

Great Ships of The U. S. Navy

U.S.S. North Carolina

USS North Carolina (BB-55) was the lead ship of North Carolina-class battleships and the fourth warship in the U.S. Navy to be named in honor of the State of North Carolina. She was the first newly constructed American battleship to enter service during World War II, and took part in every major naval offensive in the Pacific Theater of Operations; her 15 battle stars made her the most highly decorated American battleship of World War II. She is now a museum ship and memorial kept at the seaport of Wilmington, N.C.

The *North Carolina* was laid down on 27 October 1937 at the New York Naval Shipyard and launched on 13 June 1940. She was commissioned in New York City on 9 April 1941. The first of the U.S. Navy's fast battleships to be commissioned, she carried a powerful main battery of nine 16 in/45 caliber Mark 6 guns. The ship received so much attention during her completion and sea trials that she won the lasting nickname of "Showboat".

In World War II, the *North Carolina* was the first new battleship to arrive in the Pacific since the beginning of the war, transiting the Panama Canal on 10 June, four days following the end of the Battle of Midway in the Central Pacific. She steamed to the port of San Pedro, California, and then to San Francisco before proceeding to Pearl Harbor. According to sailors there, *North Carolina* was "the most beautiful thing they had ever seen", and her arrival in Hawaii greatly increased the morale of the Pacific Fleet. The *North Carolina* headed for combat in the South Pacific.

The *North Carolina* joined the long island-hopping campaign against the Japanese by assisting in the landing of U.S. Marines on the islands of Guadalcanal and Tulagi on 7 August 1942, thus beginning the long battle for Guadalcanal. [The only battleship in the naval force in the South Pacific, she escorted the aircraft carriers *Saratoga*, *Enterprise*, and *Wasp*, surrounded by their cruisers and destroyers. After helping to screen the *Enterprise* in the air support force for the amphibious landing, the *North Carolina* guarded the carrier during her mission of protecting the supply and communication lines to the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal.

After long and distinguished service, After inactivation, the *North Carolina* was decommissioned at New York on 27 June 1947. Stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 1 June 1960, she was transferred to the state of North Carolina on 6 September 1961. She was purchased from the U.S. Navy for \$330,000 raised by the efforts of North Carolina school children, who saved their spare change and lunch money for the "Save Our Ship" campaign. On 29 April 1962, she was dedicated at Wilmington as a memorial to North Carolinians of all services killed in World War II.

This battleship was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

U.S.S. North Carolina-1946

