



The Great White Fleet enters San Francisco Bay in May 1908.

San Francisco Celebrates the Fleet

by Jim Shaw

A hundred and sixteen years ago the United States made its first great show of naval force by sending the “Great White Fleet” on a globe-circling tour at the request of President Theodore Roosevelt. The fleet consisted of 16 battleships, along with their escorts and auxiliaries, although several ships were added and subtracted during the course of the tour. The vessels departed the US east coast on December 16, 1907 and didn’t return until February 22, 1909, steaming some 43,000 miles and calling at twenty ports on six continents. By sending out the fleet, Roosevelt sought to demonstrate growing American military power and the expanding blue-water capability of the US Navy. In tune with the

continued on page 4

in this issue ...

Vina Del Mar

Last of White Star: Britannic

*The Lurline’s \$18,000,000
Refit*

... and more!

MEETING NOTICE

The May 6, 2023
Chapter Meeting
will be a ZOOM event.

George Zillow will present
“My Travels on Grace Line
Passenger-Freighters in the 1950s”

An invitation containing the
ZOOM meeting link will be
sent out in advance.

Your SoCal Chapter
Board for 2023

Kate Vescera, President
Jim Shuttleworth, Vice President
Sherrill Smith, Treasurer

Scott MacDonald
Terry Tilton



Wayne Yanda - Editor
editor.oceantimes@gmail.com

Bruce Vancil - Editor Emeritus
Bill Keene - Editor Emeritus

Manuscripts and photographs submitted for
publication are considered to be gratis and no
reimbursement will be made to the author(s)
or photographer(s) or their representative(s).

The copyright of all published materials
remains with the author(s), photographer(s),
or their representative(s).

The *Ocean Times* is the Journal of the Southern
California Chapter of the Steamship Historical Society
of America for the Chapter’s membership and friends.
© 2023 Southern California Chapter
of the Steamship Historical Society of America.
All Rights Reserved.



Chapter Notes

Kate Vescera, President

Greetings Everyone! I am very pleased to be writing
my first Chapter Notes as new President of the
Chapter. Thank you to everyone for your support
and encouragement and I am looking forward to a
great year with numerous interesting events. We are
also very excited that Wayne Yanda is now helming the *Ocean Times*, with
ongoing assistance from our former Editor Bill Keene.

Additionally, we want to give a huge thank you to President Emeritus
Bruce Vancil and Bill Keene, who have both stepped down from the
Chapter Board, for their many years of outstanding service to the
Chapter. They have both been very instrumental in making the Chapter
the successful organization it is today. They are also both going to
continue to be involved with the Chapter in different roles, and we are
grateful to be able to continue to benefit from their experience and
guidance.

We are continuing our efforts at developing new Board of Directors
members and new program/project committee members. We are excited
about finding people with skills needed to take over the positions of some
Board members who will be stepping down in the coming years and also
finding people who can contribute in new and different ways.

At our last Chapter meeting on February 4, 2023, I gave a presentation
entitled “*The Little Sister: The R.M.S. Queen Elizabeth, 1938-1972*”. Our next
meeting will take place on May 6, 2023 at 1:00 pm PT on Zoom. George
Gillow will be giving a presentation entitled “*My Travels on Grace Line
Passenger-Freighters in the 1950s*.” We hope that you will be able to join us.
Also, we are looking for people who would like to present at our
upcoming meetings. If you are interested or have ideas about possible
presenters, please contact Vice President Jim Shuttleworth for more
information.

As many of you likely know, progress is being made on repairs and
renovations on the *Queen Mary* and the City of Long Beach has indicated
that the phased re-opening will be starting in the next couple of months.
We are looking forward to getting back on board and getting back to in-
person meetings. Hopefully we may be able to have our August Chapter
meeting on board, but that has yet to be determined, so please stay tuned
for more about that in the coming months.

I look forward to getting to know the Chapter members better and to
a great 2023!

Best,
Kate Vescera

In This Issue

1	Great White Fleet	10	Last of White Star: <i>Britannic</i>
2	Chapter Notes	14	The <i>Lurline</i> ‘s Postwar Refit
3	Editor’s Note	22	Becoming a “California Girl”
8	Ship Shot	22	In Our Wake
9	Tramping Cyberspace		

Hello, and welcome to April’s
“stateroom reading.” THANK
YOU to this issue’s contributors!

Member Jim Shaw provides
us with our cover story on the
world cruise of Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet, as well as the
latest *Ship Shot*.

Member Bill Miller tells the story of the last White Star liner, the
classic *Britannic*. And Bruce Vancil keeps on *Tramping Cyberspace*,
spending hours on YouTube so you don’t have to.

We wind our way through the long, expensive path that led to the
75th anniversary of the *Lurline*’s second maiden voyage. The previous
issue’s new *Posted at Sea* feature generated some interest, and lots to sort
through, so you will see more of that in future issues.

I freely admit to spending far too much time on eBay. One recent
gem that’s now in my increasingly unwieldy collection is this candid
shot of the USS *Wakefield* in Hawaii taken in early 1946. Rebuilt after a
devastating fire in September 1942, the former *Manhattan* was
recommissioned in early 1944, missing her enclosed promenade and
lifeboat davits; officials deciding the latter weren’t needed, a most
interesting choice. She was laid up in June 1946, and scrapped in 1965.

Until next time, Bon Voyage!



SUBMISSION DEADLINES

editor.oceantimes@gmail.com

July 2023: May 1, 2023
October 2023: August 1, 2023
January 2024: October 1, 2023
April 2024: February 1, 2024

Images need to be at a 300 dpi
resolution in JPG/JPEG format.

Please have text and image captions
in a Word document.

Coming up in 2023 ...

Sinking of the ss *Kentucky*
Matson’s C4 Freighters
The *Kungsholm* of 1928
Where Shall We Go This Winter?





Above and below, views of the Great White Fleet arriving in Los Angeles.

Squadron, consisting of USS *Minnesota*, USS *Maine*, USS *Missouri*, and USS *Ohio* in the Third Division, and USS *Alabama*, USS *Illinois*, USS *Kearsarge*, and USS *Kentucky* in the Forth Division.

Traveling as escorts were the four-stack destroyers USS *Hopkins*, USS *Hull*, USS *Lawrence*, USS *Stewart*, USS *Truxton*, and USS *Whipple*, along with the destroyer tender USS *Arethusa*.

Steaming independently were the stores ships USS *Culgoa* and USS *Glacier*, along with the repair ship USS *Panther*, hospital ship USS *Relief* and tender USS *Yankton*.

Because the Panama Canal was yet to be completed, the fleet steamed around South America via the Straits of Magellan, which made the first leg of the journey to San Francisco 14,556 miles long, including port calls in Trinidad, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Mexico.



times the ships were not dressed for combat but wore white-painted hulls and carried gilded scrollwork on their bows. For the nearly 14,000 American sailors on board, the voyage represented the trip of a lifetime.

The Fleet

When the fleet departed from Hampton Roads under the overall command of Admiral Robley Dunglison Evans, it consisted of USS *Connecticut*, USS *Kansas*, USS *Vermont*, and USS *Louisiana* in the First Division of the First Squadron, and USS *Georgia*, USS *New Jersey*, USS *Rhode Island*, and USS *Virginia* in the First Squadron's Second Division.

