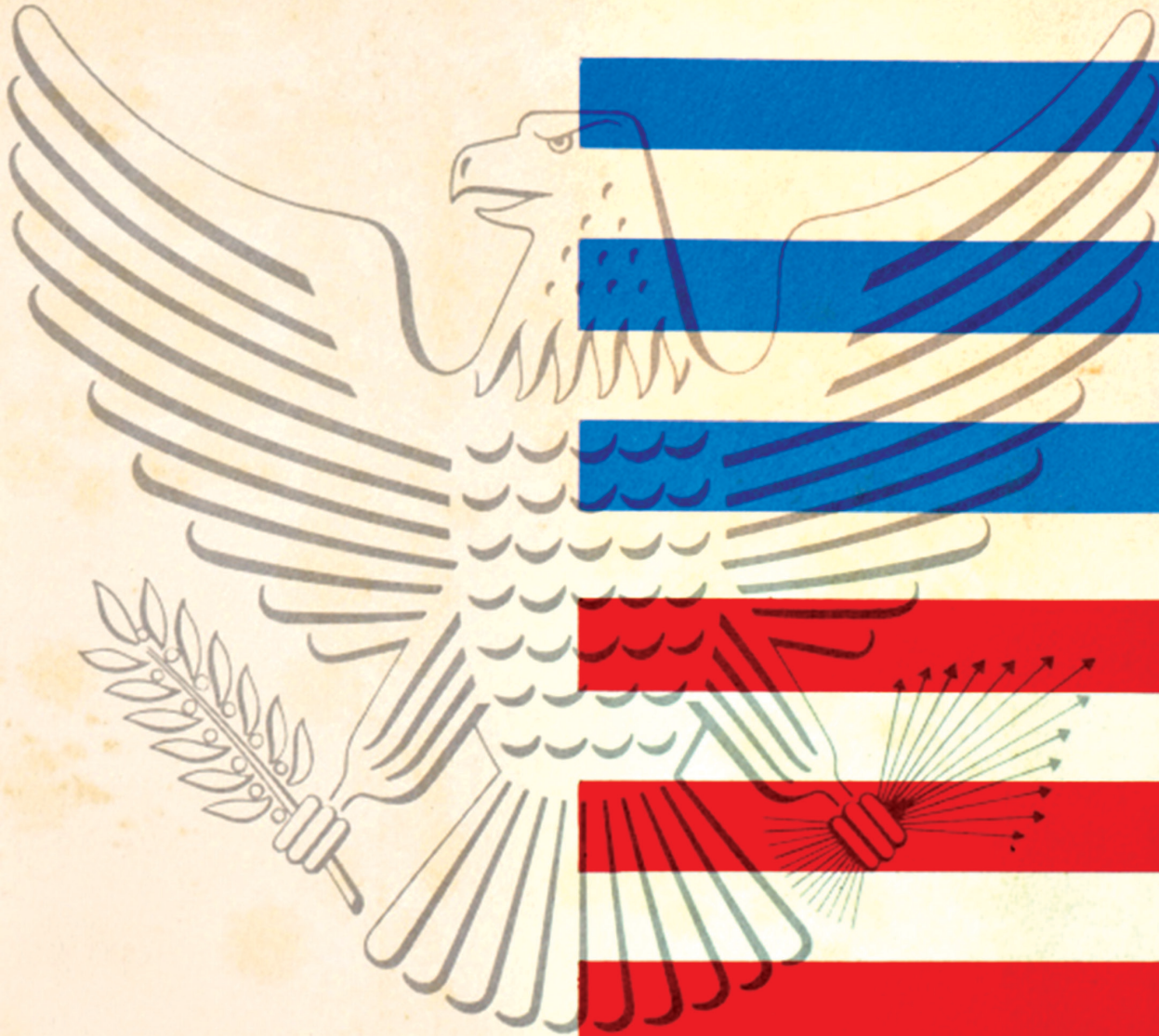
