



USS NEW JERSEY (BB 62) ~ From Philadelphia to Camden: A Retrospective of 80 Years

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

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The Proud History of the USS New Jersey BB-62



Celebrating the history of WWII Battleships, we present the first commissioning of the Battleship *New Jersey* (BB 62), and the story of its service in WWII. See page [195](#).

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**USS *NEW JERSEY* (BB 62) ~ FROM PHILADELPHIA TO CAMDEN:
A Retrospective of 80 Years. Part I: World War II, First Commissioning**

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, US Navy (Retired)^{1,2}

Eighty years ago, the United States Navy ordered Battleship Number 62, ultimately to be named USS *New Jersey*, to be built at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.³ Today, that ship is moored across the Delaware River at Camden, Jersey as a Museum Ship. During the intervening nearly 50 years, it fought in four wars - World War II (1943-1945), Korea (1951-53), Vietnam (1968-69), and the Lebanese Conflict (1983-84); it was placed in commission four times actively serving more than two decades. For the past 20 years it has been a Museum Ship.⁴



Naval History & Heritage Command photo #NH45486⁵

Fig. 1: USS New Jersey (BB 62) silhouetted against the sea and clouds, as seen from a minesweeper, 26 October 1943. It was then engaged in training in the Atlantic Ocean.

This article is an overview of the postal history of the ship – technically a branch of the New York post office during much of its lengthy service. Interspersed with the narrative of the ship’s construction and service are photographs and covers postmarked on board *New Jersey* or philatelic covers postmarked ashore marking historic events.

Much of the following information is *The Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (D.A.N.F.S. history online), as noted in endnote 4.

On 1 July 1939, the first day of Fiscal Year 1940, the United States ordered the first two *Iowa* class battleships. The class leader was built at New York Naval Shipyard while the second was USS *New Jersey*. Ultimately, six were ordered but only four [*Iowa*, *New Jersey*, *Missouri*, and *Wisconsin*] were completed; all served during World War II, Korea, during the 1980s rebuilding of the fleet, and now all four are Museum Ships.

The keel for *New Jersey* was laid 16 September 1940; it was launched 7 December 1942 sponsored by Mrs. Charles Edison, wife of Governor Edison of New Jersey the former Secretary of the Navy; the ship was commissioned at Philadelphia 23 May 1943, Captain Carl F. Holden, US Navy in command. It spent the rest of that year in the western Atlantic and Caribbean area.



Illustration courtesy George Mancin

Fig. 2: A Dr. Hutnick keel laying cover for New Jersey dated 16 Sep 1940 and postmarked on board USS Bear (AG 29) with its Locy Type 3r (BTT) postmark with Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in its killer bars rated A in the USCS Postmark Catalog. The cover bears a green one cent Washington stamp (Scott #804) and an orange half cent Benjamin Franklin (Scott #803).

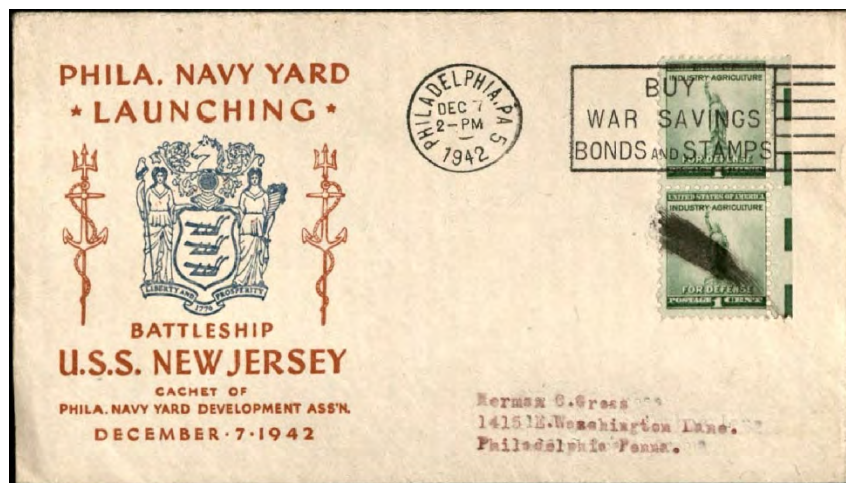


Fig. 3: A launching cover postmarked by a machine cancel at Philadelphia Post Office dated 7 Dec 1942, the first anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The cover bears a vertical pair of 1 cent green Defense Statue of Liberty stamps (Scott #899).

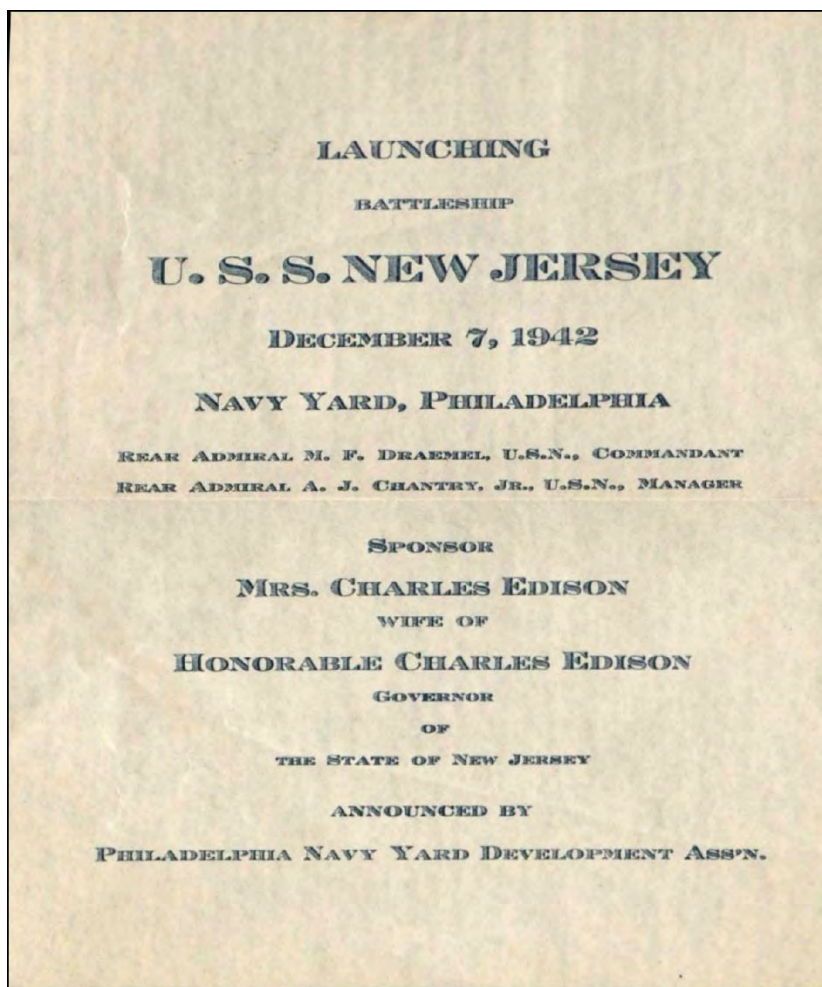


Illustration courtesy John Young

Fig. 4: Launch Day program for USS New Jersey.

Associate Press Photo, at
NavSource.org #016232u

Fig. 5: U.S. Naval officers wave from the bow on New Jersey BB-62 as it is launched at the Naval Yard at Philadelphia, 7 December 1942. Anchor and chains hang over the bow, which is higher than a five-story building.

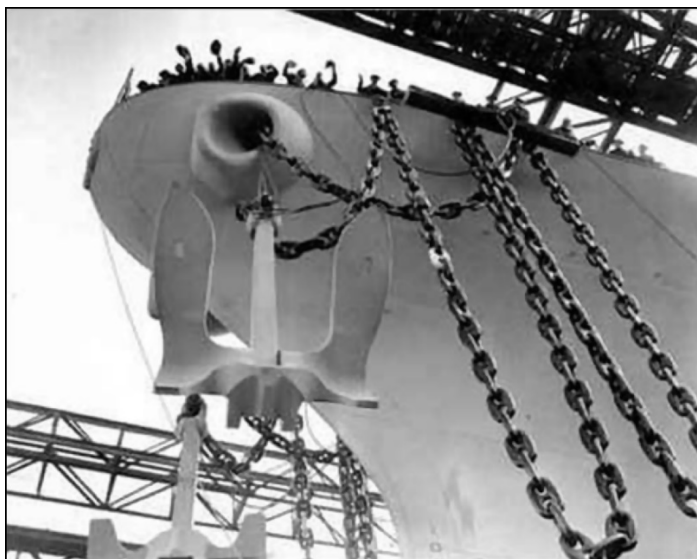




Illustration courtesy Richard Hoffner.
Fig. 6: A printed *First Day in Commission* cover for USS New Jersey dated 23 May 1943, with its *Locy Type 2z** postmark and *Locy Type 9efu* handstamp not touching the stamp, plus censor marking. Sponsor unknown. The cover bears a 2¢ red Ohio River Canalization stamp (Scott #681). The postmarks are rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog. Note the USS New Jersey Br. cancel of the New York post office.

The cover is addressed to Chief Electrician’s Mate A. J. Lance, US Navy. Archie Lance is a well-known collector who was a member of *New Jersey*’s crew and became a Warrant Officer and then a Lieutenant (junior grade).

New Jersey’s 23 May 1943 commissioning was followed by a shakedown cruise in the Atlantic Ocean.

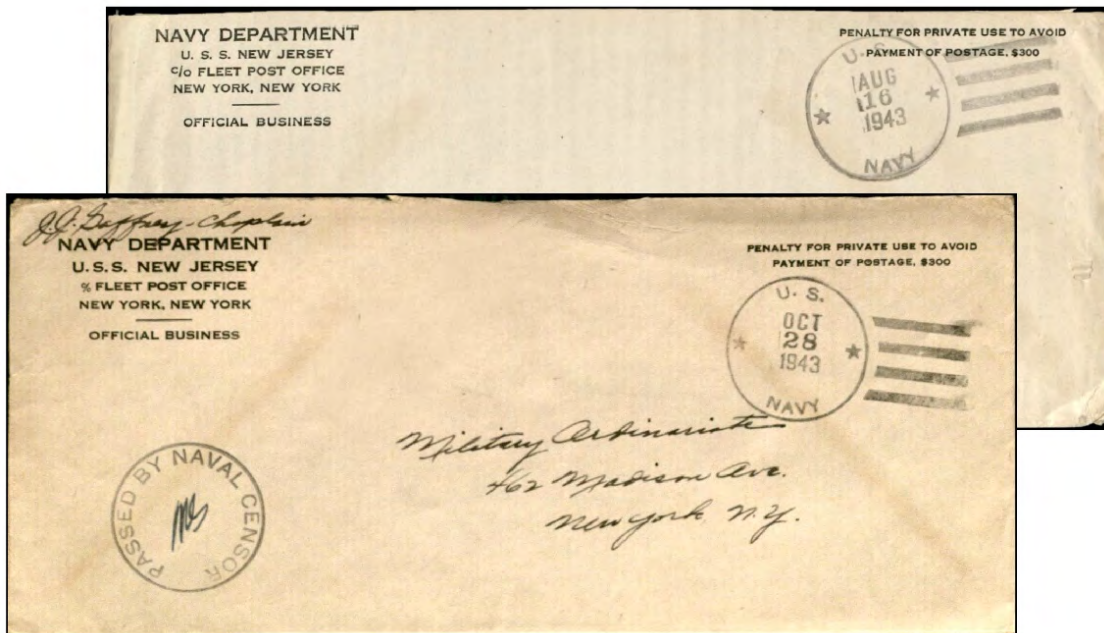


Fig. 7: Two Number 10 size official mail “Penalty Envelope” with the Fleet Post Office New York return address printed in the upper left corner, with New Jersey’s *Locy Type 2z** postmark which is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog. The cover cancelled 16 August 1943 is uncensored; the 28 October 1943 cover forwarded a report from Father J. J. Gaffney, the Roman Catholic Chaplain to the Military Ordinariate in New York. It is censored and is cancelled the day after the ship’s first Navy Day.

