

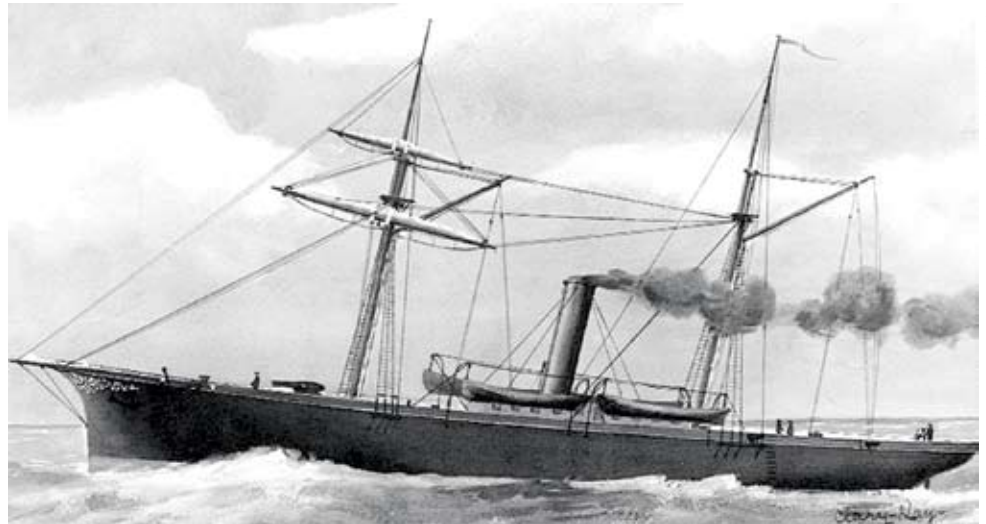
Monticello: One name, three Navy vessels

DURING THE HISTORY of the U.S. Navy, three ships have carried the name USS *Monticello* in honor of Thomas Jefferson's home, and all three served in wartime.

The naming of ships has been the responsibility of the secretary of the Navy for 189 years, and the Navy has long tried to maintain a systematic approach to the process. The 1819 act of Congress that established the secretary's authority in this regard stated that ships "of the first class shall be called after the States of this Union; those of the second class after the rivers; and those of the third class after the principal cities and towns; taking care that no two vessels of the navy shall bear the same name." While the Navy has always adhered to that last provision, the changing size of the service and the evolution of ships over time have led to a wide variety of naming practices and policies. But the naming of ships for historic sites has been a custom throughout the Navy's history, and the three ships named for Jefferson's Monticello are part of that tradition.

According to records maintained by the Department of the Navy's Naval Historical Center in Washington, the first USS *Monticello* was a wooden screw-steamer built in Mystic, Conn., in 1859 and purchased by the Navy in September 1861. After being fitted as a gunboat, the ship was put into service in the squadron blockading the Atlantic coast of the Confederacy.

The *Monticello* compiled an active record throughout the Civil War, from operations on the James and Rappahannock rivers in Virginia in 1861 to the capture of North Carolina's Fort Fisher in 1865. The ship partici-



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The first USS *Monticello* participated in several engagements along the Atlantic coast of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

pated in the blockade of Wilmington, N.C., in 1864 and three members of her crew – John Sullivan, David Warren, and William Wright – were awarded the Medal of Honor for the "gallantry and coolness" of their actions during reconnaissance of the port's defenses in June of that year. One of the men who commanded the *Monticello* during the war was Lt. William B. Cushing, who became a Union celebrity in October 1864 when he led an attack by a Navy steam launch that sank the ironclad ram CSS *Albatross*.

The USS *Monticello* was decommissioned at Portsmouth, N.H., in July 1865 and sold that November. The ship began a new life as the merchant vessel *Monticello* in July 1866 and served in a commercial capacity until April 1872, when she sank off the coast of Newfoundland.

More than 75 years passed before the Navy listed the second USS *Monticello*. This ship was built as a passenger liner, the *Conte Grande*, in Trieste, Italy, in 1928. As an Italian-flag vessel, she was interned in Brazil at the outset of World War II then purchased by the United

States and commissioned in April 1942. The newly renamed *Monticello* (AP-61) sailed to Philadelphia, where she was converted into a troop transport.

The ship's first deployment was carrying GIs from New York to Casablanca for the invasion of North Africa in November 1942. Her subsequent assignments included transporting troops from New York to India via the Panama Canal and Australia in 1942-43; from New York to North Africa in 1943; from San Francisco to Hawaii, Australia, and South Pacific island bases in 1944; and from the U.S. East Coast to Western Europe in 1944-45.

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COMMENTS?
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Navy vessels

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The second USS *Monticello* was decommissioned at Norfolk, Va., in March 1946, designated for disposal in May of that year, and returned to the Italian government in June 1947.

The third USS *Monticello* was the first to be designed and built for the Navy. Constructed in Pascagoula, Miss., she was launched in August 1956 and, after outfitting and trials off the East Coast, arrived in her home port of San Diego in May 1957 to join Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet. This *Monticello* (LSD-35) was a dock landing ship, a seagoing vessel with a large well deck for landing craft or vehicles.

The service record of the *Monticello* included participation in 1962 nuclear weapons tests at Christmas Island in the Pacific and deployments to the South China Sea, Gulf of Siam, Okinawa, and Vietnam, where she saw action, mostly in amphibious operations, from 1966 through the end of the war.

The third *Monticello* was decommissioned in October 1985. Her name was struck from the Navy list in February 1992 and she was sold in September 1995.

In addition to the three ships named USS *Monticello*, one other Navy vessel bore the name of a site closely associated with Jefferson. In service 1944-47 and 1950-70 was another dock landing ship, the USS *Shadwell* (LSD-15), named for Jefferson's Albemarle County birthplace.

Additional information about these ships is available on the Naval Historical Center's Web site, www.history.navy.mil.



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The third USS *Monticello* saw extensive action in Vietnam.



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The second *Monticello* was a troop transport in World War II.