

USS *Worcester* (CL-144), 1948-1972



USS *Worcester*, lead ship of a class of two 14,700-ton light cruisers built at Camden, New Jersey, was commissioned in June 1948. After a year of service in the western Atlantic, she deployed to the Mediterranean Sea during September-December 1949 for the first of seven Sixth Fleet tours. *Worcester* returned to the "Med" in May 1950, but this cruise was cut short by the outbreak of the Korean War in late June. Accompanied by four destroyers, she transited the Suez Canal on 29 July 1950, en route to the Far East.

From late August to late October 1950, *Worcester* operated with the Seventh Fleet off Korea, escorting Task Force 77's aircraft carriers and using her six-inch guns to bombard enemy targets in support of the Inchon Invasion and the Wonsan Landings. The cruiser returned to the U.S. east coast in late November, having steamed around the World on this extended deployment. During the next half decade, *Worcester* made five more trips to the Mediterranean and, on two occasions, also visited ports in northern Europe.

Worcester was transferred to the Pacific Fleet in January 1956, subsequently going twice to the Western Pacific for Seventh Fleet service. She decommissioned at Mare Island, California, in December 1958, joining the Reserve Fleet there. Later shifted to Bremerton, Washington, *Worcester* remained in "mothballs" until December 1970, when she was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register. She was sold for scrapping in July 1972.

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The Beginning. . . The decision to build the USS WORCESTER (CL-144) was made 13 May 1942. The building of the WORCESTER was authorized through appropriations obtained by War Bonds sponsored by the city of Worcester, Massachusetts. It was designed to fulfill the requirements of several functional needs. She was the first U.S. Navy ship of her class on which all guns could be used for anti-aircraft fire as well as for surface targets. Combining Destroyer maneuverability with cruiser size, the new WORCESTER could carry out scouting operations, lead a flotilla of destroyers, and still keep to the sea in any kind of weather. She had a fuel capacity for long voyages and speed to overtake other vessels and maneuver rapidly. She could provide armor protection against gunfire and carried superior guns that were capable of out-shooting the enemy's hard-hitting cruiser units, and still repel mass air attacks. WORCESTER, at her commissioning, displaced 14,000 tons, was 680 feet long, 71 feet wide, had a draft of 26 feet, and could make 33 knots at flank speed. She carried a ships complement of 1,070 men. Her construction cost was \$30,000,000 in 1948. Her keel was laid down 29 January 1945 at Camden, NJ by the New York Shipbuilding and Dry-dock Corp., and was launched 4 February 1947. Miss Gloria Ann Sullivan, daughter of Mayor and Mrs. F. G. Sullivan of Worcester, MA, christened WORCESTER & was commissioned at the Philadelphia Naval Base 26 June 1948, with Capt. T. B. Dugan in Command. The main battery consisted of twelve 6-inch dual-purpose guns mounted in six turrets. At commissioning the 3-inch guns were not installed, but approximately six 20mm mounts were installed for gunnery practice during the shakedown cruise. The 3-inch 50's were installed in early 1949 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, and the 20mm guns removed. There were five dual 3-inch 50 Cal. mounts on the port side, five on the starboard side and one on the bow, plus a pair of single 3-inch on blisters each side of the fantail, for a total count of 24 three-inch guns. At commissioning, the search radars were SR-2, SR-6, SG-6, and SP-1, with the SR-2 and SG-6 on the Mainmast. The SR-6 was on a mast just forward of the rear stack, and the SP-1 was on the mainmast. The SR-2 antenna was fed with a rigid coax tube 1.5 inches in diameter, with a 1/4" diameter center conductor, held in place by ceramic donuts as spacers, and was not very effective, so it was eventually replaced. The SR-6 was removed from the stub mast and a new and better SR-6 with a different antenna was installed on the foremast. Fire Control radar consisted of 2 each MK-13, 4 each ~ MK-25, 4 each ~ MK-35, 6 each and MK-27's mounted in each of the 6 main turrets. There were also individual radars on the bow and fantail 3-inch gun mounts, for a total count of 19 fire-control radars.