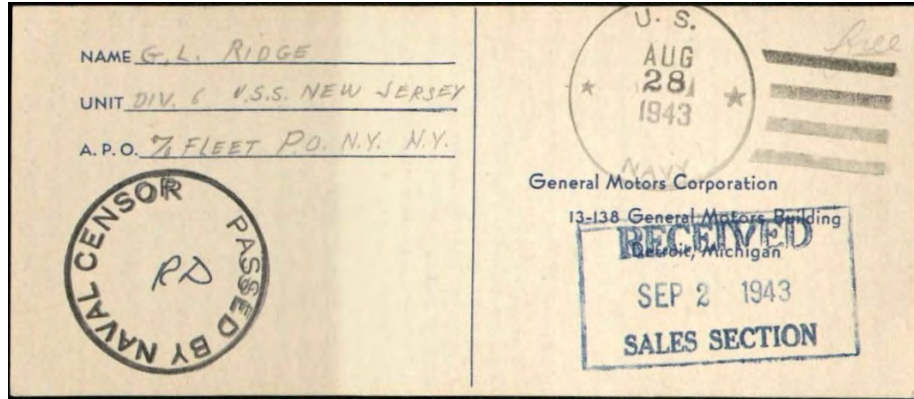


Fig. 8: A pre-printed "Thank you" card addressed to General Motors by a sailor to acknowledge receipt of a gift carton of cigarettes sent by the GM employees. The sailor has printed his name and FPO N.Y. N.Y. return address in the upper left corner. The censored card is cancelled 28 August 1943 with New Jersey's Locy Type 2z postmark and was received by GM on 2 September 1943. In addition to those donated to the military by civilians, hundreds of millions of cartons of tax-free cigarettes were sold in ship's stores for less than a dollar per carton for decades before and after World War II.*



Fig. 9: A small cover for a Christmas and New Year card franked with a brown one and a half cent Martha Washington stamp [Scott #805] with Mr. Lance's hand written name above the Fleet Post Office New York rubber stamp return address in the upper left corner. The censored cover is cancelled 21 Dec 1943 with New Jersey's Locy Type 2z postmark. The envelope is addressed to George Sadworth, a well-known naval cover collector; the enclosed card also bears a censor mark and a large rubber stamped "U.S.S. NEW JERSEY" to the left of the picture.*

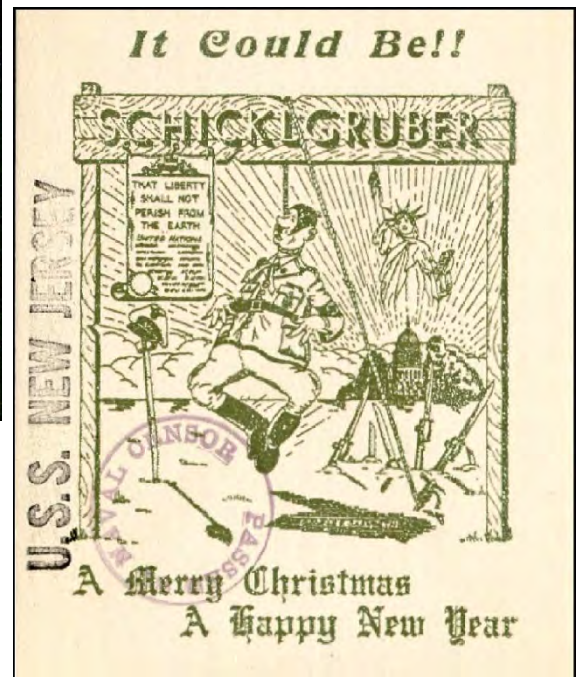


Fig. 9a: Enclosed card picturing Hitler.

Life aboard ship – preparing for battle ~

Figs. 10 a-d: NavSource.org⁶



Navsource #016241

Fig. 10a: Crewmen are seen loading 16" projectiles through a main deck scuttle. The projectiles are hoisted down several decks by a portable beam hoist built onto the top of the main turrets.



Navsource.org #0162005

Fig. 10b: Gunners packing in bags of powder which will fire the huge shell already in gun.



Navsource #016246f

Fig. 10c: Ordnance men aboard New Jersey (BB-62) move a 16-Inch projectile to an ammunition hoist.



Navsource #016244

Fig. 10d: A crewman relaxing under the guns which will fire the ordnance.

On 7 January 1944 *New Jersey* passed through the Panama Canal war-bound for Funafuti, Ellice Islands. It reported there 22 January for duty with the Fifth Fleet, and three days later rendezvoused with Task Group 58.2 for its first combat duty – the assault on the Marshall Islands.



Fig. 11: A 23 January 1944 cover sent to River Forest, Ill. upon arriving at Funafuti in the Ellice Islands, just before New Jersey's first combat duty in the Marshall Islands. Its Fleet Post Office address is now San Francisco.

New Jersey was Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet flagship during the mid-February raid on the Japanese base at Truk. Through the rest of 1944, it took part in raids on Japanese-held islands, the Marianas invasion and Battle of Philippine Sea, the Battle of Leyte Gulf and operations against the Philippines.



*Fig. 12: Admiral Raymond Spruance and Admiral Chester Nimitz aboard USS New Jersey.*⁷

New Jersey began its career as a flagship 4 February in Majuro Lagoon when Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, commanding the Fifth Fleet, broke⁸ his flag. Its first action as a flagship was a two-day surface and air strike against the Japanese fleet base on Truk in the Carolines. This was coordinated with the assault on Kwajalein, and interdicted Japanese naval retaliation during the conquest of the Marshalls.



Image courtesy John Young

Fig. 13: 5 Feb 1944 cancel Locy Type 2z with straight line “USS New Jersey” placed across but not part of the lower section of the circular device below the date



Figs. 14 and 14a: Censored airmail covers sent by crewmen soon after New Jersey transited to the Pacific. New Jersey was Fifth Fleet flagship with Admiral Spruance embarked at this time.

Each cover is franked with a carmine six cent Transport Plane stamp [Scott #C25] with sailor’s hand written return address in the upper left corner. They are cancelled 11 Feb 1944 and 16 Mar 1944 respectively with New Jersey’s Locy Type 2z* postmark. While surface mail was free, many sailors paid the six cents airmail fee to expedite their correspondence.

Between 17 March and 10 April, *New Jersey* first sailed with Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher’s flagship USS *Lexington* (CV 16) for an air and surface bombardment of Mille, then rejoined Task Group 58.2 for a strike against shipping in the Palaus, and bombarded Woleai. Upon his return to Majuro, Admiral Spruance transferred his flag to USS *Indianapolis* (CA 35). He would again break his flag in *New Jersey* at the end of the war.

New Jersey's next war cruise, 13 April-4 May 1944, began and ended at Majuro. It screened the carrier striking force which gave air support to the invasion of Aitape, Tanahmerah Bay, and Humboldt, Bay, New Guinea, 22 April, then bombed shipping and shore installations at Truk 29-30 April. *New Jersey's* sixteen-inch salvos pounded Ponape 1 May.

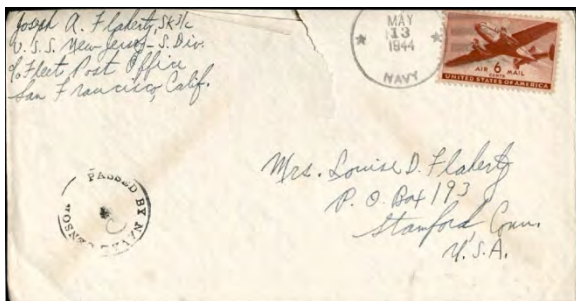


Fig. 15: A censored airmail cover sent by a crewman franked with a carmine six cent Transport Plane stamp [Scott #C25] with sailor's hand written return address in the upper left corner. The censored cover is cancelled 13 May 1944 with New Jersey's Locy Type 2z* postmark.



Fig. 16: Part of the Lance correspondence, this cover is canceled between the Hollandia Operation and the Marianas Operation, 26 May 1944. The cover is addressed to the only woman who has served as president of the Universal Ship Cancellation Society.

After rehearsing for the invasion of the Marianas, *New Jersey* put to sea 6 June [D-Day at Normandy] in the screening and bombardment group of Admiral Mitscher's Task Force.

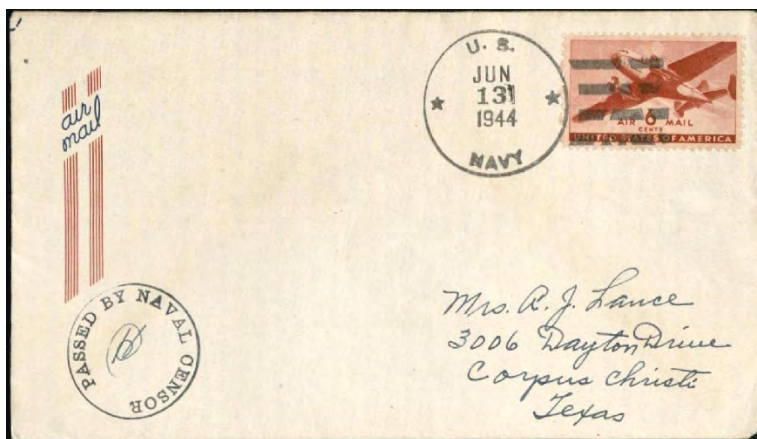


Fig. 17: Also part of the Lance correspondence, this cover is canceled during the Marianas operation, 13 June 1944.

The Japanese response to the Marianas operation was an order to its Mobile Fleet to attack the US invasion force. Shadowing US submarines tracked the Japanese fleet into the Philippine Sea. *New Jersey* took station in the protective screen around the carriers on 19 June 1944 as US naval aviators and Japanese pilots dueled in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. That day and the next sealed the doom of Japanese naval aviation. In this "Marianas Turkey Shoot," the Japanese lost more than 400 aircraft. This loss of trained pilots and aircraft was equaled in disaster by the sinking of three Japanese carriers by submarines and aircraft, and the damaging of two carriers and a battleship. The US Navy's anti-aircraft fire proved virtually impenetrable; only two US ships were slightly damaged.



Illustration courtesy Naval Online Cover Collection: Jon Burdett
Fig. 18. Cancelled 16 August 1944 with a USS *New Jersey* corner handstamp FPO San Francisco.

From August 1944, it was flagship of Admiral William F. Halsey's Third Fleet.

New Jersey broke his four star flag 24 August 1944. For the eight months after it sailed from Pearl Harbor 30 August, *New Jersey* was based at Ulithi.

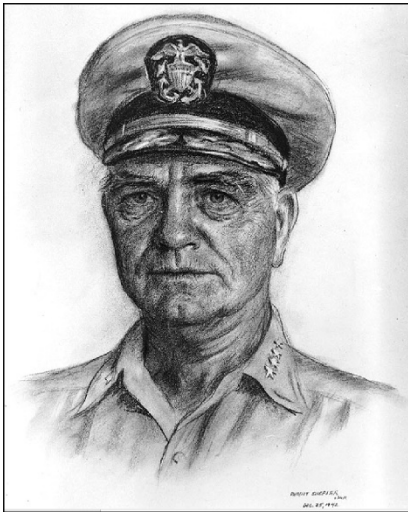


Fig. 19: *New Jersey*-born Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey.⁹

In September the targets were in the Visayas and the southern Philippines, then Manila and Cavite, Panay, Negros, Leyte, and Cebu. Early in October raids to destroy enemy air power based on Okinawa and Formosa were begun in preparation for the Leyte landings 20 October 1944.

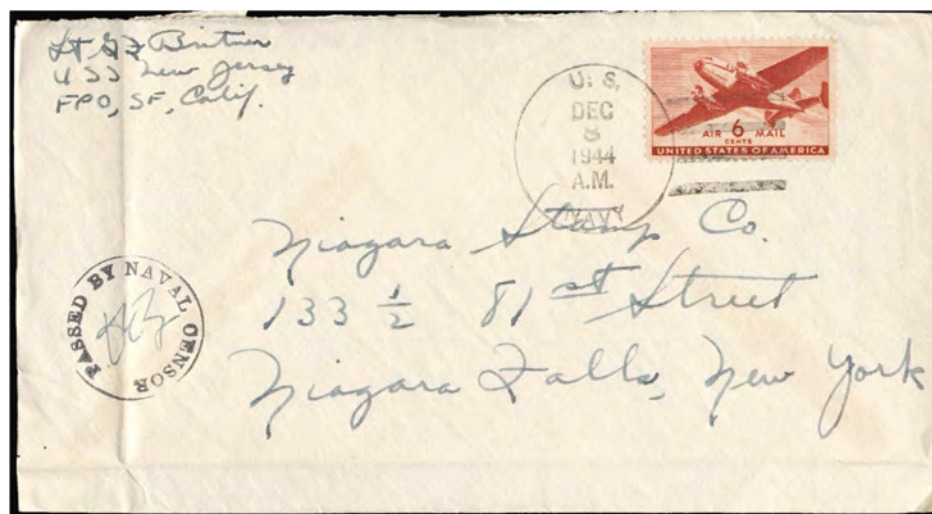
This invasion brought on the last great sortie of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Its plan for the Battle for Leyte Gulf included a feint by a northern force of carriers, without aircraft, to draw away the battleships, cruisers and fast carriers with which Admiral Halsey was protecting the landings. This was to allow the Japanese Center Force to enter the gulf through San Bernardino Strait.

At the opening of the battle planes from the carriers guarded by USS *New Jersey* struck at both the Japanese Southern and Center Forces, sinking a battleship 23 October. The next day Halsey shaped his course north after the decoy force had been spotted. Aircraft from his carriers sank four of the Japanese carriers, as well as a destroyer and a cruiser, while *New Jersey* steamed south at flank speed to meet the newly developed threat of the Center force.



Fig. 20: Admiral William F. Halsey, Commander, Third Fleet (left center) eats Thanksgiving dinner with the crew of his flagship, USS New Jersey (BB-62), 30 November 1944.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph #80-G-291498



Official US Navy photograph #80-G-291047¹⁰

Fig. 21: A censored airmail cover sent by Lieutenant G. F. Britner, Jr., franked with a carmine six cent Transport Plane stamp [Scott #C25] with his hand written return address in the upper left corner. The censored cover is cancelled, during the Leyte Operations including the Luzon Attacks, with New Jersey's Locy Type 2z postmark dated 8 Dec 1944, 10 days before the first of two Pacific typhoons which caused serious damage to Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet.*

New Jersey sailed with a carrier task group for air attacks on Luzon 14-16 December and then found herself in a typhoon which sank three destroyers. It returned to Ulithi on Christmas Eve to be met by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who had convened a Court of Inquiry. This was the first of two disastrous typhoons which damaged the Third Fleet.

