

= USS Wichita ( CA @-@ 45 ) =

USS Wichita ( CA @-@ 45 ) was a unique heavy cruiser of the United States Navy built in the 1930s . The last American cruiser designed to meet the limits of London Naval Treaty , she was originally intended to be a New Orleans @-@ class heavy cruiser , accordingly with the maximum main armament of three triple 8 @-@ inch ( 200 mm ) gun turrets . These were instead placed on an improved hull derived from the Brooklyn @-@ class light cruisers , with increased armoring . This design would go on to form the basis for the later World War II @-@ era heavy cruisers such as the Baltimore @-@ class cruisers . The ship was authorized by the 1929 Cruiser Act , laid down at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in October 1935 , launched in November 1937 , and commissioned into the US Navy in February 1939 .

Following her commissioning , Wichita was assigned to neutrality patrols in the Atlantic . After the United States entered World War II , the ship saw heavy service throughout the conflict . She was first assigned to convoy escort duty on the Murmansk Run in early 1942 , and supported amphibious landings during Operation Torch in November 1942 . During the Naval Battle of Casablanca , Wichita engaged several French coastal batteries and warships , including the battleship Jean Bart. In 1943 , Wichita was transferred to the Pacific Theater , where she remained for the rest of the war . She frequently provided antiaircraft defense for the Fast Carrier Task Force during operations in the central Pacific , including the Battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf in 1944 . During the latter engagement , Wichita assisted in the sinking of the Japanese aircraft carrier Chiyoda .

Wichita was heavily engaged during the invasion of Okinawa , where she provided heavy gunfire support to ground troops ashore . After the Japanese surrender , the ship served as part of the occupation force in Japan and assisted in the repatriation of American military personnel under Operation Magic Carpet . After returning to the United States , she was decommissioned and placed in the mothball fleet in 1946 . She remained in reserve until 1959 , when she was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register and sold for scrapping in August 1959 .

= = Design = =

In the early 1930s , the Secretary of the Navy , Curtis D. Wilbur , pushed for a new construction program for light and heavy cruisers . Wilbur succeeded in passing the Cruiser Act in 1929 , which authorized several new cruisers . Five heavy cruisers , the last of which was Wichita , were ordered between 1931 and 1934 . Wichita was the last heavy cruiser permitted under the terms of the London Naval Treaty in 1930 , which limited the US to 18 heavy cruisers with a maximum standard displacement of 10 @,@ 000 long tons ( 10 @,@ 160 t ) . The ship was originally intended to be built to the design of the New Orleans class , but the design was reworked before construction began . Instead , the design for Wichita was based on the Brooklyn class of light cruisers . The Brooklyn design was modified heavily , to give the new ship higher freeboard and better stability , and an increased cruising radius . The secondary battery of eight 5 @-@ inch ( 127 mm ) guns was identical in number to the light cruisers , but was arranged to give better fields of fire . The main battery of nine 8 @-@ inch ( 200 mm ) guns was mounted in a new gun turret design that rectified problems discovered in earlier cruisers .

Wichita was laid down at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on 28 October 1935 , and launched on 16 November 1937 . By the time she was completed , in February 1938 , Wichita was nearly over the 10 @,@ 000 @-@ ton limit ; as a result , she was completed with only two of the eight 5 @-@ inch guns to keep her under the displacement restriction . When the rest of the 5 @-@ inch guns were installed , it was found that the ship was too top @-@ heavy , and so 200 long tons ( 200 t ) of pig iron had to be added to her bottom to balance the cruiser . Wichita was commissioned into the US Navy on 16 February 1939 . Her first commander was Captain Thaddeus A. Thomson .

= = = General characteristics = = =

Wichita was 600 feet ( 180 m ) long at the waterline and 608 ft 4 in ( 185 @.@ 42 m ) long overall .

