STEAMSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA PRESENTS

OCEAN LINER GALA V

VIRTUAL AUCTION FUNDRAISER VIA EVENT.GIVES

NOVEMBER 7, 2020
PREVIEW - 6:30PM ET
LIVE SHOW - 7:00PM ET

REMEMBERING

United States Lines
BENEFITING THE SHIP HISTORY CENTER
Introduction

Our theme for tonight’s Ocean Liner Gala V celebrates the heritage of the United States Lines. The following pages highlight USL’s visual chronology of iconic ships, along with colorful captions written by our president, Don Leavitt. The art design and layout was beautifully executed and donated by John Goschke. While we honor USL, we also are excited to share news of SSHSA’s future, during this our 85th Anniversary year. We have launched and are well underway in our first comprehensive campaign; Full Ahead! Steaming Into the Future, Reaching the Next Generation. It was designed to make SSHSA sustainable and relevant for the coming 100 years.

As we approach our official 85th Anniversary date on November 10, 2020 – let’s pause a moment to blow off a little steam. The effort to sustainability began with the acquisition of our 8,000 square foot building. This key achievement has been accomplished. SSHSA now owns our building and it’s our first permanent home. There are so many to thank who have helped us reach this important milestone. But this is just the beginning.

As we embark together, funding the future, we plan to raise $3.5 million and set our course for new harbors, while still having the ability to persevere through storms. We are excited to be well on our way now with the deed in hand and building acquisition behind us.

While we wish we could still meet today in person, the global COVID-19 Pandemic has forced us into sharing kinship “virtually.” Please register now, and tune in via your computer at event.gives/sshsa or your phone by texting “sshsa” to (843) 606-5995.

Until we cruise together again, I thank everyone who supports SSHSA, and wish you all a Happy 85th Anniversary!

Matthew Schulte,
Executive Director
Carl Nold  “Congratulations to SSHSA from Vicky L. Kruckeberg and Carl R. Nold, whose grandfather Karl Nold emigrated to the USA from Germany on one of these ships, the SS George Washington, departing Bremerhaven July 27 and arriving Hoboken August 5, 1927.”

(Above) George Washington, at New York Pier from the Viez Collection, SSHSA Archives.

(Left) For a shipping line with “United States” in its name, it is odd to note most of the early fleet were German liners.

Check out this ship, one that never came to pass other than the rendering. U.S. Mail Lines was founded in 1920 with a fleet of confiscated German liners, interned in U.S. ports during World War I. U.S. Mail spent too much money rehabbing them and folded just a year later. Their planned flagships shown here, the ex-North German Lloyd four-stackers Kaiser Wilhelm II and Kronprinzessin Cecile, went into long-term lay-up, never to sail again. A new company was formed to take over U.S. Mail’s assets. – Photo credit: www.nautiques.net
Here is the vessel that would become the flagship of the newly formed United States Lines, the **Leviathan**. She had taken her maiden voyage as Hamburg American Line’s **Vaterland** in 1914 just months before the outbreak of WWI. Interned in Hoboken, she too was confiscated in 1917 and became a troopship when the U.S. joined the war. The **Leviathan** ferried thousands of soldiers back and forth across the Atlantic. As shown in this dramatic photo, homecoming was a big event. – Photo credit: Richard Rabbett

Richard Rabbett
Clinton Strong  “Congratulations, SSHSA on this important anniversary!”

A splendid painting by maritime artist Albert Brenet showing the Leviathan decked out as the new flagship of the United States Lines. Famed ship designer William Francis Gibbs got his start by planning the rehab. Germany refused to hand over blueprints, so Gibbs and his gang spent months measuring every inch, inside and out, to create new plans.” – Image credit: The Braynard Collection

Thomas Lavin “in memory of Frank Braynard”
Mike Fisher "Congrats to SSHSA"

Jason & Lynne Arabian
What a job it was to draw blueprints of the entire ship! In this excellent cutaway, you can see how immense the Leviathan was. The grand First Class public rooms were clustered along the centerline of the ship where the ride was steadiest. Second Class was situated towards the stern where the ride wasn’t too bad, provided the propellers didn’t cause their cabins to vibrate like a hummingbird. Third Class was up front where immigrants and budget travelers made do in rough seas when the bow crashed through waves. – Photo credit: Richard Rabbett
Lori DiPersio

This gentleman is Elmo Pickerell, chief radio operator on the Leviathan. Pickerell’s main love was flying, a skill he learned from Orville Wright himself in 1910. Pickerell was a long-time SSHSA member and donated many items from his ship career to our archives. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives

Gunstein Langset “Thank you for preserving the past and a vision of the future of SSHSA”
11

Henry & Shirley Fuller

What majestic funnels! Officer Pickerell is standing by the nameboard in this New York photo. In the early 1910s Hamburg American Line began building three massive sister ships, by far the largest the world had ever seen up to that time. But war intervened, and afterwards the trio was split up among Cunard, United States Lines, and White Star. USL proclaimed Leviathan the biggest ship in the world, but in reality White Star’s Majestic was a smidge bigger. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives

Douglas Tilden “Congratulations to SSHSA for 85 years of keeping our maritime heritage alive”
Don & Ann Eberle  “We have been enjoying our membership in SSHSA for 50 +/- years, meeting so many kindred spirits. Long may she sail!”

The elegant First Class Dining Salon on the Leviathan catered to the rich, famous, and infamous who dined under allegorical frescoes at tables lit by silverplated lamps. While caviar and chateaubriand were on the menu, not so wine. Prohibition spanned most of the time Leviathan was in service. Those who required a drink before dinner either smuggled their own on board, bribed a waiter to find a bottle, or sailed on foreign ships where the wine flowed smoothly. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Here is a collection of celebrities who sailed on the Leviathan.

Top row: Anna Pavlova, Russian Ballerina; Rudolph Valentino, Hollywood Mega Star; Cornelius Vanderbilt IV, Newspaperman & Filmmaker; Hope Hampton, Hollywood Starlet

Bottom row: Vincent Astor, Businessman & Philanthropist; Jackie Coogan, Child Actor & later Uncle Fester; Unidentified SS Leviathan Radiogram Boy – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
In an effort to jazz up their flagship, in 1930 USL ripped out the stodgy Palm Court and replaced it with the swanky Club Leviathan. The art deco inspired decor was in stark contrast to the rest of the ship. The company described the room as “an architectural masterpiece in the modernistic spirit.” – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Alas, in the depths of the Great Depression USL gave up on their fading flagship and shuffled it off to lay-up across the river in Hoboken. There, famed photographer Margaret Bourke-White snapped these shots of decrepitude for Life magazine. – Photo credit: Richard Rabbett
Two smart new sister ships took over for Leviathan. Manhattan came first, shown at top with her stylish stubby funnels, all the rage in the early 1930s. The stacks may have looked streamlined but they also channeled soot onto the back decks. After a few months of complaining passengers they were raised to a proper height as shown in the bottom photo. This image is from 1940 and the Manhattan is decked out with neutrality markings because of what Americans at the time called, “the European conflict”.

Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Douglas & Leslie Bryan  "‘The journey not the arrival matters’ TS Eliot"

Hanging enough animal heads to please Teddy Roosevelt, the Smoking Room on the Washington also featured murals of American Indians, comfy armchairs, and a roaring fireplace. Sister Manhattan’s Smoking Room was also a taxidermist’s delight. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Jim & Connie McNamara
Roland & Barbara Parent

The sister ships were among the most popular on the North Atlantic during the 1930s, especially among Americans who appreciated their large cabins, spacious public rooms, and menus with familiar foods. This travel agency poster proclaims the Manhattan as “the greatest liner ever built in America.” – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
H.R. “Buzz” & Joanne Smart

By the late 1930s, a new United States Lines flagship appeared. Designed by William Francis Gibbs, the America is shown here shortly before her launch from the Newport News Shipyard in August 1939. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Here is the America on her trials in June 1940. What’s that up top? Stylish stubby funnels! This time USL realized their mistake early on and the funnels were hastily heightened before the maiden voyage. Photo two shows America on her post-WWII maiden voyage with stacks at the proper height. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
No more cherubs gazing down from the heavens, America’s First Class Dining Room was 1930s sleek. According to USL, the dining room featured “gleaming china ... snowy white table linens ... highly polished silver ... freshly cut flowers ... sparkling goblets ... soft, indirect lighting ... a world famous cuisine ...” Not mentioned but appreciated were padded chairs wide enough for American seats. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Her wide Promenade Deck provided plenty of space for passengers to relax while watching the sea race by, or to enjoy a cup of late morning bouillon, served by an attentive steward pushing a cart. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
America’s civilian service was cut short by war and in 1941 she was drafted as a troopship. Renamed West Point, she served with distinction, steaming more than 400,000 miles to all corners of the globe. By the way, the fore-funnel was a dummy. During the war a platform was fitted at the top as a forward observation deck. In rough seas the pendulum-effect took hold, providing observers with a wild ride better than anything Coney Island offered. – Photo credit: Richard Rabbett
A new era; a new flagship. The magnificent United States is shown here at the Newport News Shipyard, shortly before her trials in June 1952. Again William Francis Gibbs was the designer and insisted that everything onboard was fireproof, right down to the grand piano. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Jim & Sylvia Shuttleworth