USS *NEW JERSEY* (BB 62) ~ Part I: World War II ~ Capt. Lawrence B. Brennan

From 30 December 1944 to 25 January 1945, *New Jersey* guarded the carriers in strikes on Formosa, Okinawa, and Luzon, on the coast of Indo-China, Hong Kong, Swatow and Amoy, and again on Formosa and Okinawa. At Ulithi 27 January Admiral Halsey lowered his flag but it was replaced two days later by that of Rear Admiral Oscar Badger commanding Battleship Division Seven.

In support of the assault on Iwo Jima, *New Jersey* screened the *Essex* group in air attacks on the island 19-21 February, and escorted the first major carrier raid on Tokyo 25 February, a raid aimed specifically at aircraft production. During the next two days, Okinawa was attacked from the air by the same striking force.



Fig. 22 & 23: Censored airmail covers franked with a carmine six cent Transport Plane stamp [Scott #C25] with Petty Officer Flaherty's hand written name above the rubber stamp return address in the upper left corner. The censored covers are cancelled, during the Leyte Operations including the Luzon Attacks, with New Jersey's Locy Type 2z* postmark dated 20 February 1945 & 11 Apr 1945, during Fifth and Third Fleet raids in support of Okinawa Gunto Operation.

New Jersey was engaged in the conquest of Okinawa from 14 March until 16 April. As the carriers prepared for the invasion with strikes there and on Honshu, *New Jersey* fought off air raids, used its seaplanes to rescue downed pilots, and defended the carriers from suicide planes. On 24 March 1945 it again carried out heavy bombardment, preparing the invasion beaches. *New Jersey* continued its Pacific combat operations into 1945, supporting the invasions of Iwo Jima and the Ryukyus.

6 August and 9 August 1945 marked the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, and on 15 August, Japan announced its intentions to surrender. The formal surrender ceremony was conducted in Tokyo Bay on board the USS *Missouri* on 2 September 1945.



Fig. 24: An uncensored airmail cover franked with a carmine six cent Transport Plane stamp [Scott #C25] with Petty Officer Flaherty's hand written name above the rubber stamp return address in the upper left corner. The censored cover is cancelled with New Jersey's Locy Type 2z* postmark dated 12 Sep 1945. The letter enclosed, dated 11 Sep 1945 reported that "we will get underway tomorrow and move up to Japan, probably at Yokohama."

New Jersey was not present in Tokyo Bay on the day of signing of the Instrument of Surrender. During the final months of the war, *New Jersey* was overhauled at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. It sailed 4 July for San Pedro, Pearl Harbor, and Eniwetok bound for Guam. There, on 14 August, it once again became flagship of the Fifth Fleet under Admiral Spruance. Brief stays at Manila and Okinawa preceded its arrival in Tokyo Bay, 17 September, where it served as flagship for the successive commanders of Naval Forces in Japanese waters until relieved 28 January 1946 by USS *Iowa* (BB 61).



Cover illustration courtesy John Young

Fig. 25: A cover celebrating the successful conclusion of the war, and the naval contributions of Admiral Halsey and Admiral Nimitz to this effort.



Fig. 26: An uncensored multicolor printed Navy Day cacheted # 10 airmail cover franked with two carmine six cent Transport Plane stamps [Scott #C25] with Seaman First Class (S1/c) Jos. L. DuBois' hand written return address in the upper left corner. The uncensored cover is cancelled with New Jersey's Locy Type Pz (N-8c) postmark dated 28 Oct 1945, the day after Navy Day but still during 27 October throughout most of the United States, with "Tokyo Japan" in the killer bars rated C in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th ed. 1997).

As part of Operation Magic Carpet, *New Jersey* took aboard nearly a thousand homeward bound troops with whom it arrived at San Francisco 10 February 1946.

After west coast operations and overhaul at Puget Sound, *New Jersey* returned to the Atlantic as it came home to Bayonne, New Jersey, for its fourth birthday 23 May 1947.

Between 7 June and 26 August, 1947 *New Jersey* formed part of the first training squadron to cruise Northern European waters since the beginning of World War II. Over two thousand Naval Academy and NROTC midshipmen received sea-going experience under the command of Admiral Richard L. Connoly, Commander Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, who broke his flag in *New Jersey* at Rosyth, Scotland 23 June. It was the scene of official receptions at Oslo, where King Haakon VII of Norway inspected the crew 2 July, and at Portsmouth, England. The training fleet was westward bound 18 July for exercises in the Caribbean and Western Atlantic.

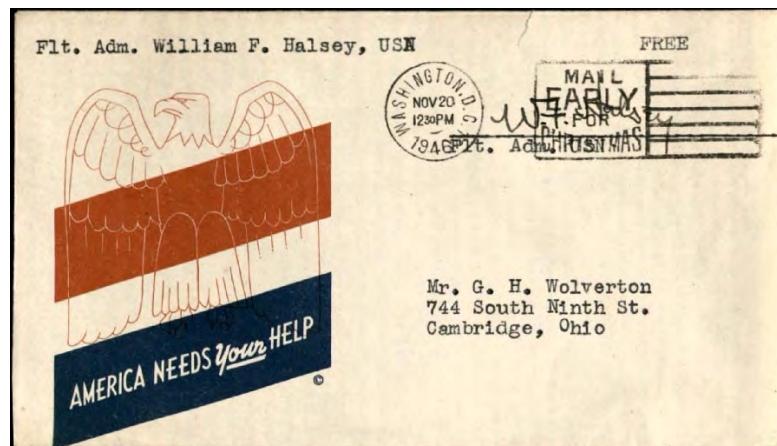


Fig. 27: An uncensored free mail printed cacheted cover with Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey's typed return on the upper left side and his autograph on the upper right side beneath the typed "FREE" frank and under the 20 Nov 1946 Washington D.C. machine postmark.

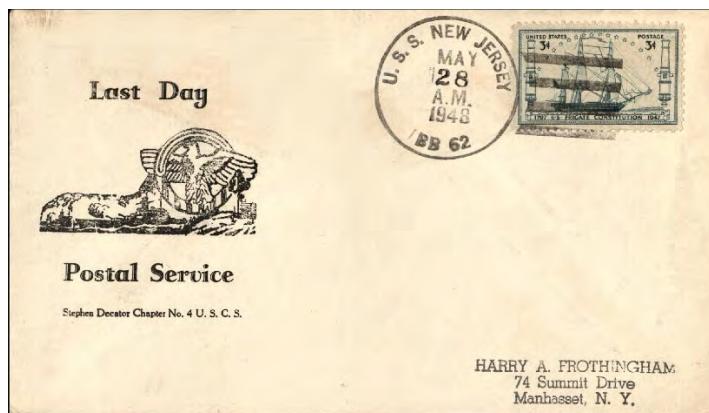


Fig. 28: A printed cacheted cover marking New Jersey's Last Day Postal Service and cancelled with New Jersey's *Locy Type 2(n)* postmark dated 29 May 1948, rated A in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th ed. 1997).

After serving at New York as flagship for Rear Admiral H. H. McClean, Commander, Battleship Division One, 12 September-18 October, *New Jersey* was inactivated at the New York Naval Shipyard. It was decommissioned at Bayonne 30 June 1948 and assigned to the New York Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet. It would be recommissioned three more times, before becoming a Museum Ship in 2001 – a story for another day.

During World War II, *New Jersey* received nine battle stars for action in the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre in 1944 and 1945. The operations it participated in are listed below:

- 1. Marshall Islands Operation**
 - Occupation of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls
 - Bombardment of Mille Atoll
- 2. Asiatic-Pacific Raids – 1944**
 - Truk Attack
 - Papau, Yap, Ulithi, Woleai Raid
 - Truk, Satawan, Ponape Raid
- 3. Hollandia Operation**
 - Aitape, Humboldt Bay, Tanahmerah Bay
- 4. Marianas Operation**
 - Capture and Occupation of Saipan
 - Battle of the Philippine Sea
 - Capture and Occupation of Guam
 - Palau, Yap, Ulithi Raid
- 5. Western Caroline Islands Operation**
 - Capture & Occupation of Southern Palau Islands
 - Philippine Island Assaults
- 6. Leyte Operation**
 - Third Fleet Supporting Operations – Okinawa Attack
 - Northern Luzon & Formosa Attacks
 - Luzon Attacks
 - Visayas Attack

7. Luzon Operation

Formosa Attack
Luzon Attacks
China Coast Attacks

8. Iwo Jima Operation

5th Fleet Raids against Honshu & the Nansei Shoto
Assault & Occupation of Iwo Jima

9. Okinawa Gunto Operation

5th & 3rd Fleet Raids in support of Okinawa Gunto Operation

10. Japanese surrender and Occupation Duty

World War II - Medals and Achievement Awards

Asiatic - Pacific Campaign Medal for World War II

World War II Victory Medal: May 23, 1943 - December 31, 1946

Navy Occupation Service Medal / Asia: October 23, 1945 - January 29, 1946

ENDNOTES:

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- ¹ Copyright MMXVI by Lawrence B. Brennan, all moral and legal right reserved. May not be reproduced or republished without the prior written consent of the author.
- ² Lawrence B. Brennan is a retired U.S. Navy Captain, an adjunct professor of law at Fordham Law School, and an admiralty and maritime law litigator in New York City. He was a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice. He was educated at Fordham University in New York City (B.A. *magna cum laude* 1974 and J.D. 1977). He is a member of the Bar of the State of New York and various federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court.
- ³ Fahey, James C. *The Ships and Aircraft of the United States Fleet (War Edition)*, New York, Ships and Aircraft 1942, p. 5.
- ⁴ The ship's history is based, as usual, on the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*' entry found on line at <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/n/new-jersey-ii.html> and on <https://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/the-ship/full-history/>
- ⁵ Many of the photos used here come from the Naval History and Heritage Command web site, at <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/new-jersey-bb-62/NH-45486.html>. We will identify them by their number on that web site
- ⁶ Other photos are from NavSource Online: Battleship Photo Archive (for USS NJ BB-62) at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/01/62a.htm> .
- ⁷ WWII database web site at <https://ww2db.com/images/5b9175682cd55.jpg>.
- ⁸ Harvard History Professor and retired Rear Admiral, US Naval Reserve, Samuel Eliot Morison instructed, You set a sail, raise the jack or ensign, hoist a signal, but break (out) an admiral's flag..." "Notes on Writing Naval (not Navy) English," originally published in *The American Neptune* (January 1949) pp.5-9.
- ⁹ A New Jersey native, Fleet Admiral Halsey was born in Elizabeth 30 October 1882. He was promoted to Fleet Admiral and became Navy's junior five star Admiral on 11 December 1945.
- ¹⁰ Naval History & Heritage Command, *op cit.*, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/new-jersey-bb-62/80-G-291047.html>.

USS *NEW JERSEY* (BB 62) ~ FROM PHILADELPHIA TO CAMDEN, Part II A Retrospective of 80 Years. Korea & Viet Nam, 2nd & 3rd Commissionings By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, US Navy (Retired)^{1,2}

USS *New Jersey* had a history well beyond its service in World War II, which we covered in our last issue,³ in commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the first commissioning, and service in WWII. This article continues the story through her second and third commissionings during the Korea and Viet Nam conflicts.⁴

The chart below lists the ship's service life in chronological order.⁵

Iowa Class Battleship
Keel Laid 16 September 1940 - Launched 7 December 1942
USS <i>NEW JERSEY</i> BB 62
Commissioned 23 May 1943 - Decommissioned 30 May 1948
Recommissioned 21 November 1950 - Decommissioned 21 August 1957
Recommissioned 6 April 1968 - Decommissioned 17 December 1969
Recommissioned 28 December 1982 - Decommissioned 9 February 1991
Struck from Naval Register 12 January 1995
Reinstated on Naval Register in reserve 12 February 1998
Stricken for preservation in New Jersey 4 January 1999
Dedicated as a Museum Ship 15 October 2001

After service in the Operation Magic Carpet, returning servicemen who served in World War II, and West Coast operations in 1947, USS *New Jersey* returned to the East Coast where she served as part of the first training squadron to cruise Northern European waters since the beginning of World War II. In 1948, she was inactivated at the New York Naval Shipyard. She was decommissioned at Bayonne 30 June 1948 and assigned to the New York Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet.



Fig. 1: A Nicholson printed cacheted cover marking New Jersey's Last Day Postal Service and cancelled with New Jersey's Locy Type 2(n) postmark dated 29 May 1948, and rated A in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).

SECOND COMMISSIONING: KOREA 1950 - 1957

This article begins with *New Jersey's* next period of service. The Korean War brought *New Jersey* back into commission in November 1950. Two Korean combat tours in 1951 and 1953 were punctuated by a European Midshipmen's cruise in the summer of 1952.



