



# LOSS OF AN AMERICAN ICON

DECADES-LONG BATTLE TO SAVE ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST IMPORTANT SHIPS APPEARS TO HAVE COME TO A SAD CONCLUSION

BY THOMAS MAXWELL

It appears that the final voyage of the SS *United States* will now take place — and it will be a voyage to oblivion for one of America's greatest maritime achievements. The famed ocean liner known for its blistering speed and uncompromising luxury now has a

date to become an artificial reef.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach and the SS *United States* Conservancy, which owns and fundraises for the ship, states that the Board of County Commissioners in Okaloosa County, Florida, had approved a

contingent contract to acquire the SS *United States* "that could see the historic ocean liner converted into the world's largest artificial reef." It should be noted that the bureaucrats involved in the destruction of the ship apparently are confused over the terms

"preservation" and "sinking." The plan would also include funding from the county to support a museum that the Conservancy said would educate the public about the USS *United States* and its legacy. *Sea Classics* will go so far as to predict that this museum will never come about. In today's America, there is little to no interest by the public in the "legacy" of this great liner and news about a "museum" is just a sop to those individuals sad to see the desecration of maritime history. Various other outlandish plans had been put forth regarding saving the SS *United States*, including making the ship a shelter for the homeless or converting it to a greeting center for newly-arriving illegal aliens. All these ideas are a travesty.

The Conservancy released a social

media statement that said, "As you know, we have worked for over a decade to see America's Flagship repurposed and we remain confident that she could succeed as a floating, mixed-use destination." Then, in truly one of the most inane statements issued yet regarding the SS *United States*, the Conservancy notes that the sinking of the liner "would save the ship from scrapping." With that sort of thought process, it is no wonder that the Conservancy has been unable to field a workable plan for saving this magnificent piece of American technology.

Often referred to as the "Big U," the SS *United States* was a major presence in the final days of transatlantic travel by ocean liner. SS *United States* sailed



from 1952 to 1969. On 26 October 1958, Pan American took delivery of the Boeing 707 jetliner and made history by inaugurating the first 707 jet service and the first daily transatlantic service from New York to Paris. Combined with changing American life styles, the advent of the jet airliner

SS *United States* as it appears today at Philadelphia. Although the ship does not look cosmetically good, it has been stated that the hull and structure are in very good condition.