

The passage from Pittsburgh to New Orleans was very enjoyable, if uneventful. The steep, scenic mountains of Pennsylvania gave way to the hills and rich valleys of Ohio and these in turn faded into the plains of Illinois, to the swamps of Mississippi and to the dikes and bayous of Louisiana. We steamed from 0600 to 2200 daily, anchoring at night with both bow and stern hooks in the Mississippi mud. The crew paralleled the ferry crew's watches and used every available opportunity in training to foresee and meet the conditions of ship's wartime operation. Thanks to the comparatively high waters the use of locks was required only twice during the voyage. The ship made four short stops, three times to exchange pilots and once at Baton Rouge, Louisiana to take on fuel oil.

The down river voyage ended 3 July 1944 as the ship moored alongside the pier in Naval Section Base, Algiers, Louisiana, in berth 15. Immediately upon mooring P.M. Belmont, Ensign, USNR, and E. Selke, Ensign, USNR reported aboard for duty from Amphibious Training Base Camp Pierce, Florida, with four boat crews of sixteen men. Later that afternoon R.G. Bolks, Ensign, USNR reported aboard for duty. All preparations for commissioning began and at 1600 that date the ship was placed in commission and the watch was set. U.S. Fleet Organization included the 677 in LST Flotilla 16, Group 48, Division 96. Heads of departments reported to the commissioning detail in New Orleans and under their supervision and guidance radio, radar, degaussing, gyro and magnetic compass equipment were checked. Registered publications, engineering and maintenance materials were drawn. The Section Base secured the main mast in position.

At 1045 on 5 July 1944 the ship got underway, anchored temporarily in the Mississippi River to wait clearance of the dock, and at 1400 moored alongside the pier at the Naval Supply Depot, New Orleans, to draw stores, provisions and ship's service supplies. By 2330 all supplies were aboard and the ship made all preparations for getting underway for deperming docks.

Soon the ship was moored alongside the U.S.S. LST 701 at the Pendleton Dock, Pendleton Ship Yard, New Orleans. While in the yards she underwent a general material check-up and a few minor repairs were effected. After work in the Pendleton Yard was completed, the ship moved on 8 July to dry dock number three, Todd-Johnson Yard, New Orleans, where she was secured at 1500 that date. Until 0730 of 9 July the yard force scraped and repainted the hull, checked, repaired, and replaced screws and rudders, when once again additional availability for repairs to the Capstan was granted.

At 1930 of 10 July the anchor was dropped in quarantine anchorages in the Mississippi, after termination of yard availability. The run down river to the ammunition dock began at 0550 the next morning with a degaussing check and compass adjustments enroute. The loading of ammunition began shortly after mooring and was completed at 1120 when the ship moved down the Mississippi some 90 miles to Pilot Town, and thence to Panama City, Saint Andrew's Bay, Florida, where she was scheduled for her shakedown cruise.

At 1831 on 11 July the ship passed entrance buoy number two, south entrance, Mississippi River, abeam to port, entered the Gulf of Mexico and set course for Saint Andrew's Bay. The passage was uneventful. Daily emergency and gunnery drills were held. At 1613 of 12 July the ship anchored in berth A-1, Saint Andrew's Bay, Florida. Captain Bast reported to the Commanding Officer, Amphibious Training Base, Saint Andrew's Bay, and at 0830 of the following morning Commander Zalenka and Staff of LST Group 47 for arrival inspection. The remainder of the day was used for general drills and ship's work. On the scheduled plan of the shakedown program for 14 July were tactical exercises for 12 LST's. From 0600 to 1947 this vessel participated in tactical maneuvers, steering, fire, and general quarters drills. Anchoring in berth B-3 for the night, we got underway at 0730 the following morning for beaching operations. At 1040 that date L.J. Reinhardt, Ensign, USNR reported aboard for duty.