She had a beam of 61 ft 9 in ( 18 @. @ 82 m ) and a draft of 23 ft 9 in ( 7 @. @ 24 m ) . She displaced 10 @, @ 589 long tons ( 10 @, @ 759 t ) at standard displacement and 13 @, @ 015 long tons ( 13 @, @ 224 t ) at full combat load . The ship had a crew of 929 officers and enlisted men . She was equipped with four seaplanes and a pair of aircraft catapults and a crane for handling the aircraft which were mounted on the stern . Wichita was powered by four Parsons steam turbines and eight Babcock & Wilcox oil @-@ fired water @-@ tube boilers . The propulsion system was rated at 100 @, @ 000 shaft horsepower ( 75 @, @ 000 kW ) and a top speed of 33 knots ( 61 km / h ; 38 mph ) . She carried 1 @, @ 323 to 1 @, @ 984 long tons ( 1 @, @ 344 to 2 @, @ 016 t ) of fuel oil , which gave her a maximum cruising range of 10 @, @ 000 nautical miles ( 19 @, @ 000 km ; 12 @, @ 000 mi ) at 15 kn ( 28 km / h ; 17 mph ) .

The hull was protected by a waterline armored belt composed of Class A armor that was 6 @. @ 4 in ( 160 mm ) thick amidships . It was reduced to 4 in ( 100 mm ) thick on either end . The belt was backed with .63 in ( 16 mm ) of special treatment steel . The Class A steel was significantly more effective than the Class B armor used in earlier cruisers ; 8 @-@ inch guns had to be within 10 @, @ 000 yards ( 9 @, @ 100 m ) to penetrate the belt , as opposed to 16 @, @ 400 yd ( 15 @, @ 000 m ) for the earlier armor . Wichita had a 2 @. @ 25 in ( 57 mm ) thick deck , which was immune to 8 @-@ inch fire inside 22 @, @ 000 yd ( 20 @, @ 000 m ) . The conning tower had 6 in ( 150 mm ) thick sides and a 2 @. @ 25 in thick roof . The ship 's main battery turrets had 8 in ( 200 mm ) thick faces , 3 @. @ 75 in ( 95 mm ) thick sides , 1 @. @ 5 in ( 38 mm ) thick rears , and 2 @. @ 75 in ( 70 mm ) thick roofs . The turrets were mounted on armored barbettes protected with 7 in ( 180 mm ) of armor plating .

== = Armament == =

Wichita was armed with a main battery of nine 8 @-@ inch / 55 Mark 12 guns mounted in three 3 @-@ gun turrets . The guns fired a 335 @-@ pound ( 152 kg ) projectiles at a muzzle velocity of 2 @, @ 500 feet per second ( 760 m / s ) . Maximum elevation of the guns was 41 degrees ; this provided a maximum range of 30 @, @ 050 yd ( 27 @, @ 480 m ) . Rate of fire was approximately one shot every fifteen seconds . The turrets allowed each gun to elevate and fire individually . Her secondary battery consisted of eight 5 @-@ inch / 38 Mark 12 dual @-@ purpose guns , four in single , enclosed Mark 30 high @-@ angle mounts , and four in open mounts . These guns fired 55 lb ( 25 kg ) projectiles at a rate of 20 rounds per minute . Muzzle velocity was 2 @, @ 600 ft / s ( 790 m / s ) ; against aerial targets , the guns had a ceiling of 37 @, @ 200 ft ( 11 @, @ 300 m ) at 85 degrees . At 45 degrees , the guns could engage surface targets at a range of 18 @, @ 200 yd ( 16 @, @ 600 m ) . Wichita was the first cruiser in the US Navy to be equipped with the new 5 @-@ inch / 38 gun .

