

Acadia Today

After 56 years of service, *Acadia* was retired in 1969. For the next 12 years, she remained berthed at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography.

Many of her former crew volunteered to assist with her maintenance and to give tours, a testament to the devotion they retained for the grand old lady.

In 1982, she moved to the wharves behind the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, where she is the subject of a program of continuous restoration and maintenance.

Every five years, *Acadia* is towed across the harbour to be dry-docked for an underwater hull inspection and repainting. The work also involves placing zinc anodes along *Acadia's* underwater hull. These sacrificial anodes, as they are called, prevent underwater corrosion of ships' hulls. The more active metal of the anode will be "sacrificed" before any of the less active metal—the steel hull—it is protecting".

Her ice-strengthened hull is still impressively strong, but during her last visit to Dartmouth, a piece of new steel plate was fitted above the rudder. The placement of the new plate was done with remarkable skill, and with the addition of simulated rivets, it is difficult to see where the new section was placed.

Her boilers no longer function, but the engine remains immaculately maintained. Throughout her new career, *Acadia* has continued one of the sea's great shipboard traditions, that of keeping a faithful ship's cat. Since 1982, *Acadia* has been home to three rodent control officers.

She is still a popular spot for her former staff and 1988 saw over 100 former crew and families return to the museum for a gala 75th anniversary tribute. Prior to this many interviews were conducted with the crew, giving us an impressive oral history of the vessel and her career.

CSS *Acadia* remains a most beautiful reminder of her era, the finest example of a rivetted hulled vessel in the museum world today. As such and because of her splendid career, she is more than just another ship. CSS *Acadia* continues to fascinate, intrigue, and delight young and old alike.

Crew "swabbing the deck".
Brown Collection,
MP28.36.200



Technological Firsts

1913 – *Acadia* was the first ship in the hydrographic fleet to be outfitted with the new wireless telegraphy system designed by Marconi to keep the ship in contact with shore stations and other vessels. This later included the introduction of an alarm system to alert operators of incoming distress calls, devised by Marconi after the loss of RMS *Titanic* in April of 1912.

1928 – A Sperry gyro-compass was added to the ship, a tremendous advance over the older magnetic compass, as it improved accuracy and reduced magnetic deviation. The new system was tested extensively during *Acadia's* Arctic expeditions.

1929 – A British Admiralty-designed echo sounder capable of recording depths over 500 fathoms was tested on the ship, and subsequent improved devices have also been used aboard *Acadia*.

1956 – DECCA navigational system is installed. This complex device paved the way for present-day LORAN and GPS systems.

info

CSS Acadia



Throughout their careers, some vessels acquire a certain mystique that sets them apart from other ships. CSS *Acadia*, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic's Canadian Scientific Ship, is one such vessel.

CSS Acadia

Built: 1913
Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
England
Builders: Swan, Hunter and
Wigham Richardson Ltd.
Official Registry Number:
133535
Length: 55.7 metres (181'9")
Breadth: 10.19 metres (33'7")
Depth: 5.79 metres (19'1")
Tonnage: 846 gross
registered tons
Boats: 2 gasoline survey
launches (during some
periods, 4), 2 cutters/lifeboats
Crew: 51
Hydrographic staff: 15

Engine: Triple expansion
Cylinder diameters:
43.18 cm (17"),
71.12 cm (28"), 1.17 m (46")
Stroke: 65.58 cm (27")
Horse power: 1715
Top speed: 12.5 knots

Boilers: Scotch, Forced draft
Working pressure: 185 psi.
Diameter: 3.41 metres
(11'3")
Length: 3.48 metres (11'6")

During her 56-year career in the Canadian Hydrographic Service, *Acadia* became a popular ship, loved by her crew and a favourite at the many ports she visited.

Acadia was launched in 1913 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England at the yards of Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Ltd. She was the first vessel specifically designed and built to survey Canada's coastal waters, and her career took her from the dangerous, ice-infested waters of Hudson's Bay to Nova Scotia's South Shore. In her early years, she was responsible for pioneering hydrographic research in Canada's Arctic waters. At the end of her career, she was used to chart the coast of Newfoundland after it joined Confederation in 1949, creating entirely new charts and updating some that were nearly a century old.

Acadia also holds the distinction of being one of the few ships to serve in the Royal Canadian Navy during both world wars, serving as a patrol vessel at the approaches to Halifax Harbour from 1916 to 1919 and as a patrol and training vessel from 1939 to 1945.

Acadia remains a classic example of the best that her British builders had to offer. Built during the Edwardian era, her splendid lines run uninterrupted from the straight bow to a graceful counter stern. With her two masts and her single funnel,

CSS *Acadia*, circa 1953. Martin Collection, M84.28.3 / N-10900

she resembles a small steam yacht more than a hardworking survey vessel.

Her interior displays a class of marine craftsmanship typical of that great tradition. Beautiful mahogany and oak panelling and fine brasswork are found throughout the quarters of the hydrographic staff and officers, giving them accommodations that suggest the great ocean liners of the same era.

So strongly built was *Acadia's* ice-strengthened hull, that she was often employed as an auxiliary ice breaker in her early years, something for which she was not really designed and which gave her masters and crew an occasional nervous moment.