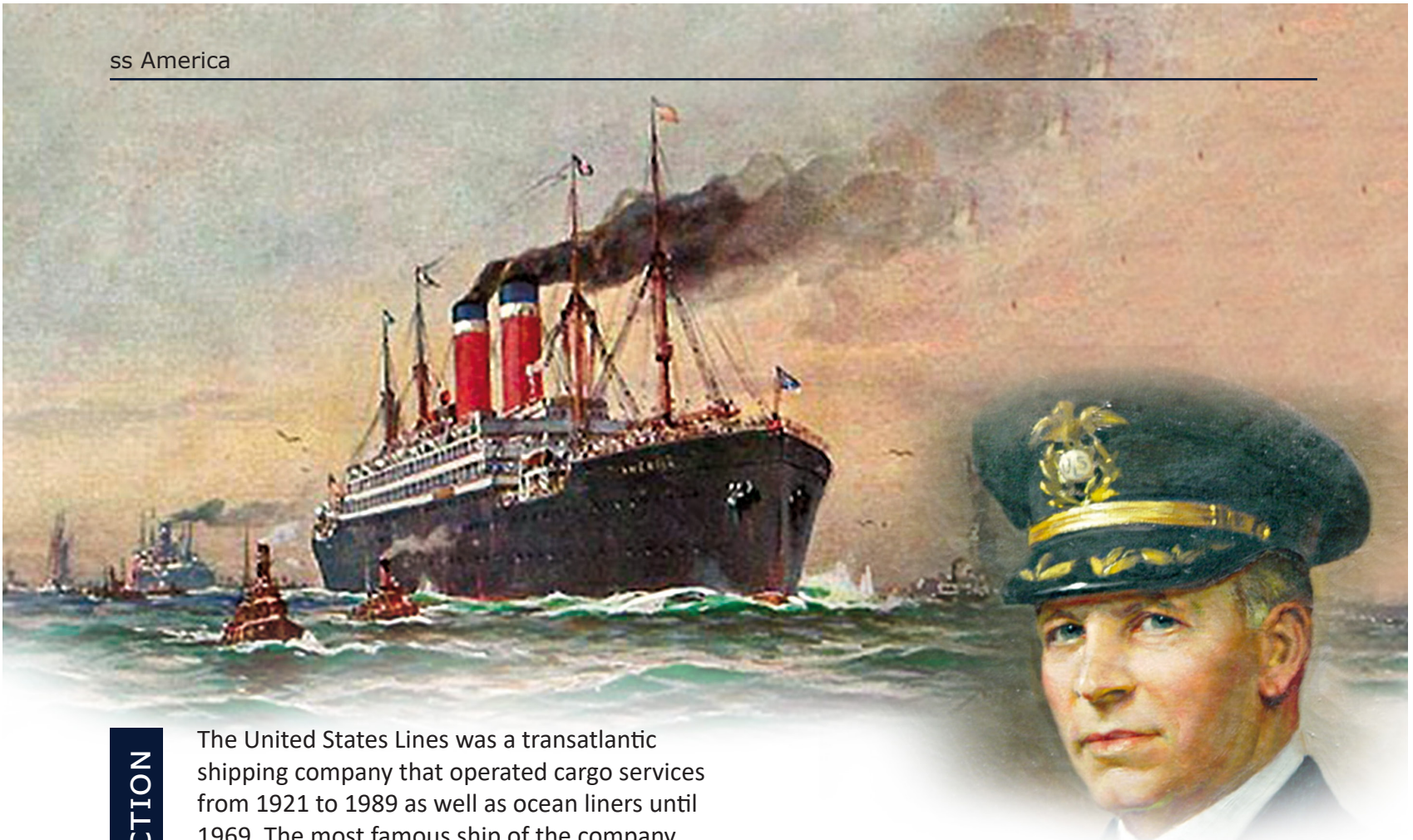


