



USS LST-203

Builder: Chicago Bridge and Iron Company, Seneca, Illinois

Commissioned: 29 April 1943

Decommissioned: Lost on 1 October 1943.

Disposition: Abandoned; struck from the Naval Register 6 March 1944.

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:

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History:

USS LST-203

The Coast Guard-manned USS *LST-203* was laid down on 2 July 1942 at the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company in Seneca, Illinois. She was launched on 25 March 1943 and entered commissioned service on 29 April 1943.

(Reports of movement between her commissioning date and 30 September 1943, are not available).

At 0836 on 30 September 1943, LST-203 beached at Nanomea Island and started to unload cargo. At 0115 on October 1, 1943, having completed unloading she began maneuvering to get off the beach. With her ramp raised, her starboard door did not close fully, being slightly sprung, and the LST attempted to retract without success. She was apparently held fast by a coral reef which caused her to pivot on the bow. A 6 to 8 foot surf pounded her against the fingers of the reef. At 0600 water was entering the shaft alley and engine room which pumps were unable to handle.

The USS *Manley* (APD-1) assisted with boats and line but by 0725 the deck plates on the port side of the main engine room were reported breaking through. At 0815 *Manley's* cable snapped and further unloading began, with lowered ramp, awaiting next high tide. At 1632 new attempts were made to pull the vessel off but at 1950 *Manley's* cable parted a second time. Unloading continued and at 1900 on the 2nd new attempts to float her by both *Manley* and *YMS-53* were unsuccessful. Other unsuccessful attempts on the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 13th were hampered by lack of power, heavy swells and water entering the engine room faster than pumps could handle it. Attempts to float her were thereupon abandoned as a stranded vessel and was stripped of all material and equipment.

The following is the account of her loss as written in the Coast Guard's official World War II history, *The Coast Guard at War, Volume VII: Lost Cutters*. Washington, DC: Historical Section, Public Information Division, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, July 1, 1947, p. 19:

LST-203

LST-203 STRANDED ON CORAL REEF

At 0836 on 30 December 1943, the Coast Guard manned LST-203 beached on Nanomea Island and started to unload cargo. At 0115 on 1 October, 1943, having completed unloading the LST began maneuvering at various speeds in order to back off the beach. With her ramp raised, her starboard door did not close fully being slightly sprung, the

LST attempted to retract without success. From 0400 she continued in her efforts to back off the beach but was apparently held fast by a coral reef which caused her to pivot on the bow. There was a 6 to 8 foot surf which pounded her against the fingers of the reef. A boat was put over the side to assist in pulling the stern out. At 0600 water was entering the shaft alley and the engine room, which fire and bilge pumps were unable to handle. The USS MANLEY (DD-1) also assisted with her boats and a line, but by 0725, the deck plates on the port side of the main engine room were reported breaking through.

UNLOADS FURTHER

AWAITING

HIGH TIDE

At 0815, the MANLEY's cable snapped and at 0945 the ramp was lowered and further unloading begun, while awaiting the next high tide. At 1632 unloading was stopped and new attempts begun to pull the vessel off. At 1950 the MANLEY's cable again parted. On the 2nd at 0725, the MANLEY tried again and again the cable snapped at 0805. The LST continued unloading cargo and at 1900 on the 2nd of October, new attempts, this time with YMS-53 and MANLEY both assisting, were unsuccessful. Again on 3 October at 0713, an attempt was made but the cable parted at 0745. The power was off the ship's circuits during most of these operations. Another unsuccessful attempt at 0807 on 4 October was followed by an unusually heavy swell which pounded the ship with more water being taken into the auxiliary engine room. At 1430 on 5 October the LST began discharging the ship's ammunition for use by shore units. On the 7th the crew moved to temporary quarters ashore and a security watch was left on board. All of the ship's supplies and equipment were removed during the next few days. On the 13th of October at 1605, the tug KINGFISHER attempted to pull the LST off the reef but as the water was entering the engine room faster than the pumps could handle it, attempts to float her were abandoned and the stripping of the now stranded vessel continued.

Photographs:

None available.

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.