National Archives photo #80-G-442943⁶

Fig. 2: USS *New Jersey* laid up at the Bayonne Naval Supply Depot, New Jersey, 1 June 1949.



Official U.S. Navy Photograph #80-G-421957
Fig. 3: Undergoing reactivation work at the Naval Supply Depot, Bayonne, New Jersey, 3 November 1950. She was recommissioned on 21 November 1950 and began her first Korean War operations in May 1951.

New Jersey was recommissioned at Bayonne 21 November 1950, Captain David M. Tyree in command.

Fig. 4: First Day Postal Service unaddressed cover with *New Jersey's* *Locy* Types 2 and 9 hand cancels dated 6 Dec 1950 following recommissioning 21 Nov 1950 at Bayonne, New Jersey where she had been in mothballs. A rubber stamp reading "FIRST DAY POSTAL SERVICE" is added to the top of the printed cachet. Both postmarks are rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).



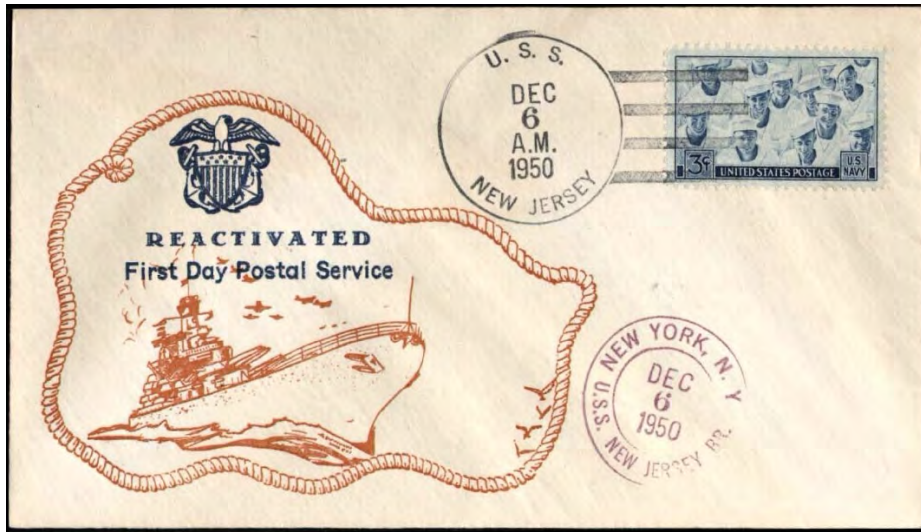


Fig. 5: First Day Postal Service unaddressed cover with New Jersey's Locy Types 2 and 9 hand cancels dated 6 Dec 1950 after recommissioning 21 Nov 1950 at Bayonne, New Jersey where she had been in mothballs.

She again conducted workups in the Caribbean. She sailed from Norfolk 16 April 1951 and arrived from Japan off the east coast of Korea 17 May. Vice Admiral Harold M. Martin, Commander, Seventh Fleet broke his flag in *New Jersey* for the next six months.



Fig. 6: A generic printed cachet "United States Navy Battleship-BB". The cover is postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 19 May 1951. The postmark is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).

New Jersey's guns opened the first shore bombardment of her Korean career at Wonsan 20 May. One crewman was killed and two severely wounded when she took a hit from a shore battery on her number one turret and received a near miss aft to port. Between 23 and 27 May and again 30 May 1951, *New Jersey* pounded targets near Yangyang and Kansong. On 24 May, she lost one of her helicopters when its crew pushed to the limit of their fuel, searching for a downed aviator. They were able to reach friendly territory and were later returned to their ship.

With Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, and Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander Naval Forces Far East aboard, *New Jersey* bombarded targets at Wonsan 4 June. At Kansong two days later she fired at an artillery regiment and truck encampment. On 28 July off Wonsan, the battleship was again taken under fire by shore batteries.

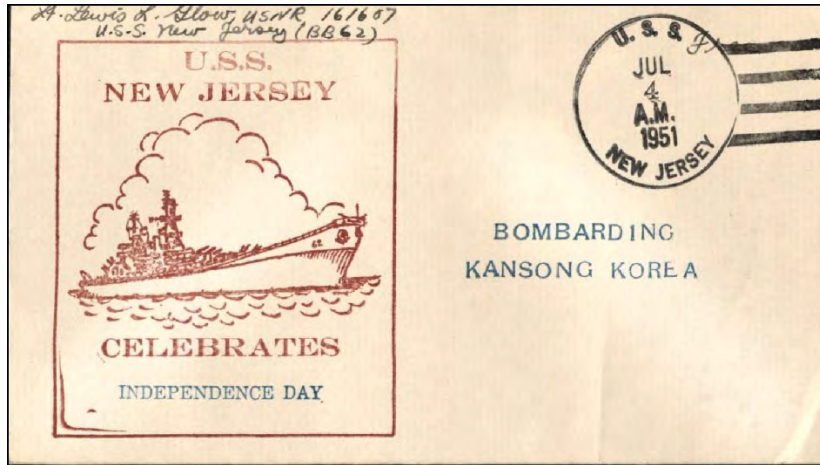
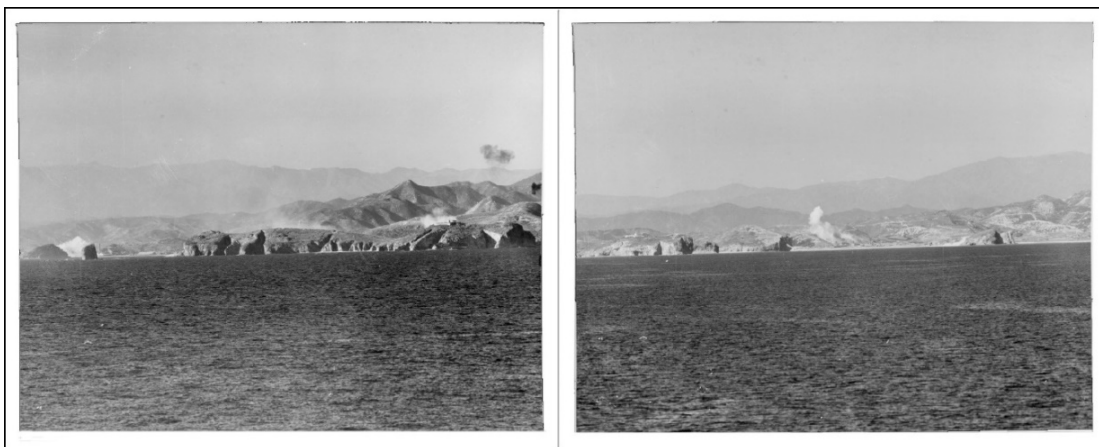


Fig. 7: A rubber stamp cachet noting that the battleship “Celebrates Independence Day” while Bombarding Kansong Korea. The free mail cover bears the handwritten return address of an officer and is postmarked with New Jersey’s Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 4 Jul 1951. The postmark is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).

Between 4 and 12 July, *New Jersey* supported a United Nations push in the Kansong area. *New Jersey* returned to Wonsan 18 July for more gun fires support. Again, she sailed to Korea troops once more on 17 August, returning to the Kansong area where for four days she provided heavy fire. She returned to this general area yet again 29 August for four days of gunfire support.

On 1 October 1951, General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Matthew B. Ridgeway, Commander in Chief Far East, came on board to confer with Admiral Martin.



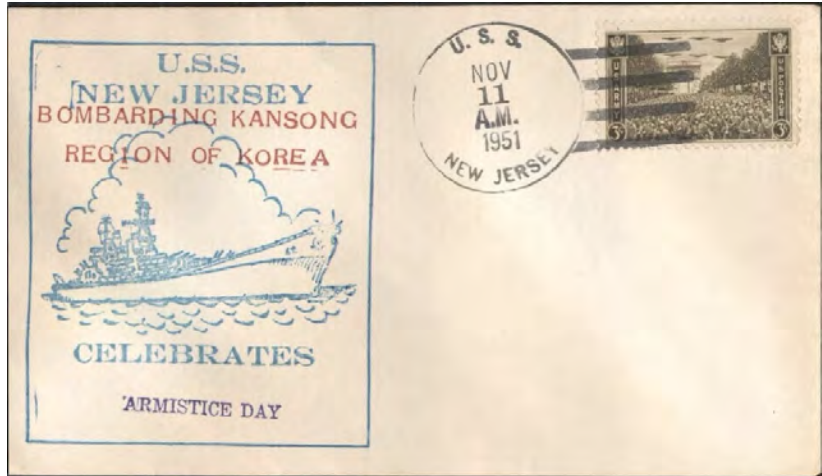
U.S. Navy Photos, now in the National Archives collections, #s80-G-434533 & 80-G-434535.

Fig. 8 (a & b): Two photographs taken 5 October 1951. Shells explode ashore as USS New Jersey (BB 62) bombards targets near Hungnam, North Korea. Hungnam city is visible at the extreme left. Both views are part of an original panorama view.

Between 1 and 6 October *New Jersey* was in action at Kansong, Hamhung, Hungnam, Tanchon, and Songjin. She worked with allied forces 16 October as she sailed in company with HMS *Belfast* with aviators from HMAS *Sydney* spotting.

New Jersey dashed up the North Korean coast raiding transportation facilities from 1 to 6 November. With renewed attacks on Kansong and near the Chang-San-Got Peninsula 11 and 13 November, *New Jersey* completed this tour of duty, nearly one year after recommissioning.

Fig. 9: A rubber stamp cachet noting that the battleship "Celebrates Armistice Day" while Bombarding Kansong Region of Korea. The cover is postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 11 Nov 1951. The postmark is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).



Relieved as flagship by USS *Wisconsin* (BB 64), *New Jersey* cleared Yokosuka for Hawaii, Long Beach and the Panama Canal, and returned to Norfolk 20 December for a six-month overhaul. Between 19 July 1952 and 5 September, she sailed as flagship for Rear Admiral H. R. Thurber, who commanded the NROTC midshipman training cruise to Cherbourg, Lisbon, and the Caribbean.



Fig. 10: A rubber stamp cachet noting "MIDSHIPMAN [sic] CRUISE 1952 PARIS GTMO CHERBOURG, LISBON". The cover bears the California Statehood commemorative stamp (Scott's Number 997) and is postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 7 machine cancel dated 4 Sep 1951, the day before the cruise ended at Norfolk. The postmark is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).

New Jersey prepared for her second Korean tour and departed from Norfolk 5 March 1953. Shaping her course via the Panama Canal, Long Beach, and Hawaii, *New Jersey* reached Yokosuka 5 April, and next day relieved USS *Missouri* (BB-63) as flagship of Vice Admiral Joseph J. "Jocko" Clark, Commander, Seventh Fleet, the first Native American graduate of the US Naval Academy.

Chongjin was her first target on 12 April, as *New Jersey* returned to action. At Pusan two days later, *New Jersey* manned her rails to welcome the Korean President and Madame Rhee, along with US Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs.

USS NEW JERSEY (BB 62), PART II, Korea & Viet Nam ~ Capt. Lawrence B. Brennen, US Navy (Ret.)

New Jersey fired on Kojo 16 April, on Hungnam 18 April, on Wonsan Harbor 20 April, and on Songjin 23 April. *New Jersey* joined a joint aviation/surface strike on Wonsan 1 May. Two days later Kalmagak at Wonsan was her target.

Official U.S. Navy Photo, in the collections of the National Archives #: 80-G-K-16282

Fig. 11: *USS New Jersey (BB 62)* steams into a Japanese port, during her second Korean War tour, circa April-May 1953. Note harbor defense nets beyond the ship.

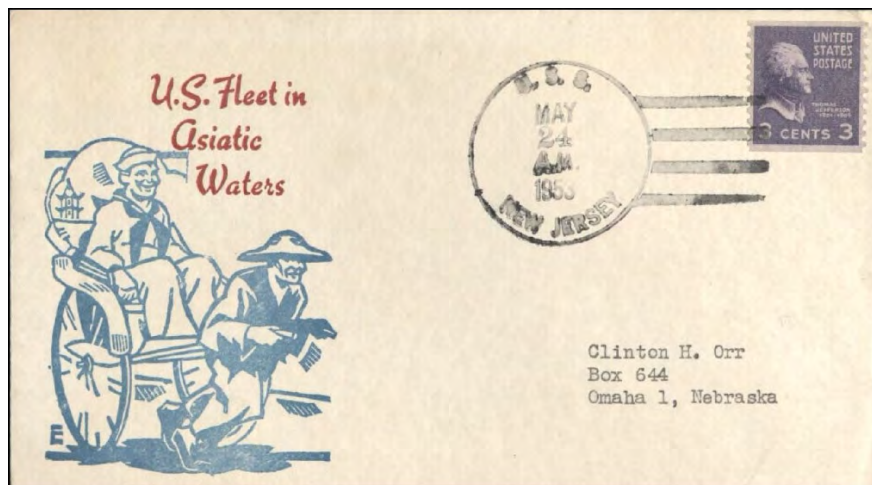


Official U.S. Navy photo, now in the collections of the National Archives #: 80-G-K-16320⁷

Fig. 12: *USS New Jersey (BB 62)* A Sikorsky HO3S-1 helicopter of squadron HU-1 takes off from the battleship's afterdeck 14 April 1953, while she was operating off Korea. The upraised green flag signifies that the pilot has permission to take off. Crash crew, in yellow helmets, are standing by with fire hoses ready.

