SS United States Media Coverage Capsule Summary

November, 2012

1. The Wall Street Journal – Campaign Sets Sail for World’s Fastest Liner
   July 10, 2012

A group of ship lovers is launching an unusual online fundraiser to repaint and start restoring the SS United States—the fastest ocean liner in the world—currently sitting idle in Philadelphia.

In the $25 million campaign, scheduled to start Wednesday, people will be able to buy virtual pieces of the ship, for $1 per square inch, at savetheunitedstates.org. The site also promises interactive deck plans and social-networking tools.

The goal is to create a “grass-roots community around the vessel,” said Thomas J. Basile, a spokesman for the SS United States Conservancy, which owns the historic ship. The campaign also is seeking corporate sponsors in return for brand exposure aboard the actual ship or on the website, he said.

The effort to save the SS United States was chronicled three years ago in a page one article in The Wall Street Journal.

The preservationists plan to use the funds to build a 20,000-square-foot shipboard museum dedicated to mid-20th-century American culture and innovation—“that 'Mad Men' era,” Mr. Basile said—and to restore the red-white-and-blue exterior. Their long-term aim is to repurpose the vessel as a waterfront destination.

There is a lot of it to paint: The “Big U,” as aficionados dub the ship, rivals the Titanic in size. Built more than a half-century ago, the SS United States was designed as a luxury liner but one that could also serve as a Cold War secret weapon. (It could be quickly converted into a high-speed troop carrier).

The ship still holds the record for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic.


PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Caretakers for the SS United States, the legendary ocean liner moored on the Delaware River since 1996, are renewing and expanding their emergency distress call for the beleaguered piece of American maritime history.

In an eleventh-hour reprieve that spared the ship a date with the scrap yard, a local philanthropist’s $5.8 million gift allowed the SS United States Conservancy to buy it and keep it afloat until November 2012. With that date looming, the nonprofit conservancy launched a “Save the United States” fundraising rally Wednesday to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the ship’s maiden voyage on July 3, 1952.

The conservancy has raised about $6 million so far but needs $25 million to restore the exterior and part of the interior to house a museum, said Susan Gibbs, conservancy executive director and the granddaughter of William Francis Gibbs, the ship’s Philadelphia-born designer. The goal is to spark interest, raise public awareness and literally get investors on board.
“The SS United States is America's flagship. It symbolizes the very best that this nation has produced,” she said. “It is going to once again be an amazing icon for the nation to appreciate and enjoy.”

The fundraising campaign includes a new interactive website, www.savetheunitedstates.org, which allows donors to “purchase” a piece of the ship for $1 per square inch for themselves or in honor of someone else. They can choose the section they want to sponsor by scrolling and zooming around a virtual model on the website, “meet” other donors throughout the ship, personalize and upload images and memories of the ship, and share it through social media sites.

The 990-foot-long ocean liner, which transported patrons across the Atlantic with both elegance and muscle, has spent the bulk of its life in a nomadic existence plagued by shifting owners, dashed hopes and close calls with the scrap yard. But even in its humbled state, the ship newspapers once feted as “the greatest shipbuilding effort in the history of this country” and “the most revolutionary modern superliner in the world” still remains an awe-inspiring sight even to those who remember it from its heyday.

“The engineering, the beauty, the service, the safety — this was the best, the best in the world, none of the ships could compare with it,” Joe Rota, who worked on the ship in the 1950s, said during a recent visit aboard the United States. “And it would be an absolute tragedy to lose it.”

The $5.8 million donation from cable TV mogul H.F. “Gerry” Lenfest, whose naval architect father designed parts of the SS United States, saved the ship from a likely scrapping and allowed the conservancy to buy the ship from Norwegian Cruise Lines in February 2011 and pay for 20 months of docking and related costs. The conservancy's redevelopment arm is exploring potential partnerships with entities in Philadelphia, New York and Miami to refashion the vessel as a stationary entertainment complex with a hotel, theater, restaurants and shopping — but the clock is winding down along with the money from Lenfest's gift.

“What you see here is kind of discouraging but ... you could scrape this down and you could repaint it, and when we light the lights at night on occasion she's absolutely gorgeous again,” Rota said. “And we could have that again. ... This would be an attraction the whole world would want to come and take part in again.”

Commissioned as a joint venture between the Navy and ship designer Gibbs & Cox, the $78 million liner's luxury cloaked its military might. Though never called to battle, it could have been converted in a single day to transport 14,000 troops for 10,000 miles without refueling.

Instead it carried more than 1 million passengers across the Atlantic over the course of 400 round trips, among them President John F. Kennedy, Marlon Brando, Elizabeth Taylor, Salvador Dali, Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier of Monaco, and England's King Edward VIII. In 1968, Bill Clinton traveled tourist-class en route to Oxford University.

The liner's glory days were short-lived as air travel rose in popularity, however, and the United States was taken out of service in 1969. It changed hands multiple times, from the Navy and on through a series of restoration-minded investors. It was unceremoniously towed from Virginia to Turkey to Ukraine, finally arriving in Philadelphia as a gutted hulk. Another succession of developers and a cruise line failed to return the ship to service as retrofitting costs proved too great.

“It's been 60 years since I first set foot on this ship with my mother ... it's very exciting,” said Louise Meiere Dunn, 82, of Stamford, Conn., who stood recently on the promenade where she danced the conga on the maiden voyage, when the United States set a new trans-Atlantic record from New York to England: 3 days, 10 hours, 40 minutes. The record that still stands for a conventional passenger ocean liner. “We understood there was going to be some sort of celebration when we were going to break the record,” Dunn said. “We went out on deck ... but the weather was so foul we came back here and found it on the promenade deck.”
She recalled with a laugh that she and the other young people on board partied until breakfast, which they ate while still in their evening gowns and black tie from the night before. Several weeks later, a friend in India saw her dancing the conga on a movie newsreel. "I'm hoping that this ship can be revived, repurposed," she said. "It would be wonderful to see this promenade deck being used again — and having a conga line, maybe."


4. **WTKR Newport News – Group Trying to Save Flagship – October 6, 2012**

5. **Fox 29 Philadelphia – SS United States Celebrates 60th Anniversary June 30, 2012**

7. Associated Press Television – SOS Call to Save the United States July 11, 2012

8. USA Today – Travel Section Photospread- November 11, 2012
With the U.S. Olympic Committee caught red-faced earlier this month for dressing our nation’s athletes in uniforms made in China, one harkens back to the day when “Made in America” was more than a nostalgic slogan. It is a sad commentary on the state of our nation that the USOC apparently didn’t think it would be at all embarrassing to shun American manufacturers when preparing Team USA to go for the gold.

Standing aboard the deck of the SS United States, however, one remembers what “Made in America” once meant to our nation and the world. Sixty years ago this month, America’s flagship shattered the trans-Atlantic speed record and became one of the great engineering achievements of her time. Back in 1952, people from every walk of life and firms from every state in the nation helped design, build and outfit the fastest and safest ship ever conceived. Her record has never been broken.

Larger than the Titanic, the SS United States was a military powerhouse disguised as a modern luxury liner. With a double hull nearly a thousand feet long, she could be quickly converted to carry 15,000 troops 10,000 miles without refueling. While only once placed on high alert, she never saw battle. Instead, she transported more than a million passengers, including four U.S. presidents, diplomats, military personnel, students, immigrants, movie stars and business moguls.

Sixty years ago, the American dream and our national pride was powerfully and beautifully rendered in red, white and blue and in steel and aluminum. When the SS United States shattered the speed record, it was as if the whole country went along for the ride. She cut through the water with the force of a rising world power, united against communism and a beacon of hope for war-torn Europe and those still struggling against authoritarian rule.
When the ship sailed into foreign ports of call, she garnered a sense of excitement, awe, anticipation and visions of what life was like in the land of the free. She represented the most advanced, the safest, the fastest, the biggest and the best — a majestic symbol of a diverse, free and dynamic society.