S. S. A M E R I C A





INTRODUCTION

The United States Lines was a transatlantic shipping company that operated cargo services from 1921 to 1989 as well as ocean liners until 1969. The most famous ship of the company became the ss 'United States'. The line became well known in the 1920s when two valiant historic rescues were made using their ships', the ss 'President Roosevelt' in 1926 and the ss 'America' in 1929.

Captain George Fried.



UNITED STATES LINES

1. UNITED STATES LINES, A SHORT HISTORY

At the end of the first World War, the United States Government found itself with a large fleet of ex-German liners which it placed under the control of the United States Shipping Board (USSB), a Department of Commerce agency. In 1920 many German vessels, together with the passenger liners 'Amerika' and 'Georg Washington', were handed over to a new concern, United States Mail Steamship Co., which operated the liners along with four American-built ships from America to France, Germany and England. US Mail possessed very little capital and

even less shipping experience; unable to fulfill its obligations. The USSB ordered the return of its vessels on 21 August 1921. The USSB in return appointed Albert Moore (Moore & McCormack), W. Averill Harriman (United American Lines) and Kermit Roosevelt (Roosevelt Steamship Company and son of the 26th U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt) as managing operators of US Mail, until the ships could be sold to private operators. The new operators managed the line under the title United States Lines (USL), with no interruption in service. The first sailing

under USL auspices was undertaken by the 'America' (I), the former 'Amerika' of the Hamburg-America Line; she sailed from New York on 27 August 1921 for Plymouth, Cherbourg and Bremen. She was eventually joined by other former German liners, the 'Georg Washington', 'Leviathan' and 'Republic', giving United States Lines a viable first class fleet, though slightly unbalanced since 'Leviathan' had no consort. With an upgraded tonnage of 59,956 the 'Leviathan' became the largest passenger liner in the world. She made her first transatlantic sailing for the United States Lines

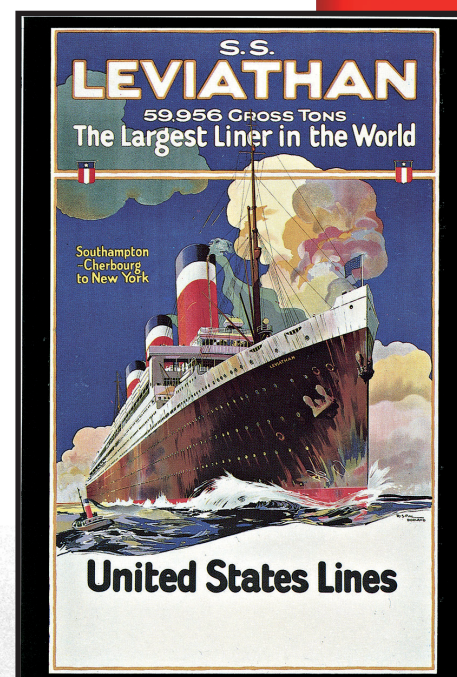
from New York to Southampton on 4 July 1923 and sailed for USL until 1934. Three years later she was sold for scrap.

Additional ships were acquired between 1921 and 1922 including six American-built '502' and '535' Class passenger/cargo vessels, so called for their overall length and named after various U.S. presidents.

In 1926 and 1929 the United States Lines and their captain George Fried became well known with two historic rescues. First captain Fried and his crew rescued all crew members of the British cargo vessel *'Antinoe'* when he was sailing on the ss *'President Roosevelt'* from New York to Bremerhaven at the end of January 1926. After several attempts amidst violent snowstorms and rough seas the *'President Roosevelt'* and her crew succeeded in rescuing the crew of twenty-five of the *'Antinoe'*. The rescue was made memorable by the *'President Roosevelts'* persistence in remaining with the sinking *'Antinoe'* despite rough seas, snow and cold weather. When captain Fried and his crew returned to New York a month later, he received a hero's welcome and a

