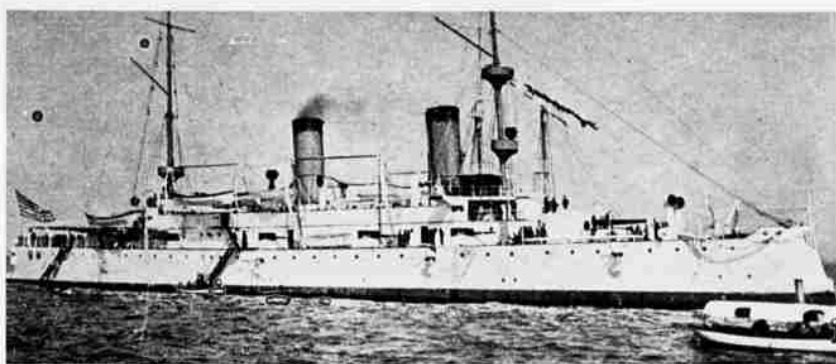
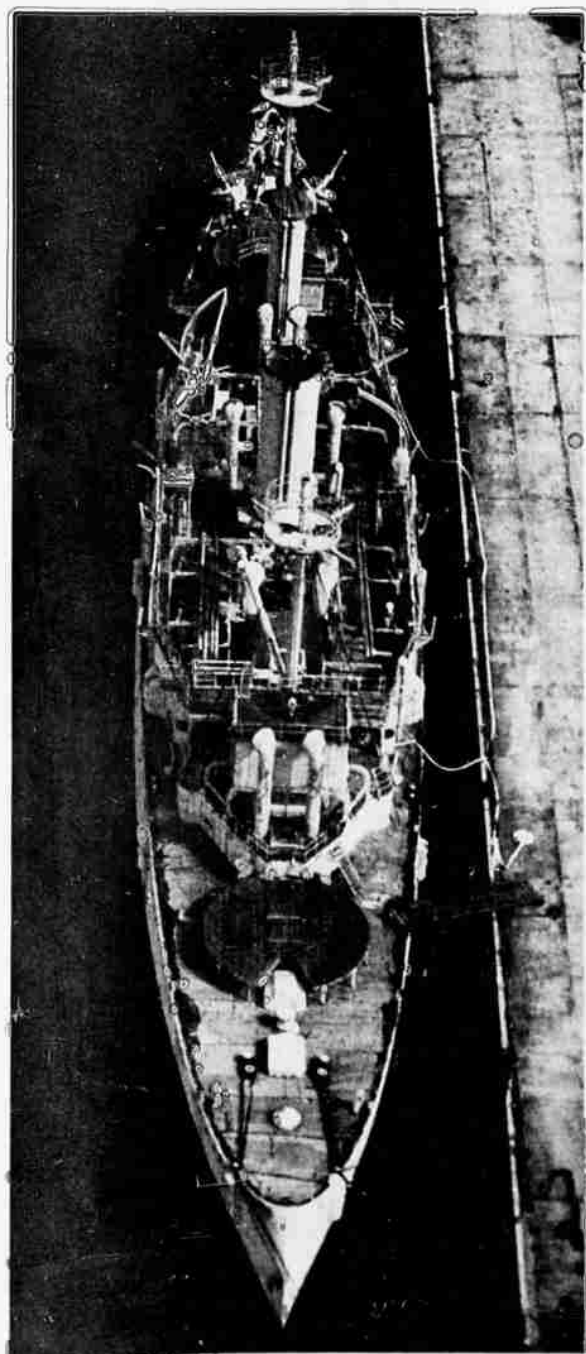




Olympia, from which Dewey gave immortal command, seems destined for a mortal grave. Cruiser is shown in early photo shortly after it was commissioned.

A Fighting Ship Seeks a Home



Olympia now lies rotting in Philadelphia Navy Yard, too old for active service and too expensive to maintain.



Constitution, which won fame in War of 1812, is among few ships to find peaceful homes.

by Jerry Klein

"YOU MAY FIRE when ready, Gridley!" has become a motto of American history. Every schoolboy knows these were the words of Admiral George Dewey as he touched off the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898.

The admiral has long been gone. So has Captain Gridley. And while the ship from which they did battle that fateful morning is still afloat, she too may soon vanish. Decommissioned in 1922, the one-time flagship of America's Asiatic Squadron—the cruiser U.S.S. Olympia—has laid rotting at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Occasionally, visitors would come to see the historic vessel, but maintenance costs ran high, and the Navy warned that the Olympia would have to be scrapped unless someone else took responsibility for her.

The Cruiser Olympia Association, a Philadelphia civic group, has been trying desperately to save the cruiser from the last long voyage into the limbo of fighting ships.

But maintaining an outmoded vessel merely as a relic costs money, and only a handful of the famous ships that helped make America a great power have retired to a peaceful old age in a place of honor on quiet water.

The oldest among them is the U.S.S. Constitution, launched at Baltimore in 1797 just in time for the naval war with France and Tripoli. The Constitution also fought Britain in the War of 1812.

Down the ways in Boston, just six weeks after the Constitution, came a little larger sister-frigate named the U.S.S. Constitution, which lost no time getting into the struggles with

France and Tripoli. But it was in the War of 1812 that the Constitution won the sobriquet "Old Ironsides."

Nevertheless, in 1830 she was slated for the scrap heap, only to be saved by Oliver Wendell Holmes, who pleaded for her life with his poem, "Old Ironsides." In the 1920s, school children helped raise money to restore the Constitution, and she still is maintained as a memorial in the Boston Navy Yard.

So proud is the Lone Star State of the battleship U.S.S. Texas that her citizens maintain her as a shrine in San Jacinto. The ship saw action briefly in World War I, but really hit her stride during World War II, in the attacks on North Africa, Normandy, Southern France, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

Of strictly World War II vintage is the carrier U.S.S. Enterprise which wreaked havoc all over the Pacific, destroying almost 1,000 Japanese planes, sinking more than 100 ships, and earning 20 battle stars. After V-J Day, Congress was urged to preserve the Enterprise as the "one vessel that most nearly symbolizes the history of the Navy in this war." But the gallant carrier was put in mothballs at Bayonne, N.J. Soon she too will be on her way to the scrap heap.

One vessel of World War II fame that is being preserved as a relic is the battleship U.S.S. Arizona, sunk on the "day that will live in infamy." She took more than 1,000 men to their graves as, with colors raised, she went to the bottom of Pearl Harbor. Today the resurrected Arizona still flies her flag—a memorial of America's past and a challenge for her future.