

Basic Detail Report



00046736

Title

Postcard commemorating the visit of the Great White Fleet to Australia in 1908

Date

1908

Medium

Ink on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 84 x 134 mm

Name

Postcard

History

In December 1907 United States President Theodore Roosevelt sent the 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. Vast arrays of souvenirs were produced for a population caught up in the euphoria generated by the Great White Fleet's world tour in 1908. Badges, medallions, pins, postcards and photographs all reflected the enthusiasm surrounding a potential new and powerful ally. The postcards typically represent America and Australia as cooperative partners and commonly depict national motifs including flags, emblems and banners.