



NJ-Built Fast Aircraft Carriers

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

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NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1927 AND 2009.

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND USS SARATOGA (CV-3)

By: Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, JAGC, USN (Ret.)¹

The term “fast carriers” describes aircraft carriers capable of making sustained speeds in excess of 30 knots, enabling them to operate with the battle fleet and to launch and recover tactical aircraft. “Wind over the deck” was necessary to launch and recover aircraft; and high speeds created higher relative wind (the sum of the actual wind in the reciprocal direction of the heading of the ship plus the speed of the ship; by way of illustration, a natural wind of 20 knots plus a speed of 25 knots generates a relative wind of 45 knots.). The first U.S. aircraft carrier, USS LANGLEY (CV-1), a converted collier (ex USS JUPITER AC-3), was not capable of operating at fleet speed and was severely limited in the number of aircraft she could handle. LANGLEY was not considered a fast carrier.

The light carriers (CVLs) also had relatively small Carrier Air Groups (CAGs) of about 30-35 aircraft. The larger fleet carriers of the YORKTOWN and ESSEX classes had Air Groups of more than 90 aircraft. The terms “CV” and “CVL” are Navy designations for aircraft carrier and light aircraft carrier respectively. Other common designations include CVE - escort carrier, CVB - heavy aircraft carrier, CVA – attack aircraft carrier and CVS anti-submarine aircraft carrier.²

For the past eight decades, New Jersey-built carriers have played an important role in the United States Navy, from Coolidge through the George W. Bush (43) administration, serving in combat during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Desert Shield, and the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. The first and last conventionally powered fast aircraft carriers in the United States Navy were built in New Jersey, as were an additional 11 carriers.



NY Shipbuilding, Camden, NJ³

All of the ships discussed here were built at a single shipyard, New York Shipbuilding, located in Camden, New Jersey. Ten of the 13 initially were designed as cruisers and converted to aircraft carriers during construction. Two more were designed as light carriers built on cruiser hulls. The 13th was the first ship of her class, the only carrier class-leader not designed by Newport News Shipbuilding.

The first 10 ships served in combat during World War II; the next two were completed too late to see wartime service but one was in combat during Korea. The first New Jersey-built carrier served more than 18 consecutive years and was the oldest surviving US carrier of World War II despite repeated battle damage from submarine torpedoes and aerial strikes. Only one of the New Jersey-built carriers was sunk by the enemy during World War II. Two of these ships had the distinction of having future presidents serve as members of the crew or air wing during

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combat. The first two New Jersey-built fast carriers were targets at the nuclear bomb test at Bikini in 1946. One was sunk at the target site, the other was sunk off the coast of California five years later. The final New Jersey-built carrier will have served a record-setting 47 plus years, including more than a decade home-ported in Japan. Two of the World War II-built light carriers served in the French Navy and a third in the Spanish Navy, then briefly as a museum ship in New Orleans in the late 20th century, before being scrapped when that venture failed.

This is the first of a multi-section article addressing the philatelic and operational history of the 13 New Jersey-built aircraft carriers. The majority of the time, the ships' post offices were branches of the New York post office, as was the case for most Navy ships. Even though much of their time was spent in the Pacific Ocean, through World War II the officers and men assigned to these ships primarily had Fleet Post Office New York mailing addresses. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, SARATOGA had various West Coast port postal addresses and after World War II, some of the other ships had FPO San Francisco addresses. Surprisingly, branches of the New York post office operated around the world, even in Tokyo Bay when some of the INDEPENDENCE class light carriers were anchored there for the Japanese surrender in September 1945.

SCOPE

This initial installment of this study contains a précis of the New Jersey-built carriers' operational careers, as well as a discussion of the history of the first New Jersey carrier, USS SARATOGA, the largest and oldest American carrier to survive World War II. Subsequent installments will address the histories of the nine INDEPENDENCE class light carriers which served in the Pacific during World War II, and the two SAIPAN class light carriers which were completed after the end of hostilities. Finally, we will consider the 47 year history of USS KITTY HAWK (CV-63), the longest serving and last conventionally powered aircraft carrier to serve in the U.S. Navy. The operational history of the ships is taken nearly *in hac verba* from the official accounts published in the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*⁴ while a description of the philatelic history, richly illustrated with ship covers, is predicated on the Universal Ship Cancellation Society, Inc.'s authoritative *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* (5th ed. 1997) (Kent, David A., editor-in-chief).⁵ The description of the postmark "Type" is predicated on the widely recognized Locy Chart⁶ begun by a Navy Medical Officer in the late 1920s.



Fig. 1: Views of New York Shipbuilding Company. This company, originally planned for a Staten Island location (hence the name), was in business in Camden from 1900 to 1967.

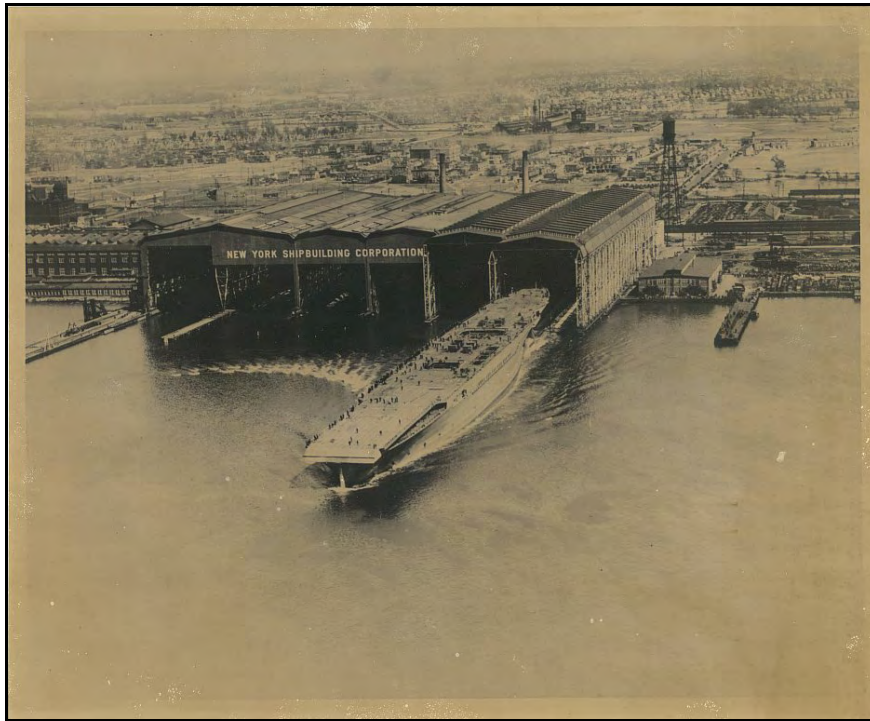


Fig. 2: Launching of SARATOGA (CV-3) April 7, 1925,⁷ at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation docks on the Delaware River, at Camden, New Jersey.

PRECIS: The 13 New Jersey-Built Fast Carriers

- SARATOGA (CV-3) was the first commissioned fast carrier to serve in the United States Navy. She preceded the Massachusetts-built USS LEXINGTON (CV-2) by a single month. SARATOGA was commissioned on November 1927 and served through World War II, suffering two torpedo strikes and multiple air strikes in 1945. She was ultimately destroyed as a target at Bikini in June 1946.

She was initially begun as a large or battle cruiser under Congressional authorization before U.S. involvement in World War I. As a result of the Washington Naval Conference during the Harding Administration, this entire class of cruisers was cancelled as were a number of new, fast battleships. SARATOGA and LEXINGTON were saved but converted to carriers during the construction which lasted nearly a decade.

- INDEPENDENCE (CVL-22) was the leader of a class of nine light carriers converted from cruiser hulls during World War II. The need for additional carriers was obvious at the beginning of the war. Nine of the light cruisers to be built in Camden were converted to light carriers, capable of high speeds to operate with their larger ESSEX-class sisters, but not capable of carrying as many aircraft. INDEPENDENCE suffered the greatest amount of combat damage by a light carrier to survive, when torpedoed during the invasion of Tarawa. She was at Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered, participated in *Operation Magic Carpet* (the return of American servicemen for discharge), and then also was used as a target at Bikini during the summer of 1946. Her hull finally was sunk off the coast of California in 1951.

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- The second light carrier, and the only one named for a New Jersey battle, USS PRINCETON (CVL-23) was the sole light carrier and last fast U.S. carrier lost during World War II when she was sunk during the Battle of Leyte Gulf on 24 October 1944 during the recapture of the Philippine Islands.
- The third ship, USS BELLEAU WOOD (CVL-24), was named for the World War I battle where the United States Marine Corps demonstrated their combat prowess in defeating the Kaiser's Army in France. She served in the Pacific offensives during World War II. Subsequently, she served in the French Navy as BELLEAU BOIS.
- The fourth light carrier was USS COWPENS (CVL-25), named for a Revolutionary War battle in South Carolina. She participated in invasions and strikes throughout the Pacific as well as the Japanese surrender and repatriation of POWs and returning veterans. She was decommissioned in 1947 and had no further active service.
- The fifth ship of the class was USS MONTEREY (CVL-26), in which Gerald R. Ford, a graduate of University of Michigan and Yale Law School, served as assistant navigator, almost losing his own life in her encounter with a typhoon in the Pacific in 1944. She too was decommissioned in 1947 but recommissioned in 1951 during the Korean War, and served as a training carrier for new naval aviators.
- The sixth INDEPENDENCE class ship, USS LANGLEY (CVL-27), served an important role in the advance across the Pacific, particularly during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944. She operated off the coast of Japan and participated in the invasions of Okinawa and Iwo Jima. After hostilities ended, she too participated in *Operation Magic Carpet*, the return of veterans for discharge. She was lent to France in 1951 where she served as LAFAYETTE until her return in 1963.
- USS CABOT (CVL-28) was the seventh ship of her class. She served in the Pacific offensives of 1944 and 1945, as part of the carrier force which conducted the first strikes against Japan since the Doolittle Raid⁸ and participated in the largest naval battle in history, the Battle of Leyte Gulf. CABOT lost more than 50 men killed or wounded in one kamikaze attack in November 1944. In 1945, she was off both Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and subsequently participated in occupation duty. The ship briefly was decommissioned in 1947 but recommissioned in 1948, serving until after the Korean War. She was transferred to the Spanish Navy under Franco and the restored monarchy as DEDALO. In 1989 she was returned to the United States where efforts to preserve her as a museum ship on the Mississippi River near New Orleans were unsuccessful and consequently, she was scrapped.
- The penultimate ship of the class was USS BATAAN (CVL-29). She was engaged in combat in the Pacific theatre from April 1944 until the end of the war. She was one of the few carriers in the Pacific to have assisted in the sinking of a Japanese submarine, I-56, on 18 April 1945, while off Okinawa. BATAAN was part of the Third Fleet force which attacked the Japanese home islands. In addition, she was involved in *Operation Magic Carpet* and decommissioned in 1947. Like some of her sister ships, BATAAN was recommissioned during the Korean War, but she was the only CVL to actually serve in combat again. BATAAN was decommissioned for the final time in 1954.

- The last of the INDEPENDENCE class, USS SAN JACINTO (CVL-30) was the ship from which Lieutenant (Junior Grade) George H. W. Bush, USNR, flew with Torpedo (VT) Squadron 51. She is also famous for a reported attempt by a Japanese naval aviator to land on her flight deck, only to be waved off by a LSO (Landing Signals Officer). She was with the Fifth Fleet at the Battle of the Philippine Sea and the Third Fleet at the Battle of Leyte Gulf, and she struck targets in the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and the Japanese home islands, as well as participating in the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Ultimately, she served in *Operation Magic Carpet* and was decommissioned in 1947.
- Two additional larger light carriers, WRIGHT (CVL-48) and SAIPAN (CVL-49), also were built on cruiser hulls but not finished in time for service during World War II.
- The final New Jersey-built fast carrier is USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-63) which will have served more than 47 years as the last and longest serving conventional carrier in the history of the United States Navy. Currently, she is completing her lengthy career begun in 1961, and returning from Japan, where she was home ported since 1998, departing Japan on 28 May 2008. However, because of a serious fire on board USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN-73), her arrival at San Diego was delayed until 7 August 2008. She will be decommissioned on the West Coast in 2009.

USS SARATOGA (CV-3): The First Fast Carrier

The fifth⁹ SARATOGA (CV-3) was laid down on 25 September 1920 as Battle Cruiser #3 by the New York Shipbuilding Co., Camden, N.J.; she was ordered converted to an aircraft carrier and reclassified CV-3 on 1 July 1922, in accordance with the Washington Treaty limiting naval armaments. She was launched on 7 April 1925, sponsored by Mrs. Curtis D. Wilbur, wife of the Secretary of the Navy; and commissioned on 16 November 1927, with Capt. Harry E. Yarnell in command. The ship had a displacement of 33,000 tons, a length of 888 feet, a beam of 106 feet (nearly the maximum for clearance of the Panama Canal) and a 24 foot 1½ inch draft. She had a maximum speed of 33.91 knots (nearly 38 miles per hour). In addition to 81 aircraft, she had eight 8 inch guns and twelve 5 inch guns. The 8 inch guns, useless against aircraft, were removed early during World War II, and replaced by more modern anti-aircraft guns.

SARATOGA, the first fast carrier in the U.S. Navy, quickly proved her value. She began her shakedown cruise from Philadelphia on 6 January 1928; on 11 January, her air officer, the future World War II hero, Marc A. Mitscher, landed the first aircraft on board. (See cover CV-3-B dated 11 January 1928, illustrated in *Figure 8*.) In an experiment on 27 January, the rigid airship LOS ANGELES (ZR-3) moored to SARATOGA's stern and took on fuel and stores. The same day she sailed for the Pacific via the Panama Canal, was diverted between 14 and 16



*Fig. 3: Airship USS Los Angeles moored on SARATOGA, 1928.*¹⁰

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February to carry a Marine aviation squadron to Corinto, Nicaragua¹¹ (to reinforce the struggle against the Sandino Rebellion), and finally joined the Battle Fleet at San Pedro, Calif., on 21 February.

The ship spent nearly her entire career in the Pacific Ocean, returning to the Atlantic in 1930 and 1934. SARATOGA took part in the Presidential Review at Norfolk in May 1930 and returned to the Atlantic for a final time for exercises between 9 April and 9 November 1934. She was the centerpiece of many Fleet Problems¹² between 1929 and 1940, when those exercises ended.



Fig. 4: SARATOGA circa 1930, with two biplanes doing a flyby before approaching for a landing.¹³ SARATOGA is easily recognized by her distinctive black vertical stripe.

When Japan struck Pearl Harbor, SARATOGA was entering San Diego after an interim dry-docking at Bremerton. She got underway on 8 December 1941 as the nucleus of a third carrier force [LEXINGTON and USS ENTERPRISE (CV- 6), already at sea], carrying Marine aircraft intended to reinforce Wake Island. She reached Pearl Harbor on 15 December and refueled. She then rendezvoused with USS TANGIER (AV-8) which had relief troops and supplies on board, while LEXINGTON and ENTERPRISE provided distant cover for the operation. The SARATOGA force was delayed by the low speed of its oiler and by a decision to refuel destroyers. The relief force was recalled on 22 December; Wake fell the next day.



Fig. 5: SARATOGA underway – circa 1942 – a National Archives photo.

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On 11 January 1942, when heading towards a rendezvous with ENTERPRISE, 500 miles southwest of Oahu, SARATOGA was hit by a torpedo fired by the Japanese submarine, I-16. Although six men were killed and three fire rooms were flooded, the carrier reached Oahu under her own power. The carrier proceeded to the Bremerton Navy Yard for permanent repairs and installation of a modern anti-aircraft battery.

After the Battle of Coral Sea, SARATOGA departed Puget Sound on 22 May arriving on 25 May at San Diego. The carrier was unable to sail until 1 June and arrived at Pearl Harbor after the Battle of Midway. She departed Pearl Harbor the following day, 7 June, after fueling; and, on 11 June, transferred 34 aircraft to USS HORNET (CV-8) and ENTERPRISE to replenish their depleted air groups. The three carriers then turned north to counter Japanese activity in the Aleutians, but the operation was canceled and SARATOGA returned to Pearl Harbor on 13 June.



Fig. 6: Interesting view of SARATOGA in camouflage. National Archives photo.

As flagship of Vice Admiral F. J. Fletcher, SARATOGA opened the Guadalcanal assault early on 7 August. The carrier force withdrew on the afternoon of 8 August to refuel. Thus, it was too far away when four Allied cruisers [USS ASTORIA, QUINCY and VINCENNES and HMAS CANBERRA] were sunk that night in the Battle of Savo Island.

On 23 August 1942, SARATOGA launched a strike against a Japanese transport force. Her aircraft were unable to find the enemy, however, and spent the night on Guadalcanal. As they were returning on board the next day, the first contact report on enemy carriers was received. Two hours later, SARATOGA launched a strike which sank the Japanese carrier RYUJO. Later in the afternoon, SARATOGA launched her aircraft again and damaged the Japanese seaplane tender CHITOSE. SARATOGA escaped detection while the Japanese aircraft damaged ENTERPRISE. For the second time in seven months SARATOGA was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. The impact caused short circuits which damaged SARATOGA's turbo-electric propulsion system and left her dead in the water. The crew jury-rigged her propulsion plant and after repairs at Tongatabu from 6 to 12 September, SARATOGA arrived at Pearl Harbor on 21 September for permanent repairs.

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SARATOGA operated in the vicinity of Noumea for most of 1943. Between 17 May and 31 July 1943, she was reinforced by the British carrier, HMS VICTORIOUS, and, on 20 October, she was joined by USS PRINCETON (CVL-23). During the invasion of Bougainville on 1 November, SARATOGA's aircraft neutralized nearby Japanese airfields on Buka. Then, on 5 November, SARATOGA conducted perhaps her most brilliant strike of the war when her aircraft (with those of PRINCETON) penetrated the heavily defended port of Rabul and disabled most of the Japanese cruisers.

SARATOGA and PRINCETON then were designated the Relief Carrier Group for the offensive in the Gilberts, and after striking Nauru on 19 November, they rendezvoused on 23 November 1943 with the transports carrying garrison troops to Makin and Tarawa. She was detached on 30 November for overhaul at San Francisco from 9 December 1943 to 3 January 1944.

The carrier again arrived at Pearl Harbor on 7 January 1944, and sailed on 19 January with light carriers, USS LANGLEY (CVL-27) and PRINCETON, to support the drive in the Marshalls. SARATOGA then departed the main theaters of the Pacific war for almost a year. Her first task was to help the British initiate their carrier offensive in the Far East. From March through May 1944 she struck Japanese forces in the Indian Ocean as part of a Royal Navy Task Force.

SARATOGA arrived at Bremerton, Washington, on 10 June 1944 for repairs through the summer. On 24 September, she arrived at Pearl Harbor and commenced her second special assignment, training night fighter squadrons. SARATOGA had experimented with night flying as early as 1931, and many carriers had been forced to land returning aircraft at night during the war; but, only in August 1944, did a carrier, USS INDEPENDENCE (CVL-22), receive an air group specially equipped to operate at night. Light carriers of the INDEPENDENCE-class had been proven too small for safe night operations, and SARATOGA was deployed from Pearl Harbor on 29 January 1945 to form a night fighter task group with ENTERPRISE for the Iwo Jima operation to counter the kamikaze threat.

SARATOGA arrived at Ulithi on 7 February and sailed three days later, with ENTERPRISE and four other carrier task groups. SARATOGA was assigned to provide fighter cover while the remaining carriers launched the strikes on Japan, but in the process, her fighters raided two Japanese airfields. On 21 February 1945, SARATOGA was detached with an escort of three destroyers to join the amphibious forces and carry out night patrols. Before sunset, SARATOGA suffered combat damage for a third and final time. Six Japanese planes scored five hits on the carrier in three minutes. SARATOGA's forward flight deck was wrecked, her starboard side was holed twice, and large fires were started in her hangar deck. She lost 123 of her crew, dead or missing. Another attack at 7PM scored an additional bomb hit. By 8:15PM, the fires were under control and the carrier was able to recover aircraft, but she was ordered to Eniwetok and then to the West Coast for repairs, and arrived at Bremerton on 16 March.

On 22 May, SARATOGA departed Puget Sound fully repaired, and she resumed training pilots at Pearl Harbor on 3 June. She ceased training duty on 6 September, after the Japanese surrender, and sailed from Hawaii on 9 September, transporting 3,712 returning naval veterans home to the United States under *Operation Magic Carpet*. SARATOGA returned 29,204 Pacific war veterans, more than any other individual ship. At the time, she also held the record for the greatest number of aircraft landed on a carrier, with a lifetime total of 98,549 landings in 17 years.

SARATOGA was considered surplus by postwar requirements, and she was assigned to *Operation Crossroads* at Bikini Atoll to test the effect of the atomic bomb on naval vessels. She survived the first blast, an air burst on 1 July, with only minor damage, but was mortally wounded by the second on 25 July, an underwater blast which was detonated under a landing craft 500 yards from the carrier. Salvage efforts were prevented by radioactivity, and seven and one-half hours after the blast, with her funnel collapsed across her deck, SARATOGA sank beneath the surface of the lagoon. She was struck from the Navy list on 15 August 1946. SARATOGA received seven battle stars for her World War II service.

THE PHILATELIC HISTORY OF SARATOGA

The following covers represent SARATOGA's many years of service.

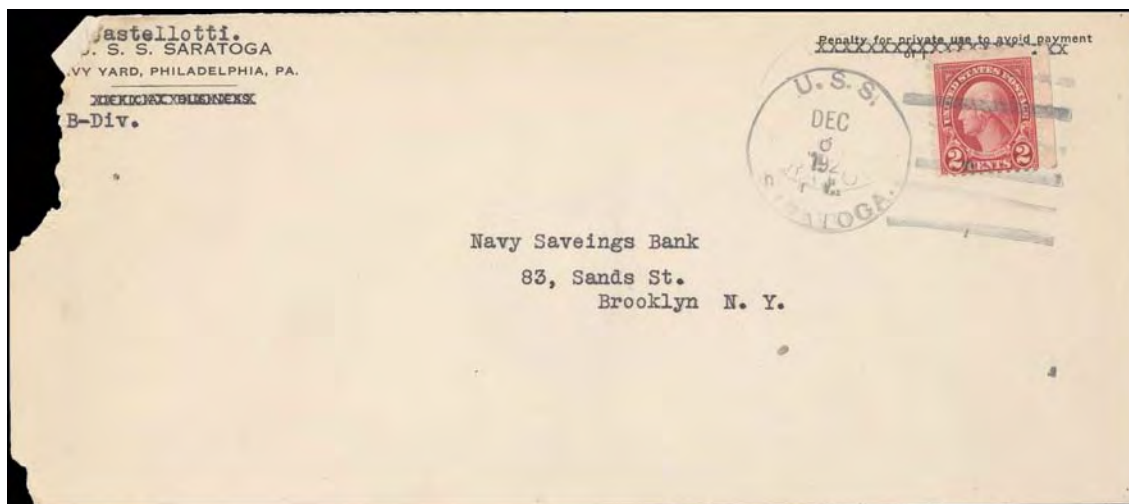


Fig. 7: CV-3-A is a USS SARATOGA (CV-3) rubber stamp cancel (Locy Type 3s(B)) dated December 1927 on a Number 10 envelope with postage (a red 2 cent Washington stamp -- not free franked for official mail). Personal mail addressed to the Navy Savings Bank in Brooklyn.

The return address is USS SARATOGA, Navy Yard, Philadelphia, PA, indicating service in the Atlantic. This was while she was at the Philadelphia Navy Yard after her commissioning but prior to the first cruise. The postmark, in use 1927-28, is rated "C" or scarce in the USCS Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks (5th Edition 1997)¹⁴ (hereinafter "Postmark Catalog"), p. S-11.

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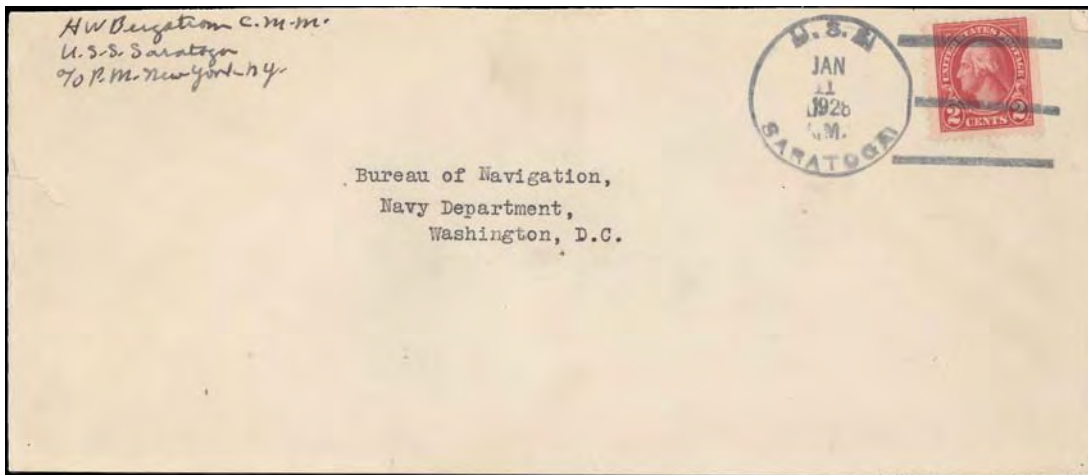


Fig. 8: CV-3-B is a USS SARATOGA (CV-3) rubber stamp cancel (Locy Type 3s(B)) dated 11 January 1928 on a Number 10 envelope with postage (a red 2 cent Washington stamp — not free franked but apparently for official mail). Addressed to the Bureau of Navigation.

On her first New Year's Day after commissioning on 16 November 1927, SARATOGA was still moored at the Navy Base Philadelphia. Her first cruise began on 6 January, and this cover was sent during her shakedown cruise and the same day (11 January 1928) that the first flight was landed on her decks by the future Commander, Task Force 58, then-Lieutenant Commander "Pete" Mitscher, U.S. Navy. The postmark, in use 1927-28, is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.



Fig. 9: CV-3-C is a steel handstamp cancel (Locy Type 6g(1)) dated 8 February 1928 on a Number 6 envelope with two cents postage (a pair of green Franklin one cent stamps).

The cover shown above is clearly an early philatelic cover, when SARATOGA was transiting the Panama Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The postmark, in use in 1928, is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.

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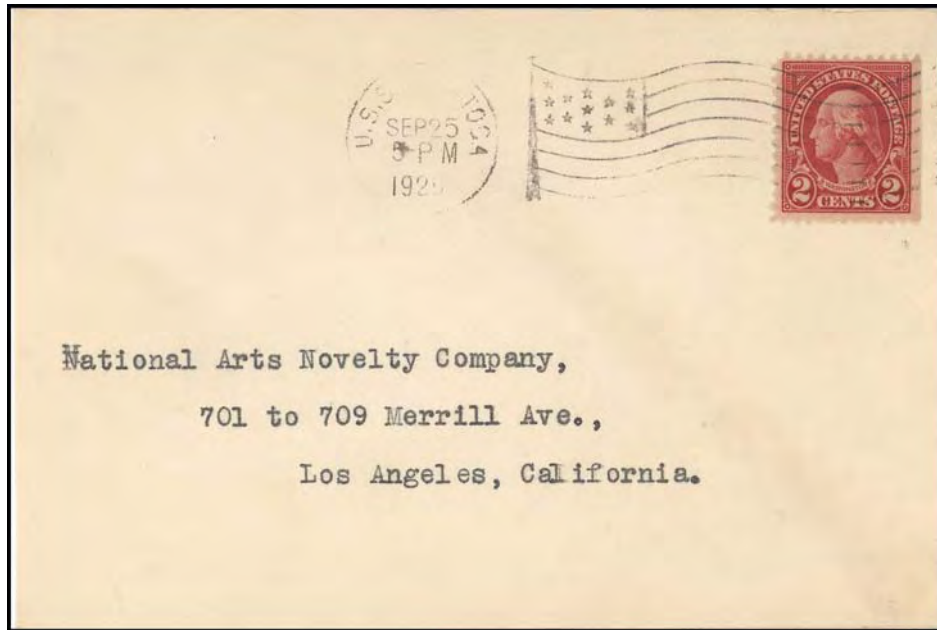


Fig. 10: CV-3-D is a steel machine Flag cancel (Locy Type 8) dated 25 September 1929 on a cut down Number 10 envelope with two cents postage (a single two cent Washington red stamp).

SARATOGA arrived at San Pedro, California to join the Battle Fleet on 21 February 1928. The next year she participated in Fleet Problem IX, again returning to San Pedro. This postmark, in use 1928-30, is rated “R-1” or rare (between 25 and 100 reported) in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.

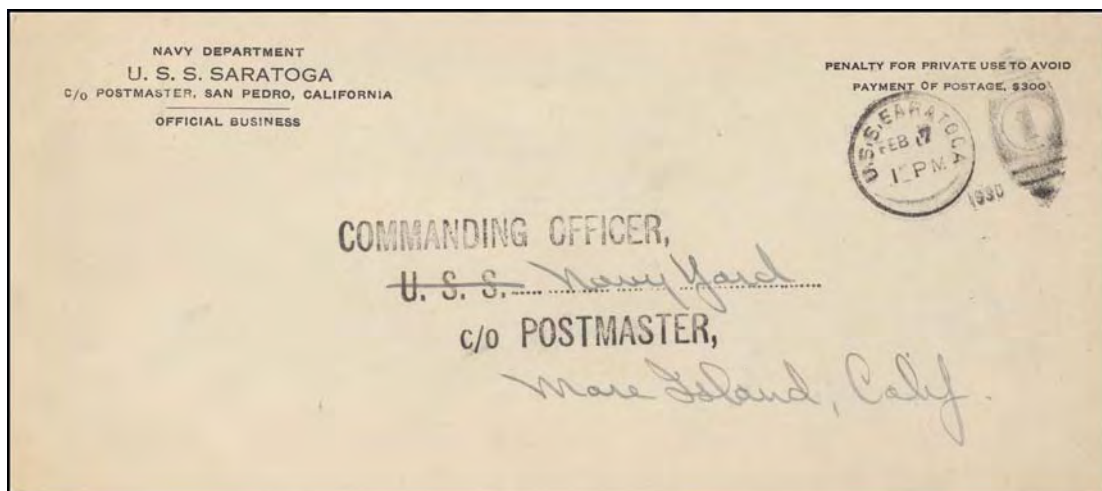


Fig. 11: CV-3-E is a steel hand stamp cancel (Locy Type 6g) with error (“EARATOGA”) dated 17 February 1930 on a number 10 penalty envelope indicating official use.

The return address here is Postmaster, San Pedro, California indicating service in the Pacific. It was sent to the Navy Yard at Mare Island, California postage free. This “error” postmark, in use 1929-31, is rated “C” or scarce in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.



Fig. 12: CV-3-F is a steel machine cancel (Locy Type 7t) dated 22 February 1933 on a Number 6 envelope with three half cent brown Washington stamps.

This postmark, in use 1932-41, is rated “A” or common in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.

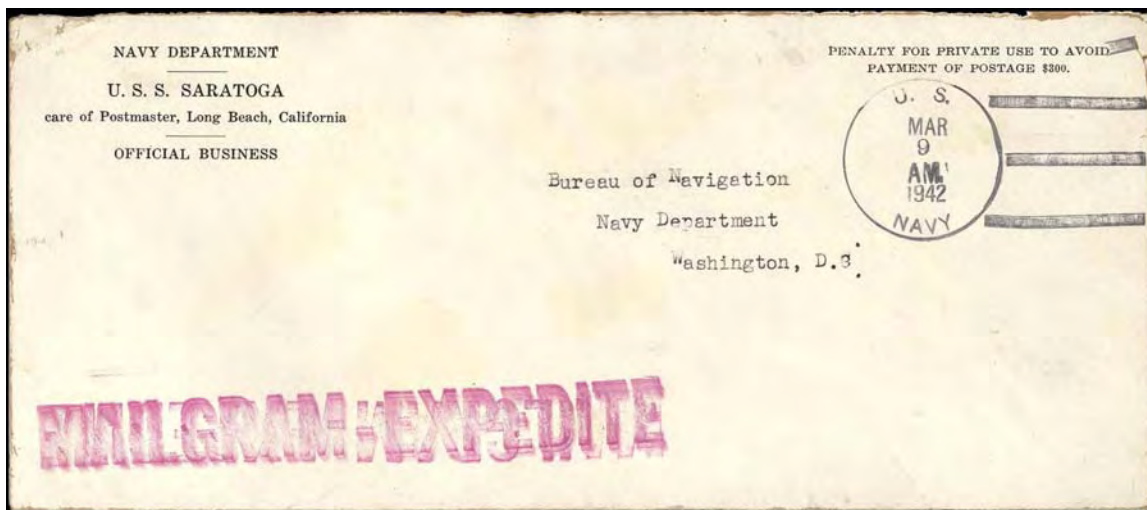


Fig. 13: CV-3-G is a rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 3z(TTT)) dated 9 March 1942 on a Number 10 penalty envelope. Official correspondence sent postage free.

The return address in *Figure 13* is Postmaster, Long Beach, California, indicating that early in World War II, SARATOGA remained with the Pacific Fleet. On the day of this cancellation, she was being repaired at the Bremerton Navy Yard for damage from the first time she was struck in combat by a torpedo fired by an Imperial Japanese submarine. The postmark, in use during 1942, is rated “B” or limited edition in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.

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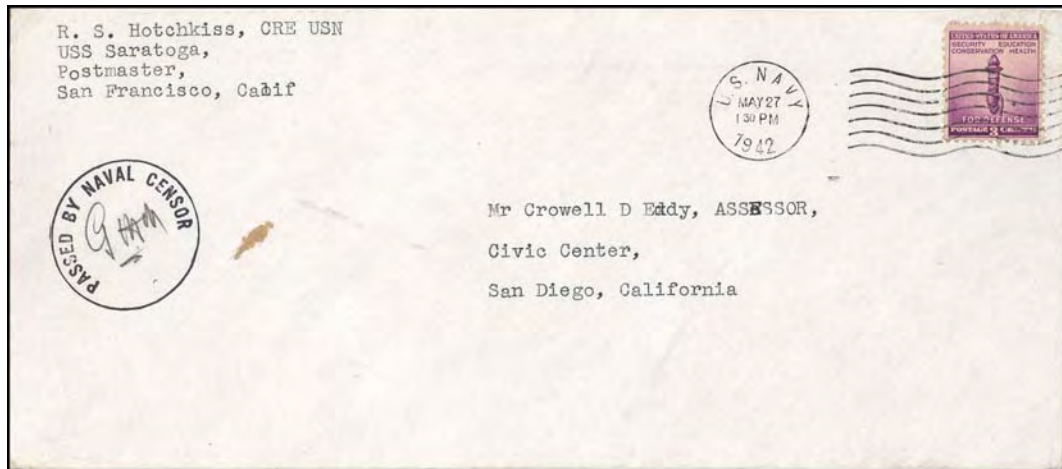


Fig. 14: CV-3-H is a machine cancel (Locy Type 7rtz) dated 27 May 1942 on a Number 10 penalty envelope.

The return address in Figure 14 is Postmaster, San Francisco, California. On the day of this cancellation, she was at San Diego after returning from refurbishment to the Pacific Fleet in anticipation of the Battle of Midway (4-6 June 1942). Unable to sail until the 1st of June, she was too late for Midway. The postmark, in use 1941-44, is rated “B” or limited edition in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.

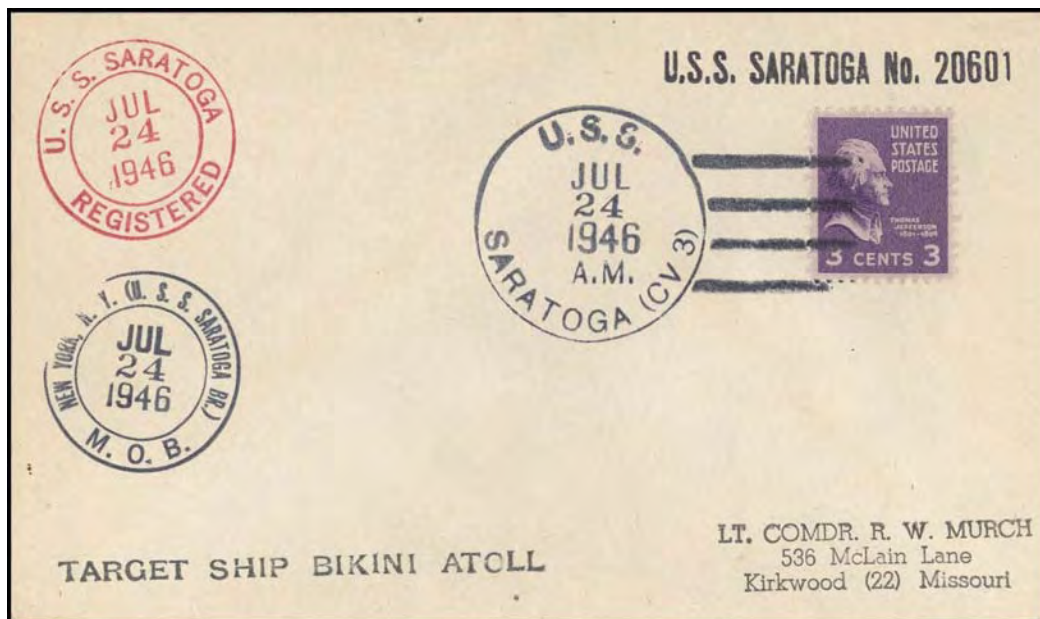


Fig. 15: CV-3-I is a rubber stamp hand cancels: Locy Types 2(n) (four bar black hand cancel on postage stamp), 9v (red double circle "registered" handstamp in upper left corner) and 9efw (black double circle "M.O.B.", or "Money Order Business" handstamp in lower left corner), dated 24 July 1946 on a Number 6 envelope.

On this her last day of postal service (24 June 1946), SARATOGA was at Bikini Atoll where she would be used as a primary target ship in the above-ground atom bomb tests. Type 9 postmarks are generally double circle small hand stamps used for registry, money order, parcel post, etc. Often Navy postal clerks refer to them as “All Purpose cancels” or “AP chops.” The postmarks, in use during 1945-46, are rated “B” or limited edition in the Postmark Catalog, p. S-11.

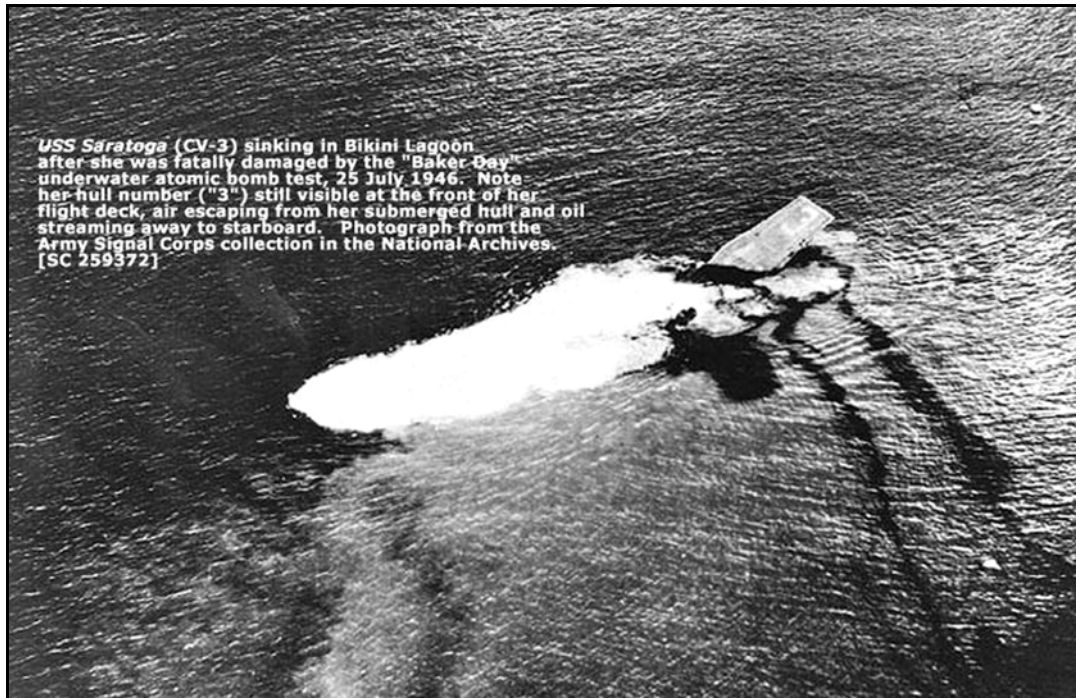
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Fig. 16: SARATOGA served even as she sank, a test victim in the Bikini Atoll atomic bomb blast, 25 July 1946. National Archives photo.

Comments, questions, etc. may be directed to the author, Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, JAGC, USN (Ret.), by mail to 176 Christol Street, Metuchen, NJ 08840 or by email to Lawrence.brennan@wilsonelser.com.

[This series on New Jersey-built fast aircraft carriers will be continued in the following issues of NJPH.]

ENDNOTES:

¹ The author is a lawyer specializing in admiralty and maritime law, federal civil litigation, insurance coverage and international law. He served in the United States Navy on active duty and in the reserve component, ashore and afloat, from 1974 to 2008. He commanded reserve units at the Naval War College and Admiralty Law and was the Legal Officer on USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) between 1979 and 1981, including the Iranian Hostage rescue mission and the then-record setting 144 consecutive days at sea. Mr. Brennan is a graduate of Fordham College (1974) where he received a Bachelor of Arts *magna cum laude* and Fordham Law School (1977).

² The numbering for carriers includes consecutively CVs, CVAs, CVLs, CVBs and the nuclear powered carriers whose designations have been CVAN (nuclear attack carrier) or CVN (nuclear carrier). The attack designations were removed in the mid-1970s and since then, all carriers have been considered multi-purpose. A second entirely different group of aircraft carriers were the escort carriers or CVEs. More than 100 CVEs were ordered during World War II, mostly for the U.S. and Royal Navies. They were included in an entirely differently set of hull numbers and designators than the larger and faster CVs, CVBs, and CVLs. These ships also were known as jeep carriers, many built by Kaiser, and were designed to be slow, around 20 knots, and had modest capacity for aircraft. They could not operate with the larger fleet units but were used to battle U-boats in the Atlantic, provide support for amphibious operations and escort service for forces in the Pacific, and to supply replacement aircraft for the fast carriers and land bases.

³ Photo from New York Shipbuilding Company Historical Site, <http://members.aol.com/nyship/history.html> [Aug 6, 2008].

⁴ *The Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, commonly known as DANFS, is the leading source for information on US naval vessels. Published in nine volumes (from 1959 to 1991), it gives histories for virtually every US naval vessel. Published in Washington by the Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1959-1981 Also available online at <http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/> This site has attempted to faithfully transcribe from the original *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, without updating or corrections. See also *DANFS*, www.history.navy.mil/danfs/. This official site contains numerous revised and expanded histories of some ships and updated entries for some modern warships.

⁵ *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* (5th ed. 1997). Kent, David A., editor-in-chief, Universal Ship Cancellation Society, New Britain, CT, 1997.

⁶ Available in the book mentioned above; also online on the Universal Ship Cancellation Society site at <http://www.uscs.org/> - go to What is a Postmark? And then follow links to the Locy System to see illustrations, or go to a description of the original author of this system.

⁷ NavSource Online: Aircraft Carrier Photo Archive at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/02/03.htm> [Aug. 6, 2008] and photo contributed to that site by Ron Reeves.

⁸ The Doolittle Raid, 18 April 1942, was the first aircraft bombing of the Japanese home islands after Pearl Harbor. Army planes were launched from a Naval carrier [USS Hornet (CV-8)], without enough fuel to return, so landing was planned in China. While the raid was successful, all 16 planes were lost (either crash landing over China or ditched in the sea), with the exception of one, which landed in Russia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doolittle_Raid [Aug. 6, 2008].

⁹ There have been six U.S. warships named SARATOGA which served between the Revolutionary War through the late 1990s collectively.

- The first SARATOGA was a sloop built in Philadelphia in 1780, commanded by Captain John Young, of the Continental Navy. She successfully cruised the East Coast and Caribbean, capturing British prizes (generally enemy merchant ships subject to capture and “condemnation” by admiralty courts under the law of prize). She also successfully engaged Royal Navy warships. SARATOGA was lost with all hands on 18 March 1781 when preparing to attack a British warship after capturing another prize. After surviving heavy winds, the prize master placed by Captain Young on the captured ship noted that SARATOGA had vanished. No further details of her fate have been discovered.
- The second ship named SARATOGA, actually the first to serve in the U.S. Navy, was built on Lake Champlain in 1814 to counter the naval race which was central to the planned British invasion of New York. Under the command of Thomas MacDonough, she set defensive positions in Plattsburg Bay where they defeated the British fleet under Commodore George Downie, leaving the U.S. essentially unchallenged on Lake Champlain and forcing the British troops under General Sir George Prevost, the Governor General of Canada, to retreat. This victory, in which SARATOGA played an essential part, was crucial to the peace negotiations at Ghent and helped restore American morale after the sacking of Washington and the burning of the White House.
- The third ship named SARATOGA was a sloop of war built by the Portsmouth, New Hampshire Navy Yard in 1841-42. She served on the West Africa Patrol, under Commodore Matthew C. Perry, combating the slave trade and supporting the recently-established government in Liberia of relocated freed African-Americans. Before and during the Mexican War she was engaged in operations in the Gulf of Mexico and then attempted to sail to California via Cape Horn but was heavily damaged by a storm, necessitating her return for repairs at Hampton Roads where she was decommissioned in 1847. The same year, once repairs were completed, she was recommissioned under Commander David G. Farragut (who would become the first flag officer in the U.S. Navy and a leading hero of the Civil War). She served off Mexico again and was repeatedly recommissioned after short deployments. In 1850 she was recommissioned and sent to the East India Squadron. There, she served under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry for a second time during his expeditions in 1852-54 opening Japan. After returning to Boston in the fall of 1854 and short periods out of service for repairs, she returned to the west coast of Africa where she captured a slaver in April 1861. During the U.S. Civil War SARATOGA served from June 1863 to April 1865, primarily in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. After intermittent service, she was finally decommissioned in October 1888. Between 1890 and 1907 SARATOGA was on loan to Pennsylvania, where she served as a school ship. In 1907 she was sold to Thomas Butler and Company of Boston.

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- The fourth SARATOGA initially was commissioned in 1893 as USS NEW YORK (Armored Cruiser # 2, CA-2) and served until 1941, being renamed SARATOGA so that the name NEW YORK could be given to a battleship under construction, in line with the custom of naming capital ships for states, and subsequently renamed ROCHESTER, so that the name SARATOGA could be given to the battle cruiser that ultimately became the first fast carrier. USS NEW YORK, an 8150-ton armored cruiser built at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was commissioned in August 1893. She initially served as flagship of the South Atlantic Squadron; she then went to the West Indies before joining the European Squadron in 1895. She was in the North Atlantic Squadron when the Spanish-American War began, and was flagship during the Caribbean campaign that led to the Battle of Santiago on 3 July 1898. From 1898 to 1916, NEW YORK served off Latin America, in Asiatic waters, the eastern Pacific, the Atlantic and off Europe. She was renamed SARATOGA in 1911. During the First World War, the cruiser was active in both the Pacific and the Atlantic, and was renamed again in 1917, becoming USS ROCHESTER. She remained in the Atlantic after the war, and operating in the Caribbean area until 1932. ROCHESTER was flagship of the Asiatic Fleet in 1932-33, mainly serving in Chinese waters. Decommissioned for the last time in April 1933, she was laid up at Olongapo, Philippines, until scuttled in December 1941 to avoid capture by the Japanese.
- The fifth SARATOGA is the primary subject of this article.
- The sixth SARATOGA was the second FORRESTAL class aircraft carrier (CVA/CV-60). She was built at the New York Naval Shipyard (“Brooklyn Navy Yard”) and commissioned in April 1956. She served nearly four decades, almost exclusively with the Atlantic Fleet. SARATOGA often was the host to presidents with multiple visits by Eisenhower and Nixon. She was the Atlantic terminus of the record-setting three hour and 28 minute cross-continental flight by F-8 Crusaders on 6 June 1957. She made one combat cruise to Vietnam in 1972, participated in the capture of the PLO terrorists who killed Leon Klinghoffer during the “hijacking” of M/V ACHILLE LAURO, helped strike Libya in March 1986, and was one of the first carriers on station during Desert Shield/Desert Storm, making six transits of the Suez Canal. She made 22 Med Cruises before being decommissioned on 20 August 1994. Even though SARATOGA has been stricken from the Naval Register, she and FORRESTAL remain at the Naval Station, Newport, Rhode Island. Efforts to preserve SARATOGA as a museum ship continue.

