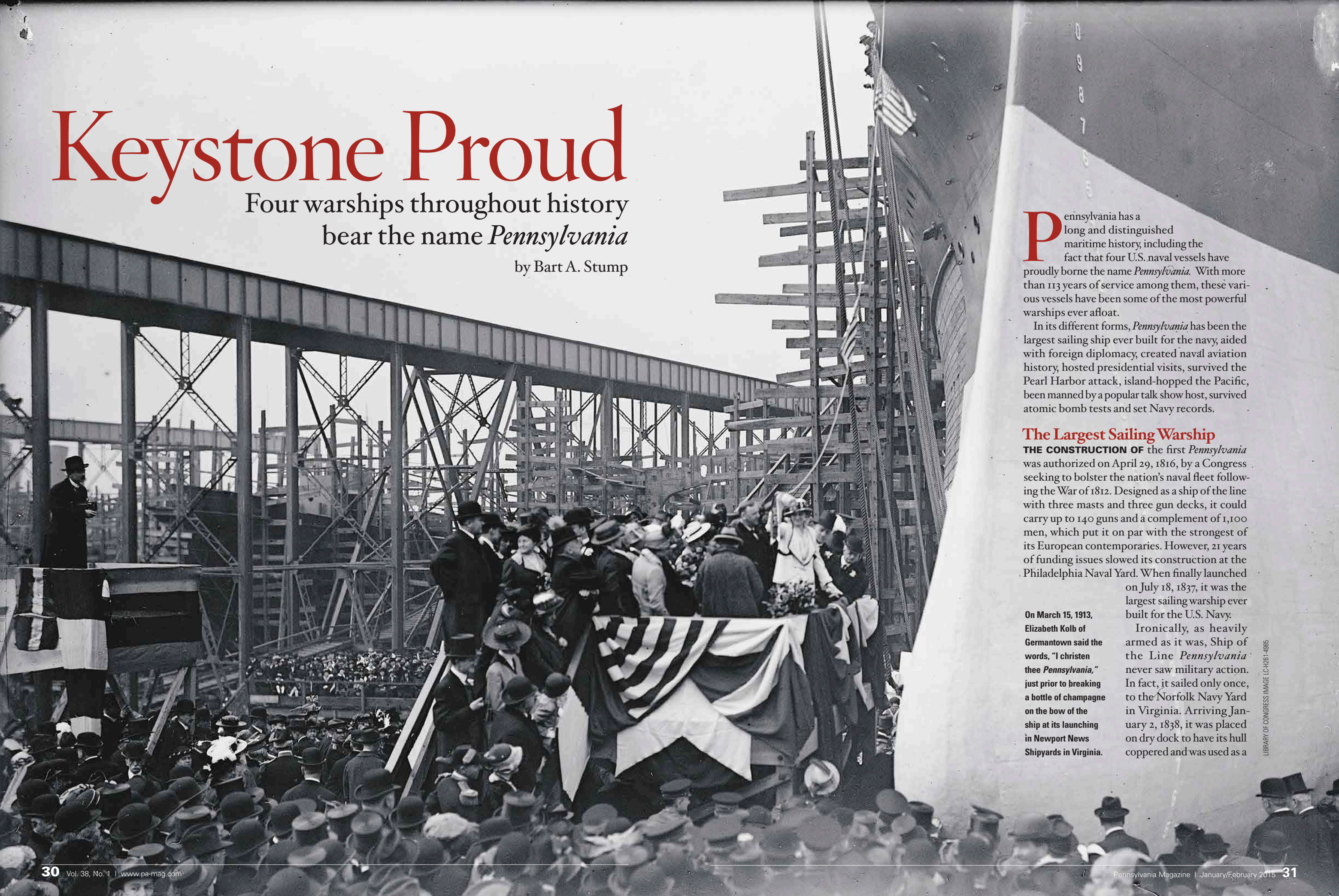


# Keystone Proud

Four warships throughout history  
bear the name *Pennsylvania*

by Bart A. Stump



**P**ennsylvania has a long and distinguished maritime history, including the fact that four U.S. naval vessels have proudly borne the name *Pennsylvania*. With more than 113 years of service among them, these various vessels have been some of the most powerful warships ever afloat.

In its different forms, *Pennsylvania* has been the largest sailing ship ever built for the navy, aided with foreign diplomacy, created naval aviation history, hosted presidential visits, survived the Pearl Harbor attack, island-hopped the Pacific, been manned by a popular talk show host, survived atomic bomb tests and set Navy records.

