

USS Cimarron (AO-22)

USS Cimarron (AO-22) was a *Cimarron* class T-3 type oiler serving with the United States Navy and only the second ship to be named for the Cimarron River in the southwestern United States (the first being a Union “double-ender” gunboat in the Civil War). She was launched 7 January 1939 by Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, Chester, Pennsylvania; sponsored by Mrs. William D. Leahy; and commissioned 20 March 1939 with Lieutenant Commander William W. Behrens in command.

World War II

Cimarron cleared Houston 31 May 1939 for Pearl Harbor, arriving 21 July. She transported oil between west coast ports and Pearl Harbor, making 13 such voyages until she sailed for the east coast on 19 August 1940. After receiving repairs, alterations and armament, she began oil runs on the east coast, principally between Baton Rouge and Norfolk, until August 1941, when she took part in amphibious operations. From 5 September to 16 September she put to sea with a transport convoy bound for **Iceland**, and voyaged north again 12 October to 5 November to refuel ships at Placentia Bay. On 15 November 1941, she joined a convoy at Trinidad bound for Singapore with reinforcements, but was detached from the convoy 9 December at **Capetown, South Africa**. Returning to Trinidad 31 December, she operated from **Brazilian ports** to Iceland until 4 March 1942, when she cleared Norfolk for San Francisco.

Pacific War

Cimarron reached San Francisco 1 April 1942 and sailed the next day with the task force bound for the first (**Doolittle**) air raid on Tokyo 18 April. With *USS Sabine* (AO-25), they fueled the Fleet at sea before and after the raid, and returned to Pearl Harbor 25 April. She sailed 29 April, bound to join the force soon to engage Japanese naval forces in the **Battle of the Coral Sea**, but arrived after the battle to refuel destroyers at Noumea, and returned to Pearl Harbor 26 May. She cleared Pearl Harbor 28 May to fuel the force which defeated the Japanese in the **Battle of Midway** and returned 12 June, departing 7 July to support the operation in the **Solomon Islands**. Using Noumea as her principal base, *Cimarron* occasionally reloaded at Suva and Efate. After repairs at San Francisco in November 1942, she sailed for the forward area 18 December. She operated again out of Noumea supporting the final stages of the **Guadalcanal** action, then fueled out of Efate, carried cargo to Sydney, Australia, and returned to fueling at Dumba Bay in support of the occupation of **New Georgia**. She returned to San Francisco, in July 1943, and then made two trips from the west coast to Pearl Harbor.



USS *Cimarron* at Norfolk Navy Yard

Career (US)	
Laid down:	18 April 1938
Launched:	7 January 1939
Commissioned:	20 March 1939
Decommissioned:	October 1968
Status:	Scrapped
General Characteristics	
Displacement:	7,470 t(1t), 24,830 t(fl)
Length:	553 ft
Beam:	75 ft
Draught:	32 ft 4 in
Propulsion and power:	Twin Screws (30,400 shp), Steam (600 psi) NSFO
Speed:	18 knots
Complement:	304
Sensors and processing systems:	Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS)
Armament:	4 × 5 in./38 guns (12 cm), 4 × 40mm AA guns, 4 × 20mm AA guns

Cimarron departed Pearl Harbor 29 September 1943 with the force which raided **Wake Island** on 5 October and 6 October, and returned to Pearl Harbor 16 October. She sailed once again 14 November to fuel in support of the **Gilbert Islands** campaign, returning 1 December, and sailed to San Pedro, California to reload 12 December to 4 January 1944. Clearing Pearl Harbor 13 January 1944, she supported the **Marshall Islands** operation and the February attacks on **Truk** from Majuro until 6 June; the **Marianas** operation from Eniwetok until 26 August; and the Palau Islands operation from Ulithi.

