



General W. P. Richardson

AP-118

Wilds Preston Richardson, born in Texas 20 March 1861, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1884 and served on the American frontier and in Alaska. During World War I, he commanded the 155th Depot Brigade, Camp Lee, Va., and later the 78th Infantry Brigade, Camp Beauregard, La. He sailed in August 1918 for France where he led in turn the 78th Infantry Brigade, 39th Division and the 55th Brigade, 28th Division to March 1919. General Richardson participated in the Meuse-Argonne Sector and commanded the A.E.F. in northern Russia receiving the Distinguished Service Medal for the latter duty. Following his return to the United States in 1919 he served in Georgia, Washington, D.C., and the state of Washington. He died in Washington, D.C., 20 May 1929.

Builder: Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Kearny, New Jersey

Class: *General John Pope*

Type: P2-S2-R2

Commissioned: 2 November 1944

Decommissioned: Her Coast Guard crew was removed on 14 February 1946

Length: 622'

Beam: 76'

Draft: 25' 6"

Displacement: 11,450 (lt); 20,175 (fl)

Propulsion: Steam turbines; twin shafts; 17,000 HP

Top speed: 20.6 knots

Complement: 465

Troop capacity: 5,142

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

AP-118 was laid down under Maritime Commission contract 2 February 1944 by Federal Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co., Kearny, N.J.; named *General R. M. Blatchford* (AP-118) on 15 April 1944; renamed *General W. P. Richardson* (AP 118) on 1 July 1944; launched 6 August 1944; sponsored by Mrs. Brebon B. Somervell; acquired by the Navy 31 October 1944, and commissioned at Bayonne, N.J., 2 November 1944, Captain Joseph S. Rosenthal, USCG, in command.

General W. P. Richardson sailed from Boston 10 December 1944 with over 5,000 fighting men and, after delivering them to Southampton, England, 21 December, returned to New York 4 January 1945 with troops and casualties. Ten days later the busy ship got underway from Newport News, Va., with 5,000 soldiers bound for Naples, Italy, debarking them 25 January and returning to Newport News 9 February with rotation troops and casualties. Underway again 18 February with 5,000 more soldiers she debarked them at Naples 1 March and subsequently carried 5,500 British troops thence to Marseilles, returning to Naples 9 March to embark 4,600 homeward-bound American casualties and troops who were delivered safely at Boston 21 March. *General W. P. Richardson* returned to Le Havre in April with 2,500 men and carried over 1,000 liberated American prisoners of war from France, and 2,900 troops and casualties from Southampton, home to New York on 28 April 1945. Following a troop-carrying run from New York to Naples and Trinidad and back, she sailed from New York to Southampton, putting in at Boston 26 June with 4,300 wounded and other troops. Through the summer and fall of 1945 the transport made four round-trip voyages from Boston to France, two to Le Havre and two to Marseilles to help insure an even flow of men and supplies from the New World to the Old.

On 14 October 1945 she sailed from Boston to Karachi, India, via the Suez Canal and returned to New York 24 November with over 5,000 veterans. On 30 November she embarked 4,500 rotation troops at New York and delivered them to Naples 10 December 1945, steaming thence via Suez to Khorramshahr,

Iran, to take on board 3,800 men of the Persian Gulf Command, returning via Naples and Casablanca to New York 23 January 1946.

General W. P. Richardson decommissioned at New York 14 February 1946 and returned to the Maritime Administration for peacetime operations as an Army transport until 10 March 1948. Returned to the Maritime Administration by the Army, she was subsequently chartered 6 May 1949 to operate as SS *La Guardia* for the American Export Lines until 4 January 1952. Following brief charter service under the American President Lines and the Havana Steamship Co., she was purchased 10 July 1956 by Textian, Inc., and renamed *Leilani*.

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.
