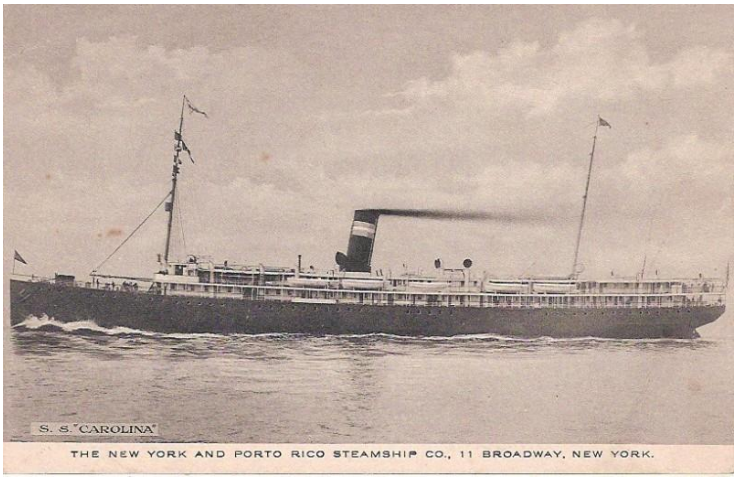
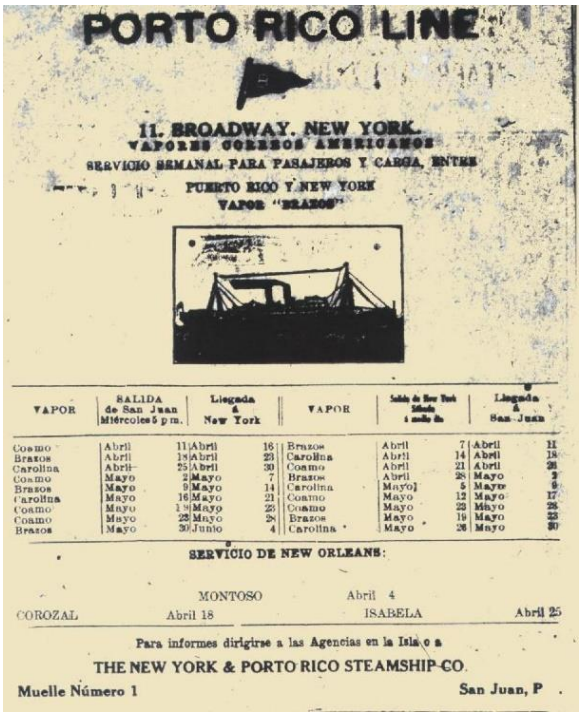
D/V TENACIOUS
ATLANTIC WRECK SALVAGE. L.L.C.

SS Carolina Project
U-151's June 2, 1918 Attack Off the New Jersey Coast



S.S. Carolina was built in 1896 by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. She was 380 feet long and a little more than 5,000 gross tons. She was christened as *La Grande Duchesse*, and following her sea trials, delivered to The Plant Investment Company. Plant initially refused delivery because of boiler and propeller problems but accepted her after a refit. In 1906, a short stint steaming for Ocean Steamship Company as *The City of Savannah*, New York and Porto Rico Steamship Company purchased her and renamed her the *S.S. Carolina*. She spent much of her life plagued with mechanical problems, including vibrations from her twin-screw configuration that caused some difficulty maneuvering. Newport News refit her again in 1913 and reduced her to a single screw, which significantly improved the ship's performance.


PORTO RICO LINE

11. BROADWAY. NEW YORK.
VAPORES CORREOS AMERICANOS
SERVICIO SEMANAL PARA PASAJEROS Y CARGA, ENTRE
PUERTO RICO Y NEW YORK
VAPOR "BRAZOS"

VAPOR	SALIDA de San Juan Miércoles 5 p.m.	Llegada á New York	VAPOR	Salida de New York Sábado á medio dia	Llegada á San Juan
Cosmo	Abril 11	Abril 16	Brazos	Abril 7	Abril 11
Brazos	Abril 18	Abril 23	Carolina	Abril 14	Abril 18
Carolina	Abril 25	Abril 30	Cosmo	Abril 21	Abril 26
Cosmo	Mayo 2	Mayo 7	Brazos	Abril 28	Mayo 3
Brazos	Mayo 9	Mayo 14	Carolina	Mayo 5	Mayo 9
Carolina	Mayo 16	Mayo 21	Cosmo	Mayo 12	Mayo 17
Cosmo	Mayo 23	Mayo 28	Cosmo	Mayo 19	Mayo 24
Brazos	Mayo 28	Mayo 2	Brazos	Mayo 26	Mayo 31
Carolina	Mayo 30	Junio 4	Carolina	Mayo 26	Mayo 30

SERVICIO DE NEW ORLEANS:

MONTOSO Abril 4
COROZAL Abril 18 ISABELA Abril 25

Para informes dirigirse a las Agencias en la Isla, o a
THE NEW YORK & PORTO RICO STEAMSHIP CO.
Muelle Número 1 San Juan, P .