Korean Service. . . While on her second tour to the Mediterranean, Korean hostilities broke out and WORCESTER received orders to depart for the Far East Theatre. On 27 July 1950, WORCESTER departed Phaleron Bay and joined Destroyer Division 21, which included: FRED T. BERRY (DDE-858); KEPLER (DDE-765); NORMS (DDE-859); and McCAFFREY (DDE-860). The detached high-speed taskforce departed for the 7,800 mile trip to Korean waters, via the Suez Canal, passing Port Said, Egypt 29 July, then thru the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean, and arrived Colombo, Ceylon 7 August 1950. They departed Colombo 9 August for Okinawa, passing thru the Bashi Channel to Buckner Bay, Okinawa, arriving 19 August. The Communist Chinese had her routed thru the Bashi Channel to be available to counter any invasion attempt on Formosa. After refueling from the tanker NAVASOTA (AO-106), she departed Okinawa 20 August and arrived Keelung, Formosa 21 August 1950 to join the Formosa Patrol. She was at anchor in Keelung 22 thru 26 August. On 27 August 1950, WORCESTER departed Keelung to join Task Force 77 (TF-77), the fast carrier task force, consisting of PHILIPPINE SEA (CV-47) and VALLEY FORGE (CV-45), who were operating in the Yellow Sea off the coast of Korea. In the ensuing days, the carriers launched air strikes against North Korean ground targets while the screen provided protection against the possibility of North Korean air attacks. Her helicopter also performed plane-guard duty, standing by in the air to rescue any ditched pilots from nearby waters. On 4 September, WORCESTER's radar picked up an unidentified contact at 1331 hours. Combat Air Patrol from VALLEY FORGE (CV-45) reported the contact as a twin-engine bomber with a Red Star marking. At 1345 hours, the F4U's vectored to the "Bogey" by FLETCHER (DDE-445) splashed the bomber 47 miles away. The following day, WORCESTER went to General Quarters (GQ) at 1108 hours, and commenced maneuvering at 20 knots, to avoid possible air attack after her radar picked up an unidentified target closing on the formation from the east. Three minutes later, WORCESTER fired three rounds of 6-inch in the direction of the intruder to warn her off. It turned out to be a British "Short Sunderland" flying boat on patrol. At 2143 hours, WORCESTER secured from Battle Stations and resumed her patrol with TF-77. On 6 September, WORCESTER retired from her screening duties and transferred her helicopter to PHILIPPINE SEA (CV-47) to clear the ship for a practice anti-aircraft firing drill. Then she recovered the "Chopper" and set course for Sasebo, Japan, for replenishment of her ammunition, fuel, stores, and provisions. She remained in Sasebo until 0532 hours 10 September when she departed for the Yellow Sea, forming up with TF-77 15 September to support the

