

USS Cassin Young

Charlestown Navy Yard

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Boston National Historical Park
Boston, Massachusetts



"We all felt that we were doing our job and the harder we worked, the faster we would get the ships out and the faster it would get over."

Gloria Brandenburg,
Ship Painter, World War II
Charlestown Navy Yard

"We heard this awful bump. The plane had hit right behind the diesel engine room... we didn't know what had happened. Well, the ship was dead in the water..."

Brendon Doyle,
Motor Machinist Mate,
USS Cassin Young 1943-1945

"My third cruise was a six-month Mediterrean cruise... that cruise was almost like a six-month vacation."

Bernard Cooney,
Seaman/Yeoman,
USS Cassin Young, 1958-1960

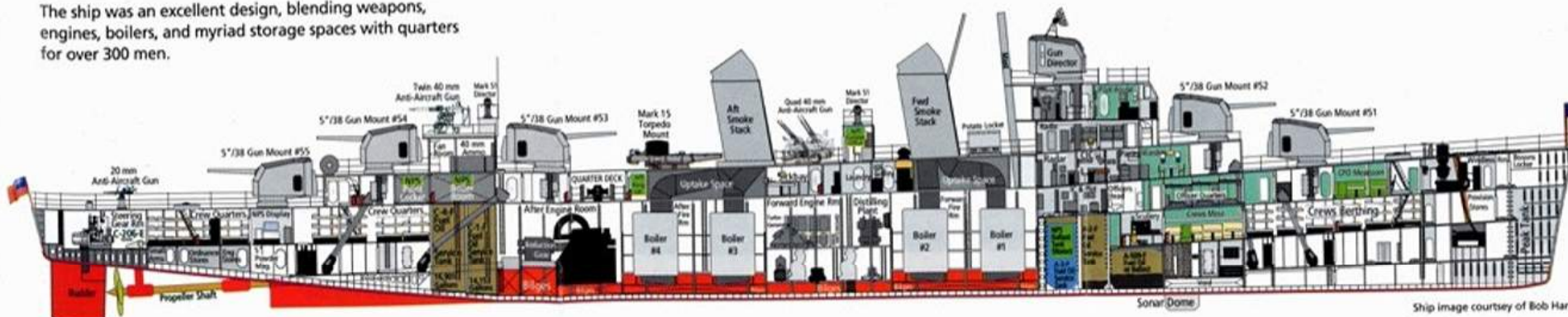
Warships like USS *Cassin Young* are conceived by nations, constructed at navy yards and crewed by officers and sailors. The ship is a reminder of the ingenuity and sacrifice of Americans to defend the liberty and freedom established by our nation's founding.

The Ship

At first glance USS *Cassin Young* appears to have little in common with nearby USS *Constitution*. But these warships share a common heritage and purpose. Not only do they show the commitment by citizens to promote and protect American ideals, they helped contribute to sweeping changes within the American economic and social landscape.

USS *Cassin Young* is a Fletcher-class destroyer. During World War II, shipyards across the nation constructed 175 "Fletchers." Here in the Charlestown Navy Yard, workers built fourteen. Warships like USS *Cassin Young* were stronger and more versatile than their predecessors. Weighing 2,050 tons, only 376 feet in length and carrying diverse weapons, this was the best all purpose warship the navy employed. These ships proved so reliable that many served well beyond the war. With modernizations and repairs at navy yards, *Cassin Young* continued defending the nation throughout

The ship was an excellent design, blending weapons, engines, boilers, and myriad storage spaces with quarters for over 300 men.



the 1950s. Other "Fletchers" in the U.S. Navy served well into the 1970s.

Wartime production of 574 destroyers of all types was an unprecedented accomplishment in American history. It was possible because of the drive and determination of a changing shipyard workforce. Social and legal barriers which denied work for women and minorities significantly broke down during World War II as men were needed for the war. This phenomenon took place across the nation, empowering millions to assist in the war effort and then seek out new opportunities in the years to come.

Planners designed destroyers for warfare on the surface, underwater, and in the air. After being built and commissioned in California in 1943, USS *Cassin Young* operated in the Pacific Theater from 1944 to August, 1945 and survived two Kamikaze attacks. During the "Cold War" era of the 1950s, *Cassin Young* helped to maintain the peace in Korea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea. In 1952 *Cassin Young* underwent its first major overhaul here at the Charlestown Navy Yard. Increased submarine threats prompted a complete modernization of the ship's underwater sonar dome. New weapons systems were installed. The ship's crew also received additional comforts. In 1955, the crew enjoyed comforts ranging from a soda machine, a new ship store, and even a barber shop.

Though in 1959 *Cassin Young* earned a Battle Efficiency rating "E" in recognition of excellent



By 1945, twenty percent of the 50,000 workers in the Charlestown Navy Yard were either women or minorities, primarily African American. Most were employed as helpers or mechanics.

performance, structural problems with the rudder and propellers required emergency repairs in France. Upon her return to the United States, she was showing her age. On April 29, 1960 USS *Cassin Young* was decommissioned for the last time.