Many Puerto Ricans came to New York aboard the *Carolina* from 1906-1918 in search of opportunity. Jesus Colon was one of them. A Brooklyn Puerto Rican activist, he traveled to New York on the Carolina in 1917. At 16 years old, he convinced his friends who worked on the crew to hide him in the linen closet to escape to New York without paying for a ticket. His friends snuck him onto the ship, but a crew member quickly found out and reported him. The Captain put him to work polishing the fine China in exchange for his fare. "I still remember the name of the boat – *S.S. Carolina*, an old ship painted in funeral black around the hull and in hospital white from the deck up." he later recalled. In the decades after *Carolina's* sinking, travelers and survivors fondly remembered the ship at gatherings in both New York and Puerto Rico. Years later, the band leader Rafael Cortijo with singer Ismael Rivera recorded "Carolina," a lively song that celebrates the ship.

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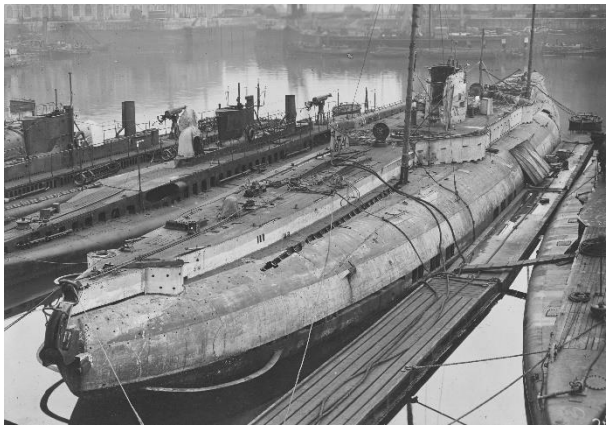
Colon made it safely to New York on his 1917 voyage, but passengers on the May 1918 voyage from Puerto Rico to New York were not as lucky. *S.S. Carolina* left San Juan on May 29, 1918, with 218 passengers, 117 crew members, and a cargo of sugar. On Sunday, June 2, she received a radio S.O.S. from the American schooner, *Isabel B Wiley*. The *Wiley* reported being under attack by a submarine. *Carolina's* master, Captain Barber, ordered full speed and steered away from the reported location but could not escape the submarine. *U-151* fired three warning shots from her deck guns and signaled for the Carolina's passengers and crew to abandon ship. Captain Barber launched the ship's lifeboats. Women and children embarked first, and the boats began to launch at 6:30 p.m.

Captain Barber was the last to leave the ship. He later explained, "After I had seen everyone off the ship into the boats, and after I had destroyed all the secret and confidential papers, I, myself, got into the chief officer's boat, this being the only boat left alongside." Once the ship had been evacuated, *U-151* fired three further shells into the ship's port side. She sank a little more than an hour later, at 7:55.

Carolina was just one of the vessels U-151 claimed that day. In all, she sank six ships and damaged two more over the course of about two hours. These included the liner SS *Carolina*, the freighters *Winneconne* and *Texel*, the schooner *Isabel B. Wiley,* and two other schooners, all with a combined crew and passengers of about 448 people. In all cases, *U-151* fired warning shots and gave the crews time to abandon ship in an orderly fashion—women and children first in the case of *Carolina*—before sinking them with gunfire. The success of the attack prompted some to refer to the events of June 2, 1918 collectively as "Black Sunday."

Carolina's fate was unknown on the evening of June 2, and newspapers speculated the worst. The night was stormy, and the ship's boats tried to stay together. The submarine had attacked at supper time. Many of the *Carolina's* women passengers were dressed in their evening gowns when they took to the boats. The passengers and crew suffered greatly from exposure during the storm.



