

= SS George Washington =

SS George Washington was an ocean liner built in 1908 for the Bremen @-@ based North German Lloyd and was named after George Washington , the first President of the United States . The ship was also known as USS George Washington ( ID @-@ 3018 ) and USAT George Washington in service of the United States Navy and United States Army , respectively , during World War I. In the interwar period , she reverted to her original name of SS George Washington . During World War II , the ship was known as both USAT George Washington and , briefly , as USS Catlin ( AP @-@ 19 ) , in a short , second stint in the U.S. Navy .

When George Washington was launched in 1908 , she was the largest German @-@ built steamship and the third @-@ largest ship in the world . George Washington was built to emphasize comfort over speed and was sumptuously appointed in her first @-@ class passenger areas . The ship could carry a total of 2 @, @ 900 passengers , and made her maiden voyage in January 1909 to New York . In June 1911 , George Washington was the largest ship to participate in the Coronation Fleet Review by the United Kingdom 's newly crowned king , George V.

On 14 April 1912 , George Washington passed a particularly large iceberg south of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and radioed a warning to all ships in the area , including White Star Line ocean liner Titanic , which sank near the same location . Throughout her German passenger career , contemporary news accounts often reported on notable persons ? typically actors , singers , and politicians ? who sailed on George Washington .

At the outbreak of World War I , George Washington was interned by the then @-@ neutral United States , until that country entered into the conflict in April 1917 . George Washington was seized by the United States and taken over for use as a troop transport by the U.S. Navy . Commissioned as USS George Washington ( ID @-@ 3018 ) , she sailed with her first load of American troops in December 1917 .

In total , she carried 48 @, @ 000 passengers to France , and returned 34 @, @ 000 to the United States after the Armistice . George Washington also carried U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to France twice for the Paris Peace Conference . George Washington was decommissioned in 1920 and handed over the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) , who reconditioned her for passenger service . SS George Washington sailed in transatlantic passenger service for both the United States Mail Steamship Company ( one voyage ) and United States Lines for ten years , before she was laid up in the Patuxent River in Maryland in 1931 .

During World War II , the ship was re @-@ commissioned by the U.S. Navy as USS Catlin ( AP @-@ 19 ) for about six months and was operated by the British under Lend @-@ Lease , but her old coal @-@ fired engines were too slow for effective combat use . After conversion to oil @-@ fired boilers , the ship was chartered to the U.S. Army as USAT George Washington and sailed around the world in 1943 in trooping duties . The ship sailed in regular service to the United Kingdom and the Mediterranean from 1944 to 1947 , and was laid up in Baltimore after ending her Army service . A fire in January 1951 damaged the ship severely , and she was sold for scrapping the following month .

= = Design and construction = =

SS George Washington was an ocean liner built in within two years ( 1907 ? 1908 ) by AG Vulcan of Stettin , Germany ( present @-@ day Szczecin , Poland ) , for North German Lloyd ( German : Norddeutscher Lloyd or NDL ) . Intended for Bremen ? New York passenger service , the ship was named after George Washington , the first President of the United States as a way to make the ship more appealing to immigrants , who then made up the majority of transatlantic passengers and believed formalities on arrival would be easier on a ship with an American name . George Washington was launched on 10 November 1908 by the United States Ambassador to Germany , David Jayne Hill . At the time of her launch , she was the third @-@ largest ocean liner in the world , behind only Cunard Line ships Lusitania and Mauretania . George Washington also became the largest German @-@ built steamship , surpassing the Hamburg America Line 's Kaiserin Auguste

Victoria , and held that distinction until the 1913 launch of Hamburg America 's Vaterland .

After George Washington was completed , she was reported in contemporary news accounts as being 27 @, @ 000 gross register tons ( GRT ) , though present @-@ day sources agree on a figure of 25 @, @ 570 GRT . Her displacement was reported as being approximately 37 @, @ 000 long tons ( 38 @, @ 000 t ) , more than twice the 18420 t displacement of the British battleship Dreadnought . She was powered by two quadruple @-@ expansion steam engines that generated 20 @, @ 000 horsepower ( 15 @, @ 000 kW ) and propelled her considerably faster than the 18 @. @ 5 knots ( 34 @. @ 3 km / h ) guaranteed by her builders . Because she was designed to emphasize comfort over speed , George Washington 's engines consumed an economical 350 long tons ( 360 t ) of coal daily , or about one @-@ third as much as the Cunard speedsters Lusitania and Mauretania . By using less coal , and , consequently , needing less space to carry it , the liner was able to carry up to 13 @, @ 000 long tons ( 13 @, @ 000 t ) of cargo . The liner also featured the Stone @-@ Lloyd system of hydraulically operated bulkhead doors for her thirteen watertight compartments .

