

Independence Seaport Museum Brings 60 Years of Maritime Exhibits and On-Water Activities to Penn's Landing

Philadelphia, PA – Founded in 1960, [Independence Seaport Museum's](#) (ISM) mission is to discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections. ISM is a key component of Philadelphia's waterfront renaissance and is a popular, family-friendly tourist destination for the Penn's Landing neighborhood, serving 110,000 visitors every year.

Inside the Museum, guests can explore one of the largest maritime art and artifact collections in North America, most of which is display in their award-winning, permanent exhibits. The [River Alive!](#) exhibition gives visitors an up-close look at the wildlife, science, and wonder of the Delaware River and encourages exploration through various engaging interactive components. Awarded the Special Achievement in Interactivity Award in 2020 by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), this exhibit proves that the river truly is alive and how important its conservation is to the eastern seaboard.

Featuring artifacts from the Museum's collection, [Tides of Freedom: African Presence on the Delaware River](#), shares first-hand accounts detailing the history of enslavement, emancipation, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights in Philadelphia. Another AAM award-winning exhibit, *Tides of Freedom* was curated by the Lasry Family Professor of Race Relations at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Tukufu Zuberi. Learn about Piracy and Philadelphia's connection to the founding of the U.S. Navy in *Patriots & Pirates*, which includes the 102-foot vessel Schooner *Diligence*. The replica ship was constructed by staff and volunteers from [The Seaport Boat Shop](#), a traditional boat shop located inside the Museum where maritime tradition meets hands-on experiences and community.

Docked nearby the Museum are [Cruiser Olympia](#), the oldest floating steel warship, and [Submarine Becuna](#), a World War II-era Balao-class submarine. ISM began its stewardship of *Olympia*, a National Historic Landmark, in 1996 and has since overseen restorations that made it possible for the historic Cruiser to remain open for touring visitors. The *Becuna* also brings a storied history from her 25 years in the U.S. Navy. The submarine completed five wartime patrols in the Pacific Theater of World War II and earned four combat stars for her service. In 1951, she underwent modernization as part of the United States Navy's Greater Underwater Propulsion & Power Program (GUPPY) and was refitted with a Guppy 1A modification. She remains the only Guppy 1A type submarine anywhere in the world. *Becuna* became a museum in July 1976 as part of Philadelphia's Bicentennial Celebration and became a part of ISM's collections in 1996.

Throughout 2021, ISM will be commemorating the [Centennial Anniversary of the Return of the Unknown Soldier](#) aboard Cruiser *Olympia*. Following the end of World War I, the Cruiser was chosen to return the remains of an unknown American soldier to the United States. To honor this historic milestone, ISM has proudly partnered with national organizations to present programming, unveil special exhibitions, and highlight *Olympia's* journey and the sacrifice made by members of our armed forces.

ISM debuted a special exhibit on Cruiser *Olympia* that tells the story of the ship's transportation of the Unknown Soldier across the Atlantic Ocean to highlight the Centennial Anniversary. Titled [Difficult Journey Home](#), the exhibit will feature an 11-panel installation that examines the 16-day treacherous

voyage home that Cruiser *Olympia* faced after departing from Le Havre, France in 1921. *Difficult Journey Home* will be on display aboard Cruiser *Olympia* until late November 2021.

To commemorate the Unknown Soldier and memorialize his story for future visitors, this May, ISM unveiled a permanent [historical marker](#) on *Olympia* located where the coffin was laid during its transport in 1921. The marker was created by Seward Johnson Atelier of New Jersey, with Susan Dunsmoor leading the project.

In addition to the new exhibit and marker, ISM has recently reopened the [Quarterdeck](#) on *Olympia's* main deck, which hasn't been open to the public in over two decades. After a fundraising campaign, ISM added the necessary security repairs and upgrades to make the deck safe for visitors. It will now be part of the tour route of Cruiser *Olympia*, and guests will be able to see from a sailor's point of view!

In addition to the ships, ISM offers additional opportunities to explore the waterways. During the warmer months, visitors can look forward to exploring the Delaware River from a whole new point of view with ISM's unique [On-Water Programming](#) with options for every level of experience. Back by popular demand, the Museum will be offering both the family-favorite, [Paddle Penn's Landing](#), where visitors can paddle around the basin, and [Kayak Excursions](#), where participants can paddle out of the basin and onto the river.

Interviews: Please contact [Billy Cook](#) to schedule interviews with ISM's President & CEO Peter Seibert, ISM Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer Mike Flynn, or Chief Curator Craig Bruns.

Safety: Visitors are encouraged to visit [ISM's website](#) to learn more about the safety procedures.

Photos: Live [HERE](#).

About Independence Seaport Museum

Independence Seaport Museum allows visitors to discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections. Our boating programs provide direct access to recreation and the scientific study of the water from the standpoints of biology and physics while art is used to represent the importance of competing uses of the river. Through our historic ships, Cruiser *Olympia* and Submarine *Becuna*, we provide the ideal platform for examining the interaction of society and water over our nation's history. Our educational student outreach programs ensure generational awareness of the museum's mission. Learn more about Independence Seaport Museum at phillyseaport.org.