

# 21<sup>st</sup> Naval Construction Battalion

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*Historical  
Information*



*“Construimus, Batuimus”  
“We Build, We Fight”*



21st C.B.

From the Chronological History of the 1st Brigade:

- 18 Oct '43 - Arrived Dutch Harbor from U.S.
- 7 Apr '43 - Detachments at Atka, Adak, and Ogliga.
- 21 May '43 - Adv. Base Unit landed at Attu - 7 off. & 151 men of the 23rd CB, 3 off & 100 men of the 12th CB, 5 men of the 21st CB.
- 21 Jul '43 - Detachment of 14 men left Dutch Harbor for U.S.

(Com 17 Sec. ltr ND17/AL2-1/L7 over 50/2b over Ser 0096 to Badocks dtd 6 Nov '44)

<u>1st Embarkation</u>		<u>21st CB</u>	<u>2nd Embarkation</u>	
NSIC	-	Norfolk	ABD	- Hueneme
ABD	-	Hueneme, 23 Sep '42	Ready Date	- 10 Jul '44
Ready Date	-	7 Oct '42	Left ABD	- 20 Jul '44 (Approx)
Left ABD	-	10 Oct '42 (?)	Destination	- <del>Pearl Harbor</del> Saipan Okinawa
Destination	-	Dutch Harbor		

LOG

- 9-21-42 - 21st CB detached from Norfolk 23 Sep '42 and ordered to report to Hueneme. (CO Norfolk ltr P16-4/P16-3/MM/CO Ser 4821 JGA dtd 21 Sep '42 to Lt. Fuller)
- 9- 7-42 - Batt split into 2 sections approximately equal in number; 1st Sect. 13 officers and approx. 520 men; 2nd Sect. 11 officers and approx 520 men.
- 10-10-42 - Both sections left Hueneme for Dutch Harbor.
- 10-12-42 - Battalion reformed as a unit, 24 officers and approx. 1040 men, while enroute to Dutch Harbor.
- 4-30-42 - 1st Brigade report - 21st CB is at Dutch Harbor, NOB, and 1 detachment at Adak NAS.
- 6-24-43 - 1 Jun '43 report of 23rd CB - 5 men landed on Attu.
- 7- 1-43 - 21st CB is at Dutch Harbor. (Com 13 to ComAlSec dtd 6-21-43 Sec. Disp.)
- 8-10-43 - 21st CB return to U.S. 1 Nov '43 approved. (VCNO Sec. Disp. 041254 Aug. to Com-AlSec)
- 12-18-43 - 21st CB arrived back in U.S. for rehabilitation about 14 Dec. '43. (WRK)
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- 6-24-44 - 21st CB arrived Hueneme 24 Jun '44 from Parks. (Rest. Disp. 242216 NCR 32001 from Hueneme to CNO)

21st C.B.

- 8-10-44 - Officers and men reported 7th Reg. 27 Jul'44. (OinC 7th Reg. 70R/01-PLA-fds over A4/P16-4/00 dtd 29 Jul'44 to OinC 21st CB)
- 8-28-44 - 1100 men of 21st CB transported by 20th Reg. on 28 Jul'44 from Able 14 to Moanalua. (20th Reg. report of 1 Aug'44).
- 8-30-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 21st CB - location not stated.
- 10-20-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 21st CB - Located at Pearl Harbor assembling Pontoon Causeways and Barges, also constructing camp. Report endorsed by 7th Reg.
- 11-15-44 -- The 21st CB is assigned to the 7th Reg. (Comservpacflt Sec. ltr 55-0K9/ark over Ser. 001008 to CNO dtd 4 Nov'44).
- 11-16-44 -- The 21st CB is located at Pearl Hbr. (Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 062243 NCR 15286 dtd 11 Nov'44).
- 11-21-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 21st CB - located at Intrepid Pt. and Waipio Pt., Oahu. Report endorsed by 36th Regiment.
- 12-7-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 7th Reg. - 21st CB reported to the 7th Reg. on 4 Oct'44.
- 12-7-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 21st CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by 7th Reg.
- 1-11-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of 21st CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by 7th Reg.
- 1-30-45 -- The 21st CB is to leave Pearl Harbor for Saipan. (Comservpac Sec. disp to CNO 212311 dtd 22 Jan'45).
- 2- 6-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 8th Brg. - 13 men were transferred to the 21st CB from the 10th CB.
- 2- 6-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 21st CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by the 7th Regiment.
- 2-15-45 - The 21st CB reported to the 35th Reg. 27 Jan'45 from 7th Reg. (35th Reg. <sup>com</sup> End End. (on 8th Brg. ltr Dtd 25 Jan'45) Ser. 085 dtd 27 Jan'45 to OinC 21st CB).