tickertape parade in Manhattan. Only three years after his first rescue, while serving as captain of the ss *'America'* (I), captain Fried rescued the 32 crewmembers of the Italian cargo vessel *'Florida'* in freezing weather and violent snow squalls. The *'America'* was heading to New York from France. As she battled her way through a major storm, the liner picked up distress signals from the *'Florida'*. The *'America'* fixed a location on the Italian ship and on 28 January 1929 she sighted the endangered vessel. The *'America'* launched a lifeboat and the crew rowed the lifeboat to 15 meters of the listing *'Florida'*. Then a line was thrown to the freighter and one by one all the men from the Italian ship came across the rope and pulled on board the lifeboat. After his second brave rescue captain George Fried became a national hero when his account of the story was widely distributed by newspapers. With his exceptional career well established, Fried commanded several ocean liners, including the *'Leviathan'*.

House colors on the funnel.



With an upgraded gross tonnage of 59,956 the ss 'Leviathan' became the largest passenger liner in the world. (Photo: C.R. Hoffman)

Under a beautiful full moon the last lifeboat left the 'President Roosevelt' (on the left) in order to save the remaining crewmembers (including the captain) of the 'Antinoe'. Soon the British cargo ship will be abandoned and her stern is already disappearing beneath the sea. As soon as the last lifeboat and crew were picked up by the 'President Roosevelt' the American passenger/cargo vessel salute to the dommed 'Antinoe' with three mighty blasts from her whistles and resumed her voyage. The rescue lasted 85 hours and 40 minutes. Painting by Marek Sarba.



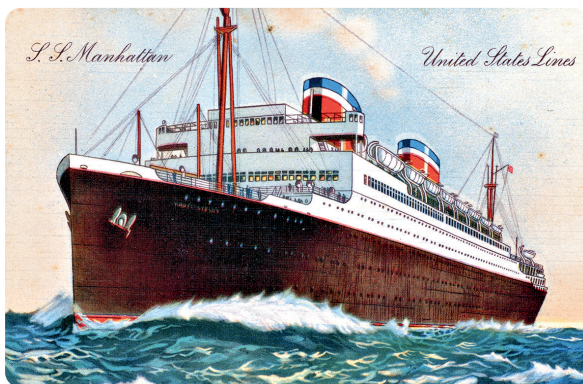
Throughout the 1920s the United States Lines accumulated debt and in March 1929 the line was sold to P.W. Chapman Company and reorganized as the "United States Lines Inc." of Delaware. The stock market crash made matters worse, and in 1931, the remaining ships were sold to 'United States Lines Company' of Nevada. Later in 1931, United States Lines was acquired by the Roosevelt International Mercantile Marine Company, which had been formed earlier in the year from the merger of the Roosevelt Steamship

Company and International Mercantile Marine Co.

In 1932, the passenger liner 'Manhattan' (24,289 gt), at a cost of approximately US\$ 21 million, became the first ship actually built for the line. One year later she was followed by her sistership 'Washington'. In 1932 the United States Lines offered to build a new passenger liner, called the 'U.S. Express Liner', which would also double as a mail ship, and would dramatically decrease the time of delivery for transatlantic mail by catapulting an aircraft when it was within range. Congress refused to give a guarantee on transatlantic postal rates and the ship was never built. In 1940, a new 'America' (II) joined