These brief accounts of the operational history of the five other ships named SARATOGA are based on the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, *supra*.

¹⁰ NavSource Online, *Ibid.* <http://www.navsource.org/archives/02/03.htm> [Aug. 6, 2008] U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph (# NH 44097) USS *Los Angeles* (ZR-3) landing on USS SARATOGA (CV-3), 27 January 1928.

¹¹ <http://vmo6rocks.homestead.com/history.html> [Aug. 10, 2008].

¹² “Fleet Problems” were naval exercises equivalent to what is known today as “war games” – described by Wikipedia as “the term by the U.S. Navy to describe each of twenty one large-scale naval exercises conducted between 1923 and 1940. They are labeled with roman numerals, from Fleet Problem I through Fleet Problem XXI. One or more of the forces would play the part of a European or Asian navy. They were the culmination of the Navy’s annual training maneuvers.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleet_problem [Aug. 6, 2008]. See also: Craig C. Felker, *Testing American Seapower* (Texas A&M Univ. Press 2007), the best single volume study on Fleet Problems 1923-40.

¹³ Naval Historical photo #NH 94599 from http://www.navy.mil/navydata/navy_legacy_hr.asp?id=12, the Official Navy website. [Aug. 6, 2008]

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Kent, David A, ed., *USCS Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* (5th Edition) 1997.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1926 AND 2009

PART II: THE EMERGENCY CARRIERS: THE FIRST THREE OF NINE INDEPENDENCE- CLASS SMALL CARRIERS BUILT DURING WORLD WAR II.

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

[This continues a serialized article begun in the last issue of *NJPH*, Aug. 2008, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole No. 171.]

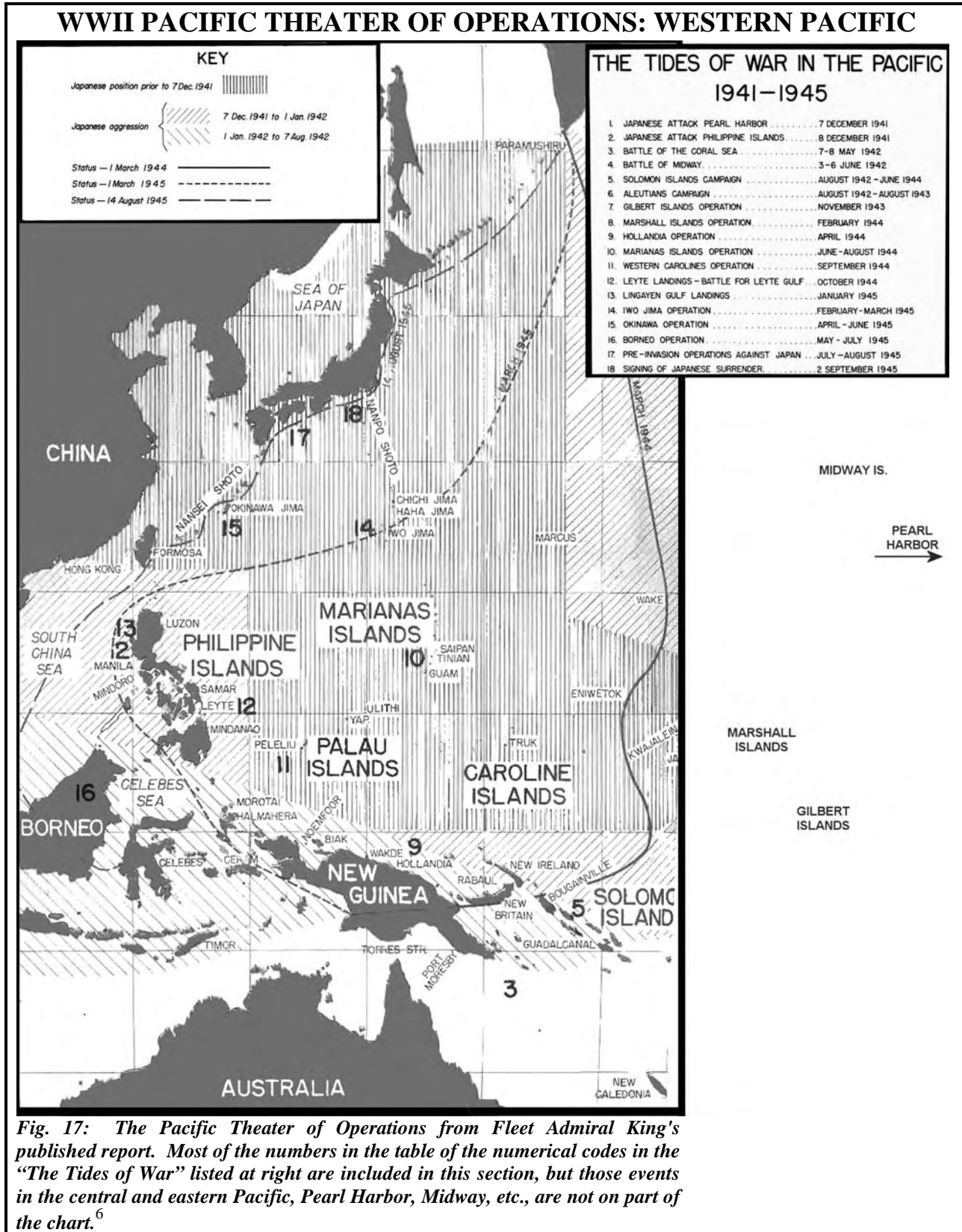
At the end of December 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt convinced Navy leadership to convert cruiser hulls into emergency aircraft carriers. After the near-destruction of the fleet at Pearl Harbor,¹ Roosevelt recognized the immediate need for additional aircraft carriers. The Navy had begun the construction of a large group of fleet carriers, the *Essex*-class, which ultimately would form the backbone of the fast carrier force in the Pacific. These ships, however, would not begin to join the fleet until 1943 and substantial numbers would not be completed until 1944. The events of 1942 would prove the need for a large number of carriers.² Thus, the Navy reversed its earlier opposition to conversion of cruiser hulls into fast carriers and eventually converted nine *Cleveland*-class light cruiser³ hulls at New York Shipbuilding in Camden, New Jersey.

On January 2, 1942, the Chief of Naval Operations,⁴ at Roosevelt's urging, issued orders for the initial light carriers. New York Shipbuilding received a formal authorization for the first conversion on January 10. Plans were submitted on February 2, 1942, and approved eight days later. This rapid turnaround resulted from years of prior planning; the Navy had considered but repeatedly rejected plans to convert cruisers into carriers for 15 years.

The Navy ordered 39 *Cleveland*-class light cruisers. Twenty-seven were completed as light cruisers, an additional nine were commissioned as small carriers,⁵ and three were cancelled. As cruisers, the ships were designed to displace 11,800 tons standard or 14,131 tons fully-loaded. They had a waterline length of 600 feet and a length overall of 608 feet 4 inches on a beam of 63 feet with an air draft of 113 feet, and a mean draft of 20 feet. The ships were propelled at speeds in excess of 32 knots by four Babcock & Wilcox boilers generating 624 psi steam creating 100,000 shaft horsepower for four screws. The complement consisted of 1,355 comprised of 70 officers 1,285 enlisted men. The main battery was comprised of twelve 6" guns in four triple turrets, twelve 5" guns, and numerous 20 mm and 40 mm anti-aircraft guns.

The *Cleveland* design for light cruisers was based on the last pair of *Brooklyn*-class ships, USS *St. Louis* (CL-49) and USS *Helena* (CL-50). The new class design took into account the greater threat of air attack, deleting one of *Brooklyn*'s five 6" gun turrets (reducing the number of rifles from 15 to 12) but raising the number of dual-purpose 5" weapons from 8 to 12 and fitting more 40 mm and 20 mm automatic weapons.

Twenty-one ships of the *Cleveland*-class had been ordered by the end of 1941. The fifth ship of the class, *Amsterdam*, had been laid down at New York Shipbuilding's Camden, New Jersey yard in May 1941 and was selected for the first carrier conversion. She was almost 40% complete when workers began removing her superstructure. Two more cruisers under construction at Camden, *Tallahassee* and *New Haven*, also were earmarked for conversion.



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GLOSSARY OF NAVAL TERMS USED

Air wings: the parent organization of the aviation units assigned to an aircraft carrier or station, comprised of a number of squadrons, usually fighter, bombing, torpedo, and attack squadrons. Each squadron was a separate "unit" or "command" with an individual commanding officer, executive officer, and administrative organization. The air wing, or carrier air wing, was the "unit" or "command" in overall charge of all the assigned squadrons. Again, an individual "unit" or "command" was commanded by "CAG" or Commander, Carrier Air Group. The term CAG remains in use even though the older term "Air Group" has been replaced by "Air Wing". Initially, Air Groups bore the names of their assigned ships, *i.e.* CHAG was Commander, Hornet Air Group; during World War II Carrier Air Groups were numbered, sometimes reflecting the hull number of the assigned carrier. Often there was a relationship between the numbers of the assigned squadrons and the air group numbers. Those attempts at numerical precision soon were abandoned. CAGs worked for the ships' commanding officers until the mid 1980s. Since then the Senior Air Wing Commander has been a more senior naval aviator (generally, a Captain) and more of an "equal" to the commanding officer of the carrier than a subordinate.

CAP duty: Combat Air Patrol duty. Aircraft assigned to defend against air attack, generally fighter aircraft (VF).

"Flew their flags on": Flag officers "break" their flags in their flag ships. Some ships are configured with additional space and equipment for an admiral's staff. When serving as the flag ship for the embarked admiral, the ship literally flies the admiral's personal flag from the yardarm. Admirals' flags display the same number of stars as his rank. For line officers the flag is a field of blue with white stars. Rear Admirals had two stars, Vice Admirals had three stars, Admirals four stars, and the Fleet Admiral had five stars. Commodores were one-star flag officers. The flag of only the senior flag officer was displayed. Thus, when both Admiral Halsey and his Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Carney, were in USS *New Jersey* (BB-62) only the four star flag was at the truck.

Gun Director: the part of the ship used to control the fire of one or more of the ship's guns. It generally consists of space for an officer and enlisted men to operate optical and electronic equipment and data links to control the ship's guns by providing data as to range, speed, angle, etc. increasing the accuracy of the guns.

Hull blisters: additions to the hull of the ship, generally placed on both the port and starboard side to widen the beam. Blisters added stability and protection as well as additional space to load liquids. They also affect the ship's stability and roll.

Laid down: construction begun, from the term "keel laying" when the keel or main first part of the ship is placed on the building ways. Often marked by a ceremonial keel laying and initialing of the steel.

Laid up: taken out of active service, decommissioned and placed in reserve status.

"Magic Carpet" fleet: these were U.S. ships used to transport veterans back to the continental United States for separation in 1945 and 1946. The press release announcing the creation of Operation Magic Carpet explains this in greater detail. See http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/NHC/MagicCarpet/mc_pr_451002.htm

Stood out: departed, sailed from.

Tombstone rear admiral: an officer who served as Captain and, upon retirement, was given the title but not the retired pay of a Rear Admiral, then the next highest grade, based upon combat awards. The practice was ended in the late 1950s.

In March 1942, CNO ordered three more cruisers at Camden, *Huntington*, *Dayton*, and *Fargo*, to be converted. The first two had been laid down in December 1941. *Fargo* had not even been laid down, and the Navy transferred her contract from Federal-Kearny⁷ to New York Shipbuilding.

Three months later, in June 1942, the final three small carriers of the *Independence*-class were ordered. *Wilmington*, laid down in March as a cruiser, and two other not yet begun, *Buffalo* (her contract also was transferred from Federal), and *Newark*, were to be converted as well. Three of the *Independence*-class ships were not true conversions, as they had already been ordered as carriers before the keel was laid. All of them were commissioned during 1943, beginning with *Independence* in January to *San Jacinto* and finally *Bataan* in November. The entire class was built by New York Shipbuilding.⁸

A 570' by 109'2" wooden flight deck was erected over the 622'6" hull. The initial plans called for a flush-decked carrier but the small island designed for the *Bogue*-class escort carriers was fitted well forward on the starboard side. Hull blisters were added to improve stability and displacement rose from 10,000 tons to 15,387. The ships had two centerline aircraft elevators and a single catapult (subsequently increased to a pair). They were armed with 20 and 40 mm anti-aircraft guns for defense although *Independence* underwent trials with two 5" guns which soon were replaced by two quadruple 40 mm mounts. Despite their modest air wings, the

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Independence-class carriers were capable of speeds in excess of 30 knots necessary to operate with the fast carrier forces. In fact, the escort carriers (CVEs) had nearly the same size air wings but were built on merchant hull designs or converted from tankers or other merchant ships and thus not capable of speeds in excess of 20 knots.⁹

Befitting the emergency nature of these conversions the *Independence*-class ships were sparse. The berthing was cramped and below the standards set for other carriers. Officers' staterooms did not have doors but curtains were used to reduce topside weight. Berthing was required for a complement of 1,569 officers and men, more than 10% greater than the crew of a light cruiser.

The Bureau of Aeronautics ("BuAir") set the air group at 31 planes — a dozen fighters, nine dive bombers, and nine torpedo bombers, plus one utility plane. In practice, the carriers often operated air groups completely composed of fighters; *Independence* operated night fighters exclusively for much of 1944. Typical operational complement in October 1944 was 34 planes, including 25 F6F fighters and 9 TBM torpedo planes.

All of these emergency carriers were destined for service in the Pacific Theater of Operations. The Pacific Fleet's primary offensive weapon was the Third Fleet or Fifth Fleet. The same ships comprised both fleets, the numerical distinction, which confused the Japanese, differentiated the fleet commanders: Third Fleet when Halsey was in command and Fifth Fleet during the tenure of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, a non-aviator. Halsey ordinarily flew his flag in USS *New Jersey* (BB-62) while Spruance's flag was flown in *Indianapolis* (CA-35)¹⁰ until she was damaged by a *kamikaze* on March 31, 1945. Neither fleet commander was embarked in the fast carriers but the commanders of TF 38 or TF 58 and their component Task Groups flew their flags in *Essex*-class carriers. The striking arm of the fleet was Task Force ("TF") 38 or 58, again the same ships with different designations depending on the fleet commander. TF 38 generally was commanded by Vice Admiral John S. McCain and TF 58 was commanded by Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, both distinguished naval aviators. The Task Forces consisted of four Task Groups ("TG"), each of which generally was comprised of four or five fast carriers, three or four fleet carriers (*Essex*-class or the pre-war carrier *Enterprise*) plus one or two *Independence*-class carriers. The Task Groups also were numerically designated (TG 38.1, 38.2, 38.3, and 38.4 or 58.1, 58.2, 58.3, and 58.4). Each Task Group was commanded by a naval aviator rear admiral and in addition to the fast carriers, generally contained two fast battleships, a mix of heavy cruisers and light cruisers, as well as destroyers. The fleets also contained Service Forces ships such as oilers, ammunition ships, escort carriers, destroyer escorts, tugs, rescue ships as well as Amphibious Forces designed to deliver Marines and supplies to assault the beachheads.

Eight of the sister ships survived the war; *Princeton* was sunk during the Battle of Leyte Gulf during late October 1944. *Independence* was used as a target ship at the Bikini atom bomb tests in the summer of 1946 and ultimately was sunk off the West Coast in 1951. Most of the other seven ships were laid up soon after World War II. Some were recommissioned for service during the Korean War with one serving in combat, and a total of three were transferred to France and Spain. Two additional light carriers were built at New York Shipbuilding based on modified *Baltimore*-class heavy cruiser hulls but not commissioned until after the end of hostilities. The *Independence*-class light carriers served valiantly and effectively during World War II but the inherent deficiencies and limitations in their design and capabilities left little room for modifications and improvements to handle larger and faster carrier aircraft, including jets.

USS INDEPENDENCE (CVL-22) (CV-22), 1943-1946

The fourth *Independence*,¹¹ begun as *Amsterdam* (CL-59), was launched as CV-22 on August 22, 1942. The ship was commissioned on January 14, 1943, with Captain G. B. Fairlamb, Jr., U.S. Navy, in command.

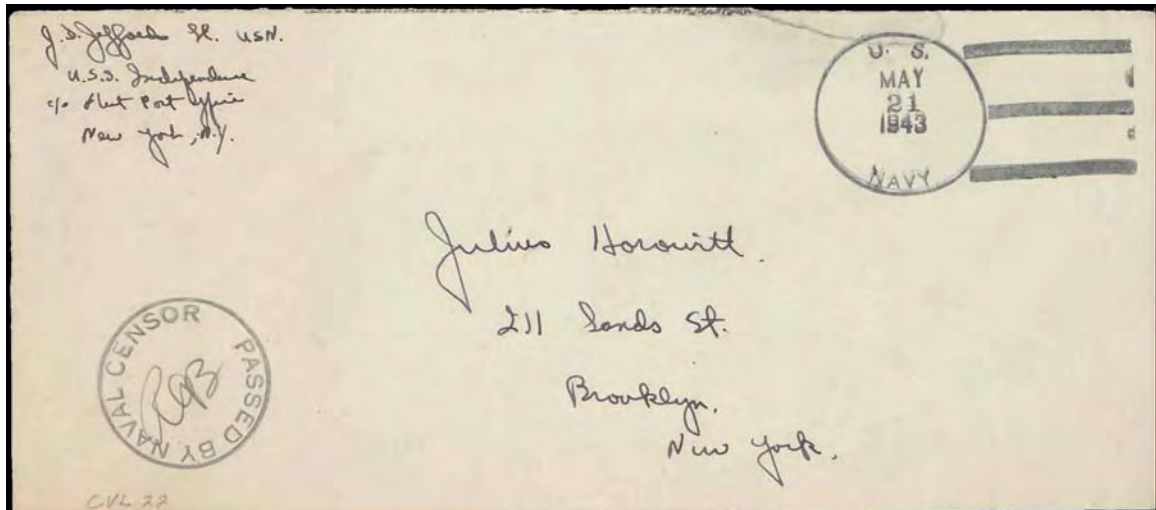


Fig. 18: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 3z (BTT)) postmark dated 21 May 1943 on a Number 10 unfranked cover with USS *Independence*'s return address at FPO New York handwritten by Lieutenant J. D. Jeffords, USN. The ship was undergoing shakedown cruise and training in the Atlantic soon after commissioning. The cover is addressed to a well-known naval tailor near the Brooklyn Navy Yard who was a collector of covers during the war. The cover bears a rubber stamp censor's mark in the lower left corner with the initials "RGB" written in black ink. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

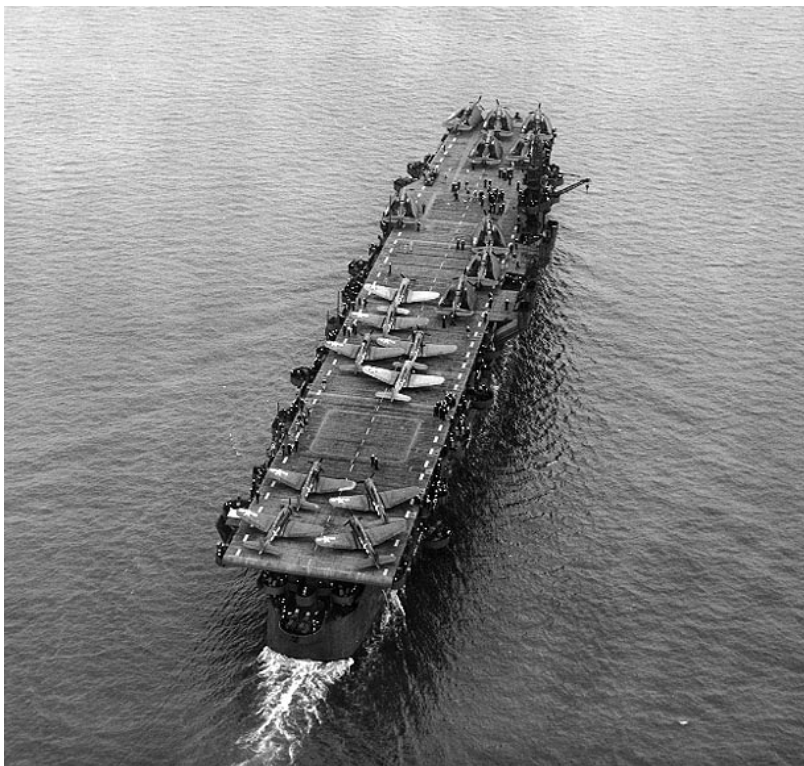


Fig. 19: In San Francisco Bay, CA, on 15 July 1943, the day the hull number on the USS *Independence* was changed from CV-22 to CVL-22. She has nine SBD scout bombers parked amidships and aft, and nine TBM torpedo planes parked amidships and forward.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
(Photo #: 80-G-74433)¹²

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The lead ship of the class, *Independence* conducted shakedown training in the Caribbean before steaming through the Panama Canal to join the Pacific Fleet. She arrived at San Francisco on July 3, 1943. *Independence* got underway for Pearl Harbor on July 14 to serve in the Pacific Theater of Operations, and the next day was redesignated as CVL-22.

Independence went to war with the finest naval fighter of World War II, the F6F Grumman Hellcat. Fighter Squadron SIX (VF-6) was commanded by the legendary Lieutenant Commander Edward H. "Butch" O'Hare¹³ who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions as a fighter pilot defending the first USS *Lexington* during the battle of Coral Sea. Also on board was another famous naval aviator Lt (JG) Alexander Vraciu, who brought down a record 19 enemy planes during the Marianas campaign. Commander O'Hare would only serve in *Independence* for less than a month before he was transferred to USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) as Commander Carrier Air Group SIX ("CAG 6") on September 17, 1943. Barely 70 days later, he was lost in action as one of naval aviation's pioneer night fighter pilots on November 26, 1943.

After two weeks of exercises, she sailed with the first two new larger fleet carriers *Essex* (CV-9) and *Yorktown* (CV-10) to raid Marcus Island. Aircraft from the carrier force struck on September 1, 1943 and destroyed over 70% of the island's installations. *Independence* began her next operation, a similar strike against Wake Island, on October 5-6, 1943.



Fig. 20: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 3z (BTT)) postmark dated 13 October 1943 on a Number 6 airmail cover franked with a 6 cent red airmail stamp and with USS *Independence*'s return address at FPO San Francisco, Calif. handwritten by a sailor in the Deck Department, 4th Division. The cover bears a rubber stamp censor's mark in the lower left corner with the initials "BR" written in black ink. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Independence next sailed from Pearl Harbor for Espiritu Santo (New Hebrides) on October 21. During an ensuing carrier attack on Rabaul (Papua New Guinea) on November 11, the ship's gunners scored their first kills—six Japanese planes shot down. After this operation the carrier refueled at Espiritu Santo and headed for the Gilberts and pre-invasion strikes on Tarawa (Gilbert Islands) on November 18-20, 1943. During a Japanese counterattack on November 20, *Independence* was attacked by a group of planes low on the water. Six were shot down, but the aircraft managed to launch at least five torpedoes, one of which struck the carrier's starboard quarter. Seriously damaged, the ship steamed to Funafuti (Ellice Islands) on November 23 for repairs. With the first step on the mid-Pacific road to Japan underway, *Independence* returned to San Francisco on January 2, 1944 for more permanent repairs.



Fig. 21: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 3z) postmark dated 25 June 1944 on a Number 10 cover free-franked with USS *Independence's* return address at FPO San Francisco, Calif., handwritten by a sailor in the upper left corner. The sailor was in the Air Department, V-2 Division. The cover bears a rubber stamp censor's mark in the lower left corner with the initials "WES" written in black ink. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

More than half a year later she returned to Pearl Harbor on July 3, 1944. During her repairs, the ship was fitted with an additional catapult, and upon arrival in Hawaiian waters, *Independence* began training for night carrier operations. She continued this pioneering work out of Eniwetok until August 24-29. The ship sailed with a large task group on August 29 to take part in the Palaus operation, aimed at securing bases for the final assault on the Philippines in October. *Independence* provided night reconnaissance and night combat air patrol.

In September the fast carrier task force regularly pounded the Philippines in preparation for the invasion. When no Japanese counterattacks developed, *Independence* shifted to regular daytime operations, striking targets on Luzon. Admiral Halsey had recommended to the Combined Chiefs of Staff a major acceleration of the offensive because of the lack of Japanese defenses. Perhaps this was his greatest strategic contribution of the war.

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After replenishment at Ulithi (Caroline Islands) in early October, the force sortied on October 6 for Okinawa. The carriers struck Okinawa, Formosa, and Philippines. Japanese air counterattacks were repulsed, with *Independence* providing day strike groups in addition to night fighters and reconnaissance aircraft.

During the liberation of the Philippines, as the carrier groups steamed east of the archipelago on October 23, it became apparent, as Halsey's Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Robert B. Carney, a future CNO, later recalled, that "something on a grand scale was underfoot."¹⁴ The Japanese fleet moved in a three-pronged effort to turn back the American beachhead on Leyte Gulf. Planes from *Independence's* Task Group 38.2, under Rear Admiral Bogan, spotted Kurita's striking force in the Sibuyan Sea on October 24 and the carriers launched a series of attacks. Planes from *Independence* and other ships sank giant battleship *Musashi* and disabled a cruiser.

That evening, Admiral Halsey made the long-questioned decision to turn Task Force 38 northward in search of Admiral Ozawa's carrier group. *Independence's* night search planes located and shadowed the Japanese ships until dawn October 25, when Third Fleet carriers launched an attack. In this second part of the Battle for Leyte Gulf, all four Japanese carriers were sunk. Meanwhile American heavy ships had won a resounding victory in Suriago Strait; and an escort carrier force had outfought the remainder of Kurita's ships in the Battle off Samar. After the battle, which virtually spelled the end of the Japanese Navy as a major threat, *Independence* continued to provide search planes and night fighter protection for Task Force 38 in strikes on the Philippines.

Independence returned to Ulithi for rest and replenishment from November 9 to 14, but soon got underway to operate off the Philippines on night attacks and defensive operations. This phase continued until December 30, 1944, when the task force sortied from Ulithi once more and moved northward. From January 3 to 9, 1945 the carriers supported the Lingayen landings on Luzon in the Philippines, after which Halsey took Third Fleet into the South China Sea. Aircraft struck at air bases on Formosa and on the coasts of Indo China and China. These operations in support of the Philippines campaign marked the end of the carrier's night operations, and she sailed on January 30, 1945 for repairs at Pearl Harbor.

Six weeks later, *Independence* returned to Ulithi on March 13, 1945 and got underway next day for operations against Okinawa, the last target in the Pacific before Japan. She carried out pre-invasion strikes on March 30-31, and after the assault on April 1, remained off the island supplying Combat Air Patrol and strike aircraft. Her planes shot down numerous enemy planes attacking the invasion force. *Independence* remained off Okinawa until June 10 when she sailed for Leyte.

During July and August the carrier took part in the final carrier strikes against Japan. After the end of hostilities on August 15, 1945, *Independence's* aircraft continued surveillance flights over the mainland locating prisoner of war camps, and covered the landings of Allied occupation troops. The ship departed Tokyo September 22, 1945, arriving San Francisco via Saipan and Guam on October 31, 1945.

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Fig. 22: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 9#) cancel dated July 26, 1945 on the reverse of a Number 10 penalty cover used for official registered mail. During this time, *Independence* was part of Third Fleet conducting the final air strikes off Japan. The cancel was in red ink, a double circle registry stamp with the ship's branch number instead of her name; it is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog. The cover also bears a rubber stamp (Locy Type 9efu) cancel from USS *Escalante* (AO-70) dated July 31, 1945 in the center of the flap. That cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog. The Fleet Oiler had fueled ships at the invasion of Western Europe at Normandy and then supported Third Fleet and Fifth Fleet Operations off Luzon, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Japanese home islands in 1944 and 1945. She also fueled ships at Tokyo Bay between September 26 and October 20, 1945 during the initial days of the Occupation of Japan.

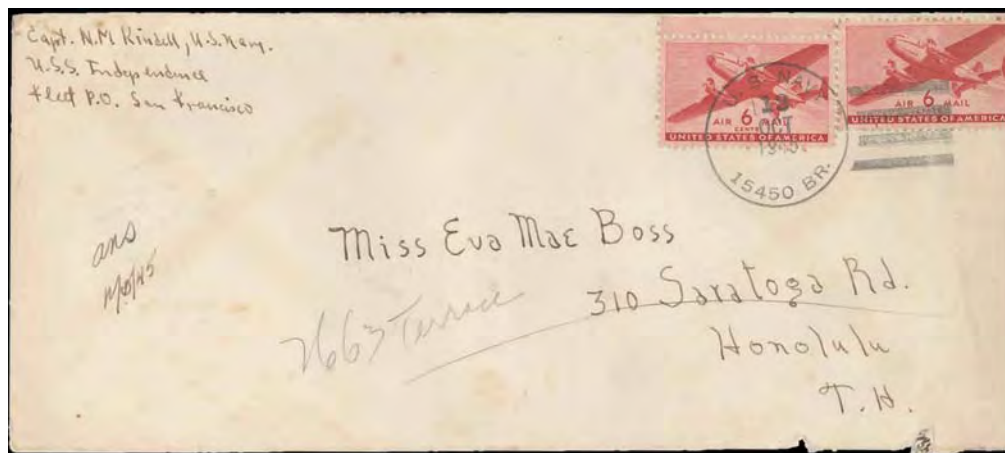


Fig. 23: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 2#) postmark dated 13 October 1945 on a Number 10 airmail cover with two six cent red air mail stamps. During this time *Independence* was part of Operation Magic Carpet, returning veterans to the continental United States. The cover is not censored. The postmark was in black ink, with the ship's branch number instead of her name; it is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog. The cover is addressed in hand by the last commanding officer of *Independence*, Captain N. M. Kindell, U.S. Navy, who ultimately retired as a flag officer.¹⁵

Independence joined the "Magic-Carpet" fleet¹⁶ on November 15, 1945, transporting veterans back to the United States until arriving San Francisco once more on January 28, 1946.

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Fig. 24: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 2(n)) postmark dated Navy Day, October 27, 1945 on a Number 6 cover franked with the one cent green Four Freedoms stamp and the two cent red FDR memorial stamp. Navy Day 1945 marked the first official use of ship's name cancels for non-registered mail since December 7, 1941 in the Pacific and earlier 1941 in the Atlantic. At this time Independence was at Portland, Oregon. The cover bears a rubber stamp cachet in blue ink on the left face and is addressed to a collector in Louisville. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog. The ship was completing its Operation Magic Carpet duties.

Assigned as a target vessel for the Bikini atomic bomb tests, she was placed within one-half mile of ground zero for the July 1, 1946 above-surface detonation. The ship did not sink, however, and after taking part in another test on July 25, 1946 was taken to Kwajalein (Marshall Islands) and decommissioned on August 28, 1946. The radioactive hulk was later returned to Pearl Harbor and then San Francisco for further tests. *Independence* was finally sunk in weapons tests off the coast of California on January 29, 1951. *Independence* received eight battle stars for World War II service.



Fig. 25: USS Independence, afire aft, soon after the "Able Day" atomic bomb air burst test at Bikini on 1 July 1946. The bomb had exploded off the ship's port quarter, causing massive blast damage in that area, and progressively less further forward.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives. (Photo #: 80-G-627502)

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Fig. 26: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 2(n)) postmark dated June 30, 1946 on a Number 6 cover franked with the three cent purple "Win the War" stamp. At this time Independence was at Bikini Atoll where, the next month, she would be one of the prime target ships in major above-ground nuclear tests. She was badly damaged by the July 1, 1946 air burst and further contaminated by radioactivity in the July 25th underwater test. Formally decommissioned in August 1946, she was later used as a radiological research hulk. The cover bears a single straight line rubber stamp in black ink and is addressed to a well known collector who was serving on board an amphibious transport, USS Rockwall (APA-230), a support ship for Operation Crossroads, the nuclear tests. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 27:
"The Independence in Tow"
 Watercolor, 1946 by
 Arthur Beaumont¹⁷

A battered *Independence*, after the first a-bomb test being towed to shallower water in preparation for test Baker. She survived that second test, was eventually towed to California for study, and later scuttled in 1951.

USS *PRINCETON* (CV-23) (CVL-23) 1943-1944

The fourth *Princeton*¹⁸ was laid down as *Tallahassee* (CL-61) on June 2, 1941; reclassified CV-23 on February 16, 1942; renamed *Princeton* on March 31, 1942; launched on October 18, 1942, she was commissioned at Philadelphia February 25, 1943, with Capt. George R. Henderson, U.S. Navy in command.

Fig. 28: Launch of the USS *Princeton*, at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation shipyard, Camden, New Jersey, on 18 October 1942.

*Photograph from the Bureau of Ships Collection in the U.S. National Archives.
(Photo #: 19-N-46451)*



Following shakedown in the Caribbean and reclassification to CVL-23 on July 15, 1943, *Princeton*, with Air Group 23 embarked, got underway for the Pacific. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on August 9, she sortied with Task Force 11 on the 25th headed for Baker Island. There she served as flagship, Task Group 11.2, and provided air cover during the occupation of the island and the construction of an airfield there between September 1 and 14, 1943. During that time her planes downed Japanese *Emily* reconnaissance planes and, more importantly, furnished the fleet with photographs of them.

After completing that mission, *Princeton* rendezvoused with TF 15, conducted strikes against enemy installations on Makin and Tarawa, and then headed back to Pearl Harbor. In mid-October 1943, she sailed for Espiritu Santo where she joined TF 38 on the 20th. She launched her planes against airfields at Buka and Bonis on Bougainville (November 1-2) to suppress Japanese aerial resistance during the landings at Empress Augusta Bay. On the 5th and 11th her planes raided Rabaul and on the 19th, with TF 50, they helped neutralize the airfield at Nauru. *Princeton* then steamed northeast, covered the garrison groups en route to Makin and Tarawa and, after exchanging operational aircraft for damaged planes from other carriers, got underway for Pearl Harbor and the West Coast.

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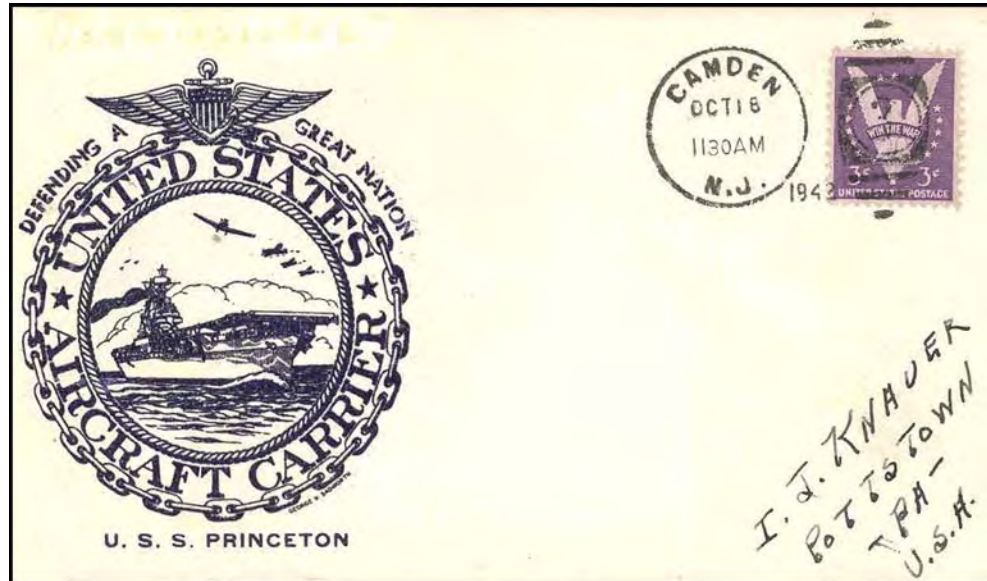


Fig. 29: The launch cover for USS Princeton (CV-23) postmarked at Camden, NJ on October 18, 1942 with a steel hand cancel device. The cover bears a printed cachet on the left face sponsored by George V. Sadworth, whose name appears in the lower left under the outer ring of anchor chain under the first part of the word "Carrier." The ship illustrated inside the concentric circles is not an Independence-class small carrier but probably is a Yorktown-class carrier. The erroneous handwritten ink annotation "Commissioned" at the top left of the cover – visible only in the electronic version of this article - has been eradicated. It is franked with a purple three cent "Win the War" stamp.



Fig. 30: USS Princeton underway in the Delaware River, off the Philadelphia Navy Yard, Pennsylvania, March 28, 1943.

*Photograph from the Bureau of Ships Collection in the U.S. National Archives.
(Photo #: 19-N-42904)*

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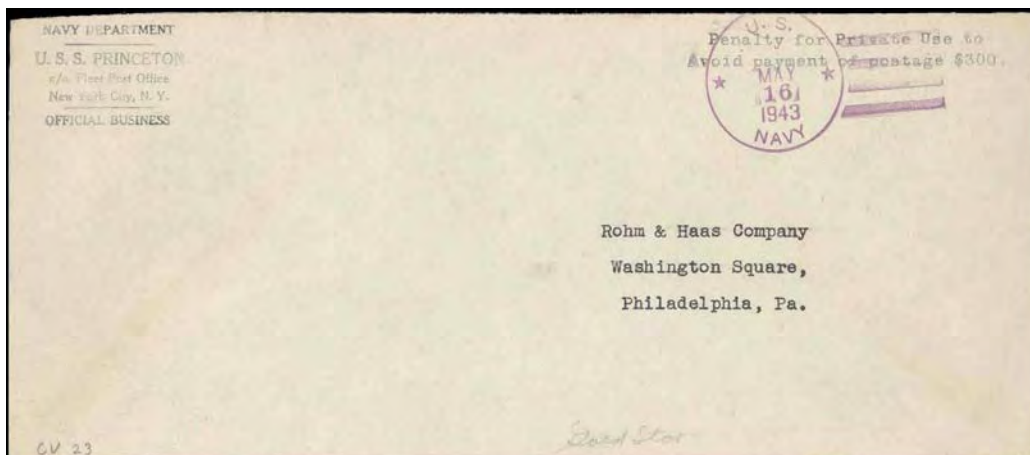


Fig. 31: A number 10 penalty envelope with a rubber stamp return address for USS Princeton C/o Fleet Post Office, New York. The cover is postmarked on May 16, 1943 with the (Locy Type 2z*) postmark in red over the rubber stamp franking. The cover is not censored and is addressed to a government contractor. The post office was established in Princeton one month before on April 15, 1943. The ship still was operating in the Atlantic Ocean undergoing shakedown cruise and initial training for the crew and air wing. The postmark is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 32: An airmail envelope franked with a six cent red airmail stamp and a handwritten return address for USS Princeton C/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco. The cover is postmarked on August 25, 1943 with the (Locy Type 2z*) postmark in black ink. The cover is censored in the lower left corner and is addressed to a collector. The postmark is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog.

Repairs at Bremerton followed and on January 3, 1944, *Princeton* steamed west again. At Pearl Harbor, she rejoined the fast carriers, now designated TF 58. On the 19th, she sortied with TG 58.4 for strikes at Wotje and Taroa (January 29-31) to support amphibious operations against Kwajalein and Majuro (Marshall Islands). Her planes photographed the next assault target, Eniwetok (a western outpost of the Marshalls) on February 2, and on the 3rd, they helped destroy the airfield on Engebi. For three days the atoll was bombed and strafed. On the 7th, *Princeton* retired to Kwajalein, returning to Eniwetok on the 10th-13th and 16th-28th, where her planes softened the beaches for the invasion force, then provided air cover during the assault and ensuing landings.

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From Eniwetok, *Princeton* retired to Majuro, before steaming to Espiritu Santo for replenishment. On March 23, 1944, she got underway for strikes against enemy installation and shipping in the Carolines. After striking the Palaus, Woleai, and Yap, the force replenished at Majuro and sortied again on April 13th. Steaming to New Guinea, the carriers provided air cover for the Hollandia operation (April 21-29), then crossed back over the International Date Line to raid Truk (April 29) and Ponape (May 1).



Fig. 33: A number 6 embossed stamped airmail envelope with a handwritten return address for USS *Princeton* C/o FPO San Francisco. It was sent by a sailor in the Deck Department, 2nd Division. The cover was cancelled on May 22, 1944 with the (Locy Type 2z) postmark in black ink over the orange six cent airmail franking. The cover is censored in the lower left with perhaps initials "RDS" in black ink inside the double ring blue rubber stamp and is addressed probably to an individual at a government contractor. The postmark is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog.

On May 11, 1944, *Princeton* returned to Pearl Harbor, departing on the 29th for Majuro. There she rejoined the fast carriers headed toward the Marianas to support the assault on Saipan. From June 11 to 18, she sent her planes against targets on Guam, Rota, Tinian, Pagan, and Saipan, then steamed west to intercept a Japanese fleet reported to be en route from the Philippines to the Marianas. In the ensuing Battle of the Philippine Sea, *Princeton's* planes contributed 30 kills and her guns another three, plus one assist.

Returning to the Marianas, *Princeton* again struck Pagan, Rota, and Guam, then replenished at Eniwetok. On July 14, 1944, she got underway again as the fast carriers returned to the Marianas to furnish air cover for the capture of Guam and Tinian. On August 2, the force returned to Eniwetok, replenished, then sailed for the Philippines. En route, its planes raided the Palaus, then on September 9-10, struck airfields on northern Mindanao. On the 11th, they pounded the Visayas. At mid-month the force moved back to support the Palau offensive, then returned to the Philippines to hit Luzon, concentrating on Clark and Nichols fields. The force then retired to Ulithi, and in early October, bombed and strafed enemy airfields, installations, and shipping in the Nansei Shoto and Formosa area in preparation for the invasion of the Philippines.

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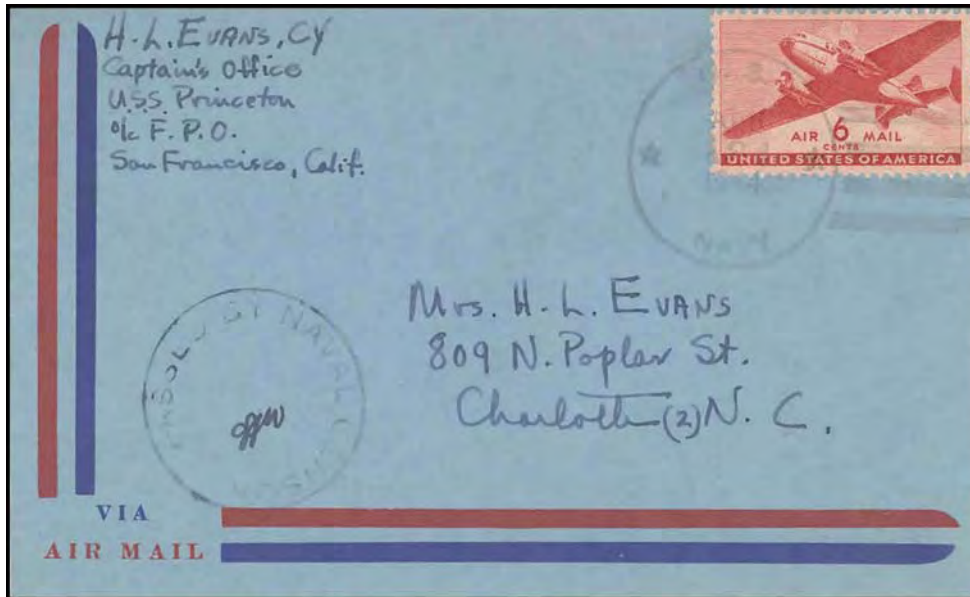


Fig. 34: A number 6 blue envelope with blue and red airmail borders and a handwritten return address for USS Princeton C/o FPO San Francisco sent by Chief Yeoman H. L. Evans, U.S. Navy. The cover most likely was cancelled on Aug. 24, 1944 with the (Locy Type 2z*) postmark in black ink over the red six cent airmail stamp. It is difficult to read the month in the cancellation and while the three letters might suggest October 24, 1944, the date of her sinking, it is highly improbable that any mail was postmarked on board that day. The cover is censored in the lower left with tiny initials in black ink, perhaps "JJW" inside the double ring black rubber stamp and is addressed probably to Chief Evans's wife or mother in Charlotte, North Carolina. The postmark is rated "C" or scarce in the Postmark Catalog.

On October 20, 1944, landings were made at Dulag and San Pedro Bay, Leyte. *Princeton*, in TG 38.3, cruised off Luzon and sent her planes against airfields there to prevent Japanese land-based aircraft attacks on Allied ships massed in Leyte Gulf. Enemy planes from Clark and Nichols fields found TG 38.3 and attacked. Shortly before 10:00 AM on October 24, 1944, a lone enemy dive-bomber came out of the clouds above *Princeton*. At 1,500 feet the pilot released a single bomb. It hit between the elevators, penetrated the flight deck and hangar, then exploded. Initial fires soon expanded as further explosions sent black smoke rolling off the flight deck and red flames along the sides from the island to the stern. Covering vessels provided rescue and fire-fighting assistance and shielded the stricken carrier from further attack. At 3:24 PM, another much heavier explosion, possibly the bomb magazine or torpedoes, blew off the carrier's stern and the after flight deck. USS *Birmingham* (CL-62), alongside to fight fires, suffered heavy damage and hundreds of casualties.

Efforts to save *Princeton* continued for half an hour, but by 4:04 PM, the fires had prevailed. Boats were requested to take off remaining personnel and shortly after 5:06 PM, USS *Irwin* (DD-794) began to fire torpedoes at the burning hulk. At 5:46 PM, USS *Reno* (CL-96) relieved *Irwin* and at 5:49 PM the last, and biggest, explosion occurred. Flames and debris shot up 1,000 to 2,000 feet. *Princeton's* forward section was gone. Her after section appeared momentarily through the smoke. By 5:50 PM she had disappeared, but 1,361 of her crew survived. Capt. John M. Hoskins, prospective commanding officer of CVL-23, lost his right foot but would become the first commanding officer of the fifth *Princeton* (CV-37). Losses and

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damage to assisting vessels were heavy — *Birmingham*: 85 killed 300 wounded, a heavily damaged topside, and loss of two 5" guns, two 40 mm and two 20 mm guns; *USS Morrison* (DD-560): foremast lost, portside smashed; *Irwin*: forward 5" mounts and director out, starboard side smashed; and *Reno*: one 40 mm smashed. *Princeton* earned nine battle stars during World War II. She was the only small carrier lost during the war and the only U.S. Navy fast carrier sunk after Guadalcanal.

