The Greatest Liners In Detail

Olympic – The Old Reliable

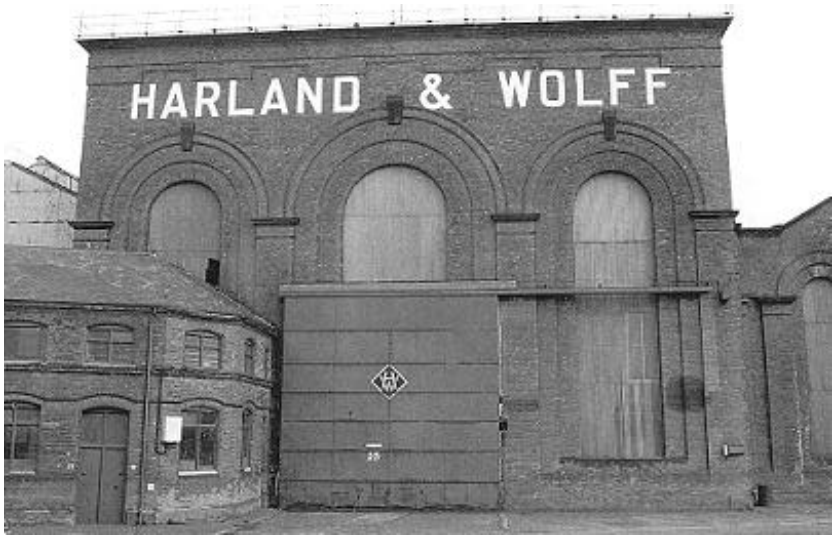
RMS Olympic was the longest lived of the Olympic Class liners White Star Line constructed to compete with Cunard's Lusitania and Mauretania.

While her sister ships Titanic and Britannic went to the bottom, Olympic prospered and even served her country in war time as a troopship, earning the nickname "Old Reliable" after proving herself unsinkable time after time.

Ismay’s Dream

When the Cunard introduced Lusitania and Mauretania in 1907, the White Star Line immediately felt the pinch as more and more people flocked to sail on the new Cunard leviathans. Bruce Ismay, the managing director of International Mercantile Marine; White Star's parent company, knew that his line would have to build ships far superior to Cunard's, both in size and luxury if they were compete. Speed would not be the issue. Lusitania and her sister were extremely fast but both were also notorious for noise and vibration. Ismay wanted big and glamorous. His giants would certainly be swift, but his intent was that their interiors rival even the most regal of palaces. The would be the most elegant ships ever to sail the oceans.

Ismay turned to White Star's ship builders at the Harland & Wolff Ship Yards in Belfast, Ireland. Lord William J. Pirrie, the managing director and controlling chairman of Harland & Wolff sat down with Ismay one summer evening and over some fine brandy or scotch, drew up preliminary plans for three ships that would impact the history of ocean liners in ways neither man could imagine at the time.

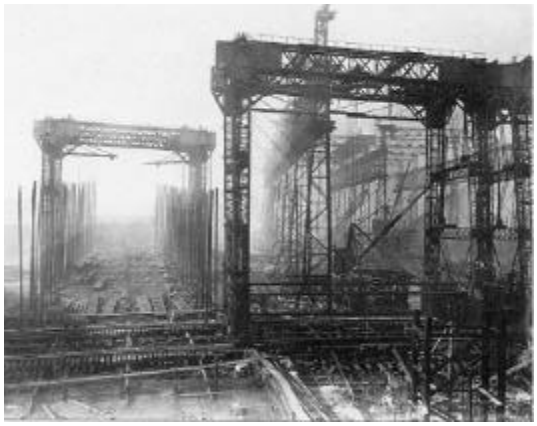


Left: *Harland & Wolff shipyards*
Below: *Lord Pirrie with his wife*

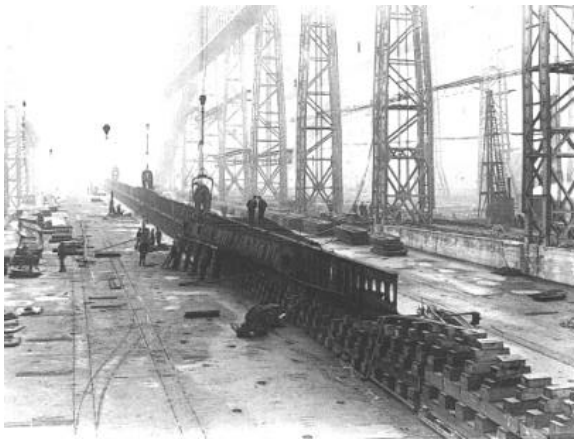
Ismay's dream was of three ocean greyhounds 900 feet in length adorned with the finest of everything; silk, oak, crystal and gold. The vessels would be "...the largest moving object(s) ever created by the hand of man." This phrase became somewhat passé towards the 1920's as just about every ship built seemed to claim it.

Lord Pirrie took Ismay's sketches back to his engineers. His nephew, Thomas Andrews was managing director of the design department. Andrews and his team drafted the plans for the vessels. At first three funnels were called for with four masts. However, numerous masts were the mark of a sailing vessel; these ships were to be the queens of a new era. A fourth funnel, a dummy that could be used for ventilation, was added. The public felt that vessels with four stacks were safer because they were larger and sturdier. The number of masts was reduced to two, one fore and one aft. The antenna for the marconi wireless apparatus would be strung between the masts. Fifteen vertical bulkheads spanning the width of each ship would divide the length of the hull into watertight compartments. Accessible to each other through doors that could closed from the bridge, the compartments could be sealed off in the event of an emergency. Any four (or the first five) could be flooded and the ship would stay afloat.

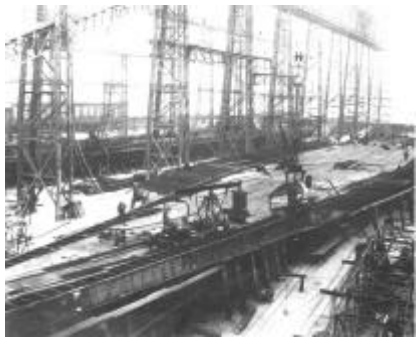
A New Leviathan



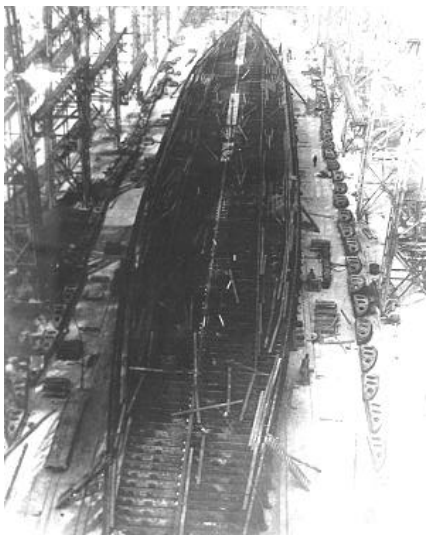
The first keel plate for Olympic was laid on December 16, 1908, three months before Titanic's keel was laid down in the adjacent slip. The first of Ismay's three giants was photographed heavily during her construction, as nothing like her had ever been built. Much larger than the Cunarders she was to outdo in size and luxury, Olympic's massive frame rose from underneath the gantry like an enormous skeleton, inspiring awe as well as trepidation in the residents of Belfast. To the nearly 15,000 men who worked the steel and iron into place, she was a source of great pride. At the end of a long day riveting plates and muscling beams into place, the streets would be flooded by the deluge of workers staggering home for a few hours sleep before heading back to the shipyard the next morning.



Thomas Andrews was the chief design engineer. As director of Harland & Wolff's design department, he was instrumental in turning Bruce Ismay's dreams into reality. Andrews was well-liked and was always one of the first to arrive at the ship yard in the morning, blueprints stuffed into the pockets of his coat. He oversaw every aspect of Olympic (and Titanic's) construction, from the laying of the first keel plate to the last bit of varnish applied to her oak fittings. Andrews took great pride in his ships. When he sailed on them, he always carried a notebook. He was constantly taking notice of squeaky doors or steps, a loose rail, a scratch on wood. He was also constantly designing. Noting rooms that were too small or too large, hallways that should be this or lounges that could be that. Thomas Andrews loved building ships.

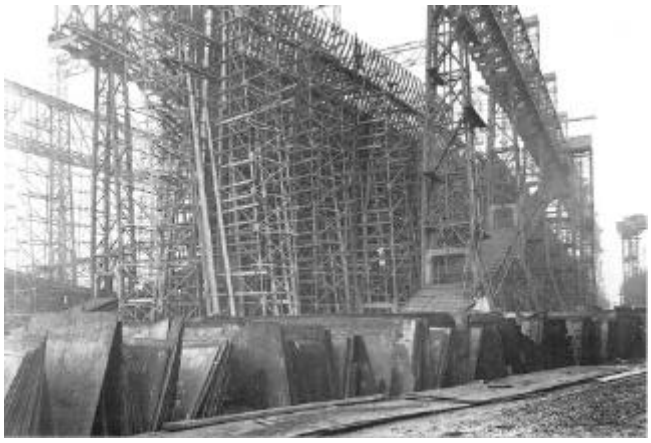


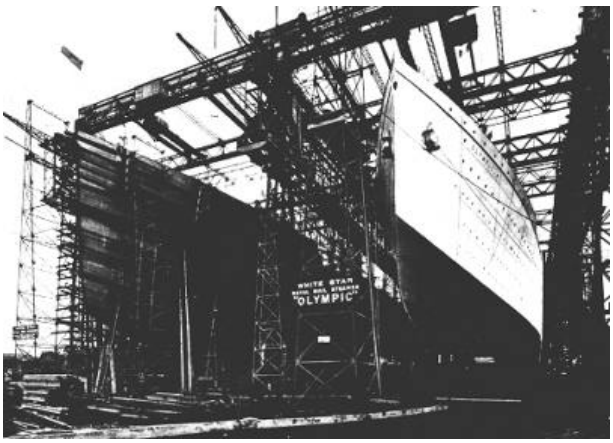
The art of shipbuilding has changed drastically since the early 1900's. Today, welding, computers and advanced machinery make for smooth, nearly perfect hull shapes, with hydrodynamic efficiency far surpassing the riveted iron hull. But the early years of the 20th century saw the established skill of creating a vessel move forward with the rapid pace of technological development. The graceful lines of the Olympic Class liner, with the gentle sloop towards amidships, the hourglass curvature of the forward bow, the intricate plating on the schooner bow; all done by hand.



The construction process could not start until Harland & Wolff constructed the gantries under which Olympic, Titanic and Gigantic would be built. They invited various firms to bid on the task. Thomas Arol and Company of Glasgow won the contract. The gantries were enormous, far larger than anything built before. They were each 840 feet long, 150 feet wide and over 220 feet tall. The tops of the structures were fitted with mobile cranes that could lift 3 tons each. At the same time Harland & Wolff purchased a secondhand floating crane for use at the fitting out basin. This crane could lift 250 tons. The lifting capacity would be needed to load the massive machinery that would be housed in Olympic's belly.

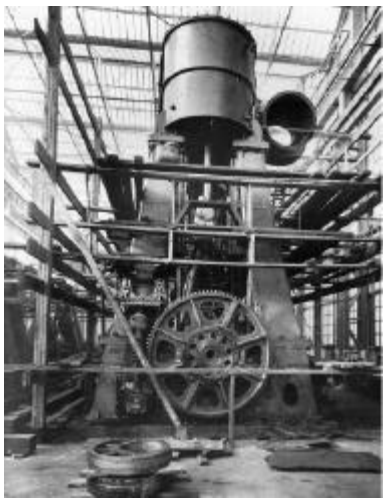
Once the gantries were complete, Olympic's keel, the longitudinal steel beam that serves as the backbone of a ship, was laid down and the frame extended out and upward from the keel.





"The skeleton within the scaffolding began to shape, at the site of which men held their breaths. It was the shape of a ship, a ship so monstrous and unthinkable that it towered there over the buildings and dwarfed the very mountains by the water...with a rudder as big as a giant elm tree, with propellers the size of windmills - everything was on a nightmare scale..."

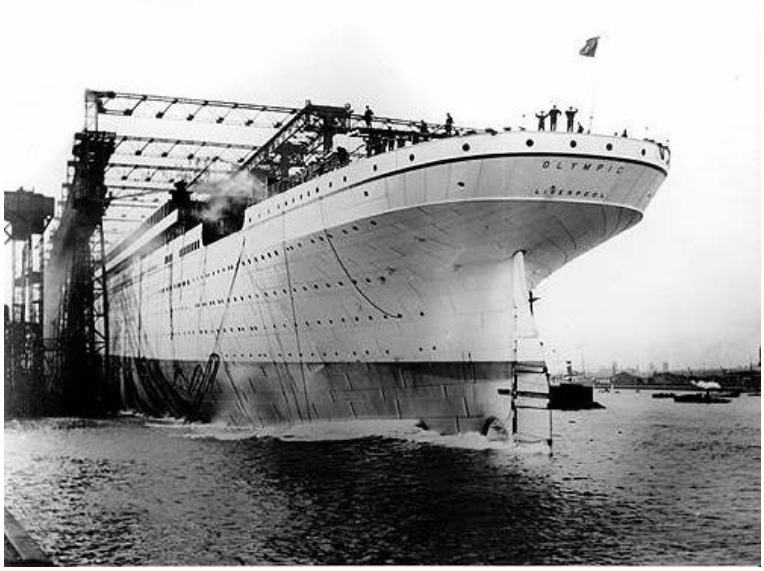
- Belfast resident; 1910



Indeed Olympic and Titanic were of a scale never before seen. From keel to the the boat deck was nearly ninety feet. The intricately riveted hull plates were of the highest quality steel. The rudder assembly alone took dozens of men and a lot of sweat to attach to the keel. The pair of four-crank, triple-expansion reciprocating steam engines was four stories tall and weighed 990 tons! The engines were assembled separately and installed with large cranes; lowered through the empty hull before the deck plating was put into place.

As Olympic neared completion, publicity increased as White Star boasted her dimensions and depicted her luxuriousness in sketches and diagrams. The public was enthralled and engineering publications dedicated entire issues to the new ship and her sister. The press, learning about the watertight compartments that divided the hull, dubbed the new liner(s) "unsinkable"; a label that White Star neither confirmed nor denied, stating simply that their new ships would be the largest and safest afloat in addition to, of course, being the most elegant vessels ever to grace the sea.

