



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

OCTOBER 2023

REMEMBERING THE BATTLESHIP OREGON



Real photo postcard of the Battleship Oregon in 1912 showing the city of St. Johns (later annexed to Portland) in the background, on its journey to its destination near the piers of the future Broadway Bridge for the Elk's Convention. Don Nelson collection.

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BY DONALD R. NELSON

The Battleship Oregon had several names including the USS Oregon and the “Bulldog of the Navy.” The ship had ties to Portland, Oregon during its illustrious career. The men of the ship and the USS Oregon had played a part in destroying the Spanish Fleet in the Spanish-American War of the late 1890s.

The Oregon was utilized in various capacities for the Navy until it was decommissioned in 1920s. The battleship was loaned to the state of Oregon in 1925. Previously, The Oregon came to Portland to take part in the Elks convention of 1912.



Real photo postcard of the Battleship Oregon being towed to the Portland Harbor in 1925. Don Nelson collection.

When the Oregon was brought to the Rose City in 1925, the ship was pulled or pushed from the Bremerton Navy Yard to Portland by tugboats and also steered by Captain Menner of the navy yard. There was also a crew of sailors and passengers on board. Two years before, it was relinquished to our state, as was required by a Washington Navy Treaty, demilitarization required the ship to be disarmed. Its guns were disabled and boilers removed as well, except for a small one used to enable steering of the craft. The propeller shaft was cut.



Real photo postcard of the Battleship Oregon at Terminal 4 in St. Johns on June 14, 1925. Don Nelson collection.

The Battleship Oregon was a floating museum, a destination for schoolchildren, Portland residents, and various groups and tourists. There was a reunion of Spanish-American War veterans on the ship in 1938.

Years earlier in the mid-1890s schoolchildren of Portland donated pennies to help purchase a silver set for the Battleship Oregon. Fundraising in the late 1930s came from donations from schoolchildren and others to allow relocation of the ship to a basin just south of the Hawthorne Bridge.

Before it was moored at the Portland Harbor, the USS Oregon was first moored at Terminal 4 in St. Johns on June 14, 1925 where the next morning Rose Festival Queen Suzanne I, who was Mrs. Ronald J. Honeyman, and her entourage of princesses and other dignitaries boarded the Battleship Oregon to its final destination.

The arrival of the ship was a major kickoff celebration of the Rose Festival on June 15, 1925. It was berthed at the waterfront moorage by the Broadway Bridge, that was its home until 1938.

A large crowd was gathered to greet the Battleship Oregon and Queen Suzanne I.

To allow access to the ship, a winding stairway had been built from the waterfront at the ship to the top of the riverbank.



Photo of the Battleship Oregon at the Rose Festival in 1925 by the Hawthorne Bridge. Don Nelson collection.



Photo of Battleship Oregon Park which was built alongside the new berth on the Willamette River. The waterfront's Harbor Drive highway shrank the size of the park. Tom Robinson collection.



Photo of Battleship Oregon Park with an unpopular statue that was built as a memorial to the Spanish American War, circa 1940. Tom Robinson collection.

An unpopular modern statue by sculptor Oliver Barrett was a memorial to the Spanish American War and celebrating the indomitable spirit of the former Rough Rider President Theodore Roosevelt. It was lost to an undocumented accident when it was to be dismantled and moved to another location.

The Oregon was sacrificed to the war effort and was towed to Kalama Washington for dismantling in February 1943. It was photographed from Willamette Iron & Steel as it was leaving Portland to be scrapped.

Its steel was supposedly needed for defense purposes. The mast and smoke stacks were removed as was as most of the above deck superstructure and other pieces. The mast today is located in Governor Tom McCall Park. The smokestacks are in storage. The ship ended up as an ammunition barge during World War II. The Battleship Oregon was sold for scrap in 1956.

Back cover photo: Ackroyd Photo of the Battleship Oregon being towed to Kalama, Washington in 1943. Tom Robinson collection.

Research resources:

- Wikipedia
- The Oregonian & Oregon Journal*
- Tom Robinson
- And other sources



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