



The MILLERGRAM

by Bill Miller
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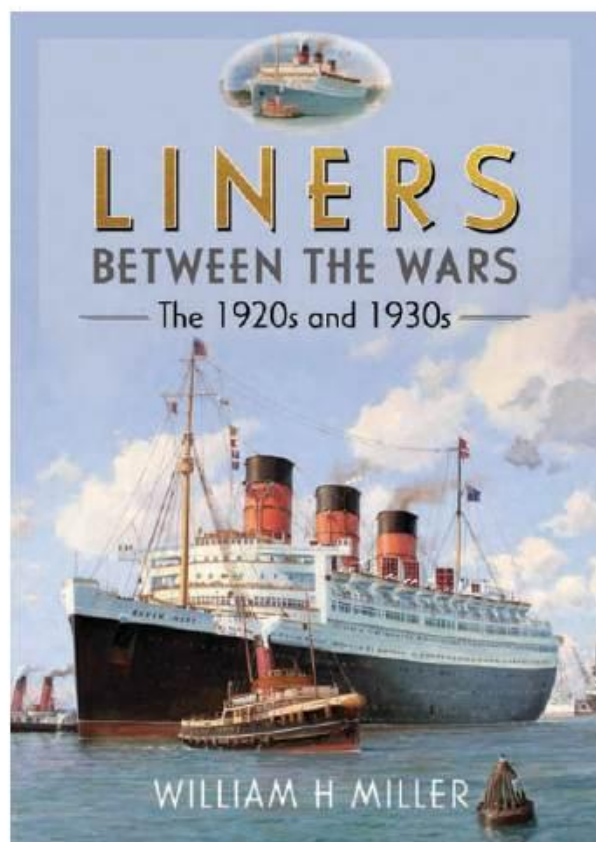
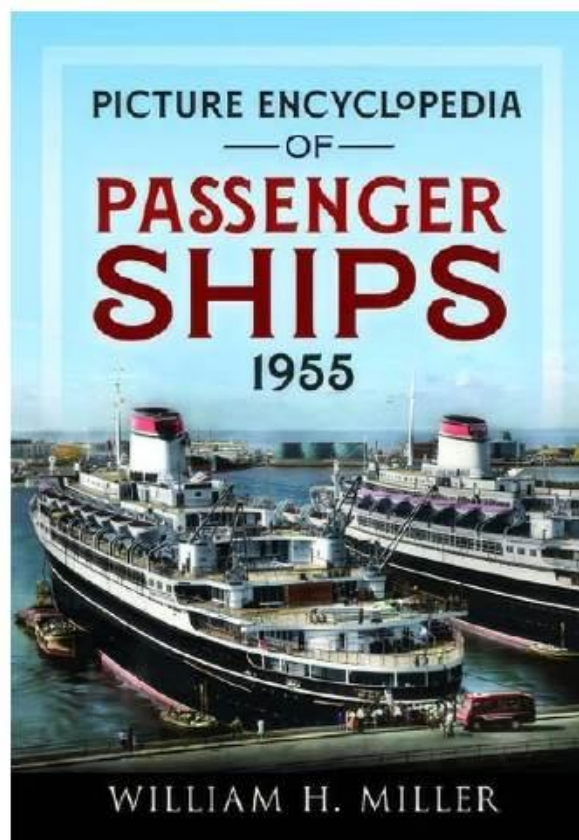
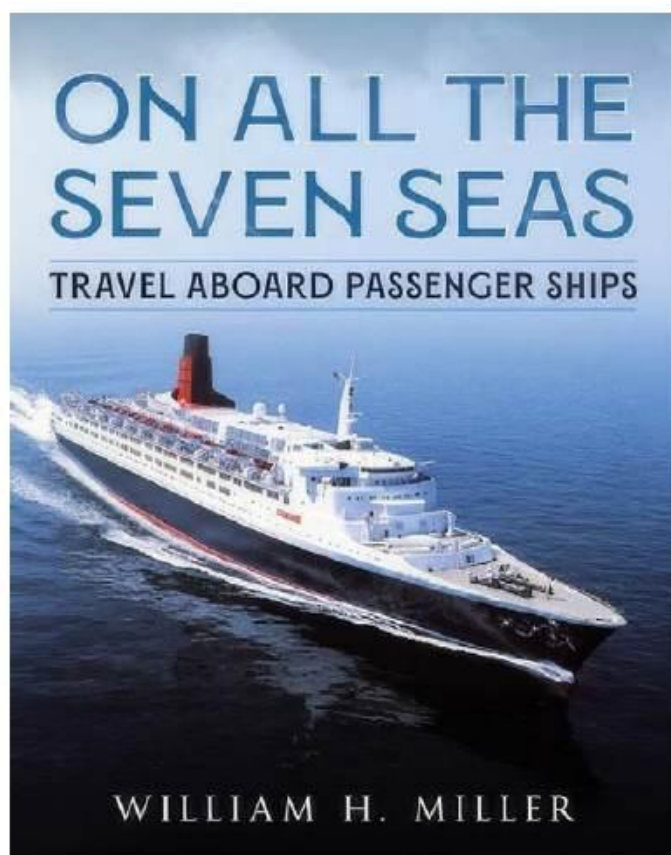
Summer 2026