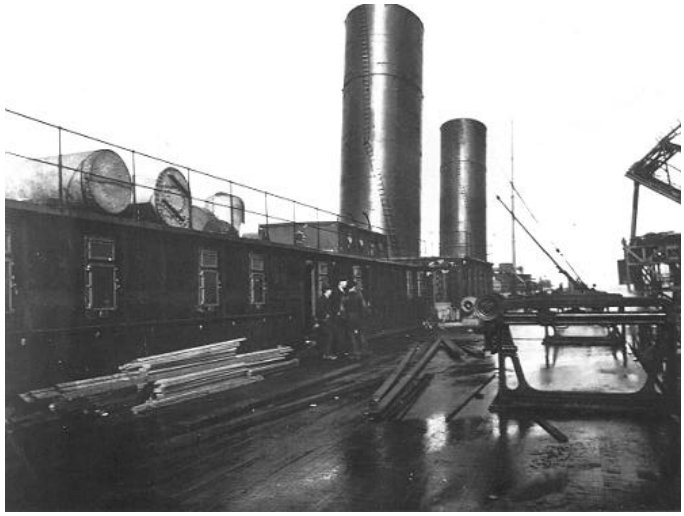
Unlike their rivals, White Star Line did not use champagne to christen their ships. Many Titanic films depict a ceremony in which a bottle is smashed against the hull to get it moving down the slip, but in reality it was much less regal. From a platform situated under the bow, a launch trigger was activated and the wooden timbers holding the ship in place were knocked out one by one. Hydraulics assisted and the slipway was greased with tons and tons of soap and grease.



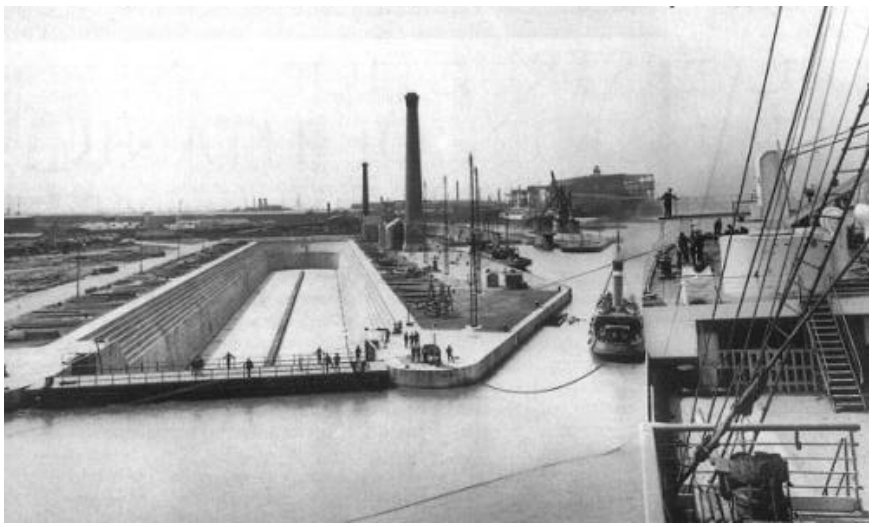
Olympic was launch on October 20th, 1910. As was the tradition with the first ship of a new class of liner, her hull was painted white and red; the White Star colors. Thousands of people gathered to watch her slip into the water for the first time.

As Olympic's 882 foot long hull slid into the water, nearby ships blasted their whistles and the throngs of people lining the river bank cheered.

Reaching a speed of nearly 12 knots, it took a full minute for Olympic to complete her journey. Her momentum was halted by six anchor chains and two piles of drag anchors. Then tugs moved in, got hold of her and towed her to the outfitting basin where her interiors and her heavy machinery would be installed.



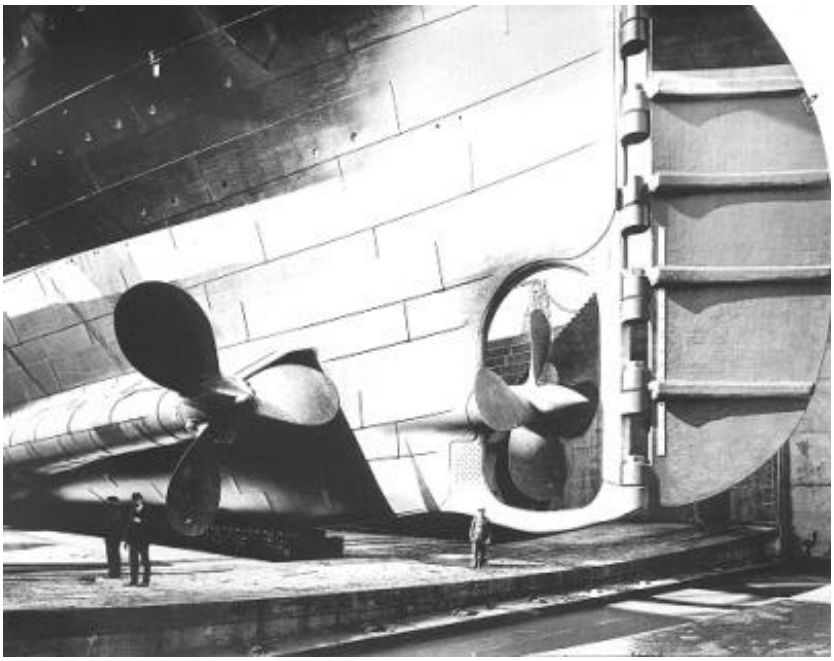
The funnels were elliptical; 24ft 6in. by 19ft and were more than 75 feet tall. The images of a funnel being transported through town and raised off the ground by a crane give a good indication of just how enormous they were. The forward three funnels were functional, providing exhaust for the 29 boilers below. The fourth funnel, as is well known, was a dummy; the original plans called for three but in the wake of Lusitania's and Mauretania's success it was decided that four funnels were essential. The fourth funnel served as a ventilation shaft for the engine room, which was to be extremely hot and smoky from the boilers and the engines themselves.



Olympic was moved from the outfitting basin to the new Thompson Graving dock. The Belfast Harbor Commission had constructed the dry dock for the purpose of accommodating the new super liners. Graving docks were called such because of their resemblance to graves. Ironic considering that the grave dock was the final element in the birth of a liner. In dry dock, the hull is painted and checked for weaknesses while work on the super-

structure and interiors proceeds. The task of turning Olympic into a floating palace was a monumental one to be sure. Today, large cruise ships are built mostly by machine; the hulls are assembled in sections and the cabins are prefabricated and inserted in blocks. In 1911 the work was accomplished only through the sweat and tears of thousands of Belfast shipbuilders and artisans of every craft.

From Siam came the finest teak, fabrics from Holland and steel from Scotland arrived at the Harland & Wolff ship yards to complete the liner and ready her for service. When she was completed, Olympic weighed in at 46,439 tons. At 882 feet long and 90 feet wide amidships, she was the largest moving object ever created. She passed her sea trials with flying colors and was officially handed over to White Star on May 31, 1911; the same day Titanic was launched. After watching her sister ship slip into the water for the first time, Olympic ferried Bruce Ismay and company to Liverpool. Then it was on to Southampton for her maiden voyage.



Queen of the Line

RMS Olympic sailed from Southampton on June 14th, 1911. Her first time at sea would not prove to be a record breaker, but she did overwhelm her First Class passengers with splendor and grace the likes of which they had never experienced. Her First Class accommodation were beyond measure; indeed even her Second Class rooms were plush. They rivaled First Cabins on most other liners at sea. White Star's newest flagship had impressed the media; she was truly the grandest ship afloat. "Let Cunard have the Blue Riband" Bruce Ismay must have mused, "Olympic, together with her sisters Titanic and Gigantic will all but secure White Star as the preeminent line to travel on..."

Among Olympic's accouterments were two "Grand Staircases". The First Class staircases, located just before the 2nd and 4th funnels, were wondrous sites to behold. Enormous carved oak rails, fanning out at each landing, the stairs allowed the aristocratic elite a lavish entrance to a social event. Descending to the First Class Dining Room, one stepped off the Grand Staircase into the First Class Reception Room to mingle with the rich and famous before dining on the finest food and drink at sea.

Diners who wished to avoid the stairs could use one of three elevators, still a rarity at sea, situated forward of each landing (behind the stairs if you were looking at them). The roof of each stairwell was topped with a wrought-iron and glass dome. The upper most landing on the forward stairs was graced by a clock that featured an elaborate carving of Honor and Glory crowning Time.

Second Class passengers found their own sections of the ship decorated tastefully, if not luxuriously. The Second Class stairs in the image at right give an indication of the fine amenities Second Class passengers were afforded on the new White Star ships.

By contrast, Third Class or Steerage passengers found themselves in a more Spartan atmosphere. The majority of passengers traveling on the lower decks would be immigrants. The trip to America was relatively cheap; for that low price and the promise of a new life in the New World, little was expected in the way of thrills and frills.

The picture at left shows Lord Pirrie and Captain E. J. Smith aboard Olympic during her maiden voyage. Smith was White Star's most experienced (and well paid) captain. He would go on to command Titanic on her ill-fated maiden voyage.

The decor of Olympic reflected several different eras in interior decoration. The First Class staterooms, for example, offered a wide variety of motifs to suite the particular tastes of the Atlantic traveler. Period decor included Empire, Adams, Italian Renaissance, Louis XIV, XV and XVI, Georgian, Regency, Queen Anne, Modern and Old Dutch. Such a multitude was unheard of on a vessel. There were also a particular large number of multi-room suites in First Class. These consisted of a sitting or parlor room, a private bath and one or two bedrooms. The price tag for passage in one these suites topped $5,000 (the equivalent of more than $50,000 today!) for a one-way ticket.

The picture at left is of a First Class stateroom and clearly shows the opulence in which a well-to-do traveler would cross the ocean. In the days before movies and movie stars, the notoriously famous were the upper class aristocrats who, by virtue of birth rite or hard work or smart investments, had been elevated far above the masses. To the common working man, the names meant little or nothing, but to the upper echelons of high society, image and reputation meant everything in the world. It was important to be on the right ship at the right

time and be seen with the right people. The rich thought nothing of the lower classes, viewing them only as plebeian laborers on whose backs there was much money to be made.

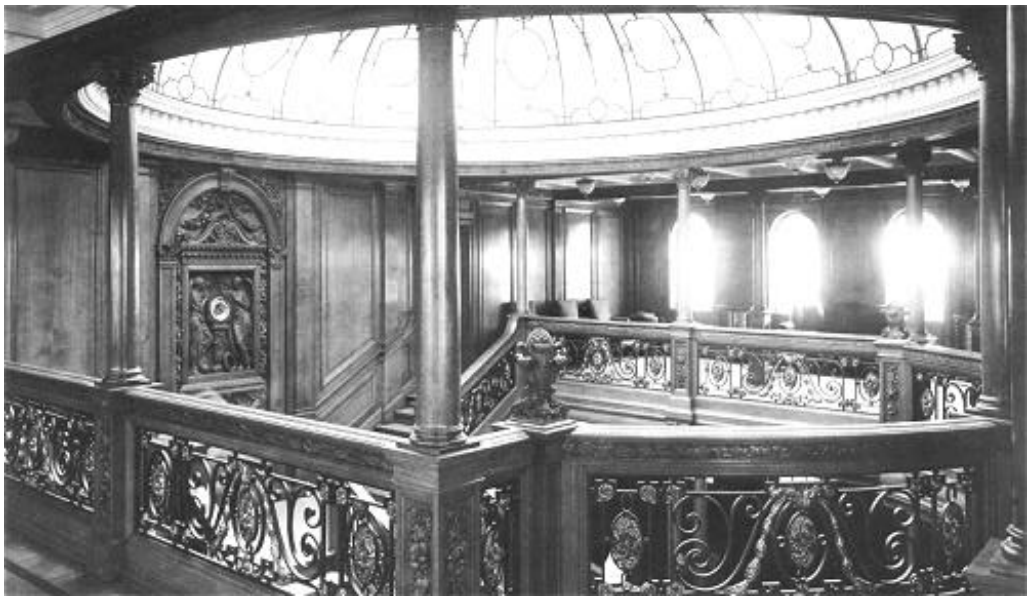
Providing onboard diversion for the aforementioned aristocracy were several gender-specific rooms. The First Class Smoking Room and Lounge were exclusively male haunts. Retiring from dinner for political jabber over liquor and cigars, these rooms were occupied well into the wee hours when most of the ship lay silent and dark.

