

NY Shipbuilders to be Honored on Labor Day by America's Most Decorated WIW II Battleship



WILMINGTON, N.C. – One of the most celebrated warships in American history began not on North Carolina's Cape Fear River, but at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

This Labor Day weekend, the Battleship North Carolina Memorial, part of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, will illuminate the Battleship North Carolina in red for the first time to honor the thousands of New Yorkers whose skill and labor brought the ship to life.

Known as “The Showboat,” the Battleship North Carolina remains afloat today as a museum and World War II memorial in Wilmington. More than 85 years after her commissioning, her decks, passageways, engine rooms, and gun turrets are a testimony to the craftsmanship of the people who spent nearly four years designing, fabricating, welding, wiring, and fitting out the ship.

Completed four months ahead of schedule, USS North Carolina was America’s first new battleship in nearly two decades. Thousands gathered in New York Harbor for her April 1941 commissioning, while millions listened by radio. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called the ship “a symbol of progress through strength” and evidence of America’s preparedness to defend itself and international freedom of the seas.

The extraordinary attention surrounding the ship also inspired her enduring nickname. Sailors aboard her sister ship, USS Washington (BB-56), jokingly referred to the highly publicized battleship as “that Showboat.” Her crew embraced the name.

Within months, the United States entered World War II. USS North Carolina served first in the Atlantic and later became the first modern fast battleship to enter Pearl Harbor following the December 7, 1941, attack. She participated in every major naval offensive in the Pacific, from Guadalcanal to Okinawa, protecting aircraft carriers, bombarding strategic targets, surviving an enemy torpedo strike, and helping carry Allied forces across the Pacific. By the war’s end, she had earned 15 battle stars—the most of any American battleship during World War II.

Saved largely through dimes donated by more than 700,000 North Carolina schoolchildren, the ship was towed from Bayonne, New Jersey, to Wilmington in 1961 to serve as the state’s World War II memorial. Yet the story of the New Yorkers who built her remains less widely known.

“The story of USS North Carolina did not begin in her namesake state—it began in Brooklyn,” said Dr. Jay Martin, Executive Director of the Battleship North Carolina Memorial. “Before her crew raced her into combat, thousands of New Yorkers brought her to life. Their craftsmanship and dedication created a resilient ship that served our nation at one of the most critical moments in history. This ship is part of New York’s story, and that story deserves to be remembered.” For New Yorkers, the Battleship offers the opportunity to step aboard a piece of their city’s history—a ship forged in Brooklyn, commissioned in New York Harbor, and remembered as one of the great American success stories of World War II. They are invited to visit the Battleship North Carolina and experience the ship that New York built. The Memorial is offering New York residents specially discounted \$13 admission through December 31, 2026, with a valid New York State ID. Learn more and purchase tickets at <https://bit.ly/battleship-brooklyn>. Use promo code **NY13** at online checkout.