

This Day in History... April 10, 1895

Launch of the SS *Saint Paul*

The SS *Saint Paul* was launched on April 10, 1895. It was the first commercial ship commissioned for the Spanish-American War and later served during World War I.

Named for the capital of Minnesota, *Saint Paul* was originally used to ship American products across the ocean and to carry foreign imports back to American shores. It was also part of the Auxiliary Navy, meaning that ship owners received subsidies on the condition that they make their ships available to the Navy in times of war.



From the Pan-American Exposition issue



Saint Paul was named after the capital of Minnesota.

When the Spanish-American War began three years later, the *Saint Paul* was the first commercial ship to be commissioned. On April 21, 1898, it was commissioned as an auxiliary cruiser of the United States Navy. Its first mission was to search for Admiral Cervera's squadron between Morant Point, Jamaica, and western Haiti. On May 25, it captured the British ship *Restormel* and then joined the blockading force at San Juan in June.

At San Juan, *Saint Paul* battled the destroyer *Terror* and delivered at least one direct hit. After that battle, *Saint Paul* returned to New York for coal and spent the rest of the war as a transport for the War Department. It delivered troops to Siboney, Cuba, and Arroyo, Puerto Rico before bringing soldiers back from Guantanamo Bay. *Saint Paul* was decommissioned and returned to its owner for civilian service on September 2.



Saint Paul took part in the blockade of San Juan during the Spanish-American War.

In 1901, the US Post Office produced a set of stamps for the Pan-American Exposition. Many of the stamps in the set reflected a "speed" theme." The *Saint Paul* was selected for the 10¢ Fast Ocean Navigation stamp, shown slicing through the ocean waves.

The Spanish-American War was still fresh in the minds of many Americans, and the *Saint Paul*'s fame made it an obvious choice for the Fast Ocean Navigation stamp.



Saint Paul served with the Navy during the Spanish-American War and World War I.

In 1917, the 553-foot steel ship was commissioned again for service during World War I. In that conflict, it served as a transport ship, making 12 voyages between New York and England. *Saint Paul* capsized near New York City in September 1918 but was righted and sent to the New York Navy Yard. It was going to be converted into a troopship, but the end of World War I canceled those plans.

Following the war, *Saint Paul* returned to its previous job of transporting domestic and foreign goods across the ocean.

After 28 years of service, the ship was sold to a German firm to be made into scrap metal in 1923.

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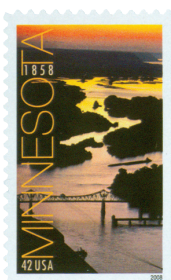
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