Following these ships were the Second

As each battleship passed Fort Point it fired a 21-gun salute, which was answered with a salute from land. Between May 5 and May 17 of 1908 trans-bay ferry traffic exceeded normal business by 450,000 passengers. The heaviest travel was recorded on May 6 when 186,000 passengers took the ferries to gain viewpoints.

The officers of the fleet were hosted at receptions held in San Francisco's prestigious St. Francis and Fairmont Hotels while the enlisted men were taken on sightseeing tours and hosted at regional events. Such were the friendships made that more than 200 of the fleet's 14,000 sailors deserted their vessels and stayed behind to marry local girls, the ships sailing without them on July 7, 1908.



Eleven decades ago, postcards such as the one to the left were printed to announce the pending arrival in San Francisco Bay of the Great White Fleet coming north from Magdalena Bay, Mexico.

Gilded Obsolescence

Although the American fleet was highly impressive as it steamed out of Hampton Roads under black clouds of coal smoke it was technically outdated. HMS *Dreadnought* had entered service with Great Britain's Royal Navy only the year before and the US Navy's first dreadnought, USS *South Carolina*, was still under construction. The two oldest ships in the fleet, USS *Kearsarge* and USS *Kentucky*, were considered too old for battle and two others, USS *Maine* and USS *Alabama*, had to be replaced by USS *Nebraska* and USS *Wisconsin* at San Francisco because of mechanical troubles, although they eventually completed their own shortened global tour, arriving back at Hampton Roads well before the main fleet.

Also left at San Francisco was the stores ship USS *Glacier*, which was to become the main supply vessel for the growing US Pacific Fleet. After a side trip up to Puget Sound to visit Washington ports, the fleet resumed its globe-circling tour from San Francisco on July 7, 1908 under the command of Rear Admiral Charles S. Sperry.

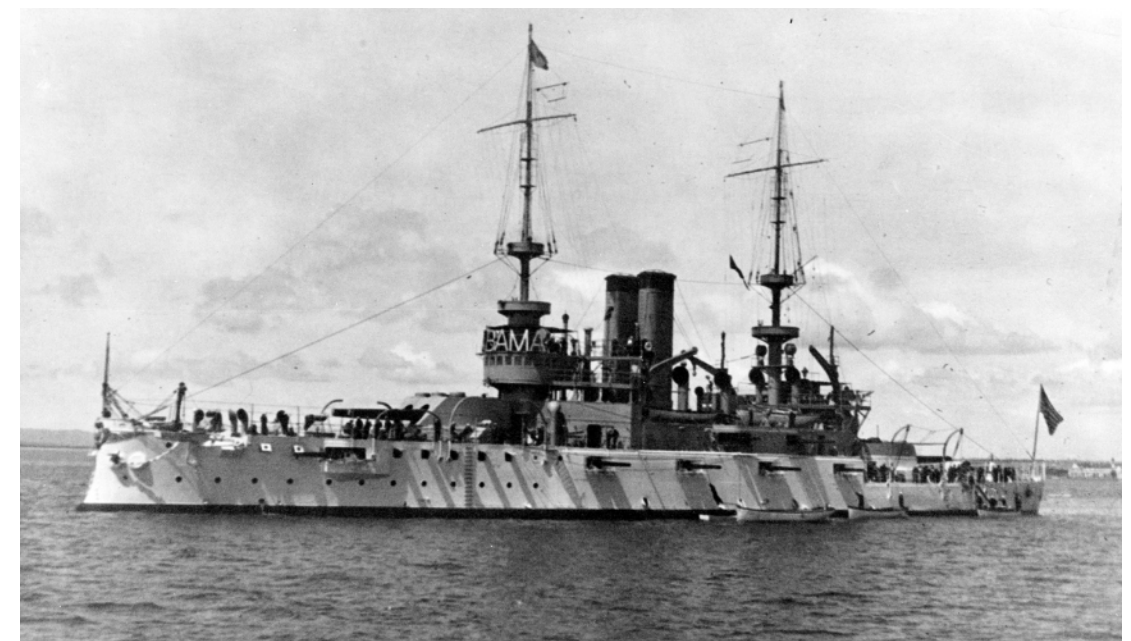
A World Tour

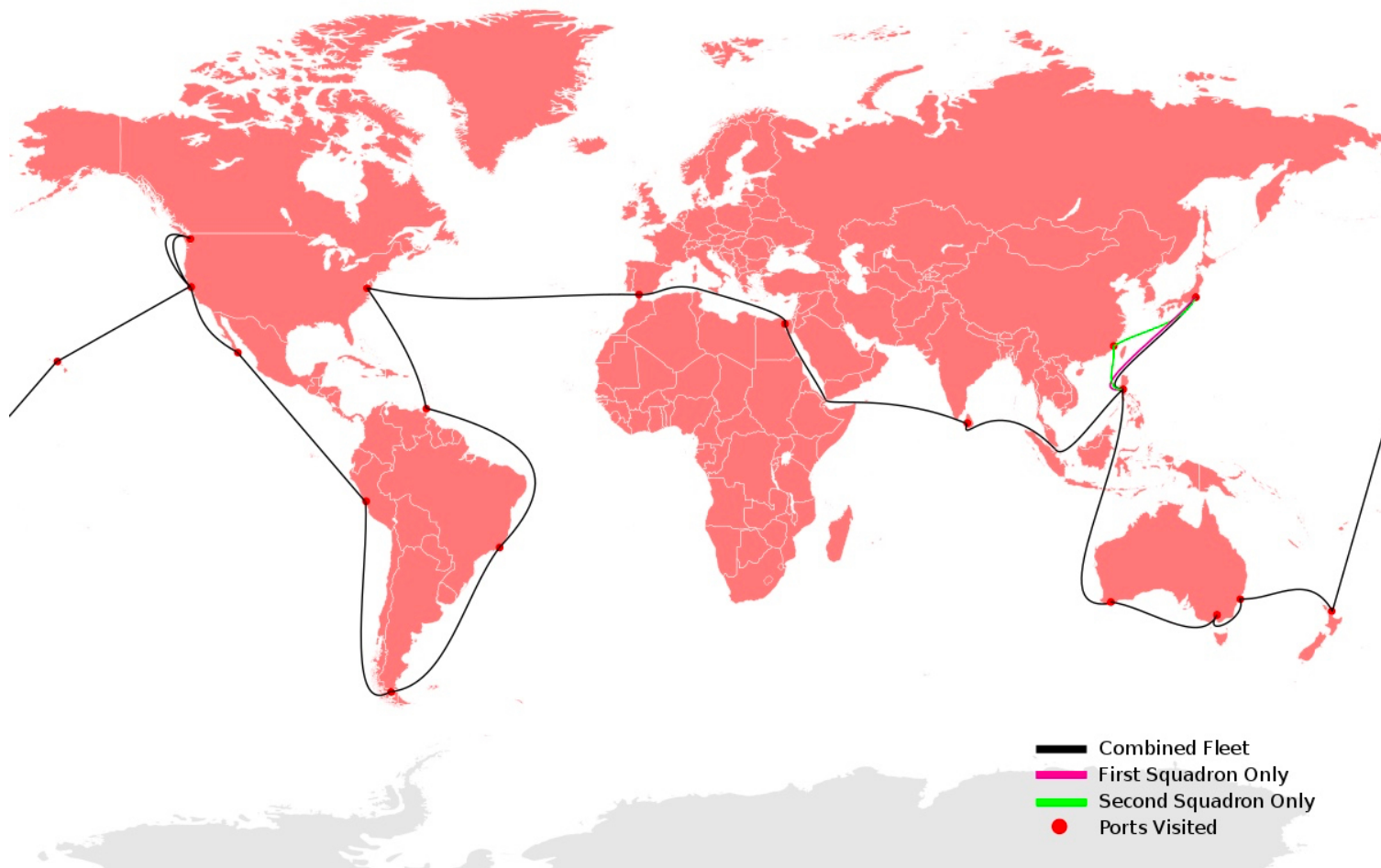
Ports of call through the Pacific and Indian Oceans included Honolulu, Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Manila, Yokohama, and Colombo, with the vessels arriving at Egypt on January 3, 1909 to transit the Suez Canal.