Her tenth birthday, 23 May 1953, was celebrated at Inchon with President and Madame Rhee, Lieutenant General Maxwell D. Taylor, and other dignitaries on board. Two days later *New Jersey* was at war once more, returning to the west coast at Chinampo to knock out harbor defense positions. She was under fire at Wonsan 27-29 May.

Fig. 13: A generic printed cachet "U.S. Fleet in Asiatic Waters". This was *New Jersey's* final line period during the Korean Conflict, 1 May through 27 July 1953 when she was awarded a battlestar for Korea Summer/Fall 1953. The cover is postmarked with *New Jersey's* Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 24 May 1953. The postmark is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).



New Jersey returned to direct support to troops at Kosong 7 June. She proceeded to Wonsan 24 June. Next day she returned to support troops at Kosong until 10 July. At Wonsan 11-12 July, *New Jersey* fired one of the most concentrated bombardments of her Korean duty and struck at Kojo 13 July. She was again on the east coast bomblines 22-24 July to support South Korean troops near Kosong. The following day she returned to Hungnam and Tanchon.

New Jersey's mission at Wonsan, next day, was her last. Two days later, she learned of the truce. Her crew celebrated during a seven-day visit at Hong Kong, where she anchored 20 August. Operations around Japan and off Formosa were carried out for the remainder of her tour, which was highlighted by a visit to Pusan where on 16 September President Rhee presented the Korean Presidential Unit Citation to the Seventh Fleet.

After returning home from the western Pacific in late 1953, *New Jersey* operated in the Atlantic. She deployed to Mediterranean twice in 1955-56. She returned to Norfolk 15 October, and 14 December arrived at New York Naval Shipyard for inactivation, and was placed out of commission in August 1957. She was decommissioned and placed in reserve at Bayonne 21 August 1957. That would last more than a decade.



Fig. 14: A Nicholson printed cachet for the Last Day Postal Service. The cover, postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 10 Jul 1957, is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).

Korean War - 4 Battle Stars Awarded

Flagship for Commander, 7th Fleet during both tours of duty April - November 1951 and March - November 1953

1. Communist China Spring Offensive

- a) May 16 - November 24, 1951
- b) April 22 - July 8, 1951

2. United Nations Summer / Fall Offensive

July 9 - November 27, 1951

3. Third Korean Winter

December 1, 1952 - April 30, 1953

4. Korea Summer / Fall 1953

May 1 - July 27, 1953

Korean War - Medals and Achievement Awards

Korean Service Medal: Korean War Service was recognized by awarding the Korean Service Medal to qualifying members of all branches of the Armed Forces. The Korean Service Medal was authorized by Executive Order on November 8, 1950, awarded for service between June 27, 1950 & July 27, 1954.

THIRD COMMISSIONING: VIET NAM – 1968 - 1969



Navy History & Heritage Command: Painting, tempera on paper; by John Charles Roach, 1969

Fig. 15: An artist's depiction of the USS New Jersey during the Viet Nam conflict.

USS *New Jersey* was the only battleship recalled to duty during the Vietnam War. She recommissioned in April 1968 and arrived off Southeast Asia in September. From then until April 1969, she conducted frequent bombardments along the South Vietnamese coast.

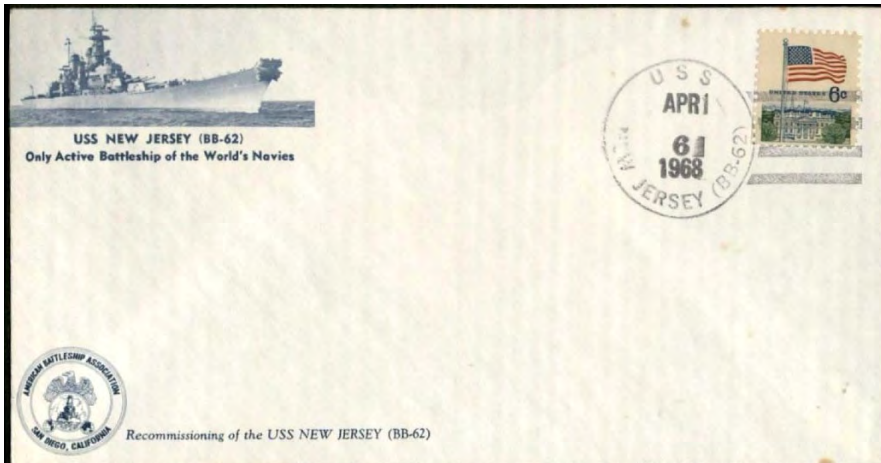


Fig. 16: Recommissioning cover with New Jersey's Locy Type 2 hand cancels dated 6 Apr 1968 at Philadelphia Naval Shipyard where she had been in mothballs with her sisterships, Iowa (BB 61) and Wisconsin (BB 64).

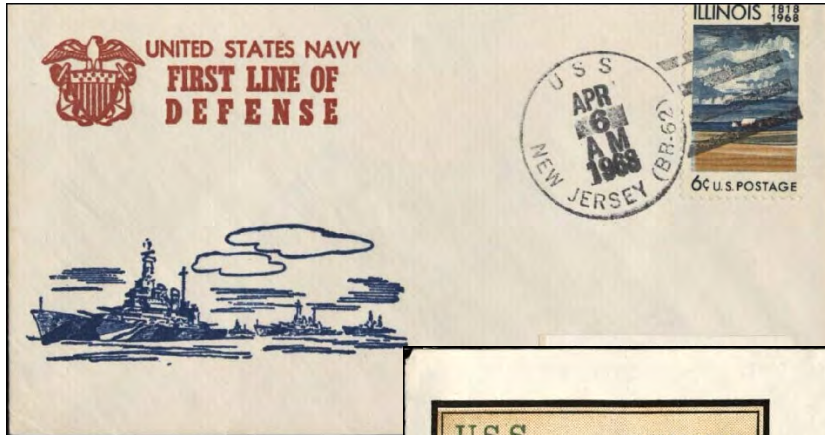
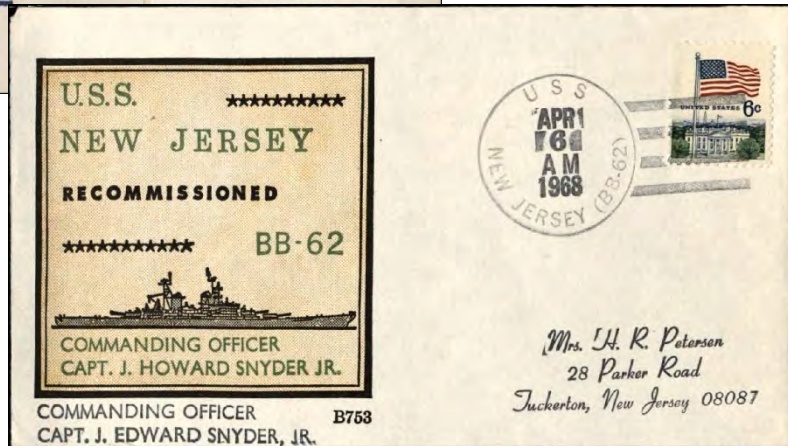


Fig. 17 & 18: Two printed recommissioning cachets; Figure 18 was sponsored by Morris Beck. The postmarks are rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th Ed. 1997).



New Jersey's third war began 6 April 1968 when she recommissioned at Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, Captain J. Edward Snyder in command. Fitted with improved electronics and a helicopter landing pad and with her 40-millimeter battery removed, she was tailored for use as a heavy bombardment ship. Her 16-inch guns could reach targets in Vietnam inaccessible to smaller naval guns and, in foul weather, safe from aerial attack.

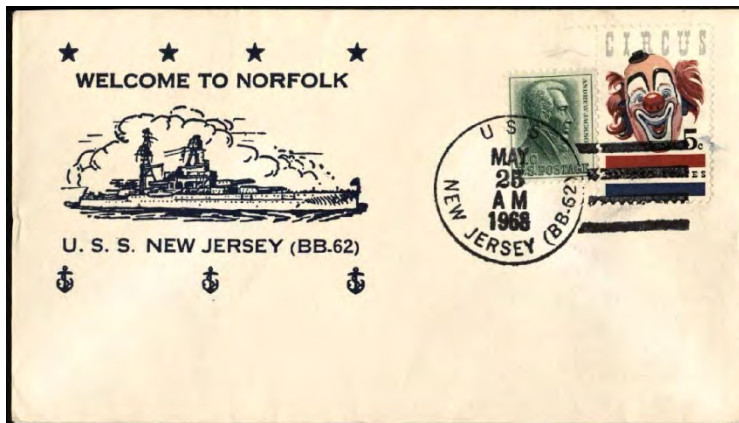


Fig. 19: A Tazewell G. Nicholson printed cachet noting the presence in Norfolk of New Jersey. The cover is postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 25 May 1968. The postmark is rated B in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th ed. 1997).

New Jersey, the only active battleship, departed Philadelphia 16 May, calling at Norfolk and transiting the Panama Canal before arriving at her new home port of Long Beach, Calif., 11 June. Further training off southern California followed. On 24 July *New Jersey* received 16-inch shells and powder tanks from USS *Mount Katmai* (AE 16) by highline transfer and by helicopter lift, the first time heavy battleship ammunition had been transferred by helicopter at sea.



Naval History & Heritage Command Photo #K-54519

Fig. 20: During operations in the Pacific, a UH-46A Helicopter from the Helicopter Combat Support Squadron Three (HC-3) moves supplies from USS Mount Katmai (AE 16) to USS New Jersey (BB 62).

Fig. 21: A mixed rubber stamp and printed cachet noting the presence in Pearl Harbor of New Jersey. The cover is postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 2 hand cancel dated 10 Sep 1968 and autographed in the upper left corner by Captain J. E. Snyder, US Navy, Commanding Officer, USS New Jersey. The postmark is rated A in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th ed. 1997).



Departing Long Beach 3 September, *New Jersey* touched at Pearl Harbor and Subic Bay before sailing 25 September for her first tour of gunfire support duty along the Vietnamese coast. Near the 17th parallel on 30 September, the ship fired her first shots in battle in over sixteen years. Firing against targets in and near Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), her guns destroyed targets over two days and she rescued the crew of a spotting plane forced down at sea by anti-aircraft fire.

The next six months fell into a steady pace of bombardment and fire support missions along the Vietnamese coast, broken only by brief visits to Subic Bay and replenishment operations at sea. In her first two months on the gun line, *New Jersey* directed nearly ten thousand rounds of ammunition; over: 3,000 of these shells were 16-inch projectiles.

Naval History and Heritage Command:
Photographed by PH2 Monty L. Tipton
Fig. 22: Bombarding enemy targets near Tuyho, on South Vietnam's central coast, during her last line period, late in March 1969.



Her first Vietnam combat tour completed, *New Jersey* departed Subic Bay 3 April 1969 for Japan. She arrived at Yokosuka for a two-day visit, sailing for the United States 9 April. Her homecoming, however, was to be delayed. On the 15th, while *New Jersey* was still at sea, North Korean jet fighters shot down an unarmed US Navy EC-121 Constellation electronic surveillance plane over the Sea of Japan, killing its entire crew. A carrier task force was formed and sent to the Sea of Japan, while *New Jersey* was ordered to come about and steam toward Japan. On the 22nd she arrived once more at Yokosuka, and immediately put to sea in readiness for what might befall.

As the crisis abated, *New Jersey* resumed her interrupted voyage. She anchored at Long Beach 5 May 1969, her first visit to her home port in eight months. Through the summer months, *New Jersey's* crew prepared for another deployment. On 22 August 1969 the Secretary of Defense released a list of names of ships to be inactivated; at the top of the list was *New Jersey*. Five days later, Captain Snyder was relieved of command by Captain Robert C. Peniston.

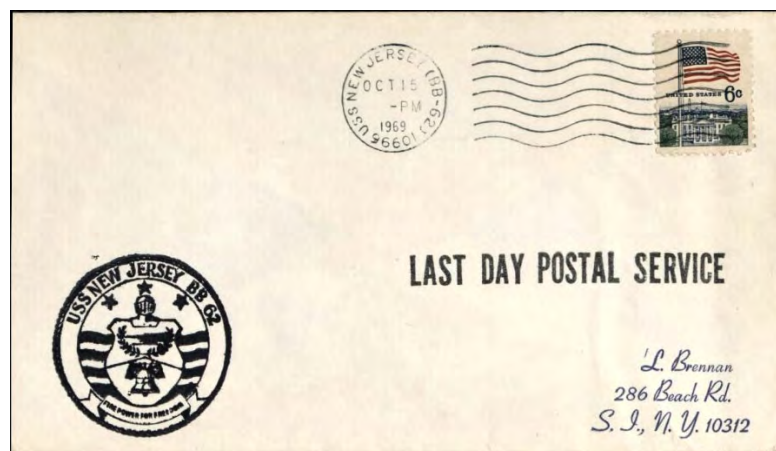


Fig. 23: A Last Day Postal Service rubber stamp cacheted cover postmarked with New Jersey's Locy Type 7(n+) machine cancel dated 15 Oct 1969 and is rated A in the USCS Postmark Catalog (5th ed. 1997). New Jersey was decommissioned for a third time on 17 December 1969.