By August 1945 , the ship had been equipped with numerous smaller guns for close @-@ range anti @-@ aircraft defense . Sixteen Bofors 40 mm guns were placed in quadruple mounts , and another eight were in dual mounts . She also carried eighteen Oerlikon 20 mm guns in single mountings . The 40 mm guns had a ceiling of 22 @, @ 800 ft ( 6 @, @ 900 m ) at 90 degrees elevation and a maximum rate of fire of 160 rounds per minute . The 20 mm gun had a rate of fire of 465 ? 480 rounds per minute ; they had a ceiling of 10 @, @ 000 ft ( 3 @, @ 000 m ) . By the end of the war , the ship was armed with a variety of fire control systems for her guns , including Mark 34 fire control gear and Mark 13 and Mark 28 fire control radars .

== = Service history == =

Wichita departed Philadelphia after her commissioning , bound for Houston , Texas . She arrived on 20 April 1939 and took part in the dedicatory and memorial service at the San Jacinto Battle Monument and War Relic Museum . The ship left Houston on 1 May for her shakedown cruise , during which she visited the Virgin Islands , Cuba , and the Bahamas before she returned to Philadelphia for post @-@ shakedown repairs . On 25 September , a few weeks after the outbreak of World War II in Europe , Wichita was assigned to Cruiser Division 7 in the Atlantic Squadron ,

based in the Hampton Roads . She conducted her first neutrality patrol on 4 ? 9 October . After returning to port , she went into dock at the Norfolk Navy Yard for maintenance , which lasted until 1 December . On 4 December , Wichita steamed to Guantanamo Bay , Cuba , arriving on the 8th . There , Thomson assumed command of the newly formed Caribbean Patrol , which included Wichita and the cruiser Vincennes , and the destroyers Borie , Broome , Lawrence , King , and Truxtun , and Navy patrol squadrons VP @-@ 33 and VP @-@ 51 . Over the course of the next three months , the force conducted a series of training maneuvers in the Caribbean . At the end of February , Wichita returned to Norfolk via Philadelphia , where she participated in further training through May .

Starting in June , Wichita and Quincy conducted a goodwill cruise to South America ; Wichita carried Rear Admiral Andrew C. Pickens , the commander of Cruiser Division 7 . Included in the ports of call were Rio de Janeiro and Santos in Brazil , Buenos Aires , Argentina , and Montevideo , Uruguay . The cruise ended in late September ; the two cruisers arrived in Norfolk on the 24th . Over the next three months , Wichita served as a training ship for Naval Reserve midshipmen and conducted gunnery practices off the Virginia capes . On 7 January 1941 , Wichita departed Hampton Roads for Guantanamo , arriving four days later . She participated in fleet maneuvers in the Caribbean through March and took part in practice amphibious landings at Puerto Rico . She returned to the United States , docking at the New York Navy Yard , on 23 March . Wichita went to sea again on 6 April , bound for Bermuda ; she reached her destination two days later . She then joined the aircraft carrier Ranger and the heavy cruiser Tuscaloosa for a patrol in the North Atlantic , during which the ships sailed to within 800 nautical miles ( 1 @, @ 500 km ; 920 mi ) of Ireland .

Wichita then returned to the New York Navy Yard on 17 May and went into drydock on 21 June . Repairs were completed on 2 July , after which Wichita was transferred to Newport , Rhode Island . She sortied again on 27 July bound for Iceland as part of Task Force 16 under Operation Indigo II , the occupation of Iceland . Wichita arrived in Reykjavík on 6 August , along with the carrier Wasp and the battleship Mississippi . The task force landed a contingent of US Army troops and fighter aircraft to provide air support . The cruiser returned to the United States by 20 August . Wichita returned to Iceland in September , arriving in Reykjavík on 28 September . Two days prior to Wichita 's arrival , the US Navy ordered the units of the Atlantic Fleet to protect all ships engaged in commerce in United States defensive waters . The orders authorized the Navy to patrol , escort merchantmen , and attack any German or Italian naval forces encountered . Wichita was assigned to Task Group 7 @. @ 5 , which was engaged in patrolling Icelandic waters through the end 1941 . On 7 December 1941 , the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor , bringing the United States into World War II ; on the day of the attack , Wichita lay at anchor at Hvalfjörður , Iceland .

