

USS SARATOGA ASSOCIATION
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SARATOGA V

Displacement: 33,000 tons
Length: 888 feet
Beam: 106 feet
Draft: 24 feet 1½ inches
Speed: 33.91 knots
Complement: 2,111 crew
Armament: 8 eight-inch and 12 five-inch guns, and 4 six-pounders
Aircraft: 81
Class: *Lexington*

The fifth Saratoga (CV-3) was laid down on 25 September 1920 as Battle Cruiser #3 by the New York Shipbuilding Co., Camden, N.J.; ordered converted to an aircraft carrier and reclassified CV-3 on 1 July 1922 in accordance with the Washington Treaty limiting naval armaments; launched on 7 April 1925; sponsored by Mrs. Curtis D. Wilbur, wife of the Secretary of the Navy; and commissioned on 16 November 1927, Capt. Harry E. Yarnell in command.

Saratoga, the first fast carrier in the United States Navy, quickly proved the value of her type. She sailed from Philadelphia on 6 January 1928 for shakedown; and, on 11 January, her air officer, the future World War II hero, Marc A. Mischer, landed the first aircraft on board. In an experiment on 27 January, the rigid airship Los Angeles (ZR-3) moored to Saratoga's stern and took on fuel and stores. The same day, Saratoga sailed for the Pacific via the Panama Canal. She was diverted briefly between 14 and 16 February to carry marines to Corinto, Nicaragua, and finally joined the Battle Fleet at San Pedro, California, on 21 February. The rest of the year was spent in training and final machinery shakedown.

On 15 January 1929, Saratoga sailed from San Diego with the Battle Fleet to participate in her first fleet exercise, Fleet Problem IX. In a daring move, Saratoga was detached from the fleet with only a single cruiser as escort to make a wide sweep to the south and "attack" the Panama Canal, which was defended by the Scouting Fleet and Saratoga's sister ship, Lexington. She successfully launched her strike on 26 January, and despite being "sunk" three times later in the day, proved the versatility of a fast task force centered around a carrier. The idea was incorporated into fleet doctrine and reused the following year in Fleet Problem X in the Caribbean. This time, however, Saratoga and carrier, Langley, were "disabled" by a surprise attack from Lexington, showing how quickly air power could swing the balance in a naval action. Following the fleet concentration in the Caribbean, Saratoga took part in the Presidential Review at Norfolk in May and returned to San Pedro on 21 June 1930.

During the remaining decade before World War II, Saratoga exercised in the San Diego-San Pedro area, except for the annual fleet problems and regular overhauls at the Bremerton Navy Yard. In the fleet problems, Saratoga continued to assist in the development of fast carrier tactics, and her importance was recognized by the fact that she was always a high priority target for the opposing forces. The fleet problem for 1932 was planned for Hawaii, and, by coincidence, occurred during the peak of the furor following the "Manchurian incident" in which Japan started on the road to World War II. Saratoga exercised in the Hawaii area from 31 January to 19 March and returned to Hawaii for fleet exercises the following year between 23 January and 28 February 1933. On the return trip to the west coast, she launched a successful air "attack" on the Long Beach area.

Exercises in 1934 took Saratoga to the Caribbean and the Atlantic for an extended period, from 9 April to 9 November, and were followed by equally extensive operations with the United States Fleet in the Pacific the following year. Between 27 April and 6 June 1936, she participated in a fleet problem in the Canal Zone, and she then returned with the fleet to Hawaii for exercises from 16 April to 28 May 1937. On 15 March 1938, Saratoga sailed from San Diego to Fleet Problem XIX, again conducted off Hawaii. During the second phase of the problem, Saratoga launched a surprise air attack on Pearl Harbor from a point 100 miles off Oahu, setting a

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pattern that the Japanese copied in December 1941. During the return to the west coast, Saratoga and Lexington followed this feat with "strikes" on Mare Island and Alameda. Saratoga was under overhaul during the 1939 fleet concentration; but, between 2 April and 21 June 1940, she participated in Fleet Problem XXI, the last to be held due to the deepening world crisis.

Between 14 and 29 October 1940, Saratoga transported a draft of military personnel from San Pedro to Hawaii; and, on 6 January 1941, she entered the Bremerton Navy Yard for a long deferred modernization, including widening her flight deck forward and fitting a blister on her starboard side and additional small anti-aircraft guns. Departing Bremerton on 28 April 1941, the carrier participated in a landing force exercise in May and made two trips to Hawaii between June and October as the diplomatic crisis with Japan came to head.