Assuming command of a ship already earmarked for the “mothball fleet,” Captain Peniston and his crew prepared for their melancholy task. *New Jersey* got underway on her last voyage 6 September, departing Long Beach for Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. She arrived on the 8th, and began pre-inactivation overhaul. On 17 December 1969 *New Jersey*’s colors were hauled down and she for the third time entered the inactive fleet.

Vietnam War - 3 Battle Stars Awarded

September 1968 - April 1969

1. Vietnamese Counter Offensive Phase V

September 17 - November 1, 1968

2. Vietnamese Counter Offensive Phase VI

November 22, 1968 – February 22, 1969

3. TET 1969 Counter Offensive

February 23 – April 1, 1969

Vietnam War – Medals and Achievements Awards

Vietnam Service Medal, September 29, 1968 – November 8, 1968

Vietnam Service Medal Awarded Continuously – November 1968

Battle Efficiency “E” Award for Mission Excellence in Operation Sea Dragon, shelling North Vietnam until the bombing halt – November 1, 1968

Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation – September 30 – October 4, 1968

Combat Action Ribbon for Performance Under Fire – October 26, 1968 & October 31, 1968

Navy Unit Commendation for contributions to the U.S. effort in Southeast Asia –

September 17, 1968 – April 11, 1969

New Jersey’s Fourth Commissioning to her retirement as a museum ship will follow in the future. Ed.

ENDNOTES:

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² Lawrence B. Brennan is a retired U.S. Navy Captain, an adjunct professor of law at Fordham Law School, and an admiralty and maritime law litigator in New York City. He was a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice. He was educated at Fordham University in New York City (B.A. *magna cum laude* 1974 and J.D. 1977). He is a member of the Bar of the State of New York and various federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. He has been quoted frequently in the media and been interviewed on national and international television and radio programs.

³ Featured article in *NJPH*, November 2019, Vol. 47, No. 4 ([Whole No. 216](#))

⁴ The ship’s history is based, as usual, on the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*’ entry found on line at <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/n/new-jersey-ii.html> and on <https://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/the-ship/full-history/>

⁵ This list is taken from the Naval Cover Museum at https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/NEW_JERSEY_BB_62

⁶ The photographs used in this article are from the Naval History & Heritage Command site, at <https://www.history.navy.mil/>. We have included their identification numbers (which can be used to locate them on that site), and also employed NHHC descriptions to best preserve information details.

⁷ Naval History & Heritage Command: This photograph is dated 14 April 1953. Photographer is Lt. R.C. Timm. <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g-k/80-G-K-16000/80-G-K-16320.html>.

**USS *NEW JERSEY* (BB 62) ~ FROM PHILADELPHIA TO CAMDEN, Part III
A Retrospective of 80 Years. Last Commissioning: 1982 to Museum Ship
By: Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, US Navy (Retired)^{1,2}**

The Reagan Administration's 1980s defense buildup produced a fourth active period for *New Jersey*, beginning with her recommissioning in December 1982. She again fired her guns in combat during the Lebanon crisis of 1983-84 and deployed to the Western Pacific in 1986 and 1989-90, with the latter cruise extending to the Persian Gulf area. Decommissioned for a final time in February 1991, USS *New Jersey* was towed from the Pacific to the Atlantic in 1999. She is now a museum at Camden, New Jersey.

When *New Jersey* was decommissioned in 1969, most people believed that it was the end of the battleship era. Few expected *New Jersey* to be recommissioned and even fewer expected all four *Iowa*-class battleships to be recommissioned. But nearly 30 years after *Iowa*, *Missouri*, and *Wisconsin* last were underway, all four battleships were recommissioned by 1988 when *Wisconsin* was returned to service. *New Jersey* again was the only commissioned battleship from December 1982 until *Iowa* was recommissioned on 24 April 1984.³ The first to be decommissioned was *Iowa* in 1990, followed by *New Jersey* and *Wisconsin* in 1991, and finally *Missouri* in 1992.

New Jersey was recommissioned at Long Beach, California 28 December 1982. She was modernized, receiving an installation of 16 Harpoon missiles, with a range of about 60 miles, and 32 Tomahawk missiles, with a range of about 500 miles. She would serve just over nine years before her final decommissioning.



Credit: Naval Cover Museum, Greg Ciesielski⁴
Fig. 1: USS *New Jersey* BB 62 cover dated on her 4th recommissioning, 28 December 1982. Locy Type FDC 2-1(n). Cachet by Stanley V. Kibbit.



Fig. 2: Also dated Commissioning Day, with Locy Type FDC 2-1(n), reopening the USS *New Jersey* post office.⁵

Fig. 3: President Ronald W. Reagan arrives onboard *New Jersey* (BB-62) on 28 December 1982, for *New Jersey*'s 4th Commissioning.

NavSource 016282d, Photo courtesy of Tommy Trampp.





NavSource 061201, USN photo by Jerry Winey

Fig. 4: New Jersey (BB-62) launching an RGM-84 Harpoon missile on the Pacific Missile Test Center Range in 1983.

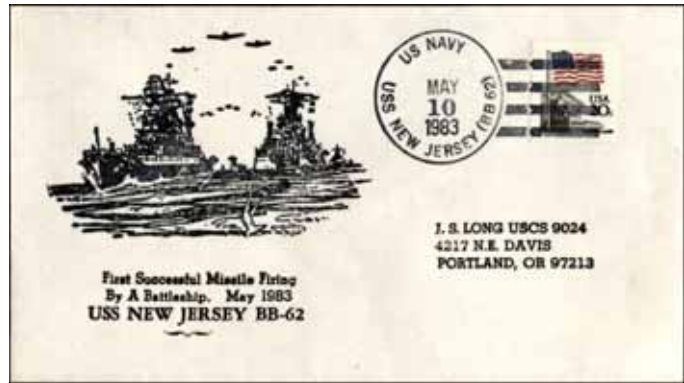


Fig. 5: A printed cacheted cover for successful missile launch, with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 10 May 1983.

USS *New Jersey* was first tasked with deployment to the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) which soon was cancelled when the ship was ordered to steam east ultimately to Lebanon after passing near Caribbean waters around the time of the US invasion of Grenada, 25 October 1983.



Fig. 6: A rubber stamp cacheted cover for arrival Pearl Harbor Port call en route to WESTPAC cruise with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 17 June 1983.

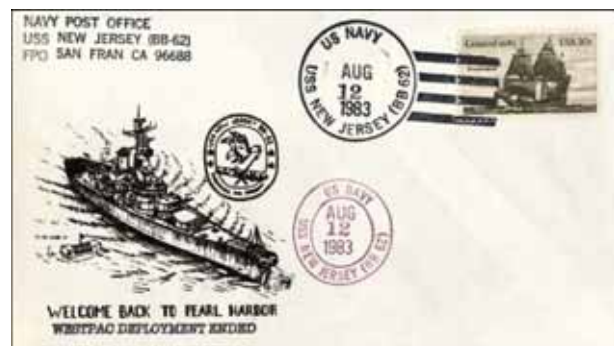


Fig. 7: A printed cacheted cover for return Pearl Harbor after cancellation of WESTPAC cruise with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) and Locy Type 9 9-1(n+u).

Lebanon Mission– 1983-1984

*Support of U.S. Marines, Multinational Peacekeeping Forces
Beirut, Lebanon, September 1983 – April 1984*

In 1983, a bloody civil war was raging in Lebanon, and US naval forces were offshore to protect American interests; US Marines landed in the war-torn country. On 19 September, after a period in which US ships fired when American position were attacked, USS *Virginia* (CGN 38) and USS *John Rogers* (DD 983) fired 338 rounds from their 5” guns in support of Lebanese Army forces defending the strategically important village of Sug el Gharb in the Shouf Mountains east of Beirut. This signaled a shift in U.S. policy; on 25 September, *New Jersey* took up station off Beirut.



Fig. 8: 2 Sep 1983, En route to Lebanon - A rubber stamp cacheted cover for Panama Canal Passage from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN, USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 2 September 1983.

Fig. 9: 22 Sep 1983- On guard off Lebanon - A rubber stamp cacheted cover for arrival off Beirut, Lebanon with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN, USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 22 September 1983.



Fig. 10: 23 Oct 1983 – Marine Compound bombed - A rubber stamp cacheted cover for bombing of US Marine Barracks, Beirut, Lebanon, with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN, USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 23 October 1983.



Fig. 11: 4 Dec 1983 – U.S. Retaliatory Strike - A rubber stamp cacheted cover for retaliatory air strikes from USS Independence and USS John F. Kennedy with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN, USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 4 December 1983.

This would prove to be a difficult and dangerous mission for *New Jersey*, in support of this multinational peacekeeping force. In October 1983, 241 US Marines and sailors were killed in a suicidal compressed gas bomb attack at their Barracks near the Beirut airport.

The Long Commission Report explained the impact:

On October 1983, a large truck laden with the explosive equivalent of over 12,000 pounds of TNT crashed through the perimeter of the USMNF compound at Beirut International Airport penetrated the Battalion Landing Team Headquarters building and detonated. The force of the explosion destroyed the building, resulting in the deaths of 241 U.S. military personnel. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Forensic Laboratory described the terrorist bomb as the largest conventional blast ever seen by the FBI's forensic explosive experts. Based upon the FBI analysis of the bomb that destroyed the U.S. Embassy on 18 April 1983, and the FBI preliminary findings on the bomb used on 23 October 1983, the Commission believes that the explosive equivalent of the latter device was of such magnitude that major damage to the Battalion Landing Team Headquarters building and significant casualties would probably have resulted even if the terrorist truck had not penetrated the USMNF defensive perimeter but had detonated in the roadway some 330 feet from the building.

Summary of General Observations: Terrorism

The Commission believes that the most important message it can bring to the Secretary of Defense is that the 23 October 1983 attack on the Marine Battalion Landing Team Headquarters in Beirut was tantamount to an act of war using the medium of terrorism. Terrorist warfare, sponsored by sovereign states or organized political entities to achieve political objectives, is a threat to the United States that is increasing at an alarming rate. The 23 October catastrophe underscores the fact that terrorist warfare can have significant political impact and demonstrates that the United States, and specifically the Department of Defense, is inadequately prepared to deal with this threat. Much needs to be done, on an urgent basis, to prepare U.S. military forces to defend against and counter terrorist warfare.⁶

On 28 November, the US government announced that *New Jersey* would be retained off Beirut although her crew would be rotated. But just over a week later, on 4 December, rather than having *New Jersey* fire a broadside, Navy launched air strikes.

In response to hostile fire from Syrian positions in Lebanon aimed at reconnaissance aircraft, Carrier Air Wing SIX strike elements were launched from USS *Independence* (CV 62). The strike into the Bekaa Valley had been planned for several weeks as retaliation for the Beirut barracks bombing, but the mission was delayed.



Fig. 12: A7 Corsair II, Light Attack Squadron (VA 15) flown by CAG Andrews,⁷



Fig. 13: A6E, Intruder, Medium Attack Squadron (VA 85) flown by LT Lange LT Goodrum.⁸

The article, “Dec 4, 1983, The Day that changed Naval Aviation” described the airstrike:

On December 4 at 8:00 a.m., twelve A-7 Corsairs and sixteen A-6E light bombers took off from the U.S.S. Independence and U.S.S. John F Kennedy, escorted by an E-2 Hawkeye, two EA-6 Prowlers, and two F-14s. The bombers were ordered to strike three sites east of Beirut, which included an ammunition depot, air-defense radars, anti-aircraft guns, and SAMs.

The timing was poor, metrological conditions made it hard for the attack aircraft to see their targets. At the same time the weather and sun angle highlighted the American airplanes in the sky for Syrian anti-aircraft gunners. The strike package also flew toward their targets along the same route, which made it easy for gunners to train their weapons.

The Syrians managed to shoot down an A-6E Intruder from VA-85, the pilot, LT Mark Lang, and his BN [Bombardier Navigator], LT Robert Goodman, were both injured during the low altitude ejection. LT Lang died from his injuries and LT Goodman was captured by the Syrians. An A-7E, piloted by the Air Wing Commander, was also hit by a surface to air missile. CDR Edward Andrews managed to get his jet over the Mediterranean before he ejected. He was picked up by Lebanese fisherman and eventually returned unharmed. CAG.⁹

After the strike, many suggested that it should have been launched at night to take advantage of superior American technology and render shoulder-launched missiles ineffectual.

The strike leader, Commander, Carrier Air Wing Six (CAG Six), from *Independence*, flying an A7E Corsair, was hit by a surface-to-air missile which struck the tailpipe. CDR Andrews, managed to get “feet wet” over the Mediterranean before he ejected. He was picked up by Lebanese fisherman and eventually returned. This was CAG Andrews’s third ejection from a tactical jet. CAG Andrews received a Purple Heart Medal for the injuries he received during this action and ejection.