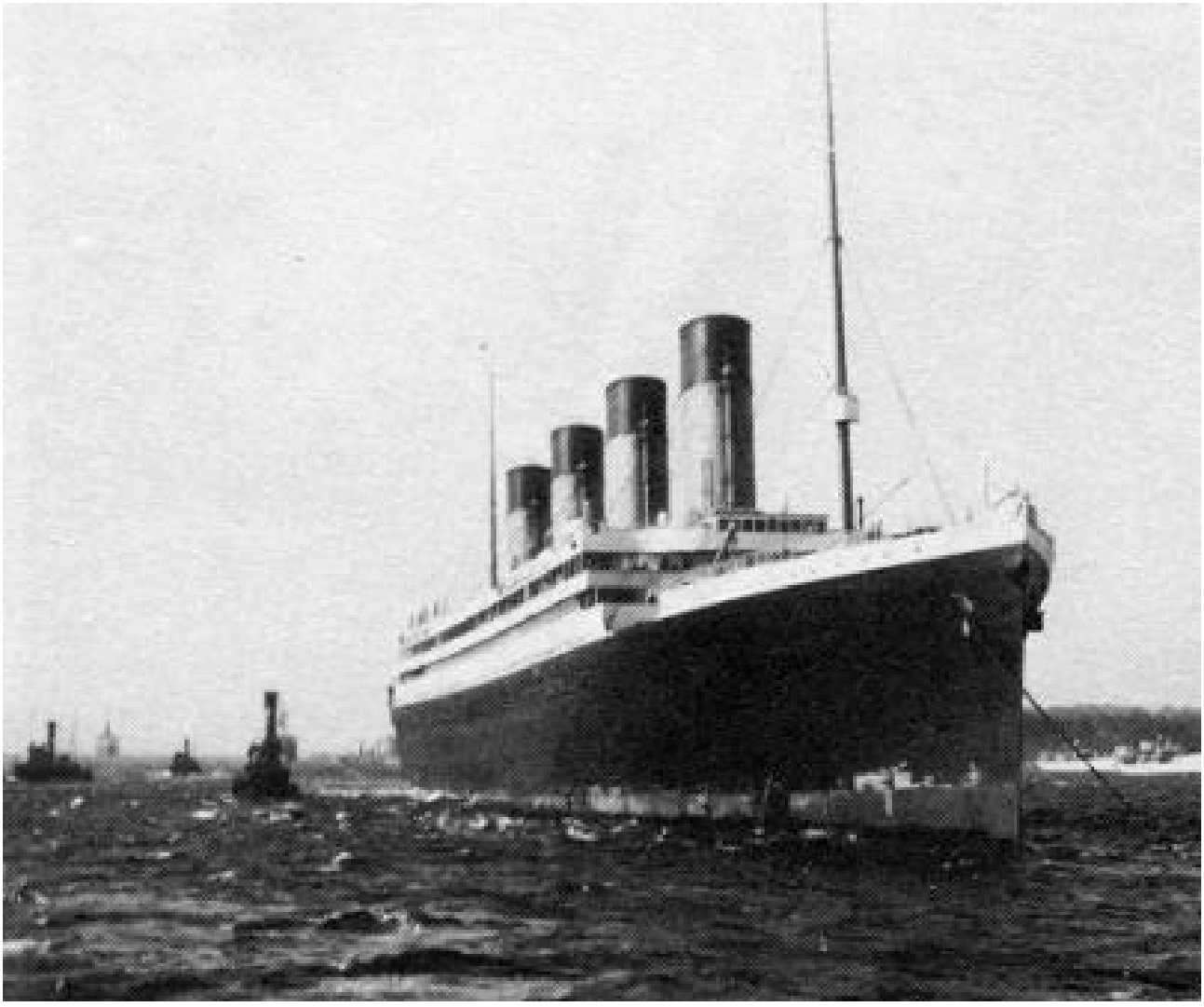
The First Class Reading Room was designed so that female passengers would have a place of their own to mingle and consort with their constituents. Lavishly decorated and lit by natural light during the day, all of these rooms were stunning.

The Palm Court and Verandah Cafe were unique getaways that provided a more intimate environment for a meal. The Cafe Parisien was a replica of an outdoor Paris locale that quickly became a favorite among younger passengers.

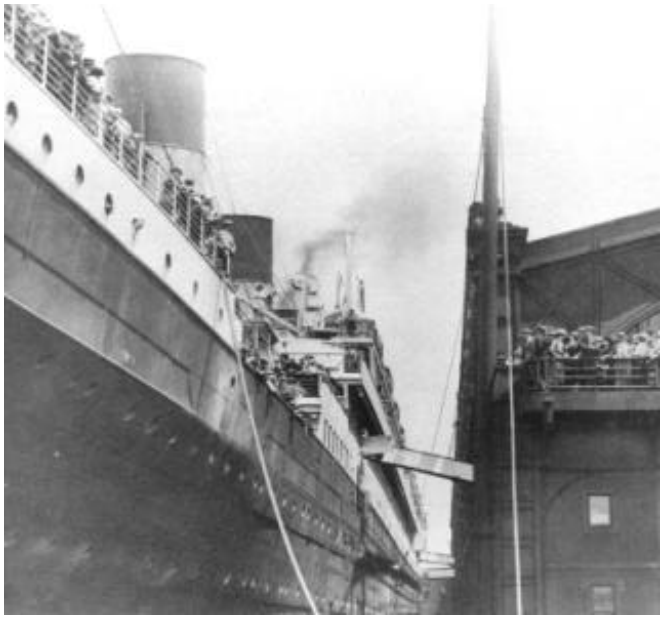
Olympic was the first liner equipped with a swimming pool. A gymnasium, complete with fitness instructor, was there to provide passengers with a means of exercise, although most of the equipment was a novelty at the time and for the most part, passengers saw the mechanical camel or rowing machines more as curiously entertaining than a means of staying fit. A Turkish Bath, essentially a steam room, was intricately adorned in Ottoman theme.

Olympic was without a doubt the most beautiful ship afloat when she sailed on her maiden voyage. Although her splendor would soon be outdone by her sister Titanic, her own reputation would distinguish her in the years to come. While both her sister ships would end up on the ocean floor, Olympic would go on to earn the nickname "Old Reliable" as she proved herself to be what her sisters were not; unsinkable.





Above, below left and right: RMS Olympic arriving New York after her maiden voyage



Old Reliable

RMS Olympic, in the course of her nearly 25 years at sea, earned the name "Old Reliable". Besides being cherished by her passengers and crew alike, Olympic proved herself time and time again to be a ship that could not be stopped or sunk. When World War I broke out in August 1914, Olympic remained in commercial service. She once rescued the crew of a British battleship off the coast of Ireland. The warship had struck a mine and was sinking fast. In September of 1915, the Royal Navy requisitioned her as a troop ship. She was painted in various colors and geometric shapes and refitted to carry more lifeboats and thousands of troops in a crossing. During her war service she survived four submarine attacks, turning one of them into an attack of her own as she turned on the enemy sub and rammed it. Although a glancing blow, with more than 46,000 tons of steel behind it, it was more than enough to sink the German submarine, forcing its crew to abandon ship.

All told, Olympic transported more than 120,000 civilian and military personnel across the Atlantic and was, like so many liners drafted for war duty, instrumental in bringing the war to a close. Following a postwar refit, "Old Reliable" was back to sea by July of 1920. The Roaring Twenties offered a rejuvenation of sorts for the ocean liner. Many people, weary of war, sought comfort and relaxation aboard ship. Americans, in particular, sought European liners as an escape from the stringent shackles of Prohibition. Once clear of American waters, the drinks were on and the party started.

Rough Seas

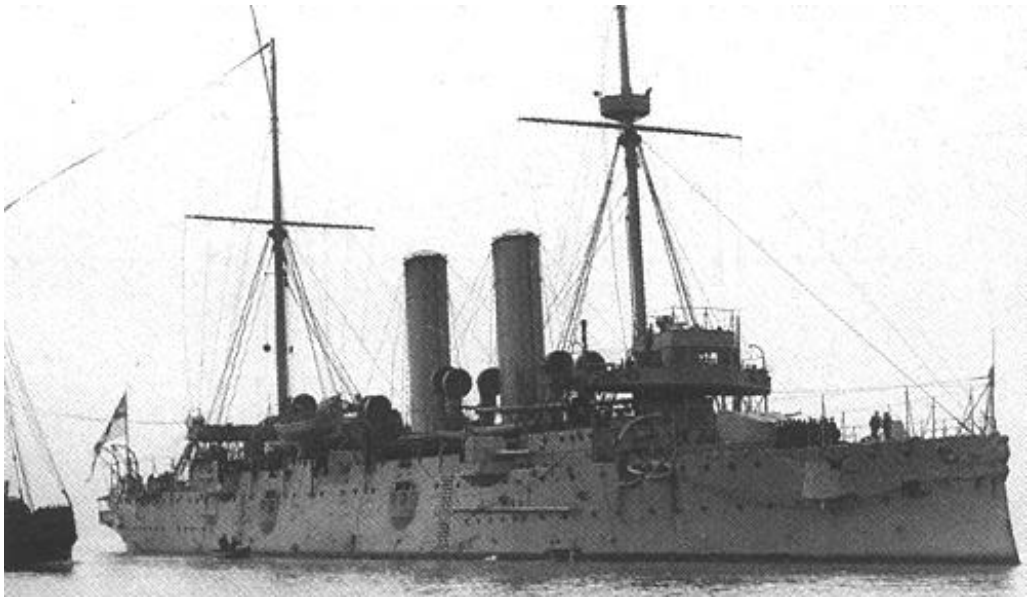
Olympic's life was not without problems. Very early in her career she was involved in a collision with a small British naval cruiser, H.M.S. Hawke. On September 20th, 1911 Olympic was leaving Southampton Water just after noon. She turned into Spithead, between the Isle of Wright and the mainland. This stretch of water lead to the English channel and her first port of call, Cherbourg in France.

At the same time, the small warship was rounding Egypt Point of the Isle of Wright, entering the same channel on a converging course. No one is quite sure exactly what happened next, although it is heavily debated. As Hawke's bow came abreast of Olympic's aft starboard quarter, the small cruiser was drawn, seemingly helplessly, into the side of the massive White Star liner. The reinforced bow of the warship punctured Olympic's hull above and below the waterline. The small ship nearly capsized as Olympic dragged her down the channel, spinning her like a top when she finally tore loose.

Olympic, although her damage was considerable, was never in any danger of sinking and no one on either ship was injured. Hawke's bow was crumpled but she was able to limp back to port for repairs. The following pictures show Hawke before and and after the incident.

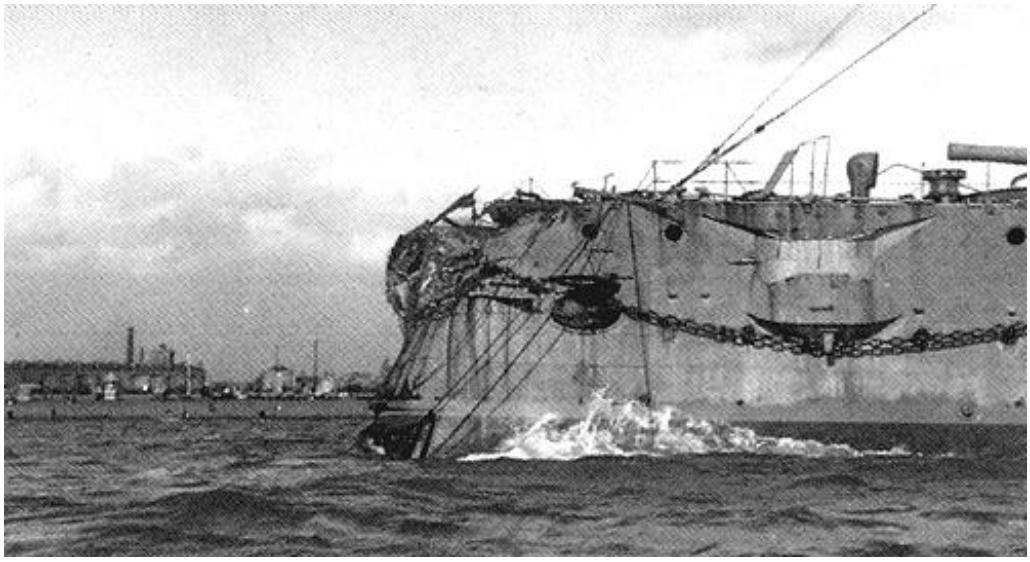
In March 1912, Olympic struck an uncharted underwater obstruction and dropped a propellor. She was returned to Harland & Wolff again where one of Titanic's blades was removed and fitted on Olympic. This was the last time the two sisters would ever be seen together. A month later Titanic sailed on her maiden voyage.

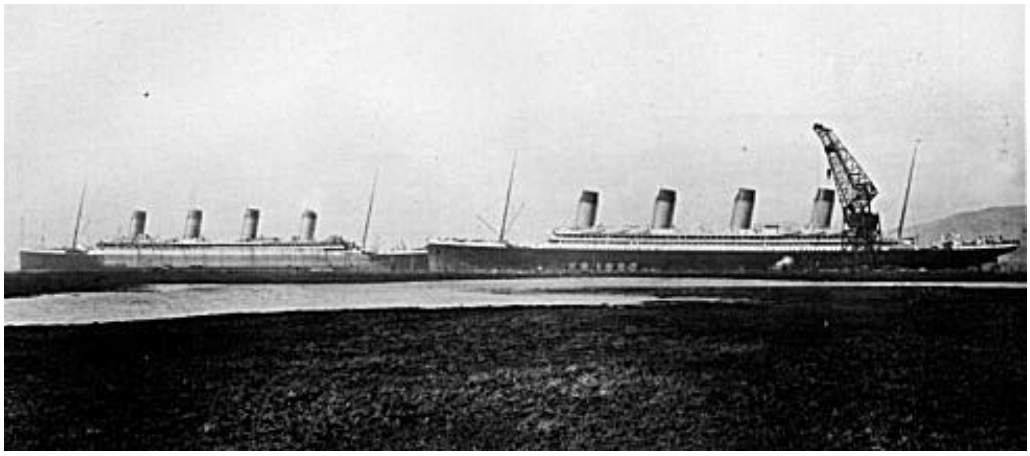
Following the loss of her sister ship, Olympic was not immediately withdrawn from service as many people think. When Titanic went down, Olympic was outbound from New York, headed for Southampton. She was more than 500 miles away when she received the distress call but poured on steam and made best possible speed anyway. She was waved off the next morning at Bruce Ismay's request, not wishing for Titanic's survivors to see a duplicate of the ship that had sank only hours earlier.