My grandfather, the designer of the SS United States, maintained that the ship represented “the strength of a free society and individual initiative [and] a tribute to the American system.”

Perhaps Ralph Lauren and the USOC should take note.

Today, as companies and consumers place less value on American-made goods, the SS United States sits idle and in a state of disrepair, a metaphor for our nation’s challenges and — some would say — decline. Solid and stately as she floats at a Philadelphia pier, the paint on her massive red, white and blue funnels is now fading and peeling.

It will be up to the power of individuals throughout the land to make her shine again and likewise spearhead a renewed push for American goods.

Like our nation, the SS United States needs the renewed vision, energy and power of her people. A new campaign at SavetheUnitedStates.org is leveraging social media and digital technology in an unprecedented way to encourage people from across the country to unite around preserving and celebrating our common history.

The campaign’s goal is to restore the exterior of this symbol of American pride, passion and ingenuity. A shipboard museum will celebrate and showcase the rich tapestry of American culture, technology and innovation. Visitors will learn about the nation’s proud post-war period when America’s ingenuity helped rebuild a war-torn world. Some of the ship’s 500,000 square feet of interior space will support retail, hospitality and entertainment uses and create a dynamic 21st century economic opportunity.

We are all part of the great tradition of “Made in America.” It wasn’t that long ago that people in this country came together to build great things. Both our nation and our flagship are stewards of an extraordinary people and powerful history.

Sometimes it can be something as simple as a limestone monument, a Main Street parade or the high notes of a ball park anthem to rekindle a sense of national pride and purpose. Or it can be an awe-inspiring all-American ocean liner that bears a great name that makes people realize how strong we are as a nation and how we must work together to ensure “Made in the USA” means something to all of us again.

Susan Gibbs is the executive director of the SS United States Conservancy and granddaughter of William Francis Gibbs, the ship’s designer.

11. New York Times – Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea
August 6, 2012

There’s some sadness in the story of the S.S. United States, which for a time in the 1950s and 1960s was the fastest and most advanced ocean liner ever built. It was the lifelong project of William Francis Gibbs, America’s preeminent naval architect, a self-taught engineer who, among his many other achievements, was instrumental in transforming a German liner captured during World War I into the Leviathan, the pride of America’s postwar passenger fleet. Then, during World War II, he pioneered a revolutionary process to construct the so-called Liberty Ships, which became symbols of America’s industrial
might. All along, Gibbs nursed plans to build a revolutionary superliner. But his designs, hatched in his parents’ Philadelphia attic as early 1916, were not realized until 1952. Ten years after its christening, his transatlantic ship would prowl the icy North Atlantic as a kind of floating anachronism, jet planes having turned its record three-day, 10-hour crossing time into a sorry joke. Such is the sweep of “A Man and His Ship” (Simon & Schuster, $30) an absorbing, transporting new history by Steven Ujifusa, which coincides with a show about the S.S. United States now on view at the Forbes Gallery (through Oct. 20).

Gibbs’s ship did not meet its sad fate alone. By the 1960s, even Cunard’s famous “Queens” — the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth — became “ghost ships of the Great Circle,” wrote one passenger at the time. “It was then possible for a single solitary passenger to turn up for tea in the dim depths of the grand saloon and sit magnificently alone while a dozen white jacketed stewards stood around like sentries.” But while Cunard has managed to keep the legacy of transatlantic travel alive with its Queen Mary 2, the flagship of the United States Lines has been laid up in South Philadelphia since 1996. Its chic, streamlined insides were gutted and sold for scrap, and the future of its rusted hull remains very much in doubt.

The most entertaining sections of Ujifusa’s book are really a kind of preamble to Gibbs’s time. The first several chapters give an abbreviated history of the golden age of ocean liners, inaugurated in 1906 with the launching of Cunard’s Mauretania. We have an idea, perhaps, of what this period looks like — all cotillions and White Star Line ashtrays — but Ujifusa colors it in. “Gone were the days of the 19th-century wooden paddle-wheel steamer, with its stiff bunks, chamber pots and pervasive stink of bilge water,” Ujifusa writes. “On board the Mauretania, men dressed for dinner in white tie and tails, women retrieved their jewels from the purser’s office, and the first-class kitchen rivaled the one at the London Ritz.” Despite significant interruptions — the Titanic’s sinking, the stock market crash — the boom time for big boats continued through the 1920s and ’30s, a period of wild seaborne celebration symbolized by the Cole Porter musical “Anything Goes.”

“The five- or six-day trip was filled with masquerades, passenger talent shows, shuffleboard tournaments, and smoking room bridge games. After dark, the booze flowed and hot jazz bands blared from the ballroom stage. The Prince of Wales and Queen Marie of Romania joined Cornelius Vanderbilt III and Vincent Astor at captains’ tables overflowing with grilled antelope, quail eggs and caviar. New York’s corrupt mayor, Jimmy Walker, set a new standard for shipboard dandyism: he packed his steamer trunks with forty-four suits, twenty pique vests (to wear with his tailcoats), twelve pairs of trousers, and a hundred cravats. At the captain’s table, Commodore Sir James Charles of the Cunard Line demanded that male guests don evening dress, complete with military decorations and hereditary medals. A legendary gourmand, he dropped dead during one of his gargantuan feasts aboard the Aquitania in 1928.”

While the ocean liner, especially during Prohibition, was a refuge for sybarites of all stripes, Gibbs himself was a rather dour teetotaler, persnickety and, despite being a devoted husband, something of a chauvinist. He praised a female shipping executive for being “the only woman in the world who can keep her mouth shut” and once confirmed a journalist’s suspicion that he loved his ship more than his wife. On the rosier side, he was a stickler for safety, setting standards that went far beyond existing maritime regulations. Keenly aware that fire posed the greatest risk to any ship at sea, he would not allow any wood whatsoever in the United States’ interiors, even going as far as asking Theodore Steinway, of Steinway & Sons, to make his pianos for the ship out of aluminum. (Steinway had to douse one of his wood-framed baby grands with gasoline and ignite it to prove it did not pose a fire risk. The gasoline burned, but the piano itself did not; Gibbs was satisfied and allowed them aboard.)

Much of Ujifusa’s book is a portrait in determination, as Gibbs’s plans for his big ship are continually tossed about in political, economic and personal squalls. A less single-minded man may have given up at numerous times. In fact, even as transatlantic liners were passing into obsolescence, Gibbs maintained that he should be building more of them, a sentiment echoed by the United States’ first captain, Commodore Harry Manning. “She should have had a sister ship,” he said in 1967. “This business of putting it all in airplanes is nonsense.” Gibbs died in 1974 at age 81.
Compared with its 40-year gestation period, the United States' time at sea was brief, albeit memorable. “It is ultramodern,” wrote a newspaper columnist shortly after the 1952 launch, “a big chromium, air-conditioned, streamlined Park Avenue apartment house afloat.” The crossing lured luminous passengers like Marilyn Monroe, Jack Benny, Marlon Brando, Cary Grant, Salvador Dali, even a young Bill Clinton. When the Duke and Duchess of Windsor came aboard, Ujifusa writes, “They brought along 150 Louis Vuitton steamer trunks and suitcases. Stewards replaced United States Lines’ linens with Windsor-monogrammed Porthault towels and sheets. Custom drapes were installed, leopard skin rugs were thrown on the floor, and pictures in jewel-encrusted frames placed on the tables. Their suite was no longer fireproof but it was now fit for royalty and looked as if the Windsors lived there year-round. Not only that, but their two pug dogs were allowed to romp around the suite during the day.” Among the other artifacts now on view at the Forbes Gallery are aluminum panels covered in paint and gold leaf that were taken from a mural in the Windsors’ suite — one of thousands of pieces of the great ship that were auctioned off to the highest bidder after it was retired in 1969.


The SS United States was the last of the golden age of trans-Atlantic cruise ships, 107 feet longer than the Titanic and 50 percent faster than the ill-fated luxury liner.