= = = Atlantic theater = = =

Wichita left port on 5 January 1942 for training and a patrol in the Denmark Strait ; she returned to Hvalfjörður on 10 January . On the 15th , a powerful storm , with sustained winds of 80 knots ( 150 km / h ; 92 mph ) and gusts up to 100 kn ( 190 km / h ; 120 mph ) , hit Iceland . Wichita was damaged by the storm , including a collision with the freighter West Nohno and the British trawler Ebor Wyke . She then ran aground off Hrafneyri Light . The following day , the ship 's crew evaluated her condition ; she had suffered minor damage from the collisions , including some leaks , and damage to the hull from the grounding . Temporary repairs were effected in Iceland to allow Wichita to return to the New York Navy Yard for more thorough repairs . She arrived on 9 February , and repairs lasted until 26 February , when she left port for training maneuvers off Maine in early March .

On 26 March , Wichita , assigned to Task Force 39 , departed the United States to reinforce the British Home Fleet based in Scapa Flow . Task Force 39 , commanded by Rear Admiral John W. Wilcox , Jr . , included Wasp , the battleship Washington , the cruiser Tuscaloosa , and eight destroyers . While en route , Wilcox was swept overboard in a heavy sea and lost . Rear Admiral Robert C. Giffen , who flew his flag in Wichita , took command of the task force . After arriving in Scapa Flow , Wichita and the other American ships spent several weeks training with their British

counterparts . On 28 April , Wichita departed on her first major operation with the British . She was assigned to the Allied escort for the Arctic convoys QP 11 and PQ 15 . The American component , organized as Task Force 99 , comprised Washington , Wichita , Tuscaloosa , and four destroyers . The British assigned the carrier Victorious , the battleship King George V , a light cruiser , and five destroyers . After successfully escorting the convoys , Wichita returned to Hvalfjörður , arriving on 6 May .

Wichita sortied on 12 May to relieve Tuscaloosa , which was patrolling the Denmark Strait . Wichita returned to Hvalfjörður a week later , before putting to sea as part of another Allied convoy escort protecting one leg of the movement of Murmansk @-@ bound convoy PQ 16 and eastbound QP 12 . She put in to Scapa Flow on 29 May after completing the mission . While in Scapa Flow , King George VI inspected Wichita on 7 June . Wichita left Scapa Flow on 12 June , bound for Hvalfjörður , and arrived 14 June . She then relieved the British cruiser Cumberland on patrol in the Denmark Strait . While on patrol on 17 June , Wichita spotted a German Focke @-@ Wulf Fw 200 reconnaissance bomber and opened fire , though without result . Three days later , she engaged another Fw 200 , again without success .

After returning to Hvalfjörður , Wichita steamed to Seidisfjord at the end of June , where she joined Tuscaloosa and three destroyers . They were assigned to the escort for the convoy PQ 17 . The convoy escort also included Washington , Victorious , and the battleship Duke of York . The Germans organized a powerful task force , centered on the battleship Tirpitz and three heavy cruisers , to attack the convoy ; the operation was codenamed Rösselsprung ( Knight 's Move ) . Swedish intelligence had meanwhile reported the German departures to the British Admiralty , which ordered the convoy to disperse . Aware that they had been detected , the Germans aborted the operation and turned over the attack to U @-@ boats and the Luftwaffe . The scattered vessels could no longer be protected by the convoy escorts , and the Germans sank 21 of the 34 isolated transports . The next day , while south of Spitzbergen , the ships were spotted and shadowed by a pair of Fw 200s . Both Wichita and Tuscaloosa opened fire with their anti-aircraft guns , but the Fw 200s escaped without damage .

In late July , Wichita went into drydock at the Royal Navy base in Rosyth , Scotland . Repairs , which included correcting a propeller shaft vibration , lasted from 24 July until 9 August . The repairs to the propeller shaft were ineffective , however , which necessitated a return to the United States . She reached the New York Navy Yard on 22 August for repairs , which lasted until 5 September . She completed a round of post @-@ repair sea trials before conducting gunnery exercises in the Chesapeake Bay . Wichita conducted training off the Virginia Capes for the rest of the month , after which she steamed to Casco Bay in Maine for further maneuvers .