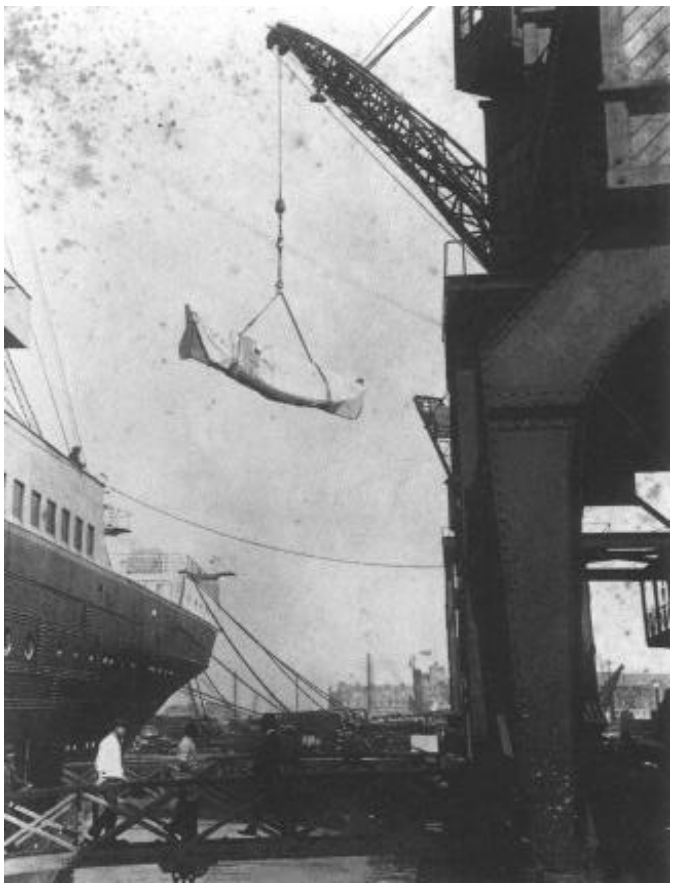


Upon her return to Southampton, she was fitted with 24 additional collapsible boats and readied for her next voyage. Her stokers refused to board, citing the high loss of life among the stokers on

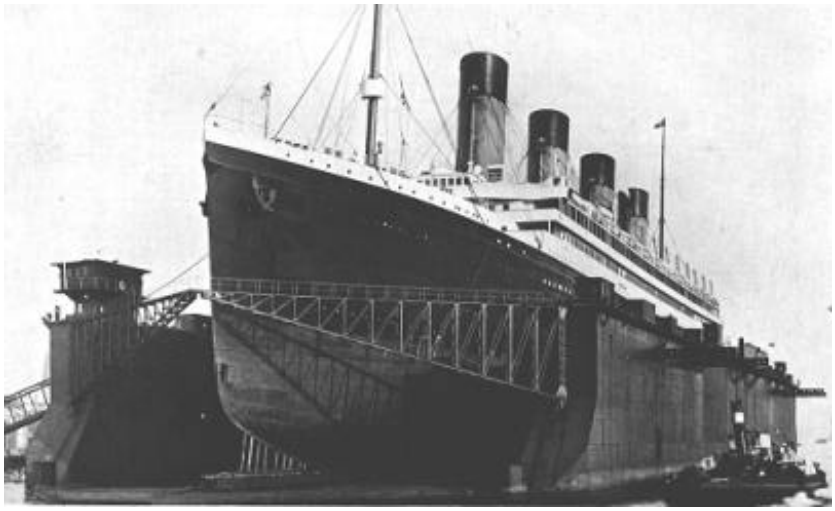
Titanic. They refused to sail until enough wooden lifeboats were installed. Once the inquiry into the disaster was convened, Olympic was withdrawn from service for a 6 month refit that included extending her double bottom up the sides of the ship and capping off her watertight compartments.







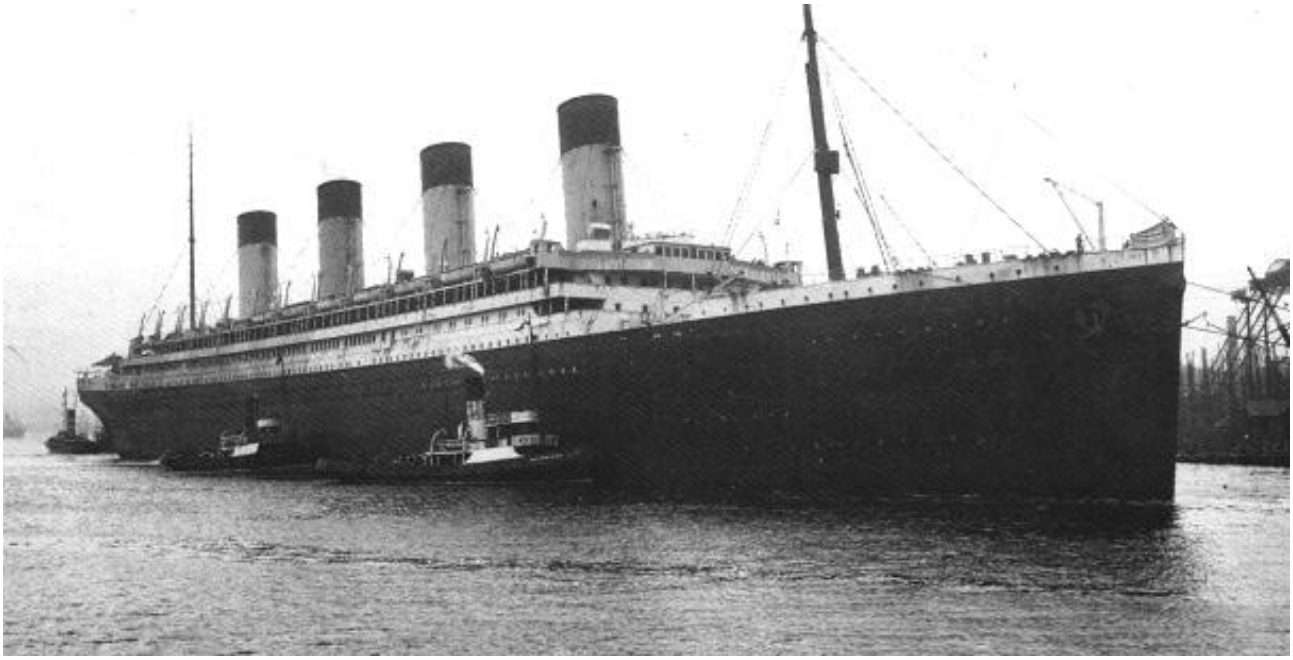
Olympic's final dark moment came on May 15, 1934. Flying under the new Cunard-White Star flag, she rammed the Nantucket lightship in heavy fog. Seven members of the lightship's crew were lost. Her owners, forced together by the Great Depression (and the British government), decided that the old liner had outlived her usefulness. In March of 1935, RMS Olympic made her last crossing to New York. Upon her return to England, she was decommissioned and sold for scrap...



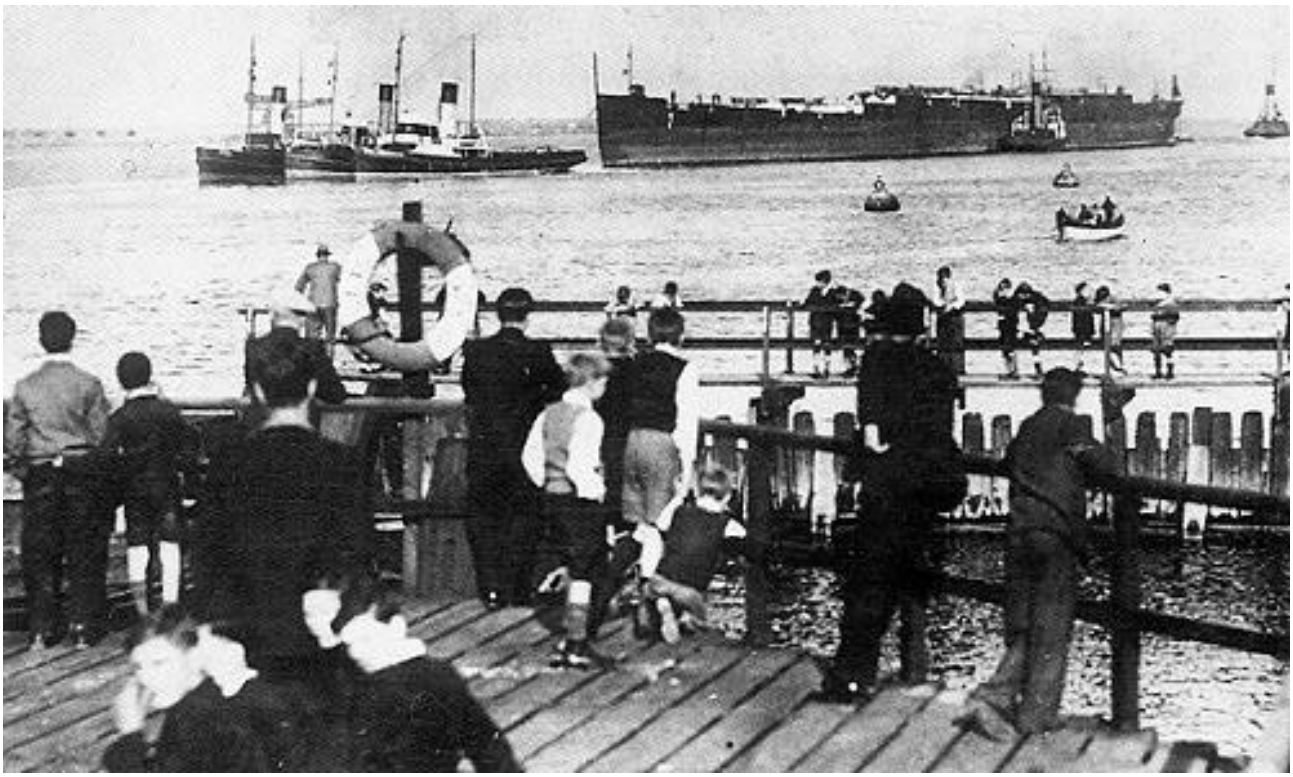
Cold Sunset

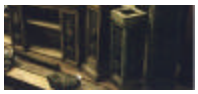
Olympic's final voyage was up the Tyne River to the town of Jarrow. She had been purchased from White Star by a local businessman who hoped to ease the hardships of an economic recession plaguing the small community. The work required to break the ship down for demolition would employ thousands of men over a period of two years.

The picture down below is of Olympic upon her arrival at Jarrow. Previously she had been berthed at Southampton's Pier 108 alongside Cunard's Mauretania, also awaiting her final orders.

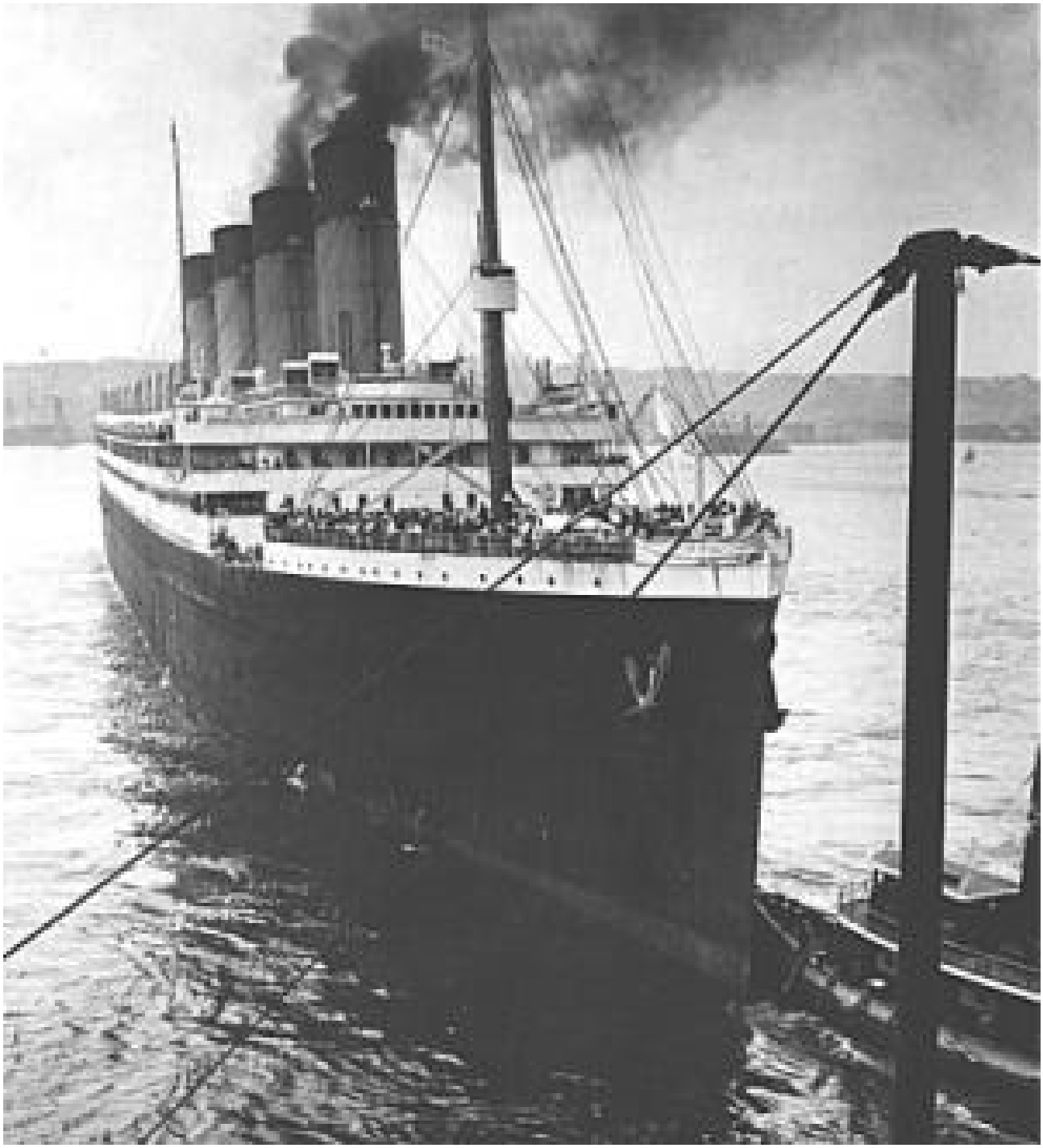


Olympic's fittings were auctioned off and scattered to the winds. Any and all things removable were removed and her superstructer was stripped down to the deck plating on B Deck. When she was but an empty hull, similar to as she had been the day she was launched, she was dragged mercilessly by tugs to Inverkeithing, Scotland for final demolition. Her hull was cut up, smelted, and reused for another ships perhaps.