As a result, Navy upgraded the billet for commanders of Carrier Air Wings to Super CAGs who were post-squadron command Captains who enjoy “command at sea” status similar to the Commanding Officer of a carrier. Also, Navy established the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center (Strike University) in Fallon, Nevada, following the concept of the Top Gun playbook.¹⁰

Subsequently, on 14 December, New Jersey fired 11 projectiles from her 16-inch guns at hostile positions inland of Beirut. These were the first 16-inch shells she fired for effect since New Jersey ended her time on the gun line in Vietnam in 1969.

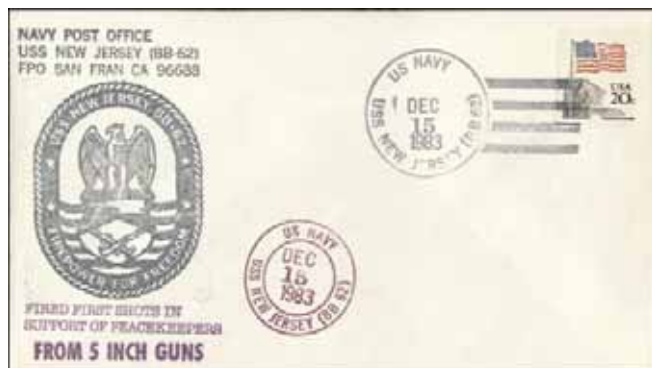


Fig. 14: 15 Dec 1983 – First Shots in support of Peacekeepers - A rubber stamp cacheted cover for the battleship’s first gun fire (5 inch guns) with USS New Jersey’s Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN,USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 15 December 1983.

Fig. 15: 25 Dec. 1983 - A rubber stamp cacheted cover for Christmas Day with USS New Jersey’s Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN,USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 25 December 1983.





Fig. 16: 8 Feb 1984 – 16” guns - A rubber stamp cancelled cover for the offshore redeployment of Marines with USS New Jersey’s Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN, USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 26 February 1984.



NavSource 016224, Official U.S.N. photograph
USNHC # DN-SC-84-06362

Fig. 17: New Jersey firing her 16” guns 9 January 1984.

More than 50 days later, on 8 February 1984, *New Jersey* fired almost 300 shells at Druze and Syrian positions in the Bekka Valley east of Beirut. Thirty of the projectiles rained down on a Syrian command post, killing the general commanding Syrian forces in Lebanon and several other senior officers. This was the heaviest shore bombardment since the Korean War.

Although *New Jersey* performed well during the intervention in Lebanon, some criticized the decision to have her shell Druze and Syrian forces. They contended that this action forced a shift in the previously neutral US forces by convincing local Lebanese Muslims that the United States had taken the Christian side. *New Jersey*’s shells had killed hundreds of people, mostly Shiites and Druze. General Colin Powell, then an assistant to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger wrote, “When the shells started falling on the Shiites, they assumed the American ‘referee’ had taken sides.”¹¹

The accuracy of *New Jersey*’s fire was called into question. An investigation into her gunfire effectiveness in Lebanon found that many of the shells had missed their targets by as much as 10,000 yards (about five nautical miles) and therefore may have inadvertently killed civilians. Tim McNulty, a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* claimed, “Everybody loved the *New Jersey* until she fired her guns. Once she fired, it was obvious she couldn’t hit anything.”¹²

The inaccuracy is believed to have resulted because the ship’s main gunpowder had been remixed and rebagged by the Navy, under the direction of Captain Joseph Dominick Miceli at the Naval Weapons Support Center. Powder lots (an individual production of powder) burned at different rates. Therefore, remixing the powder lots could have caused the guns to fire inconsistently. The problem apparently was resolved after the Navy was able to locate additional powder supplies which had not been remixed.

Ship covers tell the story of this mission:



Fig. 18: 26 Feb 1984 – Marines Evacuate Compound.

Fig. 19: 27 Mar 1984 – Reservists relieve crewmembers.



Fig. 20: 2 Apr 1984 – Departed Lebanon – Naval Phase out Under Way.



Fig. 21: 12 Apr 1984 – Arrived Villefranche, France.



Fig. 22: 28 Apr 1984 – Going Home.

Fig. 23: 5 May 1984 – End of longest deployment by Navy Ship since WWII.



Note: All covers shown here continue to use USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1(n) (USN, USS) rubber stamp hand cancel.

Lebanon Mission - 1 Campaign Star Awarded
 Support of U.S. Marines, Multinational Peacekeeping Forces Beirut, Lebanon,
 September 1983 – April 1984

Beirut Lebanon, Armed Forces Expedition
 September 23, 1983 – April 3, 1984

Lebanon Mission – Medals and Achievements
 Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal -- September 23, 1983 – April 3, 1984
 Navy Expeditionary Medal – July 1, 1983 – December 31, 1984
 Battle Efficiency “E” Award for Mission Excellence
 Department Excellence Award

1986 – Return to California, Peace in the Pacific, Showing the Flag



NavSource USN photo by Robert M. Cieri

Fig. 24: New Jersey (BB-62) in San Francisco Bay to participate in the Peace in the Pacific celebration, commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the end of the War in the Pacific, 14 August 1985.

In 1986, *New Jersey* deployed, operating as the centerpiece of her own battle group. This was the first time that *New Jersey* had operational control of her own group of escorts since the Korean War; she cruised from Hawaii to Thailand in 1986, becoming the only major U.S. naval presence in the region. Although in her own Battlegroup, *New Jersey* sailed with USS *Ranger* (CV 61), USS *Constellation* (CV64), and USS *Thach* (FFG 43).



NavSource # 0162007: USN photo # DN-SC-04-10490, by PH1 Terry Cosgrove, Department of Defense Still Media Collection

Fig. 25: New Jersey (BB-62) firing its nine 16-inch/50 caliber guns simultaneously, 30 December 1986.¹³



NavSource: USN photo #N-0000X-042, by Bill Gonyo.

Fig. 26: New Jersey (BB-62) leading the American battle line, followed by the battleship Missouri (BB-63) and the nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser Long Beach (CGN-9), with other screening vessels following astern of the cruiser. (1988)

During *New Jersey*'s 27-28 September 1986 transit of the Sea of Okhotsk, Soviet Bear and Badger bombers, a Hormone helicopter, and a May maritime patrol airplane made close passes in violation of the INCSEA Agreement between the US and Soviet Navies. A *Kara*-class cruiser and two *Grisha* III frigates also shadowed the U.S. ships. The maneuver "marked the first time a U.S. battleship had operated in the Soviet Navy's backyard."¹⁴

Following an overhaul at Long Beach which lasted into 1988, *New Jersey* returned as part of a surface action group. She operated near the coast of Korea prior to the opening of the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics before departing for the Australian 1988 bicentennial celebrations.

The end of the final US battleship era and the dream of a 600-ship fleet ended near the beginning of the final decade of the 20th century. The two primary causes were the collapse of the Soviet Empire around the transition between the Reagan and Bush 41 administrations, marking the end of the Cold War era, and the April 1989 catastrophic explosion aboard *Iowa* in her No. 2 gun turret. That incident killed 47 sailors and led U.S. Naval officials to halt all live main battery fire exercises pending completion of the investigation, which was heavily criticized for an unsupported conclusion that the cause of the explosion was a suicidal act by one of the sailors in the turret. Eventually, the ban was lifted.

New Jersey's final cruise included part of Pacific Exercise '89. Upon completion of that exercise, *New Jersey* sailed into the Persian Gulf, the centerpiece for various battle groups and surface action groups. *New Jersey* was awarded both the Persian Gulf, Armed Forces Expedition Battle Star for her 2-14 December 1989 cruise and the National Defense Service Medal for the period 2 August 1990 until decommissioning.¹⁵

The battleship returned to the United States in February 1990 and was decommissioned at Long Beach, California 8 February 1991.

Fig. 27: 3 August 1989 during Pacific Exercise '89. Locy Type 2 and Type 9-1(n+u) (USS).

Courtesy Naval cover Museum, Jon Burdett¹⁶



Persian Gulf Mission December 1989 - 1990

Persian Gulf Mission – 2 Campaign Stars Awarded¹⁷

- 1. Persian Gulf, National Defense Service** ★
December 1989
- 2. Persian Gulf, Armed Forces Expedition** ★
December 2 - 14, 1989

Final Days

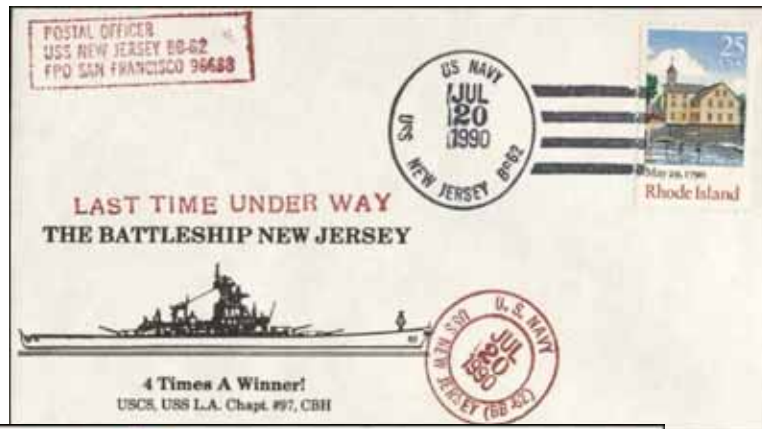
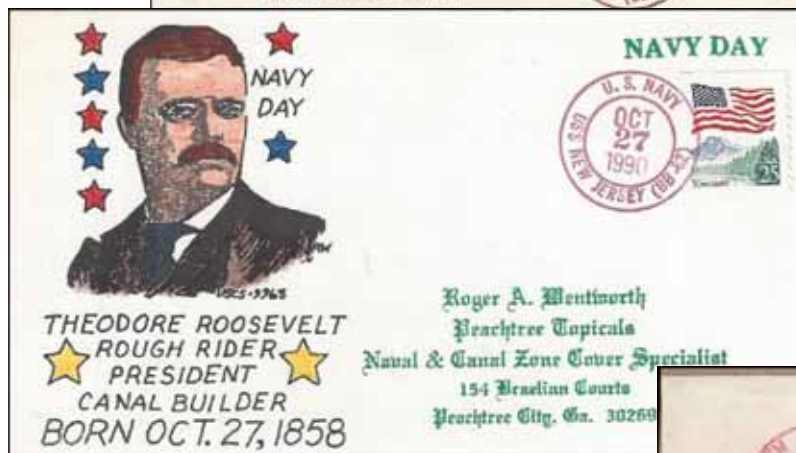


Fig. 28: A printed cacheted cover for the Last Time Under Way with USS New Jersey's Locy Type LDPS 2-1n (DI,USS,USN) and Type LDC 9-1nu (USN,USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 20 July 1990.



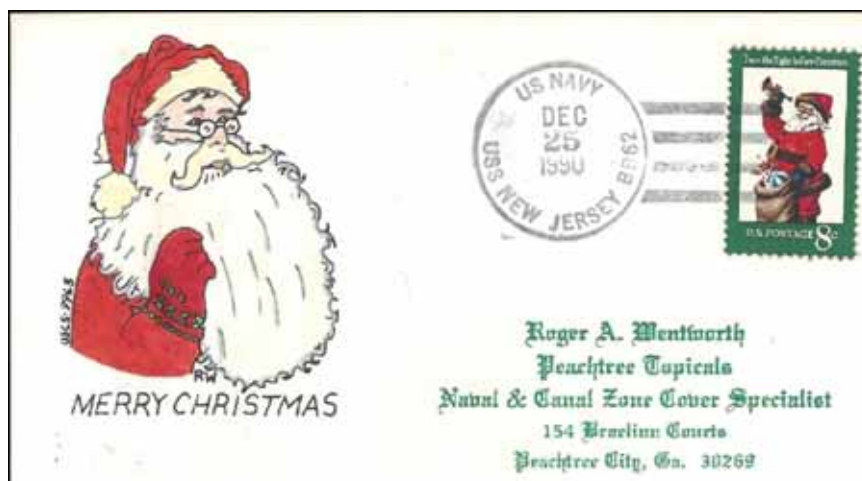
Courtesy of Rich Hoffner.

Fig. 29: A hand colored cachet drawn by Roger Wentworth. The cover for Theodore Roosevelt's Brithday, formerly Navy Day, is cancelled with USS New Jersey's Locy Type 9 9-1(n+u) (USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 27 October 1990.

Fig. 30: An official mail meter from USS New Jersey dated 29 October 1990.



Courtesy of Rich Hoffner, USCS Golden Honorary Member 4456, and repeated former president



Courtesy of Rich Hoffner.

Fig. 31: A hand drawn cachet. The Christmas 1990 cover is cancelled with USS New Jersey's Locy Type Type 2-1n (DI,USS,USN) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 25 December 1990.

