

The *Queen Mary* Overview

The *Queen Mary* quickly became one of the world's most popular ships when it was named on September 16, 1934 by King George V and Queen Mary. King George set the tone for the naming of the ship when he said "we now come to the happy task of sending on her way . . . THE STATELIEST SHIP IN BEING . . ." ¹ This phrase coined by King George V remains synonymous with the *Queen Mary* to this day. After the naming of the *Queen Mary*, the engines and the boilers were put in the ship and the ship began its first voyage as an ocean liner in May 1936. ² The ship would continue to serve as an ocean liner until World War II. As the Allies began to make plans for Operation Bolero, a very large build up of American troops in Great Britain, United States Chief of Staff George C. Marshall led the way for the *Queen Mary*, the *Queen Elizabeth*, and the *Aquitania* to be converted into troop ships. Marshall pushed for the ocean liners to be used as troop ships because the Allies did not have ships large enough to carry entire divisions of troops overseas. After the renovations were finished, the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth* were equipped to carry more than 12,000 troops each. ³ The two ships would later be credited with accelerating the end of World War II because the Allies were able to carry transport troops across the Atlantic in a timely manner. Moreover the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth* were able to out run the German U-boats. ⁴ Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, summed up the significance of the Queens in World War II when he said: "Built for the arts of peace and to link the Old World with the New, the Queens challenged the fury of Hitlerism in the Battle of the Atlantic. Their sterling service allowed the war to be shortened by as much as a year. Without their aid, the day of final victory must unquestionably have been postponed." ⁵

¹ Frank Cronican, *The Stateliest Ship: Queen Mary* (New York: The Steamship Historical Society of America), 12.

² Alister Satchell, *Running the Gauntlet: How Three Giant Liners Carried a Million Men to War, 1942-1945* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 21.

³ Daniel Allen Butler, *The Age of Cunard: A Transatlantic History 1839-2003* (Annapolis, Maryland: Lighthouse Press, 2003), 311.

⁴ The *Queen Mary* could travel between 26 and 30 knots.

⁵ Butler, 328-9.