When the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, Saratoga was just entering San Diego after an interim dry-docking at Bremerton. She hurriedly got underway the following day as the nucleus of a third carrier force (Lexington and Enterprise were already at sea); carrying Marine aircraft intended to reinforce the vulnerable garrison on Wake Island. Presence of these aircraft on board made Saratoga the logical choice for the actual relief effort. She reached Pearl Harbor on 15 December and stopped only long enough to fuel. She then rendezvoused with Tangier (AV-8), which had relief troops and supplies on board, while Lexington and Enterprise provided distant cover for the operation. However, the Saratoga force was delayed by the low speed of its oiler and by a decision to refuel destroyers on 21 December. After receiving reports of Japanese carrier aircraft over the island and Japanese landings on it, the relief force was recalled on 22 December. Wake fell the next day.

Saratoga continued operations in the Hawaiian Island region; but, on 11 January 1942, when heading towards a rendezvous with Enterprise, 500 miles southwest of Oahu, she was hit without warning by a deep running torpedo fired by Japanese submarine, I-16. Although six men were killed and three firerooms were flooded, the carrier reached Oahu under her own power. There, her 8-inch guns, useless against aircraft, were removed for installation in shore defenses, and the carrier proceeded to the Bremerton Navy Yard for permanent repairs and installation of a modern anti-aircraft battery.

Saratoga departed Puget Sound on 22 May for San Diego. She arrived there on 25 May and was training her air group when intelligence was received of an impending Japanese assault on Midway. Due to the need to load planes and stores and to collect escorts, the carrier was unable to sail until 1 June and arrived at Pearl Harbor on the 6th after the Battle of Midway had ended. She departed Pearl Harbor on 7 June after fueling; and, on 11 June, transferred 34 aircraft to Hornet and Enterprise to replenish their depleted air groups. The three carriers then turned north to counter Japanese activity reported in the Aleutians, but the operation was cancelled and Saratoga returned to Pearl Harbor on 13 June.

Between 22 and 29 June, Saratoga ferried Marine and Army aircraft to the garrison on Midway. On 7 July, she sailed for the southwest Pacific; and, from 28 to 30 July, she provided air cover for landing rehearsals in the Fiji Islands in preparation for landings on Guadalcanal. As flagship of Rear Admiral F. J. Fletcher, Saratoga opened the Guadalcanal assault early on 7 August when she turned into the wind to launch aircraft. She provided air cover for the landings for the next two days. On the first day, a Japanese air attack was repelled before it reached the carriers; but since further attacks were expected, the carrier force withdrew on the afternoon of 8 August towards a refueling rendezvous. As a result, it was too far away to retaliate after four Allied cruisers were sunk that night in the Battle of Savo Island. The carrier force continued to operate east of the Solomon's, protecting the sea lanes to the beachhead and awaiting a Japanese naval counterattack.

The counterattack began to materialize when a Japanese transport force was detected on 23 August, and Saratoga launched a strike against it. The aircraft were unable to find the enemy, however, and spent the night on Guadalcanal. As they were returning on board the next day, the first contact report on enemy carriers was received. Two hours later, Saratoga launched a strike which sent Japanese carrier Ryujo to the bottom. Later in the afternoon, as an enemy strike from other carriers was detected, Saratoga hastily launched the aircraft on her deck, and these found and damaged seaplane tender Chitose. Meanwhile, due to cloud cover, Saratoga escaped detection by the Japanese aircraft, which concentrated their attack on, and damaged, Enterprise. The American force fought back fiercely and weakened enemy air strength so severely that the Japanese recalled their transports before they reached Guadalcanal.

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After landing her returning aircraft at night on 24 August, Saratoga refueled on the 25th and resumed her patrols east of the Solomon's. A week later, a destroyer reported torpedo wakes heading toward the carrier, but the 888-foot flattop could not turn quickly enough. A minute later, a torpedo from I-26 slammed into the blister of her starboard side. The torpedo killed no one and only flooded one fire room, but the impact caused short circuits which damaged Saratoga's turbo-electric propulsion system and left her dead in the water. Cruiser Minneapolis took the carrier under tow while she flew her aircraft off to shore bases. By early afternoon, Saratoga's engineers had improvised a circuit out of the burned wreckage of her main control board and had given her a speed of 10 knots. After repairs at Tonga Abu from 6 to 12 September, Saratoga arrived at Pearl Harbor on 21 September for permanent repairs.