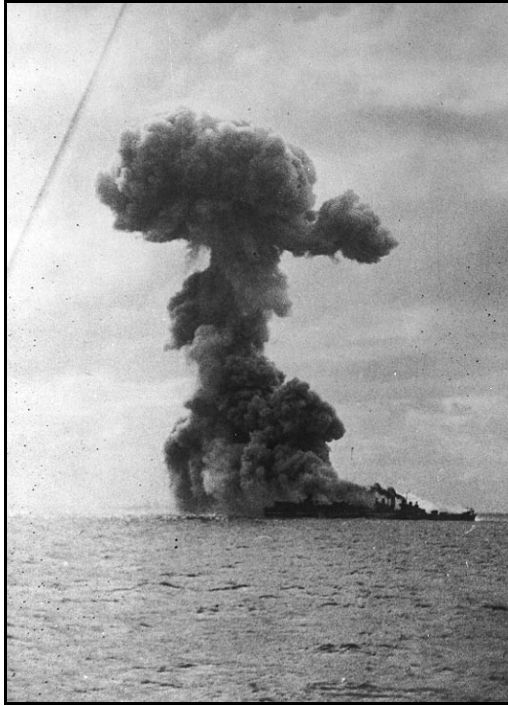
LOSS OF USS PRINCETON: OCTOBER 24, 1944

Fig. 35: Heavy explosion aft on USS Princeton (CVL-23), with USS Birmingham (CL-62) alongside.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (Photo # 80-G-281663-3).



Fig. 36: USS Reno (CL-96) stands off the starboard quarter of USS Princeton (CVL-23), while fighting fires on board the bombed carrier.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center (Photo # NH 63439).



Fig. 37: USS Princeton survivors jumping from a motor whaleboat to swim to USS Cassin Young (DD-793), October 24, 1944.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (Photo # 80-G-281662-6).

USS *BELLEAU WOOD* (CV-24) (CVL-24) 1943-1947

The *Cleveland*-class light cruiser, *New Haven* (CL-76) was reclassified CV-24 and renamed *Belleau Wood* on February 16, 1942. *Belleau Wood*¹⁹ was launched on December 6, 1942; commissioned on March 31, 1943, Captain A. M. Pride, U.S. Navy in command. She became CVL-24 on July 15, 1943, after commissioning when the hull designations were changed for the class.

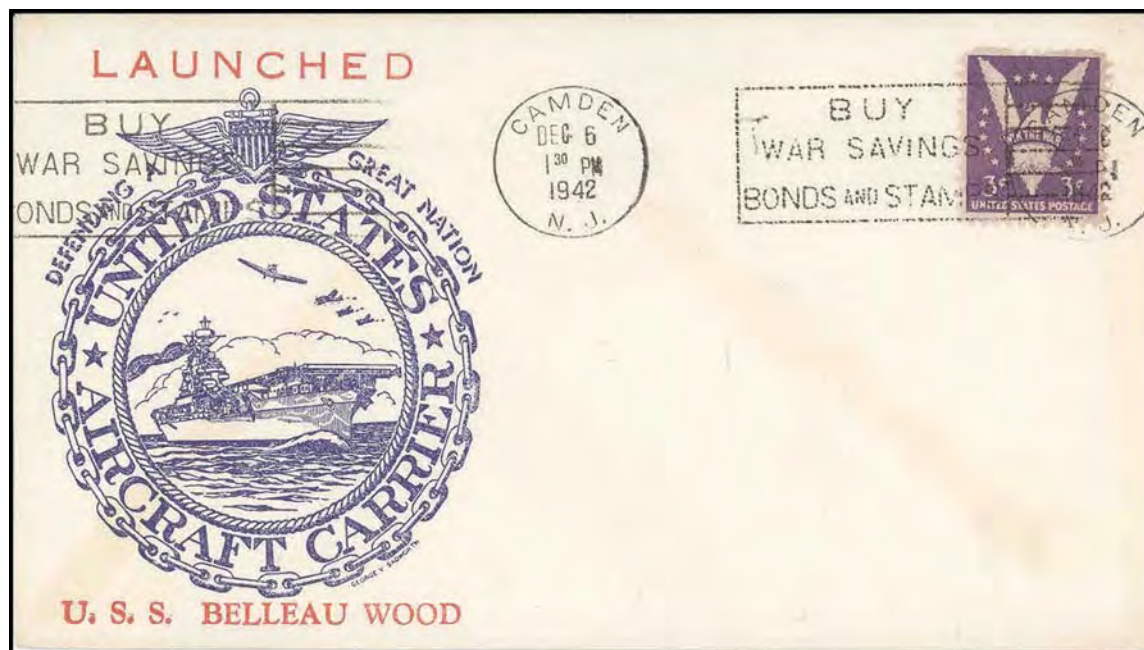


Fig. 38: The launch cover for USS *Belleau Wood* (CV-24) postmarked at Camden, NJ on December 6, 1942 with a steel machine cancel device, which was struck twice. The cover bears a printed cachet on the left face sponsored by George V. Sadworth, whose name appears in the lower left under the outer ring of anchor chain under the first part of the word "Carrier." The cachet is printed in blue and the wording added in red ink. The ship illustrated inside the concentric circles is not an Independence-class small carrier but probably is a Yorktown-class carrier. It is franked with a purple three cent "Win the War" stamp.

After a brief shakedown cruise *Belleau Wood* reported to the Pacific Fleet, arriving at Pearl Harbor on July 26, 1943. She supported the occupation of Baker Island (September 1) and taking part in the Tarawa (September 18) and Wake Island raids (October 5-6), she joined TF 50 for the invasion of the Gilbert Islands (November 19- December 4, 1943).

Belleau Wood operated with TF 58 during the seizure of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls, Marshall Islands (January 29- February 3, 1944), Truk raid (February 16-17); Saipan-Tinian-Rota-Guam raids (February 21-22); Palau-Yap-Ulithi-Woleai raid (March 30-April 1); Sawar and Wakde Island raids in support of the landings at Hollandia, New Guinea (April 22-24); Truk-Satawan-Ponape raid (April 29-May 1); occupation of Saipan (June 11-24), First Bonins raid (June 15-16), Battle of the Philippine Sea (June 19-20); and Second Bonins raid (June 24). During the Battle of the Philippine Sea, *Belleau Wood's* planes sank the Japanese carrier *Hiyo*.

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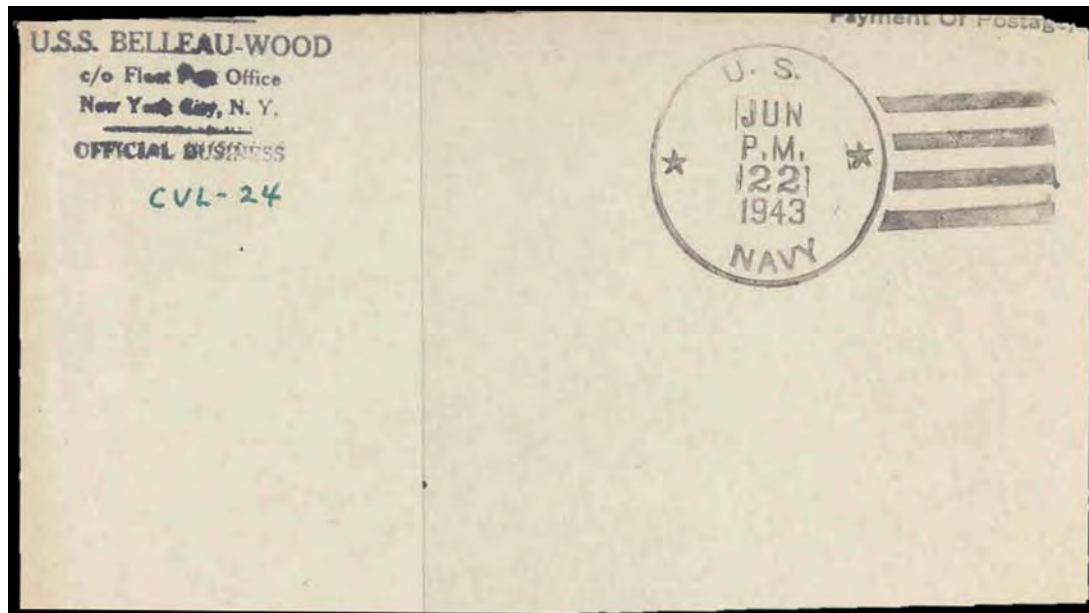


Fig. 39: A cut-down free franked cover with a rubber stamp address for USS Belleau Wood C/o Fleet Post Office New York. The cover is postmarked on June 22, 1943 with the (Locy Type 2z) postmark in black ink. The postmark is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.*



Fig. 40: USS Belleau Wood (CVL-24) underway on December 22, 1943.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center [Photo #: NH 97269]

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Fig. 41: A number 6 envelope franked with a six cent red airmail stamp and a handwritten return address for USS Belleau Wood C/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco. The cover is postmarked on May 29, 1944 with the (Locy Type 2z*) postmark in black ink. The cover is censored in the lower left face. The postmark is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

After a month long overhaul at Pearl Harbor (June 29-July 31, 1944), *Belleau Wood* rejoined TF 58 for the last stages of the occupation of Guam (August 2-10). She joined TF 38 and took part in the strikes in support of the occupation of the southern Palau (September 6-October 14); Philippine Islands raids (September 9-24); Morotai landings (September 15); Okinawa raid (October 10); northern Luzon and Formosa raids (October 11-14); Luzon strikes (October 15, 17-19), and the Battle of Cape Engaño (October 24-26). On October 30, 1944, while *Belleau Wood* was patrolling with her task group east of Leyte, she shot down a Japanese suicide plane which crashed on her flight deck aft causing fires which set off ammunition. Before the conflagration could be controlled 92 men were killed or missing.



Fig. 42: USS Belleau Wood (CVL-24), burning aft after she was hit by a Kamikaze, while operating off the Philippines on 30 October 1944. Flight deck crewmen are moving undamaged TBM torpedo planes away from the flames as others fight the fires. USS Franklin (CV-13), also hit during this Kamikaze attack, is afire in the distance.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (Photo #: 80-G-342020)

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After temporary repairs at Ulithi (November 2-11), *Belleau Wood* steamed to Hunter's Point, Calif., for permanent repairs and an overhaul, arriving November 29, 1944. She departed San Francisco Bay two months later on January 20, 1945 and joined TF 58 at Ulithi on February 7, 1945. Between February 15 and March 4 she took part in the raids on Honshu Island, Japan, and the Nansei Shoto, as well as supporting the landings on Iwo Jima. She also took part in the Fifth Fleet strikes against Japan (March 17-May 26) and the Third Fleet strikes (May 27-June 11). After embarking a new air group at Leyte (June 13-July 1), she rejoined the Third Fleet for the final strikes against the Japanese home islands (July 10-August 15).

Belleau Wood launched her planes on September 2, 1945 for the mass flight over Tokyo, Japan, during the surrender ceremonies. She remained in Japanese waters until October 13, 1945. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on October 28, she departed three days later with 1,248 servicemen for San Diego. She remained on "Magic Carpet" duty, returning servicemen from Guam and Saipan to San Diego, until January 31, 1946.

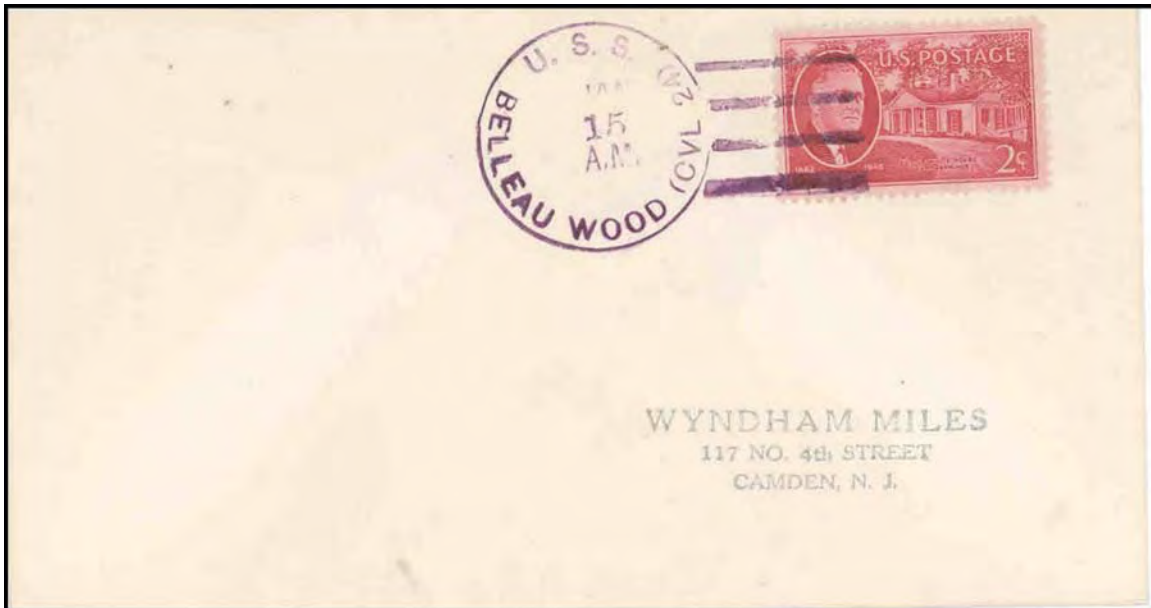


Fig. 43: A rubber stamp (Locy Type 2(n)) postmark dated January 15, [1946] on a Number 6 cover franked with the two cent red FDR stamp. The postmark is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog. Belleau Wood's post office was disestablished on February 14, 1946.

During the next year *Belleau Wood* was moored into the San Francisco area undergoing inactivation. She was placed out of commission at Alameda Naval Air Station on January 13, 1947. She remained in reserve until transferred to France on September 5, 1953 under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program. Under the name *Bois Belleau*, the ship served with the French Navy until 1960 when she was returned to the United States. She was stricken from the Navy list on October 1, 1960 and sold for scrapping. *Belleau Wood* received the Presidential Unit Citation and twelve battle stars during World War II.

[This series on New Jersey-built fast aircraft carriers will be continued in the following issues of NJPH.]

ENDNOTES:

Photo credits: the many nice photographs of carriers are available online at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/> and [at somewhat slower speed] at <http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html> -- both excellent sources of photos available for download.

- ¹ Fortuitously, none of the seven operational aircraft carriers were in port at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.
- ² Between May and November 1942 the United States Navy lost four of its seven fast carriers in combat. USS *Lexington* (CV-2) was sunk at the Battle of Coral Sea; *Yorktown* (CV-5) was sunk at the Battle of Midway; *Wasp* (CV-8) and *Hornet* (CV-7) were sunk off Guadalcanal. USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) and *Saratoga* (CV-3), the two remaining carriers in the Pacific that year, both suffered heavy damage.
- ³ The designations light cruiser and heavy cruiser were predicated on the size of the main armament of the ships, not the hull dimensions or displacement. Ships with a main battery containing guns of 6.1" or greater were heavy cruisers while those with main battery guns of 6.0" or less were light cruisers. Most cruisers were capable of fleet speed, generally in excess of 32 knots.
- ⁴ The Chief of Naval Operations, the senior admiral in the Navy, is referred to as CNO. Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy was appointed Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet ("CINCUS") on December 31, 1941 and he relieved Admiral Harold E. Stark, U.S. Navy as CNO on March 18, 1942. King remained CNO and CINCUS throughout World War II and retired as the second senior of four Fleet Admirals in December 1945.
- ⁵ The emergency carriers were "small" compared to *Essex*-class and even earlier *Yorktown*-class fleet carriers. The length of the flight decks of the small carriers was more than 250 feet shorter and their full load displacements less than half that of the *Essex*-class; their air wings were one-third the size of the fleet carriers.
- ⁶ King, Fleet Admiral Ernest J., U.S.N., *U.S. Navy At War 1941-1945 Official Reports*, (Navy Department, Washington, 1946).
- ⁷ Federal-Kearny, a shipbuilding yard at Kearny, New Jersey, near Newark, was the builder of many destroyers during World War II.
- ⁸ Until the construction of the *Nimitz*-class nuclear carriers (1967-date) no other shipyard has been entrusted with the construction of an entire multiple hull class of aircraft carriers since Newport News built the *Yorktown*-class before World War II.
- ⁹ The escort carriers (CVEs) served extensively as anti-submarine warfare ships in the Battle of the Atlantic, destroying U-boats in the mid-Atlantic gap, the last U-boat sanctuary. They also served in support of amphibious operations, escorted service force ships (oilers, ammunition ships, *etc.*), and ferried replacement aircraft to the fast carriers and Marine squadrons ashore. During the Battle of Leyte Gulf a small group of escort carriers and destroyer escorts (DEs) attached to the Seventh Fleet were able to defeat a superior Japanese surface force, without air support, that nearly reached the unloading amphibious forces while Third Fleet chased north after the Japanese "decoy" carriers.
- ¹⁰ USS *Indianapolis* is better known for her tragic sinking, the last major combatant ship to be sunk during World War II. When sailing alone to rejoin Third Fleet after repairs and delivery of the components of the first nuclear bomb to Tinian, she was torpedoed by a single Japanese submarine, *I-58*. Because the shore-side administrative staff failed to note that she was overdue, many of her survivors were lost in shark infested waters of the Philippine Sea in mid-August 1945. Her commanding officer, Captain Charles B. McVay, III, USN, was court-martialed and convicted on the testimony of the commanding officer of the Japanese submarine. McVay retired as a tombstone rear admiral after the war notwithstanding that conviction.
- ¹¹
 - The first *Independence* was a 10-gun sloop that served during the War of Independence.
 - The second USS *Independence*, first ship-of-the-line commissioned in the U.S. Navy, was launched on June 22, 1814 in the Boston Navy Yard. She immediately took on guns and was stationed with frigate *Constitution* to protect the approaches to Boston Harbor. Wearing the broad pennant of Commodore William Bainbridge, and under command of Captain William Crane, she led her squadron from Boston 3 July 1815 to deal with piratical acts of the Barbary Powers against American merchant commerce. In 1836, the frigate was the pride of the "old white navy", and she was cut down to three decks, and the guns reduced from seventy-four to fifty-four. In 1846, commanded by Commodore Shubrick, *Independence* paid her first visit to California, having come around the horn to harass the enemy coast, during the Mexican War. Returning to the east coast, the frigate became the flagship of the European squadron. She returned to the West Coast eight years later and was at Mare

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Island until she was decommissioned in 1912. The night of September 20, 1919, *Independence* was burned on the Hunter's Point mud flats to recover her metal fittings. The veteran of the days of wooden ships had survived more than a century, 98 years of which were spent serving the U.S. Navy.

- The third USS *Independence*, a 7,898 gross ton freighter, was built at San Francisco, California, in 1918. She was taken over by the Navy soon after completion and placed in commission as USS *Independence* (ID # 3676) in mid-November 1918, a few days after the Armistice had ended World War I combat action. In January 1919 the ship made one voyage to England, with a cargo of food. She was decommissioned in March 1919 and returned to the United States Shipping Board. Extensively rebuilt in about 1930, she was the merchant ship City of Norfolk until 1940, when the Navy again acquired her. Converted to a transport, she served until 1946 as USS *Neville* (AP-16, later APA-9).
- The fourth USS *Independence* is the subject of this article.
- The fifth USS *Independence* (CVA-62 CV-62) was the fourth and final Forrestal class carrier. She was built at the New York Naval Shipyard, Brooklyn, New York and commissioned on June 6, 1958. She served primarily with the Atlantic Fleet, making numerous deployments to the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. She made a combat cruise to Vietnam in 1965, the first Atlantic Fleet carrier to serve with the Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin. In 1983 she participated in the liberation of Grenada and undertook air strikes in Lebanon. Her senior aviator, Commander, Air Wing SIX, CDR E. K. Andrews, U.S. Navy, was shot down by a shoulder-held missile and recovered at sea. She underwent a Service Life Extension at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in the 1980s. Between 1991 and 1998 she was home ported in Japan, the second U.S. Navy carrier to be based at Yokosuka. She was decommissioned after more than 39 years of service.
- The sixth *Independence* is a prototype Littoral Control Ship (LCS-2). The tri-hull ship is being constructed by General Dynamics at Mobile, Alabama. She was launched on October 5, 2008.

¹² This and other Navy photos are available online at <http://www.navsourc.org/archives/> and [at somewhat slower speed] at <http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html> -- both excellent sources of photos available for download.

¹³ O'Hare Field in Chicago was named in his memory.

¹⁴ Karig, Walter, *Battle Report – the End of an Empire*, p. 368 (Rinehart and Company, Inc., New York, 1948).

¹⁵ See, Brennan, Captain Lawrence B., U.S.N. (Ret.) "FROM THE STARBOARD DELTA: USS *INDEPENDENCE* (CVL-22) Her Last Commanding Officer and the 'Blue Flash'", *Universal Ship Cancellation Society Log*, October 2008, Vol. 75, No. 10, Whole No. 899, pp 20-22.

¹⁶ Operation "Magic Carpet" was Navy's world-wide movement of millions of service members back to the continental United States for demobilization from September 1945 through 1946. There is a dearth of published material on this important effort to return veterans to civilian status. A recent data sheet on the subject, published by the Universal Ship Cancellation Society, was prepared by Stewart B. Milstein. See www.uscs.org.

¹⁷ Navy Art available at <http://www.history.navy.mil/ac/bikini/88169d.jpg> [November 12, 2008].

¹⁸ • The first vessel named *Princeton* was a sloop of war, commissioned in 1843. She was the first Navy vessel to be powered by a steam-driven screw. On February, 28, 1844, while demonstrating a new type of cannon to the President and numerous dignitaries, ten people were killed when the cannon burst. Among the casualties were the Secretary of State and two senators. The ship was decommissioned in 1849.

- The second *Princeton* was an armed transport and training ship, commissioned in 1852 and in service until 1866.
- The third vessel named for the Battle of Princeton was a composite gunboat which was commissioned in 1898. She served in the Far East and off Nicaragua, and was decommissioned in 1919.
- The fourth *Princeton* (CV-23) (CVL-23) is the subject of this article.
- The fifth *Princeton* was an Essex-class carrier, CV 37. The ship was already in construction when CVL 23 was sunk, and the name *Princeton* was given to the new replacement. Commissioned just after the end of World War II in 1945, she was reclassified in 1950 as an attack carrier, CVA 37. The ship earned the Navy Unit Commendation and eight battle stars during the Korean War. In 1954, she was reclassified as an amphibious assault ship, LPH 5. She served off the coast of Vietnam conducting support missions for the U. S. Marines, which earned her a Meritorious Unit Commendation. She was also the primary recovery ship for APOLLO TEN. She was decommissioned in 1970.
- The sixth *Princeton* (CG-59) was commissioned in 1989 in Pascagoula, MS and has completed three deployments to the Arabian Gulf and won Battle Efficiency Awards. The AEGIS missile cruiser and continues to serve with the Pacific Fleet. She suffered major hull damage in 1991 during the first Gulf War.

¹⁹ Named for the World War I battle in France where the U.S. Marine Corps defeated opposing Imperial German Army forces.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1927 AND 2009

PART III: THE EMERGENCY CARRIERS: THE MIDDLE THREE OF NINE INDEPENDENCE-CLASS SMALL CARRIERS BUILT DURING WORLD WAR II.

By: Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

[This continues a serialized article begun in the summer issue of *NJPH*, Aug. 2008, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole No. 171. We refer you to a chartlet of the western part of the Pacific Theater of Operations, included in the November 2008 *NJPH*, and also available online at:

<http://njpostalhistory.org/media/pdf/wwiipacmap.pdf>]

It happened, perhaps by coincidence, that the *Independence*-class emergency small aircraft carriers were ordered in three lots of three ships. The construction orders for these three groups were issued in early 1942 and all nine ships were built at New York Shipbuilding in Camden, NJ and commissioned at Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in 1943.

Part III of this series concerns the middle group of the *Independence*-class emergency carriers. This second group of small carriers, ordered in March 1942, consisted of *Cowpens*, *Monterey*, and *Langley*. *Cowpens* was the first U.S. carrier to enter Tokyo Bay on August 27, 1945 and her aircraft were the first navy planes to land on Japanese soil. *Monterey*'s commissioning crew included Lieutenant Gerald R. Ford, USNR, the fourth consecutive President of the United States to have served as a WWII-era naval reserve officer. *Langley* was the second small carrier to be transferred to the French Navy.

USS *COWPENS* (CV-25) (CVL-25) 1943-1947

The fourth small carrier *Cowpens* (CV-25)¹ was launched on January 17, 1943, and commissioned on May 28, 1943, with Captain R. P. McConnell, U.S. Navy² in command. She was reclassified CVL-25 on July 15, 1943. Initially, the ship was to be named *Huntington* (CL-77). Her name was changed on March 31, 1942, long before the christening.



Fig. 44: Launch photo of USS *Cowpens*, or “Mighty Moo,” as she was nicknamed, at the New York Shipbuilding Yard, Camden, NJ.³



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Fig. 45: This is the launch cover for USS Cowpens (CV-25) postmarked at Camden, NJ on January 17, 1943 with a steel hand cancel device. The cover bears a printed cachet on the left face printed in red and blue ink. The ship illustrated is not an Independence-class small carrier but is a Lexington-class carrier. It is franked with a pair of one and a half cent Martha Washington stamps. This printed cover was sponsored by John von Loseberg, RCD #52. He was from Brooklyn. Together with Mike Sanders, they produced covers under the name STANLOS Cachet Service between 1933 and 1941.

Departing Philadelphia on August 29, 1943, *Cowpens* arrived at Pearl Harbor on September 19 to begin the distinguished combat career which was to earn a Navy Unit Commendation. She sailed with Task Force 14 for the strike on Wake Island on October 5-6, and then returned to Pearl Harbor to prepare for strikes on the Marshall Islands prior to the invasion. She sortied from Pearl Harbor on November 10 to launch air strikes on Mille and Makin atolls between November 19 and 24th, and Kwajalein and Wotje on December 4th, returning to her base on December 9, 1943.



Fig. 46: A WWII post card view of the USS Cowpens.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: PART III ~ Lawrence Brennan



Fig. 47: USS Cowpens underway 17 July 1943.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives
(photo # 80-G-74271).

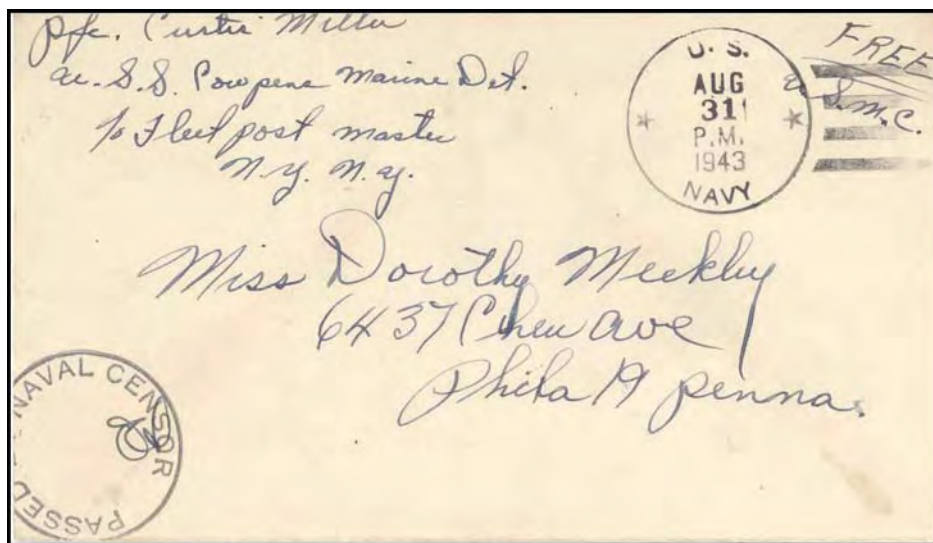


Fig. 48: A free-franked cover with a handwritten return address for USS Cowpens % Fleet Postmaster NY, NY. The cover is postmarked on August 31, 1943, two days after the ship departed Philadelphia for the Pacific Theatre via the Panama Canal. It is canceled with her (Locy Type 2z) postmark in black ink, and the cover is censored in the lower left corner. The sender was a U.S. Marine as indicated in his return address and his inscription "U.S.M.C." in the free-frank in the upper right corner. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.*

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Fig. 49: TBM Avenger torpedo plane landing on USS Cowpens during the Marshalls-Gilberts raids of Nov.-Dec 1943.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (photo # 80-G-K-13718).

Joining TF 58, *Cowpens* sailed from Pearl Harbor on January 16, 1944 for the invasion of the Marshalls. Her planes pounded Kwajalein and Eniwetok the last three days of the month to prepare for the assault landing on the 31st. Using Majuro as a base, the force struck at Truk on February 16-17 and the Marianas on February 21 and 22 before putting in to Pearl Harbor on March 4, 1944.

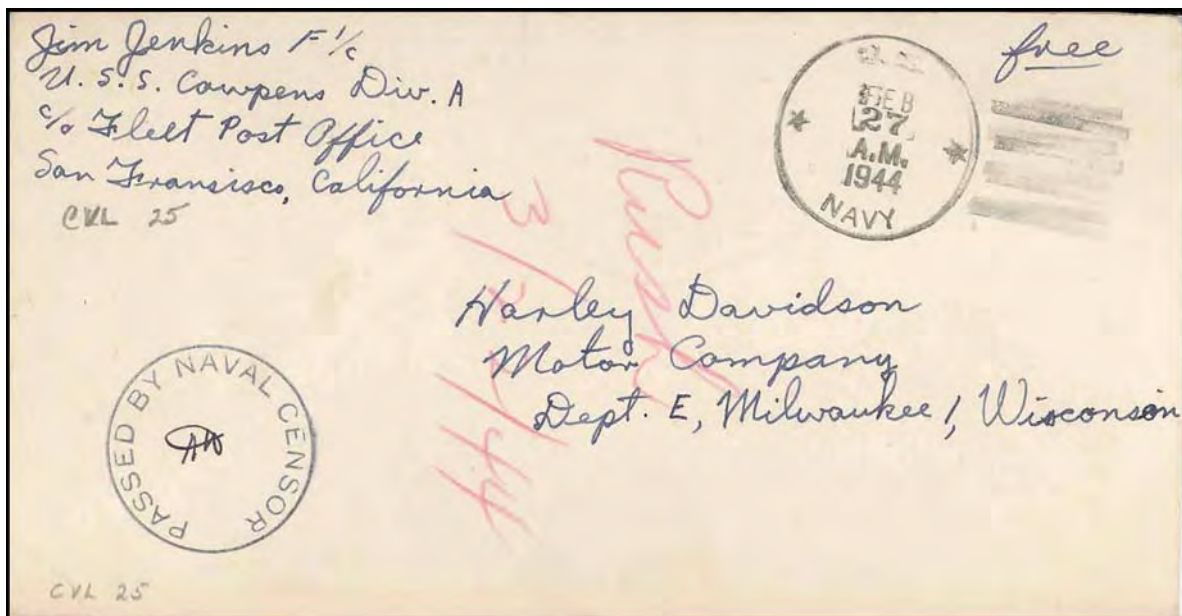


Fig. 50: A free-franked cover with a handwritten return address for USS Cowpens % Fleet Post Office San Francisco. The cover is postmarked on February 27, 1944 and is canceled with her (Locy Type 2z*) postmark in black ink. The cover is censored in the lower left corner and is addressed to the famous motorcycle company. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Returning to Majuro, TF 58 prepared for attacks on the western Carolines. *Cowpens* supplied air and antisubmarine patrols during the raids on Palau, Yap, Ulithi and Woleai from March 30 to April 1, 1944. After operating off New Guinea during the invasion of Hollandia from April 21-28, *Cowpens* took part in the strikes on Truk, Satawan and Ponape between April 29 and 1 May 1, returning to Majuro on May 14th for training.

From June 6 to July 10, 1944, *Cowpens* participated in the Marianas operation. Her planes struck Saipan to aid the assault troops, and made supporting raids on Iwo Jima, Pagan, Rota, and Guam. They also took part in the Battle of the Philippine Sea on June 19-20, accounting for a part of the huge tally of enemy planes downed. After a brief overhaul at Pearl Harbor, *Cowpens* rejoined the fast carrier task force at Eniwetok on August 17, 1944. On the 29th, she sailed for the pre-invasion strikes on the Palaus, which was essential to the return to the Philippines. From September 13-17, 1944, she was detached from the force to cover the landings on Morotai, and then rejoined it for sweep, patrol, and attack missions against Luzon from September 21-24, 1944.



Fig. 51: The USS Cowpens, en route to take part in the Palaus operation, 31 August 1944. She is wearing camouflage. Carrier in the distance (in a different camouflage pattern) is USS Independence (CVL-22).

*Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center.
(photo #: NH 96206)*

Cowpens, with her task group, flew strikes to neutralize Japanese bases on Okinawa and Formosa from October 10-14, 1944, and when *USS Canberra* (CA-70) and *USS Houston* (CL-81) were torpedoed, *Cowpens* provided air cover for their safe withdrawal, rejoining her task group October 20, 1944. En route to Ulithi, she was recalled when the Japanese Fleet threatened the Leyte invasion, and during the Battle of Surigao Strait phase of the decisive Battle for Leyte Gulf on October 25-26, the carrier provided combat air patrol for the ships pursuing the fleeing remnant of the Japanese fleet.

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Continuing support of the Philippines advance, *Cowpens's* planes struck Luzon repeatedly during December. During the typhoon of December 18, 1944, *Cowpens* lost one man, as well as planes and equipment, but skillful work by her crew prevented major damage, and she reached Ulithi safely on December 21 to repair her storm damage.

Between December 30, 1944 and January 26, 1945, *Cowpens* was at sea for the Lingayen Gulf landings. During January 1945, her planes struck targets on Formosa, Luzon, the Indo-Chinese coast, the Hong Kong-Canton area, and Okinawa. On February 10, 1945 *Cowpens* sortied from Ulithi for the Iwo Jima operation, striking the Tokyo area, supporting the initial landings from February 19-22, and hitting Okinawa on March 1, 1945.

After overhaul at San Francisco and refresher training at Pearl Harbor, *Cowpens* sailed on June 13, 1945 for San Pedro Bay, Leyte, on her way striking Wake Island on June 20th. Rejoining Third Fleet, *Cowpens* sailed from San Pedro Bay on July 1 to join in the final raids on the Japanese mainland. Her planes pounded Tokyo, Kure, and other cities of Hokkaido and Honshu until hostilities ended on August 15, 1945.

Remaining off Tokyo Bay until the occupation landings began on August 30, *Cowpens* launched photographic reconnaissance missions to patrol airfields and shipping movements, and to locate and supply prisoner-of-war camps. Men from *Cowpens* were largely responsible for the emergency activation of Yokosuka airfield for Allied use. Between November 8, 1945 and January 28, 1946, *Cowpens* made two "Magic Carpet" voyages to Pearl Harbor, Guam, and Okinawa to return veterans.

Placed in commission in reserve at Mare Island on December 3, 1946, *Cowpens* was decommissioned on January 13, 1947. She was reclassified as an aircraft transport (AVT-1) in May 1959, but was stricken from the Navy List on November 1, 1959 and sold for scrap. In addition to her Navy Unit Commendation, *Cowpens* received 12 battle stars for World War II service.

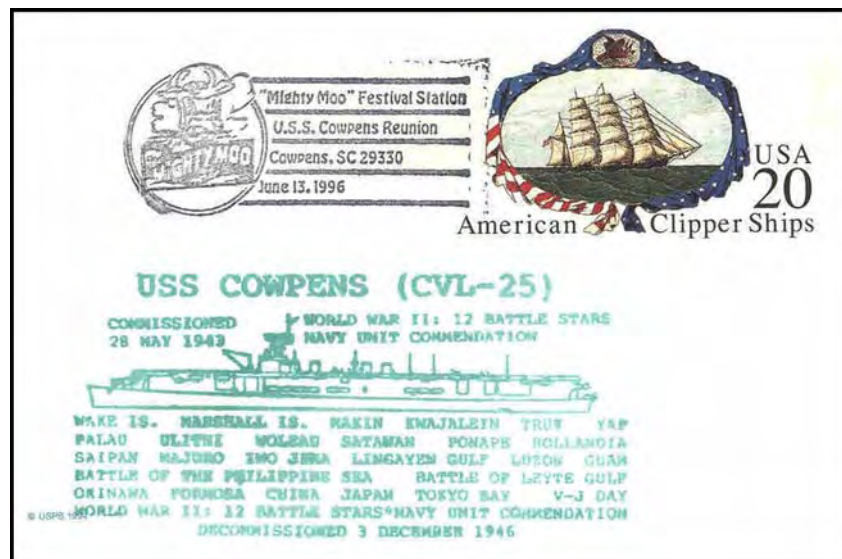


Fig. 52: A modern postal card with a pictorial cancel for USS *Cowpens's* reunion at Cowpens, South Carolina, dated June 13, 1996. It bears a rubber stamp cachet sponsored by USS New Jersey Chapter USCS.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: PART III ~ Lawrence Brennan**USS *MONTEREY* (CV-26) (CVL-26) 1943-1947, 1950-1956**

The light cruiser *Dayton* (CL-78) was laid down on December 29, 1941, just three weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack. This ship was reclassified CV-26 on March 27, 1942 and renamed *Monterey*⁴ four days later on March 31, 1942. She was launched on February 28, 1943, and commissioned on June 17, 1943, Capt. Lestor T. Hundt, U.S. Navy in command. *Monterey* was reclassified CVL-26 on July 15, 1943.

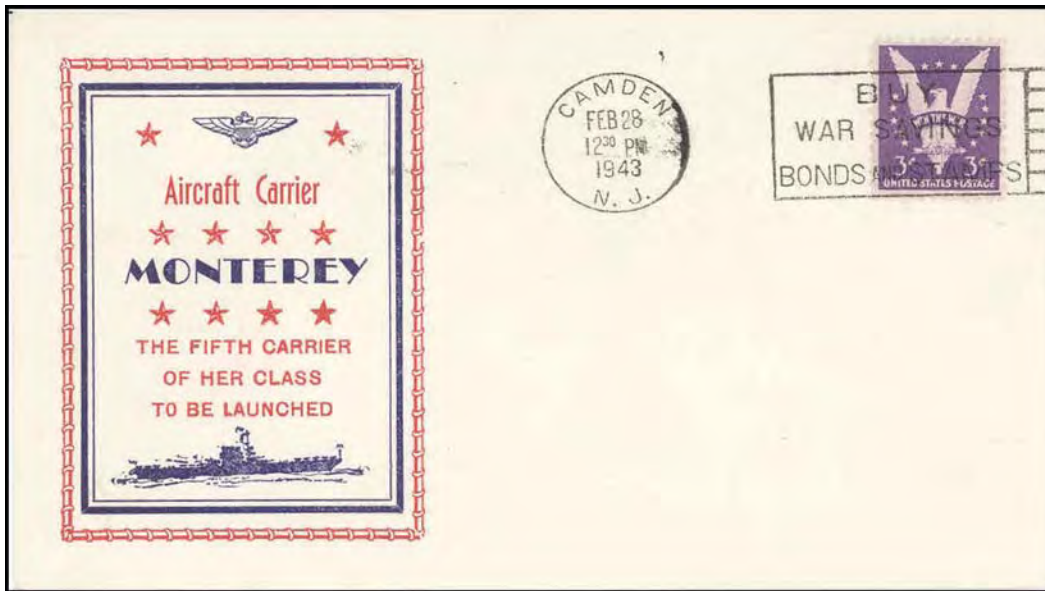


Fig. 53: The launch cover for USS Monterey (CV-26), postmarked at Camden, NJ on February 28, 1943 with a steel machine cancel device. The cover bears a printed cachet on the left face in red and blue. The ship illustrated is not an Independence-class small carrier but is a Lexington-class carrier. Naval aviator's wings appear at the top of the cachet. It is franked with a purple three cent "Win the War" stamp. This printed cover was sponsored by John von Loseberg, RCD #52.



Fig. 54: USS Monterey (CV-26) underway in the Delaware River, circa June 1943, soon after she was commissioned.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (photo # 80-G-173719).

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The most widely known crew member in later years was future president Gerald R. Ford, Jr. who was a plank owner.⁵ Ford served as the Assistant Navigator, antiaircraft battery officer, and athletic officer, on board *Monterey* for a year and a half until December 1944.⁶

Shortly after commissioning and following shakedown, *Monterey* departed Philadelphia for the western Pacific. She reached the Gilberts on November 19, 1943, in time to help secure Makin Island. She took part in strikes on Kavieng, New Ireland, on December 25, 1943, as part of TG 37.2, and supported the landings at Kwajalein and Eniwetok until February 8, 1944. The light carrier then operated with TF 58 during raids in the Carolines, Marianas, northern New Guinea, and the Bonins from February through July 1944. She also participated in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

Monterey then sailed to Pearl Harbor for overhaul, departing once again on August 29, 1944. She launched strikes against Wake Island on September 3, 1944, then joined TF 38 and participated in strikes in the southern Philippines and the Ryukyus. October through December 1944 were spent in the Philippines, supporting first the Leyte and then the Mindoro landings. She participated in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in late October 1944.

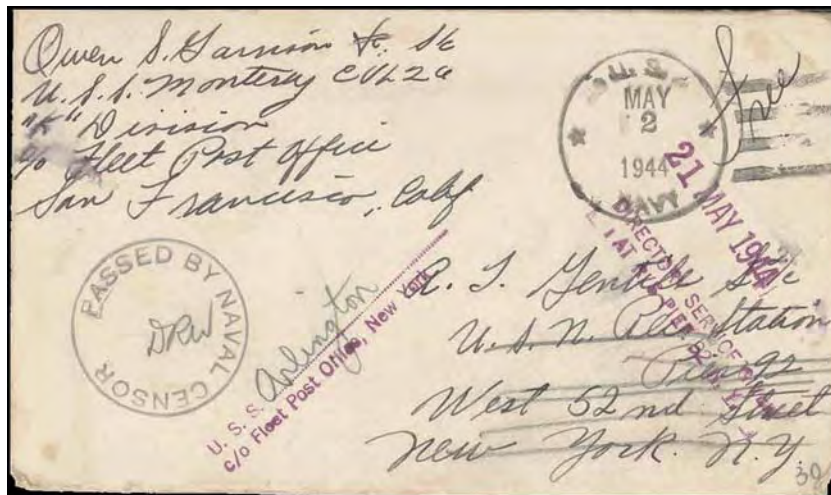


Fig. 55: A free-frank cover with a handwritten return address for USS *Monterey* % Fleet Post Office, San Francisco. The sender was in K Division. The cover is postmarked on May 2, 1944 with her (Locy Type 2z*) postmark in black ink. The cover is censored in the lower left corner with the initials "DRW" and is addressed to a sailor at the New York Receiving Station who had been transferred to USS *Arlington* (AP-174). The directory service mark on the face in purple ink is dated May 21, 1944. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 56A & B: At left, a plane is catapulted from the *Monterey's* decks, and right, *Avenger* torpedo bombers prepare to take off in June of 1944 for attacks on Tinian.

Official U.S. Navy photographs, now in the collections of the National Archives (photo #s 80-G-432851& 80-G-416686).

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Fig. 57: Gerald Ford, future President of the US, served aboard USS Monterey in WWII.

Monterey was damaged by the typhoon on December 18-19, 1944 which caused the loss of three destroyers and over 800 men to Third Fleet. *Monterey's* damage was caused by a fire, which was started by colliding aircraft on the hangar deck which tore loose from their restraining cables during the ship's extreme motion. During the storm, Lieutenant Ford narrowly avoided being lost at sea. After he left his battle station on the bridge during the early morning of December 18, the ship rolled 25 degrees, which caused Ford to lose his footing and begin to slide overboard. The two-inch steel lip around the edge of the flight deck slowed his progress so he could roll and twist into the catwalk below. Ford later remarked, "I was lucky; I could have easily gone overboard."



Fig. 58: An airmail cover franked with a 6¢ red airmail stamp and bearing a handwritten return address for USS Monterey % Fleet Post Office, San Francisco. The sender and the receiver both were in Air Departments, V-2 Division. The cover is postmarked on January 14, 1945 with her (Locy Type 2z) postmark in black ink. The cover is censored in the lower left corner probably with the initials "JWL" and addressed to a sailor with the same family name serving in the Essex-class fast carrier USS Hancock (CV-19), although it is erroneously written as CV-16, the hull number for USS Lexington). The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.*

Monterey arrived at Bremerton, Wash., for overhaul, in January 1945. She rejoined TF 58 and supported Okinawa operations by launching strikes against Nansei Shoto and Kyushu from May 9 through June 1, 1945. She rejoined TF 38 for the final strike against Honshu and Hokkaido from July 1 to August. 15, 1945.

She departed Japanese waters on September 7, 1945, having embarked troops at Tokyo for Operation "Magic Carpet," and steamed home, arriving New York City on October 17, 1945 in time to participate in the largest Navy Day celebration on October 27, 1945 when the fleet was reviewed by President Truman in New York harbor.

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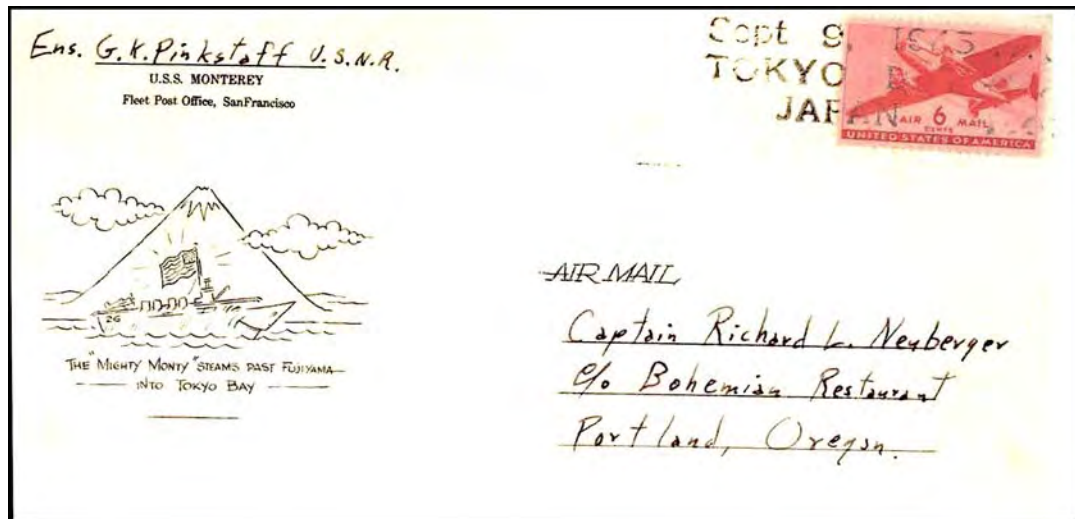


Fig. 59: An airmail cover franked with a 6¢ red airmail stamp and bearing Ensign G. K. Pinkstaff, USNR's handwritten and printed return address for USS Monterey % Fleet Post Office, San Francisco. The cover is postmarked on September 9, 1945 with her (Locy Type F or Fancy) postmark in black ink while the ship was in Tokyo Bay. The cover is uncensored and bears a printed cachet on the left face with a characterized version of the ship sailing in the waters near Mount Fuji. Many ships in the occupation force created their own fancy or provisional postmarks and rubber stamp or printed cachets for mail canceled in Japanese waters. Perhaps the most well known is the September 2, 1945 postmark from USS Missouri (BB-63). The Monterey postmark is rated "C" in the Postmark Catalog. Tokyo Bay postmarks are a particularly specialty for collectors and generally the closer the date to the surrender date, September 2, 1945, the more valuable the cover.

