



*U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

# USS *Bayfield*

APA-33; ex-SS Sea Bass



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Bayfield is a county in Wisconsin.

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Builder: Western Pipe and Steel Company in San Francisco, California.

Length: 492'

Beam: 69' 6"

Draft: 26' 6"

Displacement: 8,100 tons; 16,000 tons full load

Propulsion: General Electric geared turbine; single propeller; 8,500 SHP

Top speed: 18.4 knots

Complement: 575

Passengers:

Flag Accommodations: 80 officers; 108 enlisted

Troop Accommodations: 80 officers; 1,146 enlisted

Landing Craft/Boats: 12 LCVP; 4 LCM; 3 LCP(L)

Armament: 2 x 5"/38 single-mount dual purpose; 2 x single-mount 40mm; 4 x twin-mount 40mm; 12 x 20mm; 18 single-mount 20mm.

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## History:

The Coast Guard-manned USS *Bayfield* (APA-33) was converted to an attack transport from a standard Maritime Commission C-3 hull (C3-S-A-2; assigned name *Sea Bass*). She was built by the Western Pipe and Steel Company at San Pedro, California, and was launched on 15 February 1943. Conversion to a naval auxiliary was accomplished by the Atlantic Basin Iron Works, Brooklyn, New York, and she was placed in full commission as an APA (attack transport) and RAGC (Reserve Headquarters Communication Ship) on 30 November 1943 with a Coast Guard crew. She was renamed USS *Bayfield* and was commissioned under the command of CAPT Lyndon Spencer, USCG. Berthing space was provided for about 2,000 men. She began her shakedown cruise on 4 December 1943, out of Hampton Roads, Virginia, and during the trials was sent to the Norfolk Navy Yard for further alterations found necessary while undergoing her tests. The shakedown cruise in the Chesapeake Bay was completed on 21 December 1943.

The *Bayfield* was assigned to Task Group 20.1 on 21 December 1943 for amphibious training and on its completion the transport was drydocked at Norfolk for repairs. Work was completed in February, 1944, and she was ordered to New York to load troops for an overseas destination. On 11 February 1944, she sailed in convoy UT-8 for Glasgow, and arrived there on February 22nd without incident. She then proceeded to Portland, England, to await further orders. She arrived at Plymouth on March 11th and on the 14th departed for Clyde to carry out landing exercises. She returned to Plymouth on March 21st.

On 29 March 1944 RADM Don P. Moon, USN, and his staff reported on board and *Bayfield* became flagship of Task Force "U." From this time until early June, the ship was headquarters for planning the procedures Force "U" was to implement in the Normandy invasion. Short runs executing various maneuvers and orders were conducted and further alterations were made during April. On April 26th, the ship proceeded to sea to carry out rehearsal exercises which were completed on the 29th, when she returned to Plymouth. Troops composing the assault elements of the 4th Battalion, 8th Infantry and 87th Chemical Battalion, Company C, were embarked on 7 May 1944, and on 5 June 1944, the ship was in convoy for the Bay of Seine in execution of plans for the invasion of Normandy. On 6 June 1944, at 0305, troops debarked bound for "Utah" beach between Les-Dunes-de-Varreville and La Madeleine, Nazi-occupied France. The initial landings actually took place 500 yards from where they were supposed to, near the area known as La Grande Dune.\*\* For 19 days *Bayfield* functioned as a supply and hospital ship in addition to carrying out her regularly assigned duties as the Admiral's flagship.

She returned to the United Kingdom on 25 June 1944. After a short period allowed for necessary repairs *Bayfield* was assigned to Task Group 120.6, formed on 5 July 1944, and sailed for Oran, Algeria, where she arrived on the 10th when the unit dissolved. Reassigned to convoy UGF-12 she proceeded to Naples on the 12th. Here Task Force 87 was organized and on the death of RADM Moon, RADM Spencer Lewis, USN, assumed command of it. Training exercises were held on August 6th and 7th, in preparation for the invasion of southern France and on 13 August 1944, *Bayfield* departed Naples for the assault on the southern coast of France. Here she debarked the commanding general and troops of the 36th Division near St. Raphael in the early morning of 15 August 1944. CAPT Rutledge B. Tompkins, USN, became commander of the task force on 29 August 1944. CAPT Spencer was detached and CDR Gordon A. Littlefield, USCG, assumed command of *Bayfield*. Returning to Naples on 10 September *Bayfield* was ordered to Oran, via Bizerte, and on 16 September she was underway for the United States in convoy GUF-14. She arrived at Norfolk on 26 September 1944, and debarked passengers. CAPT W. R. Richards, USCG, assumed command on 17 September.

The *Bayfield* was drydocked and overhauled at Norfolk Navy Yard between September 28th and October 29th, 1944, and on 7 November sailed for Panama and the Pacific in Task Unit 29.6.11 with Amphibian Group 7 and passengers for Pearl Harbor. The task unit was dissolved at Cristobal and she arrived at Pearl Harbor on 26 November 1944 where her passengers disembarked. On 27 November Commander Transport Squadron 15 and staff reported aboard.