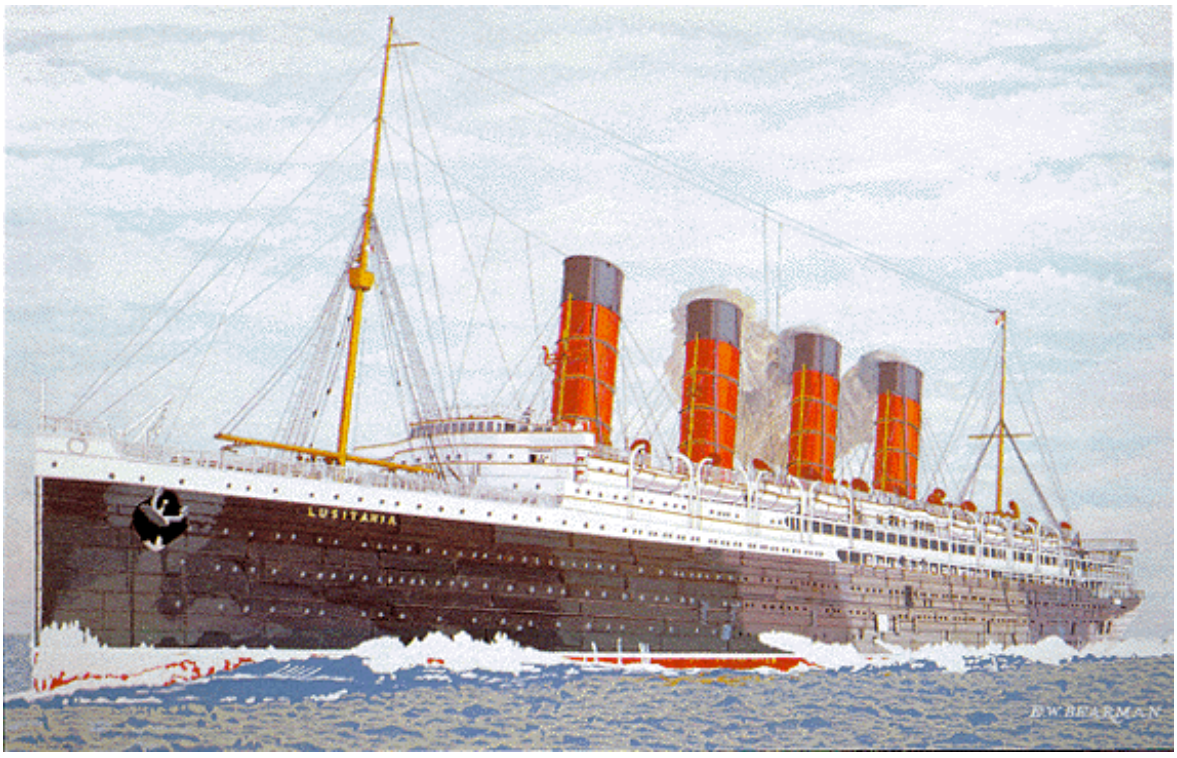




Ironic to be sure, an ocean liner that manages to survive the ocean is doomed to a far less dignified fate than one that is lost to the depths. Olympic, having endured all that she had endured, was in the end tossed aside and shredded. Of her, all that remains are only pieces scattered to the four corners of the globe. That and the love that ocean liner enthusisasts hold for these grand vessels. May Olympic's spirit forever sail the sea of our memories...

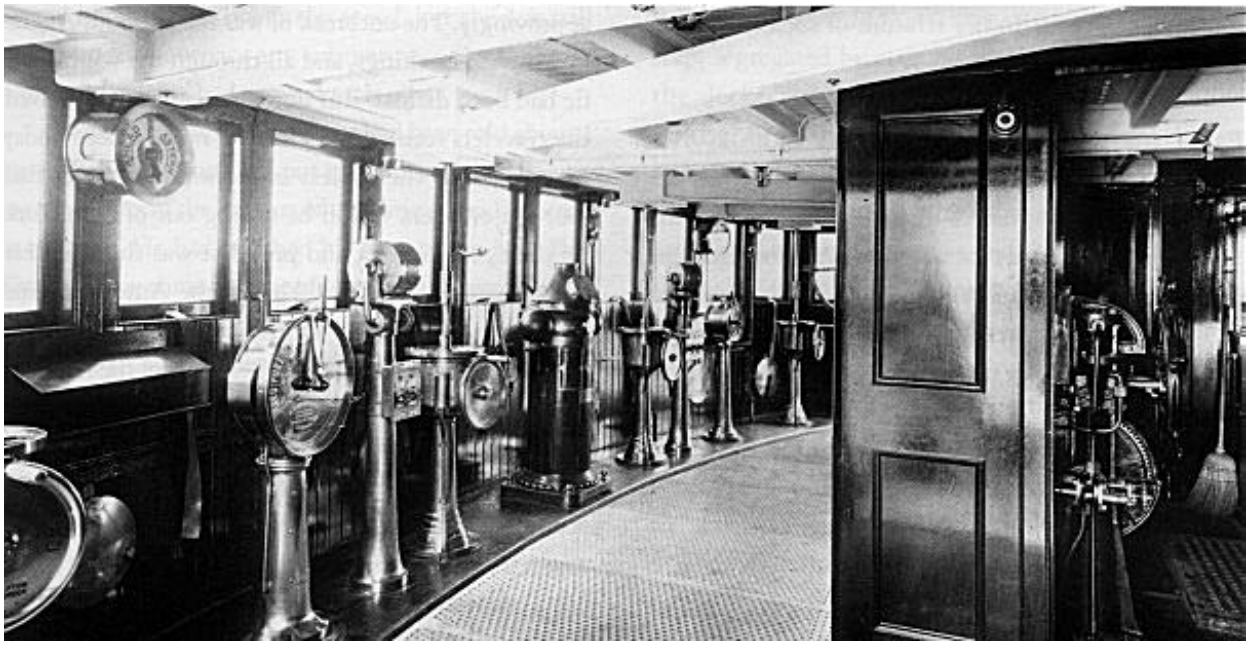


LUSITANIA



When Germany introduced the first four-stacker in 1897, Britain's Cunard Line went to the English government and asked for help in constructing two ships larger and more luxurious than the new Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse and take back the Blue Riband from the Germans.

Cunard's British rival, White Star, was now owned by an American interest and Cunard was England's last real hope for dominance of the North Atlantic. Cunard succeeded in convincing the admiralty and the contract was signed for two ships that would be far superior to anything the Germans had. RMS Lusitania was constructed at the John Brown & Company in Clydebank, Scotland while her sister ship, Mauretania was built by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson in Newcastle, England. A rivalry that was, at times, less than friendly, saw the ships constructed at break-neck speed. Lusitania was completed first and entered service in September 1907. She was followed two months later by her sister. Lusitania took back the Blue Riband but Mauretania took it from her. Slightly larger than her sister, Mauretania quickly established herself as the faster of the two; she would go on to hold the record for twenty years.



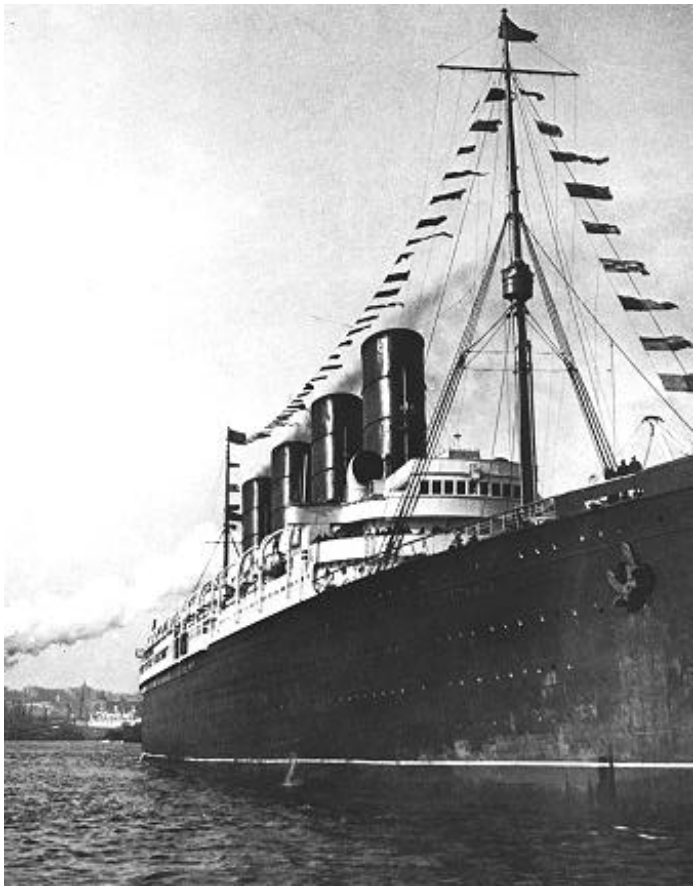
Lusitania's beauty and charm drew people to her. She was a sight to behold, her black hull towered over the docks and her four tall, raked funnels; orange with black tops, marked her as a Cunard liner. Her interiors were best described as palatial, both in size and artistry. Though her encoutrements were far surpassed by later ships, Lusitania is easily described as one of the first floating palaces. Her domed First Class dining room, three decks high, was awe inspiring to its occupants.

Lusitania's successful career ended abruptly on May 7th, 1915. Off the southern coast of Ireland, a German U-boat lurks in the depths. Despite warnings by the German embassy, most of her passengers are not worried about the threat. Lusitania is flying the American flag; the brass letters spelling out her name on the bow have been painted over. As far as the Germans should be concerned, she is an American passenger ship and therefore a noncombatant. This made her passengers, particular American ones, feel more at ease despite the fact that they were sailing into a war zone and in full disregard of warnings posted allgedly by the German embassy in the US warning against sailing on Lusitania.

The Germans considered just about any vessel in enemy waters a target. Such was the case with this fateful day off the Irish coast. When a single torpedo struck Lusitania's starboard just below the waterline, the initial blast ripped open her hull and set off a violent secondary explosion. She sank in only eighteen minutes, taking with her 1,200 passengers and crew. Among the dead were 123 Americans.

There is widespread speculation that the British Admiralty did little or nothing to protect Lusitania from the German submarine known to be lurking in Irish waters. Several vessels had been sunk by U20 in the days before Lusitania's was lost. It has been suggested that the Admiralty's logic was in that if Lusitania was sunk, the loss of American lives would force the United States to cast aside its neutrality. The public outrage on both sides of the Atlantic fostered the anti-German sentiment that would indeed draw the United States into World War I.

MAURETANIA

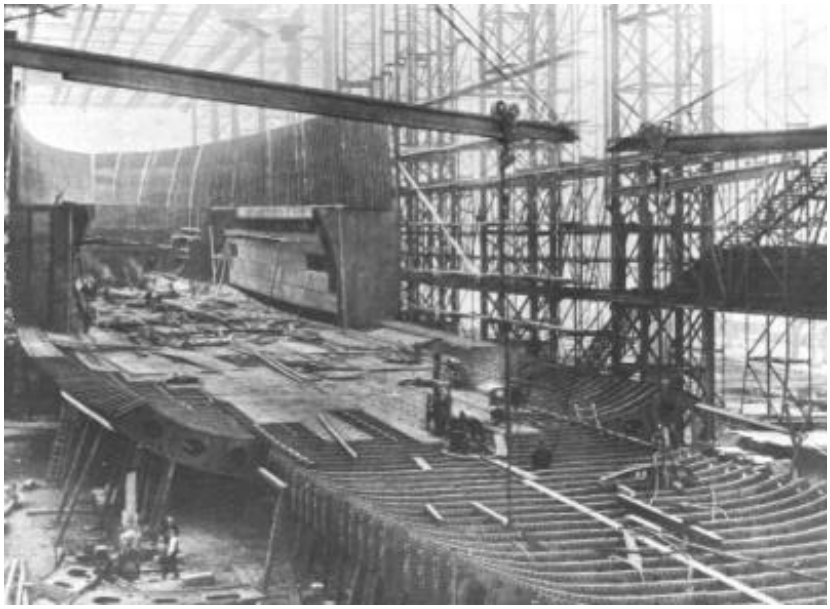


In 1901, an American railroad tycoon, J.P. Morgan, decided upon a venture to control the North Atlantic shipping market. Hoping to connect it with his extensive rail empire, his hopes were of dominating transportation not only from Europe to America, but from America to Asia. Forming the Internation Mercantile Marine (IMM), he bought control of several European shipping lines, including the White Star Line, one of Britain's two largest flags.

Cunard Line, founded by Samuel Cunard in 1839, had long been England's most cherished line and White Star's bitter rival. While White Star had a checkered safety record, Cunard's founding moto was "Speed, Comfort & Safety" Obsessed with safety (a rareity on those days), Cunard's standing orders to all his captains was to, above all else, make the safety of the passengers and cargo the number one priority. In the company's first 35 years, not a single fatality occurred. Following his death in 1878, the tradition of uncompromising reliability and safety were carried on. Cunard Line's vessels were always the fastest, safest ships to travel on.

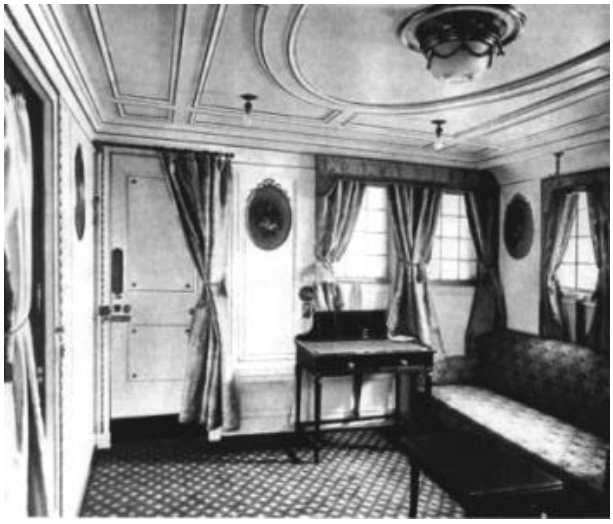
When J.P. Morgan gained a controlling interest in White Star, Cunard used the situtation to gain a financial and tactical advantage by appealing to the British Parliament for help in building two super liners that would be larger, faster and more luxurious than any other ships afloat, American, French or otherwise.

It was necessary that, in times of war, merchant ships be available to the Royal Navy for use as military transports, cruisers and hospital ships. Citing the American-owned White Star's foreign interest and possible reluctance to make such a commitment, Cunard's chairman Lord Inverclyde promised Parliament two express liners that could easily be converted to armed merchant cruisers if needed.