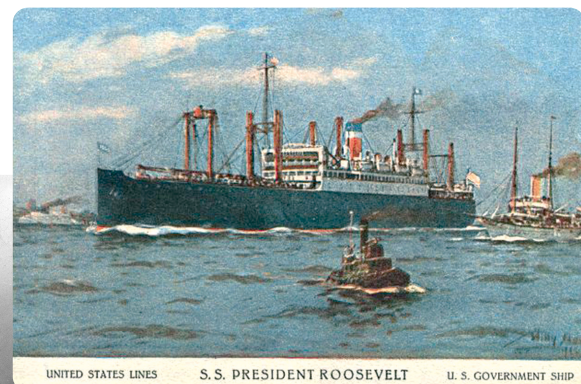
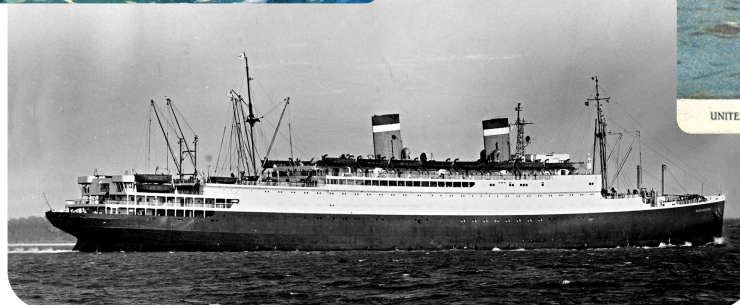
the fleet. She was originally laid down for the United States Maritime Commission as a replacement for 'Leviathan', but during construction was chartered to US Lines. Upon completion, 'America' became the largest, fastest and finest US passenger liner. The ship is the subject of this book.

During the 1930s, United States Lines' ailing parent company, Roosevelt International Mercantile Marine, began winding down its other operations and merging several of its divisions into United States Lines. United States Lines absorbed the American Line in 1932, the Baltimore Mail Line in 1937, and the American Merchant Line in 1938.



Postcard of s.s. 'Manhattan'.

Right: s.s. 'Washington'



Postcard of s.s. 'President Roosevelt'. In 1926 commanded by Captain Fried when executing it's remarkable rescue.

1940 Started with United States Lines absorbing the Roosevelt Line, leaving United States Lines as Roosevelt International Mercantile Marine's sole operating business. Roosevelt International Mercantile Marine Company finally changed its name to 'United States Lines Inc.' in 1942, reflecting its new focus.

In World War II, the ships were converted into troopships. The *'Manhattan'* became USS *'Wakefield'* and the *'Washington'* was renamed USS *'Mount Vernon'*. The flagship *'America'* became USS *'West Point'*. All three passenger liners survived World War II. After the war, the United States Lines began to build smaller and cheaper ships, and operated a number of cargo ships, all names beginning with *'American'* or *'Pioneer'*.

With a government subsidy for her construction, the ss *'United States'* entered service in 1952. She was (and still is) the largest ocean liner built in the United States and the fastest ocean liner ever built. She immediately set transatlantic speed records, capturing the Blue Riband from the *'Queen Mary'*. On her record breaking maiden voyage on 3 July 1952 she made the crossing in 3 days, 10 hours and 40 minutes at an average speed of 35,59 knots. She completed the return westbound crossing in 3 days, 12 hours and 12 minutes with an average of 34,51 knots. The *'United*



The 'American Chieftain' was introduced in 1963 and measured 11,185 gt.

(Photo: Harry Stott)



The 'American Clipper' sailed from 1946 until 1969 for the United States Lines.

(Photo: Harry Stott)

States' operated in conjunction with the *'America'*. At the beginning of 1964 the fleet of the United States Lines consisted besides the *'United States'* and *'America'* an extensive fleet of 52 cargo vessels, of which 35 *'American'* named ships and 17 *'Pioneer'* named ships. All ships were sailing around the world.

However competition from airliners brought the glory days of the passenger

liners to an end and in 1964 the *'America'* was sold to the Greek Chandris Lines and the *'United States'* was withdrawn from service in November 1969. She is presently docked along the Delaware River in Philadelphia. Her future remains - after almost half a century - uncertain.

