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## Training Treasury 1934-1940.

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The United States Coast Guard has never been a service prone to self-aggrandizement of its achievements or contributions; it simply serves and goes on. Therefore, is not surprising that a few eyebrows wrinkle in doubtfulness when the Coast Guard is credited with founding organized federal firearms training.

It began in 1933. President Franklin Roosevelt took office at the end of national Prohibition and in the beginning of a great economic depression, or crisis as it was known. His early days were highlighted with experimentation of new social concepts and programs, but to make it work he had to consolidate federal power. This included the establishment of a national police force.

However, it could not be the same type force used in the past. The previous police agencies were born in the Prohibition Era and not without areas of corruption and crime. He also needed a force that would break with the previous administration and mirror the more progressive outlook of his image of the New Deal. The New Deal was also a mechanism put in place to enforce recently federalized criminal codes; codes brought about by the rise of organized crime. Many in the public were skeptical of his socialization of the nation. They had seen another dynamic political leader take control of his nation in Europe and that leader, Adolph Hitler, had also established a national police force.

To allay fears Roosevelt insisted all federal agents have proper qualifications and training

to make them truly a force of professional federal law enforcement agents. He wanted educated men, but saw training as key to obtaining high standards of professionalism that the states would admire and not fear.

In the previous years dedication and imagination was common among the many Prohibition agents, but they had little formal training. (Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith the most famous examples) Once hired, their training was on the job and they rarely received weapons training or practice. Their practice came on the street.

To create a trained, professional "National Scotland Yard" Roosevelt appointed J. Edgar Hoover to head the new force, but time lapsed between conception and implementation. It would take . to organize and in mean time Roosevelt needed a force on which to begin his concepts of professionalism.

The choice was natural. He turned to the agents in the Treasury Department. Enforcing federal laws since 1789, each treasury bureau grew dramatically in the two succeeding decades in size and responsibility. The training of treasury did not begin immediately. Roosevelt's first Treasury Secretary, William Woodin, resigned in late 1933 because of ill health. The establishment of organized training fell to Roosevelt's next treasury appointee, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. A loyal supporter, and friend, Morgenthau implemented the idea of professional weapons training of the armed men in his eight highly individualistic bureaus.

Morgenthau's first official order placed a gag order on all treasury affairs. His next was to order a survey of marksmanship skill and weapons maintenance within the agencies. The result was disappointing and worse than anticipated. His inspectors found all bureaus, except the Coast Guard, deficient in all areas of weapons use. Some inspectors found weapons useless from

lack of maintenance. Fifty years later Lee Echols recalled some weapons with "dirt-dauber nests in the barrels...chambers filled with old, gangrenous bullets." Shooting skills were equally inadequate.

After reviewing the reports, Morgenthau ordered Coast Guard Commandant Rear Admiral Harry G. Hamlet to release small arms instructors for Treasury civilians training. It was a stroke of expedient mastery and set a precedent. Using "in-house" resources cut costs and for the first time active duty military instructors trained federal employees for civil law enforcement duties.

On May 22, 1934, after outlining the Coast Guard's task, Morgenthau directed, through his assistant William H. McReynolds, all the bureaus were to follow Coast Guard training instructions. It was a direct and simple order without vagueness or ambiguities. To start he ordered each bureau to submit the numbers and locations of their armed personnel to Commander James Pine, Coast Guard Chief of Ordnance.

Firearms training became an all out effort. Two weeks later, Rear Admiral Hamlet notified his Area Commanders of their new task ordering them to "make full use of division personnel and facilities within their areas in carrying on this work." Foreseeing their questions, he wrote, "the total number of men that will require instruction is not known," but estimated the Narcotics, Customs, and Internal Revenue bureaus held more than four thousand armed men. Hamlet gave the area commanders wide latitude and told to them to anticipate and resolve any problems hampering training.

Although, at first, the Coast Guard implemented no exact plan, the work evolved quickly. A month after McReynold's letter, Acting Commandant, Captain L.C. Covell, advised the

Internal Revenue Commissioner the facilities at New York, New Orleans, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Washington, DC ready for training. The organization of other firing ranges and mobile training units for outlying areas was underway. Some units were too distant to make physical training practical. Covell advised for these areas, "it is contemplated conducting the training by mail," but he gave no particulars of the correspondence training. Allowing training by mail indicated the Coast Guard's awareness that many of the Treasury civilians were proficient with firearms, and indeed many were.