From its maiden voyage in 1952, the SS United States operated for 17 glorious years and the massive ship still holds the prestigious Blue Riband - for the fastest trans-Atlantic crossing by a passenger liner.

Although never in active naval service, the ship played a vital role in the Cuban Missile Crisis and became a symbol of American power during the Cold War.

Now slowly rusting away in a south Philadelphia mooring, the ship which was known as the unofficial flagship of the nation is now at the heart of ambitious redevelopment plans to restore it to its former glory and convert it to a floating hotel.

Saved from a date with the scrap yard in February of last year, a local philanthropist's $5.8 million gift allowed the SS United States Conservancy to buy it and keep it afloat until November 2012.

With that date looming, the nonprofit conservancy has launched a ‘Save the United States’ drive to mark the 50th anniversary of her launch and her claiming of the Blue Riband.

The conservancy has raised about $6 million so far but needs $25 million to restore the exterior and part of the interior to house a museum, restaurants and a hotel said Susan Gibbs, conservancy executive director and the granddaughter of William Francis Gibbs, the ship's Philadelphia-born designer.

The goal is to spark interest, raise public awareness and literally get investors on board.

‘The SS United States is America's flagship. It symbolizes the very best that this nation has produced,’ she said. 'It is going to once again be an amazing icon for the nation to appreciate and enjoy.’

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They can choose the section they want to sponsor by scrolling and zooming around a virtual model on the website, ‘meet’ other donors throughout the ship, personalize and upload images and memories of the ship, and share it through social media sites.
“This is living history. Once this ship is gone, it will never be replaced. It is the last of the American ocean liners. It was built in Newport News. We cannot lose this ship,” said Dan McSweeney who is on the SS United States Conservancy and a commercial developer.

The 990-foot-long ocean liner, which transported patrons across the Atlantic with both elegance and muscle, has spent the bulk of its life in a nomadic existence plagued by shifting owners, dashed hopes and close calls with the scrap yard.

But even in its humbled state, the ship newspapers once feted as ‘the greatest shipbuilding effort in the history of this country’ and ‘the most revolutionary modern superliner in the world’ still remains an awe-inspiring sight even to those who remember it from its heyday.

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The conservancy’s redevelopment arm is exploring potential partnerships with entities in Philadelphia, New York and Miami to refashion the vessel as a stationary entertainment complex with a hotel, theater, restaurants and shopping but the clock is winding down along with the money from Lenfest’s gift.

‘The three areas that have expressed an interest in this are Miami, New York, and greater Philadelphia. However, we recently heard from a group that is very preliminarily interested in looking at the ship in Norfolk,’ said Dan McSweeney, commercial developer.

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‘And we could have that again. ... This would be an attraction the whole world would want to come and take part in again.’

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Another succession of developers and a cruise line failed to return the ship to service as retrofitting costs proved too great.
'It's been 60 years since I first set foot on this ship with my mother ... it's very exciting,' said Louise Meiere Dunn, 82, of Stamford, Conn., who stood recently on the promenade where she danced the conga on the maiden voyage, when the United States set a new trans-Atlantic record from New York to England: 3 days, 10 hours, 40 minutes.

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'I'm hoping that this ship can be revived, repurposed,' she said. 'It would be wonderful to see this promenade deck being used again - and having a conga line, maybe.'


October 14, 2012

The SS United States is an irreplaceable icon of American industrial might -- or what might be described as what America made when it made things.

Today, this noble ocean liner, built 60 years ago for the North Atlantic route, sits quietly at a South Philadelphia pier awaiting its ultimate fate.

The SS United States Conservancy and its Redevelopment Project are dedicated to ensuring this marvel of engineering, that could go faster in reverse than most ships today can go in forward, has a future.

The sleek 990-foot race horse was built from the finest Pittsburgh steel and products from nearly 20 other area companies -- including Allegheny-Ludlum Steel, Carnegie Illinois Steel, Rockwell Manufacturing, Westinghouse and Pittsburgh Plate Glass (more details at the end of this article on what these companies supplied). It looks like no other vessel built because it was unlike any ship built.

The obsession of marine architect William Francis Gibbs and the product of post-World War II American know-how, the ship was built with subsidies from the U.S. government and the U.S. Navy to serve both as a passenger liner and, in the event of war, the fastest troop vessel afloat. The history of the ship and its builder is the subject of a recent book -- "A Man and His Ship: America's Greatest Naval Architect and His Quest to Build the SS United States" by Steven Ujifusa. The book details the trials and tribulations of building this liner and its sad fate.

The SS United States cruised at 30 knots (35 mph) and made crossings in a little more than three days. It still holds the blue ribbon speed record for both east and westbound passages. Although its maximum speed was not revealed until the late 1970s and is still a matter of conjecture, for sure, it reached close to 40 knots (over 40 mph) in speed trials. It was built to outrun any enemy vessel on the ocean while moving thousands of troops to any fray. Gibbs made the SS United States just about fireproof with metal and glass (much of it from Pittsburgh companies) taking the place of wood throughout the ship.
The ship, fortunately, was never called into military service. For 17 years, it provided the rich and famous and the not-so-famous a truly American experience on a trip to Europe unlike any other.

Remember, until commercial airlines switched their fleets to jets in the 1960s, a flight across the Atlantic could take 12 hours or more and include a stop in Newfoundland. Many travelers of the era still preferred the comfort and civilized passage on an ocean liner.

The SS United States made its last voyage in 1969 and was laid up after docking in Newport News for annual maintenance.

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The history of this famous ship that really ended the golden age of trans-Atlantic crossings is well documented. Its recent history and the passion of a number of individuals to save it from being cut up for scrap is inspiring.

Through multiple owners and several failed attempts to revitalize the ship, the SS United States today sits floating, tied to Pier 82 in South Philadelphia at the cost of almost $1,000 day just for dockage. It has sat for nearly 20 years as a fixture on the Delaware waterfront.

In 2011, the ship was purchased by the SS United States Conservancy (headquartered in Washington, D.C.) with, according to Executive Director Susan Gibbs, granddaughter of the builder, “the goal of preserving this American flagship for future generations.” The conservancy launched a national campaign (savetheunitedstates.org) designed both to raise awareness of the vessel and initial funding for restoration.

The Consersvancy formed the SS United States Redevelopment Project (based in New York City) a year ago, with Dan McSweeney, son of a longtime member of the ship's crew as managing director. He is charged with finding partners and investors to redevelop the ship for mixed use which might include a hotel, restaurants, spa, school, boutiques and the like.

A small professional staff in both organizations supplemented by volunteers are involved in the Save the SS United States effort.

One such individual is Pittsburgh native Robert Wilburn, a member of the conservancy advisory council. Mr. Wilburn, the former president of the Carnegie Institute, is director of Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College in Washington. An experienced executive with non-profit and government service, he led the effort that built the Carnegie Science Center in the early 1990s. "This flagship is a nationally important historic attraction," said Mr. Wilburn. "It symbolizes an era when U.S. design and technology were emulated everywhere."

The ship continues to draw the attention of the media, historians and the general public. A number of short documentaries have been done that has rekindled interest in saving the SS United States from the scrapper. And in recent weeks, the "CBS Sunday Morning" television crew spent time on board and will air a 12-minute segment on the ship and its plight later this fall.

The Redevelopment Project also has been in discussions with the City of New York to see if the ship, when redeveloped, would be welcome on the New York City waterfront. An answer is expected later this year. "Today, we have a once-in-a-lifetime chance not only to preserve this ship," Mr. McSweeney says, "but also to create a sizable economic development project that will mean new jobs, generate tax revenues and help revitalize a waterfront district."

The late TV journalist Walter Cronkite, who traveled on the ship in its heyday, served as honorary chairman of the Conservancy. An avid sailor, he supported efforts to revitalize it. He said, in 2007, of the ship sitting at the
pier in Philadelphia: "This is a crime against shipbuilding, a crime against history [to] let such a ship die such a miserable death."

The jury is still out. But today, with the help of this effort and growing interest by the general public not to let this symbol of American manufacturing might fade away, the SS United States just might have a bright future.