At the canal word was received of an earthquake causing major damage in Sicily, thus Sperry directed

The side-by-side funnels give the *Alabama* a sporty look in this photo by Fred W. Kelsey, probably off San Diego. Courtesy of R. W. Cunningham.

(U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph)





The route of the Great White Fleet covered 20 ports on six continents.

The hull casement shutters, as seen on USS Minnesota, couldn't keep water out in rough seas during the Great White Fleet's world tour, thus were eliminated in later designs. (US Navy Archives)



USS Connecticut, USS Illinois, USS Culgoa, and USS Yankton to proceed directly to the island to render assistance.

The fleet then resumed its tour from Messina on January 9 with various units making port calls at Algiers, Tripoli, Naples, Marseille, Athens, and Malta before regrouping at Gibraltar for the crossing of the Atlantic and a triumphant return to Hampton Roads on February 22,

1909. President Roosevelt again reviewed the Fleet as it passed into the roadstead, telling its officers and men "Other nations may do what you have done, but they'll have to follow you."

Technical Shortcomings

While operationally the cruise had been a great success, with no serious breakdowns or accidents, it also brought to light various technical defects in ship design that the US Navy would have to deal with. During the heavy weather encountered, particularly off Japan, it was shown that there was a need for larger ships of greater displacement and stouter design. Also, the hull casement shutters then in use on the older vessels couldn't keep water out in rough seas, making shipboard



A shot of the Great White Fleet underway.

habitability difficult and allowing water and spray into the lower gun ports.

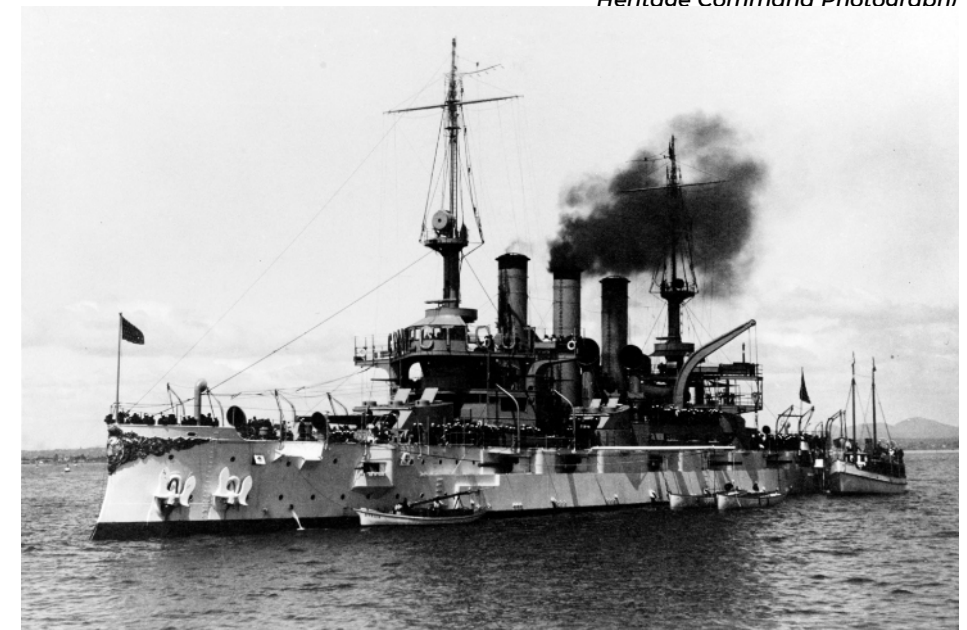
In addition, the old-style military masts were seen as potential "shell exploders" in combat, which would render the vessels blind for their own shell spotting needs. Torpedo defense guns were also seen as too light for modern combat and most of the fire-fighting gear then being carried was considered out-of-date.

After viewing Japanese warships Sperry also recommended that vessels of the US Navy should have their coloration changed from white to gray, with the feeling among officers that American ships should not be in "holiday colors" when going into battle.

The tour also demonstrated that America would need overseas bases and more auxiliary ships if the Navy was to sail globally. During the tour, foreign coaling ships and ports had to be used 90 percent of the time for coaling and resupplying purposes. Nevertheless, the tour had demonstrated that America had become a global military power.

The Connecticut by Fred W. Kelsey, probably off San Diego. Courtesy of R. W. Cunningham.

(U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Photoarchive)





Rusty Relic ... Vina Del Mar ... ex-Andorinha

Seen in graceful slumber at Chacabuco, Chile is the former Yeoward Line steamer Andorinha, built in 1911 by the Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Company at Dundee, Scotland for the company's Liverpool - Canary Island run. In 1929, as the Great Depression took hold, the 2,548grt ship was sold to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company and renamed Champerico for South American service. This lasted until 1935 when the 290ft by 41.7ft vessel was passed on to Chile's Torres & Ward to trade along the South American coast as Vina

Del Mar. Taken over by the Chilean government's Empresa Maritima del Estado in 1954, the ship was caught in a storm during 1963 and pushed ashore at Chacabuco where it continues to serve as a protected moorage for local fishing boats.

The Andorinha as it was in service with Yeoward Line.

painting: John Francis Jossee (1874-1956) Wirral Museum

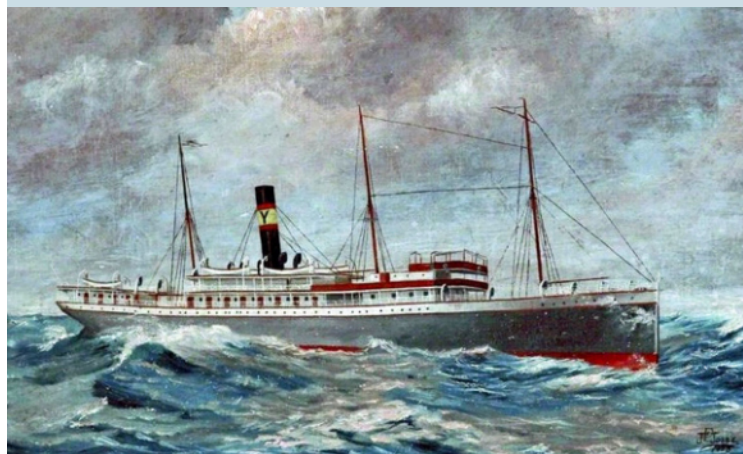


photo & story
by Jim Shaw

bruce vancil is ...

