



#SSUSFullAhead

SSUSC.org

SAVING THE  
UNITED STATES:  
HISTORY

**FULL SPEED**

**AHEAD!**

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### WHY IS THE SS UNITED STATES SO IMPORTANT?

Like the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, and the Washington Monument — there's only one *SS United States*. The ship was an ambassador of America's post-war industrial power and a technological marvel. The soaring symbol of grace and grandeur touched the lives of over one million passengers, thousands of crew members, and countless others who were thrilled by her mere presence in New York or Europe flying the Stars and Stripes. Today, this ship remains one of the world's last surviving examples from this bygone era of travel in grand style. The vessel still holds the transatlantic speed record, achieved on her maiden voyage using only two-thirds of her power. She served as a Naval auxiliary and was packed with top-secret features. It is imperative that we save her for future generations.

### HOW DOES THE SS UNITED STATES COMPARE TO THE TITANIC?

The *SS United States* is the most famous ship that *didn't* sink! At nearly 1,000 feet long, the *SS United States* is more than a hundred feet longer than the ill-fated *Titanic*, has five more decks, and — while in service — weighed in at nearly 10,000 tons heavier. The *SS United States* is so large that if you stood her on end, she'd be nearly as tall as New York City's Chrysler Building or the Comcast Center in Philadelphia. As the fastest ocean liner ever constructed, the *SS United States* could move almost faster in reverse than the *Titanic* could travel forward.

### WHO BUILT THE SS UNITED STATES AND WHY?

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, passenger travel across the Atlantic Ocean was dominated by a range of European merchant shipping lines that competed for the title of biggest, fastest and most luxurious ocean liner. The *Queen Mary* and *Normandie* are two examples of famous liners that transported travelers between New York and the ports of Europe in comfort and style. After World War II, it was America's turn to demonstrate its ability to compete and

win on the seas. This era brought with it new American prosperity and ingenuity as well as new security threats. The US Government worked in conjunction with the United States Lines to develop a “super ship” to be part Cold War weapon and part luxury ocean liner. The top secret Pentagon project produced the fastest, safest and most advanced vessel ever constructed – the *SS United States*. The ship could be quickly converted into a troop carrier able to transport 15,000 military service members for 10,000 miles without refueling, and do it faster than any other ship before or since.

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### HOW FAST WAS THE *SS UNITED STATES*?

The *SS United States*' [propellers](#), materials, hull and sleek overall design were part of a top secret Pentagon program to create the world's fastest ship. The *SS United States* still holds the trans-Atlantic speed record or “Blue Riband.” Her true performance figures were kept secret for many years, but we know now that on her sea trials she achieved an amazing 38 knots – about 44 miles per hour. Some maritime historians and former crew members maintain that she sped even faster, so her true top speed may never be known. By comparison, today's modern cruise ships travel at around 28 miles per hour. The *SS United States* smashed the transatlantic speed record on her maiden voyage in 1952 using only two-thirds of her power.

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### WHO DESIGNED THE *SS UNITED STATES*?

The *SS United States* was designed by self-taught naval architect and marine engineer William Francis Gibbs. Born in 1886, Gibbs realized a life-long dream of designing the fastest ship in the world with the *SS United States*' maiden voyage in 1952. His firm designed over 60-percent of all of the nation's heavy armored ships in World War II, some 5,000 vessels in total. Widely regarded as one of the nation's foremost naval architects, he was deeply attached to his prized creation. Gibbs called the *SS United States* every day when she was at sea and rarely missed being on hand for the vessel's docking at her pier in New York. Gibbs's granddaughter, Susan Gibbs, serves as the *SS United States* Conservancy's executive director.

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### DID ANY FAMOUS PASSENGERS TRAVEL ON THE *SS UNITED STATES*?

The *SS United States* was **the** ship on which to sail in the 1950s and 60s, and she carried a very impressive complement of notable passengers on nearly every voyage. These included Marlon Brando, Coco Chanel, Sean Connery, Gary Cooper, Walter Cronkite, Salvador Dali, Walt Disney, Duke Ellington, Judy Garland, Cary Grant, Charlton Heston, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, John Wayne, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The ship also carried four US presidents – Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Clinton. In fact, the *SS United States* carried more Presidents and heads of state in her career than any other ship in history.

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### WHERE IS THE *SS UNITED STATES* LOCATED NOW? CAN I VISIT THE SHIP?

