

U.S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY

BLUE COAST PILOTS

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Note on author. — Mr. John McCORMICK was born in Spangler, Pennsylvania, on 10 July 1903, and was graduated from Villanova College, Villanova, Pennsylvania, in 1923 with a B.S. degree in Civil Engineering. He has been with the Coast and Geodetic Survey in various field and office capacities since 11 June 1923, except for relatively brief periods with the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1930, the U.S. Army in 1930-1933, and the U.S. Navy in 1942-1943. Mr. McCORMICK has been Chief of Coast Pilot Branch since 1 January 1946.

Explanatory

The Blue Coast Pilots of the Coast and Geodetic Survey are eight streamlined editions that replace ten bulky pre-1958 volumes. In July 1961, five of the Blue editions had been released for issue and the sixth was in press; the seventh and eighth were scheduled to go to press before July 1962.

Blue Coast Pilot 2, Atlantic Coast, Cape Cod to Sandy Hook, Sixth (10 September 1960) Edition, has 228 pages as compared with the 503 pages in the Fifth (1950) Edition. Printing costs were \$ 13 095 for 14 000 copies of the Blue edition as compared with an estimated \$ 25 150 for the same number of 1950 copies. There was no magic involved. Typography was compressed, tabular sailing directions were eliminated, and duplication of chart material was reduced to a minimum.

Background

The C&GS Coast Pilots are a series of nautical books containing a wide variety of information important to navigators of United States coastal and intracoastal waters. Subjects include navigation regulations, prominent features, channels, anchorages, dangers, tides, currents, weather, ice, freshets, routes, and port facilities. Most of this information cannot be shown conveniently on the standard nautical charts and is not readily available elsewhere.



History

The history of Coast Pilots, or Sailing Directions, goes back many centuries. One writer says the Egyptians produced such a work between the sixth and fourth centuries, B.C. In 1796, Edmund March BLUNT (1770-1862) of Newburyport, Massachusetts, published the American Coast Pilot, which was not the first such book for American waters but was the first published in the United States. BLUNT's Coast Pilot was in its 21st edition when the copyright was sold to the U.S. Coast Survey in 1867.

The first formal Coast Pilots issued by the Survey were the two 1869 volumes in which Professor George DAVIDSON (1825-1911) described the coasts of California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. These were followed in 1874 by a Coast Pilot that described the Atlantic Coast from Eastport to Boston.

Programme

The Coast and Geodetic Survey publishes eight Coast Pilots : four for the Atlantic Coast; one for the Gulf Coast, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands; one for the Pacific Coast (California, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii); and two for Alaska. New editions every 5 years are planned for the six Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific Coast volumes; the two Alaska volumes may vary up to 10 years. Cumulative Supplements, containing revisions reported since the dates of the editions, usually are issued early each year.

Field Inspection

Most new editions of Coast Pilots are written only after a thorough field inspection by special Coast Pilot ship or shore parties. The principal purposes of an inspection are to verify or revise all statements in the Pilot, to strike out material no longer of value, and to add new worthwhile information.

Ship Inspection

On 31 January, 1958, a C&GS committee, headed by the Deputy Director, reported general agreement on the following : " That Coast Pilot as it presently exists for the benefit of the mariner still needs a small ship to make an adequate job of field investigations. "

Blue format

For the same amount of text, the blue format requires only 56 per cent as many pages as the pre-1958 volumes. Trim size has been increased to 7 7/8 by 10 1/4 inches from the former 7 by 10 inches. Text now is in two 19-pica columns separated by a 1 1/2-pica gutter; line numbers in the gutter provide the necessary tie-ins with the Supplements. Text type has been reduced to 8-point leaded from the former 10-point leaded.



Column width

Long ago we had trouble with the 33-pica single column used in the pre-1958 volumes. Columns of that width usually are set in monotype, and many of our books were being contracted to private concerns equipped only with linotype. It was fascinating to study the ingenuity with which the contractors faked the monotype with butted slugs of linotype, but it was definitely annoying when they left rivers between the butted slugs and sometimes reversed slugs after final proofing. We also found that linotype composition is nearly twice as fast as monotype. So we decided to go all out in favour of linotype in two 19-pica columns.

Line numbers

This was not much of a problem with the one-column format, although we had difficulty at times in getting the printers to align the numbers properly. But how do you number your lines when you have two columns? The printers insisted on numbering the outer edges of both columns but we held out for the gutter numbering and we got it.

Type

Two columns, with line numbers between, permit no mixing of types sizes, so all text type is uniformly 8-point leaded. Display centerheads have been eliminated but we attain a similar effect with boldface capital letters at the beginnings of key paragraphs; we also slug liberally because the blank slugs do not disturb the line numbering. Italics have been eliminated, and footnotes were abolished many years ago.

Hurricanes

We mention hurricanes only as an example of what we are doing toward ridding the Coast Pilot of excessive and confusing text. The 1940 edition of Coast Pilot 2 had two pages on hurricanes; the 1950 edition had 16 pages of rambling discussion, including two pages quoted from Navy Instructions to the Pacific Fleet. We studied the subject of hurricanes thoroughly when we were preparing the first of the Blue Coast Pilots; the result was 1½ pages in the blue edition with very nearly the same wording used in the 1940 edition. Sometimes the old is better than the new.

Illustrations

These have been omitted entirely from the Blue Coast Pilots because suitable photographs or drawings are difficult to obtain. Illustrations of well-known and easily recognizable features are not worth the expense.

Sailing directions

Tabular sailing directions have been eliminated because they were becoming too bulky and because their value to the mariner was becoming increasingly questionable. Such tables never have been used to any great extent by other hydrographic organizations.

Conclusion

After the eighth and last of the Blue Coast Pilots goes to press in 1962, we shall begin publication of the Gray Series, for which we foresee no major changes other than colour of cover. On 7 July, 1961, ship inspection was about 35 per cent complete for the first of the Gray Coast Pilots, and shore inspection for the second was scheduled to begin in January, 1962.