

Swedish American Line

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Swedish American Line (in Swedish: *Svenska Amerika Linien*, abbreviated SAL) was a passenger and cargo shipping line. It was founded in December 1914 under the name **Rederiaktiebolaget Sverige-Nordamerika**, beginning ocean liner service from Gothenburg to New York in 1915.^{[1][2]} In 1925 the company changed its name to Svenska Amerika Linien / Swedish American Line.^[2]

The Swedish American Line was amongst the first companies to build liners with provisions for off-season cruising, as well as the first company to build a diesel-engined transatlantic liner.^[3] Increased operational costs forced the company to abandon passenger traffic in 1975,^[1] but cargo operations continued until the 1980s.^[4]

Swedish American Line

Industry	Cargo and passenger shipping
Fate	Defunct
Founded	1915
Defunct	1975
Headquarters	Gothenburg, Sweden
Key people	Dan Broström
Parent	Broström Group
Subsidiaries	South Atlantic Lines, Home Lines, Hoverlloyd, Swedish Atlantic Line, Atlantic Container Line

Contents

- 1 History
 - 1.1 1915–1924
 - 1.2 1924–1939
 - 1.3 1939–1946
 - 1.4 1946–1951
 - 1.5 1952–1962
 - 1.6 1963–1975
 - 1.7 1975 onwards
- 2 Ships
 - 2.1 Passenger ships
 - 2.2 Cargo ships
- 3 References
- 4 External links

History

1915–1924

Rederiaktiebolaget Sverige-Nordamerika ("shipping corporation Sweden-North America") was born from the idea of Wilhelm R. Lundgren, the owner of Rederiaktiebolaget Transatlantic, with the purpose of offering ocean liner service from Sweden to North America. Both Norway and Denmark already operated

their own transatlantic liners, and the matter of establishing a Swedish company for the trade was a matter of national pride.^{[5][6]} Lundgren died in September 1914, but his successor Gunnar Carlsson managed to attract the attention of Dan Broström of the Broström Concern, and on 4 December 1914 the new Rederiaktiebolaget Sverige-Nordamerika was founded in Gothenburg.^{[2][5][6]} The Broström Concern had already operated freighters across the North Atlantic since 1911 under the name of Swedish American Mexico Line (often abbreviated SAML).^{[7][8]} Original the new company has planned to commission two purpose-built 18000-ton ships, but this plan was never realised. Instead, in September 1915 the company acquired the 1900-built Holland America Line vessel SS *Potsdam*, which was renamed SS *Stockholm*.^{[9][10]} On 11 December 1915, in the midst of World War I, the *Stockholm* left on her first crossing from Gothenburg to New York. En-route she was stopped by a British naval vessel and forced to make a stop at Kirkwall, where all mail onboard was confiscated. In the end, the *Stockholm*'s first transatlantic crossing took no less than 15½ days.^[2] Initially the new company concentrated on immigrant trade, with substantial provision made for passengers traveling in steerage.^[11] Despite the difficulties caused by the war, the *Stockholm* continued transatlantic services until 1917, when Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare forced her to be laid up in Gothenburg until June 1918, when she resumed service.^[9]

In February 1920 RAB Sverige-Nordamerika acquired a second ship, the former Allan Line vessel SS *Virginian* from Canadian Pacific Steamships. The ship had most recently been used a troopship by the British Admiralty. She was renamed SS *Drottningholm* and entered service for her new owners on 30 May 1920. In 1922-1923 the *Drottningholm* was refurbished, re-engined and her superstructure enlarged.^{[2][11][12]} As a partial replacement, the 1902-built SS *Noordam* was chartered from Holland America Line as SS *Kungsholm* from 27 February 1923 until 18 December 1924.^{[1][2][13]} In April 1924 the company acquired SS *Borgholm*, a small coastal steamer that became the first in a series feeder ships used to transport passenger from ports around the Baltic Sea to Gothenburg.^{[2][14][15][16]}