14. **Observer and Eccentric (MI) - Company Helps Save the SS United States**

*November 14, 2012*

Everyone knows about the RMS Titanic.

But a Livonia business and a growing number of people interested in preserving maritime history want Americans to know about “the greatest ship ever built” — the SS United States. The massive ocean liner, which sailed from 1952 to 1969, still holds the trans-Atlantic speed record for a passenger liner.

It was 107.5 feet longer and more than 50 percent faster than the Titanic, and unlike the ill-fated luxury liner, it's still floating. "It's greater in many ways than the Titanic," said David Lawrence, chief administrative officer for AlphaUSA.

Yet, because it didn't tragically fail, it's not nearly as famous, he said.

Lawrence is helping his company, AlphaUSA, along with its president, Chuck Dardas, get the word out about the SS United States, a.k.a. America's flagship, to help save and restore it.

Moor ed in Philadelphia, it was rescued from being sold for scrap by a Philadelphia philanthropist and is now owned by the nonprofit SS United States Conservancy.

Lawrence spoke RECENTLY to the Livonia AM Rotary Club, showing excerpts from an upcoming PBS documentary on the ship and telling about a website AlphaUSA designed where donors can “purchase” a square inch of the ship for $1 (savetheunitedstates.org).

**Waterfront attraction**

Plans are to turn the ship into a permanent waterfront attraction with hotel rooms, restaurants and a museum. The cost for the initial restoration and museum alone is $25 million, Lawrence said. More money is needed to develop it into a usable attraction. About $6 million has been raised so far.

Lawrence said Dardas heard about the ship's plight from a Philadelphia customer with ties to the conservancy. The customer had asked for contact information for Lee Iacocca in the hopes the retired auto executive-turned philanthropist could help raise the needed revenue as he had for the Statue of Liberty restoration.

But as soon as Dardas heard of the need, he wanted to get involved in helping to save the ship, Lawrence said. Dardas has a personal connection: "He owned a model of the ship during his childhood," Lawrence said.

Lawrence himself had never heard of the ship until a year and a half ago, but he said he quickly realized “this was something incredible.

“When you see her in person, she is a mammoth ship,” he said, stretching as many feet in length as the Chrysler building does in height.
Lawrence also saw the SS United States as "a model of technology, innovation and American ingenuity," which "aligns with how Alpha approaches manufacturing," he said.

Lawrence now serves on the advisory council for the conservancy.

Only object called 'United States'

Funded under an act of Congress, the superliner was designed by famed naval architect William Francis Gibbs, constructed entirely in the United States and greatly subsidized with taxpayer dollars.

It is "the only manmade object called the United States," Lawrence said.

Noted for its safety, speed and style, the ship was designed to serve as the world's finest passenger liner in peaceful times. But in case of war, it could be converted in just two days to a troop carrier, capable of transporting 15,000 troops to anywhere in the world.

On July 7, 1952, the SS United States completed the transatlantic passage in three days, 10 hours and 40 minutes, with an average speed of 35.59 knots (more than 40 mph), shattering the Queen Mary's standing record.

The ship was so fast, the water peeled the paint from its bow.

Even when still, it looked like it was in motion with its slanted red, white and blue stacks and a sharp prow.

The "Big U" made her final transatlantic voyage on Nov. 7, 1969, replaced by the much-faster jet airplane. She was removed from service on Nov. 11 of that year.

The ship's restoration project is getting national publicity. Besides PBS, CBS Sunday morning is doing a program on it as is Time magazine, Lawrence said.

Livonia AM Rotary member Bob Carris hopes school children, including those in Livonia, take the SS United States on as a fundraising project. "It'll help teach American history, and it'll give them a sense of being part of something," he said.

Rotary President William W. Friske said he thinks it's a fantastic project. "As a Rotary Club, we're going to buy a minimum of a couple hundred inches ourselves," he said.

15. The Naples Daily News (FL)- The SS United States could be on the block to become scrap metal, Naples man wants to save it November 18, 2012

Nearly 1,000 feet in length with two grand smoke stacks swathed in red, white and blue, Gibbs' new ship, the SS United States, steamed by Bishop Rock off the coast of the United Kingdom on July 11 that year. When the tip of the bow crossed the westernmost tip of Bishop Rock, the race was on.

With the open blue ocean as its racetrack, the ship — all 240,000 horsepower of her — skimmed across the sea.
Three days, 12 hours and 12 minutes later, the ship would smash the westbound Blue Riband record as it cruised past into New York Harbor. With an average speed of 34 knots (about 39 mph), it was a record that would never be broken: It stands to this day.

"It was an absolute exercise in American exceptionalism," said part-time Naples resident Richard Daniel O'Leary, who served as third officer on the ship for five years. "I think this country has done a lot of exceptional things, a lot of things that are really outstanding, and this ship is one of those things. Everyone needs to know about this ship and how great she was."

But future generations might not have that privilege. Despite a dedicated team of advocates trying to save the ship, the SS United States, now docked and cannibalized in a Philadelphia harbor, is running out of time.

In February 2011, Philadelphia philanthropist H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest donated $5.8 million to the SS United States Conservancy, a nonprofit group working to restore the vessel. The amount was enough to purchase the ship and cover the costs of mooring it in Philadelphia for the next 20 months.

This is month 20, and the ship's future seems uncertain.

"We've been aggressively fundraising and reaching out to people with our new 'Save the SS United States' campaign, so we're not out of money just yet," said Susan Gibbs, executive director for the conservancy. But with the ship's monthly carrying costs ranging between $70,000 and $90,000, Gibbs admits that she can easily see a day when the organization may have to make tough choices.

Charting a young man's course

O'Leary remembers his first watch on the SS United States like it was yesterday. He had been pulled off a Far East run to fill in for an officer taking a few days of vacation. The day before he set sail, he headed to the docks in Manhattan — to Pier 86 — with his fiancee. The ship was still a spectacle and a small crowd was gathered.

"My fiancee announced to the crowd, maybe 45 people or so, 'My fiancé is going to become her third officer tomorrow,' and they cheered," he said. "There was a bit of celebrity that went with being on this ship."

The next day, O'Leary headed to the ship's bridge at 4 p.m. to take his first watch.

"I was trying to look cool, but oh, my knees were literally shaking. I'd worked on big ships but they weren't anything like that," he said.

O'Leary was supposed to substitute for just two trips, but the crew apparently liked him — the officer he stood in for was never brought back and O'Leary spent the next five years onboard. When he finally moved on to a new position, his records showed he had made 240 transatlantic crossings aboard the SS United States.

O'Leary would go on to have a successful career in maritime industries. Eventually, he started his own company, which he'd build from a one-man enterprise to a fleet of 600-passenger harbor cruise vessels and nearly 2,500 employees. He had mentors and teachers to credit in his success. But above all else, he maintains it was the SS United States that shaped his career the most.

"It changed my life, that ship did. I think if I hadn't been assigned to that ship I would have had a very different life," he said.

Because being an officer on the ship had a bit of celebrity to it, O'Leary had the opportunity to meet many famous and influential people.
"Our commodore would bring the celebrities up to the bridge," O'Leary recalls, citing Walt Disney as the man who perhaps gave him the best tidbit of advice.

"He said, 'I'm not going to preach to you, young man, but I'll tell you something: As you go through life, be careful not to accept mediocrity.'"

The end of an era

In 1969, the SS United States was taken out of service. O'Leary contends she probably still had many years of life left, but with jet travel becoming more accessible, transatlantic vessels were struggling to make a profit.

Once out of service, she was taken to Norfolk, Va., where O'Leary happened to be deputy director of the Port Authority. There, sitting idly at a pier O'Leary controlled, was the ship he owed so much of his success to.

There's a picture that was snapped of O'Leary aboard the now-aged beauty, looking soberly out from its defunct decks. Long-faced in the photo, it's easy to see O'Leary contemplating the end of an era for both a man and a machine.

"It was a sad day; surreal. I was all mixed up," he said when asked about that photo.

