



Above: The USS Hunter Liggett was one of the first three transports commissioned in World War II.

Center: A smaller attack transport, the USS Arthur Middleton, carried out seven amphibious operations during its World War II service.

Below: Crewed by Coast Guardsmen, the USS Armthyst was a converted yacht.

asionally becoming targets for shore batteries, only their landing craft crews could expect to come under fire in the course of almost every invasion.

Entire companies of beaching craft, on the other hand, could claim the distinction of being in the forefront of the battle in every opposed landing.

Initially, the Coast Guard was to provide crews for 61 LSTs which were flat-bottomed ships, 328 feet long, fitted with ballast tanks that could be pumped out to reduce their draft by five feet when beaching, and with bow doors that opened so that vehicles could be driven off the tank deck.

Changes in production schedules

reduced the Coast Guard's responsibility to 37 of the early LSTs, 13 of which served with Navy flotillas in the European theater, while 24 went to the Pacific.

Beginning with the landings in Tunis in July 1943 and those at Fischhafen, New Guinea, two months later, one or more Coast Guard-manned LSTs participated in almost every amphibious operation involving American forces, and several landed British or Commonwealth troops, as at Taranto, Normandy and Borneo. Thirty-six more LSTs, composing the 29th Flotilla, were commissioned by Coast Guard crews in 1944 and took part in the two Ijima and Okinawa, Japan, landings in 1945, while three others completed their training too late for World War II service.

THE LANDINGS

LST participation in an invasion was rarely a simple beaching, landing of equipment and men, and retracting. Invasion convoys were often subjected to air attack while in passage, and after an LST's initial beaching, it was usually ordered to go alongside a larger vessel offshore to embark another cargo to be landed on the beach.

This sequence was often repeated a number of times in the course of a single amphibious operation. In fact, the Coast Guard-manned LST 792 was said to have been beached 90 times during its 13-month World War II career.

Nor was beaching always a simple evolution — beach gradients sometimes did not permit a close approach before the LST grounded, necessitating the use of pontoon causeways, brought to the scene by the LST, between ship and shore.

In addition, beaching on coral reefs in the Pacific was likely to be especially tricky, because the landing ship might find itself impaled on a coral head when it came time to retract. For example, the Coast Guard-manned LST 203 had to be abandoned after beaching on a coral reef in the Ellice Islands Oct. 1, 1943.

Also, two other Coast Guard LSTs were lost: LST 69 was one of six destroyed by explosion and fire while loading ammunition in Pearl Harbor May 21, 1944 — none of its crew died in the catastrophe, but 13 were seriously injured — and Japanese bombers damaged the LST 167 irreparably during the