

*MARITIME VICTORY*  
*(Private Frederick C. Murphy)*  
Beaumont Reserve Fleet, Neches River  
Beaumont vicinity  
Jefferson County  
Texas

HAER TX-110  
HAER TX-110

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### *Maritime Victory* (*Private Frederick C. Murphy*)

HAER No. TX-110

**Location:** Beaumont Reserve Fleet, Neches River, Beaumont vicinity, Jefferson County, Texas

**Type of Craft:** VC2-S-AP2/Auxiliary

**Trade:** Troop transport

**Class:** *Victory*

**Principal Dimensions:** Length (oa): 455'-3"  
Beam: 62'  
Draft: 28'  
Displacement: 15,200 long tons  
Gross registered tonnage: 7,200 tons  
Net registered tonnage: 4,300 tons  
Maximum continuous shaft horsepower: 6,000 shaft horsepower  
Service speed: 17 knots  
(The listed dimensions are as built, but it should be noted that draft, displacement, and tonnages were subject to alteration over time as well as variations in measurement.)

**Dates of Construction:** 7 May 1945 – 18 June 1945

**Designer:** U.S. Maritime Commission

**Builder:** Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland

**Present Owner:** U.S. Maritime Administration

**Disposition:** As of May 2006, the ship has been removed from the National Defense Reserve Fleet inventory in Beaumont, Texas. The Maritime Administration paid ESCO Marine in Brownsville, Texas, to dismantle the vessel.

**Significance:** In the summer of 1945, eighty-four VC2-S-AP2 Victory ships, including the *Maritime Victory*, were converted into troopships by

the U.S. Maritime Commission in preparation for an assault on the Japanese home islands. The ship made several crossings of the Atlantic Ocean and was used to repatriate American troops from Europe after World War II. The *Maritime Victory* was a good example of the World War II-era troopships because it contained most of the original furniture and equipment prior to its sale for dismantlement.

**Historian:** Brian Clayton, Fall 2006

**Project Information:** This project was undertaken in 2006 by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program to document historically significant engineering and industrial works in the United States. The Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior administers the HAER program. The documentation was prepared under the direction of Todd Croteau, HAER Maritime Program Coordinator. Sandra Heard, Crystal Olin, and Ashley T. Walker were on the field team and generated the vessel drawings. Jet Lowe produced the large-format photographs. Special thanks to Erhard Koehler (U.S. Maritime Administration) whose help and assistance greatly benefitted the project.

## BACKGROUND

One of the first priorities of the United States upon entering World War II was the construction of ships. The global experience and ferocity of World War I taught the United States that World War II would be on a grander scale, in more places, involve more people, and require more equipment—in other words, it would be total war.<sup>1</sup> During World War II, the U.S. Maritime Commission became a pivotal force in the development and construction of ships, much like the U.S. Shipping Board had been in World War I. Created in 1936, the Maritime Commission succeeded the Shipping Board but generally followed the same directive: the promotion of U.S. shipping interests. The Maritime Commission established the “Emergency Program,” a massive ship construction plan that utilized new and existing shipyards across the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Shipping Board had authorized the construction of 470 ships for the Merchant Marine as part of a large mobilization endeavor to support American troops in World War I. Between 1918 and 1922, the Shipping Board authorized an additional 1,300 ships for the Merchant Marine, and these ships became the backbone of the fleet. In the mid-1920s, U.S. shipping companies were robust, but the U.S. stock market crash of 1929 was a major setback to the maritime industry. During the Great Depression, many steamship companies were unable to replace or update their aging ships—over 90 percent of the fleet was over twenty years old and had an average speed of between 10 and 11 knots.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-1930s, the government intervened with new legislation to aid the beleaguered maritime industry. Congress passed the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, which created the U.S. Maritime Commission, superseding the U.S. Shipping Board. The act also infused new capital and ideas for rebuilding the fleet. By 1937, the Maritime Commission had planned a long-range construction program to build 500 ships that were both contemporary and economical over a ten-year period. In 1939, the Maritime Commission determined that the production quota of fifty ships per year was too low and doubled it.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the success of the German U-boat campaign against English shipping alarmed steamship companies in the United States, causing them to fear that Germany might target U.S. ships that were trading with England and France. In response, the Maritime Commission again raised the quota in August 1940 to 200 ships per year.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), pp. xxi-xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> René De La Pedraja, *A Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Merchant Marine and Shipping Industry since the Introduction of Steam* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 563-566, 629-631. During World War II, the Maritime Commission received 5,777 ships. The commission had issued contracts for 5,601 vessels, while private firms built 111 ships and foreign firms built an additional sixty-five.