The Millergram is designed and formatted by Tim Noble, our good friend from Melbourne, Australia and a former navigating officer with the Blue Star Line.

ALONG THE PROMENADE: Like the officers on the bridge and stewards along the corridors, celebrities – from European royalty to Hollywood stars – added to the culture & sheer style of the great liners of the past. Below: Actress Merle Oberon & her husband arriving in New York onboard the *United States*. The date: May 1957.



BOOK SHELF: Our three latest books, just published and soon to be published, and available from Amazon and Amazon UK. Each published by Fonthill Media in the UK.



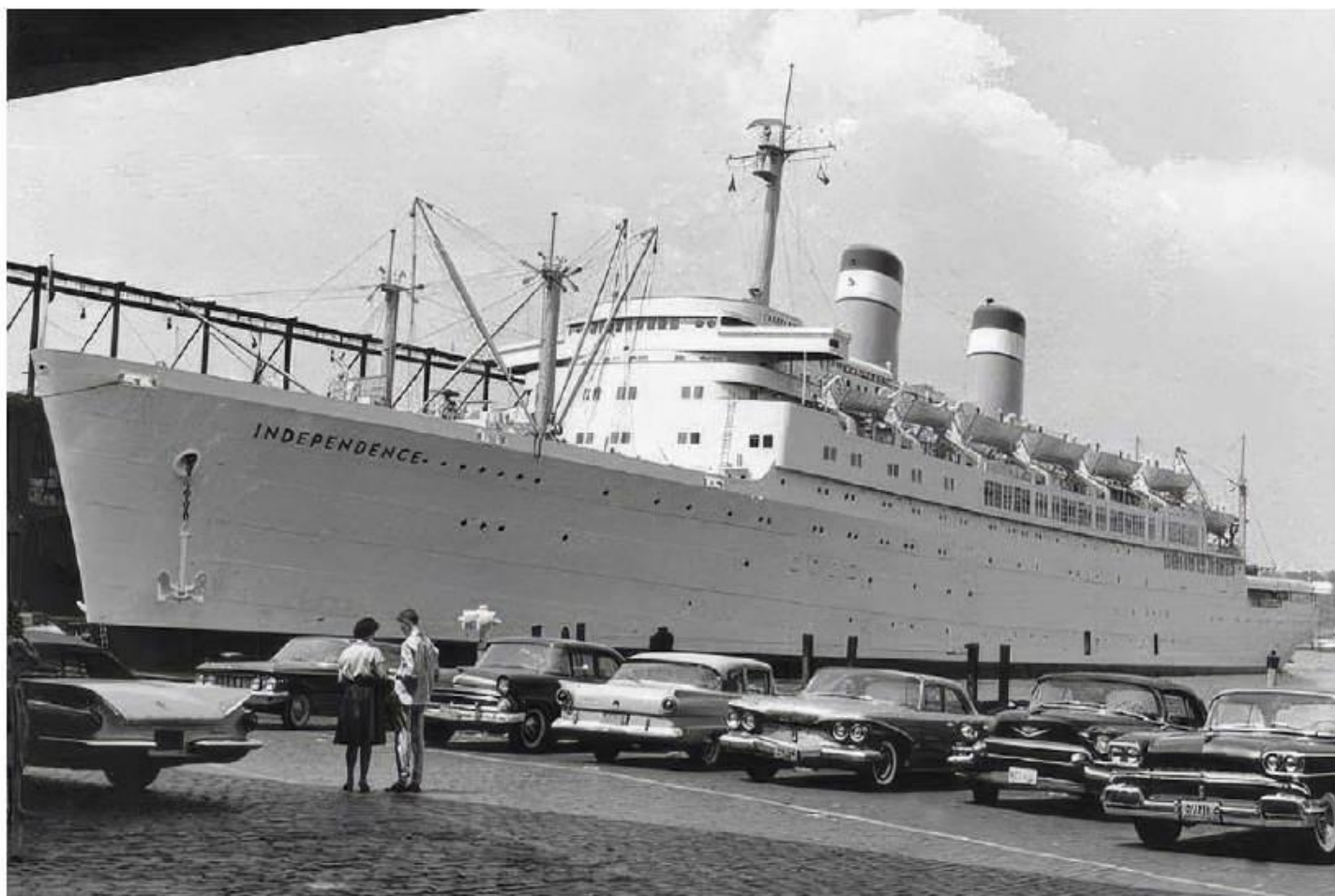
CUNARD: The *Queen Mary 2* was the only British-flag vessel and the only merchant ship at the Sail4th Parade of Ships at New York on July 4th.



