



USS *Hunter Liggett*, AP-27 / AP-14

An Army name retained.

Builder: Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation

Length: 535'

Beam: 72'

Draft: 31' 3"

Displacement: 21,900 tons

Top speed: 15 knots

Complement: 824

Armament: 4 x 3"

The Coast Guard-manned USS *Hunter Liggett* (AP-27) was built as SS *Pan America* in 1922 by Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corp., Sparrows Point, Md., and after sailing for many years as a passenger ship was transferred to the Army and renamed *Hunter Liggett* in February 1939. The transport operated from New York to San Francisco and from the West Coast to Hawaii until 27 May 1941, when she was turned over to the Navy. Converted to Navy use at Brooklyn Navy Yard, she commissioned as AP-27 on 9 June 1941 under the command of CAPT L. W. Perkins, USCG. She was reclassified as APA-14 on 1 February 1943.

The *Hunter Liggett* and her Coast Guard crew were ordered to the Pacific in April 1942. Departing New York 9 April the ship stopped at the Canal Zone and Tongatabu before arriving Wellington, New Zealand, 28 May. The transport was scheduled to take part in America's first offensive operation in the Pacific, the occupation of Guadalcanal, and after amphibious training and a rehearsal landing in the Koro Islands she sailed with other ships 31 July for the Solomons.

She arrived off Guadalcanal the night of 6 August. In this assault, America's first amphibious operation since 1898, the ship was assigned to a later wave but sent her boats to aid in the initial landings, 7 August. Air attacks began on the day after the landing, sinking fellow transport *George F. Elliott*, *Hunter Liggett's* gunners shot down several of the attackers as she remained off the beaches. Early on the morning of 9 August, men in the transport area could see the flashes of light from an engagement off Savo Island. As the Japanese attempted to reinforce their Solomons garrison and destroy the transports they surprised an American Task Force and inflicted heavy losses. The *Hunter Liggett* and the other vulnerable transports got underway, but soon returned to the transport area. After noon 9 August, they began the grim job of rescuing survivors from the sunken cruisers *Vincennes*, *Astoria*, and *Quincy*. That afternoon the transport sailed with the wounded, in company with the damaged *Chicago*, to Noumea, where she arrived 2 days later. With the Guadalcanal campaign began the refinement of amphibious techniques which was to pay off so handsomely as the war progressed.

The transport spent the next month at Noumea and on local amphibious training operations. After a period of repair at Wellington she sailed 22 October for Efate, New Hebrides, loaded marines, and returned to bitterly-contested Guadalcanal 4 November. As she off-loaded near Lunga Point, Japanese shore batteries and air attacks made every moment a potentially fatal one. As the "Tokyo Express" was due that night, *Hunter Liggett* and the other transports retired in the evening, only to return next day to finish landing operations.

For most of the next year, *Hunter Liggett* remained on this hazardous duty, the support of Guadalcanal. She made numerous trips to the island bringing troops from Noumea and New Zealand, carried equipment, and transported wounded marines and Japanese prisoners from the embattled island. Constantly threatened from the air and by submarines, she continued this vital job until arriving 22 October 1943, when she anchored at Efate, New Hebrides.