TRAMPING
CYBERSPACE

Just by chance, I stumbled upon a four-part documentary called *The Liners: Ships of Destiny*, each episode is almost an hour long.

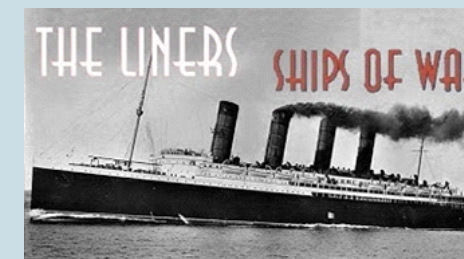
Here is another reason to block another Sunday afternoon for a binge watch of the favorite subject of so many of our members.

This series features commentaries from luminaries like Bill Miller, Frank Braynard, John Maxtone-Graham, Arnold Kludas, and more. Enjoy!



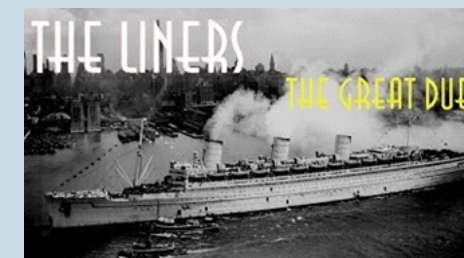
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwLMgwc95jM>

From the *Great Eastern* to modern times, this episode examines the competition and race to build bigger, faster, more luxurious with the great hope of most profitability.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdnIOREubes&t=106s>

From the *Great Britain* to the *Queen Mary*, this episode explores the role of passenger ships during times of conflict.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WVXN1cUX8>

More of the liners serving during the war. Includes *Queen Mary*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Normandie*, *Rex*, and more.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIE9xv53hRE>

As crossings fade, cruising steps up to keep passenger ships alive, though altered.

**Join, Renew,
or Give as a Gift ...**

SSHSA-SoCal Membership

for more information:
ladysherrill@msn.com

Sherrill Smith
PO Box 52454
Oxnard, CA 93031-2454

Call for Speakers!

As we look forward to moving our quarterly meetings away from Zoom to in-person, if you have a topic you'd like to present to the membership, we'd love to hear it!

for more information:
Jim Shuttleworth
jimpinxit@gmail.com



The 712-foot long Britannic making a rare visit to Boston. (author's collection)

Last of White Star: *Britannic*

by Bill Miller

In the late 1950s, Robert Welding was reassigned to the *Britannic*, a 27,000-ton ship that was the last of the old White Star Line (they had owned the *Titanic*, among many others, of course) and a company that merged with Cunard in 1934 and together became known as Cunard-White Star.

"The *Britannic* was very popular on the Liverpool-New York run as well, but she also stopped at Cobh in Ireland in each direction," he recalled. "And she had a capacity for some 1,000 passengers in first and tourist class sections. I was a cook on the *Britannic*, but Cunard also had you work in other areas as training. So, I worked in the store rooms, in provisioning, even in the laundry and, briefly, as a steward. I stayed with the *Britannic* until the end of her days, in December 1960. She was 30 years old by then and tired. There had been some major mechanical problems just the summer before and, for the long



A 1932 Art Deco brochure promoting White Star's Cabin Liners. (Wayne Yanda Collection)

Britannic outbound at New York. (Cunard Line)

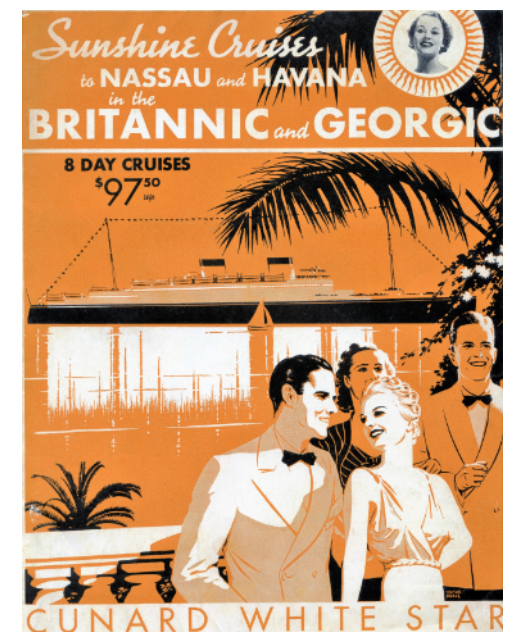
repairs, the ship was idle for weeks at Pier 90. She missed many top summer season sailings. In the end, she was stripped out at Liverpool and finished off. A skeleton crew took her up to Scotland for scrapping."

Cunard still had a large Atlantic liner fleet and after the *Britannic* Welding was reassigned yet again -- going over for one trip each (to Quebec and Montreal in the Company's Canadian service) on the *Sylvania*, *Saxonia* and *Carinthia*. "Cunard always moved you from ship to ship," he remembered. "But the overall menu and kitchen work never really changed from ship to ship."

"The *Britannic* had some of the most beautiful public rooms of any of our ships in the 1950s," recalled John Ferguson, then a staff member at Cunard Line's 25 Broadway offices in New York. "There were exquisite, perfectionately polished woods. There were columned lounges with big sofas and enormous soft chairs. There were actual fireplaces and crystal ceiling lamps and magnificent carpets, some of which came from the great *Aquitania* from before the War. A very popular, sturdy ship, she ran Cunard's then busy service between New York, Cobh and Liverpool. She was a great favorite to many travelers in those final boom years on the North Atlantic."

While the White Star Line, a longtime rival of Cunard's, never quite recovered from the devastating loss of their *Titanic* in 1912, they planned for a new super ship, the 60,000-ton *Oceanic*, in the late 1920s. The 1,000-footer was actually to have been paired with another projected giant, the 81,000-tonner that would become Cunard's *Queen Mary* (but which was then rumored to be named *Victoria*). And so, it would have been the *Oceanic* and *Victoria* on a weekly Southampton-New York express run. But soon after the

A brochure cover dated 1935. (Norman Knebel Collection)





A post-war scene dated 1947 in Liverpool. (Author's Collection)

New York in 1952: the Mauretania (II), Queen Mary, and Britannic at Piers 90 and 92. (Author's Collection)

A first class deck plan. (Norman Knebel Collection)



Wall Street Crash in October 1929, White Star fell on even harder financial times. The extravagance and scope of the *Oceanic* project had to be canceled and instead two, far more moderately sized ships were given the green light – the 27,000-ton *Britannic* and a near-sister, the *Georgic*. Built by the famed Harland & Wolff shipyard at Belfast, the 712-ft long *Britannic* was commissioned in 1930. But even her inaugural sparkle and brightness were somewhat dimmed by the dark, fast gathering clouds of the Depression. Like so many other passenger ships, the new *Britannic* would have to struggle to fill all her berths in the ensuing years.