1924–1939

In March 1923 RAB Sverige-Nordamerika placed an order for their first newbuilding, the first MS *Gripsholm*, with Armstrong Whitworth & Co in Newcastle upon Tyne.^[2] She was the first diesel-engined liner to be built for the transatlantic service.^[1] The *Gripsholm* was launched and christened on 26 November 1924, and delivered on 7 November 1925. On the same date her owners officially changed their name to Svenska Amerika Linien / Swedish American Line, and on 21 November the *Gripsholm* set out on her maiden voyage from Gothenburg to New York.^{[2][17]} Encouraged by the success of the *Gripsholm*, SAL placed an order for a ship of similar but larger design with the Blohm & Voss shipyard in Hamburg on 28 October 1926.^[2] In 1927 the company decided to enter the cruise market, offering various cruises during the northern hemisphere winter season.^[18]



MS *Kungsholm* of 1928, with her original black hull colour.

On 17 March 1928 the new MS *Kungsholm* was launched at Blohm & Voss.^{[2][19]} The *Kungsholm*'s interiors were designed with off-season cruising in mind, with her passenger capacity shrunk from 1344 on liner service to around 600 for cruising. She was also one of the first liners with interior decorations in art deco style, following the lead of the SS *Ile de France*, built in 1927.^[3] The ship was delivered to SAL on 13 October 1928, and left on her maiden voyage on 24 November 1928.^{[2][19]} Coinciding with the delivery

of the new ship, the first SS *Stockholm* was sold to Norwegian interests for conversion to a whale factory ship, SS *Solglimt*.^[9] With the *Gripsholm* and *Kungsholm* the SAL gained popularity with West European and American passengers, both in liner and cruise service.^[3] In May 1929 the United States and Canada imposed extensive restrictions on immigration.^[2] At some point after the delivery of the *Kungsholm*, SAL decided to abandon the traditional black hull colour and their entire fleet was repainted with white hulls.^[1]

The Swedish American Line continued operations with the *Drottningholm*, *Gripsholm* and *Kungsholm* throughout the 1930s. In November 1936 the company placed an order for a new ship, MS *Stockholm*, with Cantieri Riuniti dell'Adriatico, Monfalcone, Italy.^[2] The planned delivery date for the ship was in March 1939, but she was destroyed by a fire during the final stages of construction on 19 December 1938. Construction of a second ship based on the same design, also named MS *Stockholm*, begun soon after the destruction of the original.^{[2][20][21]}

1939–1946

Due to World War II breaking out in Europe, the *Kungsholm* made her last transatlantic crossing in October 1939, after which she was used for cruising around the West Indies until 1941. Also due to the war the *Gripsholm* and *Drottningholm* were taken out of service and are laid up on 24 November 1939 and March 1940, respectively.^[2] Meanwhile the construction work continued on the third *Stockholm* in Italy, and she was launched on 10 March 1940. In October 1941 the ship was ready for delivery, but due to the war SAL had no service to place her on. As a result the ship was sold to the Italian government on 3 November 1941 and converted to the troopship MS *Sabaudia*. The *Sabaudia* eventually sunk outside Trieste on 6 July 1944.^{[2][21][22]} Had the *Stockholm* ever entered service for SAL, she would have been the largest ship ever operated by the company.^[23]

In December 1941 the US Government confiscated the *Kungsholm* while she was in New York. After negotiations with the Swedish American Line, the company agreed to sell the ship to the US Maritime Commission for \$6 million. Under her new owners the *Kungsholm* became the troopship USS *John Ericsson*, and served in the US Navy until 1945 when she was laid up.^{[2][19][24]} The *Drottningholm* meanwhile was chartered by the US government 4 March 1942 for use as a repatriation vessel, to exchange official personnel between the United States and the Axis powers. As Sweden was a neutral country during the war, the Swedish-flagged ship could be used to transport passengers between the warring nations. The *Drottningholm* made two exchange trips for the US government, after which she was chartered for similar use by the British government. In June 1942 the *Gripsholm* was also chartered to the US government for the same use as the *Drottningholm*. For this purpose the *Gripsholm* was managed by the American Export Lines but kept her original Swedish crew and flag. Unlike the *Drottningholm*, the *Gripsholm* was chartered to the US government until 1946. Together the *Drottningholm* and *Gripsholm* made a total of 33 repatriation voyages during the war.^[25]