amphibious assault on North Korean forces at Inchon and Seoul. This was a daring strike, aimed at outflanking the North Korean invaders by a strategic landing behind their lines in South Korea, masterminded by General Douglas MacArthur. WORCESTER screened the fast carrier task force as their planes bombed North Korean targets ashore. On 20 September 1950, she was detached to conduct shore bombardment with TG-95.2 in the vicinity of Pohang Dong. She proceeded to the objective via the Straits north of the Quelpart Islands and west of Tsushima to rendezvous with HELENA (CA-75), 3 miles off the east coast of Korea and 12 miles north of Pohang Dong. She relieved the HELENA in her GunFire Support duties at 0600 hours 24 September 1950. At 0805 hours, WORCESTER began shore bombardment, shelling nine North Korean troop concentrations ashore. Her own gun fire support party named "Cliff Dweller" directed Fire Control, and Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) personnel assisted them ashore. WORCESTER delivered Call-Fire throughout the day, with pinpoint accuracy, at troop concentrations and command post's. At dusk, she was relieved by SAMUEL N. MOORE (DD747), the nighttime gunfire support ship, and departed to seaward of the fire support area, for the night. WORCESTER returned the following morning and resumed her Gun Fire Support duties, adding casualties to the already beaten and retreating North Korean forces. Throughout the 25th, WORCESTER, using "KMAG" spotting from ashore, delivered GunFire Support for the advancing United Nations (UN) Forces, breaking up communist troop concentrations with her precise 6-inch fire. The ship's War Diary at one point recorded: "Spotter reported troops dispersed. "KMAG" reported that all firing has been very effective and instrumental in enemy retreat." WORCESTER spent the night hours of the 25th and into the 26th, patrolling eight miles of a stretch of coast between Yonghae and Utchin. The rapid advance of the UN Forces on the 26th, negated fire support from WORCESTER's guns until September 27, when she received a report that the USS BRUSH (DD-745) had struck a mine off Tanchon, North Korea at 1220 hours. The USS SAMUEL N. MOORE (DD-747) took over On-call Gun Fire Support duties, and the WORCESTER immediately steamed at 27 knots for up to 100 miles to provide assistance. Upon arrival, the BRUSH was down by the bow, with a 3-degree port list, and there were five dead and 30 injured. At 0101 hours 27 September 1950, WORCESTER commenced taking on board the more seriously wounded of the destroyer's crew via high-line transfer. Two Corpsmen were transferred to the BRUSH during these transfers, to prepare the wounded for transfer. By 0228 hours, fifteen stretcher cases, all suffering from burns were received on the WORCESTER. The WORCESTER and BRUSH altered course for Japan after damage control shored up bulkheads around the damaged area, and later that day, took on four more stretcher patients and six ambulatory patients, plus one corpse. They were later joined by the salvage vessel USS BOLSTER (ARS-38) and destroyer DeHAVEN (DD-727), and continued to Sasebo, Japan, arriving at Sasebo the afternoon of 29 September 1950. As she was being made fast to her buoy in Sasebo harbor, WORCESTER received this message from the BRUSH: "With us you are not only "Big League" (WORCESTER's radio call sign) but world champions. The kindness, consideration and eagerness to help, of the WORCESTER's ship's company, will never be forgotten by the BRUSH." On 30 September, WORCESTER departed Sasebo to return to Korean waters, and at 0600 hours October 1, joined the task force south of the 41st. Parallel, to resume her fire support and interdiction duties to support the advance of the UN Troops. As she patrolled off the coast, WORCESTER launched her helicopter to conduct anti-submarine and anti-mine patrols, and frequently stationed lookouts on the bow of the ship with their eyes peeled for mines. Periodically the screening destroyers found and destroyed mines drifting nearby. Recent encounters with the horned spheres had resulted in all operations being carried out at the 100-fathom curve, which meant maximum gun range for the ships when "Call-Fire" was requested. On 7 October, WORCESTER picked up three North Korean POW's, and transferred them to USS ROCHESTER (CA-124). WORCESTER, as flagship for TG-95.2, returned to Sasebo 8 October, and Rear Admiral C.C. Hartman removed his flag and staff from the WORCESTER while she was re-fueling, rearming and loading provisions. On 9 October, WORCESTER became a Flagship again, when Rear Admiral Allen E. Smith brought his flag and staff aboard as Commander TG-95. At 1248 hours on 10 October, WORCESTER got underway to return to the East Coast of Korea, this time to screen minesweeping operations at the important port of Wonsan, and to support the advance of the 3rd Republic of Korea (ROK) Army Division. Early 11 October, the operation truly became International, when the British destroyer JAMES COCKADE (D-34), the Australian destroyer HIMIAS WARRAMUNGA (D-123), and the Canadian destroyer HMCS ATHABASKAN, joined WORCESTER's group, which already included the British Light Cruiser JAMS CEYLON (C-30), Heavy Cruiser JAMS HELENA, the U.S. Heavy Cruiser ROCHESTER (CA-124), and destroyers HERBERT J. THOMAS (DD-833) and MADDOX (DD-731). On 12 October, the Battleship MISSOURI (BB-63) joined, bringing her heavy 16-inch guns to the task force. While MISSOURI's helicopter searched the projected bombardment track for mines, the UN Force formed up for battle. At 1150 hours, when a shell from an unobserved shore battery fell 5,000 yards short of the group, it apparently signaled the beginning. WORCESTER hoisted the Blue and White UN Flag to the foretruck and commenced firing at exactly noon 12 October. For the next 90 odd minutes, WORCESTER's 6-inch guns hammered at iron works and railroad tunnels in the port installations of Chongjin, just 50 miles from