The SS United States would change hands several times over the years. An investor bought it with the intention of turning it into a hotel, and took it to Turkey to have asbestos and other harmful chemicals removed. When that company's plans fell through, it was sold again to a cruise line that dreamed of adding the ship to its fleet.

Again, the costs to make her functional were too high for the cruise line to justify. She was put up for sale again.

There was a point in time when even O'Leary contemplated buying the vessel. Looking at it day after day in the port he controlled, he couldn't help but think it would make a wonderful tourist attraction. Ultimately, he passed up the chance to buy her — and her future once again became uncertain.

Spirits in the shadows

Today the ship sits at Pier 82 in the Delaware River in Philadelphia. The paint is peeling; the red, white and blue smoke stacks are faded. Everything inside — the tables, the light fixtures, the silver service from the first-class dining room — has been stripped out.

Susan Gibbs — also the granddaughter of the ship's designer, William Frances Gibbs — describes her first visit to the now-decrepit ship as being "very sad."

Gibbs' grandmother had taken copious notes on her many voyages on the vessel. As Gibbs traveled up I-95, she read her grandmother's prose on the elegant dinners, the lavish parties and the glitz and glamour of sailing in first class.

Once in Philadelphia, it quickly became apparent the world of extravagance and elegance recorded in the notebooks was gone.

"We boarded the ship and they handed us flashlights and told us to be careful," Gibbs said. "It was so cavernous and desolate, it kind of felt like there were spirits in the shadows. It was sad, it was such a contrast to the world I'd read about on the way up."
This visit was the beginning of Gibbs' journey to save the ship. Today, Gibbs works full time at the helm of the conservancy, leaving behind her previous career in international development. Along with the conservancy’s board, Gibbs has developed a grand plan for her grandfather's ship — a plan that, if executed correctly, could save the SS United States for good.

"My goal is for the ship to endure and inspire," Gibbs said.

The conservancy has formulated a plan that would both restore the ship and turn it into a major tourist attraction. The plan calls for the instillation of a new museum onboard, called the Center for American Design and Discovery. Additional space on the ship would be available for commercial restaurants, shopping and boutique hotel use. The commercial ventures onboard would provide a continued revenue source for the vessel, helping to offset the ship's monthly carrying costs.

But restoring the ship — the first hurdle in the plan — isn't going to be easy, or cheap. O'Leary imagines that to, in his words, "do it right," it's going to cost about $250 million. The “Save the SS United States” campaign allows donors to pledge $1 to restore one square inch of the ship.

So far, close to 26,000 inches of the ship have been saved — but there are more inches to go.

The penalty of failure is steep. If the conservancy can't raise the funds needed, the ship will be sold for scrap. Piece by piece, what many call America's greatest ship of state will be picked apart and sold to the highest bidder.

"What the conservancy really needs right now is a little bit of luck," O'Leary said. Although he's refrained from joining the group's board, he is closely watching what's happening and championing it as best he can.

Until they get that luck, the conservancy will be fundraising like crazy and keeping its fingers crossed, hoping to keep its dreams — and this ship — afloat.

16. **USA Today – Where Titanic Failed, American Vessel Stood Tall**
   **April 13, 2012**

As we approach the Titanic's 100th anniversary on Sunday, the doomed luxury liner seems to be sailing across every television and computer screen. Amidst the rapt attention paid to a British ship's tragic end, the most famous ocean liner that never sank still bears the proud name United States. Though sadly overlooked by most Americans, our nation's flagship still serves as an enduring symbol of American postwar power, pride and innovation.

There are many measures of a vibrant society — the freedom it guarantees its citizens, its technological advancement and the opportunities it affords its people, to name just a few. An advanced society is also one that appreciates its own history. As the red, white and blue funnels of the SS United States fade in Philadelphia, this storied ship, once a metaphor for American strength and ingenuity, risks becoming a tragic symbol of our nation's decline. We cannot allow that to happen.

While the Titanic carried more than 1,500 passengers to a watery grave on her first Atlantic crossing, the SS United States barreled across the ocean on her record-breaking maiden voyage averaging 35.59 knots — or more than 40 miles per hour. On that historic trip in 1952, America's answer to Europe's dominance of the seas sped through the water with such force that bow waves blasted the paint off her hull. She became the fastest ocean liner ever built using only two-thirds of her power and still holds the trans-Atlantic speed record for a passenger ship, nearly 60 years after her launch. The SS United States could go faster in reverse than the
Titanic could travel forward.

**Storied history**

After a ticker tape parade up the Canyon of Heroes in New York honoring her crew, the "Big U" went on to serve for 17 mishap-free years, carrying more than a million passengers across the sea, including four U.S. presidents, business moguls, movie stars, military personnel and immigrants beginning new lives on our shores.

Built as part of a top-secret Pentagon project to create the safest and fastest ocean liner ever constructed, the 1,000-foot-liner is 100 feet longer than the Titanic. The size of the Chrysler Building, the SS United States served as both a luxury liner and Cold War weapon, capable of transporting 15,000 troops, 10,000 miles without refueling.

Like the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and the Washington Monument, there is only one SS United States.

Thanks in part to lessons learned from the Titanic’s tragic demise, the SS United States was designed for safety. The ship's dual engine rooms ensured that she could still make port even if one of them flooded. The ship's aluminum superstructure eliminated the need for "expansion joints" — small seams in the steel superstructure that contributed to the Titanic's breakup.

**Major safety precautions**

The "Big U" was completely fireproof. Her designer, my grandfather William Francis Gibbs, took this mandate to an extreme. He demanded that Theodore Steinway customize the ship's baby grand pianos in aluminum. Mahogany pianos were permitted only after Steinway offered to douse one in gasoline and ignite it to illustrate its fire-retardant qualities. The wooden shuffleboard discs were replaced with plastic alternatives, and the conductor's baton was rendered in aluminum. However, as one magazine noted wryly after the vessel's debut, they had "devised no way of rendering the musicians incombustible."

Rather than resting some two-and-a-half miles below the ocean's surface off the coast of Newfoundland, the SS United States still floats at a Philadelphia pier. Decommissioned in 1969, she has passed through the hands of a number of owners over the decades. The non-profit SS United States Conservancy saved the ocean liner from certain scrapping last year by purchasing the vessel, thanks to a grant from a patriotic philanthropist named H. F. "Gerry" Lenfest.

This irreplaceable piece of American engineering is now poised to serve our nation and the world yet again. Partners and supporters from across the country are needed to help redevelop the vessel as a mixed use destination featuring a museum, educational programs and other uses in an urban waterfront setting. The ship's more than 650,000 square feet of interior space offers unique opportunities to explore and celebrate everything from American technological innovation, engineering, and postwar history to sea-going travel and the *Mad Men* era.

In response to the Titanic's sinking, the bishop of Winchester stated: "The Titanic, name and thing, will stand for a monument and warning to human presumption." The SS United States also stands as a monument and also issues a warning. Today, the Big U quietly warns us that time, tide and complacency can threaten even our most awe-inspiring patriotic symbols.

The Titanic and the SS United States both embodied their nation's loftiest aspirations. But only one of these legendary vessels can still be saved for future generations. Once the Titanic memorials, movies and television shows become a memory, we have a chance to save our own history.

*Susan Gibbs is the executive director of the SS United States Conservancy and the granddaughter of William Francis Gibbs, the designer of the SS United States*
PHILADELPHIA — Former NFL coach Dick Vermeil is starring in a new public service campaign for the legendary ocean liner SS United States.

Vermeil makes a personal appeal to save the ship in the ads, which will be distributed to television stations in connection with the 60th anniversary this year of the launch of the world's fastest ocean liner.

The massive ship has been moored in Philadelphia since 1996. The SS United States Conservancy is a nonprofit group that owns the historic ship and is working to redevelop it.

The conservancy hopes to air the public service announcement initially in the Philadelphia, New York and St Louis markets.

Vermeil is a former coach of the Philadelphia Eagles, St. Louis Rams and Kansas City Chiefs.

