



General W. M. Black

AP-135

William Murray Black, born in Lancaster County, Pa., 8 December 1855, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1877 and entered the Corps of Engineers. He advanced steadily and was appointed Chief of Engineers for the District of Columbia in 1897. During and after the Spanish-American War, he served as Commander, Department of Engineers, in both Cuba and Puerto Rico. In 1906 he was appointed Senior Member of the board for raising the famous battleship *Maine*, and in 1909 he was promoted to Brigadier General to become Chief of Engineers, Department of the East. In 1916 he was appointed Chief of Engineers, United States Army. His accomplishments were many, including river and harbor improvements in Florida ports and fortification and railroad construction in Cuba. General Black retired a Major General 31 October 1919 and died in Washington, D.C., 24 September 1933.

Builder: Kaiser Shipbuilding Inc., Richmond, California

Class: *General G. O. Squier*

Type: C4-S-A1

Commissioned: 24 February 1945

Decommissioned: Her Coast Guard crew was removed on 28 February 1946

Length: 522' 10"

Beam: 71' 6"

Draft: 26' 6"

Displacement: 17,250 tons (fl)

Propulsion: Geared turbine; single shaft; 8,500 HP

Top speed: 18 knots

Complement: 512 officers & crew

Troop capacity: 3,823

Armament: 4 x 5"/38 dual purpose; 4 x 1.1" twin gun mounts; (later replaced by 4 x 40mm twin gun mounts); 16 x 20 mm (single).

DANFS' History:

General W. M. Black (AP-135) was laid down under a Maritime Commission contract 26 November 1942 by Kaiser Co., Inc., Yard 3, Richmond, Calif.; launched 23 July 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Decatur S. Higgins; acquired by the Navy 26 January 1944; converted to a transport by Matson Navigation Co., San Francisco; and commissioned 24 February 1944, Captain J. P. Murray, USCG, in command. One of the most active ships of her type, *General W. M. Black* plied the world's oceans and touched many distant ports in completing her varied missions as a troopship. On her first voyage she embarked 3,500 Army troops and sailed from San Francisco 26 March 1944, delivering them at Pearl Harbor before returning to San Francisco 9 April with nearly 500 veterans. Underway again 22 April, *General W. M. Black* carried 3,500 troops from San Francisco to New Caledonia and Guadalcanal. She departed Guadalcanal 14 May, embarked 2,700 at Balboa, Canal Zone, and reached New Orleans 8 June. The transport subsequently steamed to Kingston, Jamaica, where she embarked 2,400 passengers and sailed to Norfolk, arriving 26 June.

General W. M. Black began the first of 13 transatlantic round-trip voyages when she departed Norfolk 28 July with 2,700 fighting men bound for Naples, and returned to New York 31 August with 3,000 homeward-bound troops and casualties. From 12 September to 19 August 1945 the busy transport made 10 similar round trip troop-carrying voyages (5 from New York, 3 from Boston, and 2 from Norfolk) to the United Kingdom (Plymouth, Liverpool, Southampton); France (Cherbourg, Le Havre, Marseilles); North Africa (Oran); and Germany (Bremerhaven). In addition to carrying German

prisoners of war to the United States, she rotated tens of thousands of troops and patients to and from the European theater in this period of nearly a year. Departing Boston 31 August 1945, General W. M. Black sailed for India via the Suez Canal. A unit of the "Magic-Carpet" fleet, she returned to Boston in October with 3,000 veterans of the South Pacific fighting. After making a similar voyage during November and December, she moored at New York 5 January 1946. She decommissioned there 28 February 1946 and was returned to service as an Army transport.

General W. M. Black was reacquired by the Navy 1 March 1950 and assigned to MSTs. Manned by a civilian crew, she operated out of New York in the Atlantic until 1 September when she shifted her homeport to San Francisco. Between 1950 and 1953 she steamed to the Far East and transported more than 65,000 troops and their combat equipment in support of the struggle to repel Communist aggression in Korea. After the Korean armistice, she continued transpacific voyages, deploying troops to Japan, Korea, and Alaska and returning veterans of the Korean fighting to the United States. In June 1955 she carried troops and cargo to the Bering Sea during Operation "Mona Lisa." Following her return to San Francisco, she was placed out of service 26 August and was transferred back to the Maritime Administration. At present, she is berthed in the National Defense Reserve Fleet at Suisun Bay, Calif.

General W. M. Black received six battle stars for Korean War service.

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

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

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.