In October 1944, before the end of World War II, SAL placed an order with the Götaverken shipyard in Gothenburg for a cargo/passenger liner of 12,165 gross register tons (GRT).^[2]

1946–1951

In March 1946 the Swedish American Line re-commenced commercial service, with the *Drottningholm* setting on her first post-war crossing from Gothenburg on 26 March 1946, while the *Gripsholm* set out on

her corresponding crossing from New York on 31 March 1946. On 9 September 1946 the company's newest ship was launched at the Götaverken shipyard and named MS *Stockholm*.^[2] The new *Stockholm* was the product of an entirely different thinking from her two predecessors with the same name—instead of offering luxurious surroundings, the new ship was to offer cheap transportation for the masses with austere interiors—despite the protests from the company's chief executive and Stateside offices.^{[26][27]} During the same year the Swedish American Line founded Home Lines together with Cosulich Lines and the Greek businessman Eugen Eugenides.^[1] Additionally the operations of Swedish American Mexico Line were merged into those of the Swedish American Line in 1946, bringing five cargo-carrying ships to the fleet of SAL.^{[4][7]} On 18 July 1947 Swedish American Line bought back the USS *John Ericsson* from the US Navy, and restored her to her original name. The ship sailed to the Ansaldo shipyard in Genoa, where she was rebuilt for service with Home Lines under the name MS *Italia*.^[19]

On 7 February 1948 the new *Stockholm* was delivered to SAL. She set out on her maiden voyage from Gothenburg to New York on 21 February 1948.^[28] When the *Stockholm* entered service, the *Drottningholm* was transferred to South Atlantic Lines (a subsidiary of SAL) and renamed SS *Brazil* for traffic with Home Lines.^[12] Between 18 December 1949 and 14 February 1950 the *Gripsholm* was rebuilt at Howaldtswerke, Kiel with amongst others new funnels, a new bow and modern navigational equipment.^[17] In March 1950 the company placed an order for a new combined cruise ship/ocean liner with De Schelde shipyard at Vlissingen, Netherlands. On 18 January 1951 the Swedish American Line re-commenced cruise service for the first time since 1941, when the *Stockholm* embarked on a cruise to the West Indies.^[2]

1952–1962

The new ship under construction at De Schelde was launched on 18 October 1952 and named MS *Kungsholm*, becoming the third SAL ship to bear the name. The new *Kungsholm* was delivered on 30 September 1953, and set out on her maiden voyage from Gothenburg on 24 November 1953.^{[2][29]} Following the *Kungsholm*'s delivery the *Stockholm* was rebuilt with larger passenger accommodations.^[27] Coinciding with the completion of the *Stockholm*'s refit, the ageing *Gripsholm* was sold to the North German Lloyd, becoming their MS *Berlin*.^{[17][28]} On 14 September 1954 SAL ordered another new ship, essentially an enlarged version of the most recent *Kungsholm*, from the Ansaldo shipyard. The new ship was named MS *Gripsholm* (the second ship to bear that name in the SAL fleet) and launched on 8 April 1956.^[2]



The 1957 *Gripsholm* in Stockholm, photographed by Gustaf W. Cronquist.

On 25 July 1956 the *Stockholm* collided with the SS *Andrea Doria* outside Nantucket in one of the most famous maritime disasters of the 20th century. 47 people on the *Andrea Doria* were lost, while five members of the *Stockholm*'s crew were lost in the collision. Several of the *Andrea Doria*'s passengers were rescued by the *Stockholm*. She was able to return to New York under her own power, and was subsequently repaired at Bethlehem Steel, returning to service on 5 November 1956.^{[2][27][28]} On 14 May 1957 the new *Gripsholm* started on her maiden voyage from Gothenburg to New York. For the next three years the company operated with three ships.^[2] In May 1959 the *Stockholm* was sold to VEB Deutsche Seereederei, East Germany, with a delivery date on 3 January 1960, becoming their MS *Völkerfreundschaft*.^[28]

