



## **USS PONCHATOULA MEMORIAL, Ponchatoula, Louisiana**

The USS Ponchatoula story began in 1942 with the mountains of scrap metal collected by Ponchatoula, LA's school children to support America's efforts in World War II. The story returned to Ponchatoula in 2015 as proud former crewmembers of the ship acquired scrap metal artifacts recovered during its dismantling and offered them to the city of Ponchatoula. The city responded by authorizing the USS PONCHATOULA MEMORIAL to be established on the grounds of the Collinswood Museum to honor a decorated Navy warship.

In the early days of World War II, the U.S. Department of Education asked Ponchatoula High School to develop a homeroom wartime guidance program. Principal Will Ed Butler submitted a proposal that became the basis for the National High School Victory Corps. Soon, youngsters in communities all across America began collecting scrap metal for new ships, tanks and airplanes. The Ponchatoula community responded to its students' initiative enthusiastically. Within five weeks, Ponchatoula students had collected some 475 tons of scrap metal, far more than any other community in Louisiana. It took more than fifty U.S. Army trucks to haul it all away. A year later, Principal Butler received a letter from Washington, DC: A new warship was to be christened the USS Ponchatoula in honor of the community's patriotism.

That first USS Ponchatoula, AOG-38, was commissioned on October 6, 1944. She was assigned to the Pacific Theater for the dangerous duty of delivering critical gasoline supplies to remote Pacific islands for our combat troops, warships and airplanes. She fought off numerous Kamikaze attacks near Okinawa and neighboring Japanese-held islands, earning a Battle Star for her heroic service. After the war, AOG-38 became surplus and was decommissioned in December 1946. She was later sold to Sun Oil Company as a commercial tanker.

A second USS Ponchatoula, AO-148 was commissioned in January 1956 and assigned to the Pacific Fleet, homeported in Pearl Harbor, HI. She was a Neosho Class Fleet Oiler designed to provide rapid underway replenishment to ships at sea. "The Ponch" served meritoriously for 36 years. In 1958, she helped thwart Chinese aggression in the Taiwan Straits. During the Vietnam War, she was awarded 12 campaign stars and set records for refueling U.S. and allied warships while supporting combat operations of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. In 1980, she was transferred to the Military Sealift Command as USNS Ponchatoula T-AO-148, a US Navy ship operated by a civilian crew. From her new homeport in Subic Bay, Philippines, Ponchatoula's service area was expanded to include the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. USNS Ponchatoula continued to reinforce the U.S. Navy's mobility and striking power in the Western Pacific and Middle East regions for more than a decade. During this time, the Navy was accelerating its fleet modernization program, replacing older steam-driven ships with nuclear and diesel-powered ones. An aging USNS Ponchatoula was struck from the Naval Register in 1992 and mothballed in the National Reserve Defense Fleet. By 2014, she was deemed surplus and towed from San Francisco, CA, to Brownsville, TX to be scrapped.

The USS PONCHATOULA MEMORIAL is a 1/7th scale replica of the stern of the ship created from the artifacts recovered by the Ponchatoula Shipmates Association. When the Memorial was dedicated on May 16, 2015, a time capsule was placed in the capstan to be opened at a date to be determined by the city. In 2021, one of the ship's massive 9,000 lb. anchors was added. A Torii Gate was installed at the entrance to invite visitors into a restful garden area for quiet reflection and peaceful meditation. These additions complete the Shipmates' and the city's vision: The Memorial honors the Ponchatoula community's patriotic heritage. And it pays homage to thousands of sailors who served our nation gallantly on distant oceans aboard two U.S. Navy ships named PONCHATOULA.

**USS PONCHATOULA MEMORIAL  
COMMEMORATIVE BRICK ORDER FORM**

The USS Ponchatoula Memorial commemorates all those, past and present, whose service and sacrifices have helped preserve our freedoms. You too can honor the special people and meaningful events in your life with a lasting tribute engraved on a 4" x 8" brick paver to be placed in the Memorial's walkway. Your bricks will be delivered and placed into the walkway whenever minimum quantities for engraving have been met.

Thank you for your support! USS Ponchatoula Shipmates Association [www.usssonchatoula.com](http://www.usssonchatoula.com)  
We are a not-for-profit US Navy Veterans Organization pursuant to Section 501-c-4 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations to 501-c-4 organizations are not deductible for income tax purposes.

**\$85 - 4x8 Brick**



3 lines of text, 20 characters per line (including spaces and punctuation)


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 USS Ponchatoula  
 Shipmates Association  
 C/o Pete Ablanczy  
 5475 S Ceylon Way  
 Centennial, CO 80015

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