After a stateside overhaul from October through December 1944, *Cimarron* arrived at Ulithi 26 December 1944. From 27 December to 21 January 1945 she sailed to fuel the task force launching air attacks on **Indo-China** and **Philippine** targets as part of the Luzon invasion, and put to sea again from 8 February to 22 March for air raids on the **Japanese home islands** and the invasion of **Iwo Jima**. From 26 March to 23 May she sailed from Ulithi to fuel ships engaging in the Okinawa operation, and from 3 June shuttled between Ulithi and the areas from which the mighty carrier task forces launched the final series of raids upon the heartland of **Japan**. Ulithi remained her base as she supported the occupation until 10 September, when she anchored in **Tokyo Bay**. Operations in the Far East continued until 4 February 1946, when she arrived at Long Beach Naval Shipyard, for overhaul.

Korean War

Between July 1946 and June 1950, *Cimarron* ferried oil from the Persian Gulf to naval bases in the Marianas and Marshalls, occasionally continuing on to the US West Coast. Her first tour of duty in the Korean war, from 6 July 1950 to 3 June 1951, found her fueling ships of the Taiwan Patrol at Okinawa, amphibious ships at Kobe, and operating from Sasebo to the waters off Korea to fuel task forces. Several times she entered the heavily mined waters of **Wonsan Harbor**, South Korea to fuel the ships carrying out the lengthy blockade and bombardment of that key port.

Returning to the west coast, she gave service as a training tanker until her second Korean tour, from 1 August to 10 December 1951. During this time she spent a month at Taiwan fueling the ships on duty in the Formosa Straits, and made three voyages to Korean waters from Sasebo. During 1952, overhaul and training on the west coast preceded her third Korean war deployment from 9 April to 5 January 1953, when her duty was similar to that of her second. Her fourth tour of duty in the Far East was completed between 11 April and 27 November 1953.

Operation Passage to Freedom

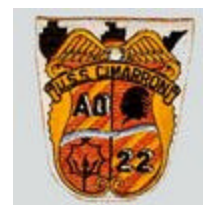
Cimarron sailed to the Far East again between 14 June 1954 and 8 February 1955, during which she served as flagship of the United Nations support group for Operation Passage to Freedom, the evacuation of refugees from Communist North Vietnam. Her pattern of operations from that time into 1963 included highly effective support of the guardian U.S. 7th Fleet in its Far Eastern operations through deployments in 1955, 1956-1957, 1957-1958, 1958-1959, 1959, and 1960. As of 1963, she had the longest continuous commissioned service of any active ship in the United States Navy, belying her age as she continued to provide her essential support with outstanding skill and efficiency.

Vietnam War

Cimarron continued her service into the Vietnam War during Western Pacific deployments to **Subic Bay** between 1965 and 1967. But her claim to fame as the **oldest US Navy ship in continuous active service** ended abruptly after being side-swiped by the USS *Hornet* (CV-12) during an underway replenishment port-side approach along the San Diego, California coastline in September 1968. *Cimarron* was decommissioned and struck from the Navy List in October 1968 and sold for scrap in 1969.

As a tribute to many dedicated crew members, *Cimarron's* key artifacts were donated to Cimarron, New Mexico, which is located closest to the Cimarron River's headwaters at Eagle Nest, New Mexico. Her ship's bell became the Village high school's bell and two of her portholes and several brass crest/shields grace the high school's entrance.

Cimarron received **10 battle stars** for World War II service, **7 battle stars** for the Korean War, and **4 campaign stars** for her Vietnam War service making her **one of the Navy's most decorated ships**.



AO-22 Crest / Shield

Sources: <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/c9/cimarron-ii.htm>
<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-c/ao22.htm>
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Cimarron_\(AO-22\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Cimarron_(AO-22)).