The Coast Guard's solution to training involved transplanting its own system to the treasury agents. Captain Covell, in the same June letter, specified the "Colt .22 caliber Ace" for training and qualification. A logical choice, Colt's ACE had been a part of the Coast Guard's own training for over a year and helped lower costs in the Depression-era economy.

Cost efficiency was a major area of concern because neither the president nor the Congress funded the project. Instructor travel time was the major expense. Therefore, the Coast Guard expected some self instruction from the agents. To aid in the self study, the ordnance section developed, borrowing heavily from *Colt's Handbook*, R.M. Bair's *Manual of Police Revolver Instruction*, Colonel A.J. Macnab's *Pistol and Revolver Training Course*, the Coast Guard developed a training booklet "INSTRUCTIONS FOR SMALL ARMS TRAINING (September 6, 1934)."

Initially printing 2000 copies, the eighteen page close-type booklets covered all areas of handgun marksmanship, maintenance, chemical agents and gas guns. It also outlined the "correct methods of handling, caring for and shooting hand weapons." Filtering through the pamphlets decidedly military tone were some progressive non-military techniques, such as; two-

hand shooting, quick draw, and point(instinct) shooting. The training remained geared to the basic military and competitive standards of the era.

The Coast Guard's choice of training standards came from its three decades of organized training experience. Beginning in 1903(when still the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service) it copied the then current military standards. During 1915, the Coast Guard began sending men to the U.S. Marine Corps at Winthrop, Maryland, for formal marksmanship instructor training. Over the next thirty years the Coast Guard trained its own instructors and continued using Marine Corps facilities for training and instruction. However, Coast Guard marksmen made strides towards shooting excellence in 1928 at its first entry to national competition. By 1934 the Coast Guard became a respected competitor with a national reputation for excellent individual and team accomplishments.

The Coast Guard applied this fundamental marksmanship philosophy to civilian training. The training was elementary. The instructors believed (a concept lost in the 35 years following World War II), "It is not desirable to attempt to make experts, but to teach the fundamentals of pistol shooting...with reasonable effectiveness at short range." Two phases "reasonable effectiveness," and "short range" were key to the program's success. Reasonable effectiveness meant hits on a silhouette target and short range was fifteen yards or less.

By September 1934, Commander Michael J. Ryan relieved Commander Pine. Ryan, assisted by Gunner Charles N. Hubbard, submitted the first training progress report listing the available ranges and instructors. Gunner L. H. Hines and Boatswain's Mate 1c(BM1c) L.L. Heath supervised the Washington, D. C., firing range located in the garage of the Main Treasury Building. They trained 181 men from Treasury, Engraving and Printing, Secret Service, and

Narcotics but only 24 qualified. Hines reported the scores improving but, "due to the fact that most of the men are over fifty years of age the training will take considerable time."

Similar results occurred at New York where Gunner L. Shea and Gunner's Mate 2c(GM2c) F.L. Gross trained 168 more and assisted with 600 Customs men, as did those in other areas; Boston, Chief Gunner's Mate(CGM) C.T. Adams; Philadelphia, CGM C.J. Woodell; Baltimore, SK1c John Sandy and Surfman T.W. Spence; Cleveland, Gunner F.A. Prince; Mobile, Gunner H.W. Parker and GM1c John A. Hatchner. Coast Guard units at Milwaukee, Duluth and Louisville conducted local training. The completion of more firing ranges added training at Chicago, Buffalo, Detroit, St. Paul, and Pembena, North Dakota. Further south the treasury department authorized ranges from Charleston, S. C., to Corpus Christi, Texas. BM1c Melvon O. Wilson trained Customs Patrol at El Paso. The far west was not forgotten. Gunner V.A. Johnson and GM1c A.H. Abraham qualified 45 of eighty-three agents at San Francisco. The Coast Guard installed ranges at Seattle, Astoria, San Pedro, San Diego, Honolulu and Denver.

In less than six months the training program reached all sections of the country serving about a thousand men and costing about \$9,000. Costs grew as additional items entered training.

Gunner Hubbard, who oversaw procurement, reported the purchase of three million rounds of .22 caliber; 264,000 .38 caliber; and ten thousand .32 caliber ammunition. Additional weapons came to the inventory including 200 Colt ACE pistols, 50 Smith & Wesson K-22, 50 Colt .22 OP (Official Police), and 54 unidentified Colt and S&W .38 revolvers. The M1911 pistols came from the Coast Guard Ordnance Depot at Curtis Creek(Bay), Maryland. Targets for training comprised some 300,000 twenty yard pistol and 10,000 Colt Silhouette.

