

= USS Alabama (BB @-@ 8) =

USS Alabama (BB @-@ 8) was an Illinois @-@ class pre @-@ dreadnought battleship built for the United States Navy . She was the second ship of her class , and the second to carry her name . Her keel was laid in December 1896 at the William Cramp and Sons shipyard , and she was launched in May 1898 . She was commissioned into the fleet in October 1900 . The ship was armed with a main battery of four 13 @-@ inch (330 mm) guns and she had a top speed of 16 knots (30 km / h ; 18 mph) .

Alabama spent the first seven years of her career in the North Atlantic Fleet conducting peacetime training . In 1904 , she made a visit to Europe and toured the Mediterranean . She took part in the cruise of the Great White Fleet until damage to her machinery forced her to leave the cruise in San Francisco . She instead completed a shorter circumnavigation in company with the battleship Maine . The ship received an extensive modernization from 1909 to 1912 , after which she was used as a training ship in the Atlantic Reserve Fleet . She continued in this role during World War I. After the war , Alabama was stricken from the naval register and allocated to bombing tests that were conducted in September 1921 . She was sunk in the tests by US Army Air Service bombers and later sold for scrap in March 1924 .

= = Description = =

Alabama was 374 feet (114 m) long overall and had a beam of 72 ft 3 in (22 @.@ 02 m) and a draft of 23 ft 6 in (7 @.@ 16 m) . She displaced 11 @,@ 565 long tons (11 @,@ 751 t) as designed and up to 12 @,@ 250 long tons (12 @,@ 450 t) at full load . The ship was powered by two @-@ shaft triple @-@ expansion steam engines rated at 16 @,@ 000 indicated horsepower (12 @,@ 000 kW) and eight coal @-@ fired fire @-@ tube boilers , generating a top speed of 16 knots (30 km / h ; 18 mph) . As built , she was fitted with heavy military masts , but these were replaced by cage masts in 1909 . She had a crew of 536 officers and enlisted men , which increased to 690 ? 713 .

The ship was armed with a main battery of four 13 in (330 mm) / 35 caliber guns guns in two twin @-@ gun turrets on the centerline , one forward and aft . The secondary battery consisted of fourteen 6 in (152 mm) / 40 caliber Mark IV guns , which were placed in casemates in the hull . For close @-@ range defense against torpedo boats , she carried sixteen 6 @-@ pounder guns mounted in casemates along the side of the hull and six 1 @-@ pounder guns . As was standard for capital ships of the period , Alabama carried four 18 in (457 mm) torpedo tubes in deck mounted launchers .

Alabama 's main armored belt was 16 @.@ 5 in (419 mm) thick over the magazines and the machinery spaces and 4 in (102 mm) elsewhere . The main battery gun turrets had 14 @-@ inch (356 mm) thick faces , and the supporting barbettes had 15 in (381 mm) of armor plating on their exposed sides . Armor that was 6 in thick protected the secondary battery . The conning tower had 10 in (254 mm) thick sides .

= = Service history = =

Alabama was laid down at the William Cramp & Sons shipyard in Philadelphia on 2 December 1896 and was launched on 18 May 1898 . She was commissioned on 16 October 1900 , the first member of her class to enter service . The ship 's first commander was Captain Willard H. Brownson . Alabama was assigned to the North Atlantic Squadron , though she remained at Philadelphia until 13 December , when she made a visit to New York , where she remained through January 1901 . On the 27th , Alabama steamed south for the Gulf of Mexico , where she joined the rest of the North Atlantic Squadron for training exercises off Pensacola , Florida . For the next six years , she followed a pattern of fleet training in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean during the winter , followed by repairs and then operations off the east coast of the United States from the middle of the year onward . The only interruption came in 1904 , when she , the battleships Kearsarge , Maine , and Iowa , and the

protected cruisers Olympia , Baltimore , and Cleveland made a visit to southern Europe . During the trip , they stopped in Lisbon , Portugal , before touring the Mediterranean until mid @-@ August . They then recrossed the Atlantic , stopping in the Azores while en route , and arrived in Newport , Rhode Island on 29 August . Toward the end of September , Alabama went into dry dock at the League Island Navy Yard for repairs , which were completed by early December . On 31 July 1906 , the ship was involved in a collision with her sister Illinois .

Alabama 's next significant action was the cruise of the Great White Fleet around the world , which started with a naval review for President Theodore Roosevelt in Hampton Roads . On 17 December , the fleet steamed out of Hampton Roads and cruised south to the Caribbean and then to South America , making stops in Port of Spain , Rio de Janeiro , Punta Arenas , and Valparaíso , among other cities . After arriving in Mexico in March 1908 , the fleet spent three weeks conducting gunnery practice . The fleet then resumed its voyage up the Pacific coast of the Americas , stopping in San Francisco , where Alabama was detached from the rest of the fleet . The ship could not keep up with the fleet due to a cracked cylinder head , which necessitated repairs at the Mare Island Navy Yard . The battleship Maine also left the fleet , as her boilers had proved to be badly inefficient , requiring excessive amounts of coal .