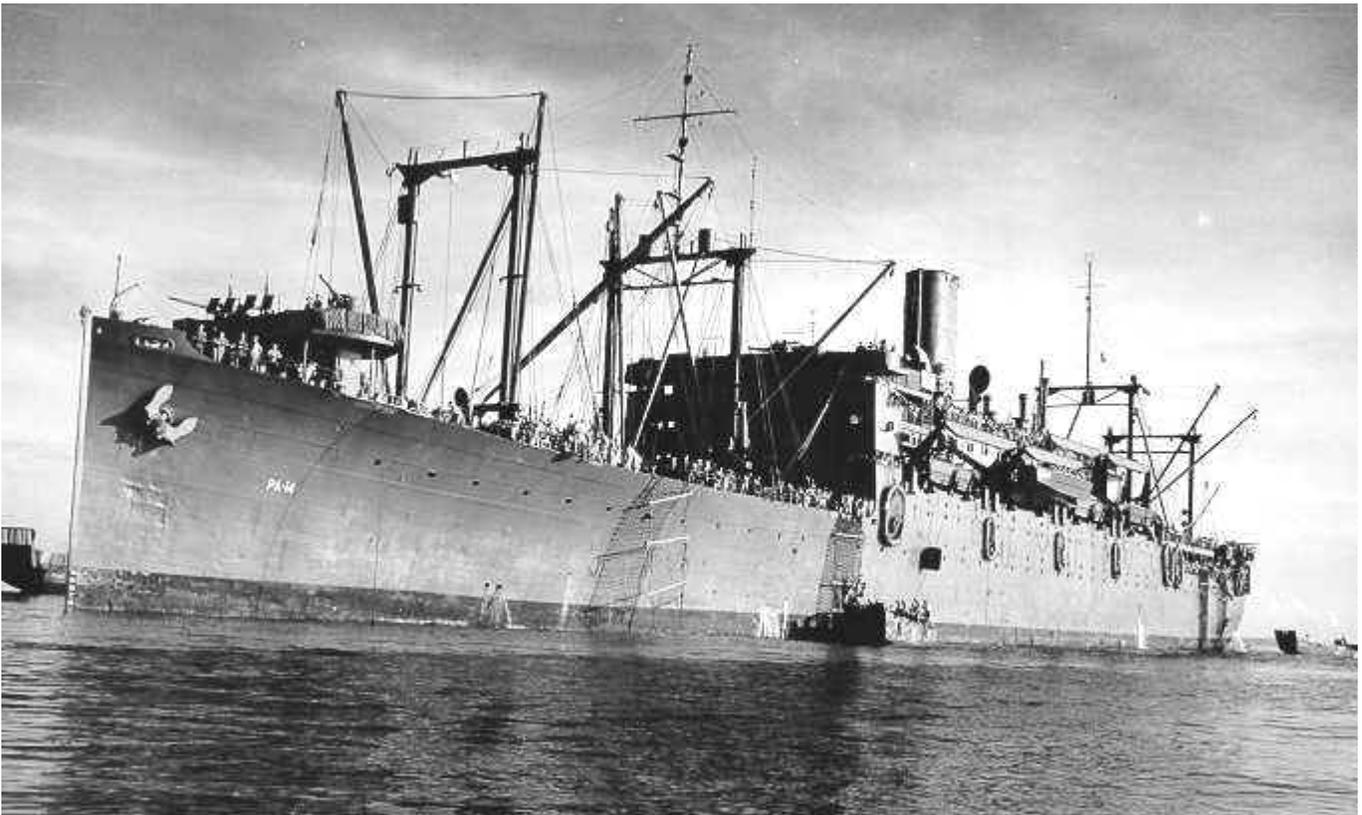
At Efate, *Hunter Liggett* took part in training operations for another important amphibious operation, the invasion of Bougainville. As American strength grew and the Gilberts operation got underway to the east, the task force sailed 28 October for Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville. Arriving early 1 November the transports unloaded with startling efficiency during air attacks from Rabaul. The *Hunter Liggett* remained in the area that night and once more witnessed from afar the Japanese attempt to break up the landing. This time, in the night action of Empress Augusta Bay the Japanese were roundly defeated by Rear Admiral Merrill's task force. She departed that day for Tulagi and after another passage to Bougainville to support the amphibious toe-hold there 11 November sailed for Espiritu Santo 18 November.

Loading wounded at Espiritu Santo, *Hunter Liggett* proceeded to Pago Pago for more casualties and sailed for San Francisco, arriving 9 December. For several months the transport underwent major repairs. Then, on 3 April 1944, she steamed to San Diego to begin a new career as an amphibious training ship. For the next eight months she imparted the lessons learned in the Solomons campaign to those who would carry out some of the largest and best executed assaults in our history - Leyte, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and others.

The *Hunter Liggett* joined the "Magic-Carpet" fleet 10 December 1945 to return to American servicemen from the Pacific. She made voyages to Ulithi, Guam, Pearl Harbor, and the Palaus before reporting to Olympia, Washington, for return to the Army on 9 March 1946 She decommissioned 18 March, and was later sold to Boston Metals Company on 30 January 1948, and scrapped.

Hunter Liggett received four battle stars for World War II service.