The United States was designed to be the fastest ocean liner in the world. Although her top speed was classified as a state secret for decades, here she is shown returning from her trials where she hit 38.32 knots, or 44 miles per hour. During the United States’ maiden voyage in July 1952, she broke the speed record for both west- and east-bound crossings. Since then, no ocean liner has ever come close. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Leon Cohn “I will always remember my transatlantic crossing from France to the United States in August 1960 on the SS United States.”
A popular United States Lines brochure called “Let’s Look Inside the World’s Fastest Liner” opened to 32” wide. Inside was this highly detailed cutaway by illustrator Logan Reavis. Lilliputian passengers and crew populate the ship. Using the legend, prospects could pinpoint 34 key areas around the vessel. – Photo credit: www.nautiques.net
USL used this great image extensively in advertising and promotion. Here the outbound America (bottom) is passing the inbound United States (top). It is easy to see that William Francis Gibbs designed both ships, creating two of the best-looking liners ever to set sail. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
The United States offered spacious cabins done up in bright colors. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor frequently sailed on the ship and booked suites such as the one shown below. – Photo credit: www.nautiques.net

Mark Nemergut
Murray Kilgour
Kent Strobel
Douglas Tilden & Teresa Keller
“Proud to have been part of the U.S. Lines history”

Besides the passenger business, United States Lines also maintained a sizeable freighter fleet. At top is the American Racer, a break-bulk freighter with beautiful lines. At bottom is the American Astronaut, built in the late 1960s to carry that new-fangled invention, the shipping container.

Like many other American steamship companies, USL gave up on the passenger business in the late 1960s to concentrate on freight instead. The United States went into lay-up. Sadly, United States Lines went out of business in the 1980s. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
"Lured by the false promise of a "cheap package vacation to The Breakers, including a cruise," bargain seekers lacking attention to detail found themselves in Scotland instead of Florida."

And what of our wonderful liners? Like a car wreck on the highway, you just can’t help but look at the tragic results. Here is the forlorn Leviathan, arriving at Rosyth, Scotland shipbreakers. Her funnels have been cut down so she could fit under the Firth of Forth Bridge.— Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Steve & Rita Draper  “In honor of the Draper Family, which has called Block Island home since 1661.”

After WWII, Manhattan and Washington went into long-term lay-up on the Hudson, north of New York City (Manhattan is the second ship from the left and Washington is third). Here they waited for a return to service that never came.

In 1965 they were towed down river to local shipyards for breaking up. The New York Times poignantly reported the scene: “On August 10, 1932, some 10,000 well-wishers crowded a Chelsea pier to watch the liner Manhattan depart on her maiden voyage. Last night not a soul paid attention as a gray ghost passed through the city on her final voyage to the scrap heap.” – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives
Neil Jones

After retirement from USL in 1964, the America went onto a further career as an immigrant ship to Australia and then as a faded cruise liner. A long lay-up ensued, but in 1993 a reprieve came along. The ship was to be towed to Thailand for conversion into a hotel. It wasn’t to be. During a storm off the Canary Islands, the tow line broke and winds pushed America onto a beachside reef. There she sat for twenty years, a favorite of photographers who chronicled her slow disintegration into the sea, until she finally collapsed under water.
Art & Meade Ferguson

That leaves the United States. Retired by USL in November 1969, the ship has waited 51 years for a new purpose. Now owned by the non-profit SS United States Conservancy, plans are developing for the ship to become hotel, exhibition and office space. Stayed tuned. – Photo credit: Patrick Murphy
Terry Tilton & Jim Shuttleworth

SSI United States shares a slip with the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock sometime in the early 1960s. – Photo credit: SSHSA Archives.

SSHSA gratefully acknowledges others who have donated and supported Ocean Liner Gala V but who have not been mentioned elsewhere in this program guide:

Jim Antonisse
Steve & Eliza Beringhause
Aimée Bachari
Michele Berard
D. Jordan Berson
Jack Cox
Douglas Davis
Astrid Drew
Barry Eager
Lauri Fine
Walter Giger
Alissa Halacy
Buell Hollister
Richie Kless
Nicholas Langhart
Susan Linda
Bruce Lockhart
Bryan Lucier
Peter Pare
Nathaniel Ruda
Brent Runyon
Steve Tise
Eric Wiberg

Copyright 2020 SSHSA is a non-profit 501 c.3 organization.