George Washington had accommodations for nearly 2 @, @ 900 passengers , with 900 divided between first and second class and the balance as third class or steerage . The ship had only eight decks rather than a more typical nine , which gave her passenger accommodations a spacious feel . The first @-@ class passenger section included 31 cabins with attached baths , and the liner 's imperial suites were designed by German architect Rudolf Alexander Schröder . The second @-@ class , third @-@ class , and steerage compartments were fitted out in a " comfortable manner " suitable for each class .

The first class public rooms were " sumptuously appointed " , and included murals by German fresco artist Otto Bollhagen that commemorated the life and times of George Washington . First @-@ class passengers could visit a separate lounge , a reading room decorated by Bruno Paul , a two @-@ story smoking room , and their own dining room that spanned the width of the ship . The upper and lower floors of the smoking room were joined by a broad staircase which helped , according to a report in The New York Times , make it " one of the most attractive parts " of the first @-@ class areas . The dining saloon seated 350 diners at small tables designed for between two and six diners in " roomy and moveable " red Morocco chairs . The dining room was decorated in white and gold , with a gilded dome rising above , while its walls featured floral designs executed against a blue background .

Other first @-@ class passenger amenities aboard George Washington included a gymnasium with machines for " Swedish exercises " , and two electric elevators for those who didn 't want to exercise at all . There was also a darkroom open to amateur photographers ; 20 dog kennels , along with a kennel master ; a 70 @-@ by @-@ 50 @-@ foot ( 21 by 15 m ) solarium decorated with green and gold tapestry , palms , and flowers of all kinds ; and an open air cafe on the awning deck for taking after @-@ dinner coffee . Second @-@ class passengers had a separate dining room , a drawing room , and a smoking room , and third @-@ class passengers had similar amenities .

= = North German Lloyd passenger service = =

George Washington began her maiden voyage on 12 June 1909 , sailing from Bremen to New York via Southampton and Cherbourg . On board were 1 @, @ 169 passengers which included a German press contingent ; Philipp Heineken , the Generaldirektor of North German Lloyd ; and a chimpanzee named Consul , billed as " his Darwinian Highness " , the " Almost Monkey @-@ Man " , who was coming to America under contract for the William Morris Vaudeville circuit .

Upon her arrival in New York on 20 June , George Washington was greeted by the unfurling of the official banner of the League of Peace from the Singer Building , and docked at 18 : 30 at the North German Lloyd piers in Hoboken , New Jersey . Coincidentally , Martha Washington , an ocean liner of the unrelated Austro @-@ American Line , was in port when George Washington docked in New York for the first time .

On 22 June , the liner hosted a press luncheon , and , the next afternoon , hosted some 3 @, @ 000 members of the Daughters of the American Revolution who presented a commemorative bronze

tablet . Stewart L. Woodford , a former Congressman and ambassador , spoke at the ceremony dedicating the tablet , which was placed at the base of the staircase in the first @-@ class smoking room . Beginning 24 June , the North German Lloyd opened George Washington to the public for five days of viewing of the new ship .

Sailing on her first eastbound journey on 1 July , George Washington commenced regular service between Bremen and New York with intermediate stops in Southampton and Cherbourg . North German Lloyd considered the Washington , as her crew affectionately called her , such a success that they soon ordered another liner of similar , but slightly larger , size .

On 24 June 1911 , George Washington participated in the Coronation Fleet Review by the United Kingdom 's newly crowned king , George V. Stationed at the head of the second row of merchant ships , George Washington ? full dressed for the occasion ? was reported by The Times as " by far the largest ship present " .