## The Largest Sailing Warship

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF** the first *Pennsylvania* was authorized on April 29, 1816, by a Congress seeking to bolster the nation's naval fleet following the War of 1812. Designed as a ship of the line with three masts and three gun decks, it could carry up to 140 guns and a complement of 1,100 men, which put it on par with the strongest of its European contemporaries. However, 21 years of funding issues slowed its construction at the Philadelphia Naval Yard. When finally launched on July 18, 1837, it was the largest sailing warship ever built for the U.S. Navy.

On March 15, 1913, Elizabeth Kolb of Germantown said the words, "I christen thee *Pennsylvania*," just prior to breaking a bottle of champagne on the bow of the ship at its launching in Newport News Shipyards in Virginia.

Ironically, as heavily armed as it was, Ship of the Line *Pennsylvania* never saw military action. In fact, it sailed only once, to the Norfolk Navy Yard in Virginia. Arriving January 2, 1838, it was placed on dry dock to have its hull coppered and was used as a

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The most recent vessel named after the Keystone State, USS *Pennsylvania* (SSBN 735) heads to its home port in Puget Sound, Washington, after completing a strategic deterrence patrol.

U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY CHIEF MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST AHRON ARENDES/RELEASED



receiving ship until the outbreak of the Civil War.

With Virginia's secession from the Union, the heavily armed *Pennsylvania* was now in enemy territory. To prevent the Confederates from obtaining its guns,

military officials ordered it burnt to the waterline on April 20, 1861. A 32-pound chambered cannon retrieved from the remains of this first *Pennsylvania* is on display today in Trophy Park at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

### Foreign Diplomat and Naval Aviation History-Maker

**THE NEXT PENNSYLVANIA** was born as the era of wooden-hulled sailing ships faded away and new generations of steam-powered all-metal warships reigned the seas. Built in Philadelphia and launched on August 22, 1903, *USS Pennsylvania* was the lead ship of a class of six 13,680-ton armored cruisers. Designated Armored Cruiser #4, it housed a complement of 829 officers and seamen.

While in San Francisco in 1908, *Pennsylvania* briefly joined Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet of battleships, which were circumnavigating the globe in a show of goodwill and naval strength. The fleet's moniker came from the ships' peacetime color scheme of white hulls. This *Pennsylvania* also made naval aviation history on January 18, 1911, in San Francisco Bay when civilian pilot Eugene Ely, flying a Curtiss biplane, made the first successful aircraft landing on a ship. Hooks on the plane's axle were used to snag ropes secured by

sandbags on a 133-foot wooden runway built on the stern of *Pennsylvania*.

On August 27, 1912, in preparation for the construction of a new battleship destined to carry the name *Pennsylvania*, Armored Cruiser #4 was renamed *USS Pittsburgh*. Under this new title, it served as the flagship of a squadron of armored cruisers patrolling off the coast of South America during World War I. *Pittsburgh* also played a role in the Chinese Civil War, putting ashore landing parties in 1927.

This proud warship met its fate in December 1931 when it was sold for scrap. Today, the bow ornament is on display at Soldiers and Sailors National Military Museum and Memorial in Pittsburgh.

### Presidential Host and Pearl Harbor Survivor

**A RADICAL EVOLUTION** in battleship design brought about the creation of the most well-known *USS Pennsylvania*. The 31,400-ton BB 38, the lead ship of two *Pennsylvania*-class Superdreadnought

battleships, was built in Newport News, Va., and launched on March 16, 1915. Nicknamed the *Pennsy* or *Mighty Penn*, the ship carried a complement of 1,358 officers and sailors. Armed with 12 14-inch guns, it was one of the most powerful warships in the world at the time. "[It] can fire at one broadside nine tons of steel a distance of 16 miles," stated the July 25, 1916, edition of the *Ogden Standard*.

As a state-of-the-art warship, *Pennsylvania* earned the title of flagship of the Atlantic fleet on October 12, 1916. However, it was not able to participate in European action in World War I because it was too modern. While the rest of the aging fleet bound for Europe burned coal, *Pennsylvania* burned fuel oil, and there weren't enough tankers available to carry fuel to the British Isles. Nevertheless, the navy showcased *Pennsylvania's* prominence during the late teens and early 1920s when it hosted a variety of high-ranking dignitaries, including Presidents Wilson and Harding.