1963–1975

On 23 August 1963 the Swedish American Line ordered another new ship, this time from John Brown and Company, Clydebank. The new ship, named MS *Kungsholm* (the fourth SAL ship with that name), was launched on 14 April 1964. Her design featured several cruise-friendly innovations, including all-outside cabins and large lido decks.^[30] In preparation for the delivery of the new *Kungsholm*, the old (third) *Kungsholm* was sold to North German Lloyd on 5 October 1965, becoming their third MS *Europa*. The SAL operated with just one passenger-carrying ship until 24 April 1966, when the fourth (and final) *Kungsholm* was delivered. She began service with a transatlantic crossing from Gothenburg to New York, after which she was used for cruising around the world.^{[2][31]} In 1966 SAL's ships made only nine transatlantic crossings.^[30] In 1965 SAL had founded Hoverlloyd together with Swedish Lloyd to offer a fast hovercraft connection across the English Channel. Hoverlloyd begun operations in 1966 with two hovercraft, *Swift* and *Sure*.^{[32][33]} Another joint operation was formed in the mid-60s when SAL, Rederiaktiebolaget Transatlantic and Wallenius Rederiet founded Atlantic Container Line as a joint marketing entity for transatlantic freight operations. Some time later the decision was made to establish a new company, Swedish Atlantic Line (AB Svenska Atlant Linjen), for Swedish American Line's freight operations. In the early 70s another joint company, Atlantic Gulf Services, was founded, this time in collaboration with Finnlines.^[8]

In 1970 SAL's passenger ships made only three transatlantic crossings, and from 1971 onwards the only crossings made were repositioning cruises.^[30] In June 1972 the Swedish American Line purchased the expedition cruise ship MS *Lindblad Explorer* via their Panama-based subsidiary United Cruising Co. Unlike other SAL passenger vessels, the *Lindblad Explorer* was registered in Panama, not Sweden.^[34] Increased operational costs of Swedish-flagged ships forced the company to start negotiations with Swedish trade unions for re-flagging the *Gripsholm* and *Kungsholm*. The negotiations failed however, and 22 March 1975 the company decided to abandon passenger traffic despite protests from the company's United States offices, according to whom the ships would have continued to be highly profitable even under the Swedish flag.^{[1][2][23]} The *Gripsholm* and *Kungsholm* were taken out-of-service and laid up in August 1975. The *Kungsholm* was sold to Flagship Cruises in October of the same year for only 65 million Swedish krona, a half of what SAL had paid for her nine years earlier. Flagship maintained her under the name *Kungsholm* for cruising under Liberian flag.^{[23][31]} The *Gripsholm* found a buyer in November when she was sold to Karageorgis Lines, Greece, becoming their MS *Navarino*.^[35] The *Lindblad Explorer* however stayed under SAL's ownership.^[34] At the end of 1975 SAL withdrew from Atlantic Gulf Services.^[8]

1975 onwards

SAL continued freight operations, maintained their share in Hoverlloyd and ownership of the *Lindblad Explorer* until the early 1980s. The *Lindblad Explorer* was sold to Lindblad Swire Cruises in 1980,^[34] and soon afterwards SAL withdrew from Hoverlloyd.^[32] Precise information as to when exactly SAL ceased operations is not available—apparently the last ship owned by the company was sold in 1986.^[4]