While headed to New York on the morning of 14 April 1912 , crew aboard George Washington observed a large iceberg as the ship passed south of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland . By noon the ship passed within a half mile ( 900 m ) of the iceberg , estimated by the crew at 112 feet ( 34 m ) above the waterline and 410 feet ( 120 m ) long . After recording the ship 's position , George Washington radioed a warning to all ships in the area . The White Star steamship Titanic , some 250 nautical miles ( 460 km ) east of George Washington 's position , acknowledged receipt of the warning , one of several her radio operators received . On 15 April , George Washington received garbled transmissions that informed that Titanic had struck an iceberg less than twelve hours later , and in nearly the same position as the one that George Washington had reported . Edwin Drechsel , in his 2 @-@ volume chronicle of North German Lloyd , draws comparisons between the iceberg photographed by George Washington ( and first published in his book ) , and a better @-@ known photo taken from the Hamburg America Line ship Prinz Adalbert , purportedly of the Titanic iceberg . Drechsel suggests that the iceberg photographed and reported by George Washington may have been one and the same .

= = = Notable passengers = = =

Throughout her Lloyd transatlantic career George Washington carried some notable and interesting passengers to and from Europe . In August 1909 Sigmund Freud sailed from Bremen bound for New York on his one and only trip to the US . He was accompanied by his colleagues Carl Jung and Sándor Ferenczi . In February 1910 , banker Edgar Speyer , a Privy Counsellor appointed by Edward VII of the United Kingdom , arrived for a visit to the United States . Prince Tsai Tao , the uncle of the Emperor of China , departed in one of George Washington 's imperial suites after a four @-@ day visit to New York in May ; the Chinese Imperial flag flew from the mainmast in his honor as the ship departed . In October , Henry W. Taft , brother of U.S. President William Howard Taft returned from a visit to Europe . In December , disgraced Arctic explorer Frederick Cook arrived on the liner ; conflicting opinions on the veracity of his claims of reaching the North Pole nearly caused a fight to erupt on board . On the same voyage as Cook , German actor Ernst von Possart arrived for his first stage performances in New York in over 20 years .

Composer Engelbert Humperdinck , after attending the debut of his opera Königskinder at the Metropolitan Opera , sailed on George Washington in early January 1911 in order to attend the opera 's Berlin premiere . American sculptor George Grey Barnard returned to New York in April amidst controversy over some of his works . An organization called the National Society for Protection of Morals was protesting the presence of nude figures in sculptures he executed for the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg . July saw George Washington transporting a menagerie of sorts . The liner was carrying a shipment from India of 6 white peacocks , 2 lions , 2 elephants , 150 monkeys , and some 2 @,@ 000 canaries destined for the recently organized Saint Louis Zoological Park . In August , two men of note ? both headed for Berlin ? sailed on George Washington . Nathan Straus , co @-@ owner with his brother Isidor of R.H. Macy & Company , sailed as the U.S. delegate to the third world congress for the protection of infants held in Berlin . Congressman Richard Bartholdt , charged by President Taft to deliver a statue of Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben to

the German government , sailed with the statue , which was a gift from the American people .

Financier and philanthropist J. P. Morgan , Jr. returned from a two @-@ month trip to Europe in November 1912 ; his wife followed him home the next month . Also arriving on George Washington 's November crossing was Mary Garden , a Scottish @-@ born soprano , who was returning from a sabbatical in Scotland . The next month , opera singers Frieda Hempel and Leon Rains , both headed for appearances with the Metropolitan Opera , arrived on the same voyage as Mrs. Morgan . Hempel , a German soprano , was with the Berlin Royal Opera , and American tenor Rains was with the Saxon Royal Opera of Dresden .

Newlyweds Francis B. Sayre , an assistant district attorney in New York , and Jessie Woodrow Wilson Sayre , the daughter of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson , sailed in November 1913 for a European honeymoon . The couple , wed at the White House , traveled in one of George Washington 's imperial suites . The following January , English playwright W. Somerset Maugham quietly slipped out of New York on George Washington . Maugham had arrived in New York in mid November to see Billie Burke in the New York premiere of his play , The Land of Promise .

= = World War I = =

George Washington continued operating on the Bremen ? New York route until World War I when she sought refuge in New York , a neutral port in 1914 . With the American entry into the war in 1917 , George Washington was taken over 6 April and towed to the New York Navy Yard for conversion into a transport . She commissioned 6 September 1917 , with Captain Edwin T. Pollock in command .