Location - ~~Saipan~~ Okinawa 21st CB

- 2-17-45 - The 21st CB is located at Pearl Hbr. (Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 081016 Feb'45).
- 3-10-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 21st CB - location not given. End. by 35th Reg.
- 4-24-45 - The 21st CB is staging at Saipan. (1 Apr'45 report of the 35th Reg.)
- 5- 8-45 - The 21st CB is located at Saipan. Staging for Okinawa. (DIRpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15Apr'45)
- 5-14-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 35th Reg. - The adv echelon of the Reg. arrived at Saipan on 17 Mar'45. The 7th, 14th, and 21st CBs arrived at the staging point shortly thereafter. The adv echelon of the Reg. and the batts are moving forward to target in echelons.
- 5-17-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of 35th Reg. - 23 officers & 968 men of the 21st CB along with 35th Reg. 7th & 14th CBs embarked during Feb'45 for staging at a forward area.
- 5-19-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 21st CB - enroute to Saipan as of 1 Mar'45.
- 5-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 21st CB - One echelon of 21 off. and 701 men, departed from Saipan on 22 Apr'45 and arrived Okinawa on 28 Apr'45. The records of these men remain at Saipan. Report routed via the 35th Reg and 8th Brg.
- 6-21-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 21st CB - located at Okinawa and Saipan. Movements as follows: 21 off. and 701 men left Saipan 21 April and arrived Okinawa 29 April; 3 off. and 157 men left Saipan 22 May and arrived Okinawa 27 May'45. 99 men and 2 off. still at Saipan. Report via 35th Reg and 8th Brg.
- 7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 21st CB - located at Okinawa. 3rd (final) movement of the Battalion consisting of 101 men and 2 officers left Saipan on 12 Jun'45 and arrived at Okinawa on 17 Jun'45. Report via 35th Reg and 8th Brig.
- 8-23-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 17th Reg - The 21st CB reported to the 17th Reg for duty on 22 Jul'45.

Location - Okinawa

21st CB

- 10-17-45 - CNOB, Okinawa request authority to inactivate the 21st CB. (CNOB, Okinawa conf spdltr ser 0203 dtd 20 Sept'45 to Comservpac).
- 10-30-45 - Comservpac approves the inactivation of the 21st CB. (Comservpac conf spdltr ser 05522 dtd 6 Oct'45 Cincpoa).
- 11-14-45 - Comservpac directs Comdt. Okinawa to inactivate 21st CB. Advise Comservpac when inactivation is completed. (Comservpac conf spdltr ser 05659 dtd 23 Oct'45 to Comdt., NOB, Okinawa).
- 12-5-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 21st CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 17th Reg. & 8th Brig.
- 1-15-46 - Inactivation of the 21st CB was completed on 21 Nov. 1945. (CinC 8th Brigade ltr ser 3016 dtd 28 Nov. 1945).

INACTIVATED.

ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Jul'44		1069	BNP625
1 Aug'44	30	1066	MoR
1 Sep'44	32	1067	MoR
1 Oct'44	32	1043	MoR
1 Nov'44	32	1012	MoR
1 Dec'44	32	999	MoR
1 Jan'45	31	1004	MoR
1 Feb'45	29	982	MoR
1 Mar'45	27	966	MoR
1 May'45	27	954	BNP625 & R
1 Jun'45	27	957	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	27	959	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	29	933	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45		896	BNP625
1 Oct'45	24	717	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	16	323	BNP625 & R



21st Naval Construction Battalion

1. Name, rank, and home address of OinC: LOWELL J. STEPHENSON,  
Lt. Comdr. CEC USNR - 4235 Howe St., Oakland, California.
  2. Date battalion was commissioned 28 August 1942
  3. Date battalion departed from U. S. 12 October 1942
  4. Details of first construction job:
    - a. Location Aleutian Islands.
    - b. Listing of major construction jobs including brief pertinent details as, type of job, size of job, time involved, and difficulties encountered: (example: fighter airstrip; size 4500' x 200'; completed in 60 days; airstrip ran through low marshland for 900 feet with an average four foot fill. Coral scooped from ocean bed provided the fill. \_\_\_\_\_  
See attached sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_  
(If additional space is needed, use another sheet and attach to this form)
5. List details of other construction jobs in like manner on attached sheet. See attached sheet.
  6. List participation in enemy action, giving places, dates, number of casualties and type of action, (bombing, shelling, ground fighting, opposed landings, etc., on the attached sheet.)
  7. Date of return to U. S. (If applicable) 4 December 1943.
  8. Date of second departure from the U. S. (If applicable) 20 July 1944.
  9. Details of construction jobs on second tour of duty (On attached sheet, if applicable) See attached sheet.
  10. List all previous OinC's of battalion, giving names, ranks, and dates: F.M. THOMSON, Lt. Comdr. CEC USNR - 22 Sept. 42 to 4 Aug. 45.  
E.M. KELLY, Lt. Comdr. CEC USNR - 28 Aug. 42 to Sept. 42.

4. (b)

Our tour of duty lasted for 13 months; the battalion consisted of a group of very capable and ambitious workmen. Their work was done quickly and skillfully, and they completed a large number of major construction projects and numerous smaller jobs. Adverse weather conditions existed in every season of the year, and rain, snow, and high winds continuously hampered construction progress.

Submarine Nets: Shortly after landing in the Aleutian area, the 21st Battalion was assigned the job of assembling submarine nets that were used to protect Dutch Harbor. Time involved on this work was three weeks.

Fuel Oil Tanks: This project consisted of constructing 5 concrete fuel oil tanks. The tanks were constructed to store fuel oil for ships coming into the Aleutian Area.

Submarine Base Power Plant: Power plant was constructed for submarine base for charging batteries on submarines based at Dutch Harbor.

Submarine Base Pier: Water, electrical, and steam facilities installed on Submarine Base Pier.

Road Projects: Constructed five miles of road over Ugadaga Pass (elev. 1600 ft) and up Pyramid Valley.

Airplane Hangar: Two wooden seaplane hangars and one concrete hangar constructed by 21st NCB. Wood hangars were 120 ft wide by 100 ft deep.

Gun Emplacements: Four twelve inch gun emplacements with concrete control station built on Hill 400. Water supply system for the Army also established on this hill.

4. (b) cont.

Hog Island Camp Area: Cantonment for Army built on small island across from Dutch Harbor. Approximately 500 men housed in this camp for which 21st NCB built all facilities.

Ammunition Storage: Fifteen ammunition storage magazines constructed at various locations in the Dutch Harbor area.

Marine Railway: Constructed marine railway and small boat shop for Naval Base.

Airfield on Ogliuga: This was a small island between Adak and Amchitka. Detachment of 65 men and two officers from the 21st NCB built 50 x 3000 Pierce/Plank airstrip on this island which was about 250 miles from Kiska. This project was carried out in mid-winter under adverse weather conditions.

Quonset Hut Area: Twenty-seven quonset huts were constructed for the Naval Air Station at Adak. Building conditions were very difficult, as the base was tundra soil which required a fill before operations could start. Materials were scarce and most of the materials were flown in. Driving rains and snow were the greatest obstacles.

Army Cantonment, Unalaska Valley: This job consisted of the construction of necessary facilities for an Army Garrison force of about 5000 men. Work consisted of the construction of the following: Ordnance Repair Shop, Bakery, Chapel, Barracks, Laundry, Theatre, Post exchange, sewer system, electrical system, roads, ammunition magazines, Headquarters Company Area, General's House, Prisoner Stockade, substation, fire station and decontamination buildings.