NEW YORK: I keep an eye on my favorite port anywhere and its changes. Over in Brooklyn, the 1,500-ft long Columbia Street pier and adjacent grain elevator have long been in disuse. Once very busy with ships, the pier was occupied between Nov 1943 and Nov 1946 by the sad remains of the salvaged *Normandie*.



OCEAN LINER ARCHIVES: Looking back – on Tue Sep 8th 1964, 7 passenger ships arrived in New York. The *Queen Elizabeth* arrived at 8:00am from Southampton; the *Sylvania* (seen top below) from Liverpool; the student-filled *Aurelia* from Le Havre; and the *Excalibur* from Genoa. At 9:00am, the *Independence*, *Homeric* and *Victoria* arrived from cruises in the Caribbean.



The *Independence* & *Victoria* (below) had been off on late summer cruises.



POSTER ART: Posters were an extremely evocative promotion of travel by ship. They prominently featured in travel agent & tourist offices. Right: The Cunard Line promoted the glories of trans-Atlantic travel in the 1930s.



VOYAGES: In 1966, the North German Lloyd was in full force with 3 liners in trans-Atlantic as well as cruise service: the *Bremen*, *Europa* & *Berlin*. Weeklong Atlantic crossings were still offered between Bremerhaven, Southampton, Cherbourg & New York. First class accommodations were priced from \$425, tourist class from \$275. There were also winter Caribbean cruises from New York and periodic cruises from Bremerhaven to Norway, the Canary Islands & to the Mediterranean.



Above: The *Bremen* at New York.



4 GREAT CRUISES
to the
West Indies and
South America

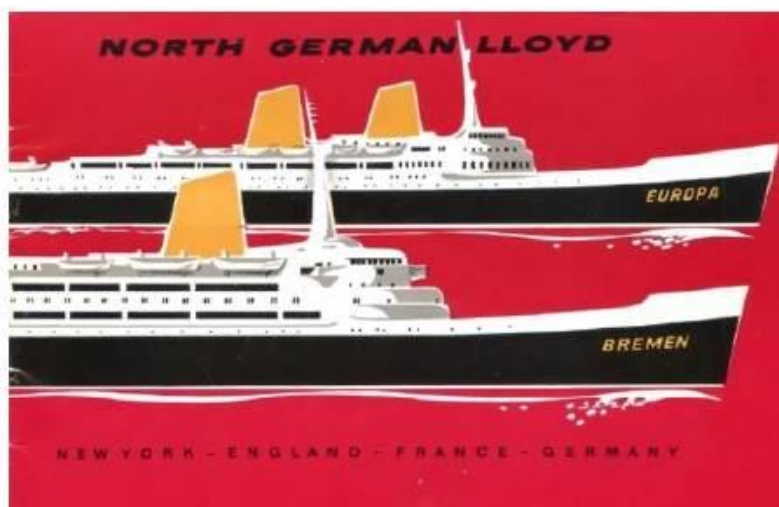
This winter again the new Bremen will take you to the
lovely ports of the sea-borne Caribbean. Unusual
scenery, brilliant entertainment, superb food and service
in the cozy old Hotel tradition will make your
cruise a truly memorable experience. There is only one
way to reach it - the way of passengers is invited to
provide maximum comfort. All cruises feature the ports
where free port shopping is most advantageous.