Monterey enjoyed an impressive war record. Her planes sank five enemy warships, and damaged others. She was responsible for the destruction of thousands of tons of Japanese shipping, hundreds of planes, and vital industrial complexes. She was assigned "Magic Carpet" duty, and made several voyages between Naples and Norfolk.

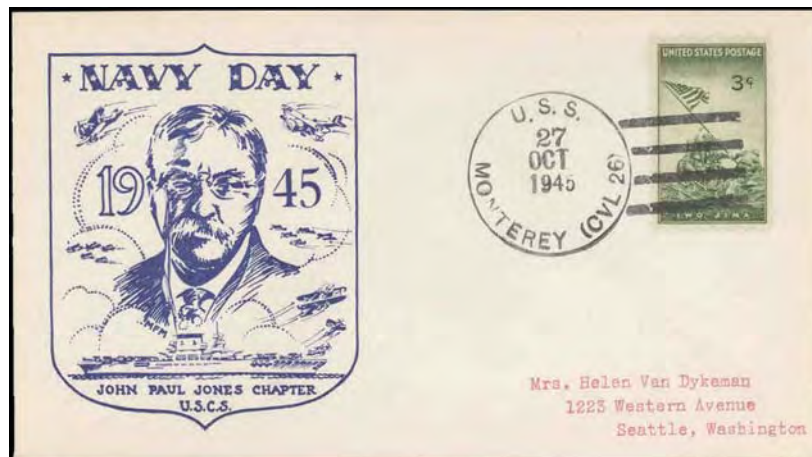


Fig. 60: A cover franked with a 3¢ green U.S. Marine Corps or Iwo Jima stamp and bearing a cachet with the likeness of President Theodore Roosevelt whose birthday coincided with the celebration of Navy Day until the early 1970s, when Navy Day was transferred to October 13th. The cover bears the ship's cancel (Locy Type 2(n)) on the first day of use of name cancels, October 27, 1945, Navy Day. The cover was sponsored by the old John Paul Jones Chapter of the Universal Ship Cancellation Society. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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She decommissioned on February 11, 1947, and was assigned to the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, Philadelphia Group. With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, *Monterey* was recommissioned on September 15, 1950.

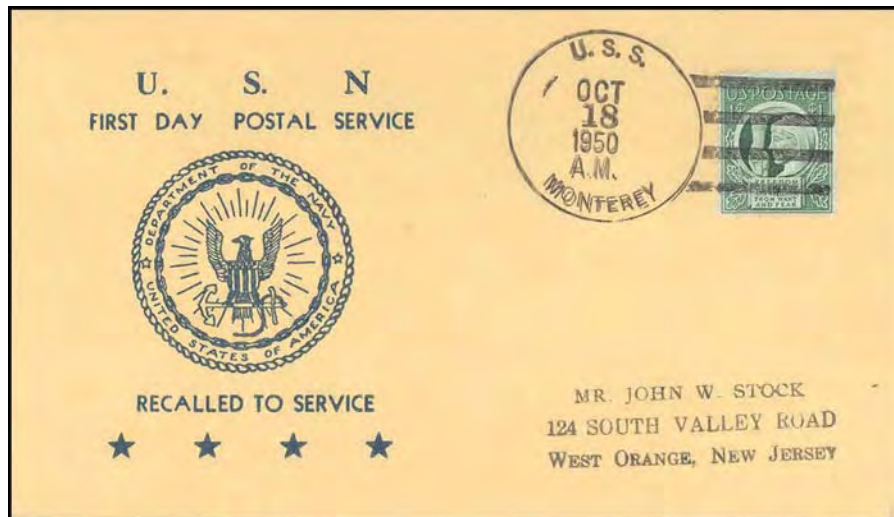


Fig. 61: A post card franked with a 1¢ green Four Freedoms stamp and bearing a cachet by the legendary sponsor, Tazewell G. Nicholson of Norfolk, Virginia, who printed cachets, walked to the ships in port at Norfolk, and often postmarked his naval covers for about half a century. The cover bears the ship's cancel (Locy Type 2) on the first day of postal service, October 18, 1950, during the Korean War. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

She departed Norfolk on January 3, 1951, for Pensacola, Florida, where she operated for the next four years under the Naval Training Command, training thousands of naval aviation cadets, student pilots, and helicopter trainees.



Fig. 62: USS Monterey served as a training ship in the Gulf of Mexico in 1951. This photograph was taken near the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida.

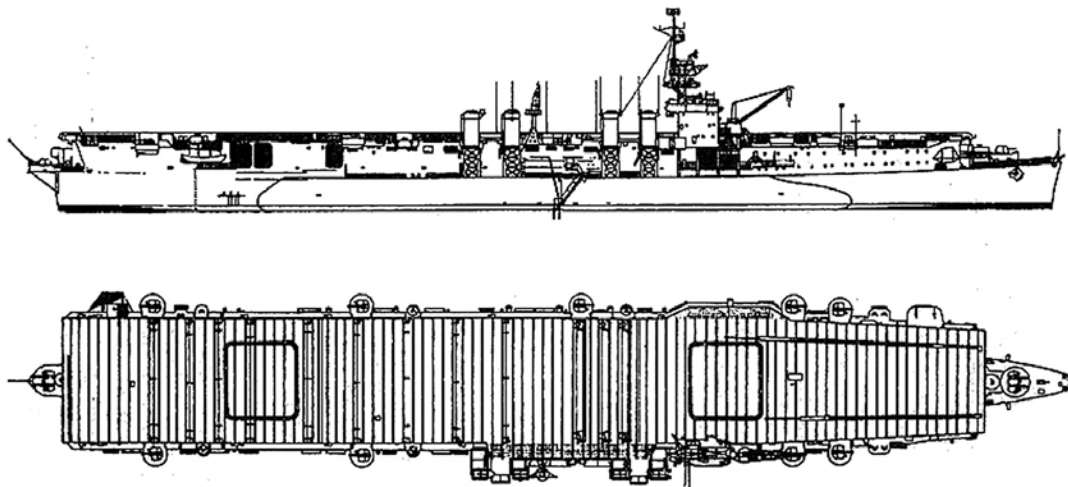
Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center (photo # NH 97451).

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Fig. 63: A printed, unaddressed cacheted cover franked with a 3¢ red New York 300th Anniversary stamp. The cover is postmarked on February 26, 1954 with her (Locy Type 2 and Type 9efu) postmarks in black and red ink respectively. The cachet depicts a stylized carrier from her starboard bow within an anchor chain all printed in red. The Type 2 postmark is rated "A" or common while the Type 9efu postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

Between October 1 and 11, 1954, she took part in a flood rescue mission in Honduras. She departed Pensacola on June 9, 1955, and rejoined the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, Philadelphia Group. She decommissioned again on January 16, 1956. Reclassified AVT-2 on May 15, 1959, she remained berthed at Philadelphia until she was sold for scrapping in May 1971. *Monterey* received 11 battle stars for World War II service.



Легкий авианосец «Индепенденс»

Fig. 64: Illustration from a Russian publication, titled Light aircraft carrier "Independence," it actually shows the Monterey as she appeared in the 1950s.

Contributed by Alex Tatchin to the NavSource Online: Aircraft Carrier Photo Archive

NEW JERSEY-BUILT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: PART III ~ Lawrence Brennan

USS LANGLEY (CVL-27) 1943-1947

Langley (CVL-27)⁷, originally named *Fargo* (CL-85), was laid down as *Crown Point* (CV-27), on April 11, 1942; renamed *Langley* on November 13, 1942; launched on May 22, 1943; reclassified CVL-27 on July 15, 1943; and commissioned on August 31, 1943, Capt. W. M. Dillon, U.S. Navy in command.



Fig 65: *The launch cover for USS Langley (CV-27), postmarked at Camden, NJ on May 22, 1943 with a steel hand canceling device. The cover bears a blue rubber stamp cachet with a port bow view of a pre-World War II Treaty Cruiser and the name of the sponsor, Mrs. H. L. Hopkins, wife of the presidential aide. The cover is on an airmail envelope with traditional printed red and blue border and wording “Via Air Mail” and is franked with a 6 cent airmail stamp. A second rubber stamp appears on the upper right corner of the cover, above and below the franking and postmark. In black ink above the cancel and stamp, the straight line reads, “Launching of” and below it reads, “U.S.A.C. LANGLEY.” The abbreviation “U.S.A.C.” stands for “U.S. Aircraft Carrier.” There also is a stylized American Eagle “Via Air Mail” in the upper left corner. This cover was sponsored by First Day Covers of Teaneck, New Jersey. Thanks to John P. Young, Director USCS, for his gracious assistance in identifying some of the cachet sponsors.*

After shakedown in the Caribbean, *Langley* departed Philadelphia on December 6, 1943 for Pearl Harbor, where she participated in training operations. On January 19, 1944, she sailed with Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher’s Task Force 58 for the attack on the Marshall Islands. From January 29 to February 6, the carrier’s air group conducted raids on Wotje and Taora to support Allied landings at Kwajalein, and repeated the performance February 10 through 28, 1944 at Eniwetok. After a brief respite at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands, *Langley* hit Japanese positions on Palau, Yap, and Woleai, Caroline Islands, from March 30 to April 1, 1944. She next proceeded to New Guinea to take part in the capture of Hollandia, on April 25, 1944. Four days later, the carrier was engaged in the two-day strike against Truk, rendering the Japanese naval base almost useless. During the raid, *Langley* and her aircraft accounted for 35 enemy planes destroyed or damaged, while losing only one aircraft.

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Fig. 66: A free-frank cover with a handwritten return address for the Fleet Post Office, New York, within a month of the ship's commissioning. Langley was conducting shakedown cruises and fitting out in the Atlantic at this time. The sender was in the Deck Department, 1st Division. The cover is postmarked in black ink on September 23, 1943 with her (Locy Type 2z) postmark. The cover is censored in the upper right and the lower left corners apparently with the same censor's initials, perhaps "JRS". The postmark is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 67: USS Langley off the East Coast in October 1943, with training planes on her deck.

Official U.S. Navy photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (photo # 80-G-87113).

NEW JERSEY-BUILT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: PART III ~ Lawrence Brennan

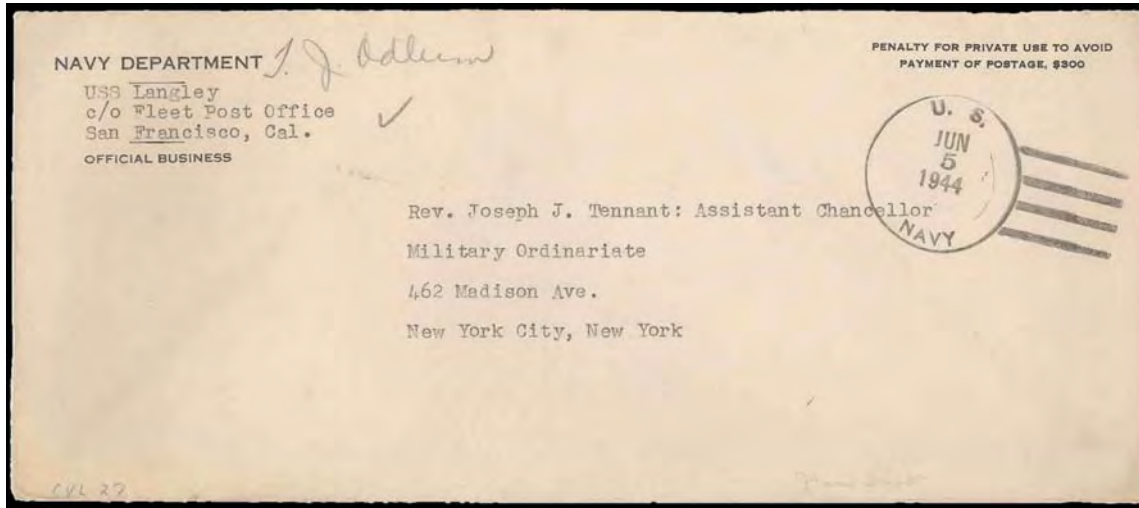


Fig. 68: A free-frank penalty cover with the typed return address for the Fleet Post Office, San Francisco postmarked on June 5, 1944, the day before D-Day. Langley was at Majuro Atoll on that day. Based on the address to the Roman Catholic Military Ordinariate in New York (an excellent source for World War II penalty covers) and the name of the chaplain annotated in pencil (commonly added by the Military Ordinariate), this was a cover sent by the ship's Roman Catholic Chaplain. The cover is postmarked in black ink with her (Locy Type 2z) postmark. The cover is not censored. The postmark is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Langley next departed Majuro Atoll on June 7 for the Marianas campaign. On June 11, 1944, Vice Admiral Mitscher's carrier groups took over from the land-based Army Air Force bombers. At 1:00 PM, the Task Force launched a strike of 208 fighters and eight torpedo-bombers against enemy bases and airfields on Saipan and Tinian. From June 11 to August 8, the battle raged for control of the Marianas. On June 15, the US forced the enemy to engage in fleet-to-fleet combat for the first time since Midway. During the two-day Battle of the Philippine Sea, June 19-20, 1944, the enemy suffered such severe losses that it was not able to seriously challenge U.S. sea power until the invasion of Leyte. When Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa retreated with his battered Mobile Fleet, he had lost 426 aircraft and three carriers. *Langley* had added her strength to break this Japanese effort to reinforce the Marianas.

The carrier departed Eniwetok August 29, 1944, and sortied with Task Force 38, under the command of Admiral William F. Halsey for air assaults on Peleliu and airfields in the Philippines as the preliminary steps in the invasion of the Palaus September 15-20. During October, she was off Formosa and the Pescadores Islands, attached to Vice Adm. Mitscher's Fast Carrier Force. Later in the month, as the Navy carried General MacArthur back to the Philippines, *Langley* was with Rear Adm. Sherman's Task Group protecting the Leyte beachheads. During the Battle of Leyte Gulf, Vice Admiral Mitscher served as Commander, Task Force 38 under Admiral Halsey who commanded Third Fleet. Commodore Arleigh A. Burke remained Chief of Staff for TF 38. Rear Admiral John S. McCain was commander of TF 38.1, one of four "carrier groups" constituting TF 38, the carrier force of Third Fleet. After Leyte Gulf Vice Admiral McCain assumed command of Third Fleet fast carriers as Commander, Task Force 38 while Vice Admiral Mitscher continued to serve as Commander, Task Force 58 under Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander, Fifth Fleet.

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In an effort to parry this deadly thrust into its inner defenses, Japan struck back with its entire fleet. On October 24, 1944, *Langley's* planes helped to blunt the first and most powerful prong of this counteroffensive, Adm. Kurita's Center Force, as it steamed toward the San Bernardino Strait and the American beachhead. The following day, she raced to intercept the Japanese carriers north of Leyte. In the ensuing battle off Cape Engano, Mitscher's force pulverized the enemy fleet. The Japanese lost four carriers, two battleships, four heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and five destroyers.

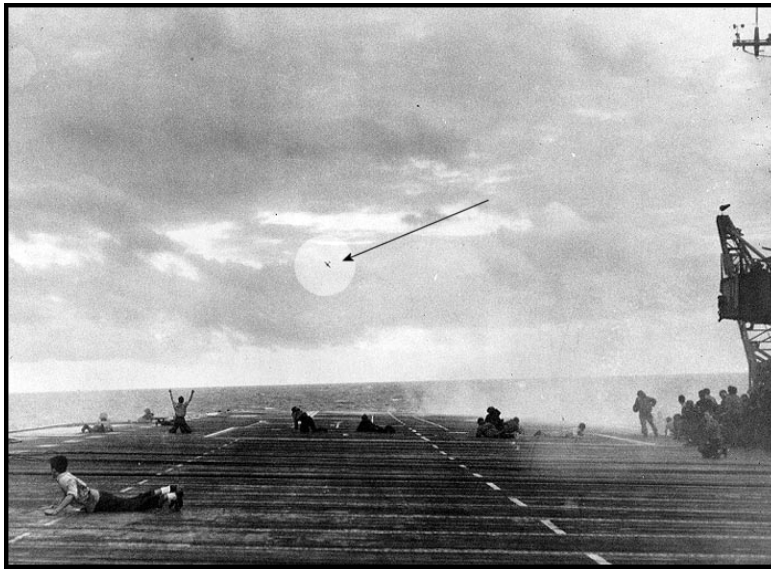


Fig. 69A & B: At left, the *USS Langley* downs a Japanese plane; at right, an F6F "Hellcat" lands "high" on *Langley's* deck. Both pictures are from October 1944.

Official U.S. Navy Photographs, now in the collections of the National Archives
(photo #s 80-G-700447 & 80-G-284074).

Langley's aircraft had assisted in the destruction of the carriers *Zuiho* and *Zuikaku*, the latter being the remaining carrier of the six that had participated in the Pearl Harbor attack. Japan's chances for final victory had been reduced by the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

During November, *Langley* supported the Philippine landings and struck the Manila Bay area, Japanese reinforcement convoys, and Luzon airfields in the Cape Engano area. On December 1, 1944, she withdrew to Ulithi for reprovisioning.

In January 1945, *Langley* participated in the daring raid into the South China Sea supporting Lingayen Gulf operations. Raids were made against Formosa, Indo-China, and the China coast from December 30, 1944 to January 25, 1945. The thrust into this area, which the enemy had considered a private lake, netted many Japanese ships, aircraft, supplies, and the destruction of installations.

NJ-BUILT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: Part III ~ Lawrence Brennan



Fig. 70: An airmail cover franked with a 6¢ red airmail stamp and a return address for the Fleet Post Office, San Francisco postmarked on November 1, 1944, just after the epic Battle of Leyte Gulf. Langley was in the Western Pacific on that day. The cover is postmarked in black ink with her (Locy Type 2z) postmark. It is addressed to The Gamma Zeta at Urbana, Illinois, where the University of Illinois is located. The cover is censored in the lower left corner with the initials “GW” in the black circular device. The postmark is rated “A” in the Postmark Catalog.

Langley next joined in the sweeps against Tokyo and Nansei Shoto in support of the conquest of Iwo Jima, February 10 to March 18, 1945. She then raided airfields on the Japanese homeland, and arrived off Okinawa on March 23. Until May 11, the ship divided her attention between the Okinawa invasion and strikes on Kyushu, Japan, in an effort to knock out *kamikaze* bases in southern Japan from which they were launching attacks.

After touching Ulithi and Pearl Harbor, she steamed to San Francisco, arriving on June 3, 1945 for repairs and modernization. She departed on August 1, 1945 for the forward area, and reached Pearl Harbor on August 8. While there, hostilities ended. She completed two “Magic Carpet” voyages to the Pacific, and got underway on October 1 for Philadelphia. She departed from that port November 15 for the first of two trips to Europe, transporting Army troops returning home.

She returned to Philadelphia on January 6, 1946 and was assigned to the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, Philadelphia Group, on May 31, 1946. She decommissioned on February 11, 1947 and was transferred to France under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program, on January 8, 1951. In French service she was renamed *Lafayette* (R-96). The carrier was returned to the United States in March 1963 and sold to the Boston Metals Co., Baltimore, Md., for scrapping. Langley received nine battle stars for World War II service.

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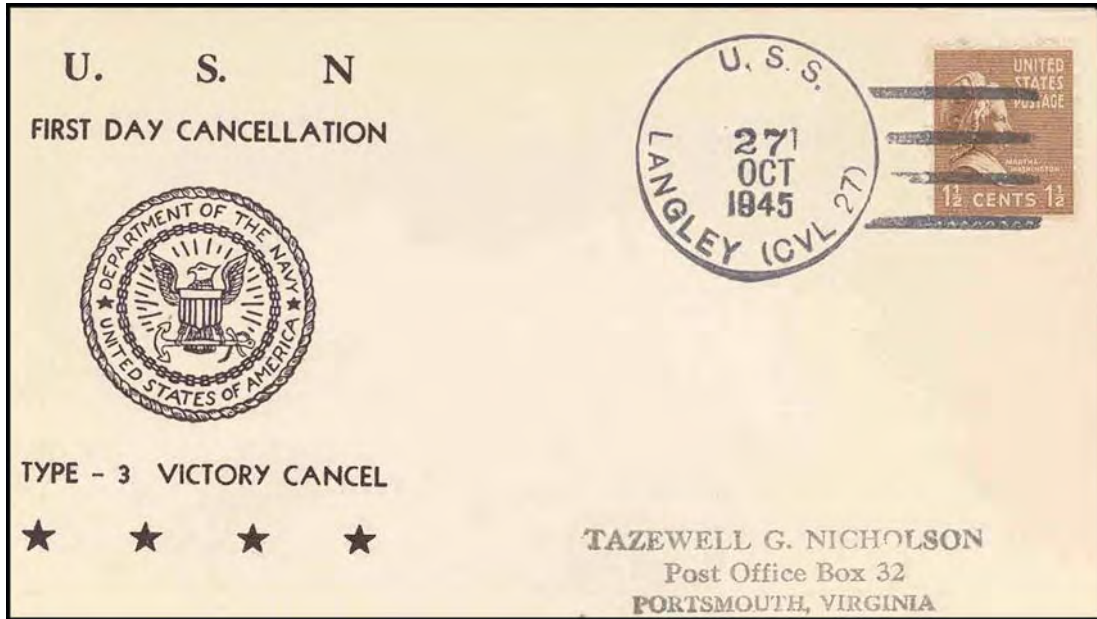
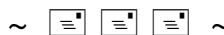


Fig. 71: A philatelic cover franked with a one and a half cent Martha Washington stamp from the 1938 Presidential Series with Langley's (Locy Type 2(n)) postmark dated October 27, 1945, the official return of postmarks reflecting the ship's name and the celebration of Navy Day with nation-wide fleet reviews and open ships. The cover was sponsored by Tazewell G. Nicholson whose return address appears on the face in the lower right corner. The postmark is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 72: Reactivated in 1951, USS Langley was on loan to France, renamed Lafayette. Shown here in preparation at the Philadelphia Naval Yard in January of 1951. Official U.S. Navy Photographs, now in the collections of the National Archives (photo # 80-G-425966).

[This series on New Jersey-built fast aircraft carriers will be continued in the following issue of NJPH.]



ENDNOTES:

Photo credits – Photo illustrations are from [NavSource Online: Aircraft Carrier Photo Archive](http://www.navsource.org/archives/02idx.htm), at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/02idx.htm>

- ¹ Named for the Revolutionary War battle fought on January 17, 1781, at the “Cowpens,” in South Carolina. Brigadier General Daniel Morgan with his experienced, yet untrained, militia and 300 Colonial soldiers commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard, met and defeated the superior force of British Army troops commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Both Morgan’s knowledge of the enemy and his use of the “double envelopment” maneuver provided victory in less than an hour of battle. The victory at Cowpens, gave the American Army the courage to successfully pursue the British from South Carolina to Yorktown. Currently, a second USS *Cowpens* (CG-63) is homeported at Yokosuka, Japan since 2000. She was built at Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, launched on March 11, 1989 and commissioned on March 9, 1991.
- ² Captain McConnell was the last commanding officer of USS *Langley* (AV-3), a seaplane tender sunk by the Japanese Navy in early 1942. Of course, previously that ship had been the first U.S. carrier, USS *Langley* (CV-1), a relatively slow ship converted from a collier after World War I. See endnote 7 and USS *Langley* (CVL-27) *infra*.
- ³ Web site: The Light Carrier Project, <http://www.geocities.com/ww2cvl/cowpenscvl.html> and its picture library at <http://www.geocities.com/ww2cvl/cowpic.html> 1/30/2009.
- ⁴ Named for the battle at that city during the Mexican War fought from September 20-24, 1846. Forces under General Zachary Taylor surrounded and then stormed the city and defeated the Mexican Army under General Ampudia. This is the third of four ships named *Monterey*. The first was a tug which served in San Francisco Bay from 1863 to 1892. The second was Monitor Number 6 which served during the Spanish American War and the Philippine Insurrection; the third USS *Monterey* is one of the subjects of this article. Currently, the name is borne by an AEGIS missile cruiser USS *Monterey* (CG-61). She is the 16th AEGIS cruiser and the fourth built at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine. She was launched on October 23, 1989 and commissioned on June 16, 1990.
- ⁵ A “plank owner” is a member of the commissioning crew of a ship. By tradition, the original crew members were entitled to a wooden plank from the ship’s deck or hull. The term has survived into the era of steel ships.
- ⁶ A University of Michigan football star and Yale Law School graduate, Ford was commissioned as Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve on April 13, 1942. On April 20, he reported for active duty to the V-5 instructor school at Annapolis, Maryland. After one month of training, he went to Navy Preflight School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he was one of 83 instructors and taught elementary seamanship, ordnance, gunnery, first aid, and military drill. In addition, he coached all nine sports, primarily swimming, boxing and football. During the year he was at the Preflight School, he was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade on June 2, 1942, and to Lieutenant in March 1943. After departing *Monterey* in late December 1944, he was assigned to the Navy Pre-Flight School at Saint Mary’s College of California, where he was assigned to the Athletic Department until April 1945. One of his duties was to coach football. From the end of April 1945 to January 1946, he was on the staff of the Naval Reserve Training Command, Naval Air Station, Glenview, Illinois as the Staff Physical and Military Training Officer. On October 3, 1945 he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander. In January 1946, he was sent to the Separation Center, Great Lakes and was released from active duty on February 23, 1946. After more than 20 years of commissioned service, on June 28, 1963, the Secretary of the Navy accepted Ford’s resignation from the Naval Reserve. Ford earned the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with nine engagement stars. He also received the Philippine Liberation Medal with two bronze stars, as well as the American Campaign, and World War II Victory Medals.
- The Navy has announced that the lead ship of the next class of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers will be named USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78) in honor of the nation’s 38th president. The ship is being constructed at Newport News Shipbuilding and is expected to be commissioned in 2015.
- Ford was the first vice president chosen under the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment and, in the aftermath of Watergate, succeeded the first president ever to resign; serving as the 37th Vice President (1973-1974) and the 38th President (1974-1977). Prior to becoming vice president, he served for more than eight years as the Republican Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and as a representative from Michigan’s 5th congressional district.
- ⁷ The second ship named *Langley*. The first was the U.S. Navy’s first aircraft carrier, USS *Langley* (CV-1), a converted collier (ex USS *Jupiter* (AC-3)) which was again converted to a seaplane tender (AV-3) in the late 1930s. She was sunk by the Japanese Navy in early 1942. Professor Samuel Langley, an aviation pioneer, was the initial namesake.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1927 AND 2009

PART IV: THE EMERGENCY CARRIERS: THE FINAL THREE OF NINE *INDEPENDENCE*-CLASS SMALL CARRIERS BUILT DURING WORLD WAR II.

By: Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

[This is the fourth in a series of articles begun in the summer issue of NJPH, Aug. 2008, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole No. 171 and continued in the November 2008 (Whole No. 172) and February 2009 (Whole No. 173) issues. For a map of the western half of Pacific Theater of Operations, see November 2008 NJPH, or go to: <http://njpostalhistory.org/media/pdf/wwiipacmap.pdf>. For picture credits see note above Endnotes.¹]

Part IV of this series concerns the final group of the *Independence*-class emergency carriers. This third group of small carriers, ordered in June and October of 1942, consisted of *Cabot*, *Bataan*, and *San Jacinto*. *Cabot* was the longest serving small carrier. She sailed under the U.S. flag during World War II and after that under the Spanish flag from 1967 to the late 1980s.² Thereafter she was returned to the United States to be the centerpiece of a naval museum in New Orleans. Unfortunately, that private enterprise failed and after protracted litigation she was sold to breakers to satisfy the maritime liens.³

Bataan was placed in service one month before her sister ship, *San Jacinto*. *Bataan* was the only small carrier to participate in the sinking of a Japanese submarine and the only member of her class to fight in both World War II and the Korean conflict. She was the last of the *Independence*-class carriers to be decommissioned in U.S. service. *San Jacinto* had the shortest time in commission, from late November 1943 until March 1947. She served in the Pacific Theatre of Operations from June 1944 until the Japanese surrender in September 1945, but was among the first ships to return to the Continental United States. During her extensive combat service *San Jacinto* operated Carrier Air Group FIFTY ONE, which included Torpedo Squadron FIFTY ONE. One of the youngest commissioned naval aviators served in that squadron, Lieutenant (Junior Grade) George H. W. Bush, U.S. Naval Reserve⁴, the fifth and final World War II era naval reserve officer to serve as President.⁵ *San Jacinto* also was the legendary carrier that waved off a Japanese naval aircraft during the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944.

USS *CABOT* (CVL-28) (1943-47) (1948-1952)

The third *Cabot*⁶ (CVL-28) was laid down as the cruiser *Wilmington* (CL-79), redesignated CV-28 on June 2, 1942, renamed *Cabot* June 23, 1942, converted while building, and launched April 4, 1943 at Camden, N.J. She was reclassified CVL-28 on July 15, 1943 and commissioned on July 24, 1943, with Captain M. F. Shoefel, U.S. Navy in command.

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Fig. 73: Insignia of the USS Cabot, circa 1943-44, based on the slogan of Cabot's first Commanding Officer, Captain Malcolm F. Schoeffel: "Up Mohawks, At 'Em!" "Mohawk" was the ship's voice radio call sign at the time.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives, (Photo #80-G-263253 - cropped)



Fig. 74: USS Cabot is launched by the New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, N.J. April 4, 1943.

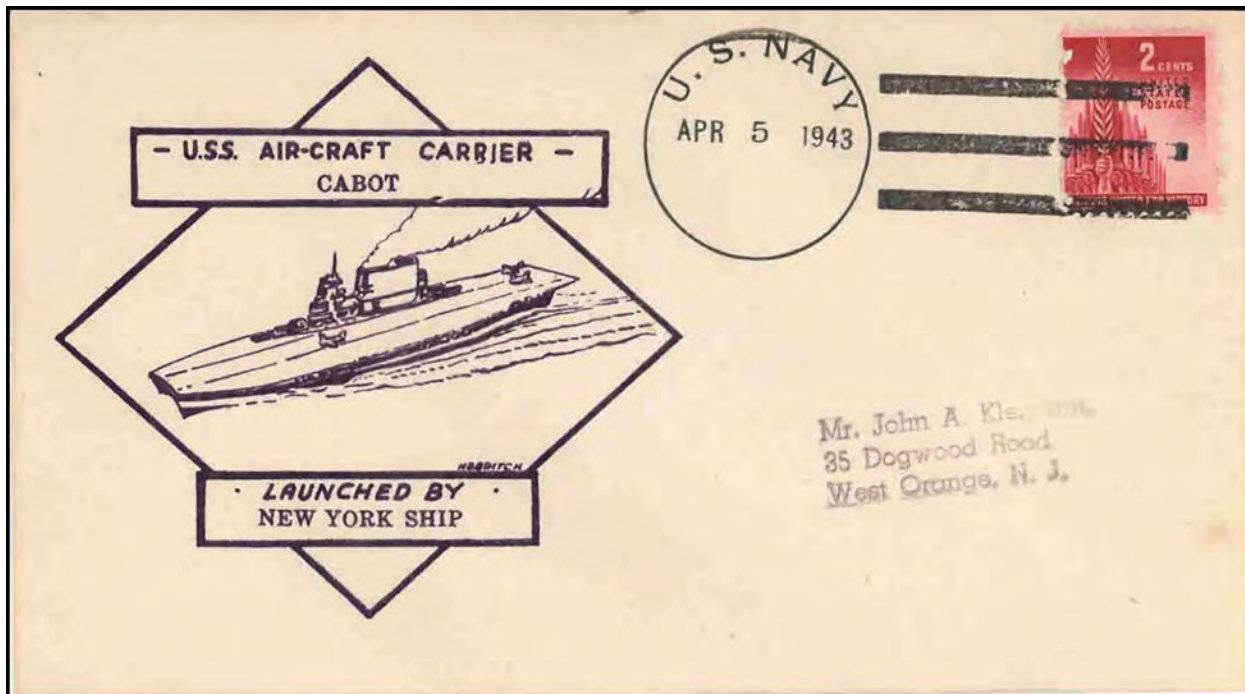


Fig. 75: A printed cacheted cover marking the launching of USS Cabot. The cachet depicts a Lexington-class carrier from altitude off the port side from forward of amidships. The ship is moving at high speed as illustrated by the stylized wake and stack gasses. There are few aircraft on deck suggesting launch or recovery in which case the ship would be steaming into the wind. The cover bears a rubber stamp generic "U.S. Navy" three bar postmark dated April 5, 1943 in black ink cancelling a 2¢ red "Nations United for Victory" stamp. The ship was launched on Sunday, April 4, 1943.

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Fig. 76: Free mail from Cabot which bears the rubber stamp (Locy Type 2z*) postmark dated September 13, 1943 with a handwritten return address of a sailor in the Navigation Department (N Division) with a Fleet Post Office New York address. The red printed slogan “Idle Gossip Sinks Ships” is underscored in black pen. The red censor’s rubber stamp bears unclear initials, possibly “FALE”. The cancel is rated “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

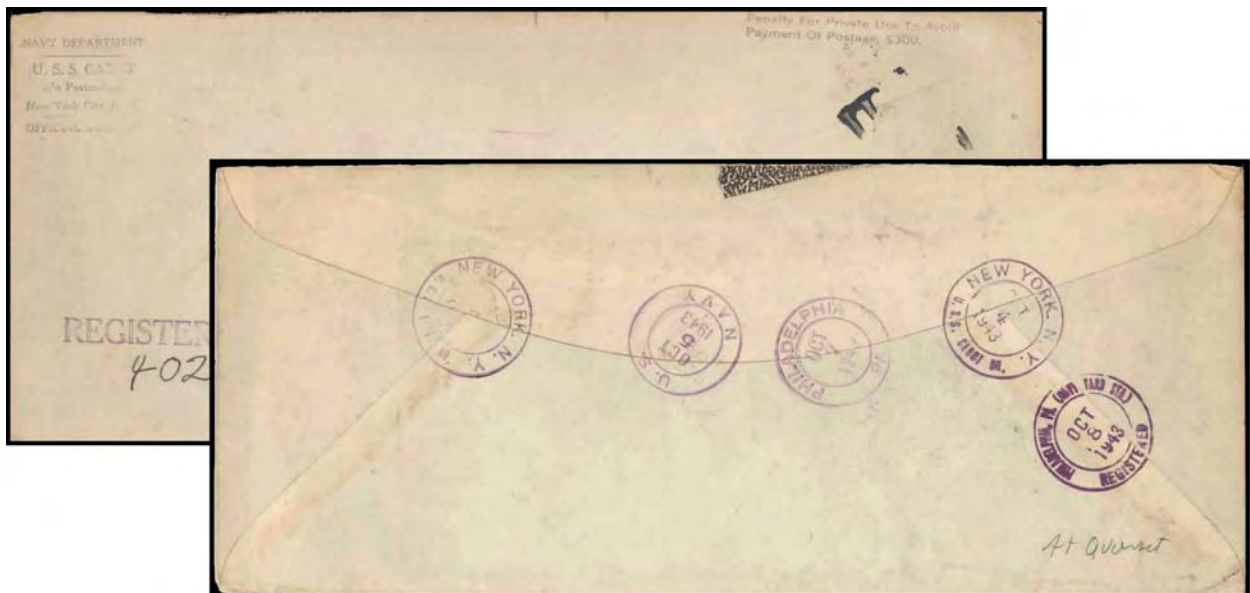


Fig. 77: A Number 10 penalty registered mail envelope addressed to The Commandant, Navy Yard, Philadelphia. The face, which has a rubber stamp return address from Cabot at FPO New York, seems to bear just a portion of the black killer bars of a postmark, the circular portion is missing. The reverse bears the ship’s rubber stamp registry mark (Locy Type 9efu) dated October 4, 1943 when the ship was at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. A second registry mark, dated October 5, 1943, simply reads “U.S. Navy” within the circles. The third registry mark is dated October 7, 1943 at Philadelphia, PA and the final one is dated October 8, 1943 at Philadelphia, PA (Navy Yard Sta.). The cover took nearly five days to travel about 350 miles, including parts of two days within Philadelphia. The cancel is rated “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

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Cabot sailed from Quonset Point, Rhode Island, on November 8, 1943 for Pearl Harbor, where she arrived December 2nd. Clearing for Majuro on January 15, 1944, she joined Task Force 58 to begin the consistently high quality of war service which was to win her a Presidential Unit Citation. From February 4 to March 4, 1944 she launched her planes in strikes on Roi, Namur, and the island stronghold of Truk, aiding in the neutralization of these Japanese bases as her part in the invasion of the Marshalls.

Cabot returned to Pearl Harbor for a brief repair period, but was back in action from Majuro for the pounding raids on the Palaus, Yap, Ulithi, and Woleai at the close of March 1944. She sailed to provide valuable air cover for the Hollandia operation from April 22 through 25, and four days later began to hurl her air power at Truk, Satawan, and Ponape. She cleared Majuro again on June 6, 1944 for the pre-invasion air strikes in the Marianas, and on June 19 and 20 launched sorties in the key Battle of the Philippine Sea, the "Marianas Turkey Shoot," which crippled Japanese naval aviation. *Cabot's* air units pounded Japanese bases on Iwo Jima, Pagan, Rota, Guam, Yap, and Ulithi as the carrier continued her support of the Marianas operation until August 9, 1944.

Pre-invasion strikes in the Palaus in September 1944 along with air attacks on Mindanao, the Visayas, and Luzon paved the way for the long-awaited return to the Philippines. On October 6, 1944 *Cabot* sailed from Ulithi for raids on Okinawa, and to provide air cover for her task group during the heavy enemy attacks off Formosa on October 12 and 13th. *Cabot* joined the group which screened "Cripple Division 1," the cruisers USS *Canberra* (CA-70) and USS *Houston* (CL-81) which had been torpedoed off Formosa,⁷ to the safety of the Carolines. She then rejoined her group for continued air strikes on the Visayas, and the Battle for Leyte Gulf on October 25 and 26.

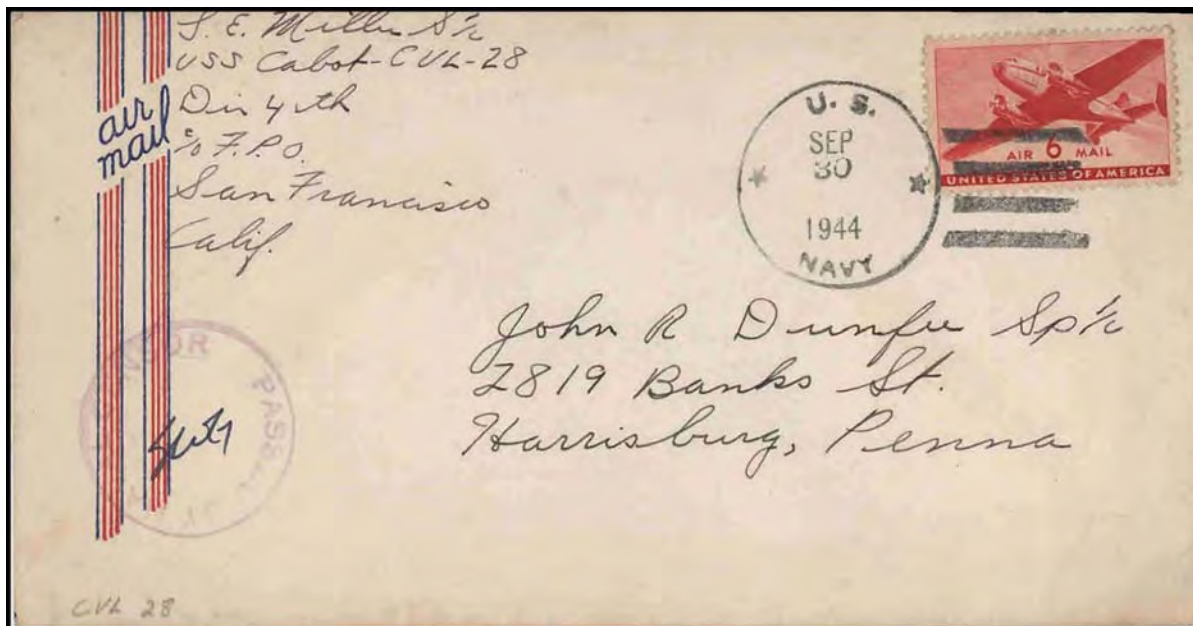


Fig. 78: An airmail envelope from a Seaman First Class in *Cabot's* Deck Department (4th Division) with a handwritten return address care of FPO San Francisco. The 6¢ airmail stamp is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2z*) postmark dated September 30, 1944 in black ink. This was mailed between the Battle of the Philippine Sea and the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which ended the Imperial Japanese Navy's carrier aviation forces. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Ernie Pyle called her "Iron Woman of the Pacific." On October 16, 1944, eight Hellcat fighters from USS *Cabot* engaged 70 attacking enemy aircraft, shooting down a total of 27 in a little more than 15 minutes, with the loss of only one of her own planes, whose pilot was recovered.

Cabot remained on patrol off Luzon, conducting strikes in support of operations ashore, and repelling desperate suicide attacks. On November 25, 1944, a particularly vicious attack occurred. *Cabot* had fought off several *kamikazes* when one, already flaming from hits, crashed the flight deck on the port side, destroying the still-firing 20mm gun platform, disabling the 40mm mounts, and a gun director. Another of *Cabot's* victims crashed close by and showered the port side with shrapnel and burning debris. *Cabot* lost 62 men killed and wounded but careful training had produced a crew which handled damage control. While she continued to maintain her station in formation and operate effectively, temporary repairs were made. On November 28, 1944, she arrived at Ulithi for permanent repairs.



Fig. 79: Kamikaze crashes into the deck of the *Cabot*, November 25, 1944.⁸

Cabot returned to action December 11, 1944, steaming with the force striking Luzon, Formosa, Indo-China, Hong Kong, and the Nansei Shoto in support of the Luzon operations. From February 10 to March 1, 1945 her planes pounded the Japanese homeland and the Bonins to suppress opposition to the invasion of Iwo Jima. Continued strikes against Kyushu and Okinawa in March prepared for the invasion of the latter island. After these prolonged, intensive operations, *Cabot* was homeward bound for San Francisco for a much-needed overhaul completed in June.

Fig. 80: USS *Cabot* (CVL-28) with a long "Homeward Bound" pennant departing the Western Pacific for overhaul in San Francisco, California, April 13, 1945. She had been operating in the combat zone since January 1944. View looks aft from the ship's island, with other shipping in the distance.



Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center. (Photo #: NH 96958).



Fig. 81: USS Cabot underway at sea, July 26, 1945.
Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives. (Photo #: 80-G-262768).



Fig. 82: A hand printed "cached" cover bearing Cabot's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2(n)) postmark dated December 4, 1945. The cover, franked with a 3¢ purple baseball stamp, is addressed to a retired naval officer collector in the Constructors Corps (shipbuilders) with an address at Electric Boat in Groton Connecticut, where many submarines were built. A number of covers with similar hand-printed cachets were addressed to Commander Bullard. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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After refresher training at Pearl Harbor, the carrier launched strikes on Wake Island on August 1, 1945 while en route to Eniwetok. Here she remained on training duty until the end of the war. Sailing August 21st, she joined TG 38.3 to support the landings of occupation troops in the Yellow Sea area in September and October. Embarking homeward-bound men at Guam, *Cabot* arrived at San Diego on November 9, then sailed for the East Coast. *Cabot* was placed out of commission in reserve at Philadelphia on February 11, 1947.



Fig. 83: This cover bears the ship's rubber stamp registry mark (Locy Type 9efu) dated December 20, 1945. The mark cancels a block of four orange 1/2¢ Franklin stamps from the 1938 Presidential Series and is "socked on the nose." The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 84: A printed cachet for *Cabot*'s Last Day of Postal Service with an autograph of the Postal Clerk. The 2¢ red FDR stamp is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2z) postmark dated April 18, 1946 in black ink. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Recommissioned on October 27, 1948, *Cabot* was assigned to the Naval Air Reserve training program. She operated out of Pensacola, then Quonset Point, R.I. on cruises to the Caribbean, and had one tour of duty in European waters from January 9 to March 26, 1952. *Cabot* was again placed out of commission in reserve January 21, 1955. She was reclassified AVT-3 on May 15, 1959.



Fig. 85: A Tazewell G. Nicholson printed cacheted cover bearing the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2t(nu)) postmark dated December 1, 1948, marking the recommissioning of the ship. The carrier in the cachet is not an Independence-class light carrier but the starboard profile of USS Ranger, the first ship designed from keel up to be a carrier. The cover is franked with a 2¢ red "Nations United For Victory" stamp. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

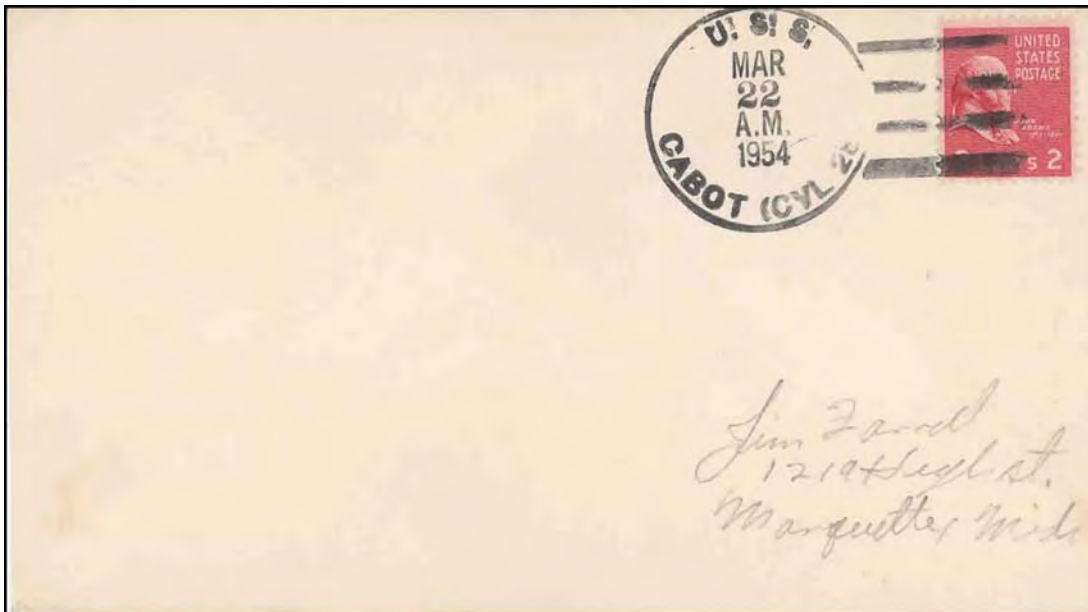


Fig. 86: An uncacheted cover bearing Cabot's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2(n)) postmark dated March 22, 1954, after the armistice in Korea. Compare with Figure 28E and contrast with the last figure. The cover is franked with a 2¢ red John Adams stamp from the 1938 Presidential Series. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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In 1967, after over a dozen years in “mothballs,” *Cabot* was loaned to Spain, in whose navy she served as *Dedalo*. The loan was converted to a sale in 1972.



Fig. 87: A view of Cabot after she was transferred to Spain and became Dedalo.



Fig. 88: Dedalo operating in June 1988 with Harrier jets.

Dedalo was stricken by the Spanish Navy in August 1989 and given to a private organization in the U.S. for use as a museum ship. However, that private organization was unable to pay its creditors, so, on September 10, 1999, the ship was auctioned off by the U.S. Marshal's Service to Sabe Marine Salvage.

In addition to the Presidential Unit Citation, *Cabot* received nine battle stars for World War II service.⁹



Fig. 89: USS Cabot resting in the ship breakers berth in Brownsville, Texas.