The *Bayfield* departed Pearl Harbor on 6 December 1944 as flagship of Task Unit 13.10.16 on maneuvers conducted off Maui. Mooring at Honolulu on 9 December 1944, she embarked troops of the 2nd Battalion, 390th Infantry, USA, on December 11th and departed to continue amphibious exercises which were completed with her return to Honolulu on the 16th.

On 1 January 1945, she sailed to Maui to load cargo and troops of the Fourth U. S. Marine Division at Kahului Harbor and returned to Pearl Harbor on January 4th. She was on amphibious exercises from January 6th to the 9th, and from the 12th to the 18th conducted further amphibious exercises. She sailed from Pearl Harbor on 27 January 1945, in Joint Expeditionary Force 51 (VADM Admiral R. K. Turner) en route to Iwo Jima via Eniwetok and Saipan, arriving at the latter place on 11 February 1946. Rehearsal exercises were conducted off Tinian on February 12th and 13th. The Force departed Saipan for Iwo Jima on 16 February 1946, and on "D" day (19 February 1945) *Bayfield* anchored off Iwo Jima, where she landed troops and equipment and functioned as a hospital and prison of war ship as well as flagship for Task Group 53.2. Ten days were spent off Iwo Jima and on 1 March 1945, she sailed for Saipan in Task Unit 51.29.2.

Passengers, casualties of the Fourth Marine Division and prisoners of war were discharged there on 4 March 1945. Supplies and equipment of the Second Marine Division were loaded on March 6th and 7th, and *Bayfield* was underway on the 11th to participate in the rehearsal exercises in preparation for the invasion of Okinawa. She returned to Saipan on March 19th, and on the 27th was underway to Okinawa with Task Unit 51.2.1. On Easter morning, April 1st, she hove to off the southeastern coast of Okinawa, unloading troops for a diversionary feint, this operation being repeated on April 2nd. From April 2nd to the 11th she was at sea, in retirement, awaiting orders. On April 11th she set course for Saipan in Task Group 51.2.2 with troops still on board and the Task Group was dissolved on arrival at Saipan on the 14th, troops being disembarked the same day. The equipment was unloaded on 17 May 1945. From April 14th to June, 1945, she lay at anchor in Saipan Harbor awaiting orders, while she was being painted and routine repairs were made.

On 4 June 1945, *Bayfield* was underway in Task Group 12.2.2, en route to island in the South Pacific for pool-up lifts. From Tulagi the ships of the Group were ordered to various ports to unload cargo. She departed Tulagi for Espiritu Santo on 14 June 1945, and arrived there on the 17th. After loading she sailed for Tinian on 1 July 1945 and arrived there on the 9th. After unloading cargo she proceeded to Saipan the same day, where more cargo was unloaded and passengers embarked for Guam for which island she departed on July 13th and arrived on the 14th, unloading passengers and the balance of her cargo. On 16 July 1945, the transport loaded passengers and departed for San Francisco where she arrived on 30 July 1945. Here she received drydocking and routine maintenance work in preparation for the expected invasion of the Japanese home islands.

The *Bayfield* was still in San Francisco, however, when the war ended on 14 August 1945. She sailed on August 25th to Eniwetok for outward routing to Subic Bay, Philippines, to discharge passengers and cargo and then to proceed to Zamboanga, Philippine Islands. Arriving at Eniwetok on September 7th, she departed the next day on revised orders for Tacloban, Philippine Islands, and arrived at Leyte Gulf on September 14th and after unloading passengers and cargo at Samar, reported to Commander, Amphibious Group 3 for duty in the occupation of Aomori, Japan.

On 17 to 18 September 1945 elements of the 81st Division and their equipment were combat loaded and on the 18th *Bayfield* departed in Task Force 34 for Aomori, where she arrived on 25 September 1945 and amphibious landings were carried out. On the 29th she sailed for Saipan as part of Task Unit 34.3.25 which was dissolved on arrival on 4 October 1945, and *Bayfield* reported for "Magic Carpet" operations of returning personnel to the United States. She departed Saipan on 7 October 1945, loaded to capacity and arrived at San Pedro on the 20th. She made two more trips across the Pacific, to Jinsen, Korea, one leaving San Pedro on 3 November 1945 and another leaving Seattle on 29 December 1945. She returned to San Francisco on 6 February 1946.

Her Coast Guard crew was removed on 8 March 1946.

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**Images:**



USS *Bayfield* off Utah Beach, June, 1944. No official number; photographer not listed.



USS *Bayfield* loading landing craft, off Utah Beach, 6 June 1944; photo number 80-G-252391; photographer not listed. Naval Historical Center photo through NavSource.

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**Sources:**

Cutter History File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

*Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.* Washington, DC: USGPO.

*\*\*Email from Pieter Graf*

U.S. Coast Guard. *Coast Guard At War: Volume V: Transports & Escorts, Part II.* Washington, DC: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Historical Section, Public Information Division, 1949.