<sup>3</sup> Brian J. Cudahy, *Box Boats: How Container Ships Changed the World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 2-3; L.A. Sawyer and W.H. Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers: The History of the 'Victory' Type Cargo Ships and of the Tankers Built in the United States of America during World War II* (Cambridge, MD: Cornell Maritime Press, Inc., 1974), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Cudahy, *Box Boats*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Sawyer and Mitchell, p. 16.

## DESIGN OF VICTORY CLASS

On 3 January 1942, President Roosevelt declared that the United States would embark on an Emergency Program guided by the Maritime Commission that would focus on building a standard 11-knot ship (later known as the *Liberty* ship) in mass quantity. While the *Liberty* ships were neither particularly aesthetically pleasing nor speedy, their mass production helped offset the German U-boat successes in the Atlantic campaign during World War II. By the end of the war, the Maritime Commission had produced over 2,700 *Liberty* ships, but a second-generation cargo ship soon supplanted them.<sup>6</sup>

In 1943, the U.S. Maritime Commission proposed the construction of a new class of cargo vessels. The design was based on a British fast cargo ship, dating to 1942, that could operate outside of the convoy parameters. U.S. naval architects drew the plans for this new ship around a basic design: 445' long, 63' abeam, and 28' draft. There were two key requirements for this new class; the deadweight had to equal that of a *Liberty* ship, and it had to have a minimum speed of 15 knots. Bethlehem Steel developed the arrangement plans while the Maritime Commission focused on the stability calculations and other considerations. In addition to speed, the commission considered the postwar disposal of the ships. American planners thought the design would appeal to ship owners and that steamship companies would purchase the vessels at the conclusion of hostilities.

The Maritime Commission ended up making several changes to the new cargo ship during the design phase. Early on, the commission realized that some shipyards designated to build the new ships did not have slips to accommodate a ship with a 63' beam so the design was consequently altered to a 62' beam. The commission finally approved the drawings for the new fast cargo ship in March 1943 with production scheduled for April. Disagreements with the War Production Board stalled construction until the end of 1943. The new ships were designed the *Victory* class and the prefix was changed to VC2 in April 1944.<sup>7</sup> U.S. shipyards produced 272 VC2-S-AP2 ships, of which the *Maritime Victory* is one.

## DESCRIPTION

The VC2-S-AP2 had a raked stem and a cruiser stern to achieve high speeds. The ships measured 455'-3" in overall length and 62' beam. Frames spaced 36" apart strengthened the hull and improved its flexibility, addressing the problem of stress fractures that had plagued the *Liberty* ships. Since "one of the most important attributes of the *Victory* ship was its ability to carry a good deadweight of cargo," the bulkheads created five holds, along with fore and aft peak tanks and machinery space.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Information in this section comes from Sawyer and Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers*, pp. 16-20, 32; Frederic C. Lane, *Ships for Victory: A History of Shipbuilding under the U.S. Maritime Commission in World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), pp. 574-580, 586-607.

<sup>7</sup> The other type of *Victory* ship was the VC2-S-AP3, which was 1 knot faster and consequently had higher-powered machinery. However, the hulls of both *Victory* ships were the same.