In sleek, Art Deco moderne, she was an especially long and low looking ship with two squat stacks (only the second one actually worked; the forward one was the wireless room), a slightly raked bow and a classic cruiser stern. Danish-built Burmeister & Wain diesels made her one of the largest motor liners of her time. The original passenger berths totaled 1,553 in three classes and there was room for cargo in no less than seven holds. Trans-Atlantic crossings were spaced with periodic Caribbean and Mediterranean cruises. She also ran a number of very short, "get away" trips such as 3-day weekend cruises up to Halifax from New York as well as 6 and 7-night jaunts to Bermuda or Nassau. Fares for a 3-day, long weekend cruise in the mid '30s started at \$45. The 19-knot ship was called, however, to more urgent duty just after the Second World War started in September 1939. The *Britannic* was painted over entirely in somber grays and spent the next six years as a troop transport.

She rejoined Cunard-White Star (that double title would be used until 1950) in 1948, but still wore her original White Star colors (buff and black) on her funnels. The Cunard colors of black



top and orange-red with two black stripes would not have worked on such squat-sized stacks. Fully refurbished, her quarters were restyled for two classes in the post-war era, 429 in first class and 569 in tourist. An annual nine-week Mediterranean-Black Sea cruise, which departed from New York each January, was a highlight of her schedules. Ports of call for the 1960 cruise included Madeira, Gibraltar, Villefranche, Naples, Mykonos, Haifa, Istanbul and Odessa.

John Ferguson also recalled her trans-Atlantic schedule and the arrivals and departures at New York of the *Britannic*. "She usually arrived on Saturdays and then sailed six days later, on Fridays. All of the Irish families and relatives used to greet the *Britannic* as she docked at Pier 92, even if it was late at night. On sailing day, visitors could go aboard three hours before sailing. Large Irish families along with friends would come aboard to see even one family member making a return visit to Ireland. But there were no visitors on arrival days. Actually, however, very important people could get special passes to go aboard and greet arriving passengers. The office boys at 25 Broadway would go over to the US Customs House at Bowling Green and get these special passes. Only then, these visitors could pass the barriers on Pier 92."

Prompted by increasing old age, the *Britannic* had a massive mechanical breakdown (a broken crankshaft) in the spring of 1960 and had to remain along the south side of New York's Pier 90 for months while undergoing repairs. Using barges as floating workshops, it then ranked as the largest pierside repair job of its kind. Todd shipyards did the work, based out of their plant in Red Hook, Brooklyn. But it all cost Cunard millions, including the lost bookings and cancellations. The 30-year-old ship's fate was sealed. She was the first of the post-war fleet of big liners to go, those twelve passenger ships that, by 1957, made Cunard the largest and the busiest on the North Atlantic. By 1960, the airlines were already cutting deeply into Cunard's share of that trans-ocean trade.

And so, on a moody December afternoon in 1960, the *Britannic* – the last of the White Star liners – sailed from New York for the final time. After de-storing at Liverpool, she headed north, to Inverkeithing in Scotland, to be broken-up. The *Britannic's* career was finished: 1930-60.



The *Britannic* berthed on the south side of Pier 92, New York. (Author's Collection)

Mediterranean-Black Sea cruise brochure dated 1956. (Norman Knebel Collection)





The *Lurline's* \$18,000,000 refit

story & images by Wayne Yanda

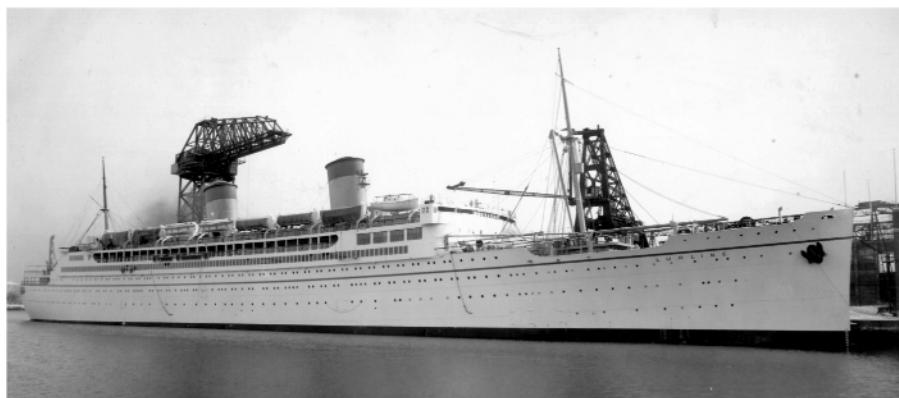
After World War II, the race was on to “get back to normal.” Several years of austerity measures designed to support the war effort were giving way to pent up consumer demands, including leisure travel. As long-range air service was still in its infancy, getting the passenger fleets back in operation was a top priority.

While some liners were restored to their pre-war looks – see USL’s *America*, and Grace Line’s *Santa Rosa* and *Santa Paula* – other companies were building new: Delta Line’s *Del Norte*, *Del Sud*, and *Del Mar*; and America Export Lines’ *Excalibur*,

Excambion, *Exeter*, and *Exochorda*. But other ships were completely transformed: Moore-McCormack’s *Argentina*, *Brazil*, and *Uruguay*, and Matson’s *Lurline*.

Such an overhaul like the *Lurline's*, was, obviously, a massive effort, riddled with supply chain issues and other delays; the final tab escalating to more than twice what it took to build her in 1933. The results, however,

A stunning painting illustrated early brochures in the *Lurline's* postwar service. Compare it with the image below of her nearing completion at Bethlehem Shipbuilding's Fore River Plant in Quincy, Massachusetts.



helped start the conversation on postwar American design.

War Recap

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the *Lurline* was two days out of Honolulu, heading for the mainland; just a typical run until word of what happened at Pearl Harbor reached Commodore C. A. Berndtson. He ordered the *Lurline* shift course, increased speed, and prepared for an attack that fortunately never came. Passengers were finally notified late that afternoon. Personal radios were confiscated as the ship raced to San Francisco under blackout conditions, docking after 3 a.m. on December 10.

Four days later, following a hasty conversion, the *Lurline* sailed back to Honolulu, in a convoy with the *Matsonia* and *Monterey*; the *Mariposa* would follow later. Along with over 3,200 troops, she hauled bombs and other military items. World War II kept her mainly on the Pacific, with trips to India, and in the waning days, Europe. During her war service, the *Lurline* made 31 voyages, steaming a total of 388,847 miles, serving 9,322,706 meals to 199,860 passengers.

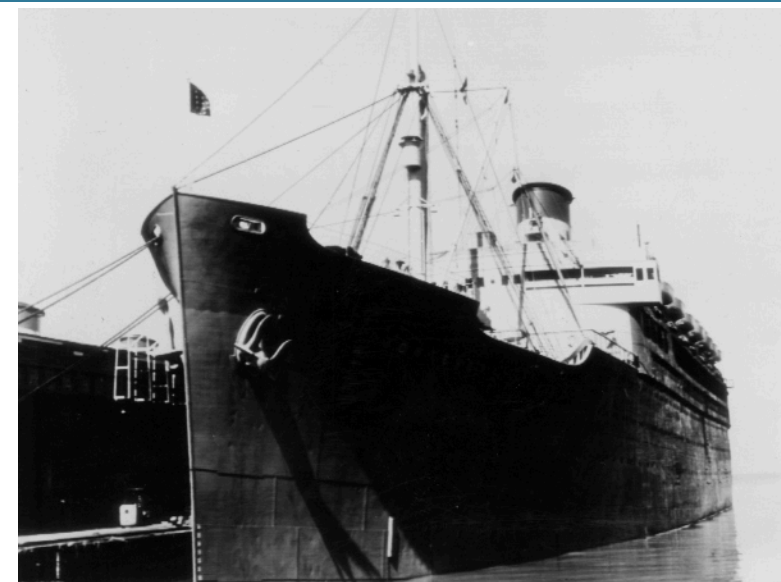
And those passengers left their mark, for what bored G.I. wasn't tempted to carve their initials into the wooden railings?