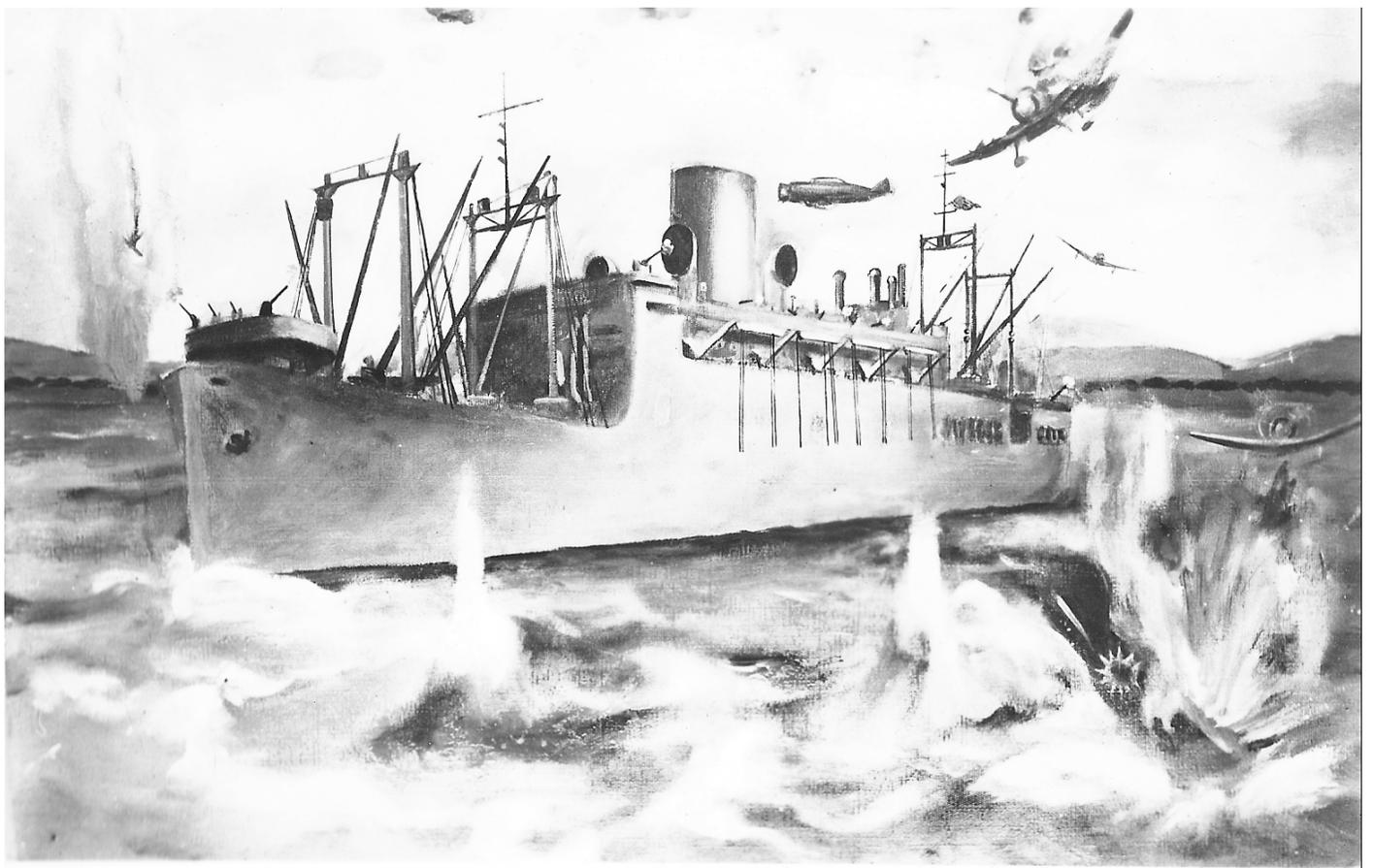
Photographs:



"This U.S. Coast Guard manned combat transport carries fighting men and vital war materials to the enemy held invasion shores. Coast Guard manned transports have participated in many invasion actions all over the world."; no date/photo number; photographer unknown.



No caption/date; Photo No. 26-G-1781; photographer unknown. Coast Guard photo via the National Archives.



Artist's rendering of the *Liggett* under aerial attack. Drawn by a crewman.
Provided courtesy of Jim Conboy whose father, James C. Conboy, served aboard the *Hunter Liggett*.

Sources:

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

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.
