

1904 St. Jan. 1907 sold to Hamburg America Line renamed Odenwald. 1917 seized by USA, renamed Newport News.



*U.S.S. Newport News - San Francisco Bay -*

# ST. JAN (1904)

## Odenwald (1907)

## Newport News (1917)

---

A Cargo/passenger ship, built in 1904 by Flensburg Shipbuilding Co., Flensburg, Germany. Named St. Jan. 1905 transferred from Vestindiske Kompagni, Copenhagen, 1907 sold to Hamburg America Line renamed Odenwald. 1917 seized by USA and renamed Newport News. 1920 designated AK-3.

### General Characteristics

---

Tonnage: 3,343, Displacement: 10,000 tons, Length: 371 ft 5 in (113.2 m), Beam: 45 ft 5 in (13.8 m), Draught: 23 ft 6 in (7.2 m), Speed: 13 kts.

### Acquiring a captured German freighter

---

Was taken over as SS Odenwald by the U.S. Navy from the Hamburg-American Line in compliance with Executive Order dated 14 May 1917; renamed *Newport News* and commissioned 14 July 1917, Lt. Comdr. John Allison, USNRF, in command.

### World War I North Atlantic operations

---

*Newport News* operated on transatlantic supply runs until assigned to NOTS 9 January 1918. Returning to Hampton Roads from Europe 2 February, she carried coal to Boston, Massachusetts, before sailing from New York 24 March laden with military supplies for England, arriving Liverpool on the 22nd. After discharging her cargo at Liverpool, Dublin, and Queenstown, she got underway for the United States 18 May, arriving Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the 31st.

In subsequent months, *Newport News* made three more voyages to European ports with mixed cargoes. Her last took her from New York to Gibraltar in April 1919. After unloading there, she took on food, clothing and other supplies and steamed to Constantinople to relieve famine and wide spread suffering in the Middle East. Returning to Norfolk, Virginia, via Gibraltar 27 June, *Newport News* was detached from NOTS.

### Servicing activities in the Pacific Ocean

---

The cargo ship departed Hampton Roads 12 July and steamed via the Panama Canal for the Pacific Ocean, arriving Mare Island 5 August. She operated on supply runs, primarily to the Far East.

## Decommissioning

---

She was decommissioned at U.S. Navy Yard, Puget Sound, Washington, 1 August 1924 and struck from the Navy List the same day. *Newport News* was sold 4 April 1925 to John F. Blaine of Berkeley, California, for scrapping.

## Military awards and honors

---

*Newport News*' crew was authorized the following medal: World War I Victory Medal (with Transport clasp)

## References

---

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS\\_Newport\\_News\\_%28AK-3%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Newport_News_%28AK-3%29)

<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/13/130003.htm>

[http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/n4/newport\\_news-i.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/n4/newport_news-i.htm)

# CALLS ODENWALD AFFAIR AN ATTACK

**Fired On Without Warning Shot,  
Germany Asserts, Contradict-  
ing San Juan Commander.**

**SAYS SHE WAS UNDULY HELD**

**Violated Clearance to Elude Enemy  
Cruisers That Had Been Warned  
She Was About to Sail.**

*Special to The New York Times.*

WASHINGTON, April 6.—The German Government has made an issue of the German merchant ship Odenwald, which was stopped when she tried to leave San Juan, Porto Rico, without clearance papers on March 22, and which since then has been detained there by the United States authorities. In a statement given out by the German Embassy today it was asserted that the customary warning blank shot was not fired from the fort; that "a sharp fire" was opened on the Odenwald, which was continued even after she had halted and was reversing her engines, and that only a lucky chance prevented loss of life on the German ship. There is an intimation in the German statement that the Odenwald was unduly detained awaiting clearance, and the statement is made that she attempted to depart without clearance for fear enemy cruisers, which had been warned of her intentions, would reach San Juan water in time to sink her should she attempt to leave port.

The United States Government's response to this charge was to furnish to the press the text of an official report to the War Department made by Lieut. Colonel Burnham, commander of the fortress of Morro Castle, who says that only warning shots and none aimed at the Odenwald were fired. In his dispatch the American commander told the Secretary of War that he had personally warned the German Consul and the commander of the Odenwald "that force would be used if necessary to prevent the vessel from leaving without clearance."

The German Government has called upon the United States to investigate the action of the San Juan authorities. This was made known in the German Embassy statement, which declares that international rules were violated in the alleged action of the American commander in firing solid shot at the Odenwald without first sending a warning shot. The German Embassy statement refers to the action of the fort as an "attack."

State Department officials late today refused to discuss the German Embassy statement. Secretary Bryan read it, but would not comment upon it, beyond admitting that the matter had been brought to the attention of the State Department by the embassy. The action of the embassy in calling for an investigation and making the fact public without the knowledge of the State Department was considered significant in view of the fact that immediately after the Odenwald was halted Secretary Garrison gave out an official statement that warning shots had been fired. Here is the embassy statement:

"The German Embassy has requested the State Department to investigate the case of the Odenwald. The Captain of this steamer had asked for clearance papers for Hamburg and the steamer was searched, by order from Washington, twice thoroughly by the Custom House authorities. The result of the search having been satisfactory, the Captain was promised clearance papers. After having been kept waiting for three days, the Captain believed that the situation forced him to put to sea, disregarding the rules of the harbor, because, otherwise the assembling of cruisers of the enemy which had been informed of his intention would have involved the inevitable loss of his ship.

"When the Odenwald tried to leave a sharp fire was immediately directed against her from Morro Castle without the blind warning shot having been fired which is usual, according to international rules. The fire was continued until three minutes after the machines of the Odenwald had been on full steam backward. It is attributed to a lucky chance that by this attack no human life was lost."

The recognized procedure to halt a ship requires that, first, a blank shot shall be fired; then a shot, which may be solid, may be fired over and not at the bows of the ship, and finally solid shot may be fired at the vessel. The German complaint is that the first warning shot—a blank charge—was not fired.

The official report to Secretary Garrison said that warning shots were fired with a machine gun.