**THE NEW
TO BREMEN**

NORTH GERMAN LLOYD
ALABAMA - ALASKA - ARIZONA - ARKANSAS - CALIFORNIA - COLORADO - CONNECTICUT - DELAWARE - FLORIDA - GEORGIA - ILLINOIS - INDIANA - IOWA - KANSAS - KENTUCKY - LOUISIANA - MAINE - MARYLAND - MASSACHUSETTS - MICHIGAN - MINNESOTA - MISSISSIPPI - MISSOURI - MONTANA - NEBRASKA - NEVADA - NEW HAMPSHIRE - NEW JERSEY - NEW YORK - NEW MEXICO - NORTH CAROLINA - NORTH DAKOTA - OHIO - OKLAHOMA - OREGON - PENNSYLVANIA - RHODE ISLAND - SOUTH CAROLINA - SOUTH DAKOTA - TENNESSEE - TEXAS - UTAH - VERMONT - VIRGINIA - WASHINGTON - WEST VIRGINIA - WISCONSIN - WYOMING



The *Europa* in the Caribbean (above) & the *Berlin* at Madeira (below).



WINTER CRUISES: Cruises were plentiful in the winter of 1955-56. Travelers could take, say, the *Maasdam* of the Holland America Line on a 9-night cruise from New York down to Nassau & Havana. Passengers had a day & night in port and then alternate sea days. Fares began from \$130 per person to a quad down on D Deck to \$325 in a upper-deck double with private bathroom.



HEARD ALONG THE BOAT DECK:

90 YEARS AGO FOR The *QUEEN MARY* of 1936



Outbound at Southampton by artist Stephen Card.

In 2018, the late Anthony Bourdain, the celebrated chef and prolific author of books on cooking, passed away. In one of his lengthy obituaries, his biography included his first association with fine food. It was as a child, at age ten, when he was traveling (in first class) with his family on the *Queen Mary*. He wrote in his first book (*Kitchen Confidential*) on the experience: “I ate a bowl of vichyssoise, a potato-leek soup, that held the delightful surprise of being cold. It was the first food I enjoyed and, more important, remembered enjoying.”

Like Craig Claiborne, who discovered fine food onboard the French Line and later became food editor of the *New York Times*, both men remain legends in the world of cooking and cuisine – and both discovered their love of food on ocean liners.

“The *Queen Mary* was one of the most beloved liners of all time – and maybe even the most beloved,” noted the late maritime historian and author Frank Braynard. “It had a certain ‘something,’ a unique chemistry that greatly appealed to both passengers and crew alike.” Designed in late 1920s, laid down in 1930, but then delayed for 2 ½ years (because of the Depression), the 81,237-ton liner was introduced in May 1936.



The ship and her future running-mate, the slightly larger *Queen Elizabeth*, were Cunard's bid to dominate trans-Atlantic passenger service with a two-ship relay between Southampton and New York (and with a quick stop at Cherbourg in each direction). Together, they would cross in 5 days at an average speed of 28 ½ knots. The quadruple-screw *Queen Mary* actually held the Blue Riband from 1938 until 1952 and, of course, this added to its already great popularity.

Both *Queens* were used as hugely successful troop ships during World War II, most notably ferrying some 15,000 soldier-passengers per voyage between New York and Gourock in Scotland between 1942 and 1945.

Alone, they delivered some 2 1/2 million GI soldiers for the eventual invasion of Europe in June 1944. Winston Churchill himself praised the two liners: "Together, they helped to lessen the war by at least a year!"



