



The U.s.s. Ward: An Operational History of the Ship That Fired the First American Shot of World War 2

Richard P. Klobuchar

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In 1940, with the threat of war in the Pacific imminent, the United States was forced to expand its fleet as quickly as possible. This included reconditioning and recommissioning “four stackers” from the navy’s reserve fleet. It was here that the USS *Ward* came into her own, earning the distinction of firing the first shot in America’s war against Japan and serving three years in combat until it was sunk—with no loss of life—on December 7, 1944. From the first confrontation at Pearl Harbor through the *Ward*’s last mission in the Philippines, this history gives a detailed account of the life and times of the ship and her crew of 125 men. On May 15, 1918, at Mare Island Shipyard in California, Master Shipfitter J.T. Moroney laid the keel of a hull designated simply as DD-139. In a record that still stands, Maroney had the hull ready for launching in only 17 days instead of the four months usually required. One of the last Wickes class destroyers built in the waning days of World War I, the *Ward* was commissioned too late to participate in the action for which it was ordered. Nevertheless, the *Ward* was on active duty in the Atlantic and Pacific for three years after her commissioning and participated in several historic naval events. The work provides a vivid description of the *Ward*’s service during World War II. Interviews with surviving crewmen and forewords by Kenneth C. Swedberg and Guy E. Thompson, former crewmen, are included. Other sources include information from the National Archives and the Naval Historical Center. Appendices provide *Ward* technical data, a chronology of major events, listings of citations earned in World War II and of amphibious landings, and a roster of personnel.

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