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PHILADELPHIA — The SS United States Conservancy is planning to compile an inventory of the furnishings, equipment, ephemera and other artifacts of the legendary ocean liner that still exist.

The conservancy made the announcement Monday on its website, which has a survey for owners of items such as light fixtures, dishes, advertisements and souvenirs, ship models, log books, lifejackets and menus.

The nonprofit group owns the historic ship and is working to redevelop it. The conservancy stressed that the survey doesn't mean it's looking for collectors to donate their treasures. It said the goal is to eventually make the information available for researchers and historians, connect fans of the ship and identify potential sources of future loans for exhibitions and displays.
"At this stage, we are simply trying to create a comprehensive record of how the SS United States' legacy endures in material culture and memory," the conservancy said in a statement.

After decades of false starts and shifting owners, the SS United States Conservancy last year bought the five-block-long ship, known to fans as "Big U," from Norwegian Cruise Lines and its parent for $3 million.

The estimated $200 million cost to renovate the ship will come from for-profit entities. The conservancy is exploring possible partnerships with as yet unnamed investors in New York and Miami to redevelop the liner as a stationary entertainment complex with a hotel, restaurants, retail, educational and museum components.

Also Monday, the conservancy announced a new partnership with real estate advisory firm New Canaan Advisors LLC to assist in advancing its development plans.

Decommissioned in 1969, towed from port to port for decades, the largest passenger vessel ever constructed in the U.S. has been moored since 1996 at a Delaware River pier in South Philadelphia.

On its 1952 maiden voyage from New York to Le Havre, France, the liner's 268,000 shaft horsepower engines set a trans-Atlantic speed record: 3 days, 10 hours, 42 minutes. That beat the previous pace by about four hours, setting a record that still stands for a conventional passenger ocean liner.

Built as a joint venture between the Navy and ship designer Gibbs & Cox, the $78 million liner was never called to battle but could have been converted in a single day to transport 14,000 soldiers.

Instead, it carried heads of state, royalty and celebrities in its 400 round trips. Passengers included Presidents John F. Kennedy, actress Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier of Monaco, and England's King Edward VIII. Then-Rhodes scholar Bill Clinton traveled tourist class – one step above the crew – on his way to Oxford University in 1968.


As a little girl, Susan Gibbs remembers visiting her grandmother's coastline home in Rockport, Mass. There was the bronze bust of her grandfather, William Francis Gibbs, positioned as if he were staring off to sea. It would later prompt curious expeditions to the attic, where old newspaper clippings and photographs were pulled from trunks.

The documents revealed that William Francis Gibbs had a passion in his life, "the other woman," according to the family. It was, in fact, a ship that he would design and help build. It was the SS United States, a luxurious ocean liner that was larger than the Titanic, faster than the Queen Mary, and the last of its breed. The top political, military and entertainment figures of the day regularly sailed aboard her, along with everyday Americans and immigrants to our shores.

Fast forward to 1999: A young Marine, Dan McSweeney, is driving through Philadelphia. He is on his way to the Marine base in Quantico, Va., from his home in New York. He catches a glimpse of something that will change his life.

"I just kind of looked over and saw the funnels in the distance. I immediately knew what it was, because I grew up hearing about her, but I had never seen her before. So I got off the highway to go and get a closer look," says McSweeney. "I went on to Quantico, but I knew that I had to get involved somehow."
Today, Susan Gibbs is the executive director of SS United States Conservancy, and Dan McSweeney, whose father migrated from Scotland to serve as a steward on the SS United States, is managing director of the SS United States Redevelopment Project, a division of the Conservancy. Formed in 2004, the Conservancy acquired the ship last year in an effort to save and "repurpose" her.

As descendants, both Gibbs and McSweeney are part of a community, a special fraternity that has been touched deeply by this ship, which was taken out of service in 1969 after a 17-year run of transatlantic crossings, and has somehow, some way avoided being dismantled for scrap. The ship has been berthed along the Delaware River in South Philadelphia for more than 15 years.

“It really is remarkable the ship has not been scrapped before now,” Gibbs says. “As the passenger ship with the longest time in layup, it has been more than a cat with nine lives. It is extraordinary that the vessel is still floating. The fact that she has lasted this long, again, is another reason why we just have to save this vessel for future generations.”

But though the history runs deep, this is more than just another historic preservation story. It's about site selection, about finding the best business use — or, rather, uses — in the best place possible.

For the Conservancy, which is now seeking real estate developers to partner with in forming and shaping a future business case for the SS United States, this is an economic development project. In short, this is a story about finding a new home and new use for this historic vessel.

“There are people in America who understand that this ship needs to be saved because it is a part of our history. But we also have to look at it from a business point of view,” McSweeney says. “We are not asking people to send us money so that we can continue to keep the ship where she is now indefinitely. What we are asking people to do is contribute money so that we can create a sustainable attraction that serves a business function.”

A New Mixed-Use Model?

In March, New Canaan Advisors LLC was added to the growing team leading the redevelopment program. Company founder Curtis Battles worked on the redevelopment of two of New York City's most visible commercial real estate icons — Grand Central Terminal and the World Trade Center. He says his job is help make the transformation of the historic ship into a stationary, multi-purpose water destination happen by finding the right real estate development partner.

Battles says his group crafted a Request for Qualifications that was sent to more than 200 firms, with submissions due June 1. The RFQ will be followed by a Request for Proposals to a select group of respondents.

"We don't know yet how many folks are going to respond to the RFQ but we had a lot of interest across a wide spectrum," Battles says. "There are probably a half dozen groups that will do this well and can put together the kind of team that makes sense to do this. So that is what we are trying to get down to with the RFQ process."

The RFQ is designed to identify a developer to refurbish, transform and re-purpose the historic ship into a for-profit, self-sustaining, multi-purpose stationary waterfront attraction.

"It is not going to be an easy job for sure. It's a big job, but we think that we can do it," McSweeney says. "Our very optimistic goal is to be sitting at the table with the chosen developer in the fall to hash out how we can work together."

Whichever development group is ultimately chosen must demonstrate "vision, financial resources and commitment. And underlying all of that is the acknowledgement that this ship is an irreplaceable American icon." McSweeney says.
From the standpoint of a developer, the fact that the ship has essentially been gutted, with most interior walls having been removed but with the decks still in place, presents a unique opportunity on how to design and develop a mixed-use plan, Battles said.

"The top five to six decks are all clear. So you can look almost down the entire length of the ship and see it open, which makes it a lot easier," Battles says.

Gibbs agrees that the empty space provides for more possibilities.

"The fact that the interiors are gutted provides a wonderful opportunity, because our private developer partners will have a blank slate to create very exciting new space onboard," she says. "It also provides the Conservancy with the opportunity to beautifully recreate some of the more iconic spaces aboard the vessel and use modern materials and technologies to develop an experience that can be better than the original."

Says McSweeney, "We are offering an incredible canvas to work with."

Battles likens the ship to the Chrysler Building, the Art Deco skyscraper in New York, lying on its side — 650,000 sq. ft. (60,385 sq. m.) of useable commercial space "that's sitting there waiting for you to step into without having to build all the exterior brick and mortar yourself."

The SS United States' home port of New York as well as Miami have been identified as promising locations for the long-term docking of the ship, although other cities will be considered.

"So the answer is that we don't know where it is going to land. We try to be very open and say, 'Tell us what you want to do,' " says Battles.

McSweeney agrees that an East coast location is likely, although there has been a group from Galveston, Texas, that has expressed interest.

"We think that New York and Miami are the most likely scenarios. However, we are open to whatever serious inquiries and proposals come forward," McSweeney says.

On May 9, the Conservancy announced the formation of a Blue Riband panel to assess development proposals and offer expert opinions on their strengths and weaknesses to the Conservancy. The panel is named in honor of the fabled transatlantic Blue Riband, an accolade traditionally given to the passenger liner crossing the Atlantic Ocean with the highest speed. The SS United States won the accolade after her maiden voyage on July 4, 1952, when she broke the transatlantic speed record held by the Queen Mary for the previous 14 years by more than 10 hours.