Contributed by Mike Smolinski

AO-22 Cimarron

Voice Call Sign "Skidrow" (50-53)



Awards, Citations and Campaign Ribbons



Precedence of awards is from top to bottom, left to right

- Top Row - American Defense Service Medal - American Campaign Medal - Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (10)
- Second Row - World War II Victory Medal - Navy Occupation Service Medal (with Asia clasp) - Korea Service Medal (7)
- Third Row - National Defense Service Medal (2) - Vietnam Service Medal (4) - Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (5-Taiwan Straits, 1-Quemoy-Matsu, 1-Vietnam)
- Fourth Row - United Nations Service Medal - Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal - Republic of Korea War Service Medal (retroactive)

Cimarron Class Fleet Oiler

- Laid down, 18 April 1938, as a Maritime Commission type (T3-S2-A1) tanker hull, under Maritime Commission contract (MC hull 2) at Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock, Chester, PA.
- Launched, 7 January 1939
- Commissioned **USS Cimarron (AO-22)**, 20 March 1939
- During the Korean War **Cimarron (AO-22)** served in the combat zone for the following periods and participated in the associated campaigns:

18 September 1950 to 15 April 1951

Communist China Aggression

18 September to 2 November 1951

North Korean Aggression

3 November 1950 to 23 January 1951

First UN Counter Offensive

29 January to 20 March 1951

29 March to 8 April 1951

17 August to 20 September 1951

31 October to 25 November 1951

UN Summer-Fall Offensive

31 August to 10 September 1951

10 to 20 November 1951

Korean Defense Summer-Fall 1952

24 May to 8 June 1952

18 to 26 June 1952

29 June to 2 July 1952

11 to 23 July 1952

30 July to 10 August 1952

20 August to 1 September 1952

9 to 17 September 1952

8 to 19 November 1952

17 May to 20 September 1952

1 November to 30 November 1952

Third Korean Winter

12 to 18 December 1952

1 November to 21 December 1952

28 to 30 April 1953

Korea Summer-Fall 1953

7-16 May 1953

27 May to 6 June 1953

12 to 23 June 1953

7 to 16 July 1953

1 May to 2 September 1953

6 to 9 September 1953

22 to 24 October 1953

1 to 9 November 1953

- During the Vietnam War *Cimarron* (AO-22) participated in the following campaigns:

Vietnam Defense

22 July to 1 August 1965
 10 to 16 August 1965
 21 to 30 August 1965
 7 to 17 September 1965
 23 September to 6 October 1965
 9 to 15 October 1965

Vietnamese Counteroffensive

17 to 22 April 1966
 29 April to 4 May 1966
 9 to 11 May 1966
 16 to 23 May 1966
 27 to 30 June 1966

Vietnamese Counteroffensive - Phase II

10 to 18 July 1966

4 to 11 August 1966
 28 August to 5 September 1966
 10 to 14 September 1966
 20 to 23 September 1966
 7 to 15 April 1967
 20 April to 1 May 1967
 5 to 10 May 1967
 20 to 27-May 1967

Vietnamese Counteroffensive - Phase III

5 to 13 June 1967
 21 to 24 June 1967
 3 to 11 July 1967
 15 to 23 July 1967
 4 to 13 September 1967

- Decommissioned and struck from the Naval Register in October 1968
- Final Disposition: scrapped, at San Jose, CA in 1969
- *Cimarron* received 10 battle stars for World War II service, 7 battle stars for the Korean War service, and 4 campaign stars for Vietnam War service

Specifications

Displacement: 7,470 t.(lt) 24,830 t.(fl)

Length: 553'

Beam: 75'

Draft: 32' 4"

Speed: 18 kts.

Complement: 304

Armament: four 5"/38 dual purpose gun mounts, four twin 40mm gun mounts, four twin 20mm gun mounts

Cargo Capacity: 146,000 barrels

Propulsion: geared turbines, twin screws: 30,400hp

Sources: <http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/19022.htm>
<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-c/ao22.htm>

Photo # NH 73254 USS Cimarron, photographed circa 1945-46



Photo # USN 111502 USS Cimarron replenishes USS Hornet and USS Nicholas off Viet Nam, circa 1966