The *SS United States* is docked at Pier 82 on Philadelphia's Delaware River. Because the vessel is located at a working pier and is subject to Homeland Security regulations, access to the vessel's pier is restricted. Members of the media are sometimes permitted on board with the permission of and escorted by the Conservancy. Financial supporters of the ship [at certain levels](#) can also schedule tours with the Conservancy. However, an excellent view of the vessel for the general public can

be seen from Columbus Boulevard or from the IKEA cafeteria in Columbus Commons across the street. To pinpoint directions to the vessel using GPS, the following address may be used: 2100 South Christopher Columbus Boulevard, Philadelphia PA 19148.

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### **ARE THE SS UNITED STATES' INTERIORS STILL INTACT?**

No. Unfortunately, the vessel's fittings were all dismantled in the 1980s and 1990s by previous owners for financial gain and to remove building materials popular in the 1950s that were later deemed hazardous. Many fittings and artwork remain in private collections. The Conservancy's mission includes a restoration of several of the ship's grand public rooms to their original configuration with both original and replica materials. The Conservancy is presently undertaking a special project to catalogue the location and ownership of the remaining fittings from the vessel including furniture, artwork, china and other items.

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### **HOW DO I RESEARCH WHETHER ONE OF MY ANCESTORS TRAVELED ON THE SS UNITED STATES?**

Over one million passengers traveled on the *SS United States*, and passenger lists from each voyage were maintained by United States Lines. These documents were scattered after the ship was withdrawn from service, but the Conservancy is currently compiling and digitizing these records for future use, including genealogical research.

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### **ABOUT THE SS UNITED STATES CONSERVANCY**

#### **WHAT IS THE SS UNITED STATES CONSERVANCY?**

As the owners of the *SS United States*, America's National Flagship, the Conservancy leads the global effort to save this one-of-a-kind piece of American history from being lost forever. The Conservancy, a national nonprofit organization, raises awareness and financial resources for the maintenance, restoration, and ultimate reuse of this iconic vessel. The Conservancy's staff, Board of Directors, and advisors work in tandem with volunteers from across America and around the world to ensure that the fastest ocean liner ever to cross the Atlantic endures and inspires for generations to come.

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#### **HOW DOES THE CONSERVANCY SPEND THE FUNDS IT HAS RAISED?**

The Conservancy spends 82 cents out of every dollar raised on direct costs related to the *SS United States'* upkeep, including dockage, insurance, security, and vessel maintenance costs. The Conservancy also runs ongoing curatorial and educational programs highlighting the historical significance of America's Flagship. The Conservancy deploys a very small team of part-time staff members and consultants, as well as a large network of volunteers and pro bono advisors. The Conservancy's executive team and board of directors receive no compensation for their work on behalf of the *SS United States*.

## WHAT IS THE [SAVETHEUNITEDSTATES.ORG](http://SavetheUnitedStates.org) CAMPAIGN?

[SavetheUnitedStates.org](http://SavetheUnitedStates.org) is a groundbreaking crowd-funding campaign to save and restore America's Flagship. It is an innovative, online experience that combines the latest in digital technology, social networking and historic preservation in an innovative new web platform for everyone to enjoy. [SavetheUnitedStates.org](http://SavetheUnitedStates.org) offers visitors a virtual ship experience online where they can navigate throughout the great vessel to learn about her history, her personalities, and her accomplishments. Everyone can help save the ship by personalizing their own sections for as little as \$1. Contributors can select sections of the ship they wish to help save, and then build a profile with photos and stories around those portions — making every supporter a part of the large, online community dedicated to saving the ship. This groundbreaking interactive experience will become a permanent part of the future *SS United States Center for Design and Discovery*. As of 2016, more than 80,000 pieces of the ship have been saved.

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## DOES THE CONSERVANCY OFFER EDUCATIONAL AND CURATORIAL PROGRAMS?

The SS United States Conservancy is deeply committed to honoring the legacy of the *SS United States* through curatorial and educational programs. Since its founding, the Conservancy has developed and mounted major temporary exhibitions at the Forbes Galleries in New York City and the Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia. The Conservancy will partner with the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge Massachusetts to develop an exhibition featuring the *SS United States* artwork of renowned author-illustrator David Macaulay, to be unveiled in 2018. The Conservancy maintains a growing collection of *SS United States* documents, images, artifacts, and other historical materials. We have also conducted an exhaustive preservation inventory of fixtures and shipboard components remaining aboard the vessel. Plans are underway for a dynamic "digital exhibition" that will explore the *SS United States'* unique design and history.

