✚ FLOATING FORTRESSES OF HEALTH ✚
THE FIRST NAVY HOSPITAL SHIPS

- For over two millennia, naval forces have recognized the **critical need for dedicated medical ships**. Evidence shows the Athenian fleet employed the Therapeia as early as 400 B.C., demonstrating an early understanding of onboard medical care.
- Floating sanctuaries (**"immunes"**) accompanied the galleys that transported Caesar's legions across the Roman empire. These vessels were kept out of combat laying the groundwork for the future concept of hospital ships and their dedicated care of the sick and injured.
- U.S. Navy hospital ships have played **integral roles in treating and saving lives**, both in peacetime and war, from almost as long as there has been a Navy Medicine.
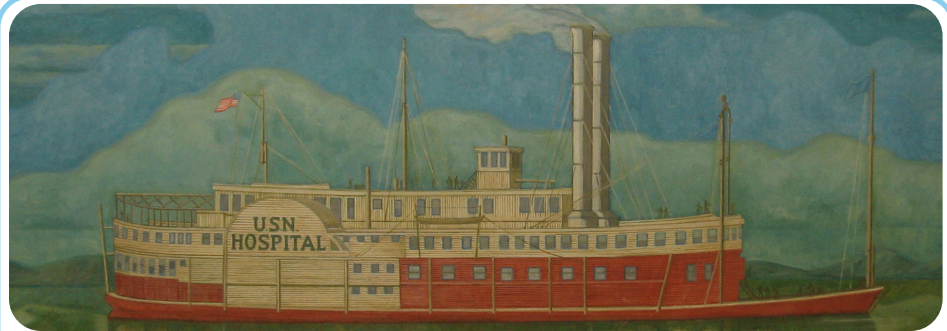
⚓ FIRST NAVY HOSPITAL SHIP ⚓

During the First Barbary War, the Navy used the former ketch **USS Intrepid** for treating and transporting casualties. This was the first documented instance of a **U.S. Navy vessel used as a hospital ship.**

Did you know?

In 1863, prior to its designation as a hospital ship, **USS Home was used as a "rest ship,"** a sanctuary where Sailors, returning from the bombardment of Charleston, could find respite and replenish their strength.

⚓ PRE-GENEVA CONVENTION NAVY HOSPITAL SHIPS ⚓

USS BEN MORGAN, North Atlantic Blockading Squadron
- Active: 1861-1865
- Type: schooner (sailing)

USS RED ROVER, Mississippi Squadron
- Active: 1862-1865
- Type: side-wheel river-steamer

USS HOME, South Atlantic Blockading Squadron
- Active: 1864-1865 (as hospital ship)
- Type: screw steamer

USS NEW HAMPSHIRE, South Atlantic Blockading Squadron
- Active: 1864-1865 (as hospital ship)
- Type: ship-of-the-line

USS JAMESTOWN, Pacific Squadron
- Active: 1866-1867 (as hospital ship)
- Type: sloop-of-war (sailing)
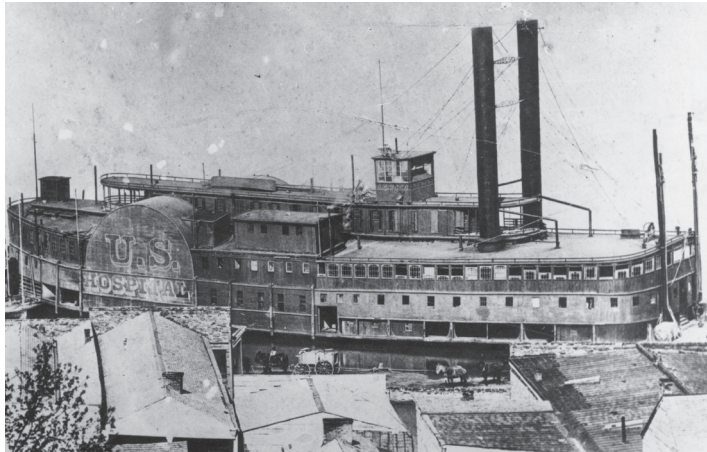
USS IDAHO, Asiatic Squadron
- Active: 1867-1873 (as hospital ship)
- Type: steam sloop

USS PAWNEE, North Atlantic Squadron
- Active: 1870-1875 (as hospital ship)
- Type: steam sloop-of-war

NAVY MEDICINE *FAST FACTS*

⚓ CIVIL WAR ICON ⚓

- USS Red Rover was commissioned on Dec. 26, 1862.
- The former Confederate side-wheeler-turned Union Navy ship provided vital medical services for the Mississippi Squadron, based out of Mound City, Illinois.
- Between December 1862 and November 1865, the medical personnel aboard Red Rover treated and cared for more than 2,450 casualties, including 300 Confederate soldiers making it one of the busiest naval hospitals in the war.

⚓ HOSPITAL SHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW ⚓

Between 1864 and 1907, the Geneva Conventions and related Hague Conventions established key principles for the protection of hospital ships in naval warfare. These included:

- Hospital ships were to be respected and could not be attacked or captured. This protection was conditional on ships being used solely for assisting the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked.
- To ensure recognition, military hospital ships were to be painted white with a horizontal band of green and fly the white flag with a red cross alongside their national flag.
- These ships were obligated to provide relief and assistance to the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked of all belligerents.

⚓ THE SAGA OF HOSPITAL SHIP IDAHO ⚓

- Though originally conceived as a warship when constructed, the Navy employed USS Idaho as a combination hospital-supply ship and fitted it with a 50-bed hospital.
- On May 18, 1868, Idaho was designated a hospital ship for the newly formed Asiatic Squadron.
- On Sept. 21, 1869, Idaho was at sea when caught in a typhoon. Despite being de-masted and battered by violent waves and torrential rains, Idaho remained afloat and remarkably no one aboard was killed or lost. Idaho sailed back into Yokohama never to leave the port under the U.S. flag.
- From 1869 until 1872, Idaho functioned as a Navy station hospital in Japan until the U.S. Naval Hospital Yokohama was constructed.

Did you know?

In the Spanish-American War (1898), USS Solace became the first hospital ship to fly the Geneva Red Cross flag.