

PRESS RELEASE

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Model of Famous Ship on Display at State Museum

A detailed scale model of an important ship in Alaska's early history is now on display at the Alaska State Museum. The model of the *Thomas Corwin*, a U.S. Revenue cutter active in Alaska waters between 1877 and 1898, is on loan from the Oregon Historical Society.

The steamer *Thomas Corwin*, named for the 20th Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, was built in Portland, Oregon, and commissioned in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service in 1877. She subsequently made approximately 15 annual cruises to Alaska, where her primary duty was to protect the interests of the United States by policing the fisheries and early maritime industry. In addition to law enforcement, the vessel routinely engaged in exploration, search and rescue, scientific research, and medical and humanitarian relief along the 33,904 miles of Alaska shoreline recently acquired from Russia. Her home port was San Francisco.

The model was made by Captain Thomas Mountain around 1900. Mountain survived the sinking of the U.S. Navy Sloop of War *Peacock* at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1841 and later served in the Mexican and Indian Wars. He presented the model to the Oregon Historical Society in 1901.

In 1881 naturalist John Muir sailed aboard the *Corwin* to study Alaska's glaciers and natural history. The *Corwin*'s mission on that trip, however, in addition to her normal patrol duties, was to search for captain G. W. De Long and his ship *Jeannette*. The *Jeannette* had left San Francisco two years earlier, planning to drift across the North Pole while trapped in pack ice. The vessel was never found. Muir's experiences on the cruise were published posthumously as *The Cruise of the Corwin*.

The *Corwin* was also involved in the bombardment of Angoon in 1882. The accidental death of a Native employee of the local whaling company led to an attempt by his clan to seek restitution from the company. The company manager called for military assistance, and the *Corwin*, under the command of Captain Michael Healy, responded along with two other vessels. The resulting bombardment and fire left six children dead and the village in ruins.

In 1886 the *Corwin*'s seizure of three Canadian sealers nearly led to armed conflict between the U.S. and Great Britain. After a brief transfer to the U.S. Navy during the Spanish American War, the *Corwin* was sold in 1900 and became a merchant vessel, often returning to Alaska under charter.