(Photos compliments of Capt. Mike Howell, who coordinated the movement of Cabot from New Orleans to Texas).¹⁰

USS *BATAAN* (CVL-29) (1943-1947) (1948-1954)

The cruiser *Buffalo* (CL-99) was reclassified CV-29 and renamed *Bataan* ¹¹ on June 2, 1942. The ship was reclassified CVL-29, on July 15, 1943 and launched on August 1, 1943 at Camden, N. J. *Bataan* was commissioned on November 17, 1943, Captain V. H. Schaeffer, U.S. Navy in command; and reported to the Pacific Fleet.



Fig. 90: A printed cacheted cover marking the launching of Bataan. The cachet depicts a Lexington-class carrier from off the starboard side aft. The cover bears a Camden, New Jersey steel handstamped postmark dated Sunday, August 1, 1943 (with the year inverted) in black ink cancelling a 1¢ green and 2¢ red "For Defense" stamps.



Fig. 91: The USS Bataan with aircraft parked on her flight deck, including TBM "Avenger" torpedo planes on her forward deck, off the Philadelphia Navy Yard, PA, March 2 1944.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the Collections of the Naval Historical Center
(Photo #: NH 92287)

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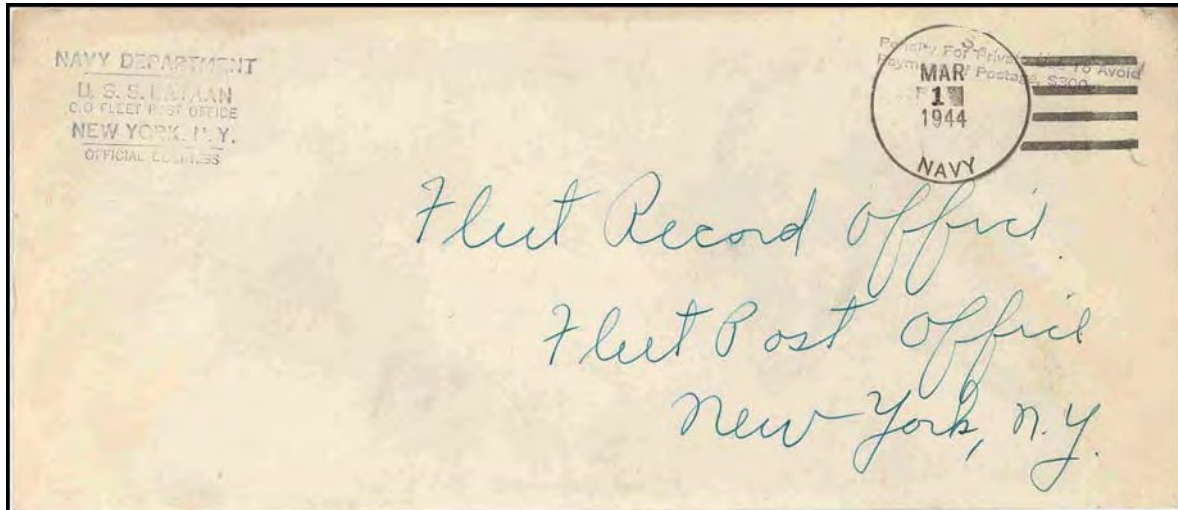


Fig. 92: An uncensored number 10 penalty envelope with Bataan's rubber stamp return address % FPO New York. The cover is handwritten in blue ink to Fleet Record Office Fleet Post Office, New York and is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2z) postmark dated March 1, 1944 in black ink. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

In her initial engagement with the Japanese, *Bataan's* planes supported the attack on Hollandia, New Guinea, between April 21-24, 1944. Following this action were strikes against Truk, Satawan, and Ponape (April 29-May 1, 1944); Saipan, Marianas (June 11-August 10, 1944); First Bonins raid (June 15-16); Battle of the Philippine Sea (June 19-20); and the Second Bonins raid (June 24).



Fig. 93: A censored airmail envelope with an Engineering Department (B Division is boiler division in the Engineering Department) handwritten return address c/o FPO San Francisco. The cover is handwritten in blue ink and is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2z) postmark dated May 19, 1944 in black ink on a 6¢ airmail stamp. The censor's mark is rubber stamped in blue ink with the initials "DR" within the circle. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Bataan then returned to the United States for repairs. She joined TF 58 and participated in the fleet raids in support of the Okinawa operation (March 17-May 30, 1945), during which her aircraft assisted in the sinking of the Japanese submarine *I-56*, April 18, 1945. Retiring to the Philippines, *Bataan* joined the Third Fleet for operations against the Japanese home islands (July 10–August 15).



Fig. 94: A Japanese Navy "Judy" (Yokosuka D4Y3) bomber passes near USS Bataan (CVL-29) during an unsuccessful dive bombing run on Task Force 58, while the U.S. ships were operating off Japan on March 20, 1945. The Japanese plane was soon brought down by anti-aircraft fire. Photographed from USS Hancock (CV-19). Bataan is the ship in the center of the view

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (Photo #: 80-G-3192320).



Fig. 95: The reverse of a Number 10 penalty registered mail envelope which bears Bataan’s rubber stamp registry mark (Locy Type 9efu) dated October 13, 1945 six weeks after the Japanese surrender. A second and third registry mark both dated October 18, 1945 show delivery at New York. The cancel is rated “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

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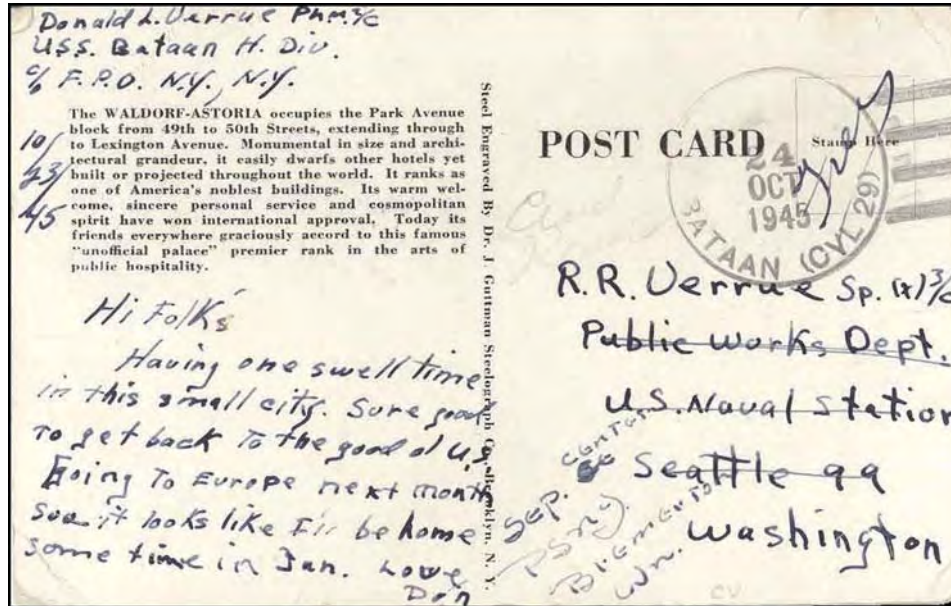


Fig. 96: A “Free Frank” postcard with a Pharmacist's Mate Second Class's handwritten return address % FPO New York. The card is hand written in blue-black ink and is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2n) postmark dated October 24, 1945 in black ink. This is an early use of ship's name postmarks, which were reinstated on Navy Day, October 27, 1945 as part of the national celebration of victory and extensive reviews of the fleet. Bataan was in New York from October 17, 1945 until after Navy Day. The cancel is rated “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

Bataan returned to the United States, arriving at New York on October 17, 1945, and was assigned to "Magic Carpet" duty. On January 10, 1946 she arrived at Philadelphia to prepare for inactivation. Bataan went out of commission in reserve on February 10, 1947.

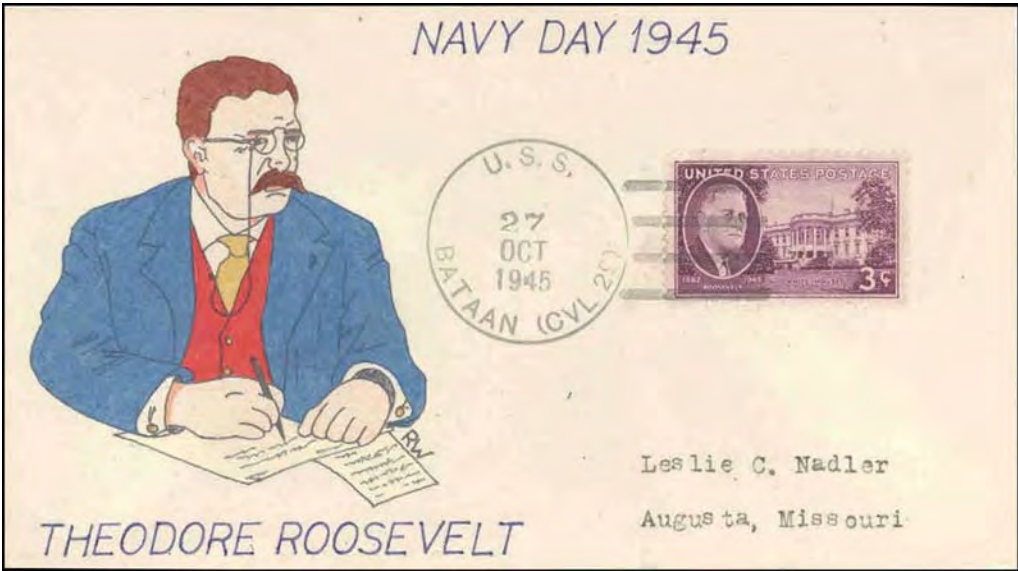


Fig. 97: A cover with an added cachet sketch of President Theodore Roosevelt, whose birthday was adopted initially as Navy Day. The cachet was added by Roger Wentworth in the late twentieth century or early twenty-first century. The cover is canceled by Bataan's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2n) postmark in black ink dated October 27, 1945, Navy Day. The cancel is rated “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

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Bataan was recommissioned, prior to the beginning of the Korean War, on May 13, 1950 at Philadelphia. In July 1950 she stood out for San Diego, upon arrival loaded Air Force cargo and personnel, and departed November 16 for Tokyo Bay. She arrived in Korean waters on December 15 and until June 1951 her aircraft flew strikes in support of the United Nations' ground forces.



Fig. 98: A printed cacheted cover with a shield and a sketch of four different types of ships. The cover is canceled, on the recommissioning of Bataan by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2n) postmark in black ink dated May 13, 1950, just before the beginning of the Korean War. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

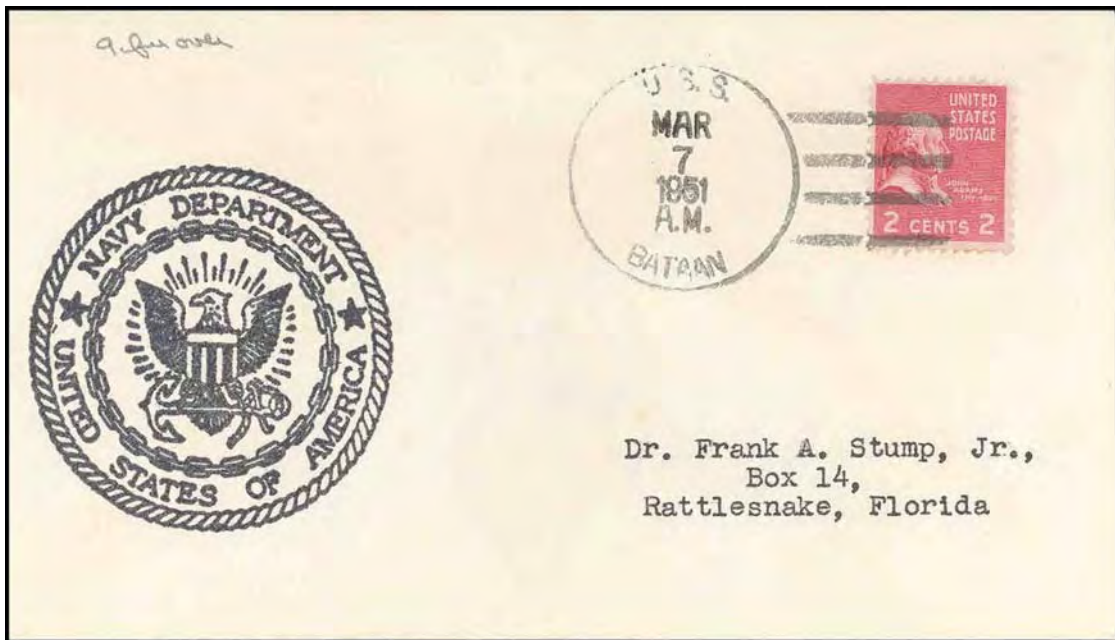


Fig. 99: A rubber stamp cacheted cover with a Navy Seal. The cover is canceled by Bataan's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2) postmark in black ink dated March 7, 1951. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Bataan departed for the West Coast on June 2, 1951 and after a brief stop at San Diego steamed to Bremerton, Wash., arriving on July 9 for overhaul. She returned to San Diego on November 20, 1951 and on January 27, 1952 departed for Yokosuka, Japan, and then to Buckner Bay, Okinawa. She conducted training off Okinawa until April 29, when she sailed for Korean waters. *Bataan* continued operating between Japan and Korea throughout the summer of 1952 carrying personnel and supplies to the combat zone and launching strikes against the enemy. She left the war zone August 11 for San Diego. On Navy Day, October 27, 1952, the carrier once again stood out for the Far East and operated off Korea until May 10, 1953, when she departed for San Diego. *Bataan* was the only *Independence*-class carrier to see combat in the Korean War and the only U.S. light carrier to fight in two conflicts under the U.S. flag.



Fig. 100: *USS Bataan (CVL-29)* underway in January 1952 with *F4U-4B "Corsair" fighter-bombers of VMF-314* on board. Photo was taken as she was working up in preparation for her second Korean War deployment.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
(Photo #: 80-G-633888).

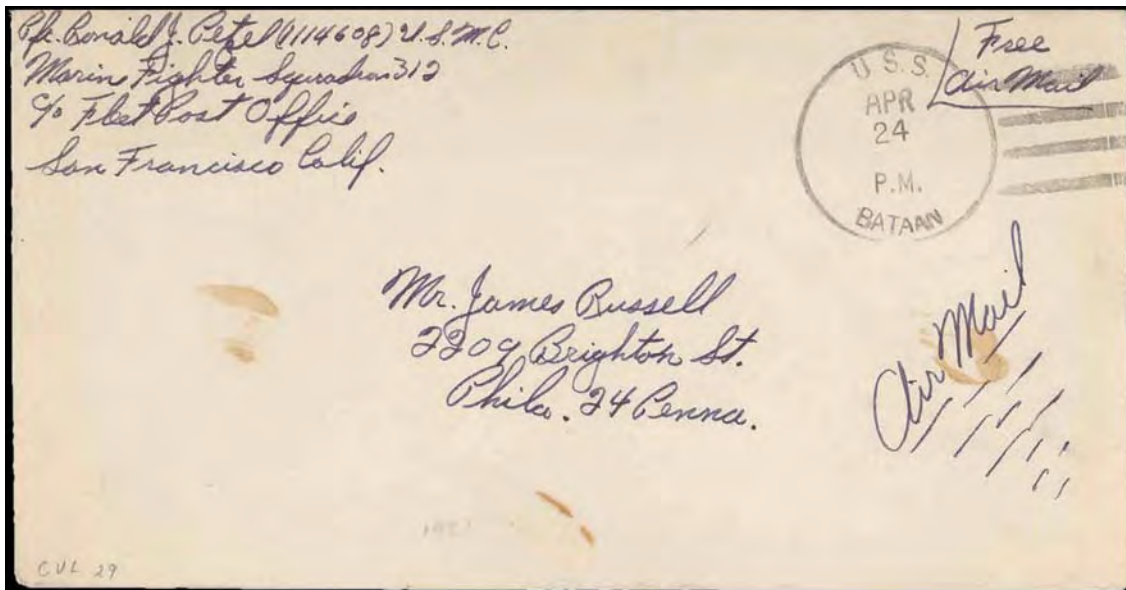


Fig. 101: A "Free Mail" uncensored airmail cover canceled by *Bataan's* rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2) postmark in black ink dated April 24, ---. It bears the handwritten return address of a Marine private in fighter squadron VMF 312 addressed to a famous collector and the long term editor of the *Postmark Catalog*, James Russell. The cancel is rated "A" in the *Postmark Catalog*.



Fig. 102: USS Bataan (CVL-29) photographed on May 22, 1953, as she was en route to Naval Air Station San Diego, California, following a deployment to Korean waters. Note crew paraded on the flight deck spelling out the word "HOME" and an arrow pointing over her bow. Aircraft on deck include 19 Grumman AF "Guardian" anti-submarine planes and a solitary Vought F4U "Corsair" fighter (parked amidships on the starboard side).

*U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph.
(Photo #: NH 95808).*

She remained in the San Diego area undergoing overhaul and training until July 31. Then she sailed via Pearl Harbor to Kobe and Yokosuka, Japan, and then back to the United States where she reported for inactivation on August 26, 1953, after the armistice in Korea. She went out of commission in reserve on April 9, 1954 at San Francisco. She was stricken from the Navy List in September 1959 and sold for scrapping in May 1961. *Bataan* received six battle stars for her World War II service and seven for her Korean service.

USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) (1943-1947)

The name *Newark*¹² was originally assigned to a projected light cruiser, CL-100, on February 11, 1941. The light cruiser was earmarked for conversion to an aircraft carrier and reclassification to CV-30. Renamed *Reprisal*¹³ on June 2, 1942, the ship was laid down on October 26, 1942. Renamed *San Jacinto*¹⁴ circa January 4, 1943; reclassified as a small aircraft carrier, CVL-30, on July 15, 1943, she was launched on September 26, 1943 and commissioned on November 15, 1943, Capt. H. M. Martin, U.S. Navy in command.

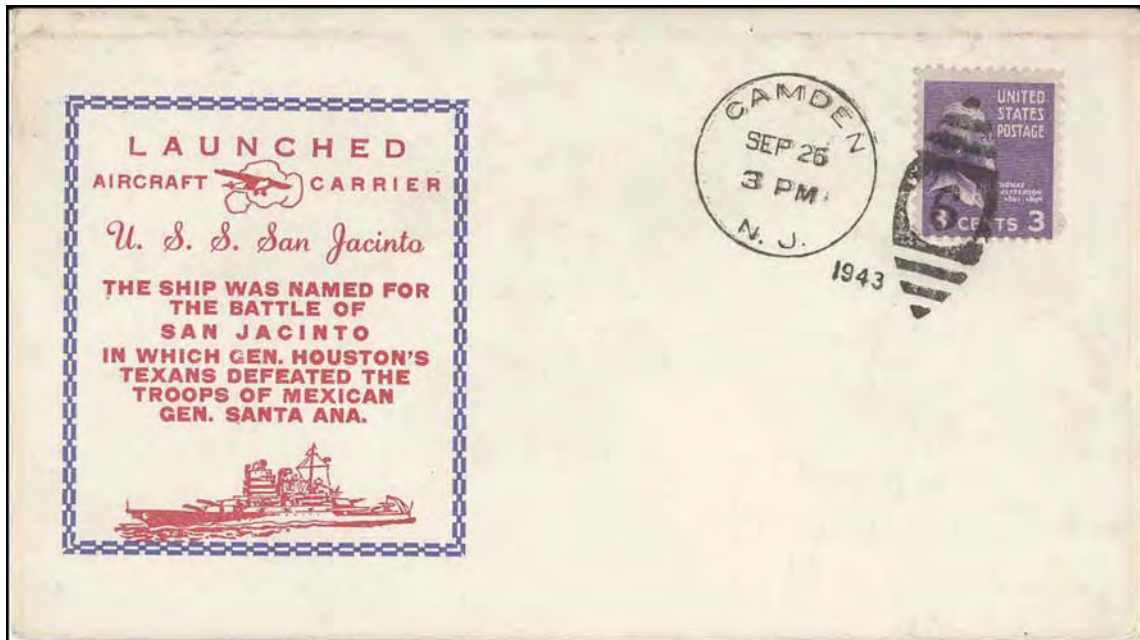


Fig. 103: A printed cacheted cover marking the launching of San Jacinto. The cachet depicts a pre-World War II battleship off the port bow. The cover bears a Camden, New Jersey steel handstamped postmark dated Sunday, September 26, 1943 in black ink cancelling a 3¢ purple Jefferson stamp from the 1938 Presidential Series.

Fig. 104: USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) sliding down the building ways at the New York Shipbuilding Corp. yard, Camden, New Jersey, after she was christened by Mrs. Jesse H. Jones, September 26, 1943.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives (Photo #: 80-G-44590).



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Fig. 105: *USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) underway off the U.S. East Coast (position 36°55'N, 75°07'W) on January 23, 1944, with an SNJ training plane parked on her flight deck. Photographed from a Squadron ZP-14 blimp. The ship is painted in camouflage.*

*Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
(Photo #: 80-G-212798).*

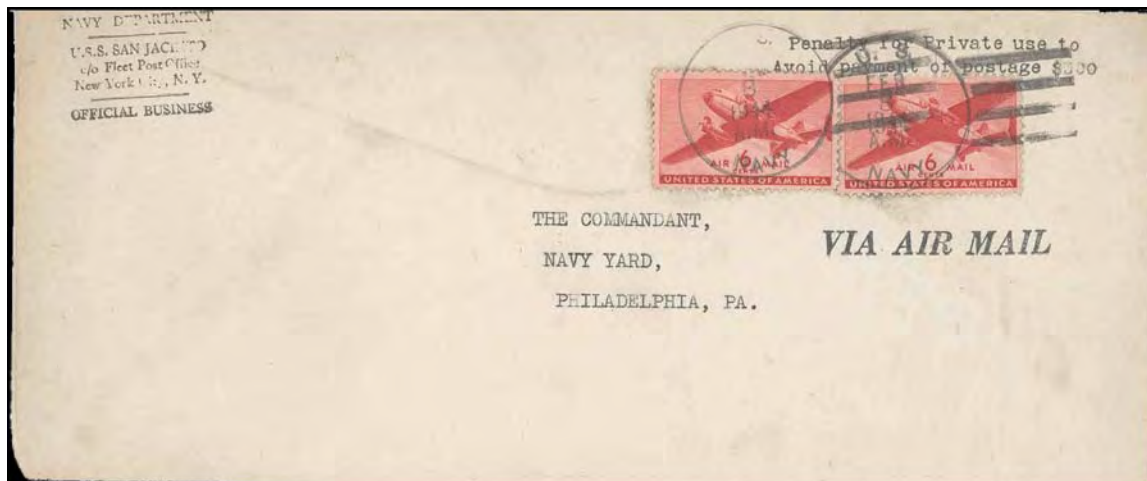


Fig. 106: *An uncensored Number 10 penalty envelope with USS San Jacinto's rubber stamp return address % FPO New York. The cover is typewritten to The Commandant Navy Yard, Philadelphia and is twice canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2z) postmark dated February 8, 1944 in black ink. The ship was commissioned on November 15, 1943 and the post office was established on January 15, 1944. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.*

After shakedown in the Caribbean, *San Jacinto* sailed, via the Panama Canal, San Diego, and Pearl Harbor, for the Pacific war zone. Arriving at Majuro, Marshall Islands, she became part of the growing might of Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's Task Force 58/38, the fast carrier striking force of the Pacific Fleet. There, *San Jacinto* embarked Air Group 51, whose fighters and torpedo planes would be the ship's chief weapons in battle.

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Fig. 107: Lieutenant Commander Albert B. Cahn gives the "Take-off" signal to a TBM-1C "Avenger" of Torpedo Squadron 51, during exercises on USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) on May 16, 1944.

*Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
(Photo #: 80-G-238772).*

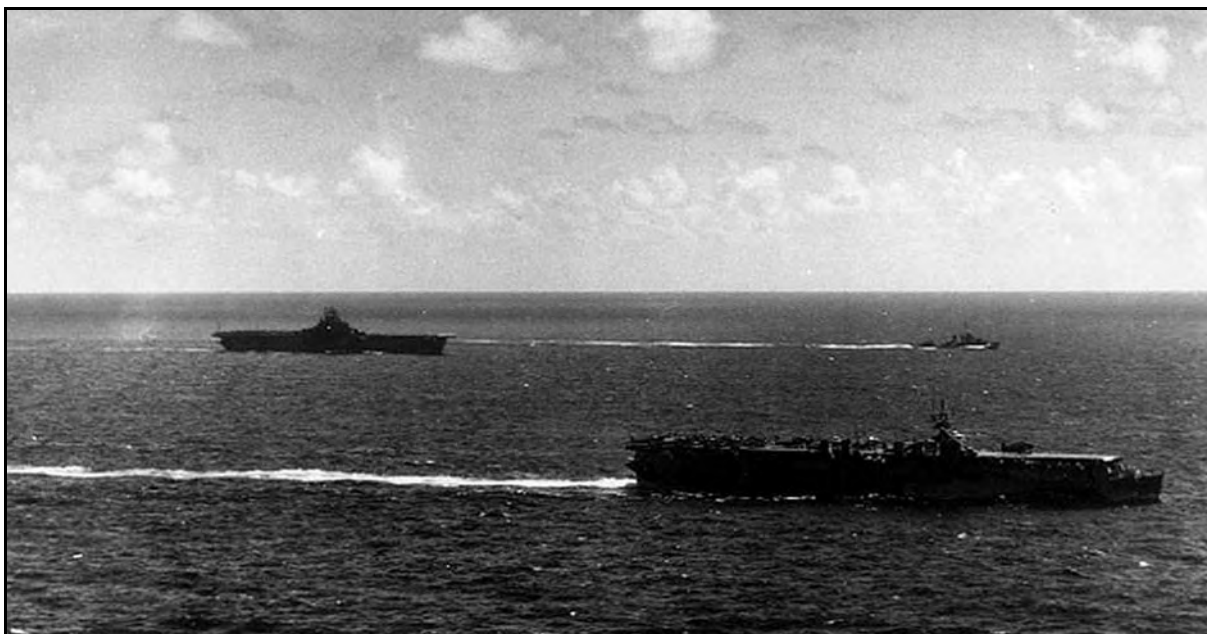


Fig. 108: USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) – right foreground, steaming in formation with USS Lexington (CV-16) and a DD-348 class destroyer, during pre-invasion operations in the Marianas area on June 13, 1944. Both carriers belonged to Task Group 58.3.

*Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
(Photo #: 80-G-238786).*

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After providing search patrols to protect other carriers striking at Wake and Marcus Islands, *San Jacinto*, by June 5, 1944, was ready to participate in the largest fleet action since the battle of Midway, almost exactly two years before. On that day, Task Force 58 sortied from Majuro and headed toward the Marianas to conduct air strikes preparatory to American seizure of Saipan and to protect the invasion forces from enemy air and naval attack.

This American thrust triggered a strong Japanese reaction; on June 19, the Japanese Fleet launched more than 400 planes against the invasion fleet and the covering carrier force. In the ensuing air battle, known to American pilots as the "Marianas Turkey Shoot," more than 300 enemy planes were shot down. While *San Jacinto's* planes were achieving their most one-sided victory of the war, her gunners helped to down the few attackers able to get near the American ships. Then, at dusk, Admiral Mitscher dispatched an all-carrier attack after the retreating enemy fleet. The night recovery of the returning planes was accomplished amid considerable confusion. Reportedly, a Japanese carrier plane attempted a landing approach on *San Jacinto*, only to be waved off by the landing signal officer because its hook wasn't down.

San Jacinto then participated in strikes against Rota and Guam and furnished combat air patrol (CAP) and antisubmarine patrol (ASP) for her task group. During these raids, a *San Jacinto* fighter pilot was shot down over Guam and spent 17 days in a life raft trying to attract attention and 16 nights hiding on the island.



Fig. 109: TBM-1C "Avenger" of Torpedo Squadron 51 (VT-51) takes off from USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) for a raid on Guam, June 28, 1944.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
(Photo #: 80-G-238783).

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Fig. 110: US Navy pilot George H. W. Bush in the cockpit of an Avenger, 1942–1945 ~ future 41st President of the United States.

Photo courtesy of the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library.
Submitted by Bill Gonyo

After a refueling and replenishment stop at Eniwetok Atoll, *San Jacinto* joined in carrier strikes against the Palaus on July 15th. On August 5, her targets were Chichi, Haha, and Iwo Jima. A brief stop at Eniwetok preceded her return to the Bonins at the end of August. During strikes on Chichi Jima on September 2, 1944 antiaircraft fire downed the General Motors TBM-3 *Avenger* flown by Lt.(j.g.) George H. W. Bush, USNR; although one of his two-man crew (either Lt. W. G. White or ARM2c J. I. Delaney) bailed out, his chute failed to open and he plummeted to his death. The submarine *Finback* (SS-230), life guarding for the strike, rescued Lt. (j.g.) Bush, covered by fighters that sank two small craft that put out from the island in hopes of taking the downed pilot captive.¹⁵ The rescued *Avenger* pilot went on to become the 41st President of the United States.

Subsequently, *San Jacinto* flew dawn-to-dusk CAP and ASP duty while other carriers struck at Yap, Ulithi, Anguar, and Babelthuap, pinning down Japanese air forces while the Palaus were being assaulted on September 15, 1944. Following a replenishment stop at Manus, Admiralty Islands, *San*

Jacinto joined in strikes against Okinawa and furnished photographic planes to get information necessary for future invasion plans. After refueling at sea, she once again supplied dawn-to-dusk air protection as other carriers sent strikes against Formosa, northern Luzon, and the Manila Bay area from October 12th to 19th. During operations on October 17th, a fighter plane made a very hard landing and inadvertently fired its machine guns into the ship's island structure, killing two men; wounding 24, including her commanding officer; and causing considerable damage to radar. Despite this accident, *San Jacinto* remained battle worthy.

As American troops landed on Leyte in the central Philippines on October 20, *San Jacinto* provided close air support. On October 24, this mission was interrupted by news of the tri-pronged approach of the Japanese fleet which precipitated the largest fleet battle in naval history.

San Jacinto sent planes against the central force in the Sibuyan Sea; then raced north to launch strikes against the northern force, resulting in heavy damage to the Japanese carriers and surface combatants off Cape Engano. On October 30, her fighters furnished air protection over Leyte while her guns shot down two planes attempting suicide attacks on the ship. After a pause at Ulithi, the carrier joined in attacks on the Manila Bay area; then took a side trip to Guam to exchange air groups, receiving Air Group 45. She received slight damage during Typhoon Viper on December 18, 1944.

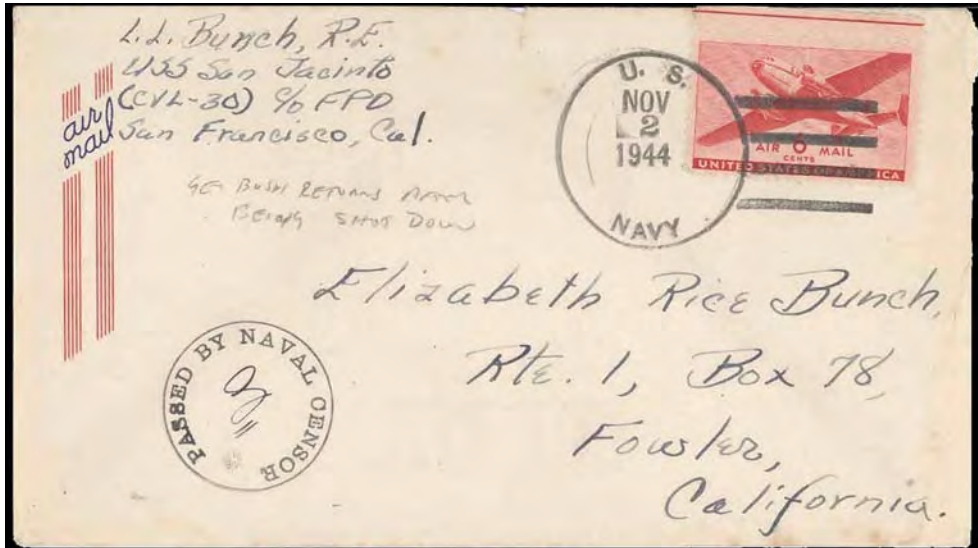


Fig. 111: A censored airmail envelope with a handwritten return address % FPO San Francisco. The cover is censored with a black rubber stamp mark and a single initial, possibly “Z,” underscored in the lower left corner, and was canceled by the ship’s rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2z) postmark dated November 2, 1944 in black ink. This was about the date that Lieutenant (junior grade) George H. W. Bush, USNR was returned to USS San Jacinto and VT 51 after he was shot down near Chichi Jima. The cancel is rated “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

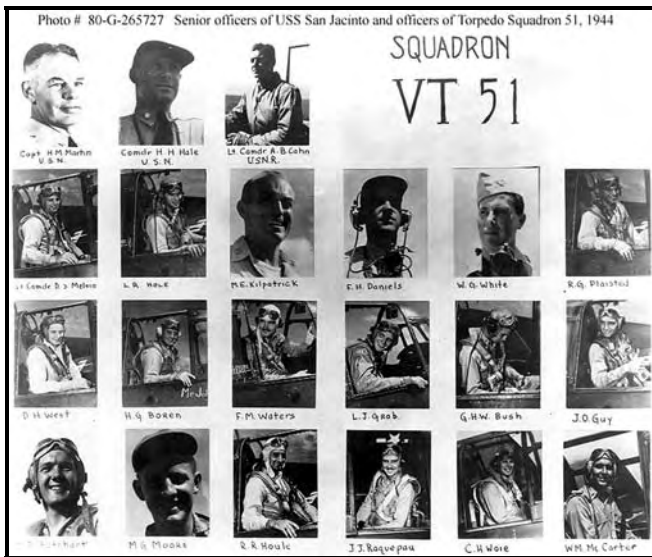


Fig. 112: Portrait montage of squadron officers of VT-51 and senior officers of its parent carrier, USS San Jacinto, circa mid-1944. The ship’s Commanding Officer, Captain Harold M. Martin, is upper left. Officer second from right, second row from bottom, is George H. W. Bush (see previous page for larger view).

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives. (Photo #: 80-G-265727).

After completing repairs at Ulithi, *San Jacinto* and the rest of her fast carrier force entered the South China Sea and launched massive air attacks on the airfields of Formosa and against shipping at Cam Ranh Bay, French Indochina, and at Hong Kong. By refueling and replenishing at sea, Task Force 38 was able to continue its pressure on the enemy and strategic support for the American invasion of Luzon by strikes against the Ryukyu Islands.

Next, *San Jacinto* joined in the first carrier strikes against the home islands of Japan. During the raids on February 16-17, 1945, carrier-based aircraft downed many enemy planes during fierce dogfights over airfields in the Tokyo area. These operations were designed to

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cover the imminent invasion of Iwo Jima. Next came air support for the landing marines, followed by further strikes against Tokyo and Okinawa before *San Jacinto* returned to Ulithi.

While conducting operations off Kyushu, Japan, she witnessed the conflagration on *Franklin* (CV-13); and, on March 19, 1945, narrowly escaped destruction herself when a *kamikaze* barely missed her. More massive enemy attacks came with Operation "Iceberg" as the carrier force furnished air support for the invasion of Okinawa. On April 5th, more than 500 planes, primarily *kamikazes*, attacked. Fighter planes and anti-aircraft guns shot down about 300, but many got through. *San Jacinto's* gunners shot the wing off a would-be suicide plane, deflecting its dive, and splashed another only 50 feet off her port bow. Her mission of covering the Okinawa invasion entailed heavy air activity and kept the ship almost constantly at general quarters while supporting ground forces and repelling frequent attacks by suicide planes. On April 7, *San Jacinto's* bombers torpedoed Japanese destroyer, *Hamakaze*, part of a naval suicide attack in which the battleship, *Yamato*, was also sunk. *San Jacinto* then returned to the dangerous job of defending against the suicide plane attacks, striking at the *kamikaze* airfields on Kyushu, and providing close air support for ground forces fighting on Okinawa. On June 5, she successfully rode out another typhoon and, after replenishing at Leyte, sortied for her final raids as part of Task Force 58. Her aircraft struck at Hokkaido and Honshu, Japan, on July 9 and continued to operate off the coast of Japan until the end of hostilities on August 15, 1945. The message *San Jacinto* received as she departed from Tokyo Bay the evening of Japan's surrender read:

COMMANDER TASK FORCE TO SAN JACINTO THE SPARK PLUG IS NOT THE BIGGEST PART OF THE MACHINE, BUT IT IS THE THING THAT MAKES HER HUM. WE WILL MISS THE LEADERSHIP OF THE LITTLE QUEEN, THE FLAGSHIP OF THE TEXAS NAVY. OUR BEST WISHES FOLLOW HER AS SHE PARTS COMPANY HOMEWARD BOUND. WELL DONE TO A GALLANT SHIP.¹⁶

Her air missions over Japan then became mercy flights over Allied prisoner-of-war camps, dropping food and medicine until the men could be rescued. Her wartime mission completed, *San Jacinto* returned home and tied up at Alameda, Calif., on September 14, 1945.

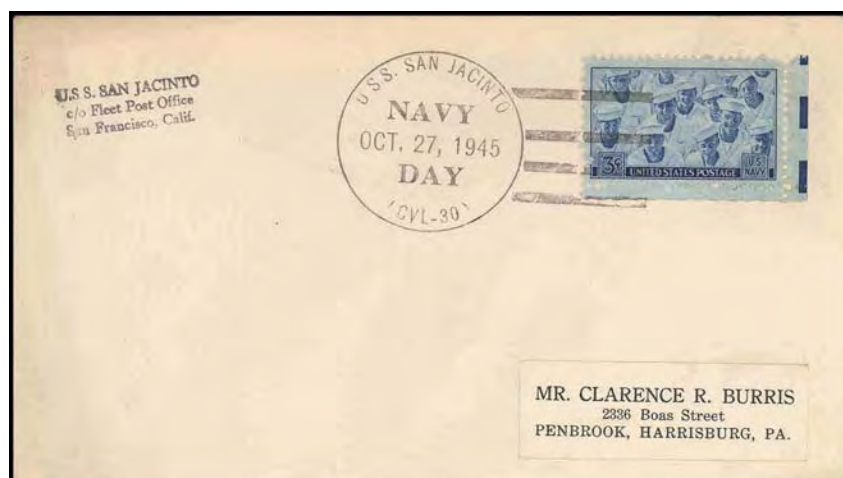


Fig. 113: An uncanceled cover with USS San Jacinto's rubber stamp return address % FPO San Francisco. The cover is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type F (S-17)) Fancy postmark dated Navy Day, October 27, 1945 in black ink on a 3¢ blue U.S. Navy commemorative stamp of 1945. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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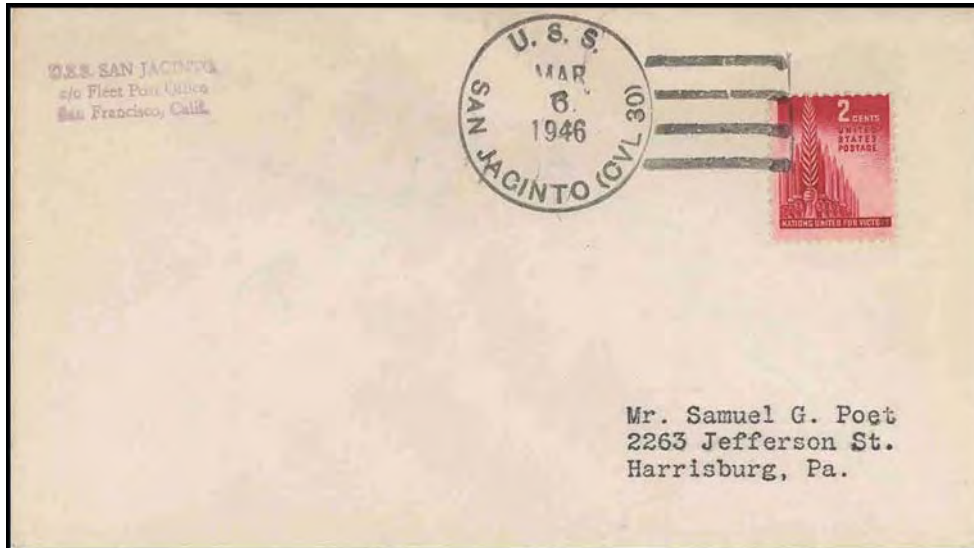


Fig. 114: An uncanceled cover with San Jacinto's rubber stamp return address % FPO San Francisco. The cover is canceled by the ship's rubber handstamp (Locy Type 2(n) postmark dated March 6, 1946 in black ink on a 2¢ red Nations United for Victory stamp. The last day of postal service was March 31, 1946 and the post office was disestablished on April 1, 1946. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

She was decommissioned on March 1, 1947 and joined the Pacific Reserve Fleet berthed at San Diego. Reclassified as an auxiliary aircraft transport (AVT-5) on May 15, 1959; she was struck from the Navy list on June 1, 1970.

San Jacinto earned five battle stars and was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. Her hull was sold for scrapping on December 15, 1971 to National Metal and Steel Co., Terminal Island, Calif.

[This series on New Jersey-built fast aircraft carriers will be continued in the following issue of NJPH.]

Photo credits: The many nice photographs of carriers are available at <http://www.navsourc.org/archives/> and [at somewhat slower speed] at <http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html> – both excellent sources of photos available for download. See also USS *Cabot* Association at: <http://www.geocities.com/usscabot/cabmen.html>.

ENDNOTES:

¹ These and other pictures courtesy of <http://www.navsourc.org/archives/> & the USS *Cabot* Association web site at <http://www.geocities.com/usscabot/cabmen.html>. See note above Endnotes.

² The author saw the ship under Spanish colors at the port of Rota, Spain in September 1979 when he was a Lieutenant serving in USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) at the start of a deployment. He returned to the joint U.S. Spanish Naval Station, Rota, en route to Garmisch, Germany, in early November 1979, when the U.S. hostages were taken in Teheran. In early 1980 *Nimitz* redeployed from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, ultimately launching the doomed hostage rescue mission and returning to Norfolk, Virginia on May 26, 1980 after 144 consecutive days underway and nearly a 10 month deployment. The author also saw the ship when she was moored near New Orleans on the Mississippi River while flying in a helicopter over the museum ship in the early 1990s.

³ In admiralty law maritime liens allow a party to arrest a ship and proceed *in rem* to enforce their liens. As in this tragic case, a ship can be condemned and sold to satisfy the claims against the hull.

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⁴ George H. W. Bush was the 40th Vice President and 41st President of the United States (1981-1989 and 1989-1993 respectively). The U.S. Navy named the final *Nimitz*-class nuclear aircraft carrier USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN-77). She was built at Newport News Shipbuilding and commissioned on January 10, 2009. After finishing flight training, Ensign Bush was assigned to Torpedo Squadron (VT-51) as photographic officer in September 1943. As part of Air Group 51, his squadron was based on USS *San Jacinto* in the spring of 1944. *San Jacinto* was part of Task Force 58 that participated in operations against Marcus and Wake Islands in May, and then in the Marianas during June. On June 19, 1944 the task force triumphed in one of the largest air battles of the war. During the return from the mission, Ensign Bush's aircraft made a forced water landing. The destroyer, USS *Clarence K. Bronson* (DD-668), rescued the crew, but the plane was lost. On July 25, Ensign Bush and another pilot received credit for sinking a small cargo ship.

After Bush was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade on August 1, *San Jacinto* commenced operations against the Japanese in the Bonin Islands. On September 2, 1944, Bush piloted one of four aircraft from VT-51 that attacked the Japanese installations on Chichi Jima. For this mission his crew included Radioman Second Class John Delaney, and Lieutenant Junior Grade William White, USNR, who substituted for Bush's regular gunner. During their attack, four TBM Avengers from VT-51 encountered intense antiaircraft fire. Bush's aircraft was quickly hit and his engine caught on fire. He completed his attack and released the bombs over his target, scoring several damaging hits. With his engine on fire, Bush flew several miles from the island, where he and one other crew member on the TBM Avenger bailed out of the aircraft. While Bush anxiously waited four hours in his inflated raft, several fighters circled protectively overhead until he was rescued by the lifeguard submarine, USS *Finback*. For this action, Bush received the Distinguished Flying Cross. During the month he remained on *Finback*, Bush participated in the rescue of other pilots.

Subsequently, Bush returned to *San Jacinto* in November 1944 and participated in operations in the Philippines. When *San Jacinto* returned to Guam, the squadron, which had suffered 50 percent casualties of its pilots, was replaced and sent to the United States. Throughout 1944, he had flown 58 combat missions for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals, and the Presidential Unit Citation awarded *San Jacinto*.

Because of his valuable combat experience, Bush was reassigned to Norfolk and put in a training wing for new torpedo pilots. Later, he was assigned as a naval aviator in a new torpedo squadron, VT-153. With the surrender of Japan, he was released from active duty on September 18, 1945 and then entered Yale University. On November 16, 1948 he was promoted to Lieutenant. Bush never drilled in the naval reserve and was not recalled to active duty for the Korean War. On October 24, 1955 his resignation was accepted under honorable conditions.

⁵ John F. Kennedy (1961-1963), Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969), Richard M. Nixon (1969-1974), Gerald R. Ford (1974-1977), and George H.W. Bush (1989-1993). James E. Carter was not a naval reserve officer and did not serve in World War II. He was a member of the Class of 1947, United States Naval Academy.

⁶ Three ships in the US Navy have been named *Cabot*, after the explorer John Cabot.

- The first USS *Cabot* of the United States was a 14-gun brig, one of the first ships of the Continental Navy, and the first to be captured in the American Revolutionary War. The brig was purchased in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during November 1775, and placed under the command of Captain J. B. Hopkins, where she seized large quantities of desperately needed military supplies, and seven prizes. *Cabot* stood out of Boston in 1777, and encountered the more powerful HMS *Milford*. The British ship chased *Cabot* and forced her ashore in Nova Scotia. *Cabot's* captain and crew escaped unharmed, but British were able to take possession of the ship, and refitted her for service in the Royal Navy.
- The second USS *Cabot* (CV-16) was renamed *Lexington* on June 16, 1942, prior to launch.
- The third *Cabot* is this vessel.

⁷ The nickname "CRIPDIVONE" was created by Halsey's Third Fleet staff "Dirty Tricks Department." It was an obvious play on words for the Navy acronym for CRUDIVONE or Cruiser Division ONE. Both *Canberra* and *Houston* were towed to safety and repaired. *Canberra* later was converted to Navy's second guided missile cruiser (CAG-2), with her heavy cruiser six 8 inch guns in two mounts forward and two missile launchers astern. *Canberra* reverted to (CA-70) prior to being decommissioned in February 10, 1970. She served repeatedly off Vietnam, providing heavy gunfire support. After temporary repairs *Houston* proceeded to Manus December 20th and eventually steamed to New York Navy Yard, arriving March 24, 1945. *Houston* steamed out of New York harbor on October 11, 1945, after extensive rebuilding. Following refresher training in the Caribbean she took part in training exercises out of Newport, R.I. during 1946 and 1947 to Europe and the Mediterranean

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Sea. Returning to Philadelphia on August 16, 1947, *Houston* decommissioned on December 15, 1947, was placed in reserve, and finally stricken from the Navy List on March 1, 1959 and scrapped.

