

## Aircraft Repair Units

The second set of ships to be procured was the group needed for aircraft repair work. Early in 1944 the Army Air Forces requested six such ships through the Army Service Force. By midyear the first of these ships was made available in the form of a newly completed Liberty ship on which conversion work was immediately initiated. This conversion consisted of installing a number of specialized shops (e.g., sheet metal, armament, engine components, etc.) in the cargo holds, and adding a platform for aircraft under repair on the forward deck of each ship. This platform extended over holds #1 and #2 and replaced the mast and booms that had served these holds. The six converted ships were ready in the fall of 1944.

The Army Air Forces also requested that a group of smaller ships be made available as auxiliary aircraft repair ships. Originally 36 such ships were sought, but the request was pared to 18 ships when it became clear that the higher number was unrealistic in terms of the competition for ships. The 18 ships were set aside from a large group of FS boats being built by Higgins Industries in New Orleans. These ships required less extensive alterations than the Liberty ships, with the work being largely the conversion of below-deck spaces into specialized shops. The first of these ships was in service by the fall of 1944.

Three of the aircraft repair ships returned to merchant service under their original names and were eventually scrapped: the *Gen. Russell* in 1959, the *Gen. Olds* in 1960, and the *Gen. Weaver* in 1970. The *Gen. Duncan* and *Gen. Dargue* spent a number of years in the James River reserve fleet, and the *Gen. Lyon* was converted to a depot repair ship at Portland, Oregon.

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