= = = = Operation Torch = = = =

At the end of October , Wichita was assigned to Task Group 34 @. @ 1 , under the command of Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt , who flew his flag in Augusta . The Task Group also included the battleship Massachusetts and Tuscaloosa . The ships were assigned to provide gunfire support for Operation Torch , the invasion of French North Africa . Wichita participated in the Naval Battle of Casablanca , which began early on the morning of 8 November . The ships were tasked with neutralizing the primary French defenses , which included coastal guns on El Hank , several submarines , and the incomplete battleship Jean Bart which lay at anchor in the harbor . Wichita and Tuscaloosa initially engaged the French batteries on El Hank and the French submarine pens , while Massachusetts attacked Jean Bart. French naval forces , led by the cruiser Primauguet , put up a stubborn defense .

In response , the French launched a pair of attacks to break up the American landings . During the first French attack , either Wichita or Tuscaloosa damaged the French destroyer Milan and forced it aground . A second French attack was also defeated ; one of the two cruisers sank the destroyer Fougueux and damaged Frondeur . Wichita , Tuscaloosa , and Massachusetts also engaged Jean Bart. At 11 : 28 , Wichita was hit by a 194 mm ( 7 @. @ 6 in ) shell , fired by a gun on El Hank . The shell penetrated her deck and exploded below , injuring fourteen men . Hewitt broke off the attack

temporarily , but by 13 : 12 , several American warships began firing on French vessels exiting the harbor . Wichita and Tuscaloosa closed on the port to engage the cruisers Primauguet and Gloire , still in the harbor . Heavy fire from El Hank forced the American cruisers to retreat shortly after 15 : 00 . For the remainder of the operations off North Africa , Wichita patrolled between Casablanca and Fedhala . Her part in the amphibious assault complete , Wichita departed the area on 12 November , bound for New York for repairs ; she arrived on 19 November .

= = = Pacific theater = = =

Shortly after repairs were completed , Wichita was transferred to the Pacific theater . She was assigned to Task Force 18 , commanded by Rear Admiral Giffen , and tasked with operations off Guadalcanal . She was joined by the heavy cruisers Louisville and Chicago , the light cruisers Montpelier , Cleveland , and Columbia . In addition , the escort carriers Chenango and Suwannee , and eight destroyers were present in the task group . On the night of 29 January 1943 , the Task Force was steaming off Rennell Island ; wary of the threat from Japanese submarines , which Allied intelligence indicated were likely in the area , Giffen arranged his cruisers and destroyers for anti @-@ submarine defense , not expecting an air attack . The cruisers were aligned in two columns , spaced 2 @, @ 500 yd ( 2 @, @ 300 m ) apart . Wichita , Chicago , and Louisville , in that order , were to starboard , and Montpelier , Cleveland , and Columbia were to port . The six destroyers were in a semicircle 2 mi ( 1 @. @ 7 nmi ; 3 @. @ 2 km ) ahead of the cruiser columns . That evening , the ships came under attack from Japanese torpedo bombers . In the ensuing Battle of Rennell Island , Chicago was hit by several torpedoes and sunk ; Wichita was hit by one torpedo , though it failed to explode .

Wichita then steamed to Efate in the New Hebrides for a training period . She then departed on 7 April , bound for Pearl Harbor and arriving there a week later . On 18 April , she steamed out of Pearl Harbor for Adak , Alaska , again flying Giffen 's flag , for Task Group 52 @. @ 10 . In early May , Wichita was assigned to the amphibious force tasked with liberating the Aleutian Islands from Japanese control . She served as the flagship of the northern covering force , along with the cruisers Louisville and San Francisco and four destroyers . On 6 July , Wichita , three other cruisers , and four destroyers bombarded Japanese positions on the island of Kiska . The bombardment convinced the Japanese that the Americans intended to invade the island in the near future ; they therefore planned an evacuation by July .

