members of the crew rendering watchman or similar services aboard the vessel during this period would not appear to be within the special provisions relating to seamen because their services are not rendered primarily as an aid in the operation of the vessel as a means of transportation. See Desper v. Starved Rock Ferry Co., 342 U.S. 187. Furthermore, employees who are furnished by independent contractors to perform watchman or similar services aboard a vessel while in port would not be employed as seamen regardless of the period of time the vessel is in port, since such service is not of the type described in §783.31. The same considerations would apply in the case of members of a temporary or skeleton crew hired merely to maintain the vessel while in port so that the regular crew may be granted shore leave. On the other hand, licensed relief officers engaged during relatively short stays in port whose duty it is to maintain the ship in safe and operational condition and who exercise the authority of the master in his absence, including keeping the log, checking the navigation equipment, assisting in the movement of the vessel while in port, are employed as seamen within the meaning of the exemptions. The same may be true of licensed relief engineers employed under the same circumstances whose duty it is to maintain the ship’s auxiliary machinery in operation and repair (see Pratt v. Alaska Packers Ass’o. (N.D. Calif.) 9 WH Cases 61).

§ 783.38 Statutory definition of “American vessel”.

The provisions of section 6(b)(2) prescribe special methods for computing minimum wages and hours worked under the Act which are applicable only to seamen who are employed on American vessels. An “American vessel”, which would appear to signify a vessel of the United States as distinguished from a foreign vessel, “includes”, under the terms of the definition in section 3(p) of the Act, “any vessel which is documented or numbered under the laws of the United States.” The Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Customs and the United States Coast Guard, respectively, are