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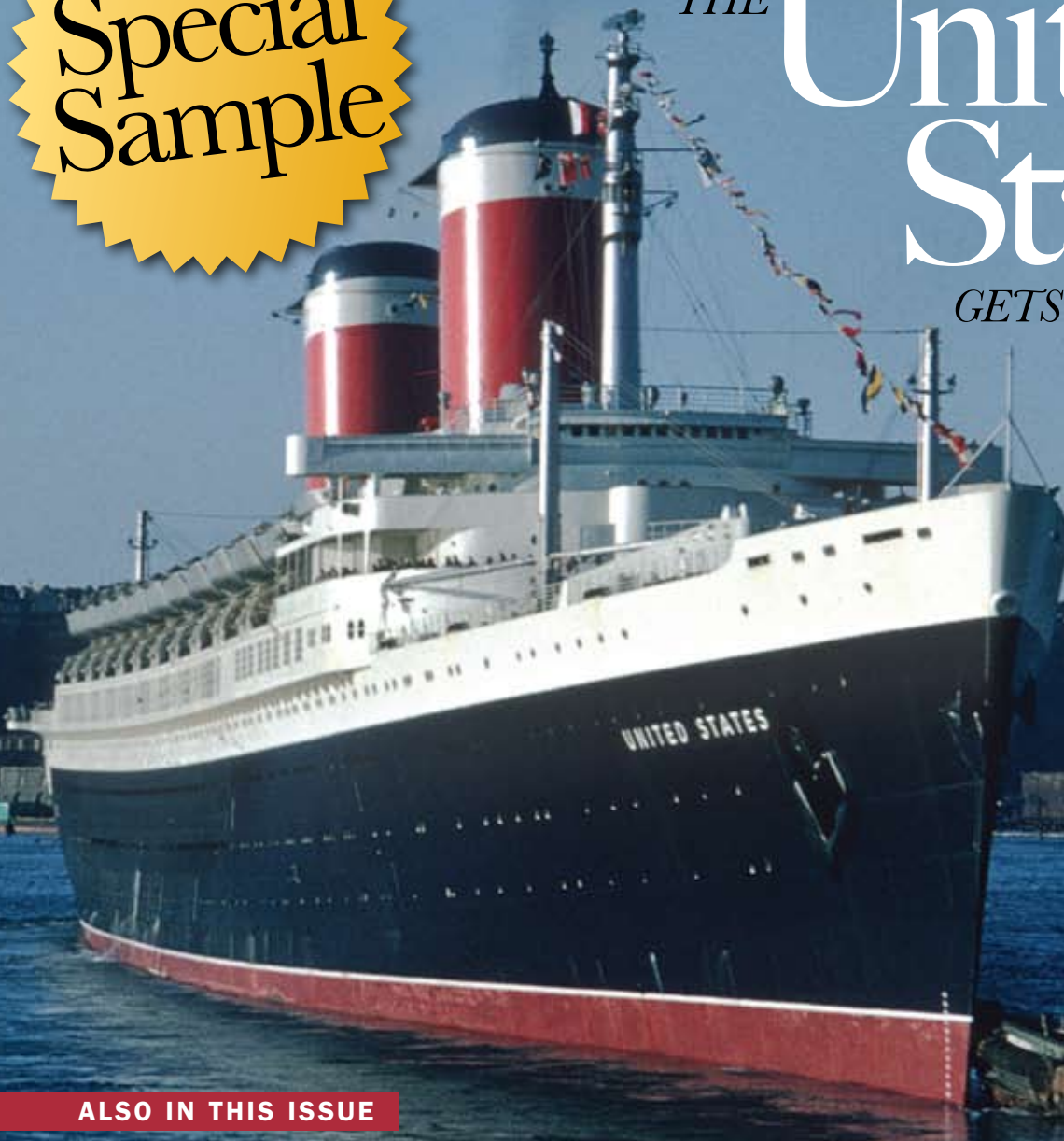
PowerShips

THE MAGAZINE OF ENGINE-POWERED VESSELS FROM THE STEAMSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Special
Sample

THE United States

GETS A REPRIEVE • 6



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Celebrating 75 Years in 2010



THE
United States

GETS A REPRIEVE

by Jack Shaum



A Generous Philadelphia Philanthropist Enables the SS United States Conservancy to Purchase the Record-Holding Ship & Develop a Plan for Her Future



IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN FOUR DECADES since her mighty engines propelled the legendary liner *United States* through the seas and she has been out of service more than twice as long as she was in service. In that time since her lay-up in 1969, a number of proposals for returning her to service have come and gone, and the faded record-breaker continued her lonely existence tied up at one unused pier or another in several ports. Earlier this year the scrap merchants came to look her over and submit bids and the outlook appeared grim.



