

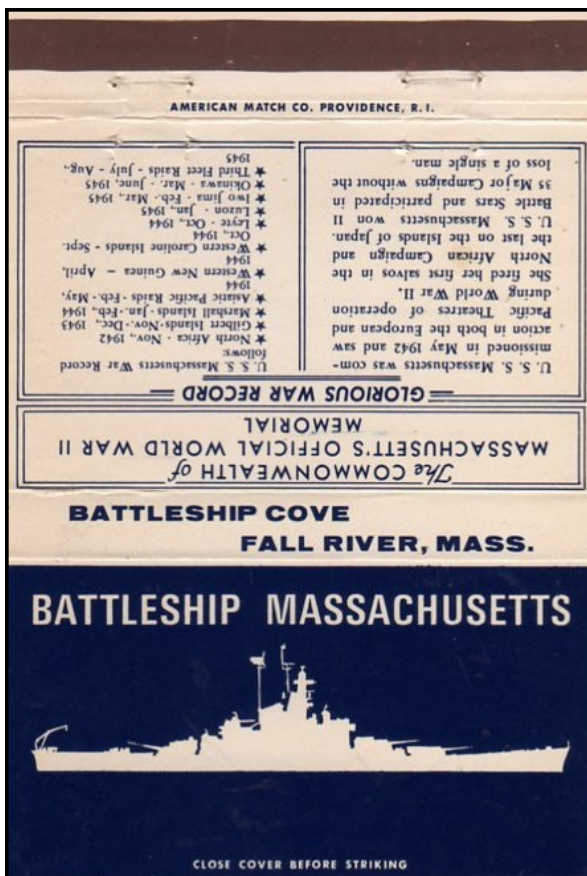
Battleship

I suppose if you're in the Massachusetts area, you're already familiar with Battleship Cove, but the rest of us, living elsewhere, aren't. Using myself as an example, and being all the way out here in California [God's country]....[well, God's and Mexico's], I had never heard of this fascinating place until I happened to see a newspaper article about it last year. Here's what I learned...

Battleship Cove, in Fall River, MA, is run by The USS Massachusetts Memorial Committee Inc., a private non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of historic memorials and providing the general public with an informative educational experience to honor patriotism and country. It governs the USS Massachusetts (BB-59), USS Lionfish (SS), USS Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. (DD), and PT Boats 796 and 617. Battleship Cove also features the only Russian Missile Corvette (Hiddensee) on display in the world. The USS Massachusetts is presently the home to the official memorials honoring Bay State residents who lost their lives in World War II and the Persian Gulf War. Similarly, the USS Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. honors those who lost their lives in the Korean and Vietnam War.

The centerpiece, of course, is the Battleship Massachusetts. Commissioned in 1942, it participated in 35 naval battles in 13 major Atlantic and Pacific campaigns without ever suffering any significant casualties. "Big Mamie," as she was called by her wartime crew, earned an enviable war record, earning 11 battle stars; she fired the first and last 16" shell in anger during World War II. Decommissioned in 1946, the ship was placed in the mothball fleet in Norfolk, Virginia where she remained for the next eighteen years. In the meantime ... those young "boys" she carried home from the war had become civilians and were still attached to their ships and shipmates. They began holding annual reunions in 1946 and in 1948 formed the USS Massachusetts Associates, a non-profit corporation. In 1962, the Navy announced that the battleship was to be sold for scrap. This decision led to the formation of the USS Massachusetts Memorial Committee, Inc., established to create a historic memorial honoring patriotism and country. It took two long years but with the help of citizens, school children, and the state legislature the battleship returned to the state for which she was named.

Since her arrival in 1964, "Big Mamie" has greeted over



Cove

4.4 million visitors from all over the world. Battleship Cove continues to be an important educational resource for youth and school groups throughout New England. Perhaps, the greatest educational impact that the USS Massachusetts has been able to impart is through the group's innovative youth group overnight camping program. Since the program's inception, over 280,000 young men and women have received an important hands-on history lesson about the memorial ships and their roles in preserving freedom for our nation. The program provides a history of the Battleship Massachusetts, as well as, present a realistic interpretation of day to day living aboard the ship.

The arrival of the USS Massachusetts paved the way for the development of Battleship Cove and served as the catalyst for the revitalization of the Fall River waterfront and improvement in the quality of life in both Fall River and Bristol County. When the ship was opened to the public in August 1965, there was little suggestion of the development that would occur over the thirty-four years. The Committee was instrumental in forming a tourism promotion agency and the planning for a Heritage State Park that now graces what was once a dilapidated, crumbling waterfront. The Marine Museum, Old Colony and Fall River Railroad Museum, the Fall River Carousel, and the tall ship H.M.S. Bounty round out the reconstruction of a waterfront area once thought to beyond recovery.

In 1972, the battleship was joined by the submarine USS Lionfish, a World War II Balao-class attack submarine. In 1974, destroyer Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. joined the emerging fleet at Battleship Cove. The largest type destroyer built by the United States during World War II, this Gearing class destroyer is the only one of its type on public display. In 1981, the Kennedy was named a memorial to Bay State citizens who lost their lives in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. During the 1970's, a PT Boat museum on the battleship and the later exhibit of PT 796 and 617 came about, the only two PT boats on display anywhere in the world. PT 796 is housed in a Quonset Hut, of which thousands were built around the world in the 1940's. The battleship, destroyer, submarine, and two PT boats were designated "National Historic Landmarks." The most recent addition to Battleship Cove is Hiddensee, the only Russian missile corvette on public display in the world. Built in Russia and used by the East German Navy, Hiddensee was offered to the United States after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. She became a permanent resident of Battleship Cove in October 1996.

Also on display are a North American T-28 Trojan trainer plane, a Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM), a UH-1m "Huey" Helicopter, the bow of the cruiser USS Fall River, and a Japanese "Shinyo" Suicide Attack Boat.

Battleship Cove has grown to become one of the nation's most dynamic exhibits of

