

Australian American Association Queensland Division - Brisbane



News Flash No 83 -11th February 2024

Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Qld.



Installation of the “USAT Goucher Victory Memorial Sign”

Former Councillor for the Brisbane City Ward of Hamilton - David McLachlan and the current Councillor for the Ward - Cr Julia Dixon, together, deserve a huge ‘vote of thanks’ for the good news to follow in this News Flash.

The good news being that our Association has been successful in having the "USAT Goucher Victory Memorial Sign" installed at Newstead Terrace Park, Newstead. This location being a short distance away from our Association’s Australian American War Memorial, located in Newstead Park.



The Memorial Sign reads..... **USAT Goucher Victory.**

The US Maritime Commission built a class of merchant ships called victory ships and the USAT Goucher Victory was one of them named in honour of Goucher College which had a proud connection to WWII. In 1947, the USAT Goucher Victory collected and transported nearly 2,000 coffins of deceased US service personnel back to the US who had been buried in Australia. A ceremony was held in the Brisbane City Hall on 22nd December 1947 to honour the American dead. A coffin containing the body of an unknown soldier was paraded through Brisbane to USAT Goucher Victory at Newstead Wharf, watched by approximately 30,000 Brisbane residents. The 22nd December 1947, echoing the arrival of Pensacola Convoy 22nd December 1941 in Brisbane.

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This Memorial Sign is located at the river-end of the Maud Street entrance, to the Park. The entrance was used by the Parade of the Unknown Soldier, which was the last coffin of a US Serviceman loaded onto the USAT Goucher Victory, on 22nd of December 1947.



The coffin of the unknown US Serviceman being transported in a solemn procession through the Brisbane CBD to Newstead. The Procession was watched by over 30,000 Brisbane residents.



The coffin being transported finally through the gates of Newstead Wharves.

A mere six years to the day, since the Pensacola Convoy arrived on 22nd December 1941 to render on-the-ground assistance to Australia, against the Japanese assault expected, following the bombing of Pearl Harbour (as you may know - Pearl Harbor was the US Naval base, west of Honolulu., that was bombed by the Imperial Japanese Navy on 7th December 1941, in a surprise attack).

The Memorial Sign follows the successful lobbying by our Australian American Association, Brisbane for the naming of “Pensacola Convoy Place”. You may recall our Association’s *News Flash No 10* in which a particularly important request came from our Association’s Member - Mr Peter A Rasey, for the lodgement of an E-Petition to the Brisbane City Council to name “Pensacola Convoy Place” after the first American WWII Convoy into Brisbane. You may further recall our Association’s later *News Flash No 59* where Peter and our Association were similarly active in requesting the lodgement of a further E-Petition to the Brisbane City Council for the installation of the “USAT Goucher Victory Memorial Sign”.

The "USAT Goucher Victory Memorial Sign" installed at Newstead Terrace Park, now locks-in the Closing Chapter of WWII in Brisbane that ensued on 22nd of December 1947.

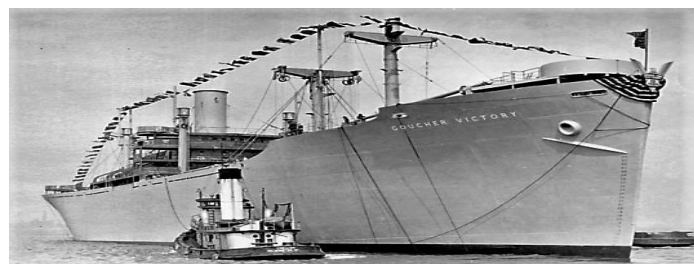
The Opening Chapter being the arrival of the Pensacola Convoy which berthed on 22nd of December 1941. The story began with the first presence of US Forces in Australia, when a convoy of 7 cargo and troop ships (known as the “Pensacola Convoy”) was being escorted by the “USS Pensacola”, en-route to re-equip the US Base in Manila. However, following the bombing of Pearl Harbour by Japanese forces, the convoy was diverted to Brisbane. The convoy was the first of the military forces (US battalions of men and their military equipment) to arrive from the US on Australian soil. The convoy discharged its men and equipment at a location at Hamilton Wharf - now known as “Pensacola Place” at Brett’s Wharf, located downstream from Newstead Park.



The Heavy Cruiser - “USS Pensacola.



US National Guard soldiers marching along Racecourse Road Hamilton in Brisbane, after being discharged from their troop ships.



Victory Class Ship “USAT Goucher Victory”

The Closing Chapter occurred a mere six years later as the last Americans left on the USAT Goucher Victory. The coffins of the deceased US Service Personnel were transported all the way back to the United States of America.

Please refer to the Radio Interview and Speeches, on the U-Tube links as follows:

1. Our Association's Member Peter A Rasey's interview on the ABC's Weekly Radio Program – "Macca All Over", where he advises of the installation of the "USAT Goucher Victory Memorial Sign" at "Newstead Terrace Park" and further describes the loading and final transporting of nearly 2,000 coffins of deceased US service personnel back to the US:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpQXVFDyLrE&list=PLv0V6xrRuq2lCWuDcc7soBp8smVCZadhz&index=1>
2. Our Association's President Mike Harris' 'keynote speech' given at the "Pensacola Convoy Plaque" Unveiling Ceremony held at Brett's Wharf, Brisbane (this was the site where the Pensacola Convoy berthed on 22nd December 1941).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lsdudf3sY8&list=PLv0V6xrRuq2kEbYXLAGjd6kIAzTfE_9WZ&index=4
3. Our Association's President Mike Harris' 'vote of thanks' speech given at the Unveiling Ceremony of the "Camp Cootha Place Sign" at Mt Cootha (this highly secret camp was a key US Navy 7th Fleet facility used for the storage of Torpedos, Sea Mines, Ammunition and explosives, during WWII)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2YyvlhseN4&list=PLv0V6xrRuq2mwL2uys43FTMzf5nluZEJZ&index=8>

There are countless memorial signs, plaques, and monuments located at various locations along the Brisbane River such - as "Submariners Row" at New Farm, the "Australian American War Memorial" at Newstead Park and the "Pensacola Convoy Plaque" at Brett's Wharf. There are others in the suburbs of Brisbane such as - "Camp Cootha" at Mt Cootha, which continue to remind Australians of the dark and desperate times they faced during WWII from 1941 onwards. This was an ominous period when our country came under the threat of foreign invasion. So therefore, we must never forget our own Australian service personal who defended us, as well as those US service personal who came from across the sea to support us in our time of need.

These memorial signs, plaques, and monuments have now become an invaluable addition to our Association's work in remembering and honouring those who fought and those who paid the supreme sacrifice, so that we may enjoy our present freedom. Let's we forget!

Invitation to attend the 82nd Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea - Annual Wreath-laying Service. Please don't forget to attend this Annual Wreath-laying Service being held at the Australian American War Memorial at Newstead Park, Brisbane, on Saturday 4th May 2024, commencing at 10:00 am sharp.

This is our Association's Signature Service, which we have commemorated annually for over 80 years. So if you would like to attend, please email us advising how many will be attending, the persons' names, their organization, and if they are laying a wreath, at: admin@aaabrisbane.com

Yours fraternally,

Mike Harris *President / Life Member*
Australian American Association, Brisbane.