Communist China. WORCESTER's 6-inch guns expended 1,065 rounds in the shore bombardment 12 October. On 13 October, she was at Songjin and shelled port facilities and railroad installations with 150 rounds of 6-inch. Songjin is now listed on current maps as Kimchaek. On 17 October, she returned to Chongjin and fired an additional 105 rounds of 6-inch at what was left of the port facilities. Both of these targets were over 100 miles north of Wonsan, and were shelled to damage North Korean supply lines. Over the next few days, WORCESTER and the ships in company with her, proceeded to rain destruction on targets of opportunity near Wonsan, targets that ranged from railroad marshaling yards to rolling stock, and adjacent warehouse area's. Also 16 October, in an action reminiscent of the "Battle of the Pips", in WW-II, the HELENA, WORCESTER and accompanying destroyers fired at unidentified radar targets, "Blips", on radar screens that were approaching from the north. They were never visually spotted or confirmed, but were probably 2 flocks of geese. WORCESTER then returned to Sasebo to pick up mail and some passengers, then returned to the Wonsan Task Force to transfer the mail, VIP passengers and her helicopter unit to the ROCHESTER (CA-124), then at 1723 hours 21 October, in company with LIMS HELENA, and screened by USS SUTHERLAND (DD-743), and USS ENGLISH (DD-696), she cleared Korean waters to join up with USS COLLETT (DD-730). WORCESTER then was escorted only by USS COLLETT and continued on to Sasebo, Japan. She arrived Sasebo 23 October and disembarked Rear Admiral Smith, his Flag and Staff, to the Destroyer Tender USS DIXIE (AD-14). WORCESTER then completed her transfer of helicopter support personnel, spares, and equipment to Fleet Activities, Sasebo, and at 1701 hours 23 October, departed Sasebo for Yokosuka, Japan, arriving 0823 hours 25 October. After refueling, replenishment, liberty for her crew, and cleaning of two boilers, WORCESTER departed Yokosuka, Japan 27 October 1950, enroute Pearl Harbor, and Honolulu, Hawaii. The day after she sailed, WORCESTER received a radio dispatch from Admiral Turner Joy, Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, which said: "Upon the WORCESTER's departure from the Far East, I wish to extend a hearty 'WELL DONE' to the entire Ship's Company. Your rapid deployment from the European Station, to the Far East, followed by your immediate and most effective participation in the Korean effort, clearly demonstrates that your status of 'War Readiness' was excellent." WORCESTER then departed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii 4 November for the Panama Canal Zone, arriving 15 November. She departed the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal 16 November enroute the Philadelphia Naval Base. She arrived at Philadelphia 21 November 1950, having circum-navigated the globe. She departed NavBase Philadelphia 27 November enroute Norfolk, arriving 28 November to unload ammunition, then departed 29 November for Boston Navy Yard. WORCESTER arrived at her homeport of Boston 1 December 1950.

The End . . . On 19 December 1958, WORCESTER was de-commissioned at Mare Island, California and placed in reserve status, "Moth-Balled", for re-activation if needed, and berthed at San Francisco. She was then transferred to Bremerton, Washington, Naval Shipyard before being struck from the U.S. Navy list of active ships in December 1960. She was sold for scrap to the Zidell Explorations Inc., Portland, Oregon 5 July 1972 for \$495,950.

The revolutionary light cruiser that never had a chance to prove herself in her designed role, but proved herself and her crew well, in a secondary role in Korea, was broken up for scrap. She was the last of the "All-Gun", Light Cruiser concept designs. New cruisers were armed with Missiles.

Approximately 200 tons of her armor plate was sent to the Fermi National Accelerator Lab at Batavia, IL west of Chicago, the armor being used for absorption shielding in the particle accelerator. USS ROANOKE (CL-145) also supplied 200 tons of armor plate, along with the Heavy Cruisers MACON (CA-132), FALL RIVER (CA-131) and BALTIMORE (CA-68) with 300 tons of armor plate each. Five Essex Class Carriers; PRINCETON (CVA-37); ANTIETAM (CVA-36); BUNKER HILL (CVA-17); PHILIPPINE SEA (CVA-47); and LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CVA-39), each supplied 600 tons of armor plate.

WORCESTER was awarded two battle stars for her "Korean War Service"



Source:
http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/navy/uss_worcester.htm