George Washington sailed with her first load of troops 4 December 1917 and during the next 2 years made 18 round trip voyages in support of the American Expeditionary Forces . During this period she also made several special voyages . President Woodrow Wilson and the American representatives to the Paris Peace Conference sailed for Europe in George Washington 4 December 1918 . On this crossing she was protected by Pennsylvania , and was escorted into Brest , France , 13 December by ten battleships and twenty @-@ eight destroyers in an impressive demonstration of American naval strength . After carrying 4000 soldiers back home to the U.S. , George Washington carried Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt and the Chinese and Mexican peace commissions to France in January 1919 . On 24 February , she returned President Wilson to the United States . The President again embarked on board George Washington in March 1919 ; arriving France 13 March , and ( see picture [ 1 ] ) returned at the conclusion of the historic conference 8 July 1919 .

During the fall of 1919 , George Washington carried another group of distinguished passengers ? King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium and their party . Arriving New York 2 October , the royal couple paid a visit before returning to Brest 12 November . Subsequently , the ship was decommissioned 28 November 1919 after having transported some 48 @,@ 000 passengers to Europe and 34 @,@ 000 back to the United States . The ship was turned over to the United States Shipping Board on 28 January 1920 .

= = The Hatchet newspaper = = =

Started in February 1918 ; as a means to relieve the stress the troops , sailors , and officers were under aboard a ship in the danger zone ; it was written by officers who had previous literary experience and produced by men who had printing and publishing experience . It was printed on a small hand press ? 5 @,@ 000 copies with the first issue but this was increased to 7 @,@ 000 ? and titled The Hatchet ( a reference to the tale about George Washington and the cherry tree ) . News from the ship and news received by radio were in the single @-@ sheet newspaper . The masthead in 1919 listed the ship chaplain as managing editor and three reporters ? one each from the Associated Press , International News Service and the United Press as " associate editors " . The newspaper pages , printed on a shipboard press , measured about 9 by 8 inches ( 23 by 20 cm ) . The newspaper 's motto : " We Cannot Tell a Lie " . Its front page claimed it had " The Largest

## Circulation On The Atlantic Ocean " .

= = Interwar passenger service = =

After her delivery to the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) , George Washington was used to transport 250 members of the American Legion to France as guests of the French Government in 1921 . The vessel was then reconditioned by USSB for transatlantic service , and chartered by the U.S. Mail Steamship Company , for whom she made one voyage to Europe in March 1921 . The company was taken over by the government August 1921 and its name changed to the United States Lines . George Washington served the Line on the transatlantic route until 1931 when she was laid up in the Patuxent River , Maryland .

= = World War II = =

George Washington was reacquired for Navy use from the United States Maritime Commission on 28 January 1941 and commissioned as USS Catlin ( AP @-@ 19 ) on 13 March 1941 . She was named in honor of Brigadier General Albertus W. Catlin , USMC . It was found , however , that the coal @-@ burning engines did not give the required speed for protection against submarines , and she was decommissioned on 26 September 1941 . Because of their great need for ships in 1941 , Great Britain took the ship over under Lend @-@ Lease on 29 September 1941 as George Washington , but they found after one voyage to Newfoundland that her aging boilers could not safely maintain sufficient steam pressure to drive her otherwise servicable engines . A secondary contributing factor was the difficulty in manning her with sufficient skilled stokers ? the role having been supplanted with the steady introduction of oil fired ships in the 1930s . With the ship unfit for combat service the British returned her to the War Shipping Administration ( WSA ) on 17 April 1942 .

The ship was next operated under General Agency Agreement by the Waterman Steamship Co . , Mobile , Alabama , and made a voyage to Panama . After her return on 5 September 1942 the WSA assigned George Washington to be converted to an oil @-@ burner at Todd Shipbuilding 's Brooklyn Yard . When she emerged on 17 April 1943 , the transport was chartered by the United States Army and made a voyage to Casablanca and back to New York with troops between April and May 1943 .

In July , George Washington sailed from New York to the Panama Canal , thence to Los Angeles and Brisbane , Australia . Returning to Los Angeles , she sailed again in September to Bombay and Cape Town , and arrived at New York to complete her round @-@ the @-@ world voyage in December 1943 . In January 1944 George Washington began regular service to the United Kingdom and the Mediterranean , again carrying troops in support of the Allies in Europe from . She made frequent stops at Le Havre , Southampton , and Liverpool .

George Washington was taken out of service and returned to the Maritime Commission 21 April 1947 . She remained tied to a pier at Baltimore , until a fire damaged her 16 January 1951 . She was subsequently sold for scrap to the Boston Metals Corporation of Baltimore on 13 February 1951 .