After the termination of passenger services, United States Lines continued to operate as a container ship line, being bought by



The ss 'United States' was nicknamed the big 'U'. (Photo: FotoFlite)

containerization pioneer Malcolm McLean in 1978. By the 1980s, the line operated 43 vessels and was a leader in international shipping. It spent over US\$1 billion in rapidly expanding its fleet and acquiring two competitors, Moore-McCormack Lines and Delta Steamship Lines. In expectation of a worldwide surge in oil prices, United States Lines borrowed heavily to construct a new class of 12 fuel efficient container ships known as the Jumbo Econships that, at over 57,000 gross ton, were the largest cargo ships yet built. Just as the new vessels were delivered, international freight rates fell and oil prices collapsed to near historic lows. The giant and slow Econships left United States Lines overcapacity, deeply in debt, and unable to compete with faster ships that were once again economically viable. Straining under the debt accumulated by the fleet expansion, the company filed for bankruptcy on 24 November 1986 in one of the largest bankruptcies in US history at the time. Most of the vessels were sold to pay creditors and in the reorganization plan filed on 5 July 1988, the company was formally liquidated by 1992.

The name United States Lines revived briefly in 2000 and 2001 as a brand name of American Classic Voyages, for their Hawaiian cruises brand with a single ship, the *'Patriot'*, the former *'Nieuw Amsterdam'* (III) of the Holland America Line. Also construction started in 2000 on the 72,000 gt future *'Pride of America'* and a sister ship



'United States' berthed in Bremerhaven (Germany).



as part of the Project America cruises. Following the 11 September terrorist attacks in 2001, American Classic Voyages filed for bankruptcy and ceased operations. Norwegian Cruise Line acquired the unfinished first cruise vessel and all parts for the second ship for their new "Homeland Cruising" NCL America division in 2002. The unfinished hull was towed from Pascagoula (USA) to the Lloyd Werft in Bremerhaven (Germany) to be finished as *'Pride of America'*. She made her first 7-day Hawaii cruise from Honolulu on 23 July 2005. The *'Patriot'* was repossessed by Holland America Line and in 2002 chartered by Louis Cruises to become *'Spirit'*. She was renamed *'Thomson Spirit'* in 2003 and was acquired by Louis Cruises in 2008. Nine years later she was renamed *'Marella Spirit'* and in November 2018 sold for scrap.

In the 54 years between her introduction and her wrecking in 1994, *ss America'* had eight different owners (of which the Greek Chandris Lines twice) and sailed under the names of *America'* (carrying this name three different times), *'West Point'*, *'Australis'*, *'Italis'*, *'Noga'*, *'Alferdoss'* and *'American Star'*. She served mostly in passenger service as *ss America'* and *ss Australis'*. The focus of this volume is the history during the period that she sailed under the American flag from 1940 until 1964. The next volume will focus on the later years.



Departure *'United States'* from New York. (Photo: Harry Stott)