⁸ <http://www.geocities.com/usscabot/28photo.html>

⁹ In addition to earning the Navy Occupation Service Medal for service in Asiatic waters during the period of September 2 to October 15, 1945, USS *Cabot* (CVL-28) earned nine battle stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Service Ribbon for participation in the following operations:

Marshall Islands Operation

Occupation for Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls 29 January to 8 February 1944

Asiatic-Pacific Raids

Truk Attack 16-17 February 1944
Palau, Yap, Ulithi, Woleai Raid-30 March to 1 April 1944
Truk, Satawan, Ponape Raid 29 April to 1 May 1944

Hollandia Operation

Aitape-Humboldt Bay - Tansmerah Bay 21 April to 1 June 1944

Marianas Operations

Battle of the Philippine Sea 19-20 June 1944
Third Bonins Raid 3-4 July
Capture and Occupation of Saipan 11 June to 10 August
Capture and Occupation of Guam 12 July to 15 August
Palau, Yap, Ulithi Raid 25-27 July
Fourth Bonins Raid 4-5 August 1944

Western Carolina Islands Operations

Capture and Occupation of southern Palau Islands 6 September to 14 October 1944
Assaults on Philippine Islands 9-24 September

Leyte Operation

Third Fleet supporting operations and Okinawa attack.
10 October 1944

Northern Luzon and Formosa Attacks 11-14 October
Battle of Surigao Strait 24-26 October
Luzon Attacks 15 October to 16 December 1944
Visayans Attacks October and November 1944

Luzon Operation

Formosa attacks January 1945
Luzon attacks 6-7 January 1945
China Coast attacks 12-16 January
Nansei Shoto attack 22 January 1945

Iwo Jima Operations

Assault and occupations of Iwo Jima 15 February-16 March 1945
Fifth Fleet raids against Honshu and the Nansei Shoto
15 February to 16 March 1945

Okinawa Gunto Operations

Fifth and Third Fleet raids in support of
Okinawa Gunto operation 12 March to 11 June 1945

¹⁰ <http://www.geocities.com/usscabot/28brown.html>

¹¹ *Bataan* was named for the World War II battle in the Philippine Islands in 1942. Currently, an amphibious assault ship named USS *Bataan* (LHD-5) serves with the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. *Bataan* received battle stars in World War II: Her planes supported the attack on Hollandia, New Guinea, between 21 and 24 April 1944. Next, *Bataan* launched air strikes against Truk, Satawan, and Ponape (29 April-1 May 1944); in her First Bonins raid (15-16 June 1944); air strikes against Saipan, Marianas (11 June 10 August); air strikes in the Battle of the Philippine Sea (19-20 June 1944); air strikes against Bonins a second time on 24 June 1944). *Bataan* joined TF 58 and participated in the fleet raids in support of the Okinawa operation (17 March-30 May 1945), during which her aircraft assisted in the sinking of the Japanese submarine I-56, 18 April 1945, in 26°42' N., 130°38' E. Retiring to the Philippines, *Bataan* joined the Third Fleet for operations against the Japanese home islands (10 July-15 August). She returned to the United States, arriving at New York on October 17, 1945, and was assigned to "Magic Carpet" duty.

¹² No modern warship has been named for this major city.

¹³ The original *Reprisal* was a Revolutionary vessel, serving under Capt. Lambert Wickes, helping in the defeat of the British off the coast of the British Isles. It was lost on its return home off the shores of Newfoundland – all on board except the cook went down with her. CVL 30 was the second ship to be named *Reprisal*, but the name was changed to *San Jacinto* to mollify her Texas sponsors. The third and final ship to be so named was CV-35, laid down July 1, 1944, but her construction was cancelled and she was scrapped in November 1949.

¹⁴ On 21 April 1836, General Sam Houston and his outnumbered troops won independence for Texas by decisively defeating a Mexican army at the San Jacinto River.

¹⁵ Chichi Jima was infamous for the dastardly war crimes committed there. No captured U.S. naval aviators survived. Some were cannibalized by their captors. LTJG Bush apparently was aware of the horrors of the risk of captivity and told at least one biographer that he did not intend to accept capture alive. See *The Flyboys* by James Brady.

¹⁶ See Frugal's World Website at:

<http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:kYeV6ee7xLcJ:www.frugalsworld.com/modules/zmagazine/article.php%3Farticleid%3D103+world+war+II+%2B+battle+stars+%2B+%22USS+San+Jacinto%22&cd=14&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1927 AND 2009.

PART V: THE LAST CLASS OF SMALL CARRIERS, USS SAIPAN (CVL-48) AND USS WRIGHT (CVL-49)

By: Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, JAGC, USN (Ret.) 176 Christol Street, Metuchen NJ 08840
Lawrence.brennan@wilsonleser.com

[This is the fifth in a series of articles begun in the summer issue of NJPH, Aug. 2008, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole No. 171 and continued in the November 2008 (Whole No. 172) and the February & May 2009 (Whole Nos. 173 & 174) issues. For picture credits see note above Endnotes.¹]

The first ten fast carriers built in Camden by New York Shipbuilding served in the Pacific Theatre of Operations during World War II and were involved in the battles and campaigns except Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, and Midway. In 1941 and 1942 *Saratoga* was the lone New Jersey-built carrier; from 1943 to the end of the war in the summer of 1945, the emergency light carriers led the offensive with the Third Fleet and Fifth Fleet culminating in the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. During the first ten months of 1944, ten New Jersey-built fast carriers were spearheading the offensives in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The eleventh and twelfth fast carriers built at New York Shipbuilding were a separate class of two light carriers completed too late to serve in combat during World War II. The *Saipan*-class was designed as improved replacements for anticipated combat losses of the *Independence*-class carriers. Two ships were ordered but fortuitously only a single *Independence*-class ship, USS *Princeton* (CVL-23), was lost in October 1944.

The *Saipan*-class ships displaced 14,700 tons on a hull of 684' length, with a beam of 76'9" and an extreme width at the flight deck of 115'. The maximum draft was 28' and the designated speed was 33 knots. The ships' crews consisted of 1,721 officers and men. They could operate 50 aircraft, nearly a 50% increase over the *Independence*-class and almost half the complement operated by the *Essex*-class fleet carriers. They had forty 40 mm anti-aircraft guns.

Surprisingly, the last two small carriers were completed at a time the U.S. Navy had suspended or canceled the construction of other, larger, advanced designed and more capable fleet carriers of the *Essex* and *Midway* classes. In retrospect, it is apparent that the already inadequate *Saipan*-class ships were a poor investment. They each served about a decade as second-rate carriers and only one of the two provided minimal combat service after the armistice in July 1953 at the end of the Korean conflict. Some of the *Essex*-class ships would serve in combat through Vietnam with the last ship serving until 1975 – some reaching nearly 30 years after initial commissioning. The three completed *Midway*-class large carriers (initially designated CVBs) would serve through Vietnam and two of the three, *Midway* (CV-41)² and *Coral Sea* (CV-43) would serve more than 40 years with *Coral Sea* being decommissioned in the late 1980s and *Midway* after Desert Shield/Desert Storm – the First Gulf War in the early 1990s. Most of the *Essex*-class ships and all three *Midway*-class carriers were substantially rebuilt in the 1950s and subsequently modernized through the remainder of their service lives to include hurricane bows, angled decks, strengthened flight decks, improved catapults, and arresting gear

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to handle the larger and faster jet aircraft that dominated naval aviation since the 1950s. The light carriers, however, were too small and their designs “too stretched” to be modified to include angled decks (they were already too “top heavy”). They had wooden flight decks which were vulnerable to attack and operational damage and they did not have the flight deck or hangar deck space to properly handle a substantial air wing of jets and later helicopters and larger fixed wing aircraft. A better use of the budget at the end of World War II could have been devoted to the construction of a fourth *Midway*-class carrier or the completion of one of the numerous *Essex*-class fleet carriers that were suspended or scrapped in the late 1940s; only *Oriskany* (CV-34)³ was completed, and that was the prudent result of improvements in the design of carriers in the years between the end of World War II and the Korean conflict.

USS SAIPAN (CVL-48)

Saipan was laid down on July 10, 1944, launched nearly a year later on July 8, 1945 and commissioned on July 14, 1946, Capt. John G. Crommelin, U.S. Navy⁴ in command. *Saipan* was the first ship named for the 1944 battle and invasion of the island in the Northern Marianas Islands.



Fig. 115: Artwork reproduction of USS Saipan (CVL-48) insignia during the 1950s
U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph# NH 70134-KN



Fig. 116: A rubber stamp cachet in red and blue inks showing a starboard bow view of a Yorktown-class carrier. The cover was postmarked on July 14, 1946, Saipan’s first day in commission. It bears Saipan’s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n)) and was franked with a purple 3¢ Alfred E. Smith stamp. Clearly, this was a philatelic usage which was addressed to the famous cachet artist, Gow Ng, whose hand-painted submarine covers, in particular, are highly prized by collectors. The cancel is listed as “B” in the Postmark Catalog.

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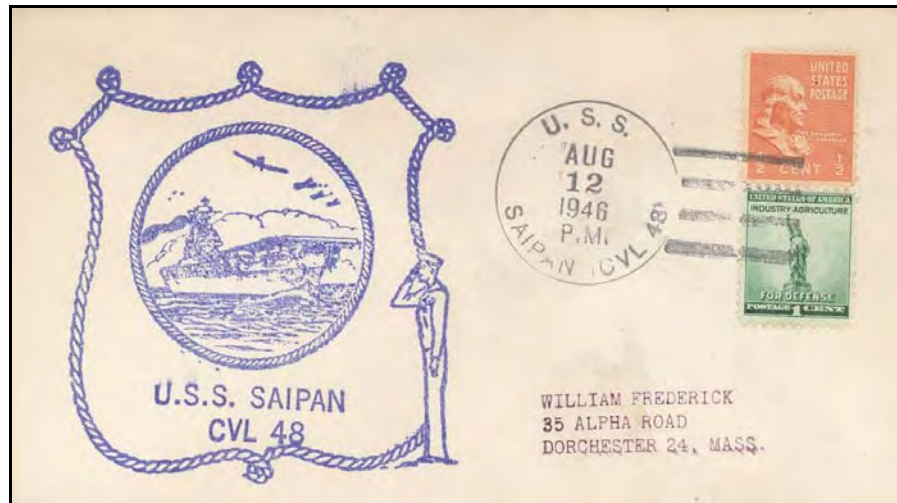


Fig. 117: A rubber stamp cachet in blue ink showing a starboard bow view of a Yorktown-class carrier with double frames of rope line in a circle within a rectangle, and a saluting sailor in uniform in the lower right corner of the cachet. The cover was postmarked on August 12, 1946. It bears Saipan's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n)) and was franked with a green 1¢ For Defense stamp and an orange half cent Franklin stamp from the 1938 Presidential series. This also was a philatelic cover which was addressed to the famous collector and navy postal clerk instructor, William Frederick, who was stationed at Newport training postal clerks during World War II. The cancel is listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

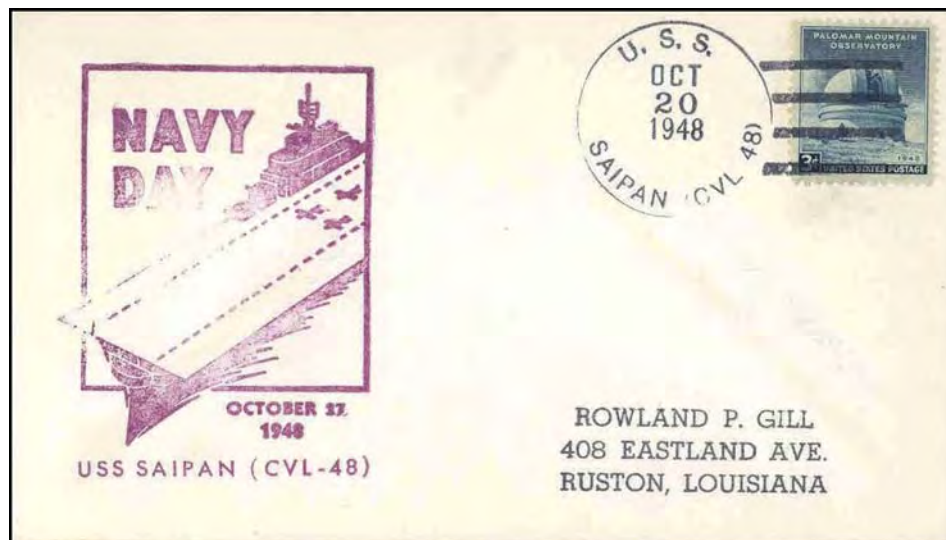


Fig. 118: A rubber stamp cachet weakly applied in red ink with a Navy Day 1948 motif showing a port bow on view of a large carrier. The cover is cancelled with Saipan's rubber hand stamp (Locy Type 2(n+)) in black ink. The cover bears a blue 3¢ Palomar Mountain Observatory stamp. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

Until 1953, *Saipan* mainly operated in the western Atlantic and the Caribbean on training service, routine operations, and operational development duties, including conducting carrier qualifications for VF-17A, the Navy's first jet fighter squadron, in May 1948. During this period, *Saipan* also made a diplomatic cruise to Venezuela in February 1948, a mission to Greenland late in that year where she assisted in the rescue of 11 downed airmen on an icecap between Christmas and the end of the year, a Mediterranean tour in March-May 1951, and Second Fleet operations.



Fig. 119: FH-1 Phantom of VF-17A on USS Saipan, May 1948.⁵



Fig. 120: USS Saipan (CVL-48). Crewmen wash snow and ice from the flight deck and superstructure, during Operation "Icecap." Ice is visible on the island and mast. Circa late December 1948, when Saipan was sent to Greenland waters on a rescue mission.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center.

Photo #: NH 97614.

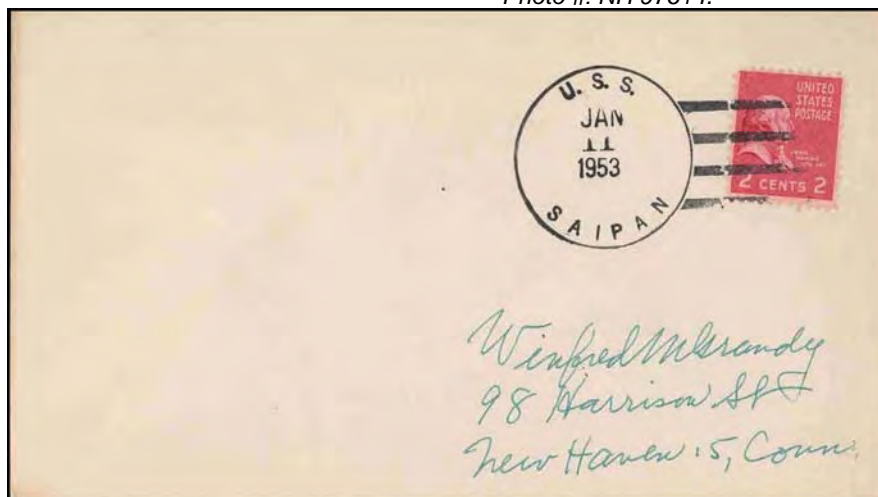


Fig. 121: A rubber stamp uncached cover. The cover is cancelled with Saipan's rubber hand stamp (Locy Type 2) in black ink. The cover bears a rose carmine 2¢ John Adams stamp. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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In October 1953, she departed the east coast and steamed for the Panama Canal and the Pacific. On October 30, she arrived at San Diego, and then continued on to Pearl Harbor, Yokosuka, and duty with the Seventh Fleet off the coast of Korea in support of the truce which has lasted 56 years.



Fig. 122: USS Saipan (CVL-48) Underway circa the mid-1950s, with eleven AD-1 "Skyraider" attack planes parked on her flight deck, aft.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center
Photo #: NH 97613



Fig. 123: An uncanceled cover was postmarked on December 28 1954. It bears Saipan's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2r) and was franked with a blue 3¢ Future Farmers of America stamp. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Assigned to TF 95, she was engaged primarily in surveillance and reconnaissance missions along the coast and in inspection patrols of the islands just south of the 38th parallel. In January 1954, she provided air support for Japanese-manned LSTs ferrying former Chinese POWs from Inchon to new homes on Taiwan. In early February, she participated in amphibious exercises in the Ryukyus, and then returned to Inchon to stand by in the event she was needed for an evacuation of Indian troops from Panmunjom. In March, amphibious exercises took her to the Bonins. She then returned to Japan where she took on 25 AU-type aircraft and five H-19A helicopters at Yokosuka and steamed south. On April 18th, VMA-324 pilots flew the AUs off her flight deck and landed them at Tourane (now Danang) Air Base, to support the French Aeronavale fighting at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in the last days of the First Indochina War. There the aircraft were turned over to French forces. Later that day, *Saipan* entered the harbor, offloaded spare parts and maintenance personnel, and departed for Manila.

She then delivered the helicopters to Air Force personnel in the Philippines; and she resumed operations off the coast of Korea. On May 8, she put into Sasebo, and, through the 24th, remained in Japanese waters. On the 25th, she got underway to return to Norfolk via the Suez Canal. On July 20, she completed her circumnavigation – perhaps the only such voyage by a small carrier. For nearly three more years, *Saipan* served as training carrier out of Pensacola, Florida. In October 1954 and again a year later, she assisted hurricane relief activities in Haiti and Mexico.

Decommissioned at Bayonne, New Jersey, on October 3, 1957, *Saipan* was redesignated as an aircraft transport in May 1959, with the new hull number AVT-6. She remained in “mothballs,” however, until March 1963, when she began conversion to a command ship. *Saipan* was redesignated CC-3 in January 1964, but was again reclassified in September of that year, becoming a major communications relay ship. She was recommissioned on August 27, 1966 at Norfolk, Virginia as *Arlington* (AGMR-2).



*Fig. 124: USS Saipan was reborn in 1966 as USS Arlington (AGMR-2), underway, circa 1967.*⁶

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center.

Photo #: NH 97625

In 1967 she conducted shakedown exercises in the Caribbean, the Bay of Biscay and exercises off northern Europe before returning to the Caribbean. Departing Norfolk on July 7, the communications ship transited the Panama Canal and proceeded on to Pearl Harbor, Yokosuka, and Subic Bay. She rotated on station off Vietnam with *Annapolis* (AGMR-1) and also assisted with recovery operations during the Apollo manned space missions in 1968 through 1970.

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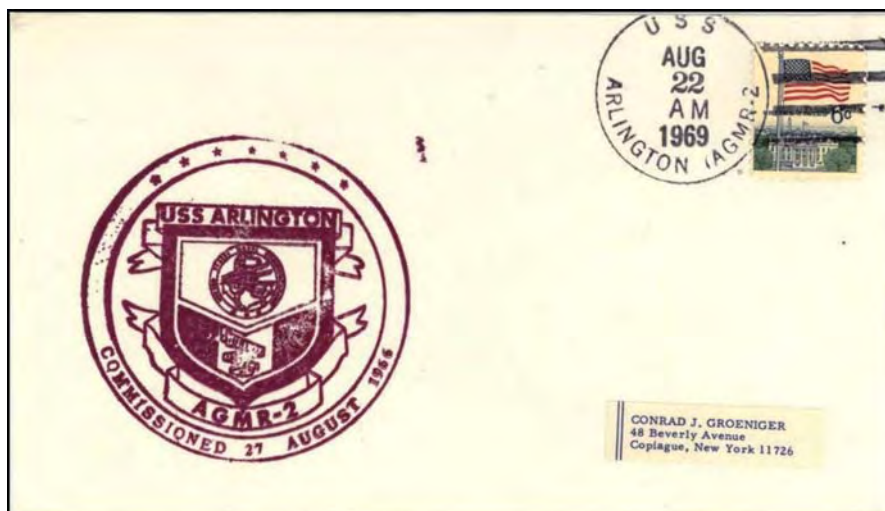


Fig. 125: A rubber stamp cacheted cover which was postmarked on August 22, 1969. It bears Arlington's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n+)) and was franked with a red, white, and blue 6¢ Flag over the White House regular issue stamp. The cancel is listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

On December 18, 1968, she departed Hawaii in TF 130, the Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force, Pacific. Acting as primary landing area communications relay ship, she participated in the recovery of Apollo 8. Again assigned as primary landing area communications relay ship for TF 130, she departed Pearl Harbor on May 11, 1969 and steamed for the Apollo 10 recovery area, 2,400 miles south of Hawaii. On the 26th, the capsule was recovered and the assigned ships returned to Hawaii. *Arlington* proceeded to Midway where she provided communications support for the Nixon-Thieu conference on June 8, and next she sailed west.

On July 7, however, she again was ordered east for her third Apollo recovery mission. On the 23d, she embarked President Richard M. Nixon⁷ for an overnight visit; and, on the 24th, supported the recovery of Apollo 11. Crew and capsule successfully recovered, *Arlington* headed for Hawaii, and then steamed to the west coast. On August 21, she arrived for the first time at her homeport, Long Beach, and four days later shifted to San Diego to begin inactivation. She was decommissioned on January 14, 1970 and berthed with the Inactive Fleet at San Diego. The ship was stricken from the Navy List on August 15, 1975, and was sold by the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) for scrapping on June 1, 1976. *Arlington* (AGMR-2) earned 7 campaign stars for service off Vietnam.

USS WRIGHT (CVL-49)

USS *Wright* (CVL-49) was the final *Saipan*-class light aircraft carrier later converted to the command ship CC-2. She was the second ship named *Wright*; the first *Wright* (AZ-1) was named for Orville Wright⁸; the second honored both brothers: Orville and Wilbur.

Wright was laid down on August 21, 1944, launched on 1 September 1, 1945, the day before the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay – actually within hours of that event considering the half day time difference between the East Coast and Tokyo - and commissioned at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on February 9, 1947, with Captain Frank T. Ward, U.S. Navy in command.

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Fig. 126: A rectangular rubber stamp cachet in blue ink showing a nearly bow-on view of a large carrier with an enclosed bow, unlike the small carriers, and a single plane launched. The cover marks the launching of Wright and is cancelled on September 1, 1945, with a Camden machine cancel and seven wavy lines. The cover bears a purple 3¢ FDR stamp.

Fig. 127: A printed first day postal service cachet showing a bow-on view of three pre-war battleships at the head of the battleline. The cover is cancelled on February 9, 1947, the first day in commission, with Wright's rubber hand stamp (Locy Type P) in black ink. The cover bears a purple 3¢ Vermont Statehood 150th Anniversary stamp. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 128: USS Wright (CVL-49) Lieutenant James waves a Texas flag from the cockpit of his F6F "Hellcat" fighter, after landing on board the Wright in August 1948.

Collection of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.
 U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph
 Photo #: NH 62399.

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Fig. 129: A printed cachet in blue and red inks showing a nearly bow-on view of a large carrier with an open bow, and Wright's homeport at US Naval Aviation Training Base (U.S.N.A.T.B.) Pensacola, Florida with naval aviators' wings. The cover was postmarked on Navy Day, October 27, 1948. It bears Wright's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n)) and was franked with a purple 3¢ Fort Kearney stamp. The cancel is rated "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

She spent most of her time through 1950 serving as a training carrier out of Pensacola, Florida, with occasional diversions to anti-submarine warfare operations and other duties. In January-March 1951, the ship made the first of four overseas deployments, this first with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Following more than a year of anti-submarine exercises and other training activities off the U.S. east coast, *Wright* crossed the Atlantic again in August 1952 to take part in NATO Operation "Mainbrace" in northern European waters. She made a final Mediterranean deployment in February-May 1953.

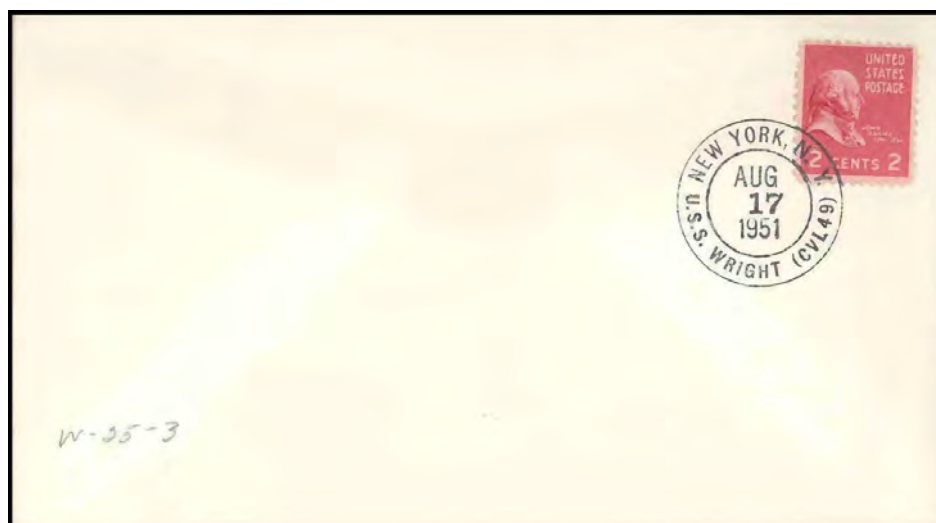


Fig. 130: A clearly philatelic but uncached cover postmarked on August 17, 1951, it bears Wright's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 9efu) and was franked with a rose carmine 2¢ John Adams regular issue stamp of the 1938 Presidential Series. The cancel is rated "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Fig. 131: *USS Wright (CVL-49) underway circa the mid-1950s, with about eighteen U.S. Marine Corps AD “Skyraider” aircraft parked on her flight deck.*

Official U.S. Navy
Photograph, from the
collections of the Naval
Historical Center Photo
#: NH 97617



Fig. 132: *A printed cachet in blue ink showing a nearly bow-on view of a large carrier with an enclosed bow (similar to the pre-war Lexington-class), and cruisers and destroyers, plus an Asian dragon superimposed. The cover was postmarked on February 17, 1954 while the ship was serving in the Far East. It bears Wright’s rubber stamp hand cancels (Locy Type 2 and Type 9efu), and was franked with a 3¢ Anniversary of New York City stamp. Clearly, this was a philatelic cover and there is no mailing address or return address. The cancels are listed as “A” and “B” respectively in the Postmark Catalog.*

In April 1954, *Wright* passed through the Panama Canal to join the Pacific Fleet. She operated in the Far East with the Seventh Fleet, carrying a Marine Corps attack squadron, during May-October 1954. The next year she participated in the nuclear weapons test Operation “Wigwam,” then began inactivation preparations. *USS Wright* decommissioned at Bremerton, Washington, in March 1956. While in reserve, she was redesignated an aircraft transport (AVT-7) in May 1959. In March 1962, she entered the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard to begin conversion to a command ship. She was reclassified CC-2 in September of that year and recommissioned on May 11, 1963 with Capt. John L. Arrington, II, U.S. Navy in command.

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Fig. 133: USS Wright as CC-2 off Southern California in September 1963.

Wright operated locally on trials and training evolutions off the Pacific Northwest until September 3, 1963 when she departed Seattle and proceeded to San Diego which she reached three days later. For the next three weeks, the ship trained in local waters before returning to Puget Sound for post-shakedown availability.

Wright sailed south along the Pacific coast, through the Panama Canal to her new homeport, Norfolk, Virginia. En route she provided medical assistance to a sailor in an Israeli flag merchant ship. For the next six years, *Wright* operated out of Norfolk, training to perform her assigned mission as an emergency command post afloat. Regular overhauls performed at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard continually improved her capabilities. She operated primarily off the Virginia Capes, but ranged as far north as Bar Harbor, Maine, and as far south as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Punta del Este, Uruguay. On occasion, she alternated on “alert” status with USS *Northampton* (CC-1).

From April 11 to 14 1967, *Wright* lay at anchor off the coast of Uruguay, providing a worldwide communications capability supporting President Lyndon B. Johnson as he attended the Latin American summit conference at Punta del Este. On May 8, 1968, *Wright* aided USS *Guadalcanal* (LPH-7), which had gone dead in the water, 180 miles south of Norfolk. *Wright* towed the ship 84 miles before other ships arrived. During the *Pueblo* crisis in February 1969, *Wright* stood by, on alert off Norfolk. Ultimately decommissioned on May 27, 1970, *Wright* was placed in reserve at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. The ship was stricken from the Navy List on December 1, 1977, and sold by the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) for scrapping on August 1, 1980.

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Fig. 134: A printed cachet in blue ink by Tazewell G. Nicholson, the long-time cover sponsor at Norfolk, Virginia. The cover was postmarked on March 31, 1970, the last day of postal service, just prior to the ship's final retirement as a Command Ship. It bears Wright's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n+)) and was franked with a 5¢ red Poland's Millennium stamp and 1¢ green Thomas Jefferson regular stamp of the Famous Americans series. The postmark is listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

Summation for the CVLs

The eleven small carriers⁹ were all built in Camden by New York Shipbuilding, a rare example of sole source procurement at that early date. With the understanding that they were "emergency carriers," albeit ships designed based on a long-standing plan to convert cruisers into aircraft carriers, they made important and timely contributions to the battles in the Pacific starting in late 1943. The nine ships of the *Independence*-class were crucial to the success of the "Big Blue Fleet" (Halsey's Third Fleet and Spruance's Fifth Fleet), as they led the offensive across the central Pacific to Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. The key to their utility was their ability to operate at fleet speeds – run with the fast carriers and turn into the wind and generate the relative wind to launch and recover aircraft. They were minimally capable of carrying contemporary fighters and bombers and had a capacity to carry about a third of the aircraft as the *Essex*-class ships. They took punishment; *Independence* returned from major torpedo damage in the fall of 1943 off Tarawa and only *Princeton* was lost – perhaps a full size fast carrier would not have succumbed to such damage but the small carriers were more battle-worthy than the escort carriers – CVEs – which could be lost to a single torpedo with catastrophic loss of life. Moreover, the small carriers were less frequently struck by torpedoes, bombs, or even kamikazes. Perhaps they were less attractive targets for Japanese aviators than their larger sisters or perhaps they were smaller and more maneuverable targets. The *Independence*-class ships had relatively short service lives but they were "driven hard" during their combat careers in the Pacific and laid up quickly during the peace because of the rapid demobilization of the Navy. Even the new *Essex*-class ships were decommissioned in 1946 and 1947. The *Independence*-class ships just were not capable of taking naval aviation into the jet age. They did what they were designed to do; they all fought a war and fought it magnificently to victory.

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Unlike the *Independence*-class ships, the two *Saipan*-class ships discussed here were completed too late for combat in World War II and really did not see action during the Korean War. They had longer service lives than most of their predecessors, nearly a decade of commissioned service as aircraft carriers, but they never really were first rate combatants. Their mid-life conversions to communications and command ships were examples of imaginative use of a valuable asset that lost its primary utility. They were large, expensive, and manpower intensive (*i.e.* expensive to operate) and both were decommissioned in the early years of the Nixon administration when the U.S. decreased from more than a 1,000 ship fleet to fewer than 600 ships.

The State of New Jersey, its industries, and citizens contributed mightily in the design, modification, building, and fitting out of these important ships during a global war. The last of these steel ships have been transformed into fading memories and the sailors who served in them in harm's way in the Pacific now are well in their 80s. The future holds brilliant promises of fond memories and deep appreciation to all who sacrificed to build and fight these ships.

[This series on New Jersey-built fast aircraft carriers will conclude in the following issue of NJPH, with the history of the final New Jersey-built fast carrier, USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-63), which has served more than 47 years as the last and longest serving conventional carrier in the history of the United States Navy.]

ERRATA for Part IV

The commissioning date for USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) was misstated in the Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships as November 15, 1943. The actual date of her commissioning was December 15, 1943, making San Jacinto the last built and last commissioned member of the Independence-class. Navy History and Heritage Command advised that it will be correcting the on-line version of DANFS.

The first two sentences of the second paragraph of Part IV (Vol. 37/No. 2, Whole No. 174, p. 79) should be replaced with: "Bataan was placed in service one month before her sister ship, San Jacinto."

The author regrets this error and his lack of diligence in checking all available sources, some of which had the correct date.

LBB

Photo credits: The many nice photographs of carriers are available at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/> and [at somewhat slower speed] at <http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html> – both excellent sources of photos available for download. .

ENDNOTES:

¹ These and other pictures courtesy of <http://www.navsource.org/archives> & the Department of the Navy-Naval History and Heritage Command web pages at <http://www.history.navy.mil/branches/org11-2.htm>, in addition to some images sourced from Wikipedia Commons. All photos are in the public domain. See note above Endnotes.

² *Midway* (CVB-41, CVA-41, CV-41) was the lead ship of the class and the third to bear that name. She and the last completed ship, *Coral Sea* (CVB-43, CVA-43, CV-43), were built by Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. Both were named after the pivotal naval aviation battles of 1942.

The large carrier *Midway* was to be the longest serving member of her class, in large part because she was the first U.S. carrier to be home ported overseas. Ironically, she was stationed in the former Imperial Japanese Naval base at Yokosuka, Japan. There was a certain sense of perverse humor in walking to the McDonald's on base on streets named for King, Halsey, Spruance, and other heroes of the Pacific War. Certainly, the coincidence of homeporting a ship named for the crucial defeat of the Imperial Navy in the "famous four minutes" of June 4, 1942 could not have been lost on the host nation. The third ship of the class was USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVB-42, CVA-42, CV-42). She was built by New York Naval Shipyard, Brooklyn, New York and commissioned in 1945. Originally scheduled to be christened *Coral Sea*, the name was changed upon the death of President Roosevelt in April 1945. For more about the early years of USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* see the author's forthcoming articles "The Jesuit Fleet" to be published in the *Universal Ship Cancellation Society's LOG* in September 2009, Vol. 76, No. 8, Whole # 910, pp. 20-27 and October 2009, Vol. 76, No. 9, Whole # 911, pp. 20 *et seq.* See www.uscs.org.

³ *Oriskany* was built at the New York Naval Shipyard in Brooklyn. Initially begun as an *Essex*-class carrier, construction was suspended after the end of World War II but resumed and completed to a modified design. Construction was suspended on August 12, 1947, when the ship was approximately 85% complete. *Oriskany* was redesigned as the prototype for the SCB-27 modernization program. She was built with an angled flight deck and hurricane bow. To handle the new generation of carrier aircraft, the flight deck structure was massively reinforced. Stronger elevators, more powerful hydraulic catapults, and new arresting gear were installed. The island structure was rebuilt, the anti-aircraft turrets were removed, and blisters were added to the hull. Bulges were added to increase the cross-sectional area or beam of a ship's hull, thereby increasing buoyancy and stability as well as tank volume for bunker fuel and aviation fuel. These alternations were crucial to a ship that had so much topside weight added after its original design. She was finally completed and commissioned during the first months of the Korean War on September 25, 1950. She served in combat extensively off Vietnam from 1964 until 1975. At that time she could no longer handle the front line jet aircraft but operated an air wing consisting of A-4 Skyhawks and F-8 Crusaders. *Oriskany* was decommissioned on September 30, 1976 and retained in reserve until she was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register. In 2004 it was decided to sink her as an artificial reef off the coast of Florida in the Gulf of Mexico. After removal of toxic substances, she was sunk in May 2006, settling in an upright position at a depth accessible to recreational divers. *Oriskany* is the world's largest artificial reef.

⁴ Captain John Crommelin was one of five brothers who were graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and served during World War II. "Bomb run" John was involved in the revolt of the admirals – a bitter dispute caused by the creation of the U.S. Air Force, the establishment of the Department of Defense, and most importantly, the conflict between aircraft carriers and manned bombers during the Truman administration. In 1950 The *New York Times's* military affairs expert, Hanson W. Baldwin, wrote that Captain Crommelin was a "stormy petrel who wouldn't shut up." John Crommelin retired as a Rear Admiral, a tombstone promotion, without pay but with the prestige of flag rank, in recognition of his heroic combat service. Interestingly, he is not one of the name-sakes of USS CROMMELIN (FFG 37), twenty-eighth ship of the *Oliver Hazard Perry*-class of guided-missile frigates, the first United States Navy ship of that named for three brothers: Vice Admiral Henry CROMMELIN (1904-1971), Commander Charles CROMMELIN (died 1945), and Lieutenant Commander Richard CROMMELIN (1917-1945). Born of a pioneer Alabama family in Montgomery and Wetumpka, Henry, the eldest, became a Surface Warfare Officer while Richard and Charles died in combat as naval aviators. Individually and as a fighting family, they gained fame in World War II, attaining outstanding combat records and multiple decorations. A monument commemorating their bravery rests in Battleship Park in Mobile, Alabama.

After serving as Executive Officer of USS *Enterprise* (CV-6), (the most decorated ship of World War II which was scrapped at Kearney, New Jersey following extensive attempts to save her as a museum ship failed), Captain John Crommelin was Chief of Staff to Commander, Carrier Division 24, and the senior survivor of the torpedoing on November 24, 1943 of USS *Liscome Bay* (CVE-56) by I-175 following the Tarawa invasion. More

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than 600 officers and men were lost with *Liscome Bay*. See my article, "From the Starboard Delta: USS *Liscome Bay* (CVE-56)" *Universal Ship Cancellation Log* November 2008, Vol. 75 No. 11, Whole # 900.

⁵ Photo from Wikipedia Commons (public domain material): Credited as from Robert L. Lawson (ed.): *The History of US Naval Air Power*. The Military Press, New York (USA), 1985, p. 122. US Navy cited as source.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:FH-1_Phantom_on_USS_Saipan_May_1948.jpg,

⁶ <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-a/agmr2.htm>

⁷ Nixon was the third consecutive of ultimately five presidents (1961-1993) who served as naval reserve officers during World War II. Coincidentally all served in the Pacific theatre. Nixon was the only one who never served in a combat role although there have been questions about the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross by General Douglas MacArthur, U.S. Army to Lieutenant Commander Lyndon B. Johnson, a sitting member of the House of Representatives, for a single flight as a passenger. Kennedy served in PT boats, Ford served as a member of the crew of USS *Monterey* (CVL-26), and Bush served as a naval aviator in Torpedo Squadron Fifty-One embarked in USS *San Jacinto* (CVL-30). Two future presidents served in combat in the Pacific in New Jersey-built light carriers during 1944.

⁸ USS *Wright* (AZ-1/AV-1) was a one-of-a-kind auxiliary ship in the United States Navy, named for Orville Wright. Originally the unnamed "hull no. 680" was laid down at Hog Island, Pennsylvania by the American International Shipbuilding Corporation under a United States Shipping Board contract. Named *Wright* on April 20, 1920, the ship was launched on April 28, 1920. A little over two months later, the Navy signed a contract with the Tietjen and Lang Dry Dock Company of Hoboken, New Jersey to convert the ship to a unique auxiliary vessel, a "lighter-than-air aircraft tender." On July 17, 1920, the ship received that classification and was designated AZ-1. *Wright* was commissioned at the New York Navy Yard on December 16, 1921. Her first commanding officer, Captain (later Admiral) Alfred W. Johnson, also had the collateral duties as Commander, Air Squadrons, Atlantic Fleet. Johnson was the first of a long line of commanding officers for the ship, including John Rodgers, Ernest J. King, Aubrey W. Fitch, Patrick N. L. Bellinger, and Marc A. Mitscher. The ship was renamed USS *San Clemente* (AG-79) on February 1, 1945, to clear the name for CVL-49. She earned two battle stars in World War II. Before December 7, 1941 she delivered supplies, fuel, and naval and Marine Corps personnel to Wake Island and Midway. Prior to World War II she engaged in a variety of fleet train support operations ranging from salvage of USS *S-4* to patrol plane operations. CVL 49 was named in memory of both Orville and Wilbur Wright. Coincidentally, the next and last New Jersey-built fast carrier would be named *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63), the site of their triumph and the ship which served 47 years and will be the subject of Part VI, the concluding installment of this series of articles.

⁹ The previous light carriers (CVLs) are discussed earlier sections of this series in *NJPH*: see November 2008 (Whole No. 172) and the February & May 2009 (Whole Nos. 173 & 174) issues.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1927 AND 2009.

PART VI: THE LAST CARRIER – USS KITTY HAWK (CVA/CV-63) 1961-2009 A: 1961–1974

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, JAGC, USN (Ret.) 176 Christol St., Metuchen, NJ 08840
Lawrence.Brennan@wilsonelser.com

[This is the sixth in a series of articles begun in the summer issue of NJPH, Aug. 2008, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole No. 171 and continued in the November 2008 (Whole No. 172) and the February, May & Aug 2009 (Whole Nos. 173 - 175) issues. Because of the length of service of USS Kitty Hawk, we have found it necessary to subdivide Part VI into parts A & B – through Vietnam and after Vietnam. For picture credits see note above Endnotes.¹]

The final New Jersey-built fast carrier was USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63), the lead ship of what became a four-ship class of the last conventionally-powered aircraft carriers built for the United States Navy.² She was the first and only class leader of a large, fast carrier class not built by Newport News Shipbuilding Company.³ Ultimately, she became the last conventionally-powered carrier in the U.S. Navy. *Kitty Hawk* was the only New Jersey-built fast carrier with an armored steel flight deck which was angled to permit the simultaneous launch and recovery of high speed jets. Like all post-World War II super carriers, she had four deck-edge elevators and no center line elevators. Her island was far aft on the starboard side, even further astern than the island on the earlier *Forrestal*-class. *Kitty Hawk* was the first carrier to be the longest serving active warship in the U.S. Navy.⁴



The second *Kitty Hawk*⁵ was laid down by the New York Ship Building Corp., on December 27, 1956, and launched May 21, 1960 by flooding her dry dock. A conventional slide down the builders' way was ruled out because of her mass and the risk of impact with the Philadelphia shore on the far side of the Delaware River. The ship was commissioned on April 29, 1961 at Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, Capt. William F. Bringle, U.S. Navy in command.

Fig. 135: Launch of the USS Kitty Hawk, May 21, 1960.

Photo from the Harry Pierce collection (MSS 684) at the Camden County Historical Society, Camden, NJ.

NJ BUILT FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, PART VI-A ~ Lawrence Brennan

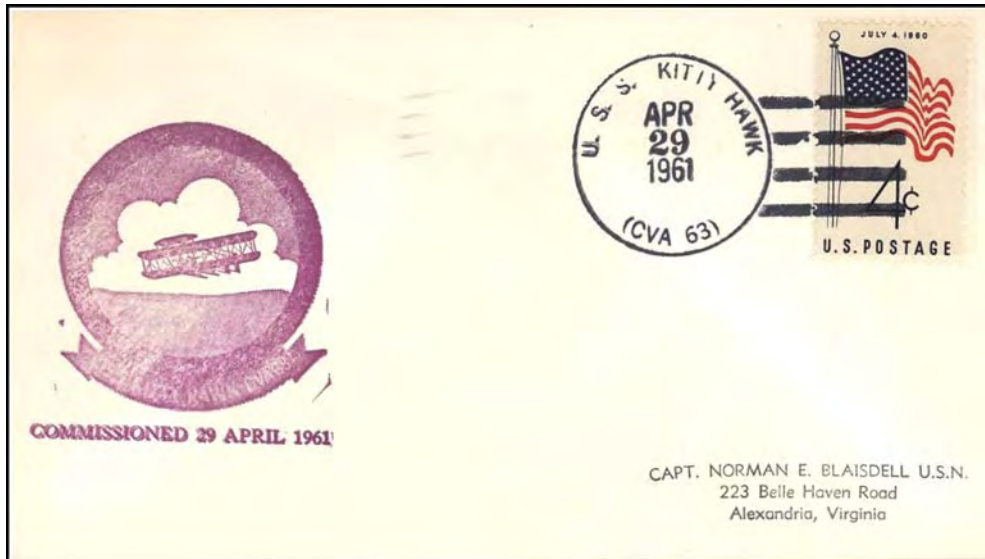


Fig. 136: A rubber stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on her first day in commission, April 29, 1961. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2t (nu)) and was franked with a 4¢ American flag commemorative stamp of July 4, 1960. Between the time that Kitty Hawk was commissioned in 1961 and decommissioned in 2009, first class domestic postage rates increased 11 fold from 4¢ to 44¢. The cover is addressed to a long-time collector and naval officer, Captain Norman E. "Toots" Blaisdell, U.S. Navy. The cancel is listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

Kitty Hawk had a length of 1,068.9 feet, a beam of 282 feet at the flight deck and 130 feet at the waterline, and a draft of 38 feet. She was capable of steaming at 33 knots on 280,000 shaft horsepower. The air wing consisted of about 85 aircraft and her crew was comprised of 5,624 officers and men.

First Deployment: Shakedown and Distinguished Visitors – April-November 1961⁶

Following shakedown in the western Atlantic, *Kitty Hawk* departed Norfolk on August 11, 1961. At Rio de Janeiro she embarked the Brazilian Navy Secretary for a demonstration with five Brazilian destroyers. The carrier then rounded Cape Horn, steamed into Valparaiso Bay. She sailed for Callao, where she entertained the President of Peru.



Fig. 137: USS Kitty Hawk in 1961 ~ early in her career.
Image courtesy of Larry Blumenthal, PH3, 1957-61.
["US Navy Photos"](#)

Arriving at San Diego, Adm. George W. Anderson, Chief of Naval Operations, landed on her deck on November 18, 1961 to witness antisubmarine demonstrations by USS *Henry B. Wilson* (DDG-7) and USS *Blueback* (SS-581), a *Terrier* missile demonstration by USS *Topeka* (CLG-8) and air demonstrations by *Kitty Hawk*. She entered San Francisco Naval Shipyard on November 23, 1961, for alterations and initial repairs.

Lawrence Brennan ~ NJ BUILT FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, PART VI-A**Second Deployment – September 1962-April 1963**

Nearly eighteen months after commissioning and following operations out of San Diego, she sailed from San Francisco for her maiden Pacific deployment on September 13, 1962. *Kitty Hawk* joined the Seventh Fleet on October 7, 1962, relieving *USS Midway* (CVA-41) as flagship.

After the Philippine Air Show, *Kitty Hawk* steamed out of Manila Harbor and welcomed Adm. H. D. Felt, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, for a weapons demonstration. The ship visited Hong Kong, Yokosuka, Kobe, Beppu, and Iwakuni before returning to San Diego on April 2, 1963.

Presidential Visit – June 6, 1963

On June 6, 1963, the nineteenth anniversary of the invasion of Normandy, President John F. Kennedy boarded *Kitty Hawk* to witness a carrier demonstration off the California coast. President Kennedy told the sailors that control of the seas meant security, peace and ultimate victory. He later wrote that the *Kitty Hawk* task force was a “great force for peace or war, which these mighty carriers and their accompanying escorts provide, helping to preserve the freedom of distant nations in all parts of the world.”



Fig. 138: President Kennedy during the 1963 review of USS Kitty Hawk.

Photos by Capt. Hap Hill USN (Ret).⁷

Third Deployment – September 1963-July 1964

On September 30, 1963 *Kitty Hawk* was off the California coast for a final exercise with the First Fleet. Then, on October 17, 1963, she departed her homeport at San Diego for the Far East and her second tour of duty with the Seventh Fleet. While approaching Japan, the crew learned that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Flags were flown at half mast as she entered Sasebo Harbor on November 25, 1963, the day of the President’s funeral where, as senior ship present, she fired the somber memorial salutes.

Following port visits to Buckner Bay, Okinawa, and Sasebo, Japan, *Kitty Hawk* headed to Taiwan. Adm. Claude V. Ricketts, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and Vice Adm. T. H. Moorer, Commander Seventh Fleet observed operations on December 3 for *Big Dipper*.⁸ Following visits to Kobe and Yokosuka, in January 1964 *Kitty Hawk* held joint operations with *USS Oriskany* (CVA-34).

Kitty Hawk visited Hong Kong and donated more than 300,000 gallons of fresh water to the drought-stricken British colony. Then *Kitty Hawk* headed to Taiwan to participate in the

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amphibious *Exercise Back Pack*. She spent a week at Sasebo followed by an Easter weekend visit to Buckner Bay. On April 6, 1964, *Kitty Hawk's* initial commanding officer, Rear Adm. William F. Bringle, relieved as Commander Carrier Division Seven. The ship again visited Hong Kong before conducting operations in the South China Sea and then returned to Yokosuka. Following this, the ship engaged in joint operations with HMS *Victorious*.