While the revived *Queen Elizabeth* entered liner service in October 1946, the three-funnel *Mary* resumed luxury sailings in the following July. Together, they quickly became the most successful pair of super liners of all time. Onboard, the 1,018-ft long *Queen Mary*, her first class interiors especially were reflective of grand ocean liners and of the great Cunard Line. It was fitted with soft leather chairs and sofas, brass handrails, chrome, glass and highly polished veneers. There were also thick drapes, carpets with swirling patterns, trumpet-shaped pylon lamps, fireplaces, stainless-framed clocks, murals and even a medallion depicting *Queen Mary* herself. The big suites in first class had full bedrooms, trunk rooms, huge bathtubs and four taps for each (for hot and cold fresh water and for hot and cold saltwater). Some 1,200 officers and crew looked after 1,995 passengers – 711 in first class, 707 in cabin (dubbed “the happy medium” by Cunard staff) and 577 in tourist. Fares for the five-night crossings by 1960 began at \$450 in first class, \$275 in cabin class and \$175 in tourist. Cunard staff – from purser and chefs to bedroom stewards and deckhands -- often asked to be assigned (or re-assigned) to the *Queen Mary*, a great favorite. Frank Braynard once described the Queens as being like “the best hotels in London or New York except they moved”.



The late Brenton Jenkins, a longtime Cunard purser, remembered: “In the 1950s, Cunard was the epitome of all British shipping lines and perhaps all others as well. It was like working for the Bank of England. In fact, family connections were often necessary just to be hired.” The late Captain Eric Ashton-Irvine added: “When you first joined Cunard, you worked your way up – by ships and by class. One often started with the smallish *Media* or *Parthia*, then went to the elderly *Ascania*, then to the *Scythia* class, then the *Britannic* and finally on to the *Mauretania* or *Caronia* before being placed aboard the *Queens*. They were the ultimate plateau!”



For most of the year, one of the *Queens* sailed every Wednesday from New York, reaching Southampton late on the following Monday. Myself, I remember seeing them and so often. Neither sailed at a set time, however, and this meant changes every Wednesday. Sometimes, it was mid-morning, sometimes noon, sometimes even late afternoon. But when sailing along the Hudson, they always looked so impressive, regal, of course totally immaculate. And, of course, they were huge – each of them all but blocked out the Manhattan skyline when looking from the Jersey side of the Hudson. And each of them had the most thunderous of whistles!



Evening departure in a superb painting by Dutch artist Maarten Platje

The *Queens* earned millions for Cunard (and for the British economy) and provided a service that was useful to tens of thousands of passengers – film stars, royalty, diplomats, industrialists and budget tourists – who knew and relied upon a weekly departure for most of the year in two very large, extremely fast, safe and comfortable “floating cities” of excellent repute.

Like the *Elizabeth*, the *Queen Mary* endured storms, strikes, delays and finally the appearance of the trans-Atlantic jet (in October 1958). The decline of the two liners was not only swift but merciless. By 1963, airlines had as much as 95% of all the trans-Atlantic passenger trade. The *Queens* lost money, became dated and even dreary, and were dubbed “dinosaurs”. Cunard itself had 12 liners in 1957; by 1969, there were only three.



The *Queen Mary* left New York on her final crossing on September 22nd 1967. The Port of New York gave her a rousing if sometimes tearful sendoff. Tugs, spraying fireboats and capacity-filled pleasure boats created a royal escort – from Pier 92 as far as the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Other ships in port and at dock sounded their whistles – all in homage to true ocean liner royalty.





Queen Mary's final departure from Southampton, taken from Oriana's bridge.

While it might have been sold to become a floating casino at Gibraltar, an Australian migrant ship or even a moored high school in Brooklyn, the *Queen Mary* beat the Japanese scrappers when it was sold to the City of Long Beach, California for use as a floating hotel, museum and entertainment center. The City bought the ship for just under \$3 1/2 million and later had it modified before opening as the "Hotel *Queen Mary*" in May 1971. It remains there to this day.

The late Frank Cronican, a television producer and author of a book about the *Queen Mary*, later said that "the *Queen Mary's* final sailing on that September day was, more than anything else, the beginning of the curtain closing on the once great Atlantic liner trade".