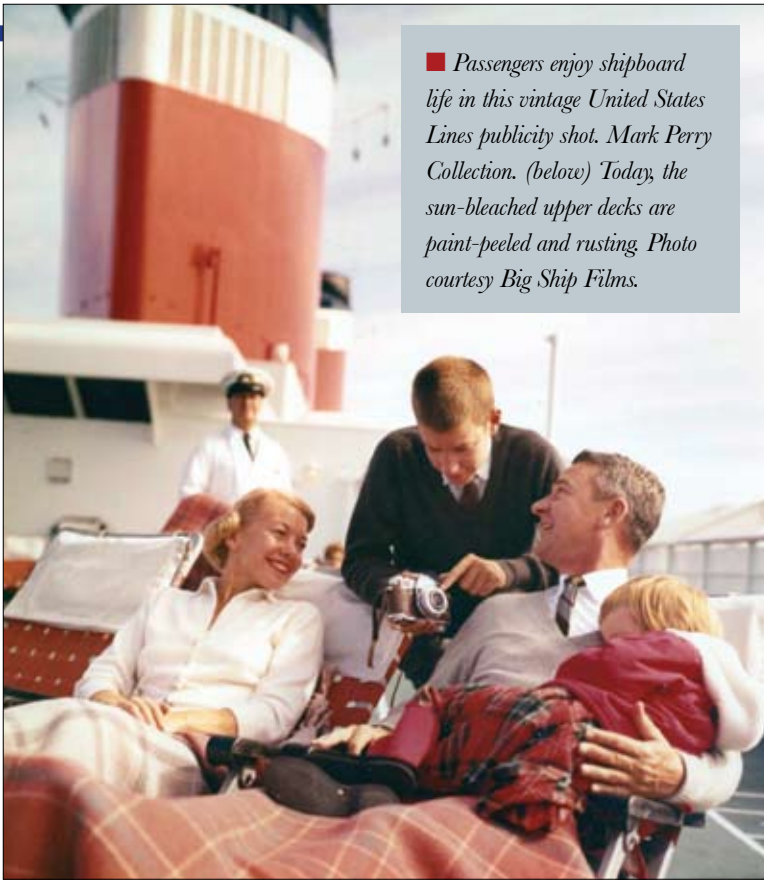
Thank You Mr. Lenfest

BUT THANKS TO PHILADELPHIA PHILANTHROPIST H.F. (Gerry) Lenfest the ship has won a reprieve. Lenfest has agreed to provide up to \$5.8 million to allow the SS United States Conservancy to buy the ship from current owners Norwegian Cruise Line/Genting Hong Kong, and maintain her at her current dock in Philadelphia for up to 20 months while plans for her redevelopment and refurbishing are completed.

THE CONSERVANCY announced that the Lenfest donation allows it to enter into an exclusive purchase option agreement with the current owners. Under terms of the purchase option the Conservancy has until February 2011 to complete the title transfer and take possession.

■ (above) In this vintage publicity photograph, passengers bid New York a festive “bon voyage!” Mark Perry Collection. (left) The United States awaits a better future in Philadelphia. Photo courtesy of Patrick Murphy.

■ *Passengers enjoy shipboard life in this vintage United States Lines publicity shot. Mark Perry Collection. (below) Today, the sun-bleached upper decks are paint-peeled and rusting. Photo courtesy Big Ship Films.*



Thanks Also to Norwegian/Genting

“MR. LENFEST’S VISION AND GENEROSITY GIVE US A FIGHTING chance to preserve the SS *United States* for generations to come. We also want to recognize the support of Norwegian/Genting. They listed the ship for sale in early 2009 and turned down higher offers to partner with us in this patriotic effort,” said Conservancy President Susan Gibbs in a statement. She is the granddaughter of William Francis Gibbs, who designed the ship.

UNDER THE CURRENT PLAN, the *United States* will not return to the high seas. Instead, the Conservancy plans to create a public-private partnership to own and operate the vessel as a stationary attraction.

“THE CONSERVANCY is very optimistic about the prospects for successfully redeveloping the SS *United States* as a multi-purpose stationary attraction on a large American waterfront,” Dan McSweeney, Conservancy Executive Director, told *PowerShips*. “As we move forward in claiming title to the ship, it’s with the recognition that never before has a preservation group owned the vessel, so our approach to repurposing the ship will be inherently different from previous efforts.”



■ *The ship’s beautifully-designed mid-century modern interiors are long gone, having been completely gutted in the early 1990s to remove asbestos. Photos by Mark Perry Collection & Big Ship Films.*



A Multitude of Options

NOW THAT THE SHIP HAS WON A REPRIEVE, THE CONSERVANCY is moving ahead in talking with potential partners in Philadelphia, New York, and elsewhere, about participating in the rebirth of the vessel. The Conservancy points out that the 990-foot *United States* has 550,000 square feet of available space and that she can be configured in any number of ways, since her original interiors were removed in the 1990s. It foresees a number of uses, including restaurants, retail facilities, entertainment outlets, and museums.