Additional Work: In addition to the above listed construction work, the following projects were also completed during the Aleutian tour of duty: Anti-aircraft School Building, building for the man-

4. (b) cont.

ufacture of powdered milk, radio station and entertainment building, Naval dispensary, four large enlisted mens' barracks, electrical and paint warehouses, battery overhaul shop, and truck and tire repair shop.

6. 

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Enemy Action: Late in April 1945, a few miles off the Island of Okinawa, the first group of 21st Seabees aboard LST's were attack by an enemy submarine. Destroyer-escort was credited with sinking this under-water craft, before any damage could be inflicted.

Late in May 1945, just off of Okinawa, the second group of 21st men aboard the PA 194, was attack by enemy planes. A suicide plane dove into the ship's bridge causing a great deal of damage, together with many casualties of the ship's crew, with a lone Seabee slightly burned.

The battalion was subjected to bombing on many occasions and in one case damaged a pier project near the camp area. A few weeks later an LST tied to this same pier was hit by a suicide plane, inflicting a great deal of damage to the ship, however the cargo was practically all unloaded before the plane struck.

9. Details of construction jobs on the second tour of duty:

The last portion of this report deals with the construction work completed by the 21st Battalion during the last part of our second tour of duty.

The battalion arrived at Okinawa aboard three LST's on April 29, 1945. Men and materials were completely unloaded by the evening of May 4, 1945 and on May 5, 1945, our first construction job on this island was assigned by Commodore C. C. Seabury of the 8th Naval Construction Brigade.

Kuba Beach Pier:

The first job consisted of the construction of a pontoon pier capable of berthing LSTs. Eleven days after this project was started, the first ships tied up to the dock and began unloading cargo destined for the front lines three miles away. At this time the pier had not been completed, but a six by eighteen pontoon head attached to the causeway enabled these first ships to discharge their cargo. The pier was completed on May 24th. Its total length consisted of eight hundred feet of pontoon barge sections connected to the shore by pontoon and earth fill approaches. 22,000 yards of fill were used in the approaches. Rough water and heavy rains were combated throughout the entire job. Heavy ground swells made this job particularly hazardous.

During the construction period, the men were living under extremely adverse conditions. Their only subsistence consisted of K-rations and black coffee, and they were housed in pup tents. Torrential rains and humid climate made conditions even more difficult.

9. cont.

Okinawa Road, Route #13:

Our second major construction project was the maintenance and repair of a highway leading to the front lines. This work involved twelve hour shifts and a maximum use of our trucks and road building equipment. During the time that the battalion kept the road in operation, thirteen inches of rain fell in two weeks time. This road was used to evacuate wounded and supply vital needs for the front. During the construction of this road, there was a critical shortage of fresh water and bathing facilities were at a minimum. Because of the continuous rainfall and humid climate the men had to wear wet and muddy clothing and shoes for days at a time.; their clothing could not be dried under existing conditions.

Baten Ko Pier:

This job consisted of the construction of a pontoon wharf six pontoons wide and 600 feet long. Original plans called for one approach, but later directives extended the length to 1200 feet and added 2 approaches to the original single approach. This project required 12,500 cu yards of coral fill in making the approaches. The project was completed in three weeks. The Baten Ko Pier proved functional during storms and for that reason the length of the pier was extended.

Yonabaru Pier:

The Yonabaru Pier was an 800 foot pontoon structure 6 pontoons wide with two pontoon approaches. A total of 321 piling was driven on this job by the 21st NCB pile driving rigs. The pier was completed

9. Cont.

in time to take care of an incoming convoy of LSTs ; 12 LSTs tied up to the pier at one time and numerous battalions of Seabees were unloaded over the pier. Storms damaged the pier and it was partially reconstructed only to be completely wrecked by another storm. Very heavy ground swells created by the storm was the cause of the destruction of the structure. After this damage reconstruction was determined unadvisable due to the excessive wave and ground swell action in that particular area during the storm periods.