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## WHAT IS THE SS UNITED STATES CENTER FOR DESIGN & DISCOVERY?

The Conservancy's plans for the *SS United States'* redevelopment include a shipboard museum, tentatively titled the *SS United States Center for Design and Discovery*. The future museum and learning center will explore the *SS United States'* emergence as an iconic American achievement and examine broader themes of 20th century post-war society, maritime history, science and technology, and mid-century modern art and design. The Conservancy continues to expand its permanent collection of *SS United States* artifacts, historical documents, artwork, and ship fixtures. For more information, [click here](#).

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## IS MY CONTRIBUTION TAX DEDUCTIBLE?

Yes! As a national 501(c)(3), all contributions to save America's Flagship are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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## HOW CAN MY COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION HELP SAVE THE UNITED STATES?

Becoming a Corporate Sponsor of the SS United States Conservancy provides your company or organization with a unique opportunity to help champion the global effort to save the *SS United States*. Sponsor benefits include national media exposure, naming rights opportunities, permanent

online recognition on [SavetheUnitedStates.org](http://SavetheUnitedStates.org), special tours, and appreciation events. The cause of America's Flagship reaches a wide range of audiences in a growing global community of supporters. Show them you care about saving our history and become a sponsor today. If you have any questions about our Corporate Sponsorship Program or would like to receive copies of our Corporate Sponsorship materials, please contact Eva Benningfield a [info@ssusc.org](mailto:info@ssusc.org) or call (888) 488-7787. You can also download our Corporate Sponsorship brochure [here](#).

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## HOW DO MY CONTRIBUTIONS HELP?

Without continued financial support from its members and donors, the *SS United States* will be lost forever. When [becoming a member](#) or making a donation through [SavetheUnitedStates.org](http://SavetheUnitedStates.org) or on our [Conservancy website](#), your support helps the Conservancy continue its efforts to ensure that the *SS United States* inspires and endures for generations to come. Your donations will enable us to cover the ship's ongoing dockage, insurance, and maintenance costs as well as expand its educational and outreach programs to inform the public, policymakers, and the media about the history and potential of America's flagship and will help us launch exhibitions and displays honoring the *SS United States*.

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## DOES THE CONSERVANCY RECEIVE ANY GOVERNMENT FUNDING?

No. The *SS United States* is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but she does not receive State or Federal financing. The Conservancy relies on the generosity of private citizens from across the nation and around the world who want to protect and preserve this unrivaled design and engineering achievement.

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## ABOUT THE CONSERVANCY'S CURATORIAL PROGRAMS

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### WOULD THE SS UNITED STATES CONSERVANCY BE INTERESTED IN MY ARTIFACTS AND PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE SS UNITED STATES? IF SO, HOW CAN I ENSURE THESE ITEMS ARE IN THE RIGHT HANDS?

The *SS United States* Conservancy prides itself on preserving the unparalleled history of America's Flagship, the *SS United States*, through its curatorial, archival, and educational programs. A key component of this work is building our permanent *SS United States* collection through donations from former passengers and crewmembers. You can read more about this work on the Conservancy's website [here](#). The Conservancy utilizes PastPerfect, a top-rated archival computer program, to catalog the items held in the Conservancy's ever-growing permanent collections. The handling of objects strictly adheres to best practices for curatorial protocol. We are always interested in receiving *SS United States* artifacts, whether it be a passenger list, menu, photograph, or item related to the ship itself. If you have any questions, please contact our Collections Manager Jen Rogers at [jrogers@ssusc.org](mailto:jrogers@ssusc.org). For general curatorial questions, you may contact the Conservancy's Senior Preservation Associate Allee Davis at [adavis@ssusc.org](mailto:adavis@ssusc.org).

## **IS THERE PAPERWORK I HAVE TO COMPLETE WHEN DONATING ITEMS TO THE CONSERVANCY?**

Yes, the Conservancy requires that a Deed of Gift form be completed by each donor. The form gives the rights of usage of any artifact(s) to the Conservancy. If and when the Conservancy uses any donated item in a display for an exhibition, publication, or similar outreach and/or educational context, the donor will be properly credited in any and all supporting signage and literature. Please email [archives@ssusc.org](mailto:archives@ssusc.org) to request a copy of the Deed of Gift form to accompany your donation.