"Ultimately, the decision on which deal to go with will rest on the shoulders of the board of directors of the Conservancy, which owns the ship. However, the expert opinion of the individuals on this panel will be very helpful in helping the board to make a decision," McSweeney says.

Prior to his death in 2009, Walter Cronkite served as the honorary chairman of the Conservancy's board of directors. Earlier this month, the Conservancy was able to secure the blessing of another well-known name for the campaign to find a future for the ship. Former NFL coach and broadcaster Dick Vermeil stars in a new public service announcement which will be distributed to television stations in connection with the 60th anniversary of the USS United States' launch to help drive interest in the efforts to restore and repurpose her.

The backers of the project understand the challenges before them as no one has done this before — creating a mixed-use commercial project from an historic ship. The Queen Mary in Long Beach, Calif., is not a model to be
replicated for the SS United States, nor are the various retired military ships berthed around the country. They serve as tourist attractions, but the Conservancy believes the SS United States has to be more than that.

"We don't want to preserve this ship completely as a museum. It has to be a multi-purpose destination that has significant commercial aspects to it. So in that sense, we are plowing new ground," McSweeney says.

Total costs for redevelopment are difficult to assign without knowing a precise commercial mix for intended use, but McSweeney says it could be in the $200 million to $300 million range.

The costs can be ameliorated by advancing in a two-phase development process, McSweeney says. Phase one would be a cleanup and restoration of the exterior of the ship, which remains in very good condition structurally, so that she would appear as she did when she first went into service in 1952. The idea is to make the ship initially a destination for events, and thereby derive income from event space.

"So, assuming that we find the right location, we have the ship there for several years and use it as an events base while planning a capital fundraising for a second phase, which is full build-out of the interior of ship," McSweeney says. "We think that approach is much more feasible and much more doable, and it also allows a market to develop around the ship before full-fledged redevelopment occurs."

Battles says the phase one exterior restoration of the ship would probably be in the $30-million range.

An exhibition of artifacts and artwork showcasing the SS United States opened at the Forbes Galleries in New York on May 18 and run through September 8. The exhibition will focus on life aboard the ship and convey the SS United States' special role as national symbol and cultural touchstone. China, furniture, artwork and documents from the ship's top-secret design are among more than 120 artifacts assembled.

Among the items on display is the bust of William Francis Gibbs, who was on the ship's maiden voyage but never on another. Still, he was obsessed with the SS United States, said granddaughter Susan Gibbs.

"It was really a dream come true for him," Ms. Gibbs says. "He is on record as saying that he loved the ship one thousand times more than his own wife."

So much so that Mr. Gibbs would be always present when the ship docked at Pier 86 in Manhattan after every transatlantic voyage.

"I have talked to so many crew members and officers who have said that every single time that they docked the ship, there was my grandfather standing there watching. And then he would be one of the first to board the vessel when it was finally tied up to the dock," Ms. Gibbs says.

The SS United States was an obsession then and is an obsession for many today. If and how that obsession can be transformed into a viable commercial piece of floating real estate is now the question looming on the horizon like a sailor's home port.

21. Philadelphia Inquirer - Remember the Titanic, but Rescue the SS United States- April 15, 2012

One hundred years ago this weekend, the world was stunned by the loss of more than 1,500 passengers and crew who went down with the RMS Titanic.

Among the victims from the Philadelphia area were businessman George Widener, owner of the Ritz Carlton, and his son Harry. The Wideners had close personal and business connections with the family of William Francis
Gibbs. Such a tragic loss hitting so close to home may have inspired Gibbs, then a 25-year-old naval architect, to begin designing his ultimate super-ship, which would launch 40 years later.

That ship was the iconic SS United States, our country’s namesake flagship, the largest and most exceptional ocean liner ever built in America. During its maiden voyage 60 years ago, the “Big U” smashed all transatlantic crossing records. To this day, it is still the world’s fastest passenger liner.

Both the Titanic and the United States were built for speed, though for different purposes.

The Titanic was built to satisfy the developing need for speed among the wealthy and to symbolize the “preeminence of the Anglo-Saxon race on the ocean,” as the ship’s owner, the White Star Line, declared.

In contrast, to protect our national interest during the Cold War, the U.S. Navy secretly funded the construction of the Big U to satisfy a pressing need for speed in order to quickly deploy 15,000 troops more than 10,000 miles without refueling. The SS United States embodied the triumphant “can-do” spirit of America in the postwar era.

The Titanic failed, sinking almost immediately after hitting an iceberg. So why does it continue to gain worldwide fame while our nation ignores the greatest ocean liner ever built?

After its historic maiden voyage, the SS United States went on to complete 398 more voyages over 17 years, covering 2.7 million nautical miles without so much as one mission-critical failure. Yet today it is close to being scrapped. Is this because good news — especially about American exceptionalism — is still not in vogue and doesn’t sell? Or are there other reasons?

One hundred years after the conception of Gibbs’ super-ship, and 43 years after it was removed from service, why must this great American success still struggle to find its place in our hearts and minds?

Clearly, the legacy of Gibbs did forge a sustainable, solid link in some minds. After all, for more than four decades, it has survived the scrap heap and is now berthed on the Delaware waterfront.

However, the ship is still without a permanent home. Only recently has there been an action plan for its reuse, one that would link it with the city of Chester’s business district.

But that might not be enough to save the Big U from being sold for scrap by its current owners as their funding is exhausted.

We cannot allow this symbol of American ingenuity to meet such a dishonorable fate. There will never be another like the SS United States.

22. **Philadelphia Examiner – SS United States Provides Backdrop to “Dead Man Down” Thriller – April 29, 2012**

Once the fastest cruise ship to cross the Atlantic Ocean, the rusting SS United States will soon see a new, but brief life, as a set for a major motion picture. Principal photography has started in Philadelphia for “Dead Man Down,” a romantic thriller starring Colin Farrell and Terrance Howard and directed by Niels Arden.

City officials were on hand along the Philadelphia waterfront, where the SS United States is docked, to announce details of the film project. Conservancy Executive Director Susan Gibbs, SS United States Redevelopment Project Managing Director Dan McSweeney and James Zolfo, Co-Executive Producer of the film talked up the project and outlined how the rusting steamship would be utilized in the movie. Zolfo announced that portions of the picture will feature the United States as a backdrop and that
some scenes will be filmed on board in limited interior locations on the historic cruise ship.

While filming the $30-million project is expected to play out over the next 60 days, the movie is not set in Philadelphia. Rather the City of Brotherly Love is a set-double for the Big Apple, New York City. Farrell plays a crime lord’s right-hand man who is seduced in a scheme to exact retribution. Philadelphia officials anticipate the movie production will pump in millions of dollars into the local economy over the next two months.

SS United States officials are hoping the movie will generate much needed publicity about the deteriorating ship and more importantly funding to help maintain and restore the ocean liner. Widely known as “America’s flagship,” the United States has been docked at Pier 82 in Philadelphia since 1996 and has come very close on a number of occasions to having a date with the scrap yard. Decommissioned in 1969, the United States’ maiden voyage in 1952 set the record for the fastest westbound Atlantic Ocean crossing.

The movie project is not the United States’ first brush with Hollywood. When the ship sailed in the 1950’s and 60’s, it carried an impressive list of who’s who in Tinsel-Town. Marlon Brando, Sean Connery, Gary Cooper, Charlton Heston, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland, John Wayne and Walt Disney are among the Hollywood elite that traveled on the ship. The liner also carried Prince Rainer and Philadelphia’s own Grace Kelly, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor as well as four U.S. presidents including Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and a young Bill Clinton. The Conservancy maintains that the SS United States carried more Presidents and head of state in its career than any other ship in history.

