

= USS Illinois ( BB @-@ 7 ) =

USS Illinois ( BB @-@ 7 ) was a pre @-@ dreadnought battleship built for the United States Navy . She was the lead ship of the Illinois class , and was the second ship of the U.S. Navy to be named for the 21st state . Her keel was laid in February 1897 at the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company , and she was launched in October 1898 . She was commissioned in September 1901 . 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 ) .

Illinois served with the European Squadron from 1902 to 1903 , and with the North Atlantic Fleet until 1907 , by which time it had been renamed the Atlantic Fleet . During this time , she accidentally collided with two other battleships . From December 1907 to February 1909 , she circumnavigated the globe with the Great White Fleet . From November 1912 , the ship was used as a training ship . She was lent to the state of New York in 1919 for use as a training vessel for the New York State Militia . The ship was converted into a floating armory in 1924 as a result of the Washington Naval Treaty , and it was under this guise that she served for the next thirty years . In January 1941 she was renamed Prairie State and reclassified as IX @-@ 15 so that the name could be given to Illinois , a projected Iowa @-@ class battleship . Prairie State was ultimately sold for scrap in 1956 .

= = Description = =

Illinois 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 .

She 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 , Illinois carried four 18 in ( 457 mm ) torpedo tubes in deck mounted launchers .

Illinois '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 = =

Illinois was laid down on 10 February 1897 by the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company of Newport News , Virginia . She was launched on 4 October 1898 , sponsored by Miss Nancy Leiter , daughter of Chicago multi @-@ millionaire Levi Leiter and commissioned on 16 September 1901 . The ship 's first commander was Captain George A. Converse . Illinois was the first member of her class to be authorized , but the last to enter service . After commissioning , the ship began a shakedown cruise in the Chesapeake Bay , followed by initial training . She left the area on 20 November to test a new floating dry dock in Algiers , Louisiana . The ship was back in Newport News in January 1902 . She served briefly as the flagship of Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans from 15 to 28 February ; during this period , she took part in a reception for Prince Henry of Prussia , the brother of the German Kaiser .

On 30 April , now flying the flag of Rear Admiral A.S. Crowninshield , Illinois departed for a tour of

Europe . She stopped in Naples , Italy on 18 May ; here , Crowninshield took command of the European Squadron . Illinois took part in training exercises and ceremonial duties in European waters for the next two months , until 14 July , when she ran aground outside Oslo , Norway . She had to steam to Britain for repairs , which were carried out at Chatham . She left the port on 1 September for maneuvers with the rest of the fleet in the Mediterranean and South Atlantic . On 10 January 1903 , Illinois was reassigned to the North Atlantic Fleet , where she remained for the next four years . Her time was occupied with peacetime training exercises , gunnery practice , and various ceremonial activities . During this period , she was involved in two accidents with other battleships of the North Atlantic Fleet . The first took place on 30 March 1903 , when she collided with Missouri . The second collision occurred on 31 July 1906 , and took place with her sister ship Alabama . Also that year , Illinois was the first ship to win the Battenberg Cup .

The ship '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 and Seattle before crossing the Pacific to Australia , stopping in Hawaii on the way . Stops in the South Pacific included Melbourne , Sydney , and Auckland .

After leaving Australia , the fleet turned north for the Philippines , stopping in Manila , before continuing on to Japan where a welcoming ceremony was held in Yokohama . Three weeks of exercises followed in Subic Bay in the Philippines in November . The ships passed Singapore on 6 December and entered the Indian Ocean ; they coaled in Colombo before proceeding to the Suez Canal and coaling again at Port Said , Egypt . While there , the American fleet received word of an earthquake in Sicily . Illinois , the battleship Connecticut , and the supply ship Culgoa were sent to assist the relief effort . The fleet called in several Mediterranean ports before stopping in Gibraltar , where an international fleet of British , Russian , French , and Dutch warships greeted the Americans . The ships then crossed the Atlantic to return to Hampton Roads on 22 February 1909 , having traveled 46 @, @ 729 nautical miles ( 86 @, @ 542 km ; 53 @, @ 775 mi ) . There , they conducted a naval review for Theodore Roosevelt .

On 4 August 1909 , Illinois was decommissioned in Boston . The ship then underwent a major modernization , receiving new " cage " masts and more modern equipment . She spent the next three years in active service with the fleet , before being decommissioned once more on 16 April 1912 . She returned to service on 2 November for major training maneuvers with the Atlantic Fleet . Illinois made training cruises to Europe with midshipmen from the US Naval Academy in mid @-@ 1913 and 1914 . By 1919 , she had been decommissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard . On 23 October 1921 , she was loaned to the New York Naval Militia for training purposes . The 1922 Washington Naval Treaty , which mandated significant reductions in naval strength , stipulated that Illinois must be rendered incapable of warlike action . As a result , she was converted into a floating armory at the New York Navy Yard in 1924 and was assigned to the New York Naval Reserve .

On 8 January 1941 , the ship was reclassified from BB @-@ 7 to IX @-@ 15 , and was renamed Prairie State so that her name could be used for the new battleship Illinois , which would be laid down a week later . Throughout World War II , she served with the U.S. Naval Reserve Midshipmen 's School , based in New York . After the end of the war , Prairie State was kept as a barracks ship for a Naval Reserve unit . On 31 December 1955 , the old ship was stricken and subsequently towed to Baltimore , where she was sold for scrap to the Bethlehem Steel Company on 18 May 1956 .

= = Silver Service = =

On 17 November 1901 , Illinois was presented with a silver service dining set provided by the state of Illinois and presented by Senator William E. Mason . It consisted of a large and small punch bowl , two candelabra , an ornamented fruit dish , a small fruit dish , two epicurean dishes , a large

centerpiece and a ladle . Each item featured engravings of the crest of Illinois and an ear of corn . In 1943 , the silver service was transferred to the Illinois Executive Mansion .