

2020gg

# First US troops arrive in Auckland

12 June 1942

## MCH, 2020ss



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Over the following two years, about 100,000 American servicemen would spend time in New Zealand, which became a rear base for the Allies' counter-offensive against Japan. This American 'invasion' led to a considerable clash of cultures (see 3 April).

At any one time between June 1942 and mid-1944, there were between 15,000 and 45,000 Americans stationed in New Zealand; most were in camps around Auckland and Wellington. As well as soldiers and marines, many US naval and merchant marine personnel spent time in this country.

For both visitor and host, it was an intriguing experience with much of the quality of a Hollywood fantasy. The American soldier found himself 'deep in the heart of the South Seas' – a land of tree-ferns and semi-tropical 'jungle' – in the words of his army-issue pocket guide. Little wonder that marine Leon Uris would later write a novel about the experience (*Battle cry*) and that Hollywood itself would make a film (*Until they sail*) based on a James Michener story, with Paul Newman as the troubled heart-throb.

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The Battle of Manners Street (1966 encyclopaedia)

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