Saratoga sailed from Pearl Harbor on 10 November and proceeded, via Fiji, to Noumea which she reached on 5 December. She operated in the vicinity of Noumea for the next twelve months, providing air cover for minor operations and protecting American forces in the Eastern Solomons. Between 17 May and 31 July 1943, she was reinforced by the British carrier, *Victorious*; and, on 20 October, she was joined by *Princeton* (CVL-23). As troops stormed ashore on Bougainville on 1 November, Saratoga's aircraft neutralized nearby Japanese airfields on Baku. Then, on 5 November, in response to reports of Japanese cruisers concentrating at Rabaul to counterattack the Allied landing forces, Saratoga conducted perhaps her most brilliant strike of the war. Her aircraft penetrated the heavily defended port and disabled most of the Japanese cruisers, ending the surface threat to Bougainville. Saratoga, herself, escaped unscathed and returned to raid Rabaul again on 11 November.

Saratoga and *Princeton* were then designated the Relief Carrier Group for the offensive in the Gilberts; and, after striking Nauru on 19 November, they rendezvoused on 23 November while the transports carrying garrison troops to Makin and Tarawa. The carriers provide air cover until the transports reached their destinations, and then maintained air patrols over Tarawa. By this time, Saratoga had steamed over a year without repairs, and she was detached on 30 November to return to the United States. She underwent overhaul at San Francisco from 9 December 1943 to 3 January 1944, and her anti-aircraft battery augmented for the last time, receiving 60 40-millimeter guns in place of 36 20-millimeter guns.

The carrier arrived at Pearl Harbor on 7 January, and, after a brief period of training, sailed from Pearl Harbor on 19 January with light carriers, *Langley* and *Princeton*, to support the drive in the Marshalls. Her aircraft struck Wotje and Taroa for three days, from 29 to 31 January, and then pounded Engebi, the main island at Eniwetok, the 3d to the 6th and from the 10th to the 12th of February. Her planes delivered final blows to Japanese defenses on the 16th, the day before landings, and provided close air support and CAP over the island until 28 February.

Saratoga then took leave of the main theaters of the Pacific war for almost a year, to carry out important but less spectacular assignments elsewhere. Her first task was to help the British initiate their carrier offensive in the Far East. On 4 March, Saratoga departed Majuro with an escort of three destroyers, and sailed via *Espiritu Santo*; Hobart, Tasmania; and Fremantle, Australia; to join the British Eastern Fleet in the Indian Ocean. She rendezvoused at sea on 27 March with the British force, composed of carrier *Illustrious*, and four battleships with escorts, and arrived with them at Trincomalee, Ceylon, on 31 March. On 12 April, the French battleship, *Richelieu*, arrived, adding to the international flavor of the force. During the next two days, the carriers conducted intensive training at sea during which Saratoga's fliers tried to impart some of their experience to the British pilots. On 16 April, the Eastern Fleet, with Saratoga, sailed from Trincomalee; and, on the 19th, the aircraft from the two carriers struck the port of Sabang, off the northwest tip of Sumatra. The Japanese were caught by surprise by the new offensive, and much damage was done to port facilities and oil reserves. The raid was so successful that Saratoga delayed her departure in order to carry out a second. Sailing again from Ceylon on 6 May, the force struck at Soerabaja, Java, on 17 May with equally successful results. Saratoga was detached the following day, and passed down the columns of the Eastern Fleet as the Allied ships rendered honors to and cheered each other.

Saratoga arrived at Bremerton, Washington, on 10 June 1944 and was under repair there through the summer. On 24 September, she arrived at Pearl Harbor and commenced her second special assignment, training night fighter squadrons. Saratoga had experimented with night flying as early as 1931, and many carriers had been

forced to land returning aircraft at night during the war; but, only in August 1944, did a carrier, Independence, receive an air group specially equipped to operate at night. At the same time, Carrier Division 11, composed of Saratoga and Ranger (CV-4), was commissioned at Pearl Harbor to train night pilots and develop night flying doctrine. Saratoga continued this important training duty for almost four months, but as early as October, her division commander was warned that "while employed primarily for training, Saratoga is of great value for combat and is to be kept potentially available for combat duty." The call came in January 1945. Light carriers like Independence had proved too small for safe night operations, and Saratoga was rushed out of Pearl Harbor on 29 January 1945 to form a night fighter task group with Enterprise for the Iwo Jima operation.