On 19 July , a powerful American fleet , including the battleships New Mexico , Idaho , and Mississippi joined Wichita to conduct another attack on Kiska three days later . Five days later , malfunctioning radar equipment led to a battle with radar phantoms ( the " Battle of the Pips " ) ; Wichita , two battleships , and two other cruisers expended over a thousand rounds of ammunition from their main batteries on the empty sea . That same day , the Japanese successfully evacuated the island , which was invaded by American troops two weeks later . The morning after the assumed engagement , Wichita launched a seaplane to reconnoiter the area , but found no evidence of Japanese forces .

Wichita participated in exercises off Hawaii for the remainder of the year . On 16 January 1944 , she departed to take part in the invasion of the Marshall Islands . She was assigned to Task Group 58 @. @ 3 , under the command of Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman . The Task Group included the fleet carrier Bunker Hill , the light carriers Cowpens and Monterey , the fast battleships North Carolina , Massachusetts , Alabama , and South Dakota , and several destroyers . Wichita provided anti @-@ aircraft support for the carriers while they conducted air strikes on Kwajalein and Eniwetok on 29 ? 31 January . On 4 February , Wichita arrived at Majuro ; she was transferred to Task Group 58 @. @ 2 . The force departed Majuro on 12 February and conducted Operation Hailstone , a major air strike on the Japanese base at Truk , four days later .

On the night of 16 February , Japanese aircraft launched an attack on the Task Group and torpedoed the carrier Intrepid . Task Unit 58 @. @ 2 @. @ 4 , which included Wichita , was detached to escort Intrepid back to safety and repairs . The ships reached Majuro on 20 February , and departed for Hawaii eight days later . The ships arrived in port on 4 March , and on the 9th , Wichita

became the flagship of Cruiser Division 6 . On 15 March , Cruiser Division 6 departed Hawaii to return to Majuro , arriving on 20 March . After arriving , she joined the screen for the Fast Carrier Task Force , which struck Japanese bases on Yap , Woleai , and in the Palaus . Wichita supported strikes on Hollandia in New Guinea on 13 ? 22 April . The task force returned to the seas off Truk on 29 April for a second round of airstrikes on the port . While the carriers were striking Truk , Wichita and several cruisers and destroyers shelled Japanese targets on Satawan Island in the Nomol group of the Caroline Islands .

On 4 May , Wichita returned to Majuro for a month of training . In June , she returned to the fleet , which was gathering at Kwajalein in preparations for operations against the Mariana Islands . Wichita was assigned to Task Unit 53 @.@ 10 @.@ 8 , which shelled Saipan on 13 June . The next day , Wichita bombarded Japanese gun positions on Guam , before returning to Saipan later that day . On 17 June , she joined Task Group 58 @.@ 7 ; the force patrolled to the west of the Marianas over the next three days in an attempt to intercept the large Japanese carrier force known to be approaching . On 19 June , the Japanese carriers struck at the American fleet , starting the Battle of the Philippine Sea . Wichita contributed to the antiaircraft screen ; her gunners claimed to have assisted in the destruction of two Nakajima B5N torpedo bombers . The ship was detached to cover troop transports and escort carriers off Saipan on 25 June . This duty lasted through the first week of July . Now part of Task Unit 53 @.@ 18 @.@ 1 , Wichita bombarded Japanese positions on Guam on 8 ? 12 July , and again starting on 18 July .

Wichita departed Guam on 10 August , bound for Eniwetok . She arrived three days later and remained there until 29 July , when she put to sea to join Task Group 38 @.@ 1 . She screened for the fast carrier task group while they launched airstrikes on Japanese targets in Palau , the Carolines , the Philippines , and Dutch East Indies . On 28 August , TG 38 @.@ 1 raided targets in Palau and Morotai . By mid @.@ September , TG 38 @.@ 1 provided air support for the assault on Morotai ; the operation lasted until 21 September . The following day , the carriers launched an airstrike on Manila in the Philippines . Early on 22 September , Japanese aircraft launched a counterattack . At 07 : 34 , Wichita shot down a bomber approximately 50 yards from her . She shot down another bomber at 07 : 45 . She continued to provide antiaircraft defense for the carriers while they struck Japanese installations on Cebu , Negros , and Coron .

