



USS LST-204

Builder: Chicago Bridge and Iron Company, Seneca, Illinois

Commissioned: 27 April 1943

Decommissioned: 23 February 1946

Disposition: Sold for scrap on 8 October 1947

Length: 327' 9" oa

Beam: 50'

Draft: 1' 6" bow, 7' 5" stern (unloaded); 8' 2" bow, 14' 1" stern (loaded -- at sea);
3' 1" bow, 9' 6" (loaded -- beaching)

Displacement: 1,625 (light); 4,080 (w/ full load of 2,100 tons)

Propulsion: 2 x General Motors 12-567 diesels, twin shafts/rudders

Range: 24,000 nm @ 9 knots

Top Speed: 11.6 knots

Complement: 111

Troops: 163

Armament: 7 x 40mm (single mount); 6 x 20 mm (single mount); 2 x .50-caliber
mgs; 4 x .30-caliber mgs

Commanding Officers:

LT Arthur I. Roberts: 27 April 1943 -

LT Charles W. Radke

LT Richard D. Irvin, USCGR: 5 January 1945

History:

USS LST-204

LST Flotilla 7, Group 21, Division 42

The Coast Guard-manned USS *LST-204* was laid down on 24 July 1942 at the Chicago Bridge & Iron Company in Seneca, Illinois. She was launched on 3 April 1943 and entered commissioned service on 27 April 1943 under the command of LT Arthur I. Roberts, USCG.

(Reports of operations between the dates of her commissioning and 21 September 1943, are not available).

On 21 September 1943, *LST-204* departed Lae, New Guinea, with a combat load of 500 Australian troops of the 9th Division and their equipment. On the 22nd she beached at Scarlet Beach several miles above Finschafen at 0656 and began unloading cargo and dis-embarking personnel under a protective air cover. The operation was completed without incident by 0925. Five minutes later the *204* began retracting from the beach. She had not moved off more than 25 yards when a lone Japanese Mitsubishi A6M "Zero" fighter flew in unobserved over the hills and swooped down to masthead level and dropped two small bombs, both falling wide of their mark and landing on the beach off the starboard bow, 40 yards away. No casualties resulted and the *204* joined the formation and headed south to Buna. At 1230 escorts signaled approaching planes and ten minutes later six Japanese Mitsubishi Ki-21 Type 97 "Sally" medium bombers were sighted on the horizon approaching the formation on the port quarter at very low altitude. They were in two groups of three planes each. Two "Zeros" spotted high above were immediately engaged by our planes. All ships broke formation and began weaving at emergency speed, according to plan. The main batteries of escorting destroyers opened fire at 5,000 yards and two bombers crashed into the sea, one exploding in midair, apparently as a result of a direct hit. The remaining bombers broke formation but continued coming.

The *204* had wheeled to port when the bombers came within range. Two were approaching on the port quarter when the order was given to fire. Hits were scored almost immediately by the 20-mm guns of *LST-204*. One torpedo launched by the bomber passed astern missing the *204* by several hundred yards. The bomber then fell into the water, bounced back again and burst into flames. The other "Sally" kept coming at deck level, 1,400 yards astern and to port. Fire was concentrated on her and she passed to starboard not more than 25 yards abeam with direct hits seen to be peppering her cockpit. She began to leave a trail of dark smoke and seemed out of control. When about 100 yards off the port bow of *204* it crashed into the sea. Firing ceased. The remaining planes were engaged by Lockheed P-38 "Lightning" fighters. Two more "Sallys" crashed to starboard 5,000 yards distant. One "Zero" plummeted seaward in flames and a P-38 fell, the pilot bailing out and being eventually picked up by

escorts. By 1305 "all clear" was sounded and the ships resumed formation. No casualties or damage was suffered by *LST-204*.

On 26 December 1943, *LST-204* was off Cape Gloucester when the convoy was attacked by enemy dive bombers at 1435. Three bombers attacked the *204* in shallow dives at 1,000 feet. Three bombs were dropped within 75 to 200 feet of the ship. With all guns firing, a fatal hit was scored on an Aichi D3A "Val" dive bomber which subsequently crashed into the sea. Damaging hits were observed on two other "Vals" and one crashed into the sea as a result. A third "Val" crashed but not as the sole result of the *204*'s fire. The attack ceased at 1540 with no casualties or damage, except cracked pipes in the engine room from bomb explosions. The USS *Shaw* (DD-373) was hit. She listed but continued fire. A near miss was made on *LST-66*, 500 yards off the port bow. A P-38 crashed two miles away but the pilot bailed out and was rescued. A Republic P-47 "Thunderbolt" crashed but the pilot bailed out and landed on a reef three miles off the port beam. Nine other unidentified planes were seen crashing into the water within a radius of 3,000 yards. The escort destroyer received the brunt of the attack and held off a number of planes. The *LST-204* suffered several near misses. At 1700 the attacks were renewed for about 10 minutes but the planes were out of range and no hits were scored or damage or casualties incurred. Three bombers were shot down. A third air battle at 20,000 feet ensued in which six enemy planes crashed and burned.

The *LST-204*, following these two experiences, was engaged in eight more invasion landings in the Pacific area as follows:

Saidor: 5 January 1944.

Humboldt Bay: 19 April 1944.

Biak: 9 June, 1944.

Noemfoor: 9 July 1944.

Sansapor: 31 July 1944.

Morotai: 15 September 1944.

Leyte: 20 October 1944.

Lingayen Gulf: 9 January 1945.

Between these invasion landings, *LST--204* made many resupply runs in the Southwest Pacific area, and after the Lingayen Gulf invasion was engaged in supply runs between the Philippine area and Southwest Pacific ports. The LST

returned to San Diego on 10 December 1945 and then proceeded to Charleston via the Panama Canal.

She was decommissioned and her Coast Guard crew removed at Charleston, South Carolina, on 23 February 1946. She was struck from the Naval Register on 5 June 1946 and was sold for scrap to the New Orleans Shipwrecking Corporation of Chicago, Illinois on 8 October 1947.

The *LST-204* earned six battle stars for World War II service.



"Debarking in New Britain. . ."; no date (December, 1943/January, 1944?); Photo No. 3058; photographer unknown.

The Coast Guard-manned LSTs 202 (foreground) and 204 (visible directly behind the debarking M4 Sherman tank).

Sources:

LST files, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

United States Coast Guard. *The Coast Guard At War. V. Transports and Escorts. Vol. 2.* Washington: Public Information Division, Historical Section, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, May 1, 1949, pp. 66-116.

United States Navy. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.* Volume VII. Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1981, pp. 574-742.
