



Independence  
Seaport Museum

Celebrating



Contact:

Michele DiGirolamo

215.413.8631

[mdigirolamo@phillyseaport.org](mailto:mdigirolamo@phillyseaport.org)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Cruiser *Olympia* in Need of Critical Repair** **Independence Seaport Museum Cooperating with** **U.S. Navy in Search for New Caretaker**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA** – The aging Spanish-American War Cruiser *Olympia*, a National Historic Landmark and one-of-a-kind former U.S. Navy vessel with a storied history, is in need of substantial and costly hull repairs to prevent her from sinking.

Independence Seaport Museum has spent in excess of \$5.3 million on the maintenance, repair, preservation, and restoration of *Olympia* since agreeing to take possession of her in 1995. Another \$10 million is required to restore the hull and deck and possibly as much as \$20 million is required for a complete restoration.

Ideally, an historic steel hull ship such as *Olympia* is dry-docked about every 20 years for maintenance. *Olympia* has been in the water continuously since 1945.

“The Independence Seaport Museum Board of Port Wardens is unanimous in its acknowledgement of *Olympia*’s rich and unique history and her importance as a naval treasure,” says Board Chairman Peter McCausland.

The Museum has been an outstanding steward for this magnificent naval ship and its related historical artifacts for many years, McCausland says, but is not able to raise the significant amount of money needed to dredge the Penn’s Landing Marina, transport *Olympia* to dry dock, and finance the repairs necessary to ensure she will remain afloat.

“We have advised the U.S. Navy that Independence Seaport Museum will relinquish its stewardship of this national naval treasure and its valuable artifact collections,” McCausland says. “Because every staff and board member deeply care about and respect this historic ship, we stand ready to assist the Navy in an aggressive search to find a new home for *Olympia* and its related collections.”

For the last two years, the Museum has worked to secure funding for the preservation of *Olympia*, approaching the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Department of the U.S. Navy, the Federal government, and private funders – with no success. The Museum also conducted a recent feasibility study, which determined that it would be unable to raise the substantial funds needed for *Olympia*’s preservation at this time.

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During its tenure as *Olympia*'s steward, the Seaport has worked tirelessly to preserve, repair, and maintain the ship. These efforts have included, amongst others, stability tests and floodable length studies with the U.S. Navy; an extensive hull condition survey; removing and disposing of 30 tons of asbestos; repairing bulkheads and doors; upgrading electrical and service water systems; constructing a replica wheelhouse to historic specifications, and restoring the bridge deck.

Over the last two years alone, the Seaport completed interim repairs to the steel plating at *Olympia*'s wind and water line, and is currently working to restore the integrity of her inner hull, as further protection against a catastrophic break in her outer hull.

The Seaport recently completed a strategic planning process, which outlines a new vision and direction for the Museum. Significant funding is needed to make that vision a reality, maintain the Museum's financial stability, and keep this cultural institution relevant to the City of Philadelphia and the Museum's visitors, which include residents, tourists, and tens of thousands of schoolchildren each year.

"Regrettably, in the current economic climate, the Board of Port Wardens has concluded that it cannot raise the funding necessary to save *Olympia* while also financing the implementation of the Museum's new strategic plan," McCausland says.

### ***Olympia*'s Historical Significance**

From the moment of her launching in 1892, *Olympia* was a rare treasure in the U.S. naval fleet, as no sister ships were ever built. She is the world's oldest floating steel warship and the sole surviving naval ship of the Spanish-American War. *Olympia* served as Admiral Dewey's flagship at the Battle of Manila Bay, which marked the U.S.'s emergence as a world power. *Olympia*'s last official naval mission was to carry the body of the Unknown Soldier from France to the United States in 1921.

In addition to being a National Historic Landmark, *Olympia* is also a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark, on the National Register of Historic Places, and part of the Save America's Treasures program.

### **The Urgency of *Olympia*'s Plight**

*Olympia* has been in the water for 60 years, which has taken a terrible toll on her hull. Her prognosis is grim, unless efforts to restore her hull and rotted exterior decks, necessary to protect the historic fabric of the ship's interior, are undertaken soon.

The estimated cost for these repairs, including dredging and a safe tow to dry dock, is \$10 million. The time required to perform all the required repairs is approximately two years.