Transitions

Shortly before V-E Day, Matson announced a \$18,000,000 plan to modernize the *Mariposa*, *Monterey*, and *Lurline*. Work was expected to take six months, which was delayed repeatedly as the trio were kept busy repatriating servicemen and bringing home war brides. Re-establishing their passenger service was part of a \$50,000,000 program Matson launched to resume operations, including \$20,000,000 on cargo vessels, \$9,000,000 for an (ultimately doomed) air transport service, \$1,000,000 for a bulk sugar terminal in Hilo, another million upgrades to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and a seven-story addition to their San Francisco headquarters at \$850,000.

In late February 1946, Matson started running ads declaring “Design for Living De Luxe,” illustrated with a cartoon of a designer rearranging furniture in a model of a First Class cabin. With the buzzword phrases “pleasure and comfort,” and “designs for better things,” at least the ad agencies were fully up and running. It was up to the manufacturing sector to retool after their war efforts to deliver on such promises.

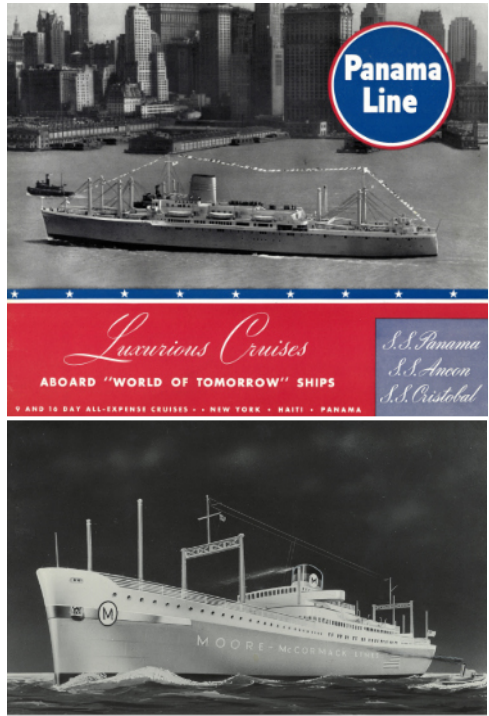
After a \$400,000 touch-up, the *Matsonia* (built as the *Malolo*) re-established Matson's Hawaiian run in an interim service, sailing from San Francisco on May 23, 1946. Capacity was 548 passengers; fares started at \$110 (\$1,703 today) one-way. She was to remain with the company until the other three were renovated. Before her overhaul, the *Lurline*, still painted in wartime grey, would make



Matson's *Monterey* in San Francisco on June 14, 1946. She was due to sail under Army charter with 460 passengers for Australia, but remained in port when 250 stewards, firemen, and engineers walked out. Such delays, coupled with supply and labor shortages at the shipyards, plus the related exponential cost increases, pushed back her return to commercial service to the point where it was no longer feasible.

Before World War II was over, Matson began running ads illustrated with ships so streamlined, they made the *Normandie* look as if she were built of concrete blocks.





(top) Raymond Loewy's first ocean liner design work was with George G. Sharp for the new Panama Line trio.

(above) Loewy and Sharp teamed up again to work on Moore-McCormack's Rio Hudson quartet. Though launched on schedule, the four would be rebuilt as escort carriers.

one line run starting May 31.

The Refit

Following that voyage, *Lurline* was stripped of her wartime accoutrements at Pier 36 in San Francisco, arriving at the United Engineering Company shipyard in Alameda on July 13. The plan: get her back in service by February 1947; *Monterey* and *Mariposa* soon to follow.

But what's a reno-job without a hiccup? Towards the end of July, a fire in the number four hold, possibly caused by faulty wiring, was quickly contained. Damage to the *Lurline* was slight, and work continued as if nothing occurred.

The *Mariposa* would begin her refit in September, following two sailings in August. It was also announced in August the *Lurline* would make her trial run in February 1947, with officials admitting the cost of the refit was thought to be underestimated by about \$2,000,000. By the time work started on the *Monterey*, it was accepted that it would now take \$8,000,000 per ship. Even though labor strikes caused more delays, it was announced in December that the *Lurline* and *Mariposa* would be back in service by May 1947; the *Monterey* by the fall.

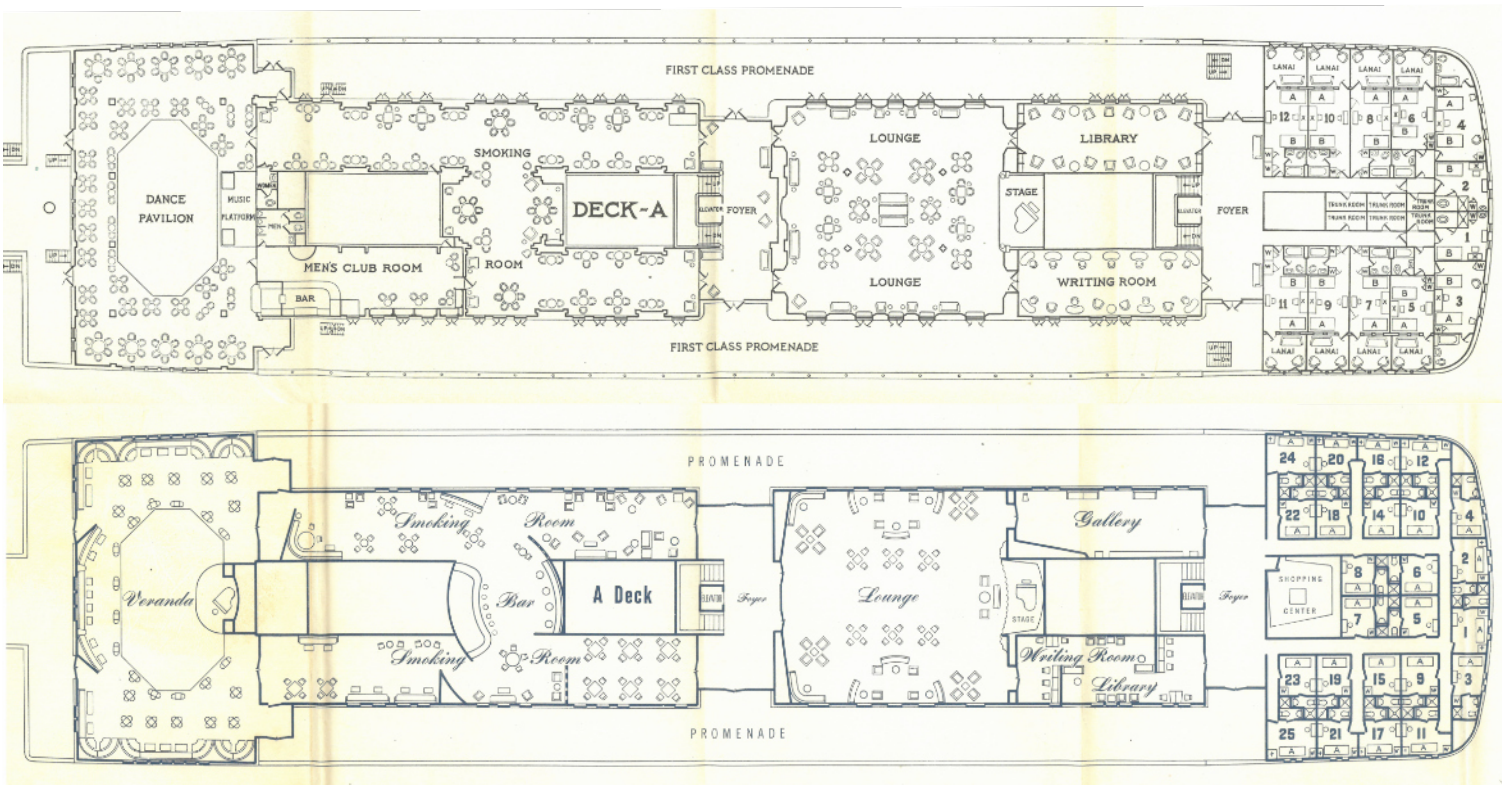
To orchestrate the trio's transformation, Matson chose noted industrial designer Raymond Loewy. This wouldn't be Loewy's first go at passenger liners. Early in his career, he illustrated ads for the White Star Line. After he was more established, he worked with George G. Sharp on the Panama Line's *Panama*, *Ancon*, and *Cristobal*, and Moore-McCormack Line's aborted South American quartet *Rio Hudson*, *Rio Parana*, *Rio de la Plata*, and *Rio de Janeiro*.