On December 7, 1941, *Pennsylvania*, the flagship of the entire U.S. fleet, was dry docked at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, and when the Japanese attacked, it was one of the first ships to return fire on the enemy. However, the attacking bombers and torpedo planes heavily strafed the flagship, and a bomb destroyed one of its 5-inch gun batteries. At the end of the day, the ship suffered the loss of 15 seamen, with 14 missing in action and 38 wounded, while the ship itself avoided major damage.

Following repairs, *Pennsylvania* began its primary mission of shelling enemy positions in preparation and support of amphibious landings by marine and army units throughout the Pacific. The bombardment operations included the Aleutians, Gilbert Islands, Marshall Islands, Marianas, Western Caroline Islands, Leyte and Luzon. The last two operations helped Gen. Douglas MacArthur fulfill his promise of returning to and liberating the Philippines.

Eugene B. Ely lands his Curtiss pusher biplane on *USS Pennsylvania* (Armored Cruiser #4), anchored in San Francisco Bay, California, on January 18, 1911.



U.S. NAVY PHOTO NH 13865, PHOTOGRAPH FROM EUGENE B. ELY SCRAPBOOKS

As the final days of the war approached, *Pennsylvania* joined other U.S. ships amassing at Okinawa in preparation for

(top) A Currier and Ives lithograph of the 140-gun U.S. Ship of the Line *Pennsylvania* that was launched on July 18, 1837, as the largest sailing warship ever built for the U.S. Navy. (bottom photos) Two of the 14-inch guns and the munitions from the third ship named after *Pennsylvania* can be found today at the *Pennsylvania* Military Museum in Boalsburg.

the planned invasion of the Japanese mainland. However, plans dramatically changed when atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki three days later. In the aftermath of the bombs' destruction, a Japanese plane torpedoed *Pennsylvania* while the ship lay anchored near Okinawa, leaving a nearly 30-foot hole in its stern and killing 20 men and injuring another 10.

On August 14, 1945, during repairs to the ship following this tragedy, *Pennsylvania's* best-known crew member came on

board. Ensign Johnny Carson, the future host of *Tonight Show*, served as the ship's communications officer, decoding encrypted messages. His first task was to supervise the removal of 20 dead sailors who were casualties of the torpedo attack. Carson's wartime service on *Pennsylvania* was cut short as the next day, August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allies.

No longer battle-worthy, *Pennsylvania* performed its final mission in July 1946 when it served as a target vessel at Operation Crossroads, the atomic bomb testing at Bikini Atoll. Surviving two nuclear tests but still leaking from the torpedo damage suffered at Okinawa, *Pennsylvania* met its fate when it was towed to deep water and sunk off Kwajalein on February 10, 1948.

USS *Pennsylvania* (BB 38) ended a distinguished career, having earned a Navy Unit Citation and eight battle stars. One of its bells and a 1:48 scale model of the ship as it appeared in 1916 are on display today at Penn State University's Wagner building, which serves as home to the university's ROTC program. Another bell and two of its 14-inch guns are displayed at the *Pennsylvania* Military Museum in Boalsburg, Centre County.

### Naval Record Holder

**THE FINAL WARSHIP** to bear the name of our commonwealth is the USS *Pennsylvania* (SSBN 735), an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine. Launched April 23, 1988, this nuclear-powered sub carries 24 Trident ballistic missiles and a complement of 155 officers and crew. Stationed at Bangor, Wash., *Pennsylvania* set a record for the longest patrol (140 days) by an Ohio-class sub in June 2014.

**ALL TOLD, THE FOUR WARSHIPS NAMED PENNSYLVANIA** have honorably served our nation throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Ranging from the largest sailing ship in the navy, to the first ship to host a plane landing, to a battleship that survived the Pearl Harbor attack, to a record-setting nuclear submarine, these extraordinary fighting ships aptly sum up the spirit of our state motto: Virtue, Independence and Liberty. 🇺🇸

—Bart A. Stump is a freelance writer from York.



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BART A STUMP (2)



The Organic Farming Program is a one-year certificate program offered through a partnership between Delaware Valley College and Rodale Institute.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DELAWARE VALLEY COLLEGE AND ALLURE WEST STUDIOS

# VETERANS TO FARMERS

A new program is helping veterans gain the skills and knowledge to become organic farmers

by Cindy Ross

**T**he last agricultural census tells the tale of the aging farmer in America. Data reveals that the average farmer is 57 years old and almost 30 percent are over the age of 65. Now, consider that nearly 45 percent of our military comes from a rural background and that many veterans return home after active duty seeking a vocation that will support them and their families.

With the hope of turning veterans into farmers, the Rodale Institute in Berks