<sup>8</sup> Sawyer and Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers*, pp. 32, 37, quote from p. 37.

The *Maritime Victory* was one of the ninety-seven *Victory* ships chosen for conversion to a troopship. The “austere conversion,” meaning it could be re-converted to a cargo ship after the war and consequently retained the cargo-handling gear, was completed in June 1945 with space for 1,597 people. As part of the conversion, berths, also known as “pipe racks,” were installed in cargo holds one through four for the troops. Extensive ductwork throughout the ship provided adequate heat and ventilation. The fifth cargo hold was not converted so it could still carry cargo at a reduced capacity, usually less than 100,000 cubic feet. Other troop accommodations included the galley, storage rooms, reefers, toilets, and showers in the holds, and the mess on the second deck. Medical personnel had quarters and a hospital on the main deck.<sup>9</sup>

Safety measures included the installation of stairwells in each cargo space in the event of sinking. The ship also carried lifeboats stored in cradles and auto release life rafts on the outside of the vessel. Each passenger had a life float and jacket. In addition, the *Victory* ships were equipped with armament. Mounted forward was a 3" gun and aft was a 5" dual-purpose one. There were also eight 20-caliber guns, two of which were on the forecastle, four amidships, and two on the stern. The navy supplied twenty-nine U.S. Naval Armed Guard Personnel (USNAG) gunners who berthed in the aft deckhouse.<sup>10</sup>

An Allis-Chalmers cross-compound steam turbine with Falk double reduction gears located amidships powered the *Maritime Victory*. The engine rating was 6,000 horsepower at 100 revolutions per minute (rpm) with a top speed of 17 knots and a range of 23,500 miles. The Babcock and Wilcox boilers were oil-fired. Auxiliary generators powered the ship. The navigation and communication equipment were located in the middle island, as well as the crew living quarters. The standard navigation equipment in the bridge consisted of the steering station, binnacle, gyro repeater, gyro pilot, engine telegraph, charts, and a fathometer. The upper bridge deck housed the radio room and cryptographic equipment.<sup>11</sup>

## OPERATION

Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard, Inc., in Baltimore, Maryland, built many of the VC2-S-AP2s, including the *Maritime Victory*. The ship was constructed and then converted from 7 May 1945 to 18 June 1945 and delivered to the U.S. Army Transportation Corps (USAT) in January 1946. The ship made crossings in 1946 carrying troops between the European Theater of Operations, especially Le Havre, France, and New York City, New York. From Le Havre, the ship often left from the area known as the “Cigarette Camps.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sawyer and Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> Sawyer and Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers*, pp. 18, 24.

<sup>11</sup> Sawyer and Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>12</sup> Sawyer and Mitchell, *Victory Ships and Tankers*, p. 24; “1946 Troop Ship Crossings,” available at <http://www.ww2troopships.com/crossings/1946.htm>, accessed 11 July 2006. The limited amount of information on troop crossings is the result of the destruction of all passenger lists, manifests, vessel logs, and troop movement files from U.S. Army transports by the Department of Army in 1951.

After the Allies secured the French harbor of Le Havre,...the Americans began ringing the city with camps that served as staging areas for new troops arriving in the ETO. Most of the camps were located between Le Havre and Rouen. [They also constructed the so-called “City Camps” around the city of Reims; these camps served as assembly areas for units about to enter combat. And there were additional embarkation camps in Southern France, north of Marseilles, and, of course, Camp Tophat near Antwerp, Belgium.] The wartime plan was for incoming units to first pass through staging camps on their way to the assembly areas, and then to the front. The staging-area camps were named after various brands of American cigarettes; the assembly area camps were named after American cities. The names of cigarettes and cities were chosen for two reasons: First, and primarily, for security. Referring to the camps without an indication of their geographical location went a long way to ensuring that the enemy would not know precisely where they were. Anybody eavesdropping or listening to radio traffic would think that cigarettes were being discussed or the camp was stateside, especially regarding the city camps. Secondly, there was a subtle psychological reason, the premise being that troops heading into battle wouldn’t mind staying at a place where cigarettes must be plentiful and troops about to depart for combat would be somehow comforted in places with familiar names of cities back home (Camp Atlanta, Camp Baltimore, Camp New York, and Camp Pittsburgh, among others)... By war’s end, however, all of the cigarette and city camps were devoted to departees. Many processed liberated American POWs (Prisoners of War) and some even held German POWs for a while.<sup>13</sup>