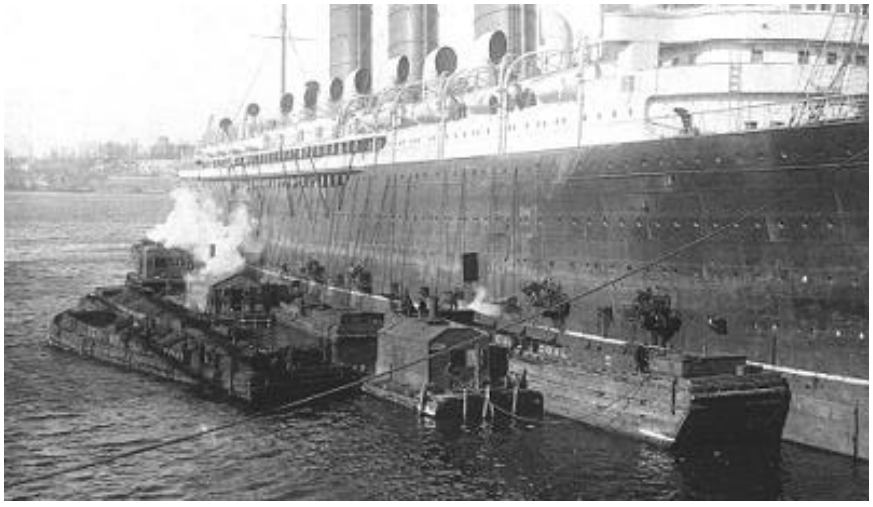
Mauretania and her sister Lusitania were to be the largest moving objects ever created by man. This was in a time before that title became almost cliche. 790 feet long, 88 feet wide and displacing 31,938 tons, Mauretania was the larger of the two sisters. Launched after her sister, Mauretania slipped into the River Clyde for the first time on September 20th, 1906. Her maiden voyage was November 16th, 1907. She could average more than 26 knots and quickly took the coveted Blue Riband

from her sister Lusitania, who had taken it from the Germans on her own maiden voyage. Mauretania would go on to hold the prize of the Atlantic for 26 years. She surrendered it to Germany's Bremen in June 1929. In those years she charmed everyone who sailed on her. Passengers and crew alike fell in love with her and flocked to see her and sail on her whenever possible.



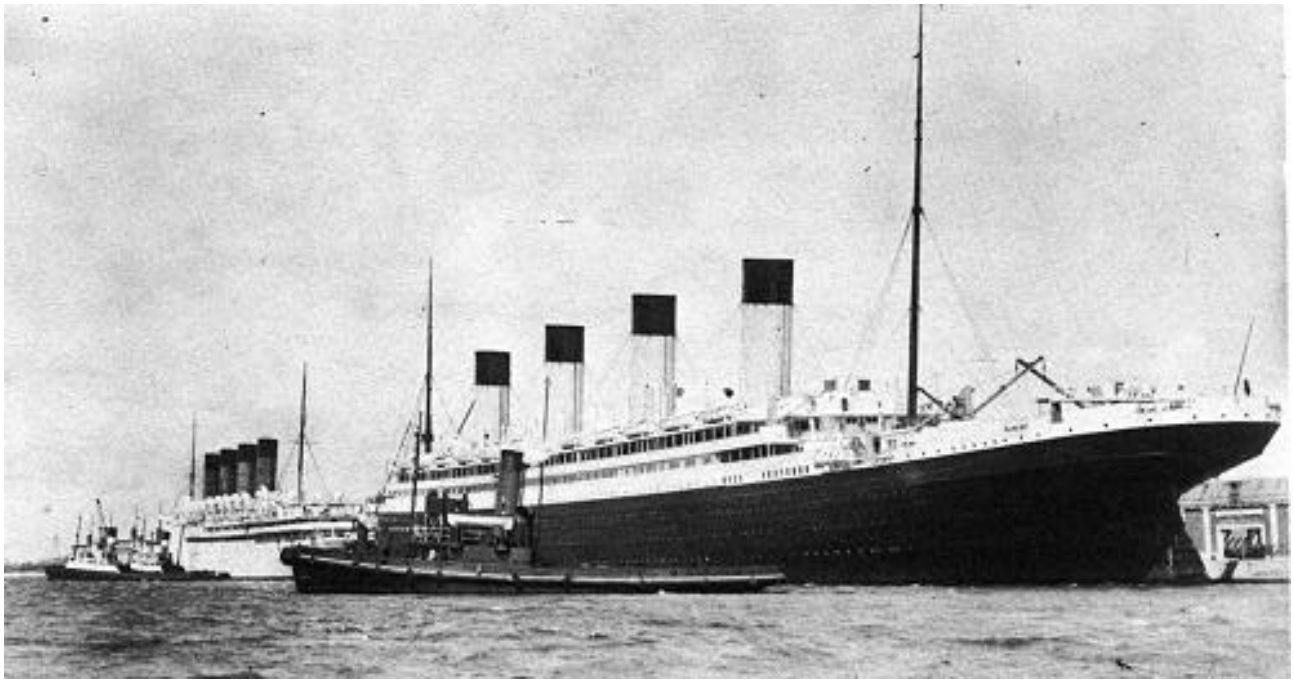
Luxury in 1st class *(Above)*, 2nd class (*Right)*

While Lusitania was lost to a German torpedo in 1915, Mauretania served the Admiralty with dubious distinction from 1915 to 1919 as both a troop transport and a hospital ship. Although she and her sister were extremely fast and slender (much slimmer than White

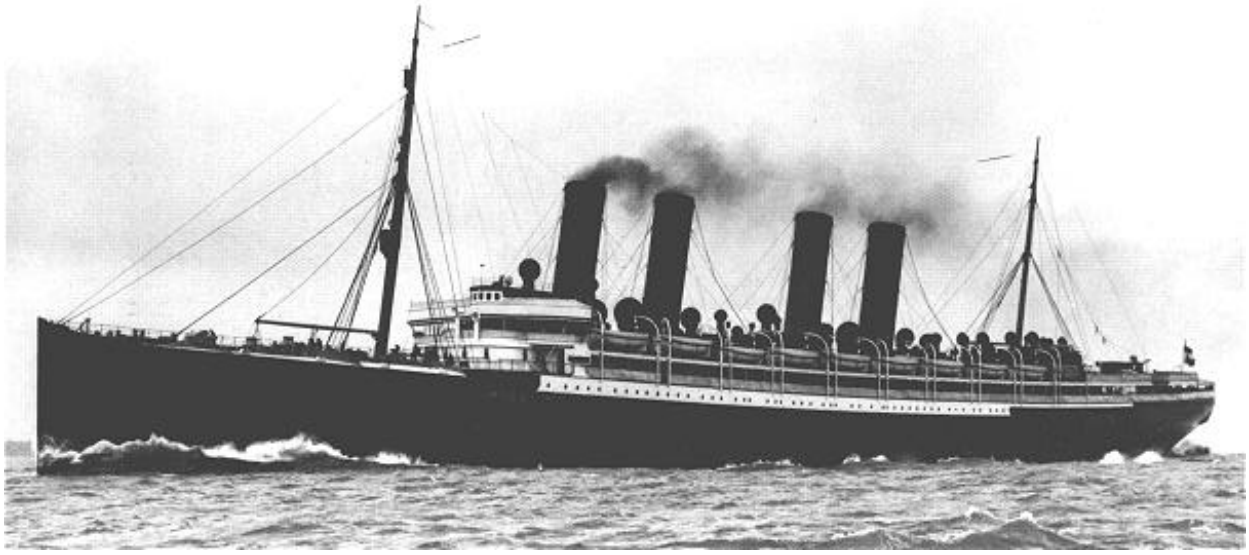


Star's giant liners by comparison) they would have made excellent armed cruisers. The admiralty decided that Mauretania's hull lacked sufficent strength without heavy armoring and that the Cunard four-stacker would best serve in a support capacity. She came through and at war's end was returned to Cunard for use as a commercial liner.

Affectionately known as "the Maury", Cunard's speed queen ended her career amidst the Great Depression and sailing under the Cunard-White Star flag, an ironic forced-merger of the companies whose rivalry brought about her existence. She sailed from New York for the last time in September 1934. She was taken to Southampton's Berth 108. This backwater wharf in the bustling English port served as a kind of "death row" for liners on their way to the scrappers. Joined by Olympic, White Star's former queen, Mauretania tied up one last time, rang her engines down and faded out. Her fittings and furniture were auctioned off and scattered to the wind. Her long-time master, Cunard's Commodore of the Line Arthur Rostron, saw her off from the quay as tugs pulled her stripped and stained hull off to the breakers. Rostron refused to board the gutted ship, perferring instead to "...remember her the way she was..."



KAISER WILHELM DER GROSSE

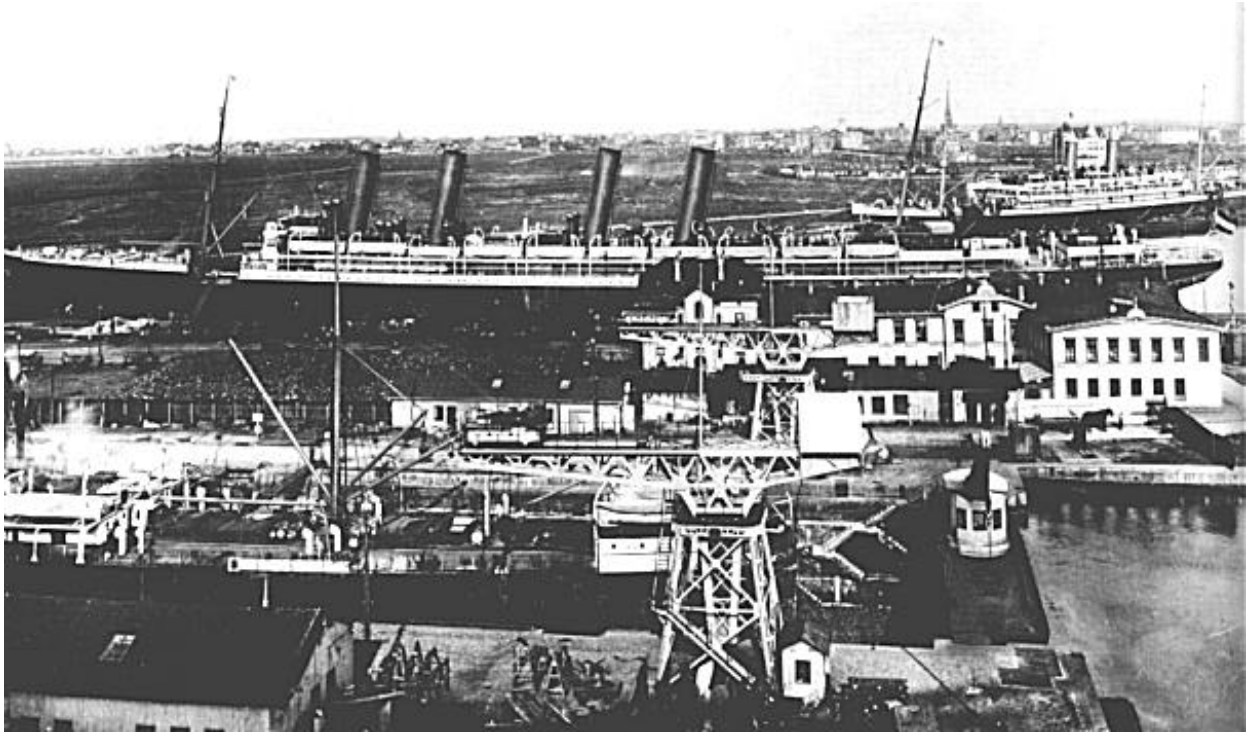


It was the early 1890's. As the 19th century drew to a close, Germany was fast becoming a noted power in Europe, both as an industrial nation and a political voice in the delicate balance of diplomacy and conflict.

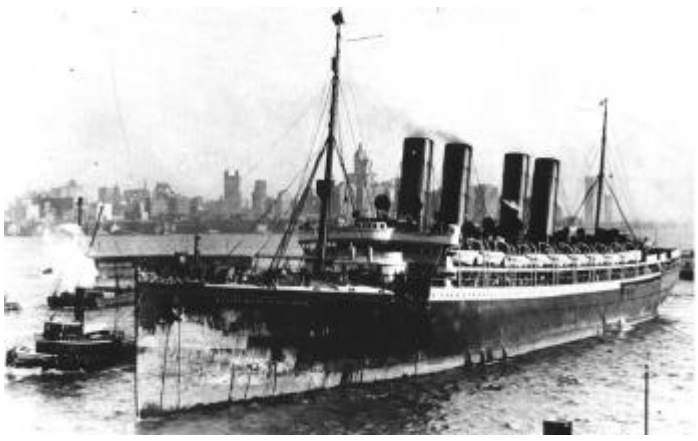
The North German Lloyd shipping company, determined to outdo its English rivals at Cunard and White Star, ordered a ship built that would not only be the world's largest vessel, but would take from British hands the Blue Riband of the Atlantic. The Blue Riband was the intangible trophy awarded to the fastest ship.

Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse was built at the Vulkan Shipyards in Stettin, Germany. When launched on May 3rd, 1897, the liner became "...the world's largest moving object every created by man" (This honor would soon become cliché as ship after ship laid claim to it a succession of super-liners that continues to this day). Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse sailed for the first time in the fall of 1897. The maiden voyage proved successful for the North German Lloyd Line and victorious for Germany, as the new liner took the Blue Riband from Cunard's Lucania. Steam triple expansion engines geared to twin propellers gave Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse a service speed of 22 knots. The pride of German shipbuilding could carry 1,970 passengers across the Atlantic in less than six days. Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse was 655 feet long, 66 feet wide and displaced 14,349 tons. Kaiser's four funnels set in the minds of the public a sense of safety, superiority. The slightly raked stacks, grouped in two pairs, also gave the illusion of speed. So serious with public preoccupation with a ship's funnels, that many people refused to book passage on ships unless they had atleast three funnels. Soon, four funnels became a standard, even when the fourth was a dummy (as would later be the case in White Star's Olympic, Titanic, and Britannic).

When World War I broke out in August of 1914, all the German shipping lines canceled their sailings. Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse was drafted by the Imperial German Navy and was turned into a high-speed armed merchant cruiser. Painted all black and fitted with guns, the Kaiser looked very intimidating. However, fate had other plans and Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse lived only a few weeks into the war. In that time, she did manage to sink three vessels and even stopped and boarded two British liners. When Kaiser's captain saw that there were women and children aboard (and was satisfied that the ships were not carrying weapons), he allowed the steamers to proceed.

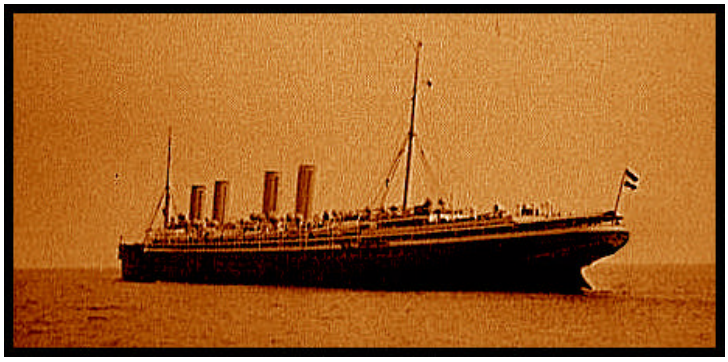


That act of gallantry was repaid to him in full on August 26th. Short on coal, Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse docked at the bay of Rio de Oro in West Africa. The British cruiser HMS Highflyer appeared and in the ensuing battle, the German liner's ammunition ran out before the British warship's did. Highflyer's captain accepted the surrender of the German crew. Kaiser's captain ordered her scuttled as they abandoned ship. Explosives ripped out the keel of the mighty liner and the British cruiser pummeled shells into her side. The first four-stack liner, shattered and ravaged by fire, heaved over and vanished into the sea.



