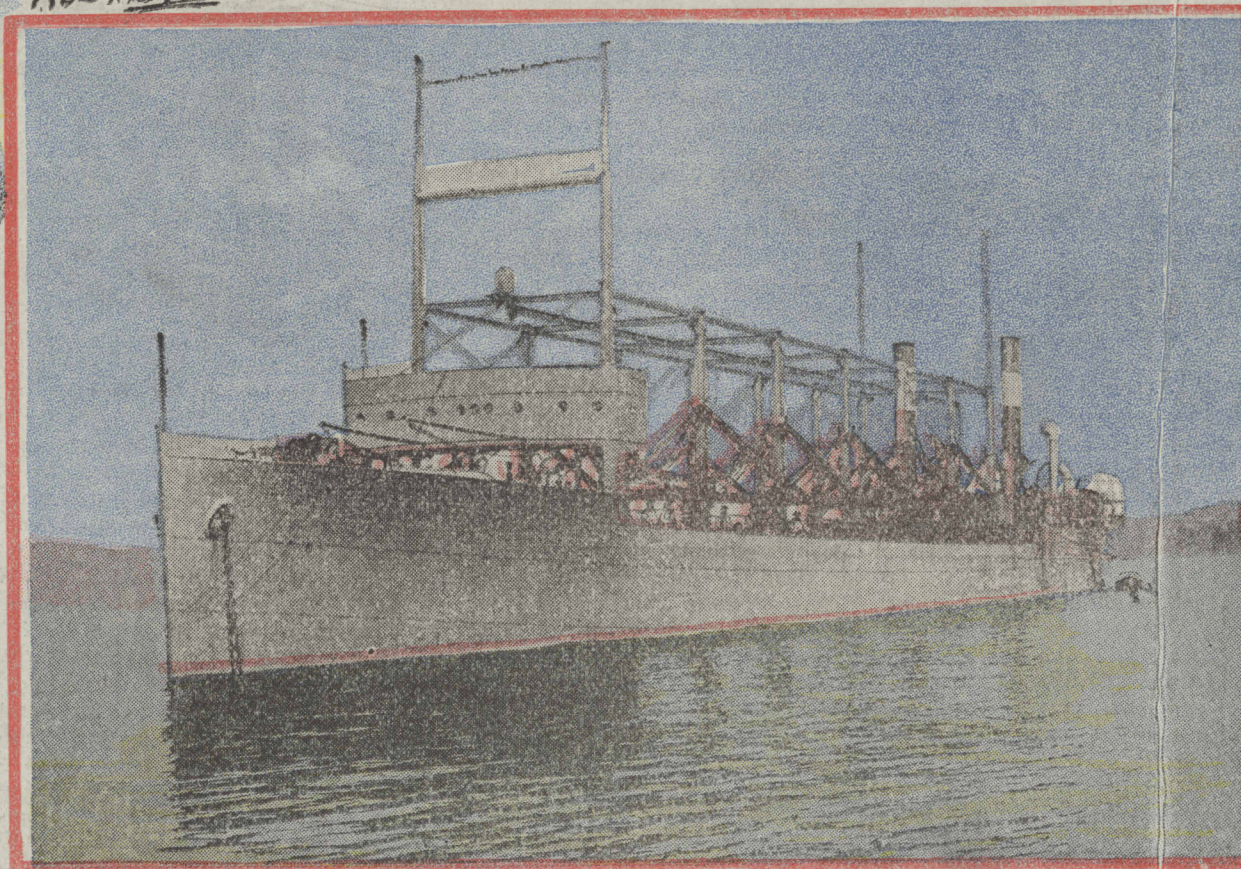
mate fate of this vessel has been nothing more than a matter for conjecture.

Another ship which disappeared at sea while on a mission to wage war against privateers was the United States gunboat No. 7, one of fifteen ships hastily constructed in 1803 to be pressed into service against the Barbary coast pirates. On June 20, 1805, No. 7 sailed from New York in command of Lieut. P. S. Ogilvie. After passing Sandy Hook it never was heard from again.

142 Lost with the Epervier

Ten years later the Epervier, a man-o'-war of 477 tons, carrying 18 guns, sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Atlantic and vanished without trace. Besides its crew of 128 men this vessel carried to their deaths 14 passengers.

In 1854 the navy department was shocked by the loss of the U. S. S. Porpoise, a two-masted brig weighing 224 tons. This ship, with a crew of 69 men commanded by Lieut. William King Bridge, set sail from Hongkong on Sept. 12 for a survey of the South Sea Islands.



(From "The United States Navy in the World War Official Pictures.")
The ill-fated Cyclops, which vanished in the Atlantic in 1918. Last seen at Barbados, British West Indies, where it coaled, the schooner carried to their deaths a crew of 252 and 57 passengers.

The brig left the Chinese port with the U. S. S. Vincennes. Capt. John Rodgers, in command of the latter ship, reported that on Sept. 21 the two ships became separated in a dense fog in mid-channel between China and Formosa. The Porpoise never was heard from again. Several warships spent nearly a year searching all the islands in the South Seas, but no trace of the ill-fated vessel was found. It is believed that the brig was engulfed in the treacherous waters near the Pescadores.

One of the naval ships lost in recent times was the U. S. S. Nina, which was sighted for the last time on Feb. 6, 1910. This ship, a schooner-rigged tug of 357 tons, was built in the last year of the Civil war. At the time it disappeared it was serving as tender to the third submarine division of the Atlantic fleet. On the day it was last seen it set out from port outside Cape Henry and Cape Charles, bound for Boston, with a crew of 31 men. An extensive search was made for the vessel, but no trace of it ever was found.

One of the most remarkable tragedies of this kind in modern times was the disappearance of the U. S. S. Cyclops in March, 1918. This naval collier, with a displacement of 19,360 tons, and carrying a modern wireless outfit, never was able to flash a message of its fate.

The last message from the collier was received on March 4, when the vessel left Barbados, British West Indies, and reported "fair weather" several hundred miles out. Carrying

57 passengers and a crew of 252 men, the collier is believed to have been destroyed by an explosion which prevented the sending of any message from the vessel. No debris from the ship ever was found. It has been learned since that no German U-boats nor German mines were in the area where the Cyclops was last reported. The most plausible belief is that a heavy explosive charge was placed in the hold of the ship before it left port, which caused its destruction. It had as its cargo a large quantity of manganese. Several messages have been found in bottles in the ocean, purporting to be word dropped from the mystery ship just prior to its disappearance, but none of these has been proved to be authentic.

Conestoga Vanishes in 1921

The most recent disappearance of an American naval vessel was that of the fleet tug U. S. S. Conestoga. This ship of 617 tons, commanded by Lieut. Ernest L. Jones, disappeared in March, 1921, with a crew of 56 men. It left Mare Island navy yard for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and was not heard from again. Warships and airplanes joined in a fruitless search for trace of the ship.

Other ships of the United States navy which have vanished without trace were the Saratoga, in 1780; the Pickering, in 1800; the Etna, in 1812; the Wasp, in 1812; the Lynx, in 1812; the Wild Cat, in 1824; the Hornet, in 1829; the Sylph, in 1831; the Sea Gull, in 1839; the Grampus, in 1843; the Albany, in 1854, and the Levant, in 1861.