The Introduction of Hostilities in Vietnam – May-June 1964

Three months before the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident, between May 18 and June 10, *Kitty Hawk* was engaged in *Yankee Team* special operations in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam. While conducting photo reconnaissance flights over Communist Laotian territory, two *Kitty Hawk* pilots were downed by ground fire. CDR D.W. Lynn, Executive Officer of VF-111, went down on June 7, but was rescued and returned to the ship on the following day.⁹ Also at this time, LT C.F. Klusmann of the VFP-63 photo reconnaissance Detachment C flying a RF8A Crusader was shot down and captured by Communist forces in Laos.¹⁰ After almost three months in prison camp, he escaped and was returned to the United States.

Kitty Hawk arrived at Yokosuka on June 14, 1964 after 36 continuous days at sea. The following day she hosted the change of command ceremony where Admiral Moorer was relieved by Vice Adm. Roy L. Johnson as Commander Seventh Fleet. *Kitty Hawk* departed Yokosuka on July 7 and arrived home at San Diego on July 20, 1964 after a nine month deployment.

Return to the West Coast and Repairs at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard – August 1964-November 1965

On August 10, 1964, *Kitty Hawk* departed San Diego for Bangor, Washington. While en route, as a test, the icebreaker USS *Staten Island* (AGB-5) towed the carrier. On August 16, 1964, the eight month overhaul and modification period began. *Kitty Hawk* returned to San Diego in May 1965. For five days underway in July, Walt Disney and a Hollywood crew, which included two chimpanzees, were on board to film scenes of the movie *Lt. Robin Crusoe, USN*. From May until September, *Kitty Hawk* conducted exercises and carrier qualifications.



Fig. 139: A rubber stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on February 24, 1965. It bears *Kitty Hawk's* steel machine cancel (Locy Type 10ef) and was franked with a New Jersey Tercentenary stamp. The cover is addressed to a long-time collector and naval officer, Captain Herbert F. Rommel, U.S. Navy, who then was the Commanding Officer, Washington Navy Yard. The cancel is listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Going to War

Kitty Hawk made six combat cruises to Vietnam between November 1965 and November 1972. *Kitty Hawk* and her embarked Air Wings were awarded a Presidential Unit Citation, five Navy Unit Citations, six Armed Forces Expeditionary Medals, approximately 30 Vietnam Service Medals, and about 40 Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citations.

Fourth Deployment (First Combat Cruise to Vietnam – October 1965- July 1966

On October 19, 1965, *Kitty Hawk* left San Diego, for its third western Pacific cruise. On November 8, *Kitty Hawk* departed Hawaiian waters for Subic Bay to join the Seventh Fleet. November 26, 1965 was the first time *Kitty Hawk's* aircraft launched combat operations, flying 90 attack sorties and dropping more than 140 tons of ordnance.

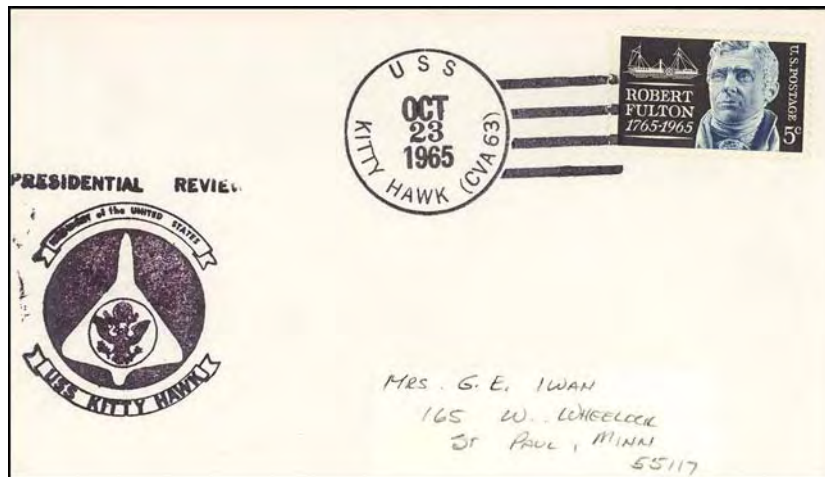


Fig. 140: A rubber stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on October 23, 1965, while the ship was underway for Hawaii for her first combat cruise. More than two years after the event, the cover has the “Presidential Review” cachet applied. It bears *Kitty Hawk's* rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n)) and was franked with a 5¢ Fulton commemorative stamp, coincidentally honoring the father of the steamboat. The cancel is listed as “A” in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig 141 A & B: A RVAH-13 Bats' R5AC Vigilante having just landed on the angled deck of USS *Kitty Hawk* (Vietnam October 1965 to June 1966). The Navy experimented with aircraft camouflage intended to blend in with the Vietnamese jungle¹¹ At right is an aviator's view of the flight deck circa 1965-66. Note the angled deck, the centerline with the port and starboard “ladder lines” marking the edges of the landing area. To starboard of the “right hand” or inboard ladder line is an E-2 Hawkeye and other aircraft in the pack.

Photo Mike Haywood # NS0263ae

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Fig. 142: A non-philatelic cover which was postmarked on November 30, 1965. It bears Kitty Hawk's machine steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt) and was free franked. N.B.: unlike prior wars, during Vietnam there was no censoring of mail and the free frank was extended to airmail. This is a cover hand-written by LTJG Nordahl 20 days before he was killed in action when his RA5C Vigilante was shot down by a salvo of missiles while performing a photoreconnaissance mission at a power plant near Haiphong. This cover is postmarked before Kitty Hawk's Air Wing Eleven conducted their first strikes. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Between November 1965 and June 1966, *Kitty Hawk* spent 122 days in combat during five line periods of approximately three to four weeks each. Carrier Air Wing Eleven lost 20 aircraft to combat causes and another five to operational causes. During her first line period (November 26–December 24, 1965) she lost four aircraft to combat causes including two RA5C Vigilante heavy photoreconnaissance aircraft.¹² This included the first attacks on major industrial targets in the heavily defended portions of North Vietnam. Robust, Soviet-supplied defenses included multiple salvo Surface to Air Missiles ("SAMs") which bracketed and destroyed the U.S. aircraft. She also lost an A4 to operational causes. During the second line period (January 14–February 4, 1965) CVW Eleven lost three aircraft to combat; two aircraft were loss to combat during the third line period (February 17–March 15, 1966); ten aircraft were lost in combat and one to operational causes during the fourth line period (March 31 – April 27, 1966),¹³ the fifth line period (May 7–22, 1966) resulted in the loss of one aircraft in combat and two to operational causes. *Kitty Hawk* "out-chopped"¹⁴ on June 6, 1966 and returned to San Diego on June 13, 1966 for overhaul and training.

Fifth Deployment (Second Combat Cruise to Vietnam) – November 1966–June 1967

On November 4, 1966 *Kitty Hawk* again deployed to Vietnam. She arrived at Yokosuka on November 19, 1966 to relieve *Constellation* as flagship for Rear Admiral David C. Richardson, Commander Task Force 77. Between December 1966 and May 1967, *Kitty Hawk* spent 118 days in combat during five line. Carrier Air Wing Eleven lost 14 aircraft to combat causes and another three to operational causes. The air wing also scored four kills by shooting down North Vietnamese aircraft.

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Fig. 143: Another non-philatelic cover which was postmarked on April 16, 1966. It too bears Kitty Hawk's machine steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt) and was free franked. This also is a cover hand-written by a Master Chief. The cover is postmarked during the fourth line period of the first combat cruise. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 144: A rubber stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on November 3, 1966, the day before the ship deployed for her second combat cruise to Vietnam. It bears Kitty Hawk's machine steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt) and the blue 5¢ Washington Regular issue of the Prominent American Series. The cover is addressed to the author when he was a grammar school student. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

During her first line period (December 4, 1966-January 3, 1967) she lost one aircraft in combat and shot down two enemy aircraft. During the second line period (January 17-February 14, 1967) she lost three aircraft in combat and one to operational causes. The third line period (March 3-28, 1967) saw the loss of four aircraft in combat. The brief fourth line period (April 12-28, 1967) saw the loss of two aircraft in combat and the kills of two North Vietnamese aircraft. The final line period (May 8-22, 1967) resulted in the combat loss of four aircraft and

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the operational loss of another. In total three F4B fighters from VF-114 were lost to operational causes, including one off line (April 6, 1967). *Kitty Hawk* out-chopped on June 12, 1967 and returned to San Diego on June 20, 1967.

On June 25, 1966, *Kitty Hawk*'s Hangar Bay One was turned into a theater for the world premiere of Walt Disney's *LT Robin Crusoe, U.S.N.* At the same time, off the coast of Vietnam, the picture was also premiered onboard *USS Constellation*. This was the first time in naval history that a premiere was held aboard a warship, and the first time that a double premiere was held, one at sea and the other in port. She then entered the naval shipyard at Long Beach for maintenance. *Kitty Hawk* returned to San Diego on August 25, 1967.



Fig. 145: A rubber stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on April 19, 1967, while the ship was on her fourth line period for her second combat cruise. It bears *Kitty Hawk*'s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2t (n+)) and was franked with a 5¢ Great River Road commemorative stamp. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Sixth Deployment (Third Combat Cruise to Vietnam) – November 1967-June 1968

On November 18, 1967 *Kitty Hawk* again deployed to waters off Vietnam. Between November 1967 and June 1968, *Kitty Hawk* spent 125 days in combat during four line periods. Carrier Air Wing Eleven lost eight aircraft to combat causes and another seven to operational causes.

During her first line period (December 23, 1967-February 21, 1968) *Kitty Hawk* lost four aircraft in combat and an equal number to operational causes. The second line period (March 4-27, 1968) resulted in the loss of two aircraft in combat. The third line period (April 12-May 1, 1968) saw one combat and three operational losses. The final line period (May 13-June 1, 1968) brought a single combat loss. *Kitty Hawk* out-chopped on June 20, 1968 and returned to San Diego on June 28, 1968.

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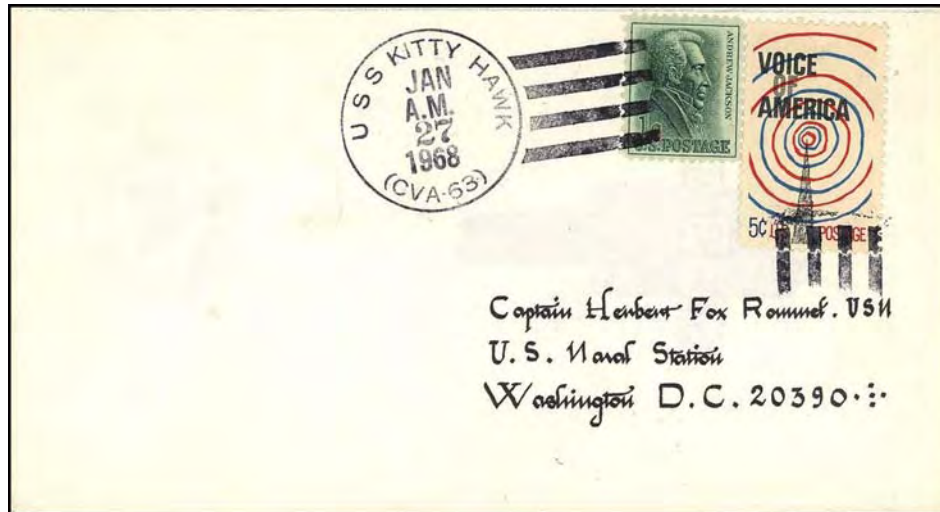


Fig. 146: An uncached cover which was postmarked on January 27, 1968, while the ship was underway for her first line period during her third combat cruise. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2t (n+)) and was franked with a 5¢ Voice of America commemorative stamp and 1¢ green Jackson definitive stamp. The cover is addressed in calligraphy to Captain Rommel. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

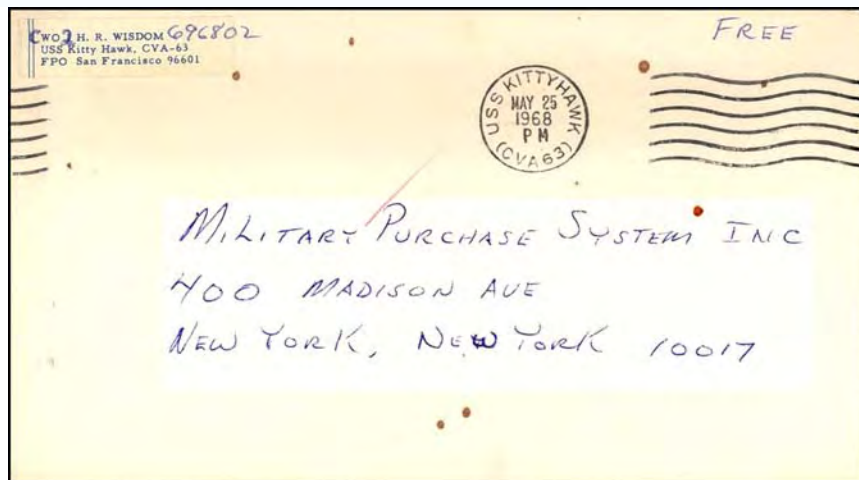


Fig. 147: Another non-philatelic cover which was postmarked on May 25, 1968, during the fourth line period of her third combat cruise. It too bears Kitty Hawk's machine steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt) and was free franked. This cover written by a Commissioned Warrant Officer 2 who corrected his return address label following his promotion from Warrant Officer 1. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Seventh Deployment (Fourth Combat Cruise to Vietnam) - December 1968-July 1969

On December 30, 1968 *Kitty Hawk* again deployed to Vietnam. Between January and August 1969, *Kitty Hawk* spent 111 days in combat during five line periods. Carrier Air Wing Eleven lost three aircraft to combat causes and another four to operational causes.

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During her first line period (January 28-February 28, 1969) there was one combat and one operational loss. The second line period (March 13-April 4, 1969) saw a single combat loss. The third line period (April 18-May 9, 1969) resulted in the final combat loss and a single operational loss. The fourth line period (June 29-July 14, 1969) saw no aviation losses. The fifth and final line period (July 30-August 16, 1969) saw a single operational loss.

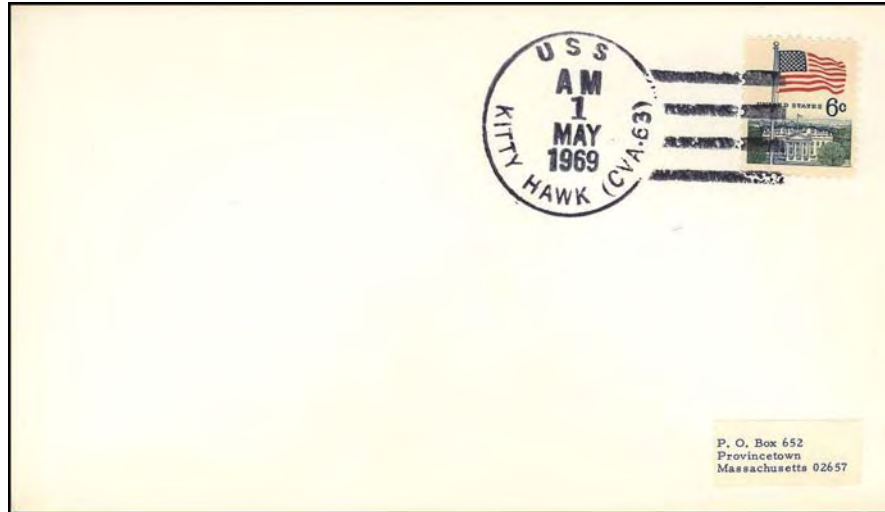


Fig. 148: An uncached philatelic cover which was postmarked on May 1, 1969, while the ship was on her third line period of her fourth combat cruise. This was the day before LCDR W. J. O'Connor, U.S. Navy was shot down and recovered over Laos while flying an A-7A Corsair II, with VA-105. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n+)) and was franked with a 6¢ definitive flag stamp. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Kitty Hawk out-chopped on August 27, 1969 and arrived at San Diego on September 4, 1969.

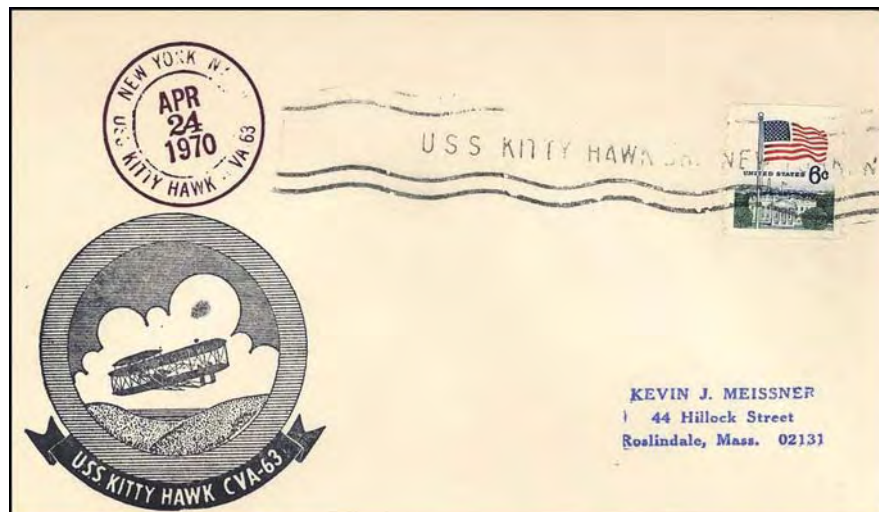


Fig. 149: A rubber stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on April 24, 1970 between the fourth and fifth combat cruises. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 9fu) and an undated roller (Locy PPR (K-20L)) and was franked with a 6¢ definitive flag stamp. The cancels both are listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

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Fig. 150. Overhead view circa 1970s of Kitty Hawk showing her four catapults – two at the bow and two at the waist on the angled deck. Also, note the area in the middle of the angled deck where the center line and ladder lines are well worn by aircraft during recovery when an aviator attempted to engage one of the four arresting wires with the aircraft's tail hook. The engaged wire pays out to its limits as the aircraft is "trapped" or decelerates while the engine(s) are pushed forward to full power to allow the aircraft to "go around" if the pilot fails to engage or "hook a wire." Each of the four steam catapults was fixed with a Jet Blast Deflector ("JBD") which would be raised to deflect the jet exhaust from the aircraft while it was awaiting the catapult stroke. In this photo the JBDs are in their "down" or normal position as part of the flight deck. On the flight deck are four E2 Hawkeyes, one with the wings extended for flight and three with the wings folded; the massive radar domes are prominent. With the Hawkeyes is an A7 Corsair II, with folded wings. At the island and aft appear to be helicopters with the rotors folded.

Photo Robert Hurst

Eighth Deployment (Fifth Combat Cruise to Vietnam) – November 1970-July 1971

On November 6, 1970 *Kitty Hawk* again deployed to Vietnam. Between December 1970 and July 1971, *Kitty Hawk* spent 138 days in combat. Carrier Air Wing Eleven lost one aircraft to operational causes.

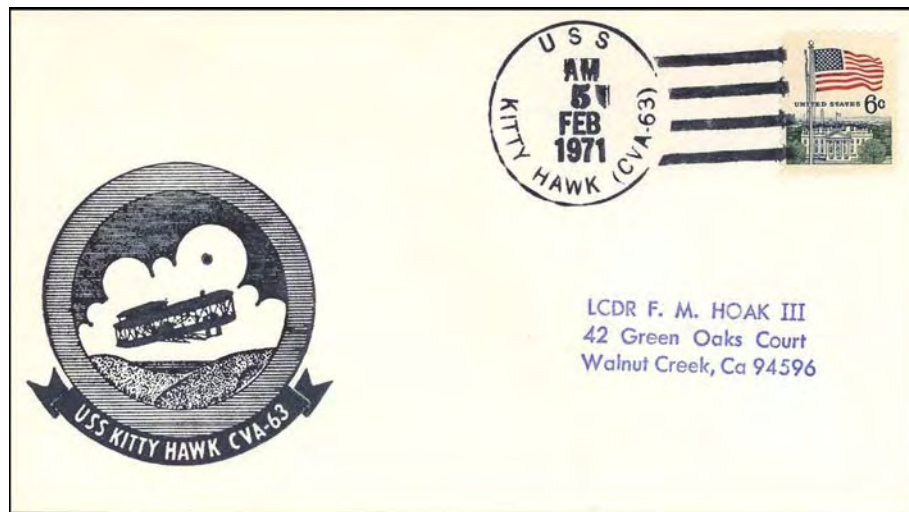


Fig. 151: A rubber stamp cacheted philatelic cover which was postmarked on February 5, 1971 between the second and third line periods while the ship was on her fifth combat cruise. The cover is addressed to a former president of the Universal Ship Cancellation Society, Captain Frank M. Hoak, III, U.S. Navy (Ret.). It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n+)) and was franked with a 6¢ definitive flag stamp. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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During her first line period (December 8-28, 1970), second line period (January 13-February 3, 1971), fourth line period (April 10-25, 1971), fifth line period (May 4-16, 1971), and sixth line period (May 30-June 23, 1971) *Kitty Hawk* and CVW Eleven suffered no combat or operational losses. During her third line period (February 21-April 2, 1971) VA-195 lost an A7E but the pilot was recovered.

Kitty Hawk out-chopped on July 6, 1971 and returned to San Diego on July 17, 1971.

Ninth Deployment (Sixth Combat Cruise to Vietnam) – February-November 1972

On February 17, 1972 *Kitty Hawk* again deployed to Vietnam for her final combat cruise of the war. Between March and November 1972, *Kitty Hawk* spent 192 days in combat during six line periods, now of approximately three to ten weeks each. Carrier Air Wing Eleven lost ten aircraft in combat, and three aircraft to operational causes; CVW Eleven had two kills.

During her first line period (March 8-25, 1972) *Kitty Hawk* lost a single A7E from VA-192 from operational causes. Before that first line period, on March 6, 1972, VA-195 lost an A7E and after that line period, on March 23, 1972, VA-192 lost another A7E to operational causes. During the second line period of approximately 80 days (April 3-June 25, 1972) *Kitty Hawk* lost five aircraft in combat and VF-114 had two kills. During the third line period (July 8-August 3, 1972) she had no losses. During the fourth line period (August 14-September 4, 1972) *Kitty Hawk* had two combat losses. During the fifth line period (September 15-October 2, 1972) she had a single combat loss. Finally, during the sixth line period (October 13-November 4, 1972) *Kitty Hawk* had one final combat loss.



Fig. 152: Another non-philatelic cover which was postmarked on April 3, 1972, during the 80 day second line period of her sixth combat cruise. It too bears *Kitty Hawk*'s machine steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt) and was free franked. This cover is written by a Boiler Tender Third Class. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Aircraft from *Kitty Hawk*, as well as *Hancock* (CVA-19), *Coral Sea* (CVA-43), and *Constellation*, were involved in *Operation Freedom Train* beginning on April 5, 1972. Aircraft flew sorties against targets in the southern part of North Vietnam that were involved in the invasion of South Vietnam. The operating area in North Vietnam was limited initially to between 17° and 19°N. However, special strikes were authorized against targets above the 19th parallel on occasion. By the end of April, operations were permitted in North Vietnam throughout the region below 20° 25' N and many special strikes above the 20th parallel had also been authorized.

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On April 16, aircraft from *Kitty Hawk*, *Coral Sea*, and *Constellation* flew 57 sorties in support of U.S. Air Force B-52 strikes on the Haiphong petroleum products storage area. *Operation Linebacker I* began on May 10, 1972 and consisted of heavy strikes of targets in most of North Vietnam, which lasted until restrictions on operations above 20°N were imposed on October 22. The operation was an outgrowth of *Freedom Train* and President Nixon's mining declaration which also stated that the U.S. would interdict the flow of supplies in North Vietnam. On this first day of *Linebacker I*, the Navy shifted its attacks from targets in southern North Vietnam to the coastal region embracing Haiphong north to the Chinese border.

On May 11, 1972, aircraft from *Kitty Hawk*, *Coral Sea*, *Midway*, and *Constellation* laid additional mine fields in the remaining ports of significance in North Vietnam – Thanh Hoa, Dong Hoi, Vinh, Hon Gai, Quang Khe and Cam Pha as well as the Haiphong approaches. This early mining was not confined solely to the seven principal ports. Other locations were also seeded early in the campaign, including the Cua Sot, Cap Mui Ron, and the river mouths, Cua Day and Cua Lac Giang, south of Don Son and the Haiphong port complex.

There was a dramatic change in North Vietnam's air defense effort during the summer 1972. During April and May, the Navy air effort in North Vietnam involved intensive air-to-air combat and a large number of surface-to-air missile (SAM) firings. During June and July there was an increase in *Linebacker I* Navy attack sorties, but there was a decrease in the number of air-to-air combat incidents and SAM firings. After mid-June, almost all North Vietnamese aircraft sighted or engaged were MiG-21s.

On October 12, 1972, *Kitty Hawk* was en route to her station in the Gulf of Tonkin when a racial brawl involving more than 100 sailors broke out. Nearly 50 sailors were injured in this widely-publicized incident which resulted in a congressional inquiry into discipline in the Navy.

On October 23, 1972, the U.S. ended all tactical air sorties into North Vietnam above the 20th parallel and brought to a close *Linebacker I* operations. This was designed to promote the Paris negotiations. *Kitty Hawk* returned to San Diego on November 28, 1972. On January 23, 1973, a cease fire in Vietnam went into effect.

From January through July 1973, *Kitty Hawk* changed homeports to Hunter's Point. *Kitty Hawk* was converted from an attack (CVA) to a multi-mission carrier (CV). The "CV" designation indicated that she was no longer strictly an attack carrier and that anti-submarine warfare would also become a major role. *Kitty Hawk* became the first Pacific Fleet carrier to carry the multi-purpose "CV" designation. The conversion consisted of adding 10 new helicopter calibrating stations, installing sonar/sonobuoy readout and analysis center and associated equipment, and changing a large portion of the ship's operating procedures. One of the major changes was the addition of the Anti-Submarine Classification and Analysis Center (ASCAC) in the CIC area. The Engineering Department underwent a major change in its propulsion plant. The Navy Standard Oil (black oil) fuel system was completely converted to Navy Distillate Fuel. The Air Department added several major changes to the flight deck, including enlarging the jet blast deflectors (JBD) and installing more powerful catapults in order to handle the new Grumman F-14 Tomcat. *Kitty Hawk* moved out of dry dock on April 28, 1973, and the next day, on her twelfth birthday, was named a Multi-Purpose Aircraft Carrier (CV).

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Fig. 153: Another philatelic cover with a rubber stamp cachet which was postmarked on July 17, 1973, after the ship was redesignated as a “CV”. It too bears Kitty Hawk’s machine steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt) and was franked with an 8¢ definitive flag stamp. Both the postmark and modified rubber stamp cachet reflect the ship’s new designation as a “CV”. This cover was addressed to Captain Toots Blaisdell, U.S. Navy (Ret.), who was the addressee of the commissioning cover. The cancel is listed as “A” in the Postmark Catalog.

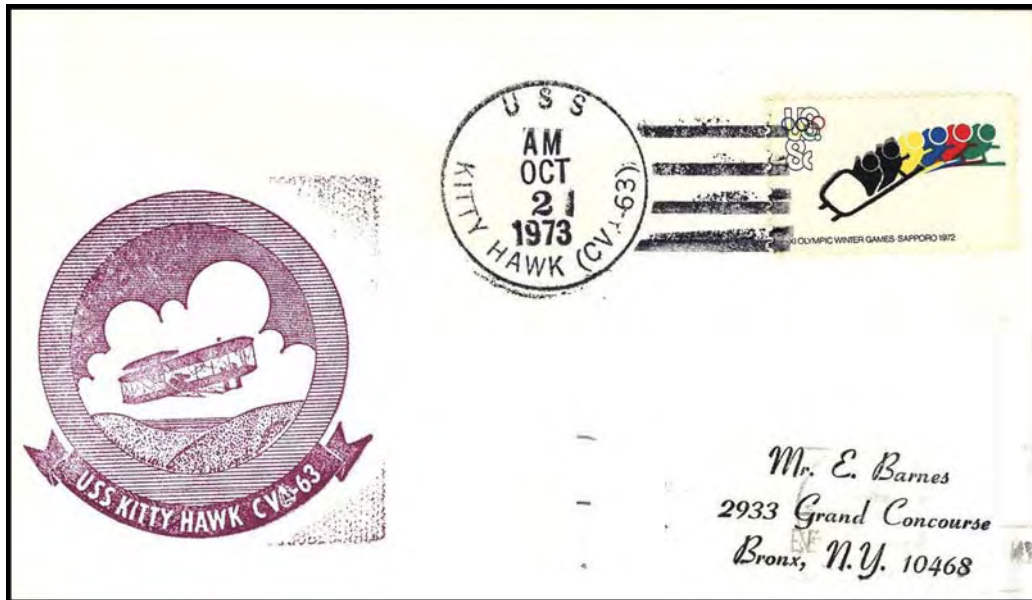


Fig. 154: A rubber stamp cacheted philatelic cover which was postmarked on October 2, 1973. It bears Kitty Hawk’s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type P, having been modified from a Type 2(n) or 2 (n+) by the removal of the “A” from “CVA”) and was franked with an 8¢ Olympic commemorative stamp. The cancel is listed as “A” in the Postmark Catalog.

[The last (Part VI-B) in this series will follow in the next issue of NJPH.]

Photo credits: The many nice photographs of carriers are available at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/> and [at somewhat slower speed] at <http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html> – both excellent sources of photos available for download.

ENDNOTES:

¹ These and other pictures courtesy of <http://www.navsourc.org/archives> & the Department of the Navy-Naval History and Heritage Command web pages at <http://www.history.navy.mil/branches/org11-2.htm>, in addition to some images sourced from Wikipedia Commons. All photos are in the public domain. See note above Endnotes.

² *USS Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63) initially was the lead ship of a two ship class of conventionally powered carriers built during the Eisenhower Administration. Her sister ship, *USS Constellation* (CVA-64), was built by the New York Naval Shipyard at Brooklyn. She suffered a catastrophic fire during fitting out with more than 50 fatalities. *Constellation* was the last carrier to be built in a naval shipyard. Subsequently, the Kennedy Administration decided to resume building of conventionally powered carriers after the commissioning of the first nuclear powered carrier, *USS Enterprise* (CVAN-65), in 1961. In addition to the McNamara-driven short term and short-sighted cost analysis, Navy needed time to develop fewer and larger nuclear reactors for future carriers. *Enterprise* had eight relatively small reactors while the subsequent *Nimitz* class, first commissioned in 1975, had two larger reactors. In any event, the Kennedy Administration obtained funding for two conventionally powered carriers of a modified *Kitty Hawk* design. *USS America* (CVA-66) and *USS John F. Kennedy* (CVA-67) both were built at Newport News Shipbuilding in the mid to late 1960s and both had service lives of about 30 to 35 years while *Enterprise* approaches her 50th anniversary.

³ *USS Ranger* (CV-4) was the first carrier designed and built as a carrier. The entire *Yorktown*-class (*USS Yorktown* (CV-5), *USS Enterprise* (CV-6), and *USS Hornet* (CV-8) and *USS Wasp* (CV-7) were built at Newport News before World War II; only *Enterprise* survived. *USS Essex* (CV-9) was the leader of the fast carriers which led the Pacific Fleet along with the New Jersey-built small carriers. Designed during the war but not completed in time to engage in hostilities were three ships of the *Midway*-class, two of which *USS Midway* (CVB-41) and *USS Coral Sea* (CVB-43), were built at Newport News. The first post-war designed class of super carriers built were the four ships of the *Forrestal*-class. *USS Forrestal* (CVA-59) was a Newport News built ship. The one ship *Enterprise*-class was built at Newport News. All ships of the *Nimitz*-class have been built by Newport News. The first new class of nuclear powered carriers in 40 years, *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78), is being constructed at Newport News. Her keel laying ceremony was held in mid-November 2009. Currently, three ships are contemplated in this class.

⁴ This excludes the historic *USS Constitution*.

⁵ The first *USS Kitty Hawk* (APV-1) was named for a small village in North Carolina where the Wright brothers made the world's first airplane flight on December 17, 1903. The ship was 478 feet long, with a beam of 63 and a half feet, and draft of 17 knots. She had a crew of 245 and was armed with four three inch guns and a single five inch gun.

Kitty Hawk, formerly SS *Seatrain New York*, was built in 1932 by Sun Ship Building & Dry Dock Co., Chester, Pa.; acquired by the Navy on June 25, 1941; renamed *Kitty Hawk* on July 8; converted to an aircraft transport by Tietjin & Land Dry Dock Co., Hoboken, N.J.; and commissioned on November 26, 1941, at New York Navy Yard, Comdr. E. C. Rogers, U.S. Navy in command.

After shakedown *Kitty Hawk* departed New York on December 16, 1941, for Hawaii via the Panama Canal with aircraft to replace America's losses in the Japanese attack and arrived Pearl Harbor on February 8, 1942. She unloaded her planes and returned to the mainland on February 25. *Kitty Hawk* returned to Pearl Harbor on May 17. Intelligence reports arrived indicating that a Japanese fleet was approaching the Hawaiian Islands. Immediately *Kitty Hawk* loaded the men, armament, and equipment of the 3d Marine Defense Battalion and planes of Marine Air Groups 21 and 45 and sailed to reinforce Midway, escorted by *Gwyn*. En route a PBY reported a submarine in the area which *Gwyn* drove off with a heavy barrage of depth charges, enabling *Kitty Hawk* to deliver men and aircraft to Midway on May 26, 1942.

Escorted by destroyers *Gwyn* and *Sicard*, *Kitty Hawk* departed Midway on May 29 and arrived at Honolulu on June 1, 1942. On June 5, the fleet learned of the victory in the Battle of Midway, and sailed for San Diego arriving on June 13.

Kitty Hawk returned to Pearl Harbor on July 13, 1942; loaded men, equipment and airplanes of the 2d Echelon of the 23d Marine Air Group; and set course for Port Vila, Efate, New Hebrides, arriving on August 28. She moored alongside escort carrier *Long Island* (CVE-1) transferring 40 aircraft which were immediately catapulted by *Long Island* and flown directly into combat on bitterly-contested Guadalcanal.

She sailed on October 4 for San Francisco then headed for Pearl Harbor, arriving on October 20. Loading Army Air Corps airplanes, she steamed to Palmyra, arriving on October 30. There, she embarked more planes, cargo and passengers. Sailing on November 2, she arrived at Dumbea Bay, Noumea, on November 10, where she picked up men from *Hornet's* air group after that carrier had been sunk. Arriving at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, on November 13, she discharged army aviators and planes. *Kitty Hawk*

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sailed from Espiritu Santo on November 22, for home with 359 passengers, arriving San Diego on December 7, 1942. Carrying men and equipment of Marine Air Group 12, she got underway on January 4, 1943, for the New Hebrides, arriving at Espiritu Santo on January 22; but, as enemy air raids prevented unloading, she sailed on to Pallikulo Bay, a safer place; then departed for Undine Bay, Efate, where she finished unloading men, munitions and aircraft of Marine Air Group 12. *Kitty Hawk* returned to San Diego on February 20, 1943.

Between February 20, 1943 and June 25, 1944, *Kitty Hawk* made seven voyages to Hawaii and seven to the Southwest Pacific. The ship was reclassified AKV-1 on September 15, 1943. She returned to San Francisco for overhaul on August 5, 1944.

Kitty Hawk loaded passengers, planes, and cargo at San Diego and sailed on August 29 for Finschhafen, New Guinea; Seeadler Harbor, Manus, Admiralty Islands; Guadalcanal; and Espiritu Santo, returning San Diego on October 12, 1944.

Kitty Hawk sailed directly from San Francisco to Manus, arriving on November 12, 1944. From Manus she steamed to the Solomons to pick up men of a radio control drone unit: called at Guadalcanal on November 26, Espiritu Santo on November 30, then sailed for Pearl Harbor, arriving on December 9, 1944. Two days later she sailed to Maui Island, where she debarked the radar control unit.

After minor repairs at San Diego, *Kitty Hawk* sailed on January 7, 1945, to ports in the South Pacific; returned to San Francisco on February 17; she steamed back to the forward area, returning to the West Coast 12 June.

Kitty Hawk received news of the end of hostilities while at Pearl Harbor. Then, she carried military cargo to the Marshalls, the Marianas, and the Philippines. She departed Pearl Harbor for the final time on November 24, 1945. *Kitty Hawk* arrived at Bayonne, N.J., on December 15, 1945; visited Norfolk: then decommissioned at New York on January 24, 1946 and simultaneously was returned to Seatrain Lines, Inc.

⁶ In this article the count of “deployments” is not used in a technical sense and may not coincide with the ship’s or other counts of “deployments.” Rather, it is a shorthand, or break, to indicate a separate, major at sea period. For example, the Navy appears to count the cruise from San Diego to Philadelphia in 1987 as a deployment and label it, erroneously, as a circumnavigation. (The ship departed from the West Coast and arrived on the East Coast, about 3,000 nautical miles short of a proper circumnavigation.) They do not list *Kitty Hawk*’s return cruise from Philadelphia to San Diego as a deployment. Perhaps this is because on the initial voyage the ship was “deployed” in the Pacific and Indian Oceans and the Med while on the return cruise in 1991 she was not “deployed” but sailed virtually directly from port-to-port via the tip of South America.

⁷ The 1963 Presidential Fleet Review at <http://www.johnfry.com/pages/JFKHapHill63.html> .

⁸ Admiral Ricketts died in office and DDG-5 was renamed in his memory before she participated in a NATO mixed manning experiment. Admiral Moorer, a distinguished World War II naval aviator, later became Chief of Naval Operations and finally Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁹ Commander Doyle Wilmer Lynn, U.S. Navy was killed in action while flying a F8D Crusader with VF-111 as part of Carrier Air Wing Two embarked in *USS Midway* when he was shot down by anti-aircraft gunfire over North Vietnam on May 27, 1965. His body was not recovered. See <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/dwlynn.htm>.

¹⁰ Previously, Lieutenant Charles F. Klusmann’s aircraft had been hit by ground fire on May 21, 1964 but he was able to return to *Kitty Hawk*. Ultimately, he survived the war to retire as a Captain.

¹¹ Robert L. Lawson (ed.): *The History of US Naval Air Power*. The Military Press, New York (USA), 1985. See http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RA-5C_RVAH-13_camouflaged_Vietnam_1966.jpg .

¹² See my two articles about the loss of a RA5C Vigilante from *Kitty Hawk*’s RVAH-13 on December 20, 1965 resulting in the loss of LCDR Guy D. Johnson, USN and LTJG Lee E. Nordhal, USN which were published in the Universal Ship Cancellation Society’s *Log* Vol. 72, No. 1, January 2005 # 854 and Vol. 73, No. 5, May 2006, #870.

¹³ Rene J. Francillion’s seminal *Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club*, London, Conway, 1988, page 144 suggests conflicting numbers. It shows ten aircraft lost in combat between March 31 and April 28, 1966 but it reports that the third line period ended on April 27, 1966. The ship was on line to April 29 1966. Another source, however, demonstrates that “[o]n 28 April, an F-4G *Phantom* was hit by enemy ground fire. Both pilot and RIO ejected at sea and were recovered safely. ... *Kitty Hawk* departed Yankee Station 29 April and arrived at Subic Bay 30 April for upkeep.”

¹⁴ “Out-chop” is the administrative departure of a warship from the operational control of a commander’s Area of Operations (“AOR”). It is the converse of “in-chop” when a warship enters the operational control of a commander’s AOR.

NEW JERSEY-BUILT: 13 FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY BETWEEN 1927 AND 2009.

PART VI: THE LAST CARRIER – USS KITTY HAWK (CVA/CV-63) 1961-2009

B: Post-Vietnam

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, JAGC, USN (Ret.) 176 Christol St., Metuchen, NJ 08840

Lawrence.brennan@wilsonleser.com

[This is the final entry in a series of articles begun in the summer issue of NJPH, Aug. 2008, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole No. 171 and continued in the November 2008 (Whole No. 172) and the February, May, August & November 2009 (Whole Nos. 173 - 176) issues. Because of the length of service of Kitty Hawk, we have found it necessary to subdivide Part VI into parts A & B – through Viet Nam and after Viet Nam. For picture credits, see Endnotes.¹]

POST VIETNAM COMBAT OPERATIONS (1973-1978)

Tenth Deployment

Kitty Hawk was deployed again to the western Pacific from November 23, 1973 to July 9, 1974. This was the only time she did not operate off Vietnam during the war.



Fig. 155: A rubber-stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked during her first foray into the Indian Ocean as part of the Seventh Fleet on March 13, 1974. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2 (n+) (USS, CVA)) and was franked with a 10¢ American flag stamp. The cover is addressed to a long-time collector the late, Laurence J. Briend, who, with the author, was co-founder of USS America Chapter 71, Universal Ship Cancellation Society when we were teenagers. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

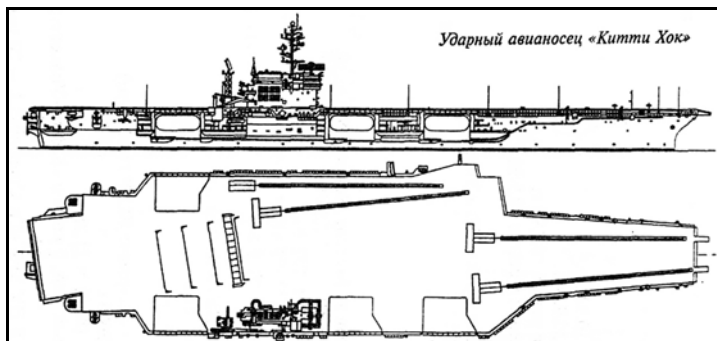


Fig. 156: Identification diagram of USS Kitty Hawk, from a Russian manual in the 1970s

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Eleventh Deployment

A month prior to *Kitty Hawk's* next western Pacific deployment on May 21, 1975, *Midway*, *Coral Sea*, *Hancock*, *USS Enterprise* (CVAN-65), and *USS Okinawa* (LPH-3) responded on April 19, 1975 when North Vietnam overran two-thirds of South Vietnam. Ten days later, *Operation Frequent Wind* was carried out by U.S. Seventh Fleet forces. Hundreds of U.S. personnel and Vietnamese were evacuated to waiting ships after the fall of Saigon. *Kitty Hawk* returned with Carrier Air Wing Eleven (henceforth CVW Eleven) to her home port on December 15, 1975.

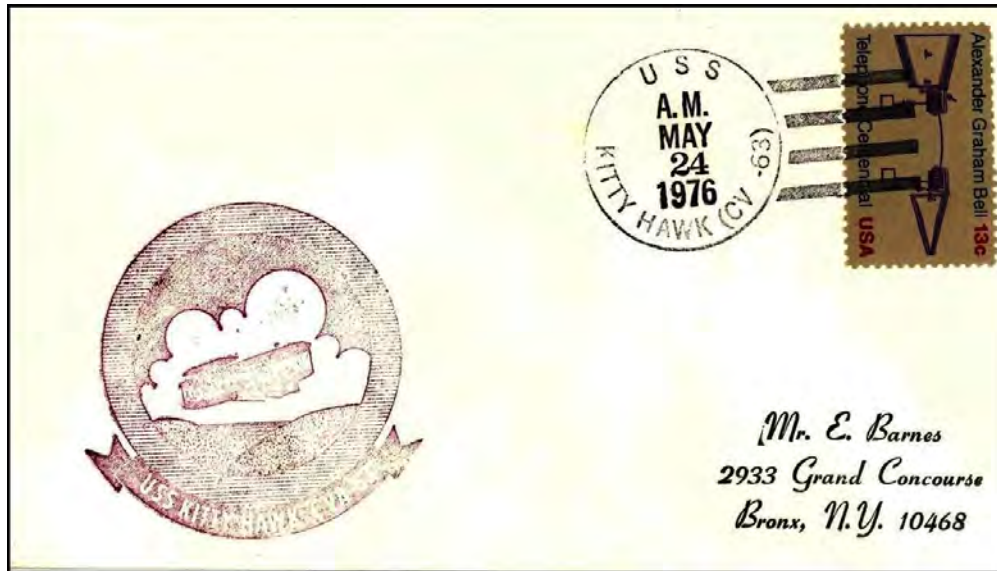


Fig. 157: A rubber-stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked on May 24, 1976. It bears *Kitty Hawk's* rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2P [2(n+)] (USS, CV with “A” removed]) and was franked with a 13¢ Alexander Graham Bell Telephone Centennial commemorative stamp. The cancel is listed as “A” in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 158: *USS Kitty Hawk* underway in July 1977. N.B. This photograph is strikingly similar to the view used in the *Byrd Chapter's* Decommissioning Ceremony cover prepared by John Lyding. See Figure 186.

US Navy View by A. Legare - Defense Visual Information Center View DN-SC-86-00162

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Twelfth Deployment

Between October 25, 1977 and May 15, 1978 *Kitty Hawk* with CVW Eleven deployed to the western Pacific.

TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AND BEYOND (1979-1987)

Thirteenth Deployment

On May 30, 1979, *Kitty Hawk* and CVW Fifteen departed San Diego on their last seven-month cruise to the western Pacific together. On October 28, 1979, *Kitty Hawk* and her escorts were directed to operate south of the Korean peninsula in response to the assassination of South Korean President Park Chung Hee on October 26, 1979.

The Iranian Hostage Crisis

On November 18, 1979, *Midway* arrived in the northern part of the Arabian Sea in connection with the hostage crisis in Iran. Followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had come to power following the overthrow of the Shah, seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on November 4 and held 63 U.S. hostages. Spokesmen demanded that the United States return to Iran the deposed Shah who was in a New York hospital. *Kitty Hawk's* cruise was extended two and a half months to support contingency operations in the North Arabian Sea. On November 21, 1979, *Kitty Hawk* and her escorts were directed to sail to the Indian Ocean to join *Midway* in the northern Arabian Sea. *Kitty Hawk* arrived on station on December 3. This was the first time since World War II that the U.S. Navy had two carrier task forces in the Indian Ocean in response to a crisis.



Fig. 159: Moving Mk-82 500-pound bombs past two parked A-6 Intruder attack aircraft.

US Navy photo by ENS A. Legare (DVIC id: DN-SN-85-11093).



Fig.160: Crewmen in flight control center use a table to simulate aircraft layout on flight deck, Dec. 1979.

US Navy photo by PHC Ken George (DVIC id: DN-SN-85-06358).

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Two weeks later, on December 21, 1979, the Defense Department announced a three-ship nuclear-powered carrier battle group from the Sixth Fleet would deploy to the Indian Ocean to relieve the Seventh Fleet carrier battle group led by *Kitty Hawk*. The Sixth Fleet carrier battle group consisted of USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68)² and her nuclear-powered cruiser escorts, USS *California* (CGN-36) and USS *Virginia* (CGN-38). However, on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1979, the Soviets airlifted 5,000 airborne troops and equipment into the Afghanistan capital of Kabul. The U.S. protested the invasion but the Soviet Union claimed they were there at the request of the Afghanistan government. On December 27, a Soviet-backed coup installed a new president in Afghanistan. Two carrier task forces centered on *Kitty Hawk* and *Midway* continued contingency operations in the northern Arabian Sea.



