

= USS Illinois (BB @-@ 65) =

Illinois (BB @-@ 65) was to have been the fifth Iowa @-@ class battleship constructed for the United States Navy and was the fourth ship to be named in honor of the 21st US state .

Hull BB @-@ 65 was originally to be the first ship of the Montana @-@ class battleships , but changes during World War II resulted in her being reordered as an Iowa @-@ class battleship . Adherence to the Iowa @-@ class layout rather than the Montana @-@ class layout allowed BB @-@ 65 to gain eight knots in speed , carry more 20 mm and 40 mm anti @-@ aircraft guns , and transit the locks of the Panama Canal ; however , the move away from the Montana @-@ class layout left BB @-@ 65 with a reduction in the heavier armaments and without the additional armor that were to have been added to BB @-@ 65 during her time on the drawing board as USS Montana .

Like her sister ship Kentucky , Illinois was still under construction at the end of World War II . Her construction was canceled in August 1945 , but her hull remained until 1958 when it was broken up .

= = Design = =

The passage of the Second Vinson Act in 1938 had cleared the way for construction of the four South Dakota @-@ class battleships and the first two Iowa @-@ class fast battleships (those with the hull numbers BB @-@ 61 and BB @-@ 62) . The latter four battleships of the class , those designated with the hull numbers BB @-@ 63 , BB @-@ 64 , BB @-@ 65 , and BB @-@ 66 were not cleared for construction until 1940 , and at the time BB @-@ 65 and BB @-@ 66 were intended to be the first ships of the Montana class .

Originally , BB @-@ 65 was to be the United States Navy 's counter to the Empire of Japan 's Yamato @-@ class battleships , whose construction at the time was known to the highest @-@ ranking members of the United States Navy , along with the rumors that the Yamato @-@ class ships would carry guns of up to 18 in (460 mm) . To combat this , the United States Navy began designing a 58 @,@ 000 ton ship with an intended armament of twelve 16 in (410 mm) guns . This battleship took shape in the mid @-@ 1930s as USS Montana , the lead ship of her class of battleships . She would have fielded three more 16 in (410 mm) guns than those mounted aboard the Iowa class , a more powerful secondary battery of 5 in (130 mm) / 54 caliber Mark 16 dual purpose mounts , and an increase in armor designed to enable Montana to withstand the effects of enemy guns comparable to her own .

The increase in Montana 's firepower and armor came at the expense of her speed and her Panamax capabilities , but the latter issue was to be resolved through the construction of a third , much wider set of locks at the Panama Canal . As the situation in Europe deteriorated in the late @-@ 1930s , the USA began to be concerned once more about its ability to move warships between the oceans . The largest US battleships were already so large as to have problems with the canal locks ; and there were concerns about the locks being put out of action by enemy bombing . In 1939 , to address these concerns , construction began on a new set of locks for the canal that could carry the larger warships which the US had either under construction or planned for future construction . These locks which would have enabled Montana to transit between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans without the need to sail around the tip of South America . As USS Montana , BB @-@ 65 would have been the only battleship class commissioned by the US to approach the Imperial Japanese Navy 's Yamato class on the basis of armor , armament , and tonnage .

By 1942 the United States Navy shifted its building focus from battleships to aircraft carriers after the successes of carrier combat in both the Battle of the Coral Sea , and to a greater extent , the Battle of Midway . As a result , the construction of the US fleet of Essex @-@ class aircraft carriers had been given the highest priority for completion in the US shipyards by the US Navy . The Essex @-@ class carriers were proving vital to the war effort by enabling the Allies to gain and maintain air supremacy in the Pacific War , and were rapidly becoming the principal striking arm of the United States Navy in the ongoing effort to defeat the Empire of Japan . Accordingly , the United States

accepted shortcomings in the armor for their North Carolina @-@ class battleships , South Dakota @-@ class , and Iowa @-@ class battleships in favor of additional speed , which enabled these battleship classes to steam at a comparable speed with the Essex @-@ class and provide the carriers with the maximum amount of anti @-@ aircraft protection .

= = Development = =

When BB @-@ 65 was redesignated an Iowa @-@ class battleship , she was assigned the name Illinois and reconfigured to adhere to the " fast battleship " designs planned in 1938 by the Preliminary Design Branch at the Bureau of Construction and Repair . Her funding was authorized via the passage of the Two @-@ Ocean Navy Act by the US Congress on 19 July 1940 , and she would now be the fifth Iowa @-@ class battleship built for the United States Navy . Her contract was assigned on 9 September 1940 , the same date as Kentucky . Illinois 's keel was laid down at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard , on 6 December 1942 ; her projected completion date was 1 May 1945 . This amounted to a construction time of about 30 months . She would be tasked primarily with the defense of the US fleet of Essex @-@ class aircraft carriers . In adherence with the Iowa @-@ class design , Illinois would have a maximum beam of 108 ft (33 m) and a waterline length of 860 ft (260 m) , permitting a maximum speed of 32 @. @ 5 knots (60 @. @ 2 km / h) .

Like Kentucky , Illinois differed from her earlier sisters in that her design called for an all @-@ welded construction , which would have saved weight and increased strength over a combination riveted / welded hull used on the four completed Iowa @-@ class ships . Engineers considered retaining the original Montana @-@ class armor for added torpedo and naval mine protection because the newer scheme would have improved Illinois 's armor protection by as much as 20 % . This was rejected due to time constraints and Illinois was built with an Iowa @-@ class hull design . Funding for the battleship was provided in part by " King Neptune " , a Hereford swine auctioned across the state of Illinois as a fundraiser , ultimately helping to raise \$ 19 million in war bonds .

= = Fate = =

Illinois 's construction was put on hold in 1942 after the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway , while the Bureau of Ships considered an aircraft carrier conversion proposal for Illinois and Kentucky . As proposed , the converted Illinois would have had an 864 @-@ foot (263 m) long by 108 @-@ foot (33 m) wide flight deck , with an armament identical to the carriers of the Essex class : four twin 5 @-@ inch gun mounts and four more 5 @-@ inch guns in single mounts , along with six 40 mm quadruple mounts . It was abandoned after the design team decided that the converted carriers would carry fewer aircraft than the Essex class , that more Essex @-@ class carriers could be built in the same amount of time to convert the battleships , and that the conversion project would be significantly more expensive than new Essexes . Instead , Illinois and Kentucky were to be completed as battleships , but their construction was given very low priority .

Ultimately , the ship was canceled on 11 August 1945 , when she was about 22 % complete . She was struck from the Naval Vessel Register on 12 August 1945 . Her incomplete hulk initially was retained on the belief that it could be used as a target in nuclear weapons tests . The cost to complete the ship enough to be able to launch her ? some \$ 30 million ? was too great , however , and the plan was abandoned . She remained in the dockyard until September 1958 , when she was broken up on the builder 's ways .

The ship 's bell was cast , and is now at the Memorial Stadium at the University of Illinois at Urbana @-@ Champaign . It reads USS Illinois 1946 . The bell is on loan from the Naval Historical Center (Accession # 70 @-@ 399 @-@ A) , Washington Navy Yard , Washington DC , to the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) at the university . The bell is traditionally rung by NROTC members when the football team scores a touchdown or goal .