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## **IS THERE AN SS UNITED STATES MUSEUM OR ARCHIVES I CAN VISIT?**

No, the Conservancy's full collections are not currently accessible to the public. The Conservancy continues to partner with other museums and educational organizations to facilitate viewing select items from its collections in temporary exhibitions. Some items from its collections are on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The Conservancy's long term goal is to mount a permanent exhibition, ideally on board the restored *SS United States*. If you have a question about specific item(s) in the Conservancy's collections, we would be happy to research them for you.

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## **IF PLANS TO REDEVELOP THE SS UNITED STATES INTO A STATIONARY, MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT DO NOT COME TO PASS, WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH MY ARTIFACT DONATION?**

Should the *SS United States* not be successfully redeveloped, the Conservancy will explore partnerships with one or more museums and/or institutions in support of a permanent *SS United States* exhibition and public access to the Conservancy's permanent archival collections. The Conservancy is also committed to digitizing its collections to enhance public access.

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## **WHERE SHOULD I SHIP MY DONATION TO?**

Donations, along with a completed Deed of Gift form, may be mailed to the following address:

SS United States Conservancy  
P.O. Box 32115  
Washington, DC 20007

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## **HOW CAN I BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE CONSERVANCY'S CURATORIAL PROGRAMS?**

To learn how you can become involved with the Conservancy's curatorial programs, contact us at [archives@ssusc.org](mailto:archives@ssusc.org). If interested in volunteering for work related to our permanent collections, we ask that individuals possess basic curatorial knowledge and/or have related data entry skills. To further discuss volunteer opportunities with the Conservancy, please contact us at [info@ssusc.org](mailto:info@ssusc.org).

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## ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE SS UNITED STATES

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### WHY DOES THE SS UNITED STATES APPEAR TO BE IN SUCH DISREPAIR? WHY DOESN'T THE CONSERVANCY PAINT THE SHIP'S FUNNELS?

The *SS United States* was withdrawn from service in 1969. While the vessel remains structurally sound, she has not been painted in almost 50 years. Exterior and interior restoration work must be completed in tandem with the ship's full redevelopment because of the high cost, the complexity of the project, and restrictions on performing work on the vessel in her current location. To repaint the ship's iconic funnels would total almost \$500,000.

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### WHY IS THE CONSERVANCY SPENDING SO MUCH MONEY ON THE SHIP'S MONTHLY EXPENSES?

The Conservancy spends approximately \$60,000 each month to maintain the *SS United States* at Pier 82 in Philadelphia. These core costs include pier rental, insurance premiums, and vessel caretaking, maintenance, and security charges. (They do not include Conservancy staffing and program costs.) The pier rental charges of \$850 per day are below market levels and the Conservancy has negotiated a "rent freeze" since acquiring title to the vessel. The ship cannot be moved to a new location until redevelopment plans are finalized and financed. The *SS United States'* next move will be to a dry dock facility, where full exterior restoration and remediation can commence.

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### WHAT HAPPENS IF SUFFICIENT FUNDS AREN'T RAISED TO SAVE THE SHIP?

In the event that sufficient funds are not raised to keep the *SS United States* safely afloat, the Conservancy will be forced to sell the ship to a responsible US-based metals recycler. The Conservancy is also pursuing prospects for the ship's conversion into an artificial reef in tandem with a shore-side museum. The Conservancy is doing everything possible to protect the vessel and advance prospects for the ship's restoration and redevelopment. The Conservancy also remains committed to advancing its curatorial programs and building its museum collections and, to be displayed in a future, permanent shipboard or land-based exhibition.

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### WHY HASN'T THE CONSERVANCY MOVED THE SS UNITED STATES TO A PERMANENT LOCATION FOR REDEVELOPMENT?

It is not feasible to move the *SS United States* to a new location with potentially lower costs until full project financing is secured for the ship's initial restoration and remediation. The ship's current, secure location on the Delaware River has been advantageous because the protected, freshwater conditions have helped prevent hull corrosion. The expenses and complications associated with moving the vessel dictate that her next port of call will be to a dry dock for the first phase of her exterior restoration.