If you want to catch a glimpse of movie-making as well as a piece of cruise industry history, the SS United States is visible from Columbus Boulevard in South Philadelphia. The vessel is located at a working pier and is subject to Homeland Security regulations, so access to the vessel’s pier is restricted. An excellent view of the ship can be obtained from the street or from the IKEA cafeteria located across the street at the Columbus Commons shopping center.

For more information on the SS United States visit http://www.ssunitedstatesconservancy.org

23. **CBS Philly Dick Vermeil, Former Eagles’ Coach, Serving as Pitchman for Ship’s Preservation — June 1, 2012**

PHILADELPHIA (CBS) — A familiar face is drumming up support to save the SS United States from the scrap heap.

"I spent my career cultivating winners, but now I must tell you about one that needs our help," says former Philadelphia Eagles' head coach Dick Vermeil in a new public service announcement aimed at raising $1 million to save the SS United States — that rusting hulk docked on the Delaware riverfront in South Philadelphia, across from Ikea on Columbus Blvd.

Gibbs is shopping the PSA to television stations in Philadelphia and other markets across the nation.

The group’s long-term goal is to turn the ship into a floating museum, but first they’re focused on replenishing maintenance money that runs out in November. The Conservancy is holding a June 15th fundraiser at the Independence Seaport Museum to celebrate the ship’s 60th anniversary.
24. *Cruise Industry News SS United States to be Repurposed* - April 5, 2012

The SS United States Redevelopment Project (SSUSRP) has announced the release of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) as the first step in a process to identify a developer to “repurpose” the historic vessel. The objective is to refurbish and transform the ship into a for-profit, self-sustaining, multi-purpose stationary waterfront attraction.

“This is an invitation for private developers to get engaged in perhaps the most unique and exciting development project in the nation,” stated Dan McSweeney, managing director of the SSUSRP. “As our nation’s flagship and a symbol of American innovation and engineering, this iconic vessel presents enormous opportunities to attract a whole new generation of users and visitors.”

The SS United States’ home port of New York as well as Miami have been identified as promising locations for the long-term docking of the ship, though other cities will be considered.

The project concept is currently for a mixed-use development that may include a variety of feasible uses for the ship’s more than 650,000 square feet of enclosed space including but not limited to hotel, restaurants, event space, retail, and educational facilities. Plans also include a museum and the restoration of the ship’s most iconic historic features.

Those interested in participating in the process will have 30 days to respond to the RFQ. After RFQ responses are reviewed, a limited number of Prequalified Proposers will then be invited to respond to a more detailed Request for Proposals (“RFP”). Finalists will then be selected to negotiate terms of an agreement for redevelopment of the ship at the selected location. A developer will be selected by the end of 2012, with the intent of siting the vessel in the selected city by summer 2013.

The SSUSRP has been initiated by the SS United States Conservancy, a national nonprofit organization that purchased the historic vessel last year.


The more than 75,000 daily commuters who pass through Manhattan’s Staten Island Ferry terminal are seeing a new and important message about an endangered national icon, the SS United States.

The recent installation of a 70-foot-long banner in the main waiting room of the famous Whitehall Terminal is part of the SS United States Conservancy’s year long program to raise awareness about America’s flagship, the SS United States, and advance the effort to restore and repurpose the historic vessel that once called New York home.

The huge banner also promotes a free exhibition at the Forbes Galleries, New York entitled “The Ocean Liner United States: Celebrating the Past and Future of America’s Flagship,” opening May 18 and running through Sep. 8, 2012. The SS United States exhibition will be free and open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Purchased by the Conservancy in 2011 to save the ship from the scrapyard, the SS United States awaits transformation into a museum and mixed-use waterfront destination in a major port city.

The new banner includes striking before and after photos of the ship showing her gleaming hull when she was launched with great fanfare in 1952, as well as in her current condition. Built to be both luxury superliner and Cold War weapon, America’s passenger flagship, the SS United States, was the fastest and safest ocean liner ever built. Larger than the Titanic and faster than the Queen Mary, the United States is one of the last remaining of the great 20th-century ocean liners and a symbol of American post-war innovation. The ship still holds the
transatlantic speed record, having broken the record on her maiden voyage almost 60 years ago.

The United States is now berthed in Philadelphia awaiting revitalization. “Thousands of New Yorkers who take to the waves every day cross the very same channel where the SS United States set out to ferry presidents, celebrities, tourists and immigrants across the Atlantic,” says Susan Gibbs, executive director of the SS United States Conservancy. “We hope that this exposure and the exhibition will remind New Yorkers of their ties to the nation’s flagship. Like the Empire State Building and Statue of Liberty, there is only one SS United States. She deserves to be preserved for generations to come.”

The Conservancy is currently raising funds to maintain the ship and begin the restoration process. The group is also advancing an aggressive search for developers interested in using some of the vessel’s more than 500,000 square feet of usable space for a variety of commercial purposes. The ship’s former home port of New York, along with Miami and other possible locations, is being considered for the ship’s next port of call as a mixed-used destination.

26. **Marine Link- Renewed Effort to Save SS United States- March 26, 2012**

As momentum builds for the effort to save and repurpose the greatest American ocean liner ever built, the SS United States Redevelopment Project (SSUSRP) announced that it has named New Canaan Advisors LLC (NCA) as real estate advisors to a growing team leading this exciting redevelopment program. New Canaan Advisors will assist the SSUSRP on a number of aspects related to transforming the historic ship into a stationary, multi-purpose waterfront destination.

The SS United States, which will celebrate the 60th anniversary of its maiden voyage this year, remains the largest passenger vessel ever constructed in the United States. At nearly 1,000 feet long, she remains the fastest ocean liner to cross the North Atlantic and one of the last surviving of the great 20th Century liners. “We believe that New Canaan Advisors is the right firm to help us translate our vision for the future of the SS United States into a reality,” said Dan McSweeney, Managing Director of the SS United States Redevelopment Project. “They have the unique experience of handling both high-profile projects and historic properties, making them a great asset for our team.”

The overall concept is currently to invite a mixed-use commercial and public development with a range of proposed revenue-generating uses including, but not limited to, event space, restaurants, retail, and hotel.

The SSUSRP is a strategic initiative of the SS United States Conservancy, the national nonprofit organization that purchased the historic vessel last year. The Conservancy is also advancing plans for public use, including a museum and educational programs aboard the ship, which offers more than 650,000 square feet of usable space. “We are fully committed to restoring and redeveloping this great symbol of American pride and innovation. Like the Statue of Liberty, there is only one SS United States, and we are determined to save the ship for future generations,” said Susan L Gibbs, the Conservancy’s executive director and granddaughter of SS United States designer, William Francis Gibbs.

“We are excited about this unique opportunity to assure the preservation of America’s flagship, and help her usher in a new era of service to the public while generating revenue to support its ongoing use,” states NCA’s founder and Chief Advisor, Curtis C. Battles. “The role that NCA will play in the redevelopment of the SS United States is a great example of the way we seek to add value for all our clients. We are proud to be a part of this significant project.”

Prior to founding NCA, Battles worked on the redevelopment of two of New York City’s most visible commercial real estate icons – Grand Central Terminal and the World Trade Center. NCA provides public and private organizations with unique resources for transforming underutilized assets and facilities into new opportunities. The firm specializes in helping public/private partnerships develop properties and assets into vibrant, exciting and financially feasible uses.

The growing SS United States redevelopment team will also include NCA strategic partner Charles Shorter as Senior Advisor. Shorter brings to the team more than 30 years of real estate experience in creating strategic
approaches to large scale mixed-used projects including market and financial feasibility and structuring public/private development partnerships. Real Estate Solutions Group (RESGroup), LLC Founder Patricia Adell will also assist NCA on the SS United States project. RES Group, provides comprehensive real estate consulting services to all levels of government, universities, school districts, and private developers to structure public/private finance and development solutions to maximize value.

In July 2010, the SS United States Conservancy received a $5.8 million philanthropic pledge allowing for the ship’s outright purchase and ongoing funding for maintenance at her berth in Philadelphia, PA. The current concept is for the redeveloped multi-purpose ship to be located in a major East Coast metropolitan location.