The cost was worth the price. Ryan's first training report substantiated the initial reports of Morgenthau's inspectors and reported,

"A few of the Treasury personnel have been found who were good shots but the majority of the men under training at the present time have shown that they are untrained and are dangerous with a pistol or revolver." Ryan continued, "although they have carried the pistols and revolvers for years,[the men] do not know how to use the arm with which they are equipped and do not know the proper safety precautions, etc." It was no surprise, "This condition is not unusual, as it is only with the last few years that police departments have gone in for serious training in the use of small arms."

Despite the initial results Ryan was not pessimistic. He added three to four thousand more men would be under training within another month.

The training over the next year rapidly forced the costs to over \$25,000 burdening the Coast Guard ordnance section's thin budget. By July 1936, Captain Covell sent letters to the Bureau of Printing and Engraving and the Secret Service requesting their usual reimbursement of the costs for material on a quarterly basis. There would be no charge for use of the instructors. The training remained a bargain, Covell estimated the training costs at about \$8.50 a year a man (no women yet).

The Coast Guard reached a balance between training course content and fiscal concerns. The 1934 courses followed established competitive standards in rounds fired, time, and distance (50 to 25 yards). Training also included a combat course, of sorts, that emphasized strong and weak hand firing, drawing from the holster and both "kill" and "wound" shooting.

The basic training outlook worked with a fair degree of efficiency in cost and application. By January 1937 the Coast Guard employed forty-one instructors actively training over 6000 civilians. Success in the initial two years led to new instructions for training in 1937.

Headquarters ordered an increase in qualification firing to "once in every six-month period," with either the S&W K22 or the Colt ACE depending on which type normally used. The .22 caliber firearm remained the mainstay of training, but instructions added the requirement for

qualification with the .38 revolver or .45 caliber pistol (presumably the .45 revolver also). The system allowed some flexibility because the ordnance section knew all could not meet the twice-a-year standard. Headquarters waived the requirement for those agents in isolated areas, but kept the annual minimum. What determined isolation, was not outlined. The degree of the Coast Guard's authority became evident. It no longer needed the authority, only the acquiescence, of the treasury secretary to dictate training standards.

Changes issued in the 1937 instruction went to the service caliber course and only because of the improving economic situation. The basic 1934 course remained unchanged; 10 shots slow fire (no time limit), 10 shots timed (20 seconds for 5 shots) all fired from 10 yards' distance with minimum qualification set at 140 of 200 maximum. A simple course that, oddly, so many initially failed to pass. The new instruction added an "advanced .22 caliber course" adding 5 yards to the range and a "quick fire (3 seconds per shot)" 10 round string fired "in the black of the silhouette." Each, evidently anywhere, hit in the black counted 10 points. The qualifying score began at 240 of 300. Qualification with .38 and .45 caliber weapons mirrored the .22 advanced course except imposed rankings for Expert (270+), Sharpshooter (240-269), Marksman (210-239). The stratification of scores duplicated the rise of competitive shooting teams in each bureau; many of whom the Coast Guard coached.

The 1937 mid-course correction updated requirements reflecting the competitive and personal interests in the Coast Guard and Treasury Department. By July 1938, two warrant officers and 42 enlisted Coast Guard instructors qualified 7,052 Treasury civilians of an average armed force of 5,116. This outlined an increase in qualification of 1,278 over the previous year. The next year they qualified 6,846 of 5,046 armed men, an amount headquarters figured to be

"about 68 percent of what might be expected if every man qualified twice a year according to plan." This was nearly four thousand short of goal, but still a good record.

By the end of 1939 numerous domestic and international issues overshadowed the training of treasury civilians, however, the system after five years became an automatic, expected part of treasury training--just as it is today. The Coast Guard grasped the spirit of the task without additional funding or personnel, to begin the nation's first organized federal civilian law enforcement firearms training program. The Coast Guard continued to train these personnel through 1967 when it was transferred to the Department of Transportation.

Although the training began as part of growing federal power in 1934, it evolved into the base format of present day firearms training. The Coast Guard used no new techniques nor developed any, but it gave its expertise, dedication, and organization providing the base on which all current federal firearms training firmly rests.