Saratoga arrived at Ulithi on 7 February and sailed, three days later, with Enterprise and four other carrier task groups. After landing rehearsals with marines at Tinian on 12 February, the carrier force carried out diversionary strikes on the Japanese home islands on the night of 16 and 17 February before the landings on Iwo Jima. Saratoga was assigned to provide fighter cover while the remaining carriers launched the strikes on Japan; but, in the process, her fighters raided two Japanese airfields. The force fueled on 18 and 19 February; and, on 21 February, Saratoga was detached with an escort of three destroyers to join the amphibious forces and carry out night patrols over Iwo Jima and night heckler missions over nearby Chichi Jima. However, as she approached her operating area at 1700 on the 21st, an air attack developed; and, taking advantage of low cloud cover and Saratoga's insufficient escort, six Japanese planes scored five hits on the carrier in three minutes. Saratoga's flight deck forward was wrecked, her starboard side was holed twice and large fires were started in her hanger deck, while she lost 123 of her crew dead and missing. Another attack at 1900 scored an additional bomb hit. By 2015, the fires were under control and the carrier was able to recover aircraft, but she was ordered to Eniwetok and then to the west coast for repairs, and arrived at Bremerton on 16 March.

On 22 May, Saratoga departed Puget Sound fully repaired, and she resumed training pilots at Pearl Harbor on 3 June. She ceased training duty on 6 September, after the Japanese surrender, and sailed from Hawaii on 9 September transporting 3,712 returning naval veterans home to the United States under Operation "magic Carpet." By the end of her "Magic Carpet" service, Saratoga had brought home 29,204 Pacific war veterans, more than any other individual ship. At the time, she also held the record for the greatest number of aircraft landed on a carrier, with a lifetime total of 98,549 landings in 17 years.

With the arrival of large numbers of Essex-class carriers, Saratoga was surplus to postwar requirements, and she was assigned to Operation "Crossroads" at Bikini Atoll to test the effect of the atomic bomb on naval vessels. She survived the first blast; an air burst on 1 July, with only minor damage, but was mortally wounded by the second on 25 July, an underwater blast which was detonated under a landing craft 500 yards from the carrier. Salvage efforts were prevented by radioactivity, and seven and one-half hours after the blast, with her funnel collapsed across her deck, Saratoga slipped beneath the surface of the lagoon. She was struck from the Navy list on 15 August 1946.

Saratoga received seven battle stars for her World War II service.



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Recap:

In 1925 the U.S.S. Saratoga (CV3) became the first United States vessel to be launched as an aircraft carrier. Two years later she was commissioned. She was one of only three pre-war United States aircraft carriers to survive WWII and was the oldest aircraft carrier in service, until she was sunk in the atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll.

In 1941, when the fleet was crippled at Pearl Harbor by the sudden Japanese attack, the SARA became the backbone of the American defenses in the Pacific. During WWII, her planes flew thousands of air strikes against shore installations in the Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Munda airfield, Vella Lavella, Rabaul, Gilbert Islands, Marshall Islands, Eniwetok, Kwajelein, Sumatra, Java, Iwo Jima and the Tokyo area of Japan. In addition, her planes are known to have sunk one carrier, two cruisers and several destroyers. Heavy damage was inflicted on eight enemy cruisers, one battleship, several destroyers and numerous merchant ships. Hundreds of enemy aircraft were shot down, and many more were destroyed on the ground.

She did not escape unharmed. Twice, she was struck by torpedoes fired by enemy submarines and forced to retire for repairs. Her heaviest damage was suffered near Iwo Jima when she was struck by seven bombs and five Kamikaze planes. Fires and explosions ripped the ship as her gunners fought back and her repair crews struggled to control the damage. The SARATOGA survived, but 123 shipmates gave their lives and over 300 were injured.

After the end of the war, SARA was placed on the "Magic Carpet" run and, in eight trips, returned 30,000 war weary veterans to the United States.

She now rests quietly on the bottom of Bikini Lagoon.

Subsequently (CVA-60) was launched, and then commissioned at New York in April 1956. During her illustrious thirty eight (38) year career was decommissioned on 20 August 1994 at Mayport, FL. Her memory will live in the hearts of thousands who so proudly served aboard her.

Her history speaks for itself. LONG LIVE HER MEMORY!!