Fig. 32: *Locy Type LDPS 2-1n (D1, USS, USN) cancel on a 25 January 1991 cover, on New Jersey's last day of postal service.*

Cover courtesy Naval Cover Museum, Jon Burdett.¹⁸

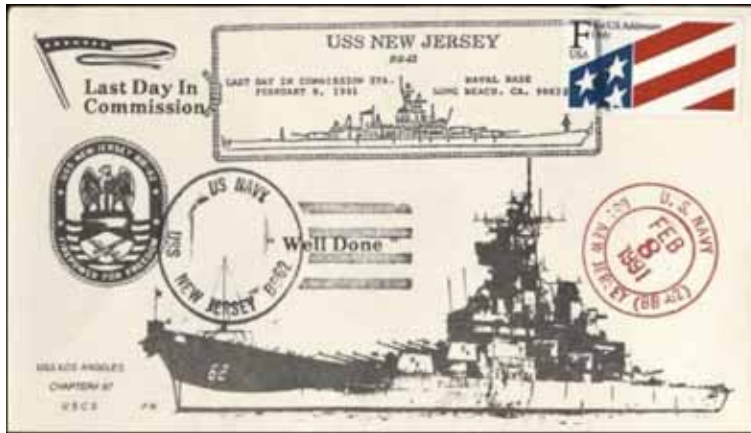


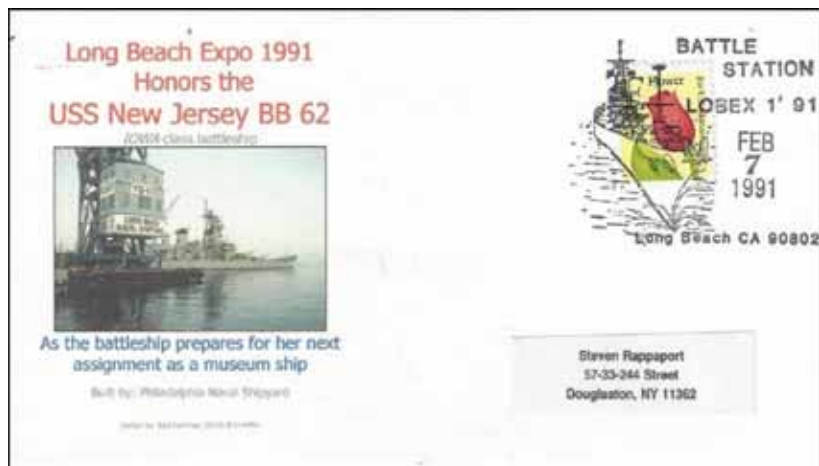
Fig. 33: *A printed cover for decommissioning with a pictorial cancel USS New Jersey's Locy Type 2-1n (USS,USN) [undated] and Type 9 9-1(n+u) (USS) rubber stamp hand cancel dated 8 February 1991.*

For the final time, her commissioning pennant was lowered at the Naval Station Long Beach, California, 8 February 1991, and then *New Jersey* was towed to Bremerton, Washington. Eight and a half years later, on 12 September 1999, the ship was towed by tug *Sea Victory* from Bremerton to Philadelphia, arriving on Veterans' Day, 11 November 1999. Within 90 days, on 20 January 2000, Navy Secretary Richard Danzig announced that the battleship would be donated to Home Port Alliance of Camden, New Jersey, for use as a museum.

The battleship era has ended.

Fig. 34: *A cover with a Battle Station LOBEX 7 Feb 1991 Long Beach, CA cancel, commemorating USS New Jersey's new role as a museum ship.*

Cachet by Rich Hoffner, cover Courtesy Rich Hoffner.



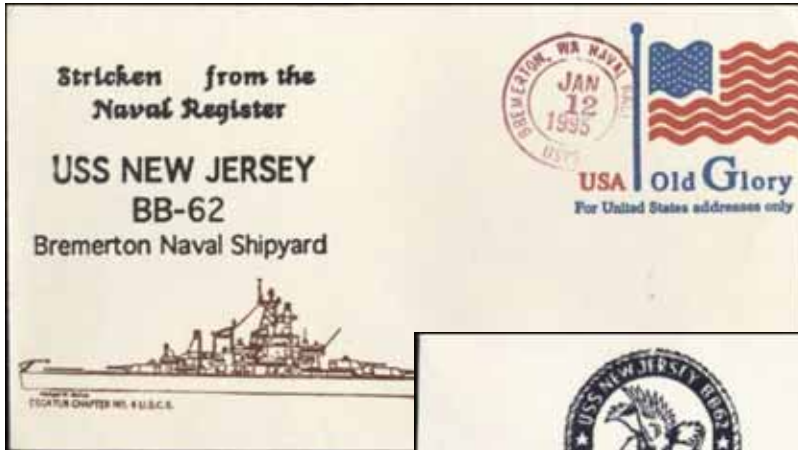
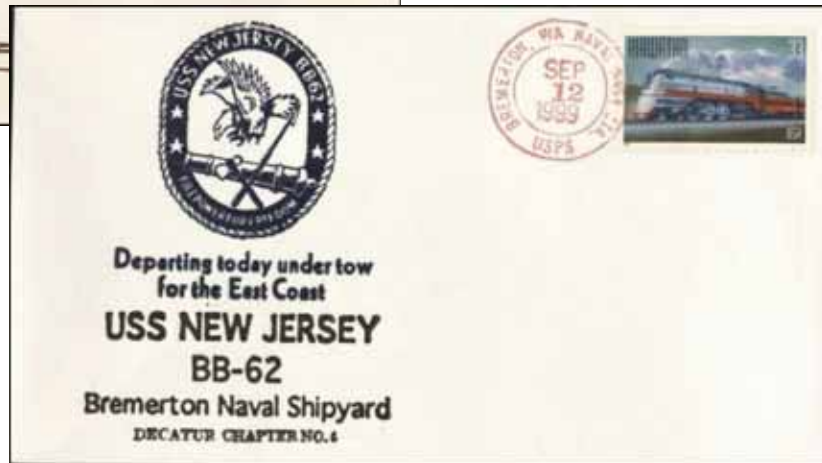


Fig. 35: A printed cacheted cover for the striking of New Jersey from the Naval Register with a Bremerton, WA Naval Shipyard All Purpose Chop hand cancel dated 12 January 1995.

Fig. 36: A USPS Bremerton WA Naval Base Sta. cancel 12 September 1999 marking the departure of USS New Jersey from the Bremerton shipyard, under tow for the East Coast.



Service as a Museum Ship 1999 to date.

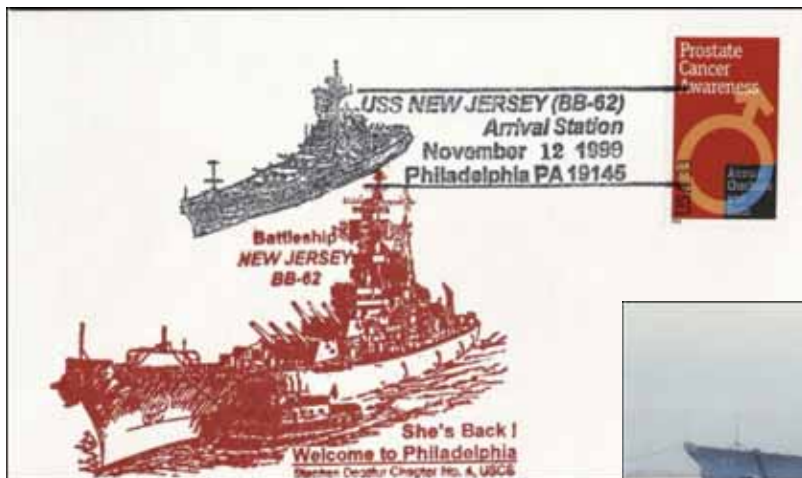


Fig. 37: A printed cacheted cover for the arrival of New Jersey at Philadelphia with a Philadelphia PA pictorial cancel dated 12 November 1999.

NavSource photo 016213m, by John Chiquoine.¹⁹

Fig. 38: New Jersey arrives in Philadelphia 1 November 1999, with curious onlookers at Marcus Hook Park.





NavSource photo # 01/016275²⁰



NavSource photo # 016277²¹

Fig. 39: New Jersey (BB-62) moored at the Camden Waterfront near the New Jersey State Aquarium and Tweeter Entertainment Center.

Fig. 40: New Jersey (BB-62) at Camden, port side aft looking forward, showing 16 and 5 inch guns.

Sadly, the ship's future is in doubt as the result of the economic decline resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020. Daily operating costs of \$10,000 continue to mount without any income, and State aid from the Department of Environmental Protection's Historic Preservation Commission has evaporated, according to a March 29, 2020 *Courier Post* article. The museum is seeking a \$2 million loan.

To learn more about the Battleship New Jersey as a Museum ship, to see upcoming events when things are open again, visit <https://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/>. Should you feel inclined, you can even make a donation.

USS *New Jersey* at Camden, NJ



Fig. 41: A printed cacheted cover for the 60TH Anniversary of christening of New Jersey, with her service record, with a Philadelphia, PA pictorial hand cancel dated 7 December 2007.

NavSource photo # 016280²²

Fig. 42. Sun setting behind USS New Jersey at Camden.



ENDNOTES:

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- ¹ Copyright MMXX by Lawrence B. Brennan, all moral and legal right reserved. May not be reproduced or republished without the prior, express written consent of the author.
- ² Lawrence B. Brennan is a retired U.S. Navy Captain, an adjunct professor of law at Fordham Law School, and an admiralty and maritime law litigator in New York City. He was a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice. He was educated at Fordham University in New York City (B.A. *magna cum laude* 1974 and J.D. 1977). He is a member of the Bar of the State of New York and various federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. He has been quoted frequently in the media and been interviewed on national and international television and radio programs.
- ³ The ship's history is based, as usual, on the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*' entry found on line at <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/n/new-jersey-ii.html> and on <https://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/the-ship/full-history/>
- ⁴ Created by cachet maker Stanley V. Kibbit, this cover is shown courtesy of the Naval Cover Museum, Greg Ciesielski, contributor. Commemorating USS NJ's 4th commissioning, Dec. 28. 1982. See https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/File:GregCiesielski_NewJersey_BB62_19821228_1_Front.jpg.
- ⁵ This and most of the covers from New Jersey's 1983 cruise were sponsored by Colonel Dube, USMC, Commanding Officer, US Marine Barracks, Hawaii.
- ⁶ <https://fas.org/irp/threat/beirut-1983.pdf>
- ⁷ Photo from Life at Full Speed, The Day that Changed Aviation, Dec. 1983 at https://flathatter.wordpress.com/2015/12/04/dec-4-1983-the-day-that-changed-naval-aviation/a-7e_va-15_in_flight_june_1976/
- ⁸ Photo from Life at Full Speed, The Day that Changed Aviation, Dec. 1983 https://flathatter.wordpress.com/2015/12/04/dec-4-1983-the-day-that-changed-naval-aviation/8676379788_0c3d6ffb57_b/
- ⁹ <https://flathatter.wordpress.com/2015/12/04/dec-4-1983-the-day-that-changed-naval-aviation/> and *Shipmate*, March 1984 and memorial at https://usnamemorialhall.org/index.php/MARK_A_LANGE_LT_USN
- ¹⁰ Based on correspondence from and multiple conversations with Captain Edward K. Andrews, US Navy and a conversation with VADM Jerry Tuttle, US Navy, who was the senior flag officer on station as well as *Shipmate*, March 1984 and https://usnamemorialhall.org/index.php/MARK_A_LANGE_LT_USN see, <https://flathatter.wordpress.com/2015/12/04/dec-4-1983-the-day-that-changed-naval-aviation/>
- ¹¹ Powell, Colin A. and Joseph Persico, *My American Journey*, Ballantine, ISBN 0-345-40728-8.
- ¹² Thompson II, Charles C. (1999). *A Glimpse of Hell: The Explosion on the USS Iowa and Its Cover-Up*. W. W. Norton. p. 140. ISBN 0-393-04714-8. Bonner, Kit; Bonner, Carolyn; Bonner, Kermit (19 November 1998). *Great Naval Disasters: U.S. Naval Accidents in the 20th Century*. Zenith Press. p. 57. ISBN 0-7603-0594-3.
- ¹³ Naval photo DN-SC-04-10490 on Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:New_Jersey_Shoots.jpg.
- ¹⁴ "Nuclear Notebook." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. 5 (7): 63. September 1988.
- ¹⁵ The terminal date for the National Defense Service Medal for the Persian Gulf War was 30 November 1995, more than four years after *New Jersey* was decommissioned.
- ¹⁶ Courtesy Naval Cover Museum, Collection of Jon Burdett, https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/File:JonBurdett_newjersey_bb61_19890803.JPG
- ¹⁷ These Campaign stars were earned for service in the Persian Gulf, prior to Desert Shield and Storm.
- ¹⁸ Cover Courtesy Naval Cover Museum, collection of Jon Burdett, at https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/File:JonBurdett_newjersey_bb62_19910125_1.jpg.
- ¹⁹ NavSource photo #016213m, at <http://navsource.org/archives/01/062/016213m.jpg>
- ²⁰ NavSource photo #01/016275, <http://www.navsource.org/archives/01/016275.jpg>, courtesy AO3 Brian S. Bell, USNR.
- ²¹ NavSource photo #016277 <http://www.navsource.org/archives/01/016277.jpg>, courtesy AO3 Brian S. Bell USNR.
- ²² *Ibid.*, #016280, <http://www.navsource.org/archives/01/016280.jpg>, again by Brian S. Bell.