Fig. 161: A rubber-stamped cacheted cover with rubber stamp return address which was postmarked during her 1980 excursion into the Indian Ocean as part of the Seventh Fleet with USS *Midway* (CV-41) on January 22, 1980 during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. It bears *Kitty Hawk*'s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type P [2 (n+) (USS, CV with "A" removed)]) and was franked with a 15¢ definitive American flag stamp. The author was on board USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) this day when she rendezvoused with *Kitty Hawk* and *Midway*. *Kitty Hawk* transferred to *Nimitz* the helicopters which subsequently were launched in April 1980 in the failed hostage rescue attempt (see below). The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

The *Nimitz* battle group joined the *Kitty Hawk* and *Midway* groups on Gonzo Station (Gulf of Oman Naval Zone of Operations) in the Arabian Sea on January 22, 1980. *Nimitz* received from *Kitty Hawk* eight RH53s from HMM- HM-16, Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Sixteen -- which ultimately would be launched on April 24, 1980 to Desert One during the failed Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission. The following day, *Kitty Hawk* departed for the Naval Air Station at Subic Bay in the Philippines, having spent 64 days in operations connected with the Iranian crisis. *Kitty Hawk* and CVW Fifteen returned to San Diego on February 25, 1980.

Fourteenth Deployment

In April 1, 1981, *Kitty Hawk* and CVW Fifteen left San Diego for the western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Following an eight-month cruise, *Kitty Hawk* returned on November 23, 1981. The crew was awarded the Navy Expeditionary Medal and the Humanitarian Service Medal for rescuing Vietnamese refugees in the South China Sea. In January 1982, *Kitty Hawk* returned to Bremerton, Washington for another year-long overhaul which was completed in January 1983.

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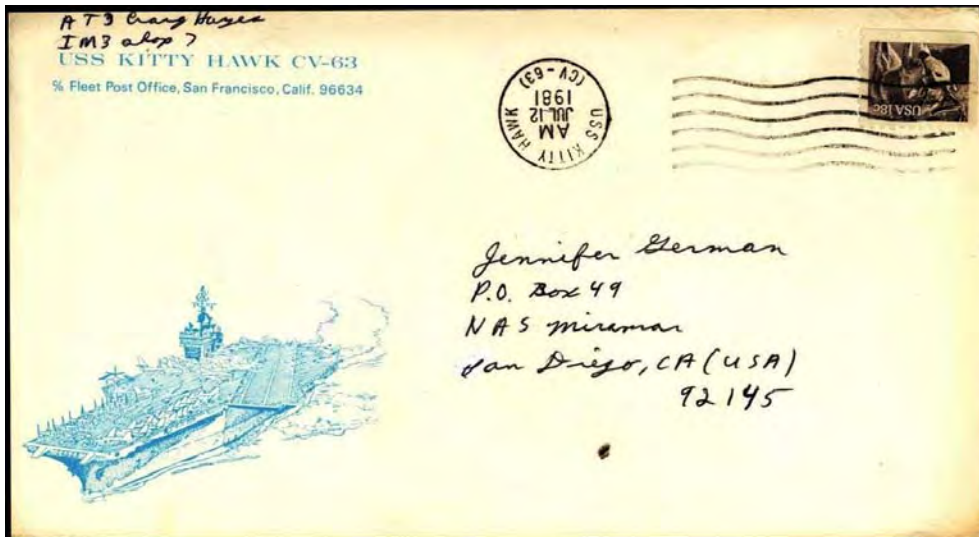


Fig. 162: A printed cacheted cover which was postmarked on July 12, 1981. It bears Kitty Hawk’s machine stamp steel cancel (Locy Type 7qt(n+u) (USS, CV) inverted) and was franked with an 18¢ stamp. The cover was sent by a petty officer in the Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD) and addressed to a woman at Naval Air Station Miramar, California. NAS Miramar then was the home of the West Coast fighter squadrons immortalized in the mid-1980s movie “Top Gun.” Currently, it is a Marine Corps Air Station. The cancel is listed as “A” in the Postmark Catalog.

Fifteenth Deployment



Fig. 163: 1984 WESTPAC formation, with USS Long Beach (CGN-9) leading the Kitty Hawk battle group.³

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Following work-ups with CVW Nine, *Kitty Hawk* deployed as the flagship for Battle Group Bravo on January 13, 1984. She returned to San Diego seven and a half months later on August 1, 1984 after a deployment to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. During exercise *Team Spirit '84* she was struck by a submerged *Victor*-class Soviet submarine in the Sea of Japan, forcing the submarine to be towed back to her homeport. *Kitty Hawk* logged over 62,000 miles on this deployment and remained on station in the North Arabian Sea for more than 60 consecutive days, returning to San Diego on August 1, 1984.



Fig. 164: A rubber-stamped cacheted cover with rubber stamp return address which was postmarked on June 8, 1984. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2t(nu) (USS, CV)) and was franked with a 20¢ definitive American flag stamp. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Sixteenth Deployment



Fig. 165: A Xerox-printed cacheted cover which was postmarked on the 75th anniversary of Naval Aviation, January 18, 1986. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2-1(n+) (USN, USS, CV)) and was franked with a 22¢ John J. Audubon definitive stamp. The cover was sponsored by Jan Eyeran of USS New Jersey Chapter USCS who learned the art of making Xerox-printed cacheted covers converted from a sheet of paper from his father. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

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On July 24, 1985, *Kitty Hawk* again deployed as flagship for Battle Group Bravo, responding to tasking from the California coast to the Gulf of Aden. *Kitty Hawk* and CVW Nine returned to the West Coast on December 21, 1985. *Kitty Hawk* celebrated 25 years of service in 1986, and a month later, the Navy celebrated 75 years of naval aviation on January 18, 1986.

Seventeenth Deployment: Return to the East Coast 1987-1991

Kitty Hawk began 1987 with a farewell to San Diego. On January 3, the ship and CVW Nine departed her homeport of 25 years and set out on a six-month world cruise. *Kitty Hawk* spent 106 consecutive days on station in the Indian Ocean and was again awarded the Navy Expeditionary Medal and the Meritorious Unit Citation.

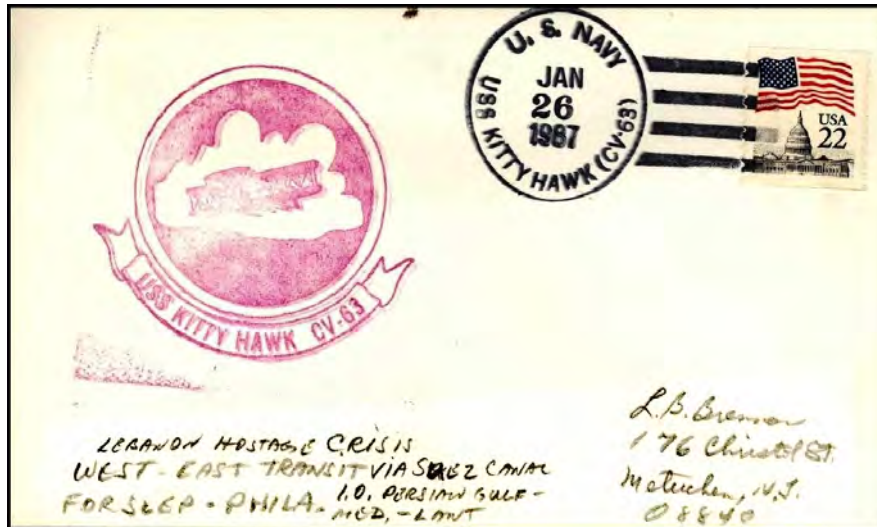


Fig. 166: A rubber-stamped cacheted cover which was postmarked during the ship's return to the East Coast for an extensive yard period on January 26, 1987. It bears *Kitty Hawk*'s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2-1(n+) (USN, USS, CV)) and was franked with a 22¢ flag definitive stamp. The cover was sponsored by Laurence J. Briend. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 167: Battle group formation underway in the Pacific Ocean, 2 March 1987. The ships are, left to right, front row: frigate *USS Barbey* (FF-1088), guided missile cruiser *USS Halsey* (CG-23), frigate *USS Stein* (FF-1065); second row, guided missile frigate *USS Vandegrift* (FFG-48), combat stores ship *USS Mars* (AFS-1), *Kitty Hawk*, ammunition ship *USS Mount Hood* (AE-29) and the guided missile destroyer *USS Callaghan* (DDG-994).

Defense Visual Information Center, photo id.: DN-SC-87-10339

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The cruise ended at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on July 3, 1987.

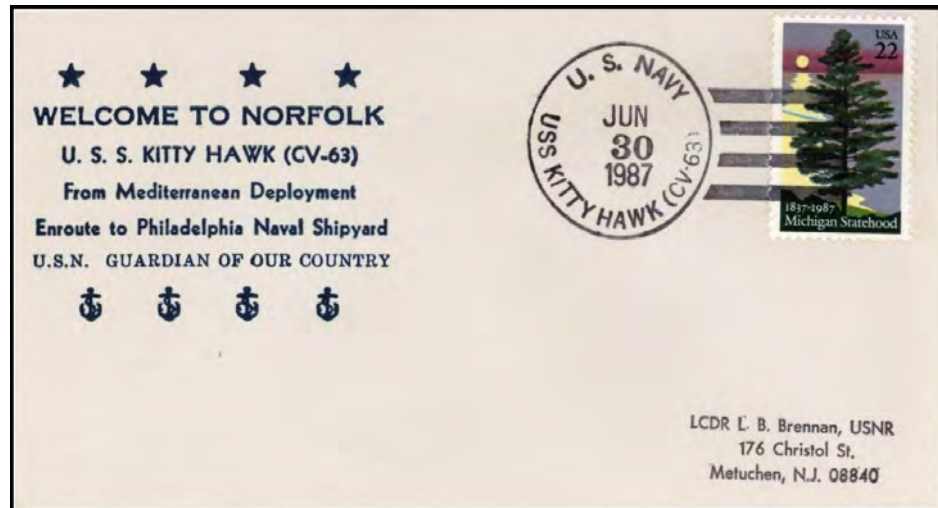


Fig. 168: A Tazewell G. Nicholson, "Welcome to Norfolk" printed cacheted cover which was postmarked on June 30, 1987 during the ship's return to the East Coast for an extensive yard period. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2-1(n+) (USN, USS, CV)) and was franked with a 22¢ Michigan Statehood commemorative stamp. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Six months later, *Kitty Hawk* began a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) overhaul. *Kitty Hawk* emerged from the yards nearly four years later, on March 29, 1991, her deck modified to accommodate the F/A-18 *Hornet*. The overhaul was estimated to have added 20 years to her service life. *Kitty Hawk* departed for the West Coast on July 30, 1991. *Kitty Hawk* did not participate in the first Gulf War.

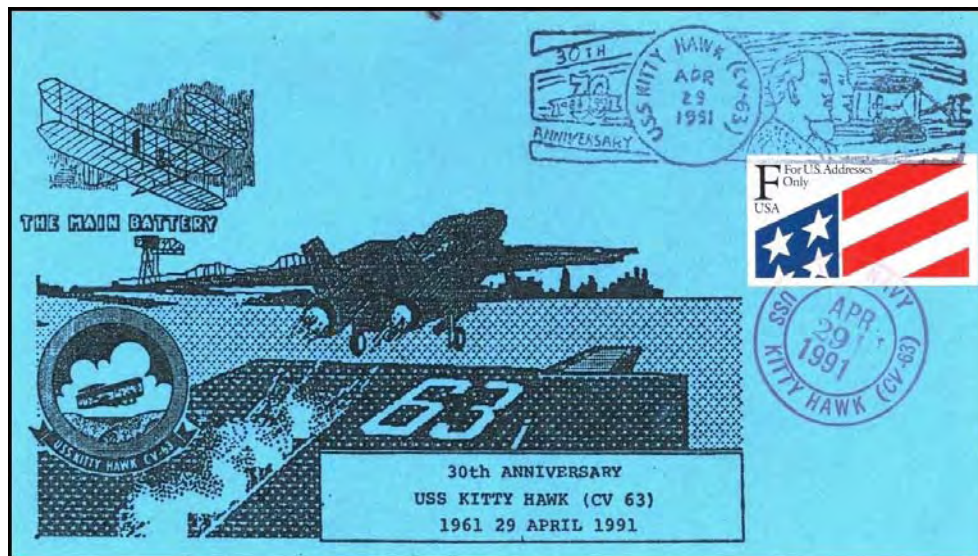


Fig. 169: A printed cacheted cover which was postmarked for the ship's 30th anniversary in commission following an extensive yard period on April 29, 1991. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancels (Locy Type F (K-20c) and Type 9-1 (n+u) (K-20b)) and was franked with an undenominated interim "F" domestic first class stamp. The cancels are both listed as "B" in the Postmark Catalog.

Eighteenth Deployment: Return to the Pacific Fleet

With the return of CVW Fifteen, *Kitty Hawk* began its second cruise around “the Horn” of South America to her original homeport of San Diego on December 11, 1991. On August 1, 1992, *Kitty Hawk* was appointed as Commander, Naval Air Forces, Pacific's “ready carrier.”

Nineteenth Deployment

The ship embarked the Commander, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Five, Commander, Destroyer Squadron Seventeen, and CVW Fifteen for three months of work-ups before deploying to the western Pacific on November 3, 1992.

While deployed, *Kitty Hawk* spent nine days off the coast of Somalia supporting U.S. Marines and coalition forces involved in *Operation Restore Hope*. In response to increasing Iraqi violations of the United Nations sanctions, the ship was redeployed to the Arabian Gulf on December 27, 1992. Just 17 days later, on January 13, 1993, *Kitty Hawk*, with 35 of her CVW Fifteen aircraft, led a joint, coalition offensive strike against missile sites in southern Iraq.

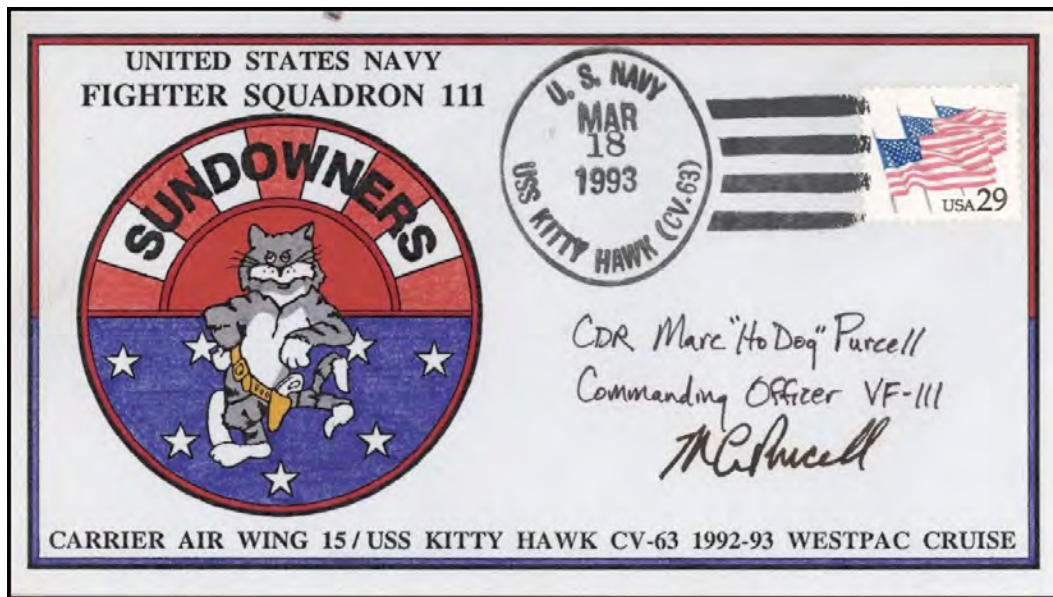


Fig. 170: A Steve Kovas “Zone Five” computer printed, hand colored, cacheted cover for Fighter Squadron One Eleven which was postmarked on March 18, 1993. It bears *Kitty Hawk*’s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 2-1(n+) (USN, USS, CV)) and was franked with a 29¢ flag definitive stamp. The cover is autographed by the Commanding Officer of VF-111, Commander Marc “Ho Dog” Purcell, U.S. Navy. He was a 1971 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and retired in 2009 as a Rear Admiral. The cancel is listed as “A” in the Postmark Catalog.

Kitty Hawk's battle group was relieved by the USS *Nimitz* battle group on March 18, 1993 and headed for home, after having operated in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf and participated in *Operations Restore Hope* and *Southern Watch*. She arrived in San Diego on May 3, 1993.

Lawrence Brennan ~ NJ-BUILT FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS – PART VIB**Twentieth Deployment**

Kitty Hawk departed San Diego on June 24, 1994 for a deployment to the western Pacific and returned on December 22, 1994.



Fig. 171: A Gary Rogak hand painted cacheted cover for the ship's 34th anniversary was postmarked on April 29, 1995. It bears *Kitty Hawk's* rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 13-11(n+)) (USN, USS, CV) formerly Type CD-9) and was franked with the "G" interim definitive stamp. The cover also contains the ship's rubber stamp cachet in the upper left corner. The cancel is listed as "A" in the Postmark Catalog.

Twenty-First Deployment

In the early summer of 1996, *Kitty Hawk* participated in *Exercise Rim of the Pacific '96* (RIMPAC 96). She then departed San Diego on her next six-month deployment on October 11, 1996. *Kitty Hawk* and her battle group, *USS Cowpens* (CG-63), *USS Antietam* (CG-54), *USS Reid* (FFG-30), and *USS Salt Lake City* (SSN-716), deployed to the western Pacific, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf. They spent three months in the Gulf in support of *Operation Southern Watch* and UN sanctions. During that period, CVW Eleven aircraft flew 1,775 sorties, accumulating 4,065 flight hours. Battle group ships conducted Maritime Interception Operations (MIO) in which crew members boarded and searched merchant ships believed to be carrying cargo in violation of UN sanctions against Iraq. *Kitty Hawk* and her battle group returned to homeport on April 11, 1997.



Fig. 172: *USS Kitty Hawk* with *USS Cowpens* (CG-63) in the Sea of Japan.

Photo by Capt. Dallas Bethea, USN (Ret) CO, USS Cowpens 1993-1995

FORWARD DEPLOYED TO JAPAN 1998-2008

Twenty-Second Deployment

On July 18, 1998, USS *Independence* (CV-62) turned over forward-deployed duties in Yokosuka, Japan, to *Kitty Hawk* while the two aircraft carriers were in Pearl Harbor. Upon reaching Japan, *Kitty Hawk* took on a new air wing, CVW Five, which had operated as a forward-deployed unit at Atsugi Naval Air Station since 1973.



Fig.173: USS Independence (CV 62) – left, and USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63) – right, at Pearl Harbor in 1998.

Kitty Hawk arrived in her new homeport of Yokosuka, Japan, on August 11, 1998. *Kitty Hawk* became the third aircraft carrier to be permanently forward deployed to Japan, after USS *Midway* (CV-41) and *Independence* (CV-62).

Twenty-Third Deployment

Kitty Hawk participated in *Exercise Foal Eagle '98*, the largest joint/combined exercise in the world between October 24 and November 4, 1998 off the coast of Korea. On November 20, 1998, *Kitty Hawk* received the First Navy Jack designating the 37-year-old aircraft carrier as the oldest ship in the fleet⁴.

Twenty-Fourth Deployment

Kitty Hawk's next deployment began on March 2, 1999. The ship and CVW Five participated in *Exercise Tandem Thrust* with a port visit to Agana, Guam. While at Agana, *Kitty Hawk* was visited by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jay L. Johnson on April 3. The CNO delivered the news that *Kitty Hawk* was being then directed to the Arabian Gulf along with USS *Chancellorsville* (CG-62) and USS *Curtis Wilbur* (DDG-54), after President Clinton ordered the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71) battle group to the Adriatic Sea to support NATO forces in Yugoslavia instead of relieving the USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) battle group. On April 20, *Kitty Hawk*, *Curtis Wilbur*, and *Chancellorsville* transited the Strait of Hormuz, relieving the *Enterprise's* battle group in the Arabian Gulf to participate in *Operation Southern Watch*.

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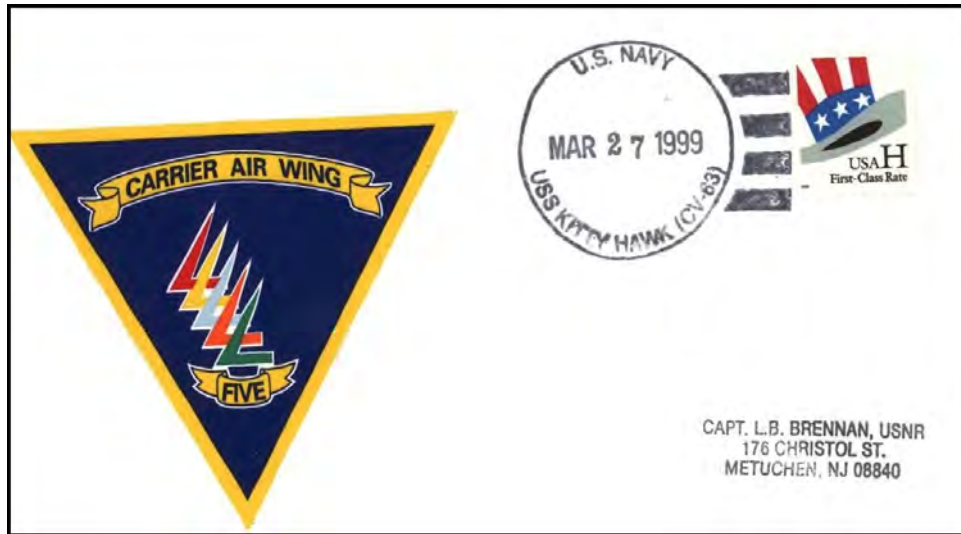


Fig. 174: A “zapper” cacheted cover for Carrier Air Wing Five (CVW 5) which was postmarked on March 27, 1999. It bears Kitty Hawk’s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-1(n+) (USN, USS, CV)) and was franked with H intermediate definitive stamp. A zapper is a sticker, or decal, commonly used by squadrons and air wings to depict their unit insignia. The door to the author’s legal office in Nimitz was covered with the zappers of the embarked Carrier Air Wing Eight and component squadrons. The cancel is not yet listed in the Postmark Catalog.

The *Kitty Hawk* battle group was relieved by the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71) battle group, and departed the Arabian Gulf on July 19, 1999, having launched more than 5,400 sorties during her three months in the Gulf.

Twenty-Fifth Deployment

Following her return to Yokosuka, she made port visits to Perth, Australia, and Pattaya, Thailand, and was back at Yokosuka in late August 1999. After participating in the multi-national *Exercises Fowl Eagle '99* and *ANNUALEX-11G* off the Korean Peninsula and Japan, *Kitty Hawk* returned to Yokosuka on November 10, 1999. Following repairs, upgrades, and training, the carrier returned to sea on February 23, 2000 for a dozen days of sea trials.

Twenty-Sixth Deployment

During her next two-month deployment to the western Pacific, *Kitty Hawk* participated in *Exercise Cobra Gold 2000* following a port call to Pattaya. *Kitty Hawk* and CVW Five again participated in the annual *Exercise Fowl Eagle* in the Sea of Japan. From November 7 to 17, 2000, the carrier trained with the Japanese Self Defense Force in *Exercise Keen Sword*; then the battle group returned to Yokosuka.

Twenty-Seventh Deployment

Following six days of sea trials in mid-February 2001, *Kitty Hawk* remained in port until March 2, 2001, when she and her battle group — USS *Chancellorsville* (CG-62), USS *Vincennes* (CG-49), USS *Gary* (FFG-51), USS *Vandegrift* (FFG-48), and USS *John S. McCain* (DDG-56) — got underway for a three-month deployment. The battle group participated in the annual *Tandem Thrust* exercise beginning on May 10, 2001.

POST 9/11 COMBAT DEPLOYMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Twenty-Eighth Deployment

Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, *Kitty Hawk* was ordered to sea in support of *Operation Enduring Freedom*, getting underway on October 1 after an accelerated sea trials and carrier qualifications period. The ship transited more than 6,000 miles in 12 days, and reported on station in the North Arabian Sea, serving as an afloat forward staging base for U.S. joint forces. While on station, pilots from CVW Five flew more than 600 missions over Afghanistan.

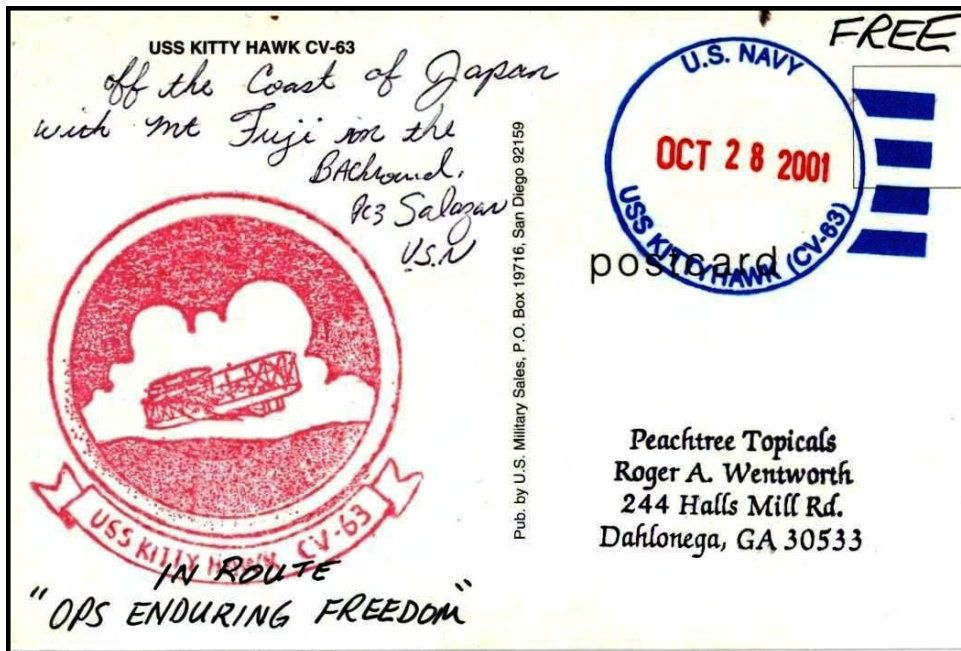


Fig. 175: A rubber stamp cacheted cover during *Operation Enduring Freedom* immediately after 9/11 which was postmarked on October 28, 2001. It bears a two color impression of *Kitty Hawk's* rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-1(n+)) (USN, USS, CV) and was a free frank from the postal clerk to Roger A. Wentworth of Peachtree Topicals. Mr. Wentworth is a cachet artist best known for his mermaid themes and Teddy Roosevelt cachets and a member of the Universal Ship Cancellation Society. The cancel is not yet listed in the Postmark Catalog.

The beginning of December brought a close to *Kitty Hawk's* missions in the North Arabian Sea. After 74 consecutive days at sea, the crew made a port visit to Phuket, Thailand, on December 13-15, 2001. They then continued on to Yokosuka, arriving on December 23, 2001, after 83 days at sea.

Twenty-Ninth Deployment

Following an intensive Ship's Restricted Availability (SRA) period, *Kitty Hawk* departed Yokosuka on March 12, 2002 to begin sea trials. *Kitty Hawk* stood out to sea again on March 18, to complete carrier qualifications (CQ) and integrated battle-group training near Guam, returning to Yokosuka on April 1. The carrier departed Yokosuka again about three weeks later for another period of underway training.

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Fig. 176: A rubber stamp cacheted cover marking the 60th anniversary of the Doolittle Raid on Japan which was postmarked on April 18, 2002. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-1(n+)) (USN, USS, CV) and 34¢ Statue of Liberty definitive stamp. The rubber stamp cachet is a modified copy of the printed cachet first sponsored by USS America Chapter 71 USCS for the 35th anniversary of the Doolittle Raid in 1977. The cancel is not yet listed in the Postmark Catalog.

Battle group ships participating in this training included USS *Chancellorsville* (CG-62), USS *O'Brien* (DD-975), USS *Vandergrift* (FFG-48), USS *Cowpens* (CG-63), USS *Curtis Wilbur* (DDG-54), USS *John S. McCain* (DDG-56), and USS *Cushing* (DD-985). USS *Helena* (SSN-725), USNS *Rappahannock* (T-AO-204), USNS *Kiska* (T-AE-35), and USNS *Concord* (T-AFS-5) supported the training operations.

Subsequently, *Kitty Hawk* made port visits to Hong Kong, Singapore and Guam. The ship celebrated her 41st birthday just prior to pulling into Hong Kong. She returned to Yokosuka on June 5.

Thirtieth Deployment

Kitty Hawk left Yokosuka on October 25, 2002, for a scheduled underway period in the western Pacific. While at sea, the ship's crew, along with the embarked CVW Five and Destroyer Squadron 15 engaged in combined military exercises. The carrier returned to Yokosuka on December 13, 2002.

Thirty-First Deployment

Kitty Hawk got underway on January 23, 2003. The deployment turned out not to be routine for on February 12 the ship was directed to the Arabian Gulf to deal with Iraq. The carrier and CVW Five, arriving on February 22, spent more than 100 consecutive days underway in support of *Operations Southern Watch* and *Iraqi Freedom*. The *Kitty Hawk* Strike group consisted of *O'Brien*, *Cowpens*, *Curtis Wilbur*, *John S. McCain*, and *Cushing*. *Rappahannock* and *Flint* provided logistical support.

During *Kitty Hawk's* participation in *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, CVW Five flew 5,375 sorties during 11,800 flight hours, and expended 864,860 pounds of ordnance. The *Kitty Hawk* Strike Group departed the Gulf on April 16 and returned to Yokosuka on May 6, 2003.

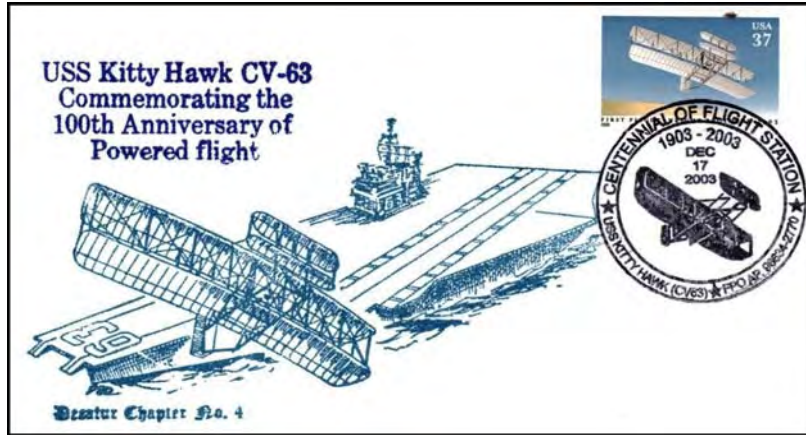


Fig. 177: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Decatur Chapter 4 USCS for the Centennial of Flight which was postmarked on December 17, 2003. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type F) and was franked with a 37¢ First Flight stamp. The cancel is not listed in the Postmark Catalog.

Thirty-Second Deployment

Fig. 178: A printed cacheted cover for the ship's joint operations with the Republic of Korea which was postmarked on March 27, 2004. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-2an) (USS, CV) FPO AP 96634-2770, with killer bars and was franked with 37¢ definitive stamp. The cover was sponsored by Jim Woodley a former member of the Universal Ship Cancellation Society. The cancel is not yet listed in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 179: An F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to the "Diamondbacks" of Strike Fighter Squadron One Zero Two (VFA-102), launching from one of four steam powered catapults aboard USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63). The Super Hornet replaced "Tomcats" (F14A) in CVW Five.

U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Jason T. Poplin (# 040228-N-5821P-010).

Between February 18 and May 24, 2004, *Kitty Hawk* deployed to the western Pacific and South Pacific. On February 19, 2004 *Kitty Hawk* had her first landing of an F/A-18F Super Hornet. The VFA-102 "Diamondbacks" introduced the improved F/A-18 E/F "Super Hornet" to the Seventh Fleet, replacing the F-14 Tomcat after more than 30 years of service.

Lawrence Brennan ~ NJ-BUILT FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS – PART VIB**Thirty-Third Deployment**

On July 3, 2005, *Kitty Hawk* called at Sydney, Australia. During the same cruise, the *Kitty Hawk* made a port call in Guam. She returned to Yokosuka on August 20, 2005.

Thirty-Fourth Deployment

In November 2005, *Kitty Hawk* anchored at Hong Kong, and was there for Thanksgiving. In June 2006, after a six month SRA period, the *Kitty Hawk* once again got underway, was overflown by a Russian Il-38, and shortly after pulled into Otaru, on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaidō, and Singapore. In August 2006 the carrier pulled into Fremantle, Australia for shore leave. In September 2006, *Kitty Hawk* made the final port call of the deployment at Pattaya, after which she returned to Yokosuka.

Thirty-Fifth Deployment

The ship departed Yokosuka on June 8, 2006. During the 99-day deployment, she took part in *Exercise Valiant Shield*, a multi-service war game involving three carrier strike groups, 22,000 personnel, and 280 aircraft June 19 to 23. It was the largest military exercise conducted by the United States in Pacific waters since the Vietnam War.

Kitty Hawk and her escorts were conducting exercises near Okinawa when a People's Liberation Army Navy's *Song*-class submarine shadowed the group then surfaced within five miles of the group on October 26, 2006. It was rare for Chinese subs to operate that far from their homeports on the mainland. Reports claim that the submarine had been undetected until it surfaced. In 2009, Admiral Timothy J. Keating, Commander, United States Pacific Command, stated that the carrier was "in a very relaxed posture. If there were some heightened state of tension, believe me, we would not let them get that close."

On January 11, 2007 *Kitty Hawk* entered a scheduled period of maintenance in Yokosuka, her place being taken by the *Ronald Reagan* which made an unscheduled deployment three weeks later.

Thirty-Sixth Deployment

This deployment began in May 2007. On July 5, 2007, *Kitty Hawk* pulled into Sydney for six days after participating in *Exercise Talisman Sabre*. On September 21, 2007, *Kitty Hawk* returned to Yokosuka after a four-month summer deployment.

Thirty-Seventh Deployment

In November 2007, *Kitty Hawk* and other US ships performed a joint military exercise, in the Bay of Bengal. Other nations that took part in this exercise were Australia, India, Japan and Singapore. Later that month, *Kitty Hawk* was scheduled to dock at Hong Kong for Thanksgiving but China denied entry. China then reversed its position "on humanitarian grounds." By that time *Kitty Hawk* was too far away to anchor in time for the holiday. The cause of the Chinese refusal remains unclear.

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Thirty-Eighth Deployment

Kitty Hawk was deployed off the coast of China along with two other ships during the Taiwan election on March 20, 2008. After the elections, she entered Hong Kong for the last time.

RELIEF BY USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN-73) AND RETURN TO THE WEST COAST FOR DECOMMISSIONING



Fig. 180A & B: Last aircraft to catapult from USS Kitty Hawk, a Super Hornet, on August 6, 2008, in the Pacific Ocean, just before her return to San Diego. Kitty Hawk departed Japan on May 28, and was replaced by the nuclear-powered USS George Washington. US Navy photos by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Don Bray (#080806-N-9076B-014).

For a decade, *Kitty Hawk* was the forward-deployed carrier at Yokosuka Naval Base. She departed Japan on May 28, 2008 and arrived at San Diego on August 7, 2008, months after her scheduled return to the United States, delayed by a serious fire on board *USS George Washington*. In October 2008 she was replaced by *George Washington*; *Kitty Hawk* then returned to the United States for her decommissioning ceremony on January 31, 2009. She was officially decommissioned on May 12, 2009 after almost 49 years of service. *Kitty Hawk* was replaced by the *USS George H. W. Bush* (CVN-77) as the 11th active carrier in the fleet.

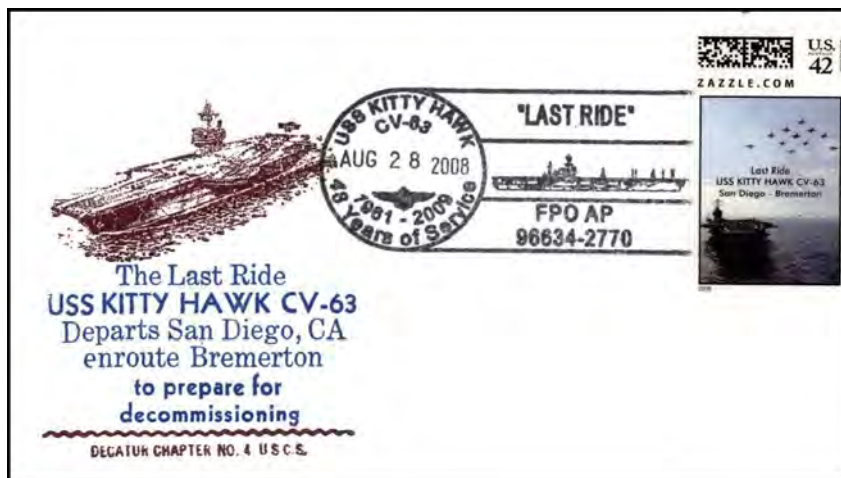


Fig. 181: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Decatur Chapter 4 USCS for the ship's final voyage from San Diego to Bremerton which was postmarked on August 28, 2008. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type F) and was franked with a 42¢ Zazzle stamp showing the ship and air wing in flight. The cancel is not listed in the Postmark Catalog.

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Fig. 182: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Decatur Chapter 4 USCS for the ship's arrival at Bremerton for decommissioning which was postmarked on September 2, 2008. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type F) and was franked with a 42¢ Zazzle stamp showing the ship. The cancel is not listed in the Postmark Catalog.

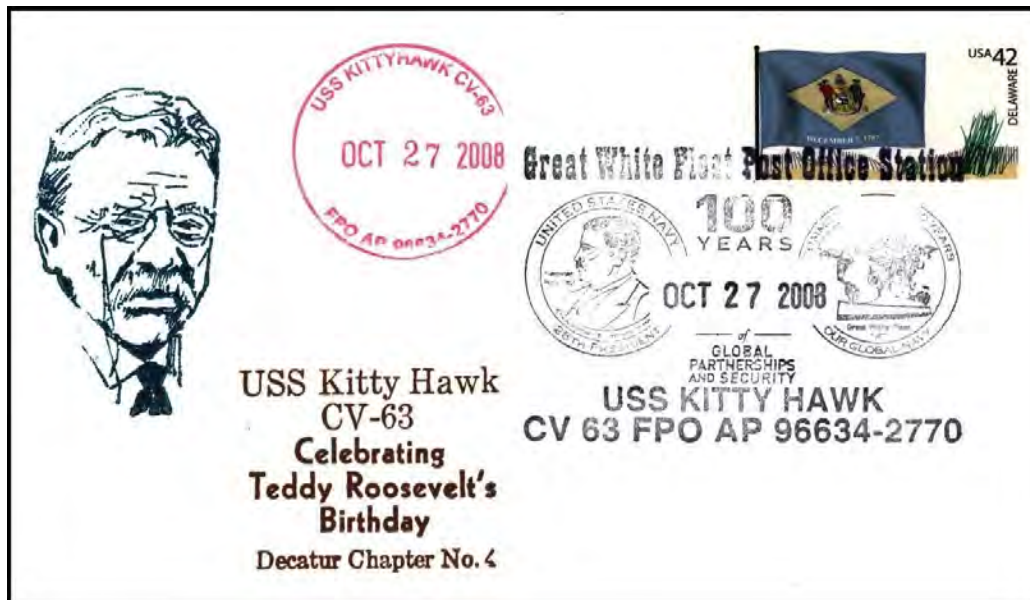


Fig. 183: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Decatur Chapter 4 USCS for 150th birthday of Theodore Roosevelt, the father of the modern American Navy, which was postmarked on October 27, 2008, traditionally Navy Day. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-2an+(USS, FPO AP 96634-2770) no killer bars and Locy Type CD-10 Great White Fleet) and was franked with a 42¢ Delaware State commemorative stamp. The cancels are not listed in the Postmark Catalog.

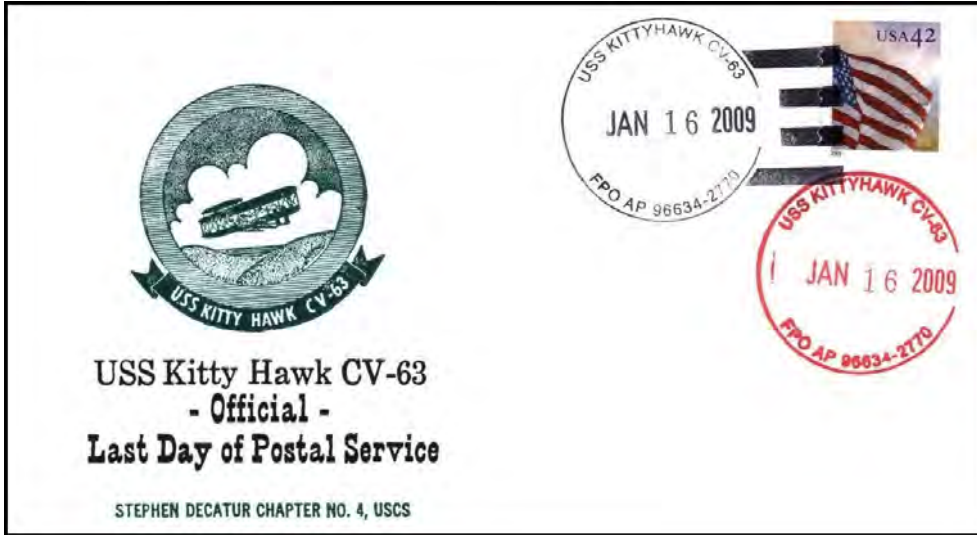


Fig. 184: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Decatur Chapter 4 USCS for the ship's Official Last Day of Postal Service which was postmarked on January 16, 2009. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-2an+(USS, FPO AP 96634-2770) no killer bars, and Type 11-2n+ (USS, FPO AP 96634-2770 with killer bars) and Type F) and was franked with a 42¢ flag definitive stamp. The cancels are not listed in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 185: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Decatur Chapter 4 USCS for the ship's Decommissioning Ceremony which was postmarked on January 31, 2009. It bears Kitty Hawk's rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-2an+(USS, FPO AP 96634-2770) no killer bars, and Type 11-2n+ (USS, FPO AP 96634-2770 with killer bars) and Type F) and was franked with a 42¢ Alaska state commemorative stamp. The cancels are not listed in the Postmark Catalog.

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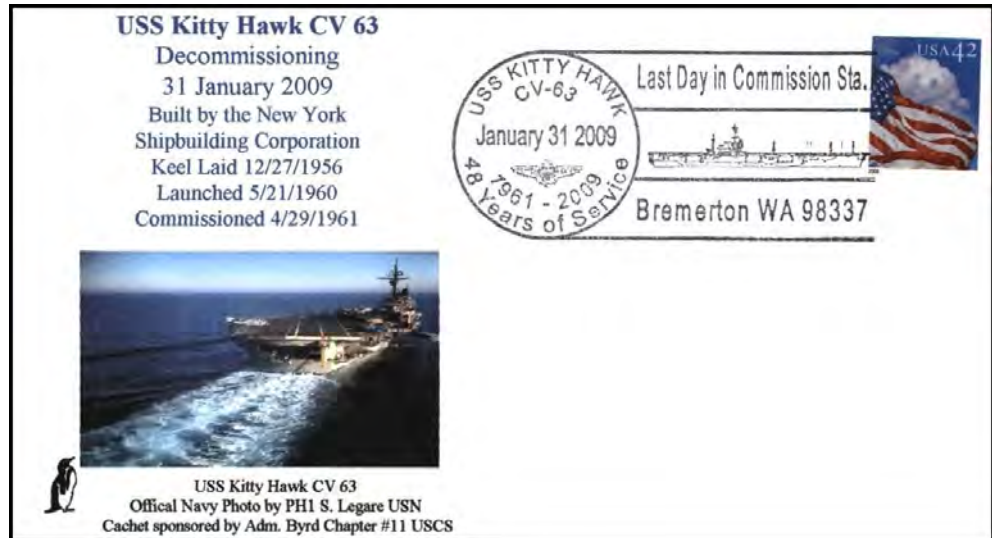


Fig. 186: A printed cacheted cover sponsored by Byrd Chapter 11, USCS for the ship’s Decommissioning Ceremony which was postmarked on January 31, 2009. It bears a USPS rubber stamp hand cancel and was franked with a 42¢ definitive flag stamp. John Lyding of Byrd Chapter designed and printed the cover which shows the view enjoyed by a naval aviator on final about to trap on board Kitty Hawk. The aircraft appears to be lined up, “in the grove” and calling the ball, although the LSO and “meatball” are difficult to see on the port side aft of the flight deck. USPS pictorial cancels are not listed in the Postmark Catalog.



Fig. 187: A printed cacheted cover sponsored for the ship’s actual Last Day in Commission which was postmarked on May 12, 2009. It bears Kitty Hawk’s rubber stamp hand cancel (Locy Type 11-2an+(USS, FPO AP 96634-2770) no killer bars, and Type 11-2n+ (USS, FPO AP 96634-2770 with killer bars) and Type F) and was franked with a 42¢ Liberty Bell “Forever” stamp. The cancels are not listed in the Postmark Catalog. Thanks to Richard Hoffner, Vice President of the USCS and Cachet Director for Decatur Chapter for this cover.

NJ-BUILT FAST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS – PART VIB ~ Lawrence Brennan

Fig. 188:
Presentation of
colors after
decommissioning,
May 12, 2009.

U.S. Navy photo #
090512-N-0017S-
039.

Kitty Hawk's decommissioning ceremony took place on January 31, 2009, and she was formally decommissioned on May 12, 2009.

CONCLUSION

From the first aircraft launched from Saratoga in 1928 until the last trap on board *Kitty Hawk* in 2008, New Jersey-built fast carriers were at the forefront of naval aviation. The vast majority of the ships built at Camden were converted cruisers and many were emergency small carriers built for a limited duration during the Second World War. Saratoga and *Kitty Hawk*, the first and last, were the largest of the fast carriers built by New York Shipbuilding and by some strange coincidence, they were the first and last conventionally powered fast carriers to serve in the United States Navy. For most of the 80 years between Saratoga's commissioning in 1927 and *Kitty Hawk's* decommissioning in 2009, New Jersey-built fast carriers were at the core of naval aviation. These ships brought victory at sea in the Pacific and demonstrated the huge industrial capability of New Jersey. There probably never will be another warship, let alone aircraft carrier, built in New Jersey, but the record speaks admirably for the efforts of the citizens of the Garden State who designed and built some of the most complex systems and mobile structures in the world.

[This is the last of this series on New Jersey-Built Fast Aircraft carriers.]

ENDNOTES:

¹ These and other pictures courtesy of <http://www.navsourc.org/archives> & the Department of the Navy-Naval History and Heritage Command web pages at <http://www.history.navy.mil/branches/org11-2.htm>, in addition to some images sourced from Wikipedia Commons. All photos are in the public domain.

² The author was the Legal Officer in *USS Nimitz* at this time.

³ Picture available at http://public.fotki.com/Toddster/navy_photos-1/command_photos/kittyhawk_battle.html.

⁴ This distinction allowed her to display the First Navy Jack in place of the Union Jack flown aboard other Navy ships. The First Navy Jack, a flag consisting of 13 horizontal, alternating red and white stripes with a rattlesnake across the center, bears the motto, "Don't Tread On Me." Conceived in 1775 by Commodore Ezek Hopkins of the Continental Navy, the flag was first used as a signal among ships to engage the enemy. In 1977, the Secretary of the Navy directed the ship with the longest total period of active service to display the First Navy Jack until decommissioned or transferred to the inactive reserve. At that time, the flag shall be passed to the next ship in line with appropriate honors. *Kitty Hawk* received the flag from Independence following its decommissioning on September 30 in Bremerton, Wash. After 9/11 all commissioned U.S. Navy warships have displayed the First Navy Jack at the jack staff when moored or anchored. No jack is displayed when a warship is underway.