DEUTSCHLAND (1900-25)

Statistics

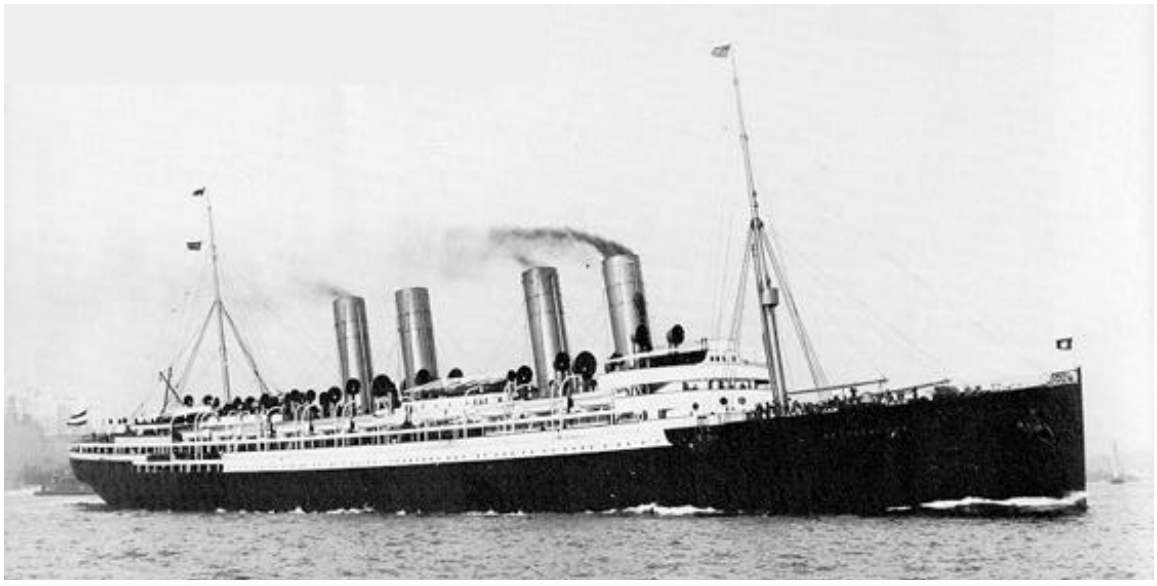


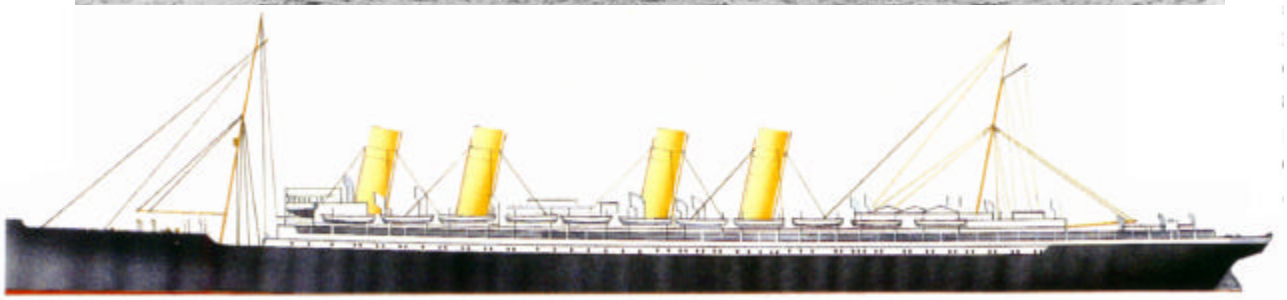
Displacement - 16,502 tons
Dimensions - 208.5 x 20.4m (684 x 67ft)
Number of funnels - 4
Number of masts - 2
Construction - Steel
Propulsion - Twin screw
Engines - Quadruple expansion engines
Top speed - 23.6 knots
Launch date - January 1900
Passenger accommodation - 700 1st class, 300 2nd class and 280 3rd class

Details of career

When she was launched, Deutschland was the largest and finest liner in the world. Fitted with four funnels arranged in pairs, she presented a graceful and powerful image, and set the standard for the later luxury liners that plied the Atlantic route. Her passenger accommodation was superb, especially for those travelling in the first class. Her only fault was a strong vibration which became obvious when she was driven at high speed, and efforts were made to cure this during her sea trials. Her machinery could develope some 33,000 hp and on her maiden voyage to New York she captured the coveted Blue Riband with an average speed of 22.4 knots. She was to retain this record for the next six years.

In 1910 she was docked near Stettin for conversion to a cruise liner. In this configuration she was renamed *Victoria Louise*, although she only served as such for a few years. In 1914 she was fitted out as an auxiliary cruiser, although her boilers were in such poor condition that she never saw service in this form. After World War I, Germany was permitted to keep her, making her the largest ship in the German Merchant Marine. She was finally broken up in 1925.





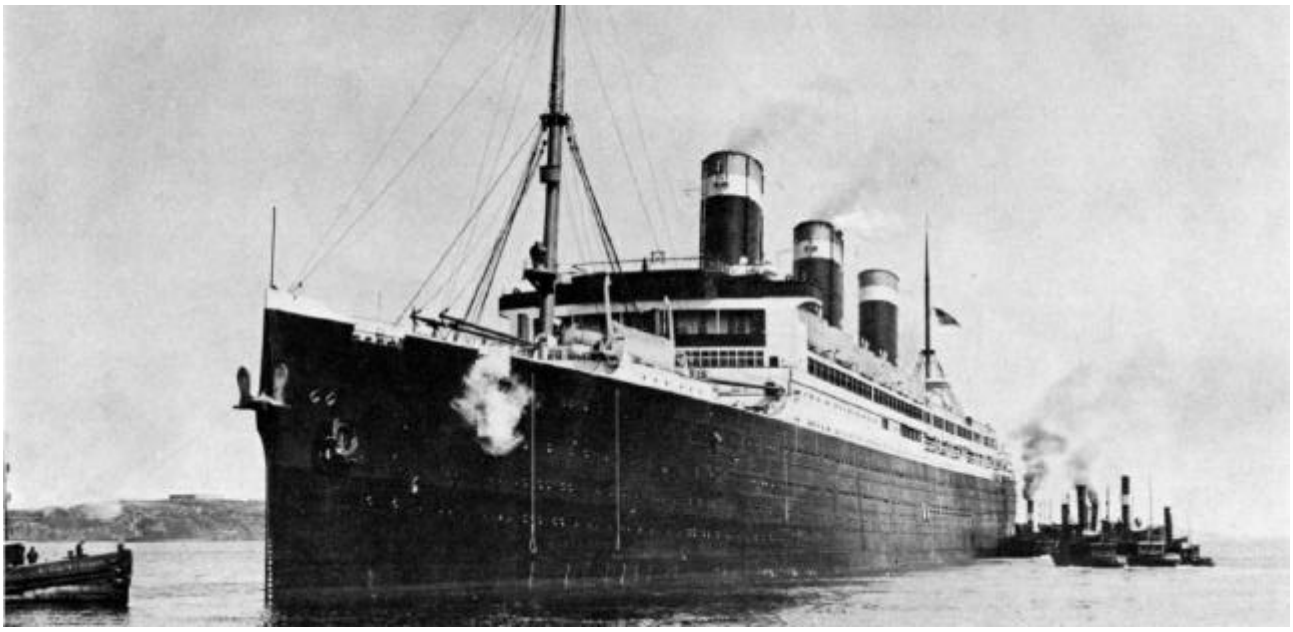
LEVIATHAN

Statistics

Gross tonnage - 48,943 (1923-31: 59,957)
Builder - Blohm & Voss, Hamburg, Germany
Dimensions - 950ftx100ft Depth 64ft
Completed - May 1914
Engines - Four sets of steam turbines
Screws - Quadruple
Watertight bulkheads - Thirteen
Decks - Seven
Normal speed - 24 knots (Attained a speed of 27.07 knots on her trial runs)
Officers and crew - 1150
Passenger accommodation - 978 first, 548 second and 2117 third class
Maiden voyage - New York-Cherbourg-Southampton on July 4, 1923

Details of career

Built for the Hamburg-America Line and christened Vaterland. Interned at New York after her second voyage for Hapag. Seized by the United States on April 4, 1917 and renamed Leviathan after she was commissioned as a transport. Transferred to the United States Lines by the US Shipping Board in 1923. Leviathan was converted to oil-firing in September 1919 and was once again reconditioned in 1923 when her gross tonnage was increased to 59,957 making her the largest ship in the world. Tonnage was soon reduced to the present figure in 1931, when it had cost the owners over $2 million in dry dock and harbour dues due to her size. Engaged in the New York-Channel ports-Bremen service. In her career as a US Transport she carried as many as ten thousand troops on each trip and was known by the American troops as the 'Levi Nathan. Prohibition and the depression caused the Leviathan to be withdrawn from service in December 1933. In June 1934 she made five round trips and her last on September 8, 1934, from Southampton to Le Havre and New York. Sold for scrap in January 1938 and left New York for the last time on January 25 steaming for the shipbreaker's yard at Rosyth, Scotland. As majestic as the Leviathan was to look upon, she never won acclaim with the American people.



UNITED STATES

Statistics

Gross tonnage - 50,924
Builder - Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co, Newport News, Virginia, USA
Dimensions - 990ftx102ft Depth 72ft
Completed - 1952
Engines - Four steam turbines, double-reduction geared
Screws - Quadruple
Decks - Seven
Normal speed - 33 knots
Passenger accommodation - 882 first, 685 cabin and 718 tourist class
Maiden voyage - New York-Le Havre-Southampton on July 3, 1952
Last voyage - Bremerhaven-Southampton-Le Havre-New York on November 1, 1969
Officers and crew - 1068

Details of career

Employed in the New York-Le Havre-Southampton service with a call at Cobh in the summer and on to Bremerhaven in winter. She is also used for cruising on occasion. Won the Blue Riband on her maiden voyage from the Cunard Line's Queen Mary by making the run from Ambrose Lighthouse to Bishop Rock in 3 days, 10 hours and 40 minutes at a speed of 35.59 knots. She is the largest merchant ship ever built in the United States of America at a cost of over $73 million dollars. The United States is the Line's flagship and the recaptress of the Blue Riband lost for over a century by the United States of America. Equipped with motion stabilisers and fully air-conditioned, she is the fastest ship in the world with a potential speed of over 36 knots. She was designed with wartime specifications in mind having a troop capacity for 14,000 fully equipped men. Her superstructure is of aluminium and she is claimed to be virtually fireproof with all her interior furniture constructed out of lightweight metals. Laid up on November 8, 1969, at Newport News as a result of the expiration of the Line's operating-differential-subsidy agreement with the Federal Government. Since the termination of this subsidy in 1969, losses for the fiscal year of 1970 were between four and five million dollars.

Shipping Companies 1914

Company	Number of Ships	Tonnage
Hamburg-Amerika Line, Hamburg	194	1.307.411
North German Lloyd, Bremen	135	907.996
British India Line, London	140	604.105
Peninsular&Orient Line, London	70	533.864
White Star Line, Liverpool	33	472.877
Nippon Yusen K.K., Tokyo	94	414.399
Cie. Gen. Transatlantique, Le Havre	85	360.193
Cunard Steamship Co., Liverpool	29	344.251
Hamburg-South, Hamburg	65	329.877
Elder Dempster Line, Liverpool	103	324.553
Messageries Maritimes, Marseille	64	313.280
Leyland Line, Liverpool	40	248.804
Holland-Amerika Line, Rotterdam	20	200.366
Pacific Steam Nav. Co., Liverpool	42	191.779
Allan Line, Glasgow	22	183.183
Unione Austriaca, Trieste	34	156.256
Woermann Line, Hamburg	43	121.945
German East-Africa-Line, Hamburg	26	111.002
Navigazione Generale, Genoa	14	96.780
Lloyd Austriaco, Trieste	66	80.358
American Line, New York	6	70.362
Red Star Line, Antwerp	5	60.024

Blue Riband (1839-today)

Westbound

DATE	STEAMER	LINE	FROM	TO	NAUT MILES	DAYS/HRS /MINS	KNOTS
1838 (4/4-22/4)	Sirius	B&A	Cork	Sandy Hook	3583	18/14/22	8.03
1838 (8/4-23/4)	Great Western	GW	Avonmouth	New York	3220	15/12/0	8.66
1838 (2/6-17/6)	Great Western	GW	Avonmouth	New York	3140	14/16/0	8.92
1839 (18/5-31/5)	Great Western	GW	Avonmouth	New York	3086	13/12/0	9.52
1841 (4/6-15/6)	Columbia	Cunard	Liverpool	Halifax	(2534)	10/19/0	(9.78)
1843 (29/4-11/5)	Great Western	GW	Liverpool	New York	3068	12/18/0	10.03
1845 (19/7-29/7)	Cambria	Cunard	Liverpool	Halifax	(2534)	9/20/30	(10.71)
1848 (3/6-12/6)	America	Cunard	Liverpool	Halifax	(2534)	9/0/16	(11.71)
1848 (14/10-23/10)	Europa	Cunard	Liverpool	Halifax	(2534)	8/23/0	(11.79)
1850 (18/5-27/5)	Asia	Cunard	Liverpool	Halifax	(2534)	8/14/50	(12.25)
1850 (11/9-21/9)	Pacific	Collins	Liverpool	New York	(3050)	10/4/45	(12.46)
1851 (6/8-16/8)	Baltic	Collins	Liverpool	New York	3039	9/19/26	12.91
1854 (28/6-7/7)	Baltic	Collins	Liverpool	New York	3037	9/16/52	13.04
1856 (19/4-29/4)	Persia	Cunard	Liverpool	Sandy Hook	(3045)	9/16/16	(13.11)
1863 (19/7-27/7)	Scotia	Cunard	Queenstown	New York	(2820)	8/3/0	(14.46)
1872 (17/5-25/5)	Adriatic	W.Star	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2778	7/23/17	14.53
1875 (30/7-7/8)	Germanic	W.Star	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2800	7/23/7	14.65
1875 (17/9-25/9)	City Of Berlin	Inman	Queenstown	Sandy Bank	2829	7/18/2	15.21
1876 (27/10-4/11)	Britannic	W.Star	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2795	7/13/11	15.43
1877 (6/4-13/4)	Germanic	W.Star	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2830	7/11/37	15.76
1882 (9/4-16/4)	Alaska	Guion	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2802	7/6/20	16.07
1882 (14/5-21/5)	Alaska	Guion	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2871	7/4/12	16.67

