

USTS *Texas Clipper* (1965 - 1996)



By the time it was placed in the reserve fleet in 1996, the oldest active ship in the entire American merchant marine fleet was *Texas Clipper*.

In 1965, the federal government lent *Excambion* to the 3-year-old Texas Maritime Academy (forerunner of Texas A&M University of Galveston) to train cadets as officers for the American merchant marine. Towed from the Hudson River to Galveston, where it arrived on May 16 — the ship was renamed *Texas Clipper*.

On June 15, 1965, under the command of Captain Bennett M. Dodson (USN-retired), *Texas Clipper* departed on its maiden voyage to Northern Europe with about 120 cadets. The ship's itinerary changed each year to ports in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic, and Mediterranean. It carried a complement of up to 250 officers, faculty members, crew and cadets. One of its more popular programs was the onboard prep-cadet summer school at sea: freshmen enrolled in two college courses, stood watches, and helped maintain the ship.

Finally, after 30 consecutive summer training cruises, the sailing days of the 50-year-old ship were over. On August 4, 1994, under the command of Captain Peter Jaime Bourgeois, *Texas Clipper* completed its final training cruise. For the next two years, it was used as a dockside dormitory for Seaborn Conservation Corps, an educational and job-training program for at risk high school students.

In May 1996, the ship added a roman numeral to its name when its successor *Texas Clipper II* arrived on campus. *Texas Clipper I* was towed to reserve moorings in Beaumont, Texas, where it stayed for ten years. In 2007 it was sunk 17 miles off the southern coast of Texas as an artificial reef.