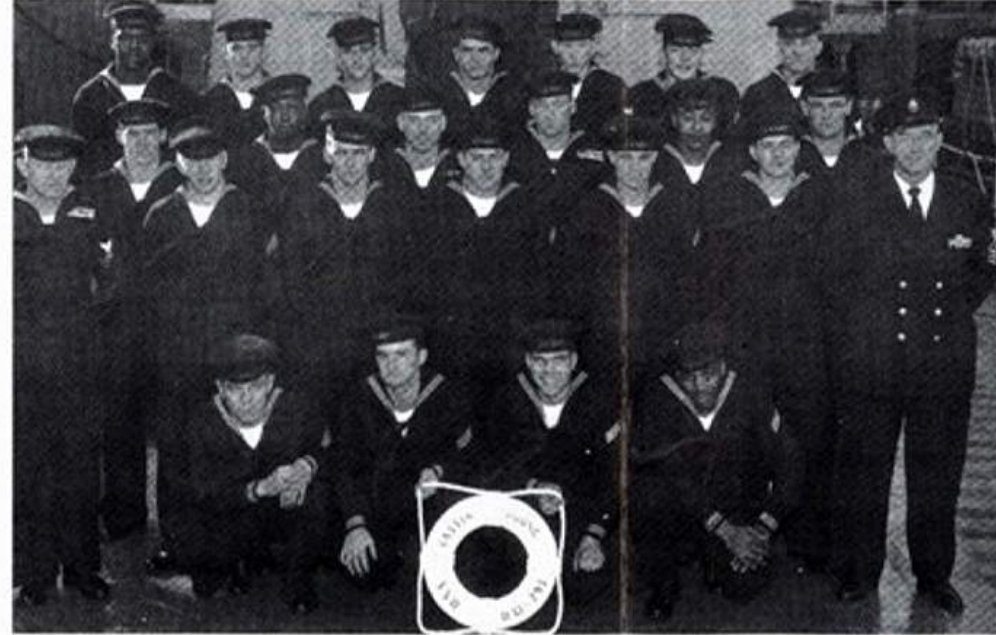
Ship image courtesy of Bob Harris

The Crew

Destroyers were sometimes called “tin cans” due to their light steel construction. Often this was shortened to “can,” meaning “ready to” or “able to.” On USS *Cassin Young* these characteristics were especially evident in the men that served aboard her. Volunteer and draftees from all walks of life and from all parts of the nation came to call the vessel home. Combining age old seamanship skills with modern technical abilities, the talented crew enabled the ship to operate with masterful competency. The efforts of the crew earned *Cassin Young* seven battle stars and the Navy Unit Commendation award. In 1945 while fighting off Okinawa, the destroyer received two direct hits from Kamikaze suicide planes. Twenty-two lives were lost in both attacks.



Damage from the July 30, 1945 Kamikaze bombing near the forward fire room. The attack caused the death of twenty-one men. USS *Cassin Young* was the last warship hit by kamikazes during operations at Okinawa.



Following President Truman's Executive Order to integrate the military, the racial makeup of the crew became more diverse in the 1950s.

The crew of USS *Cassin Young* bore witness to significant social changes related to race. During World War II, the US military, like much of America, was segregated. The small numbers of minorities serving aboard warships like *Cassin Young* were limited to serving as mess stewards and lived in segregated quarters. Despite these demeaning constraints, these otherwise ‘segregated’ sailors fought and bled alongside white crewmen. Following President Truman's order to integrate the military,

the racial makeup of the crew became more diverse in the 1950s. Crew photographs taken during World War Two and the Cold War era reflected dramatic winds of ethnic and social change that would soon envelop the entire nation.



Commander John Ailes presents the Purple Heart medal to crew members wounded in 1945 during the kamikaze attacks.



Structural problems with the rudder and propeller required emergency repairs in France in 1959, which eventually led to her decommissioning a year later.



The Legacy

“Greyhound of the Sea,” “Spearhead of the Fleet,” symbol of the “arsenal of democracy”—all these names represent the legacy of destroyers built and repaired at the Charlestown Navy Yard. Now operated by the National Park Service, USS *Cassin Young* has several new missions as part of Boston National Historical Park. Having a home in a shipyard she visited so often, *Cassin Young* is a vivid reminder of maritime heritage for both Boston and the nation. The elaborate structure and numerous weapons of the ship, together with massive dry docks and the pierside portal cranes, all convey the story of people determined to construct the best warships in the world. Compartments throughout the ship still echo the spirit of those who spent years of their lives, sometimes losing them, in service to their country. Though the passing of the years will see all those who built and crewed her pass away, USS *Cassin Young* continues to proudly declare its enduring and important role in shaping the American experience.

For More Information, write Charlestown Navy Yard Visitor Center, Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston, MA 02129, or call 617-242-5601. Visit us at www.nps.gov/bost. On a mobile device go to go.nps.gov/boston or connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/bostonnhp

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