On 8 June , Alabama and Maine began their crossing of the Pacific independently , via Honolulu , Hawaii , Guam , and Manila in the Philippines . They then cruised south to Singapore in August and crossed the Indian Ocean , stopping in Colombo , Ceylon , and Aden on the Arabian peninsula on the way . The ships then steamed through the Mediterranean , stopping only in Naples , Italy , before calling at Gibraltar and then proceeding across the Atlantic in early October . They stopped in the Azores before arriving off the east coast of the United States on 19 October ; the two ships then parted company , with Alabama steaming to New York , while Maine went to Portsmouth , New Hampshire . Both ships arrived the following day . Following her arrival , Alabama was reduced to reserve status on 3 November . She remained in New York , and on 17 August 1909 , she was decommissioned for a major overhaul that lasted until early 1912 .

Alabama returned to service on 17 April 1912 in the Atlantic Reserve Fleet , under Commander Charles F. Preston . The ships of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet ? which included eight other battleships and three cruisers ? were kept in service with reduced crews that could be fleshed out with naval militiamen and volunteers in the event of an emergency . There were enough officers and men in the Atlantic Reserve Fleet to fully man two or three ships , which allowed them to take them to sea in rotating groups to ensure that the ships were in good condition . On 25 July , Alabama was temporarily placed in full commission for service with the Atlantic Fleet during the summer training exercises , before returning to reserve status on 10 September . In mid @-@ 1913 , the Navy began to use the Atlantic Reserve Fleet to train naval militia units . Alabama operated off the east coast of the United States and made two training cruises to Bermuda that summer to train men from the naval militias of several states . These operations ended on 2 September , and on 31 October she was again laid up .

The ship remained largely inactive in Philadelphia for the next three years . On 22 January 1917 , she became a receiving ship for naval recruits . Alabama was transferred to the southern Chesapeake to begin training recruits in the middle of March . Shortly thereafter , on 6 April , the United States declared war on Germany . Two days later , Alabama became the flagship of the 1st Division , Atlantic Fleet , and for the rest of the war she continued her training mission of the east coast of the United States . During this period , she made one cruise to the Gulf of Mexico from late June to early July 1918 . On 11 November , Germany signed the Armistice that ended the fighting in Europe ; Alabama continued training naval recruits , though at a reduced level of intensity . She took part in fleet maneuvers in February and March 1919 in the West Indies before returning to Philadelphia in April for repairs . A summer training cruise for midshipmen from the US Naval Academy followed ; Alabama departed Philadelphia on 28 May bound for Annapolis , where she arrived the next day . After taking on a contingent of 184 midshipmen , she steamed out of Annapolis on 9 June . The cruise went to the West Indies and passed through the Panama Canal and back . By mid @-@ July , the ship was cruising off the coast of New England . She returned south in August for maneuvers , and at the end of the month she returned the midshipmen to

Annapolis before docking in Philadelphia .

= = = Bombing tests = = =

Alabama was decommissioned for the final time on 7 May 1920 , having spent the previous nine months inactive at Philadelphia . The ship was transferred to the War Department for use as a target ship on 15 September 1921 , and she was stricken from the naval register . She was allocated to bombing tests conducted by the US Army Air Service on 27 September 1921 , under the supervision of General Billy Mitchell . In addition to Alabama , the old battleships New Jersey and Virginia were to be sunk in the tests . The first phase of the testing began on 23 September , and included tests with chemical bombs , including tear gas and white phosphorus , to demonstrate how such weapons could be used to disable command and control systems and kill exposed personnel . That night , another test with 300 @-@ pound (140 kg) demolition bombs took place , the purpose of which was to determine whether flares could sufficiently illuminate a target for precise bombing . The second phase took place the next morning , and it was a much larger operation . The 1st Provisional Air Brigade took part in the tests , which were to simulate a combat scenario . A group of eight Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5s , armed with 25 lb (11 kg) bombs attacked first ; their bombs and machine gun fire were intended to simulate clearing the decks of anti @-@ aircraft gunners in preparation for the heavy bombers . Four Martin NBS @-@ 1 bombers attacked next , with 300 lb bombs at an altitude of 1 @, @ 500 feet (460 m) . Two of the bombs hit the deck toward the bow . Three more NBS @-@ 1s followed with 1 @, @ 100 lb (500 kg) armor @-@ piercing bombs , though none of these hit .

On 25 September , the last round of tests took place . Seven more NBS @-@ 1s attacked the ship ; three carried 1 @, @ 100 lb bombs , while the other four carried one 2 @, @ 000 lb (910 kg) bomb each . One of the 2 @, @ 000 lb bombs landed close to the ship on the port side ; the mining effect caused considerable damage , and Alabama began listing to port . The bombers scored two more near @-@ misses with the 2 @, @ 000 lb bombs , followed by a direct hit and two near misses with the 1 @, @ 100 lb bombs . The last bomb , a 2 @, @ 000 lb weapon , struck the ship at her stern . The blast broke her anchor chains , and the battered ship began to drift toward the wrecks of San Marcos and Indiana , the latter having been sunk in bombing tests earlier that year . The ship remained afloat for another two days before finally sinking in shallow water on 27 September . Mitchell attempted to use the sinking as evidence of the predominance of the bomber in his efforts to secure an independent Air Force , though the Navy pointed out that the ship was stationary , undefended , unmanned , and was not protected with the latest " all or nothing " armor scheme . The sunken wreck was sold for scrap on 19 March 1924 .