= = = Operations off the Philippines = = =

Wichita got underway to support a raid on Okinawa on 2 October . On 10 October , the fleet reached the waters off Okinawa and launched the strike . The following day , the fleet struck Aparri on Luzon . The fleet then raided Formosa , where they targeted Japanese airfields to prepare for the upcoming assault against the Philippines . On 13 October , Japanese bombers attacked the fleet and badly damaged the cruiser Canberra . Wichita took Canberra under tow , though she was relieved by the ocean @.@ going tug Munsee on 15 October . Wichita joined the screen for Canberra ; the squadron was joined by the badly damaged cruiser Houston . The ships were attacked again the following day , and Houston was torpedoed again . Wichita left the damaged ships on 21 October , after they had successfully reached safer waters . Wichita then rejoined the fleet off Luzon , assigned to Task Force 34 under Vice Admiral Willis A. Lee .

Wichita was present during the Battle of Leyte Gulf , which started on 23 October . On 25 October , the Fast Carrier Strike Force had steamed north , to attack the Northern Force commanded by Jisabur? Ozawa . Wichita again screened for the carriers , which sank or damaged several Japanese carriers . Task Force 34 was detached to finish off several of the crippled Japanese ships with gunfire ; Wichita and three other cruisers sank the light carrier Chiyoda and the destroyer Hatsuzuki . Wichita expended twenty @.@ two percent of her armor @.@ piercing rounds at the two ships , which amounted to 148 rounds at Chiyoda and 173 against Hatsuzuki . In the aftermath of the battle , Wichita returned to screening for the carriers off Samar . On 28 October , she provided gunfire support to troops ashore on Leyte . Two days later , she defended against a Japanese airstrike on the fleet .

On 31 October , Wichita left the area , bound for Ulithi , reaching her destination on 2 November .

After replenishing her ammunition and stores , she returned to Leyte for several days , until the middle of November . Her crew detected severe vibrations in her No. 4 engine ; the propeller shaft had broken and the propeller was trailing . She was therefore detached on 18 November for repairs in California , via Ulithi . While in Ulithi , divers discovered cracks in a strut for No. 3 propeller shaft ; now only two screws were operational . She reached San Pedro in California on 15 December . She entered the Terminal Island Navy Yard shortly after reaching port . Repairs lasted until 8 February 1945 , and by 28 February , she departed for Pearl Harbor . Wichita arrived in Hawaii on 6 March , before departing five days later for Ulithi .

= = = = Invasion of Okinawa = = = =

Wichita arrived in Ulithi on 20 March , and was assigned to Task Force 54 the next day . She put to sea to take part in the invasion of Okinawa . The ship was placed in Task Unit 54 @. @ 2 @. @ 3 to cover minesweepers off Okinawa on 25 March . On the afternoon of the following day , Wichita bombarded Japanese positions on the island , from 13 : 50 to 16 : 30 . Japanese aircraft attacked the ships early the next morning ; Wichita 's gunners shot down one of the aircraft . Later that day , the ship resumed bombardment duties in preparation for the amphibious invasion . She continued to shell the island through 28 March . The next day , she retired to Kerama Retto to replenish her ammunition . The ship then returned to Okinawa later that day to cover underwater demolition teams as they cleared beach obstacles . Wichita continued to support the demolition teams the next day , as well as shelling targets ashore . On 31 March , Wichita bombarded the sea wall to create a breach in preparation for the landings .

