

## U.S.S. DONNER - L.S.D. 20

A mountain pass on the Pioneer Trail to California where the Donner Party Perished in 1846.  
L.S.D.-20 DP. 4490 L. 457'9" 72'2" DR18' S 15KCPL. 326'A15CL CASA GRANDE

Donner LSD-20 was launched on April 6, 1945 by Boston Navy Yard; sponsored by Mrs. W. V. Alexander, Jr.; and commissioned on July 31, 1945, Lieutenant Commander P. V. McPeake, USNR, in command. Donner transported landing craft from Norfolk to New York then operated boat pools along the east coast until November 3, 1946 when she sailed for the Mediterranean and similar duty she returned to Norfolk on December 24 for duty along the east coast and on voyages to Argentea, Newfoundland, and Labrador, from January 31 to March 10 she sailed in the Carribean for a large scale landing exercise by the 2nd fleet Donner was placed out of commission in reverse on August 14, 1949. Recommissioned September 1950, Donner cruised to the Mediterranean for duty with the 6th fleet between March 5 and July 1951. Operating from Norfolk she took part in training exercises in the Carribean and made several cruises to the waters off Greenland for replenishment and cold weather operations. From July 17 to October 7, 1956, she made voyages from Norfolk to resupply the Dew Line Stations. Donner participated in the International Naval Review at Hampton Roads on July 12, 1957, then sailed for the Mediterranean on August 28 for NATO landing exercises in Turkey. She returned to Norfolk on February 8, 1958 and resumed training operations there and in the Carribean. Donner prepared for deployment to the Mediterranean during the Lebanon landings, but her orders were canceled when the crisis ceased. During the summer of 1959, Donner took part in Operation Inland Sea, the historic passage of a Navy Task Force into the Great Lakes through the newly dedicated Saint Lawrence Seaway. Between January 7, 1960 and June 14, she again served in the Mediterranean with the 6th fleet. On June 18, 1960, she entered the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for overhaul and modernization which continued through December 1960. Donner operated as a Flagship with NASA recovering three Mercury Redstone suborbital nose cones. In January 1961, Donner with UDT21 and U.S. Marine helicopters, recovered two instrumentation flights. On January 31, 1961, Flagship Donner recovered NASA Mercury Redstone nose cone with chimpanzee "Ham" aboard. From September 17, 1961 to December 19, 1961, Donner continued as the Flagship for Admiral Reed, commander of the South Atlantic fleet. Donner led the Solant Amity Task Force to Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, South Africa and other ports along the African West Coast. Donner continued to operate in the Carribean and Mediterranean until she was decommissioned on December 23, 1970 and placed in the Reserve Fleet. Donner was sent for disposal to Marad James River Reserve Fleet, Ft. Eustis, Virginia, on October 1981, where she remained until Donner's last voyage November, 2004. Ex-USS Donner LSD 20 was scrapped at All Star Metals Shipyard in Brownsville, TX between December, 2004 and March, 2005.