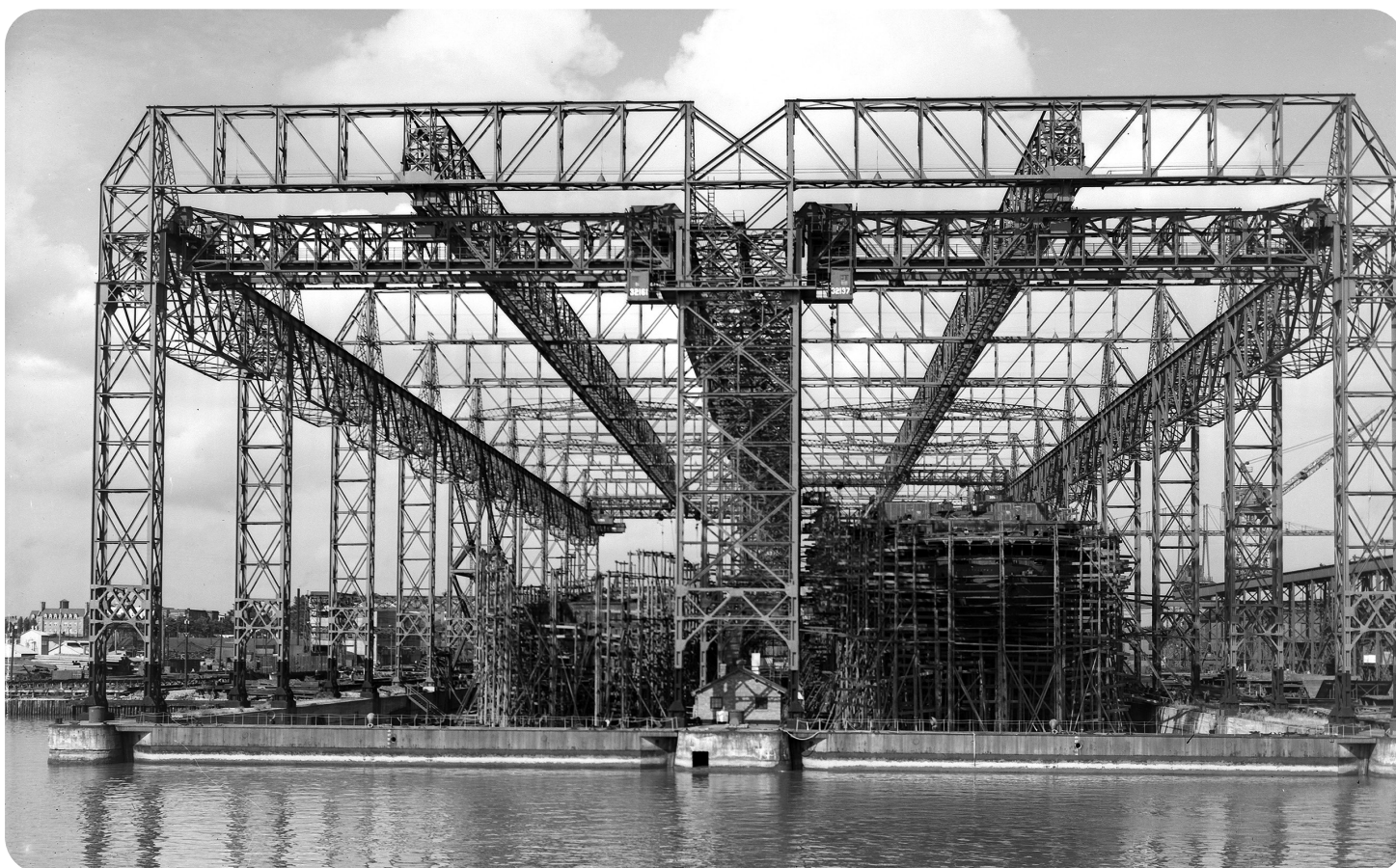


Around 1937, draftsmen take off shell plate sizes from a model. The measurements were necessary to order the materials.

(Photo: Courtesy of HII)

2. BUILDING THE 'AMERICA'

Together with the United States Maritime Commission (USMC) the United States Lines commenced negotiating in 1933 for the building of a new Liner to replace the old and uneconomic ss *'Leviathan'*. The 'Levi', as she was nicknamed, was the former German passenger liner *'Vaterland'* and was seized by the United States Shipping Board when the Americans entered World War I on 6 April 1917. She made her first transatlantic sailing for the United States Lines from New York to Southampton on 4 July 1923 and sailed



Keel was laid down on Shipway #8 on 22 August 1938. The photo is of a later date; the 'America' is on the right. (Photo: Courtesy of HII)

Shipyard

Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) is a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries. It's the largest industrial employer in Virginia and nowadays sole designer, builder and refueler of U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and one of two providers of U.S. Navy submarines. Founded as the Chesapeake Dry Dock and Construction Company in 1886, NNS has built more than 800 ships. Located in Newport News (Virginia) their facilities span more than 550 acres, strategically positioned in one of the great harbors of the East Coast.

The shipyard is nowadays a major employer, not only for the lower Virginia Peninsula, but also portions of Hampton Roads south of the James River and the harbor, portions of the Middle Peninsula region and even some northeastern counties of North Carolina. In 2013 Newport News Shipbuilding began the deactivation of the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, USS *'Enterprise'* (CVN-65), which it also had built. NNS is the only shipyard to perform refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) work on Nimitz-class aircraft carriers.