The invasion began on 1 April , and Wichita provided gunfire support to the landing troops on the southern beaches . At around 12 : 00 , she left the firing line to replenish her ammunition . She resumed bombardment the following day and resupplied again on 3 April before covering minesweepers on 4 April . During the night of 4 ? 5 April , Wichita shelled the Japanese defenders on Okinawa . The ship was assigned to join Task Group 51 @. @ 19 the next day to bombard Tsugen Shima in company with Tuscaloosa and the battleships Maryland and Arkansas . Japanese aircraft appeared , which forced the cancellation of the mission . Nevertheless , Wichita shelled Japanese shore batteries at Chiyama Shima that evening .

Late on 6 April , an A6M Zero attempted to attack Wichita . The fighter came down through a break in the clouds on Wichita 's port side . The ship 's anti @- @ aircraft gunners immediately opened fire ; a burst from one of the 20 mm guns shot away the Zero 's tail . The plane veered away , out of control , and dropped its 500 @- @ pound ( 230 kg ) bomb , which fell approximately 50 feet ( 15 m ) from the ship . The Zero 's wing clipped the deck before the plane crashed into the sea . Eleven men were wounded in the attack , though the ship remained undamaged . The following day , Wichita steamed into Nakagusuku Bay to shell a coastal battery . Shells from the Japanese guns landed close to the ship , but no hits were scored before Wichita neutralized the battery . Over the next two days , the ship continued to bombard Japanese defenses on the island , until she retired to replenish ammunition on 10 April .

Wichita continued to provide gunfire support throughout the rest of the month . On 27 April , a small caliber shell penetrated a fuel oil tank five feet below the waterline . After temporary repairs while still off Okinawa proved unsuccessful , Wichita returned to Kerama Retto where the damage was repaired on 29 ? 30 April . Wichita then returned to the gun line . On 12 May , the ship was damaged by friendly fire . A 5 inch round struck the port aircraft catapult ; shell fragments hit the shield of an anti-aircraft director , killing one man and injuring eleven others . She departed the area to rest and refit at Leyte , returning to Okinawa on 18 June . Wichita continued to provide gunfire support to the troops on Okinawa through July , as part of Task Unit 2 . On 15 August , the ship 's crew received word that the war with Japan was over . Wichita was awarded 13 battle stars for her service during World War II .

= = = Post @- @ War = = =

Wichita was assigned to the occupying force shortly after the end of the war . She departed Okinawa on 10 September for Nagasaki , arriving the following day as part of Task Group 55 @. @ 7 . Wichita was one of the first major warships to reach Japan ; she was escorted by a destroyer , a pair of destroyer escorts , two minesweepers , and the hospital ship Haven . Wichita was transferred to Sasebo on 25 September for four days before she returned to Nagasaki on 29 September . She returned to Sasebo shortly thereafter , and while she was there , a severe typhoon struck the area on 9 ? 11 October . Wichita was not damaged during the storms . While at Sasebo , Wichita 's crew inspected the Japanese ships and harbor installations to ensure Japanese compliance with the terms of surrender .

On 5 November , Wichita was assigned to Operation Magic Carpet , the repatriation of American military personnel . She refueled in Tokyo before departing for San Francisco . The ship reached San Francisco on 24 November , where she went into drydock at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard two days later . Repairs and modifications for further Magic Carpet duty were completed by 1 December . Wichita departed for Hawaii on 6 December , reaching Pearl Harbor on 12 December before proceeding to the Marianas . There , the ship loaded servicemen from Saipan and steamed back to San Francisco , arriving on 12 January 1946 . She left port on 27 January bound for the east coast of the United States ; she transited the Panama Canal on 5 ? 9 February and reached Philadelphia on 14 February . There , she was assigned to the Sixteenth Fleet and was placed in reserve on 15 July . Wichita was decommissioned on 3 February 1947 and laid up at Philadelphia . In the late 1940s , the Navy considered converting Wichita into a guided @-@ missile cruiser , but Boston and Canberra were chosen instead . On 1 March 1959 , the ship was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register and sold on 14 August to the Union Minerals and Alloys Corp.