One lifeboat made it to Atlantic City and others were picked up by passing ships. New Jersey residents welcomed survivors with open arms and hotel operators opened their establishments to them. Thirteen died (eight male passengers and five crewmen out of 218 passengers and 117 crew), when one of *Carolina*'s lifeboats capsized. The Danish steamship *Bryssel* found their swamped motorboat. It was the first loss of life caused by U-boat activity off the United States' Atlantic seaboard. Pictured left: U-151 at Cherbourg

No one knew the offending submarine's identity at the time. Samuel Johnson, one of the *Carolina's* survivors, did his best to describe the U-boat, "[It] was painted green, almost the color of the ocean. It vanished in no time after she made sure the *Carolina* would sink." He

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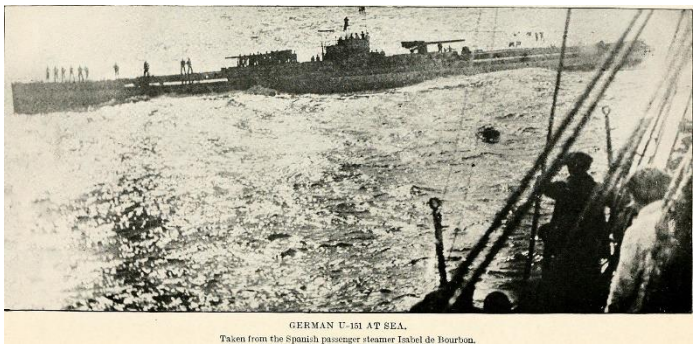
added, “She was the biggest submarine I ever saw, and I've seen a lot of them. She must have been a super submarine because she was at least 250 feet long.” Daily New Era, June 5, 1918.


GERMAN U-151 AT SEA.
Taken from the Spanish passenger steamer Isabel de Bourbon.

He was almost correct. *U-151* was 213 feet long and among the largest class of U-boats of WW1. *U-151* was originally one of seven *Deutschland* class “merchant” U-boats designed to carry cargo between the United States and Germany in 1916. Five of the submarine freighters were converted into long-range cruiser U-boats and equipped with arms. Armed with two 5.9-inch deck guns, two 20-inch torpedo tubes, 18 torpedoes, as well as mines, these were the largest (1,500 tons and a crew of six officers and 50 men), most heavily armed submarines in the world, and possessed enough range to reach the United States Eastern Seaboard and operate there for over a month.

U-151 was constructed by Reiherstieg Schiffswerfte & Maschinenfabrik at Hamburg and launched on 4 April 1917. From 21 July to 26 December 1917 she was commanded by Waldemar Kophamel who took *U-151* on a long-range cruise which eventually covered a total of 12,000 miles.

U-151 departed Kiel, Germany, on April 14, 1918 bound for the United States. This was the first time a German submarine sailed to the western Atlantic intent on attacking shipping. She was under the command of *Korvettenkapitän* Heinrich von Nostitz und Jänckendorff. Her voyage was no secret to the Allies due to the broken codes, but this fact was successfully kept from the Germans. After laying mines, cutting cable, and sinking three fishing schooners, *U-151* finally made her presence known on June 2. The attack took the Americans by surprise despite their knowledge that *U-151* was operating off the Eastern Seaboard.

The following day, on June 3, the tanker *Herbert L. Pratt* struck one of the mines laid by *U-151* off the Delaware Capes and sank. The ship was later raised. *U-151* stopped the Norwegian cargo ship *Vindeggan* off Cape Hatteras on June 9 and set scuttling charges after transferring 70 tons of copper ingots off the vessel. *U-151* engaged in other attacks off the Eastern Seaboard and returned to Kiel on 20 July 1918 after a 94-day cruise in which she had covered a distance of 10,915 nautical miles (20,215 km; 12,561 mi). She claimed 27 ships in all, 23 by direct attack and four by her minefields.

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Atlantic Wreck Salvage, LLC and the Arrest of the *S.S. Carolina*

Atlantic Wreck Salvage, LLC arrested the abandoned wreck of the *S.S. Carolina* in 2014. The U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, Honorable Joseph H. Rodriguez, ultimately granted AWS exclusive and sole salvage rights to the vessel. Pictured left and below: *S.S. Carolina* wreckage.

Joe Mazraani has been diving the wreck since the late 1990s. Tom Packer and Joe searched for the remnants of the bridge and other items of interest such as the ship's bell, its whistle, the engine room telegraph, gauge panel, and bow letters. In 2013, they found the bridge and decided to perfect an Admiralty arrest given the level of work required to free what they could see and access what is buried beneath wreckage and sand.

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S.S. Carolina Telegraphs

AWS has recovered large portions of four of the Carolina's telegraphs in an ongoing effort to restore them in full. They are by no means complete and AWS hopes more pieces of the telegraphs will be recovered in the coming years. The telegraphs are just some of the items being salvaged and restored from the vessel.

The restoration is being done by Scott Ciardi (above) of Brass from the Past in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Scott is a master craftsman with decades of experience restoring brass artifacts and antiques.

This year is the 105th anniversary of the sinking. We have planned a May 21 fundraiser for the Sayerville Historical Society at which we will display the telegraphs, talk about *Carolina's* connection to Puerto Rico and New Jersey. The event involves state and local politicians, Puerto Rican community organizations, and attorneys.

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