“THE FACT that she’s been stripped offers an opportunity to redevelop the vessel in a way which makes her viable as a 21st Century multi-purpose attraction,” McSweeney told *PowerShips*. “While preserving and re-creating key areas of the ship, we can also introduce new design features and amenities that refer to her legacy but allow for viable business operations to emerge. Another benefit of her being stripped is the fact that the vast majority of hazardous materials aboard the ship have been removed. Really, we’re talking about the best example of a blank slate an architect-development team could wish for.”

McSWEENEY acknowledged that “though her paint is fading and she’s rough around the edges, she’s still in terrific shape structurally and her beauty is quite evident.” He called her a “national icon” and promised that she will be returned to a “much-deserved place of dignity that highlights her essence. It won’t be quick and it won’t be easy, but it will happen.”

THE *UNITED STATES*, partly subsidized by the federal government so she could be used as a troop transport, entered United States Lines’ transatlantic service in 1952 and operated there and on cruises for 17 years before being laid up for economic reasons. She has changed hands several times since then and several highly publicized proposals for returning her to service as a modernized cruise ship came to naught. She has been berthed in Philadelphia at Pier 82 since 1996 following the removal of much of her interior overseas.

Possible Locations

McSWEENEY TOLD *POWERSHIPS* HIS ORGANIZATION IS LOOKING at possible sites for the ship in New York and Philadelphia, as well as Miami. “We’re striking a balance between considering the options broadly and understanding the requirement to develop a specific vision in a specific place,” he said. “It’s a dynamic process but our team is up to the challenge.”

IN NOTING the widespread support the Conservancy has received over the years, McSweeney cited the Steamship Historical Society of America, Inc. “SSHSA members have supported us strongly in Philadelphia and New York and we appreciate it greatly,” he said.

POWERSHIPS will continue to monitor and report on developments surrounding the *United States* in the months ahead and is planning a comprehensive article on her career at a later date. ⚓

■ FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE *SS UNITED STATES* VISIT WWW.SSUNITEDSTATESCONSERVANCY.ORG

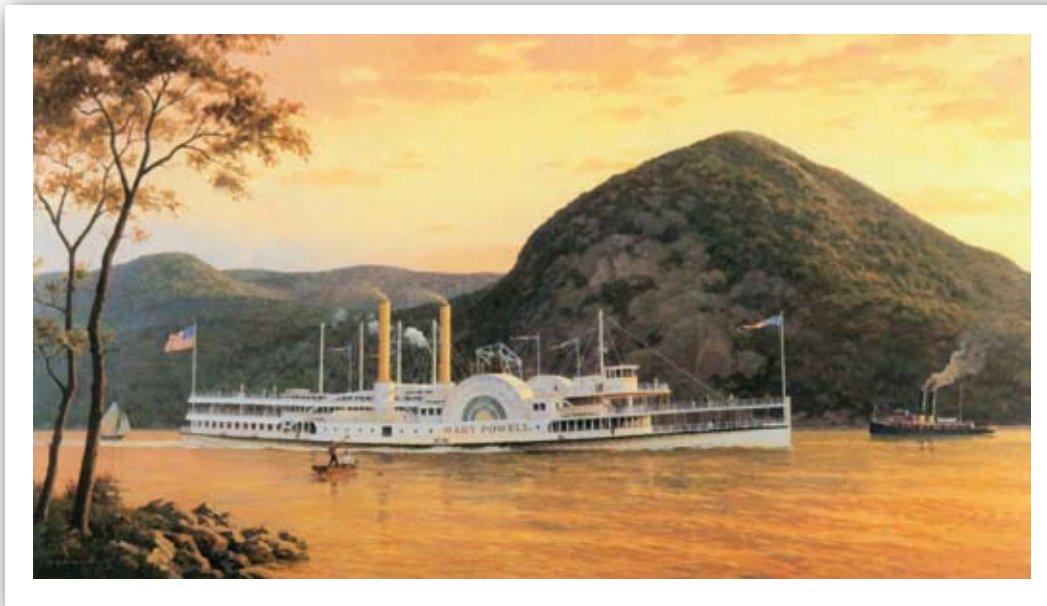


■ (at top) In spite of her weathered appearance the *United States* is structurally sound. Her decks await a new generation of patrons. Photos courtesy Big Ship Films. (below) One of her massive propellers sits on the fantail. Photo courtesy of Patrick Murphy.



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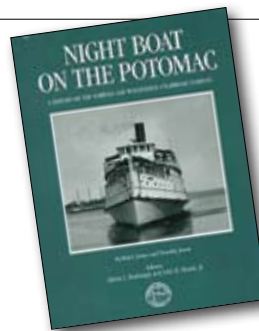
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