

# Basic Detail Report

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**Title**

USS PENNSYLVANIA - a study for a Wills cigarette card

**Date**

1908 - 1911

**Primary Maker**

John Allcot

**Medium**

Watercolour on paper

**Dimensions**

Overall: 144 x 210 x 2 mm

**Name**

Painting

**History**

Launched on 22 August 1903, USS PENNSYLVANIA was an armoured cruiser in the United States Navy. It served in the Special Service Squadron of the Great White Fleet with seven other armoured cruisers to ensure the safety of the battleships. In December 1907 United States President Theodore Roosevelt sent a US Atlantic Battle Fleet of 16 battleships on a 14 month goodwill cruise around the world. The fleet was a chance for the Navy to practice seamanship and express America's world power. Roosevelt was also concerned about rising Japanese aggression and their expansionist foreign policy. The cruise would be a political and public relations exercise to build domestic support for more naval construction. Led by the flagship, USS CONNECTICUT, the Great White Fleet as it became known, consisted of 16 battleships painted white, as was the practice of all US Navy ships in times of peace. The ships sailed in four divisions of four ships each. Early in the voyage the order of the ships was altered to allow the best-looking vessels to be at the front of the fleet. The cruise incorporated six continents, 26 countries and 32 ports with 614 officers and 13,504 crew. It consumed 435,000 tons of coal, more than any other naval expedition and was the largest fleet to ever accomplish a circumnavigation of the globe. Australia was not originally on the itinerary route of the Great White Fleet, who only decided to visit after receiving a direct invitation from the Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. One quarter of the Australian population, over one million people, saw the Great White Fleet during its three-week visit to Sydney, Melbourne and Albany. Public holidays were declared and enthusiastic crowds flocked to see the ships and parades. The practice of adding cards as reinforcing in paper packets of cigarettes started in the USA in the 1880s in order to prevent the cigarettes from becoming crushed. Advertising details were put on the cards, and they eventually featured illustrations which were released in series, becoming highly collectible. WD & HO Wills, part of the Imperial

Tobacco Company, were the British pioneers of cigarette cards, starting the practice in about 1887. The first general interest set was issued in 1895 and in 1897 they began adding short notes on the reverse. By about 1901 hundreds of tobacco companies were producing their own series, which ranged in size from several to the hundreds. Aside from women, military subjects were the most common themes on cigarette cards, appealing to the high proportion of male smokers before World War I. Today cigarette cards are regarded as highly collectable, particularly if the series is complete.