In 1947, the ship was transferred to the U.S. Army and subsequently renamed the *Pvt. Frederick C. Murphy* after a Medal of Honor recipient of that name who served in the U.S. Army, 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, during World War II.<sup>14</sup>

The U.S. Army returned the ship to the National Defense Reserve Fleet in Beaumont, Texas, in 1950. The Beaumont Reserve Fleet utilized the ship as a fleet support craft

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<sup>13</sup> “Introduction: The Cigarette Camps,” in “The Cigarette Camps: The U.S. Army Camps in the Le Havre Area,” at <http://www.skylighters.org/special/cigcamps/>, accessed 11 July 2006.

<sup>14</sup> *The Medal of Honor of the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 346. His citation reads: *An aid man, he was wounded in the right shoulder soon after his comrades had jumped off in a dawn attack 18 March 1945, against the Siegfried Line at Saarlautern, Germany. He refused to withdraw for treatment and continued forward, administering first aid under heavy machinegun, mortar, and artillery fire. When the company ran into a thickly sown antipersonnel minefield and began to suffer more and more casualties, he continued to disregard his own wound and unhesitatingly braved the danger of exploding mines, moving about through heavy fire and helping the injured until he stepped on a mine which severed one of his feet. In spite of his grievous wounds, he struggled on with his work, refusing to be evacuated and crawling from man to man administering to them while in great pain and bleeding profusely. He was killed by the blast of another mine which he had dragged himself across in an effort to reach still another casualty. With indomitable courage, and unquenchable spirit of self-sacrifice and supreme devotion to duty which made it possible for him to continue performing his tasks while barely able to move, Pfc. Murphy saved many of his fellow soldiers at the cost of his own life.*

from 1950 until 1980. In 2006, the Maritime Administration paid ESCO Marine to dispose of the ship.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See [https://voa.marad.dot.gov/programs/ship\\_disposal/standing\\_quot/docs/11\\_23\\_05%20Pvt%20Fred%20C%20Murphy.pdf](https://voa.marad.dot.gov/programs/ship_disposal/standing_quot/docs/11_23_05%20Pvt%20Fred%20C%20Murphy.pdf), accessed 11 July 2006.

**APPENDIX A: HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS**



The *Pvt. Frederick C. Murphy* passing an iceberg in Nardlvnak Fjord, 26 July 1949.  
Box 2209, Negative #624729, Record Group 83, National Archives and Records  
Administration-College Park, Maryland



The *Aiken Victory* arriving in Boston with 1,958 troops from Europe, 26 July 1945.  
Box 15, File 226, Negative #5752, Record Group 357, National Archives and Records  
Administration-College Park, Maryland



Mess hall on the *Lehigh Victory*, November 1945.  
Box 15, File 226, Negative #6204, Record Group 357, National Archives and Records  
Administration-College Park, Maryland



GI washroom on the *Lehigh Victory*, n.d.