Ships

Lists sourced from.^{[4][6][8]}

Passenger ships

Ship	Built	In service for SAL	Type	Tonnage	Notes
<i>SS Stockholm</i>	1900	1915–1928	ocean liner	12,835 GRT	Sunk 1942
<i>SS Drottningholm</i>	1905	1920–1946	ocean liner	11,285 GRT	Scrapped 1955
<i>SS Kungsholm</i>	1902	1923–1924	ocean liner	12,500 GRT	Scrapped 1928
<i>MS Borgholm</i>	1899	1924–1934	liner	518 GRT	Used on feeder service from the Baltic Sea to Gothenburg. Scrapped 1953
<i>MS Gripsholm (1925)</i>	1925	1925–1954	ocean liner	17,944 GRT 19,105 GRT	Scrapped 1966
<i>MS Kungsholm (1928)</i>	1928	1928–1942	ocean liner	21,250 GRT	Scrapped 1965
<i>SS Kastelholm</i>	1929	1929–1952	liner	921 GRT	Used on feeder service from the Baltic Sea to Gothenburg. Scrapped 1965
<i>SS Marieholm</i>	1934	1934–1940	liner	1,162 GRT	Used on feeder service from the Baltic Sea to Gothenburg.
<i>MS Stockholm (1938)</i>	1938	never entered service	ocean liner	30,390 GRT	Destroyed in a fire before delivery in 1938
<i>MS Stockholm (1941)</i>	1941	never entered service	ocean liner	30,390 GRT	Sold to the Italian government after completed, sunk 1944
<i>MS Stockholm (1948)</i>	1948	1948–1959	freighter/ocean liner	12,165 GRT	Collided with <i>SS Andrea Doria</i> in 1956. Since 2005 <i>MS Athena</i> for Classic International Cruises
<i>MS Kungsholm (1953)</i>	1953	1953–1965	ocean liner/cruise ship	21,164 GRT	Sunk 1984
<i>MS Gripsholm (1957)</i>	1957	1957–1975	ocean liner/cruise ship	23,191 GRT	Sunk 2001
<i>MS Kungsholm (1966)</i>	1966	1966–1975	cruise ship	26,677 GRT	Now operating as the <i>MS Mona Lisa</i> for Leonardo Shipping
<i>MS Lindblad Explorer</i>	1969	1972–1980	expedition cruise ship	2,480 GRT	Sunk 2007

Cargo ships

This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Swedish_American_Line&action=edit) .

Ship	Built	In service for SAL	Type	Tonnage	Notes
<i>MS Danaholm</i>	1939	1946–1963	freighter	3,643 GRT	Transferred from Swedish American Mexico Line. Scrapped 1972
<i>MS Rydboholm</i>	1946	1946–1963	Kramfors	4,711 GRT	Scrapped 1978
<i>MS Krageholm</i>	1943	1946–1967	Kramfors	3,654 GRT	Sunk 1971
<i>MS Tunaholm</i>	1938	1946–1963	Kramfors	3,851 GRT	Transferred from Swedish American Mexico Line. Scrapped 1972
<i>MS Uddeholm</i>	1945	1946–1963	Kramfors	4,815 GRT	Transferred from Swedish American Mexico Line. Sunk 1977
<i>MS Golden Quest</i>	1945	1946	Kramfors	370 GRT	Sold to Rederiaktiebolaget Jake, Kramfors 1946. Still operating
<i>MS Trolleholm</i>	1946	1946–1962	tanker	4,430 GRT	Transferred from Swedish American Mexico Line. Scrapped 1965
<i>MS Marieholm</i>	1947	1947–1958	tanker	11,966 GRT	Scrapped 1974
<i>MS Maltesholm</i>	1951	1951–1969	Category:Defunct shipping companies	4,694 GRT	Sunk 1981
<i>MS Vasaholm</i>	1955	1955–1971	Category:Defunct shipping companies	4,694 GRT	Sunk 1979
<i>MS Sagaholm</i>	1963	1963–1972	Category:Defunct shipping companies	6,916 GRT	
<i>MS Atlantic Saga</i>	1967	1967–1986	Category:Defunct shipping companies	12,231 GRT	Scrapped 1987
<i>MS Mont Royal</i>	1972	1972–1985	Category:Defunct shipping companies	4,262 GRT	Scrapped 2004

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External links

- A Tribute to the Swedish American Line (<http://www.salship.se>)

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swedish_American_Line"

Categories: Defunct shipping companies | Transatlantic shipping companies | Cruise lines | Companies established in 1915

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