Freighter Pier "S"

The fourth pier constructed by the 21st NCB was a deep water pontoon pier, 430 feet long with two pontoon approaches. The pier was designed to berth one liberty ship and it is now in operation. A total of 352 piling were used in this pier. The construction of this pier involved complications both from a rough sea and an inadequate supply of piling of sufficient length. All piling driven into the deep water at this site had to be spliced in order to obtain piling of sufficient length for the job.

The 21st battalion has constructed four larger pontoon piers all of which have played an extremely important part in the progress of the war and the development of this island. All but one are now in continuous operation; the Yonabaru pier failed because of an unavoidable misjudgment as to the proper location of its construction. The destructive force of the ground swells at that point was not anticipated when the location for the pier construction was chosen.

Miscellaneous Waterfront Facilities:

Additional waterfront facilities consisted of a Sea Mooring

For your information, pictures are included in this report illustrating the work completed on the jobs enumerated above.

Kuba Beach Pier:

- a) Kuba Beach Pier, Project No. 901.03 - 11 days after construction began. 21st NCB negative No. 31, date 5-17-45.
- b) Kuba Beach Pier, Project No. 901.03 - pier completed. 21st NCB negative No. 144, date 6-24-45.
- c) Kuba Beach Pier, Project No. 901.03 - LST burning after being struck by Jap Suicide plane. 21st NCB neg. No.141, date 6-22-45.

Okinawa Road, Route #13.

- a) Road Construction, Route #13, Project No. 1112.03 - road construction difficulties. 21st NCB neg. No. 66, date 6-9-45.
- b) Road Construction, Route #13, Project No. 1112.03 - blasting drainage ditches. 21st NCB neg. No. 76, date 6-10-45.

Baten Ko Pier:

- a) Baten Ko Pier, Project No. 901.14 - Baten Ko Pier nearing completion. 21st NCB neg. No. 177, date 7-12-45.
- b) Extension to Baten Ko Pier. 21st NCB neg. 242 date 8-29-45.

Yonabaru Pier:

- a) Yonabaru Pier, Project No. 901.02 - Yonabaru Pier in operation. 21st NCB neg. No. 204, date 7-23-45.

Freighter Pier "S":

- a) S and T Ships' Pier, Project No. 902.09 - Pier "S" nearing completion. 21st NCB neg. No. 205, date 7-28-45.
- b) First Freighter at "S" Pier., Project N-902.09  
21st NCB neg. No. 244 date 8-29-45.

cont. picture information.

Mine Disposal Work:

a) Mine Disposal Tsugen Jima, CCT Work Order No. 74 - Typical cache of Jap projectiles found on Tsugen Jima.

21st NCB neg. No. 56, date 6-2-45.

Water Point Development:

a) Water Point Project serving Ship Repair Units and 8th Brigade CB Battalions, 21st Project #801.01

21st Negative #245 date 8-28-45.

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PLAIN

ITINERARY OF THE 21ST NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

First Tour of Duty

Battalion formed at NCTC, Norfolk.

- 22 Sep 42 Departed Norfolk for ABD, Hueneme.
- 10 Oct 42 Departed Huaneme for overseas.
- 18 Oct 42 Arrived Dutch Harbor. Battalion operated from Dutch Harbor entire time overseas, with detachments on Atka, Adak and Ogliga.
- 14 Dec 43 Arrived Camp Parks from overseas. (Departure date from Dutch Harbor not available.)

Second Tour of Duty

- Feb 45 Embarked for Saipan.
- Apr 45 Began moving in echelons to Okinawa.
- 27 May 45 All of battalion at Okinawa except rear echelon.
- 17 Jun 45 Rear echelon arrived Okinawa.
- 1 Oct 45 Okinawa.

NOTE: The above itinerary is based upon information available in the C. B. Operations Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

15 October 1945.

PLAIN

HISTORICAL RECORD

Return to HISTORIAN  
Bureau of Yards and Docks



TWENTY FIRST

U.S. NAVAL

21ST NCB

CONSTRUCTION

BATTALION





Ye Olde  
Clip Joint



3-2-134-2



21st US



