

RESEARCHING THE LCT's AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A first visit to the new National Archives complex in College Park, Maryland, can be rather intimidating. I spent most of my first visit just getting acquainted with the rules, where the LCT records are and how to get at them. This guide should help prepare you and save you some time and grief.

As most of you already know, the LCTs were not commissioned as individual naval vessels but as a flotilla. Unfortunately, there are very few records for individual LCTs and even the LCT flotillas! One must go to the higher echelons of command for many types of records--but they do exist! For a description of the LCT command structure, see page 10.

Before You Go

The best advice here is to know your **flotilla** and **group** numbers. Write to NARA and ask for a free copy of your service records if you do not have them already. Often times you can determine what command your LCT was under within these records. Their address is: **National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.** Ask for the standard form for your WW2 service records.

Make a chronological list of where you were and what LST your LCT may have been on. The LST logs can provide a lot of info.

Getting There

The original National Archives and Records Administration building (NARA) is located in downtown D.C. A new complex, the largest archival building in the world, is just northeast of downtown D.C. about 10 miles into Maryland. All Navy records are here.

They have ample free parking or you can catch a free shuttle bus there from the downtown building. The D.C. Metro buses will get you there but you pay. If you go from downtown, I recommend you get there early in the morning. They leave every hour on the hour but can get crowded after 10 a.m. Before your visit, write to NARA and ask for their general info on researching at Archives II including the shuttles.

Their address: **National Archives at College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001.** Or check out their website at: <http://www.nara.gov>

Getting Started

You can't just go to it like at your local library--this is the federal government! First stop in to the main lobby where you *must* register. You will be assigned an i.d. card valid for three years.

Personal belongings must be put in lockers--only take in what you *absolutely* need for research. They will provide pencils, paper and copier service. Refer to the mailings you get for all the rules. Remember this is not a library--you will be examining what amounts to museum artifacts so *handle with care*.

Most paper records can be photocopied there. You buy a card and by putting in dollar bills the card gets credits. You put the *card* in the copy machines, not coins. Copies are ten cents each. Due to demand, they are fussy about time limits on the copiers so be prepared to get booted off after 5-10 minutes.

Also be warned: they will demand to examine any documents you want to copy each time. If documents are marked "classified" you must get them OK'd by the staff. You may get by copying them, but I guarantee the guard on your way out will check everything!

Sound like a lot of red tape? Well it is--but don't be discouraged, you'll get used to the nuisance and it's worth it when you find photos, log books, war diaries and other records about your LCT flotilla.

Some Other Tips

They have a nice cafeteria, reasonably priced, with a great view--but don't try to take food or drink anywhere else in the building. Modern restrooms. And feel free to ask for help--the staff is very friendly!

Room 2400

Your first stop should be **Room 2400**--that's where the Navy experts are. To get there you will need a "badge" to enter the area--no big deal, just tell the on-duty staff person and they'll get you set up. Almost all records you are going to look at must be "pulled" from the vaults by the folks in Room 2400--it takes about an hour to retrieve the records. Plan out your visit with this in mind. *Go to Rm 2400 first thing.* Write ahead and they *may* pull some records for you so they are ready upon your arrival.