Loewy helped pioneer the "contemporary American" style, which decidedly broke from "the classics" – Louis XIV, Tudor, Pompeian, etc. – as utilized in liners like the *Manhattan* and *Washington*. Loewy told the June 1939 issue of *Pencil Points*, "the next ships will be as modern in their decoration as they are in engineering and hull design." Therefore, Sharp and Loewy eschewed the usual assortment of wood carvings and veneers in favor of stainless steel, laminated plastics, and glass.

As a run up for the ships, Loewy redesigned Matson's ticket office on Los Angeles' "Transportation Row." The sales space was given the look of a ship's lounge. As people walked by the open front, they saw pops of color, judiciously arranged tropical plants, and primitive art.* The only signage was a large neon sign which could be seen from afar, and at street level, where "Matson" was above the double glass doors, which were dotted with several M's.

As built, the *Lurline*'s interiors were identical to the *Mariposa* and *Monterey*, save for color schemes. The New York firm Warren

*An article in the March 1947 issue of *The Architectural Forum* names Janis Pette as the sculptor of the primitive art. A search found nothing, except that they may have meant Janice Pettee, who was a ceramicist at Vernon Kilns (Vernon, CA) where she designed several collectible celebrity figurines including: Wallace Beery, Gary Cooper, Bette Davis, Paulette Goddard, Dorothy Lamour, and Robert Preston. She also made clay models for Disney's *Snow White* to help animators see the characters in three dimensions.



and Wetmore designed the public areas. They were also responsible for the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, then a Matson Line property in Honolulu. In the First Class spaces, the lounge was based on Chinese Chippendale, while many Asian touches could be seen elsewhere. Though paneling prevailed, Cabin Class areas were more contemporary, with an emphasis on clean, simple lines.

Over a decade later, simplicity and informality were Loewy's guiding philosophy for the "new" *Lurline*. "We made no attempt to follow traditional lines or any particular period. Instead, we have evolved a liveable, modern style – basically simple and informal – that exemplifies contemporary American life and good taste and lend itself completely to the colorful Polynesian decorative theme we have adopted," he said, adding, "We translated the gay relaxed atmosphere of Hawaii into the ship's design so that a passenger's island vacation begins the minute he steps aboard the *Lurline*."

(Equating the ship with its destination, "The *Lurline* is Hawaii," is akin to the French Line's messaging strategy during the interwar years. You may recall "You are in France the minute you cross the gangplank.")

Three Become One

As with any construction project, the statistics behind it border on the incomprehensible. The man hours per ship per week totaled over 50,000. Five hundred miles of wiring was repaired or replaced. To recover their steel decks would take 310,000 square feet of rubber tile, plus 90,000 feet of trimming. Bulkheads were formed with 1,500,000 square feet of aluminum sheathed marinite. Passengers and crew would reach out on 984 telephones, and go through 4,500 doors. For the foodies: toasters could crank out 750 slices an hour, and peel 50 pounds of potatoes in three minutes.

Before and after, a comparison of *Lurline*'s A Deck. While much of the basic framework remained, many alterations took place to modernize this First Class area. How many differences can you spot?



A rendering of a typical First Class cabin in "living room by day" mode. One bed is tucked into the bulkhead at left, the other has become a sofa.

Renovation Highlights

By the time the *Lurline* re-entered service, she was 15 years old. However, this rebuild turned back time. (And unbeknownst to Matson, secured her future for decades to come.) After her hull was sand-blasted clean, any damaged or worn plates were renewed. Her stacks were modified. The forward well deck was plated in. The B Deck promenade was eliminated to make room for additional passenger capacity. All equipment and systems were either rebuilt, like the engine rooms, or replaced, like the galleys.

Evaporators capable of producing 80,000 gallons of fresh water per day were installed. In addition to a consistent supply of water for passenger needs, fresh water tanks that would have normally been drained during a voyage were always full, providing ballast for a smoother ride for those travelling for business or pleasure.

The *Lurline* could now carry 722 passengers (484 in First, 238 in Cabin), compared to 693 when built (459 in First, 234 in Cabin). More room was also made for the crew, which totaled 433, compared to 358 when built. Labor agreements ensured no more than six berths per room; the rooms with berths ranging from eight to 40 when originally built were eliminated.

The average staterooms were "living rooms by day, bedrooms at night," with beds becoming full length sofas or disappearing into the walls to give the occupants a spacious living environment. First Class cabins, which took up the forward and mid sections of the ship, had private facilities, while Cabin Class, located aft, had shared ones. With the *Lurline* now completely air-conditioned, passengers could control the temperature setting for their personal comfort.

Much press was given to the revamped Lanai Suites. Originally built with eight such suites forward on A Deck, the refit reduced them to six, and moved them down to amidships on B Deck, three on each side. Measuring 27 feet long and 15 feet wide, they eschewed portholes in favor of full height windows in the sitting

With spiraling labor costs and material shortages, as well as the tacit acknowledgment of the looming threat of air competition, work was suspended on the *Mariposa* and *Monterey* on July 12, 1947; effectively shutting down large scale passenger service to the South Seas by an American company. The *Lurline's* overhaul continued, with an anticipated return to the Hawaiian run in April 1948. While the United States Maritime Commission forked over \$5,500,000 for war use, the final cost to put the *Lurline* back in service was over \$18,000,000.