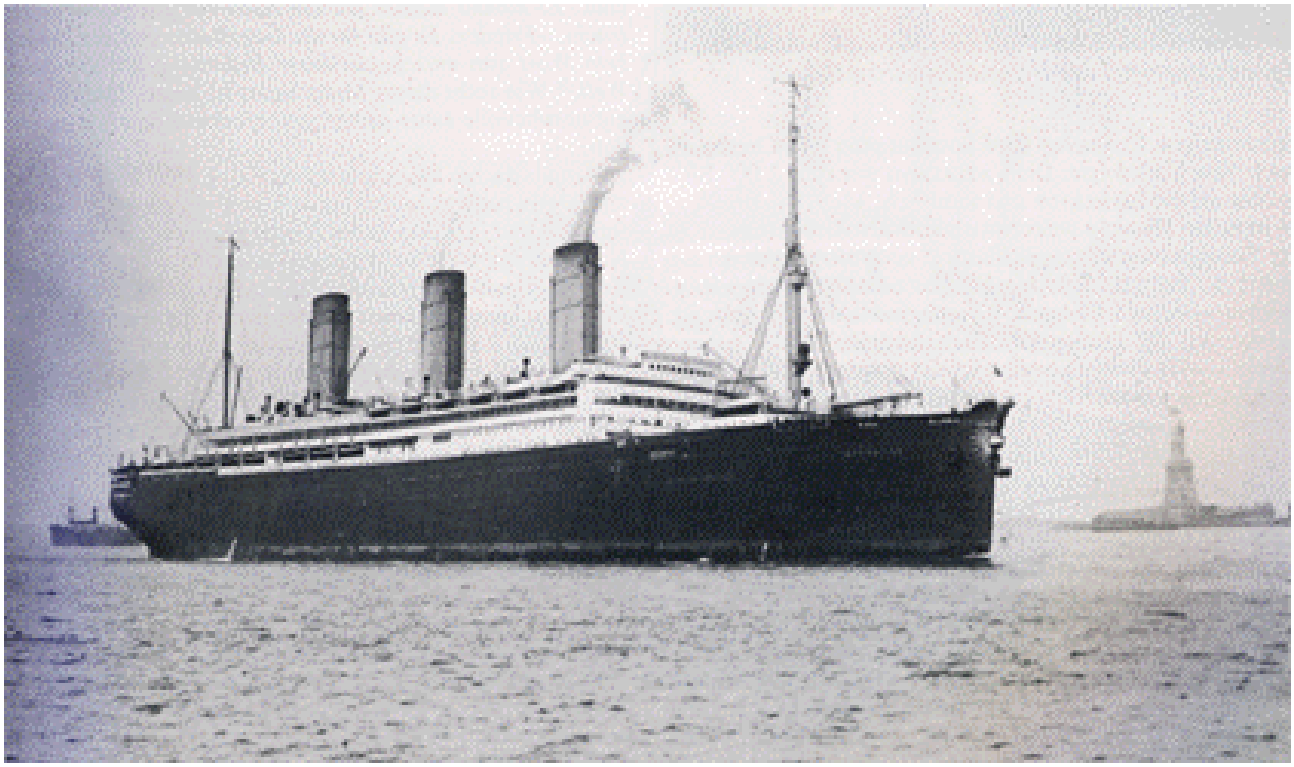
1882 (18/6-25/6)	Alaska	Guion	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2836	7/1/58	16.98
1883 (29/4-6/5)	Alaska	Guion	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2844	6/23/48	17.05
1884 (13/4-19/4)	Oregon	Guion	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2861	6/10/10	18.56
1885 (16/8-22/8)	Etruria	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2801	6/5/31	18.73
1887 (29/5-4/6)	Umbria	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2848	6/4/12	19.22
1888 (27/5-2/6)	Etruria	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2854	6/1/55	19.56
1889 (2/5-8/5)	City Of Paris	I&I	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2855	5/23/7	19.95
1889 (22/8-28/8)	City Of Paris	I&I	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2788	5/19/18	20.01
1890 (30/7-5/8)	Majestic	W.Star	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2777	5/18/8	20.10
1891 (13/8-19/8)	Teutonic	W.Star	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2778	5/16/31	20.35
1892 (20/7-27/7)	City Of Paris	I&I	Queenstown	Sandy Book	2735	5/15/58	20.48
1892 (13/10-18/10)	City Of Paris	I&I	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2782	5/14/24	20.70
1893 (18/6-23/6)	Campania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2864	5/15/37	21.12
1894 (12/8-17/8)	Campania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2776	5/9/29	21.44
1894 (26/8-31/3)	Lucania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2787	5/8/38	21.65
1894 (23/9-28/9)	Lucania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2782	5/7/48	21.75
1894 (21/10-26/10)	Lucania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2779	5/7/23	21.81
1898 (30/3-3/4)	Kaiser Wilhelm Der Grosse	NDL	Needles	Sandy Hook	3120	5/20/0	22.29
1900 (6/7-12/7)	Deutschland	Hapag	Eddystone	Sandy Hook	3044	5/15/46	22.42
1900 (26/8-1/9)	Deutschland	Hapag	Cherbourg	Sandy Hook	3050	5/12/29	23.02
1901 (26/7-1/8)	Deutschland	Hapag	Cherbourg	Sandy Hook	3141	5/16/12	23.06
1902 (10/9-16/9)	Kronprinz Wilhelm	NDL	Cherbourg	Sandy Hook	3047	5/11/57	23.09
1903 (2/9-8/9)	Deutschland	Hapag	Cherbourg	Sandy Hook	3054	5/11/54	23.15
1907 (6/10-10/10)	Lusitania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2780	4/19/52	23.99
1908 (17/5-21/5)	Lusitania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2889	4/20/22	24.83
1908 (5/7-10/7)	Lusitania	Cunard	Queenstown	Sandy Hook	2891	4/19/36	25.01
1909 (8/8-12/8)	Lusitania	Cunard	Queenstown	Ambrose	2890	4/16/40	25.65
1909 (26/9-30/9)	Mauretania	Cunard	Queenstown	Ambrose	2784	4/10/51	26.06
1929 (17/7-22/7)	Bremen	NDL	Cherbourg	Ambrose	3164	4/17/42	27.83
1930 (20/3-25/3)	Europa	NDL	Cherbourg	Ambrose	3157	4/17/6	27.91
1933 (27/6-2/7)	Europa	NDL	Cherbourg	Ambrose	3149	4/16/48	27.92
1933 (11/8-16/8)	Rex	Italia	Gibraltar	Ambrose	3181	4/13/58	28.92
1935 (30/5-3/6)	Normandie	CGT	Bishop Rock	Ambrose	2971	4/3/2	29.98
1936 (20/8-24/8)	Queen Mary	C-WS	Bishop Rock	Ambrose	2907	4/0/27	30.14
1937 (29/7-1/8)	Normandie	CGT	Bishop Rock	Ambrose	2906	3/23/2	30.58
1938 (4/8-8/8)	Queen Mary	C-WS	Bishop Rock	Ambrose	2907	3/21/48	30.99
1952 (11/7-15/7)	United States	USL	Bishop Rock	Ambrose	2906	3/12/12	34.51

Eastbound

DATE	STEAMER	LINE	FROM	TO	NAUT MILES	DAYS/HRS /MINS	KNOTS
1838 (1/5-19/5)	Sirius	B&A	New York	Falmouth	(3159)	(18/0/0)	(7.31)
1838 (7/5-22/5)	Great Western	GW	New York	Avonmouth	3218	14/15/59	9.14
1838 (25/6-8/7)	Great Western	GW	New York	Avonmouth	3099	12/16/34	10.17
1840 (4/8-14/8)	Britannia	Cunard	Halifax	Liverpool	(2610)	9/21/44	(10.98)
1842 (28/4-11/5)	Great Western	GW	New York	Liverpool	3248	12/7/30	10.99
1843 (4/4-14/4)	Columbia	Cunard	Halifax	Liverpool	(2534)	9/12/0	(11.11)
1843 (18/5-27/5)	Hibernia	Cunard	Halifax	Liverpool	(2534)	9/10/44	(11.18)
1843 (18/7-27/7)	Hibernia	Cunard	Halifax	Liverpool	(2534)	8/22/44	(11.80)
1849 (19/7-28/7)	Canada	Cunard	Halifax	Liverpool	(2534)	8/12/44	(12.38)
1851 (10/5-20/5)	Pacific	Collins	New York	Liverpool	(3078)	9/20/14	(13.03)
1852 (7/2-17/2)	Arctic	Collins	New York	Liverpool	3051	9/17/15	13.06
1856 (2/4-12/4)	Persia	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Liverpool	(3048)	9/10/22	(13.46)
1856 (14/5-23/5)	Persia	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Liverpool	(3048)	9/3/24	(13.89)
1856 (6/8-15/8)	Persia	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Liverpool	(3046)	8/23/19	(14.15)
1863 (16/12-24/12)	Scotia	Cunard	New York	Queenstown	(2800)	8/5/42	(14.16)
1869 (4/12-12/12)	City of Brussels	Inman	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	(2780)	7/20/33	(14.74)

1873 (11/1-19/1)	Baltic	W.Star	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2840	7/20/9	15.09
1875 (2/10-10/10)	City Of Berlin	Inman	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2820	7/15/28	15.37
1876 (5/2-13/2)	Germanic	W.Star	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2894	7/15/17	15.79
1876 (16/12-24/12)	Britannic	W.Star	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2892	7/12/41	15.94
1879 (22/7-29/7)	Arizona	Guion	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2810	7/8/11	15.96
1882 (30/5-6/6)	Alaska	Guion	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	(2791)	6/22/0	(16.81)
1882 (12/9-19/9)	Alaska	Guion	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2781	6/18/37	17.10
1884 (29/3-5/4)	Oregon	Guion	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2916	7/2/18	17.12
1884 (26/4-3/5)	Oregon	Guion	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	291	6/16/57	18.09
1884 (30/7-6/8)	Oregon	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2853	6/12/54	18.18
1884 (3/9-10/9)	Oregon	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2853	6/11/9	18.39
1885 (1/8-7/8)	Etruria	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2822	6/9/0	18.44
1888 (7/7-14/7)	Etruria	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2981	6/4/50	19.36
1889 (15/5-22/5)	City Of Paris	I&I	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2894	6/0/29	20.03
1892 (17/8-23/8)	City of New York	I&I	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2814	5/19/57	20.11
1893 (6/5-12/5)	Campania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2928	5/17/27	21.30
1894 (6/5-12/5)	Lucania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2911	3/13/28	21.81
1894 (2/6-8/6)	Lucania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2911	5/12/59	21.90
1895 (18/5-24/5)	Lucania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2897	5/11/40	22.00
1897 (23/11-29/11)	Kaiser Wilhelm Der Grosse	NDL	Sandy Hook	Needles	3065	5/17/23	22.33
1900 (18/7-24/7)	Deutschland	Hapag	Sandy Hook	Eddystone	3085	5/15/5	22.84
1900 (4/9-10/9)	Deutschland	Hapag	Sandy Hook	Eddystone	2981	5/7/38	23.36
1901 (13/6-19/6)	Deutschland	Hapag	Sandy Hook	Eddystone	3083	5/11/51	23.38
1901 (10/7-17/7)	Deutschland	Hapag	Sandy Hook	Eddystone	3082	5/11/5	23.51
1904 (14/6-20/6)	Kaiser Wilhelm II	NDL	Sandy Hook	Eddystone	3112	5/11/58	23.58
1907 (19/10-24/10)	Lusitania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2807	4/22/53	23.61
1907 (30/11-5/12)	Mauretania	Cunard	Beady Hook	Queenstown	2807	4/22/33	23.69
1908 (25/1-30/1)	Mauretania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2932	5/2/41	23.90
1908 (7/3-12/3)	Mauretania	Cunard	Sandy Hook	Queenstown	2932	5/0/5	24.42
1909 (3/2-8/2)	Mauretania	Cunard	Ambrose	Queenstown,	2930	4/20/27	25.16
1909 (17/3-22/3)	Mauretania	Cunard	Ambrose	Queenstown	2934	4/18/35	25.61
1909 (5/5-10/5)	Mauretania	Cunard	Ambrose	Queenstown	2934	4/18/11	25.70
1909 (16/6-21/6)	Mauretania	Cunard	Ambrose	Queenstown	2933	4/17/21	25.88
1924 (20/8-25/8)	Mauretania	Cunard	Ambrose	Cherbourg	3198	5/1/49	26.25
1929 (27/7-1/8)	Bremen	NDL	Ambrose	Eddystone	3084	4/14/30	27.91
1933 (10/6-15/6)	Bremen	NDL	Ambrose	Cherbourg	3199	4/16/15	28.51
1935 (7/6-11/6)	Normandie	CGT	Ambrose	Bishop Rock	3015	4/3/25	30.31
1936 (26/8-30/8)	Queen Mary	C-WS	Ambrose	Bishop Rock	2939	3/23/57	30.63
1937 (18/3-22/3)	Normandie	CGT	Ambrose	Bishop Rock	2967	4/0/6	30.99
1937 (4/8-8/8)	Normandie	CGT	Ambrose	Bishop Rock	2936	3/22/7	31.20
1938 (10/8-14/8)	Queen Mary	C-WS	Ambrose	Bishop Rock	2938	3/20/42	31.69
1952 (3/7-7/7)	United States	USL	Ambrose	Bishop Rock	2942	3/10/40	35.59

Distances shown in parentheses indicate that the figure is approximate.
It follows then that the speed is also an approximation.



Above: Hamburg-Amerika liner “Imperator”; leaving Cuxhaven and arriving in New York
Below: Ellis Island