Box 15, File 226, Negative #6216, Record Group 357, National Archives and Records Administration-College Park, Maryland



Soldiers playing games in the berthing area on the *Lehigh Victory*, May 1946.  
Box 15, File 226, Negative #6217, Record Group 357, National Archives and Records  
Administration-College Park, Maryland

**APPENDIX B: VICTORY TROOPSHIP CONVERSIONS**

Compiled from Roland W. Charles, *Troopships of World War II* (Washington, DC: The Army Transportation Association, 1947), Appendix E, pp. 356-357

<i>Aiken Victory</i>	<i>Laconia Victory</i>
<i>Alhambra Victory</i>	<i>La Crosse Victory</i>
<i>Altoona Victory</i>	<i>La Grande Victory</i>
<i>Amherst Victory</i>	<i>Lake Charles Victory</i>
<i>Antioch Victory</i>	<i>Lehigh Victory / USAT Lt. Bernard J. Ray</i>
<i>Bardstown Victory</i>	<i>Lewiston Victory</i>
<i>Blue Island Victory</i>	<i>Lincoln Victory</i>
<i>Blue Ridge Victory</i>	<i>M.I.T. Victory / USAT Lt. Alexander R. Nininger</i>
<i>Brandon Victory</i>	<i>Madawaska Victory</i>
<i>C.C.N.Y. Victory</i>	<i>Mahanoy City Victory</i>
<i>Central Falls Victory</i>	<i>Maritime Victory / USAT Pvt. Frederick C. Murphy</i>
<i>Chanute Victory</i>	<i>Marshall Victory / USAT Lt. Raymond O. Beaudoin</i>
<i>Chapel Hill Victory</i>	<i>Maryville Victory</i>
<i>Claymont Victory</i>	<i>Medina Victory</i>
<i>Coaldale Victory</i>	<i>Mexico Victory</i>
<i>Cody Victory</i>	<i>Milford Victory</i>
<i>Colby Victory</i>	<i>Montclair Victory</i>
<i>Colorado Springs Victory</i>	<i>Muhlenberg Victory</i>
<i>Costa Rica Victory</i>	<i>N.Y.U. Victory</i>
<i>Cranston Victory</i>	<i>New Bern Victory</i>
<i>Dominican Victory</i>	<i>Norway Victory</i>
<i>Elgin Victory / USAT Pvt. Charles N. De Gloppe</i>	<i>Oneida Victory</i>
<i>Eufaula Victory</i>	<i>Pachaug Victory</i>
<i>Fairmont Victory</i>	<i>Pittston Victory</i>
<i>Fayetteville Victory</i>	<i>Pomona Victory</i>
<i>Frederick Victory</i>	<i>Pontotoc Victory</i>
<i>Frostburg Victory</i>	<i>Rensselaer Victory</i>
<i>Georgetown Victory</i>	<i>Rock Hill Victory</i>
<i>Goucher Victory / USAT Sgt. Howard E. Woodford</i>	<i>Rollins Victory</i>
<i>Gustavus Victory</i>	<i>Rushville Victory</i>
<i>Hagerstown Victory</i>	<i>St. Albans Victory</i>
<i>Hampden-Sydney Victory</i>	<i>Sedalia Victory</i>
<i>Haverford Victory</i>	<i>Sheepshead Bay Victory</i>
<i>Hood Victory</i>	<i>Smith Victory</i>
<i>Howard Victory</i>	<i>Stamford Victory</i>
<i>India Victory</i>	<i>Stetson Victory / USAT Sgt. Sylvester Antolak</i>
<i>Kings Point Victory</i>	
<i>Kingston Victory</i>	
<i>Kokomo Victory</i>	

*Stevens Victory / USAT Pvt. Joe P.*

*Martinez*

*Taos Victory*

*Texarkana Victory*

*Tufts Victory*

*Tusculum Victory*

*U.S.S.R. Victory*

*United States Victory*

*Vassar Victory*

*Waterbury Victory*

*Waycross Victory*

*Webster Victory*

*Westbrook Victory*

*Westerley Victory*

*Westminster Victory*

*Wheaton Victory*

*William and Mary Victory*

*Williams Victory*

*Wilson Victory / USAT Pvt. Sadao S.*

*Munemori*

*Winchester Victory*

*Woodbridge Victory*

*Wooster Victory*

*Zanesville Victory*

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