As a state-of-the-art vessel and an important part of the operations of the Canadian Hydrographic Service, *Acadia* often pioneered the testing and development of new technology. But despite all the cutting edge equipment introduced aboard *Acadia*, her triple-expansion steam engines and two coal-fired, Scotch marine boilers were in operation until she retired. This made her a rarity among the Hydrographic Service's fleet and made her easy to spot as she entered port trailing an unmistakable track of black smoke.

Film Star

In recent years, *Acadia* has featured in a number of film productions, displaying the same versatility that made her so popular during her career.

1982 *South Pacific '42*
As a Japanese destroyer

1989 *Little Kidnappers*
As a Scottish immigrant vessel.

1992 *Morning of Armageddon*
As SS *Mont Blanc*, one of the ships involved in the Halifax Explosion of 1917.

1992 *Lifeline to Victory*
As a merchant ship in World War Two.

1996 *RMS Lusitania*
As the ill-fated passenger liner, sunk in 1915.

1998 *Rescue at Sea*
As White Star's SS *Republic*, in collision off Nantucket Island in 1909.

1998 *Halifax 1917*
As a hospital ship tending to victims of the Halifax Explosion of 1917.

Life Aboard Acadia

The career of a vessel is often told in an impressive array of statistics and figures. A ship's length, tonnage, horsepower, and top speed are certainly important, but it is the stories of those who served aboard that make her come alive.

Daily duties aboard ship rarely varied. The crew rose at seven and by eight had eaten breakfast and been assigned duties.

"One time, she went five or six years without a crew change. That proves she was a happy ship."

Harold Martin, third officer, 1958-61

Petty Officers' Quarters

The petty officers were responsible for the day-to-day operation of the vessel. They included the boatswain, responsible for shipboard maintenance; the coxswain, who tended to the launches and lifeboats; and the ship's cook, who could easily become the most liked or hated person aboard depending on his skills. Their double bunked accommodation was adjacent to their large mess.

In August 1961 *Acadia* rescued 500 people from forest fires raging through villages on the East Coast of Newfoundland.

Interior of Seamen's mess, 1945. Coletti Collection, M194.19.14 N-20122



"One time we were in Goose Bay and everyone went ashore ... we had pork chops for supper that night and we decided to have a game of hockey. We had these pork chops left from supper and we used them for pucks. The bosun was in the net and we were firing the chops at him with the broom. The next morning, we all got called into the old man's office."

William Hart, deckhand, 1949-63



Chartroom, 1955. Beckett Collection, M128.36.153 N 15224.

Chartroom

The hydrographers and boat's crew often spent the daylight hours in one of *Acadia's* survey launches gathering data. The evenings were spent in the chartroom, checking the data collected during the day and transferring information from the boat boards to the main work sheets.

Crew's Quarters

Three cabins housed *Acadia's* "lower deck" crew, consisting of stokers, stewards, and ordinary seamen. The quarters may seem cramped and uncomfortable by today's standards, but in 1913, they were considered spacious and convenient, as the crews ate and slept in the same area.

"You had to be careful when you were getting out of your bunk, 'cause you might step on someone's head."

Eddie Burke, Jr., seaman
1958-62

The Boat Deck

The deck house contains the wheelhouse, chartroom, and accommodation for the captain and the first officer. Their quarters are quite spartan compared to those of the chief hydrographer and his staff. The deck house was added in 1955 and is the biggest change made to *Acadia* during her working life.

Wireless Room

Acadia was the first vessel in the Hydrographic Service to be outfitted with Marconi's wireless system. A curtain separated the wireless operator's quarters from the wireless room. A specially designed alarm was installed to wake the operator if a distress call came through when he was off watch.



Wireless operator, 1940. Currie Collection, M182.9.3 / N 10453

Hydrographers' Quarters

The hydrographers' cabins were adjacent to their large mess. During the day their meals were illuminated by natural light coming through the skylight. After supper, a cribbage board was often set up, and the radio would be tuned to a hockey game or a local music program.



Wardroom, 1963. Brown Collection, M128.36.283

"I remember one time we dropped depth charges off the stern and she is not a fast boat. Anyway, we dropped one and it went off too soon—it lifted the stern right out of the water."

Vincent Currie,
radio operator, 1940

Engine Room

Acadia's triple expansion steam engine was surrounded by the accommodation for the engineering officers, who had to be close at hand in case of emergencies. The mess for the ship's captain and officers was adjacent to the engine room.

"The engine room wasn't noisy. It was quiet as a lamb. When she was steaming, it was beautiful."

Milton Hemphill, seaman,
1950-52

Stoke Hold

Acadia's stokers toiled in harsh conditions to maintain pressure for the steam engine. So awful were the conditions that the men were kept on four-hour watches to prevent dehydration. The heat was only one of the tortures. Years of breathing-in coal dust and fumes took their toll on the men as well.

"When you were steaming and you got your eight hours off, you went to bed because you were damn glad to get there. Nobody was coaxing you to go to sleep after four hours in that hold."

Fred LeBlanc, fireman
1947-51

Crew in Seamen's mess, 1913. Harper Collection, M128.36.281 / N 15766



"Dinnertime was easy, 'cause most of the men were ashore, but suppertime—they were a hungry bunch."

Ray Goyette, chief cook,
1947-58

CSS *Acadia*, 1983. N-11,721