Matson would relaunch their Australian route in 1956 with a new *Mariposa* and *Monterey*; part of the last hurrah in the annals of American ocean liners.



room for a panoramic view of the seas.

Overall, pastels dominated with occasional pops of darker tones. Mahogany, teak, and maple were used in their natural tones, or bleached. Support columns were covered in gold leaf, rather being decoratively boxed in. Scrollwork and lattice were found in practically every public room, which created barriers while still leaving a feeling of openness.

While the *Malolo's* interiors could boast of paintings by one native-born Hawaiian artist, the same could not be said for the *Mariposa*, *Monterey*, and *Lurline* when originally built, nor for the *Lurline's* transformation. Given the many references to Polynesian lore, it was an interesting choice. In any event, a Who's Who of California artists were commissioned for the *Lurline*, and they did their research, with two exceptions.

As passengers boarded, they were greeted by Al Banner's tile murals in the Main Foyer. He used multiple shades of green as a backdrop with symbols of the South Pacific and Hawaiian Islands: net throwers, fishermen, native animals, ships, and witch doctors.

For the Lanais, and several First Class staterooms, Marion Cunningham, known for her silk screen prints of San Francisco's cable cars, completed a series of Hawaiian and South Pacific scenes; eight sets of 120 prints. (Can we assume the prints related to Samoa, Fiji, and New Zealand were meant for the *Mariposa* and *Monterey*? Whether they were used in the *Lurline*, and/or the smaller passenger-cargo ships in the Matson fleet, is speculation at this point.)

On A Deck, in the First Class Smoking Room, Anton Refregier's two panels showed the traditional ceremony held preceding a fishing expedition with villagers asking the gods to protect the men and provide them with a bountiful catch. Loewy may have come to know Refregier's work through his satiric and surrealistic murals in the Café Society Uptown in New York.

Tucked away in a corner of the Smoking Room was Jacques Schnier's 40-inch tall polychromed bronze of Ku-ula, the Hawaiian



(top left) This was how the First Class Smoking Room on the *Lurline* originally looked.

(top right) Lattice work helped divide areas in the renovated Smoking Room, while keeping things somewhat open. Hints of Anton Refregier's murals can be seen on the right.

(above) The little dot just left of center in the previous image is Jacques Schnier's sculpture of Ku-Ula, the Hawaiian fishing god. This is an un-polychromed version; better to see the detail. (image: David Hendrickson)



(top) Anton Refregier's murals remained in place even after the *Lurline* became Chandris Lines' *Ellinis*.

(above) A section of the Card Room with one of Emrich Nicholson's painted mirrors.

(right) The before and after of *Lurline*'s Cabin Class Lounge. A painting of what may be a Japanese warrior is in the left image. Francesco di Cocco's bordering-on-the-surreal mural is on the right.



Fish God. Two smaller versions were cast; one is currently in the Oakland Museum of California.

The first design exception, granted, a minor one – more traditional for a liner – could be found in the Card Room off the First Class Smoking Room. Emrich Nicholson studied the 17th century art of antiquing mirrors in France, and on these mirrors for the *Lurline*,

he painted kings, queens, and jacks surrounded by a theatrical curtain reminding one of a Punch and Judy show.

Heading forward to the Main Lounge, Sargent Johnson's mahogany carving of Polynesian masks and idols rested above the doors on the aft bulkhead. Opposite, was a stage curtain designed by Dorothy Liebes, who is better known for her fabric work on United States Lines' *America* and *United States*.

As passengers entered the novelty shop, they were greeted by Merlin Hardy's mural of lush tropical foliage. For this scene, Hardy used a gold leaf background, with a wide variety of greens.

Down to C Deck, and the Cabin Class Lounge, where on the aft bulkhead noted surrealist Francesco Di Cocco danced up to that stylistic line with his oversize masks, idols, and canoes in ceremonial procession.

The second design exception could be found on E Deck, and it was a major one at that: the First Class Dining Room mosaic designed and executed by Alameda artist Helen Bruton. Situated on the forward bulkhead in the center of the room, the subject matter was a scene from Homer's *Odyssey*, with Ulysses and crew about to clash with the Sirens. Though nothing was said at the time, it was clearly out of place compared to the rest of the décor, but it worked perfectly during her service under the Greek flag as Chandris Lines' *Ellinis*.

Finally, one piece of outdoor sculpture could be found aft of the pool, courtesy of San Francisco designer Don Clever. The Art Deco-



ish school of fish amidst some stylized kelp held its own even on the sunniest of days with everyone in their brightest swimsuits.

The sold-out maiden voyage finally took place on April 15, 1948, when the *Lurline* sailed from San Francisco, picking up additional passengers in Los Angeles the next day, and arriving in Honolulu on April 21. About 200 small craft welcomed her, including pleasure yachts and outrigger canoes. Thousands welcomed her at the pier where hula dancers and musicians entertained the crowd. The governor declared it "*Lurline* Day." Among the notable passengers: Matson board chair, W. P. Roth and his wife, *Lurline* Matson Roth, who originally christened the ship back in 1932. Also, Raymond Loewy and his wife, taking a much-needed break.

Aloha

The *Lurline* sailed for Matson until turbine issues in early 1963 laid her up. Purchased by Chandris Lines later that year, their refit altered her superstructure, and added new, streamlined funnels, while keeping intact most of the 1948 furnishings and art. Passenger capacity increased to over 1,600, all in one class. Renamed the *Ellinis*, she was initially part of the migrant trade to Australia, transitioning to cruising in 1975, before her final lay up in 1981. Five years later, it was to the scrapyards in Taiwan.



(clockwise, top left) The original configuration of *Lurline*'s First Class Dining Room with Paul Wesley Arndt's sailing ships forming a frieze. A rendering with all the decorative bric-a-brac removed and a mural design that does not resemble the finished product by Helen Bruton.

(below) Don Clever's colorful mural adorns the aft pool area.



Becoming a “California Girl”



As we all wait to get back onboard the Queen Mary, let's take a look at "the beginning," or thereabouts. In this image, dated June 1969, the conversion into a stationary attraction has begun. At right, is the USS Hornet, prior to her departure to meet the Apollo 11 capsule. There's also an Iowa-class battleship, and in the building just left of center is the storage unit containing Howard Hughe's Spruce Goose.

in
our
wake

Congratulations go to three Chapter members for articles published in the Winter 2023 issue of *PowerShips*.

We celebrate the life of recently passed member **Don Persson** as he recalls a personal account of his time in 1966 at the Avondale shipyard near New Orleans; assigned to a World War II Victory ship. *My Time in a Southern Shipyard* brings us the story of the USNS Watertown (T-AGM 6) as it was being converted to a tracking and communication ship for recording test data from missiles and satellites.

Member **Jim Shaw** presents a fascinating account of his trip up the Amazon River aboard the Leopoldo Peres in the early 1970s in *Up the Amazon*. Jim brings to life his experiences of challenging comfortable living conditions, questionably delicious meals, and the wondrous adventures of the enveloping Amazon jungle.

Member **Bill Miller** continues his *Lives of the Liners* series in *Escape from Europe, 1939-1940*, that brings us the special efforts of some ships to help many people who were stranded.

