



The Conte Biancamano is underway, showing off the external portion of her comprehensive postwar refit: a cruising white paint scheme, and flared bow.
(Private Collection)

Rebirth of the Italians

*Saturnia & Vulcania,
Conte Biancamano & Conte Grande*

by Bill Miller

As we sipped drinks in his lavish, richly appointed, office-dayroom aboard the 70,000-grt Carnival Cruise liner *Sensation* during a voyage from Miami to the Caribbean in 2000, Captain Raffaele Gavino reminisced about his earlier days at sea. His thoughts turned especially to his times with the once famous and popular Italian Line, Italy's premier passenger ship company. The captain, who was then on the eve of his seventieth birthday, never paused to recall a ship, a port, an exact date. He had an exceptional recall of detail; his mind was encyclopedic.

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Around the World in 1924

Not a Chinese Junk

The Mother of All Auctions

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Chapter Notes

Kate Vescera,
President

Greetings Everyone!

A big thank you to Chapter Member Kent Sanctuary for his wonderful presentation at our August 3, 2024 meeting about voyages he took on the RMS *Queen Elizabeth* and RMS *Queen Mary* in 1957. Kent's presentation was enchanting and provided a lot of color about what it was actually like to sail on these ships.

We also had a raffle which was very popular and included many interesting and varied items. Thanks again to Board Members Jim Shuttleworth and Terry Tilton for all of their hard work in putting together the raffle. If you have items that you are interested in donating for the raffle, please contact Jim Shuttleworth.

Our next Chapter meeting will be a bit different. It will be in conjunction with the SSHSA National annual meeting. It will take place on Saturday, November 9, 2024 from 2 to 4:30 p.m., in the Mauretania Room on board the *Queen Mary*. SSHSA Archivist Astrid Drew will be presenting on the SSHSA archives and collections. We will also have a presentation from Chapter Member Nelson Arnstein on the *Rotterdam* of 1959. We hope to see you there in person or on Zoom!

The SSHSA National member meeting is planned to take place at 11 am on the same day, also in the Mauretania Room. Additionally, following the Chapter meeting, there will be a cocktail hour and then a sit-down dinner which will feature a presentation by Chapter Board Member Peter Knego on Modernism Afloat. Peter is also very generously opening his home for

MEETING NOTICE

The November 9, 2024 Chapter Meeting will be aboard the *Queen Mary*.
(2 p.m., Pacific)

Astrid Drew, SSHSA Archivist, will describe the extensive SSHSA archives, and how to use them.

Chapter Member Nelson Arnstein will present on the classic *Rotterdam* (V).

If you cannot attend in person, a Zoom meeting link will be sent out in advance.

(Details subject to change.)



Call for Speakers!

If you have a topic you'd like to present to the membership, at our meetings aboard the *Queen Mary*, we'd love to hear it!

for more information:

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us to visit on the afternoon of Sunday, November 10. More details regarding that to follow.

This will be the first time a National meeting has been held on the West Coast since 2013. We hope that you will attend both our November Chapter meeting and the National meeting. There will also be a cruise on the *Carnival Radiance* from November 11-15, 2024. Non-SSHSA members are welcome to attend, so please invite anyone who you think would be interested.

Also, we are always looking for people who would like to present at our upcoming meetings. If you are interested, or have ideas about possible presenters, please contact Jim Shuttleworth for more information. We have had presentations on a wide range of topics, including personal trips and experiences, and we also welcome presentations on collections of items, or ships and maritime history topics that you are interested in.

We are continuing to expand our online presence, which has been growing considerably, so please follow our Facebook page @shiphistorysocal and our Instagram page @ship_history_socal.

We are also continuing our efforts expand our membership and develop new Board of Directors members and new program/project committee members. We are particularly looking for someone to assist with finding and scheduling presenters for our meetings and someone to handle the raffle, so please contact any Board member if you are interested in helping with those roles, or any other leadership position.

Hope to see all of you soon!

Best,
Kate Vescera

Coming up in 2025 ...

USS *Texas*

OSK's Interwar
Liners

The Versatile C3

The Caribbean on
Oceania's *Sirena*

OCEAN TIMES SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We enjoy a mix of stories involving Pacific and/or Atlantic liners/lines, military ships, and first person narratives.

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

Please send your completed text and image captions (and sources) in a Word document to:
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Hello, and welcome to October's "stateroom reading."

First, we have member Bill Miller recounting the postwar careers of the Italian liners *Saturnia*, *Vulcania*, *Conte Biancamano*, and *Conte Grande*. One pair was restored to their prewar elegance, the other fully embraced modernism.

Next, is *Not a Chinese Junk*, by member Jim Shuttleworth. The *Shna Yak* had the misfortune of having the looks and name of something Chinese. Nothing could be further from the truth for this West Coast workhorse.

Our third story is a selection of postcards from a century-old scrapbook detailing the round-the-world trip of a Boston gentleman that began in November 1924. This issue covers the journey from New York to Japan, with Japan to New York in our April issue. There were so many cards to choose from. One of the discards is to the right.

Our *Ship Shot* is from late member Jim Shaw. When we think of the French Line, we automatically go to their magnificent transatlantic liners. But they also had a presence on the Pacific.

There's a recap of our August meeting, and on the back page, it's been 40 years since the mother of all auctions, the sale of the contents of the ss *United States*, whose fate has been the topic of much discussion this year, as well as *In Our Wake*.

As we wrap up 2024, we thank all of our contributors, for without them, there would not be an *Ocean Times* to put out.

Until next time,
Wayne Yanda



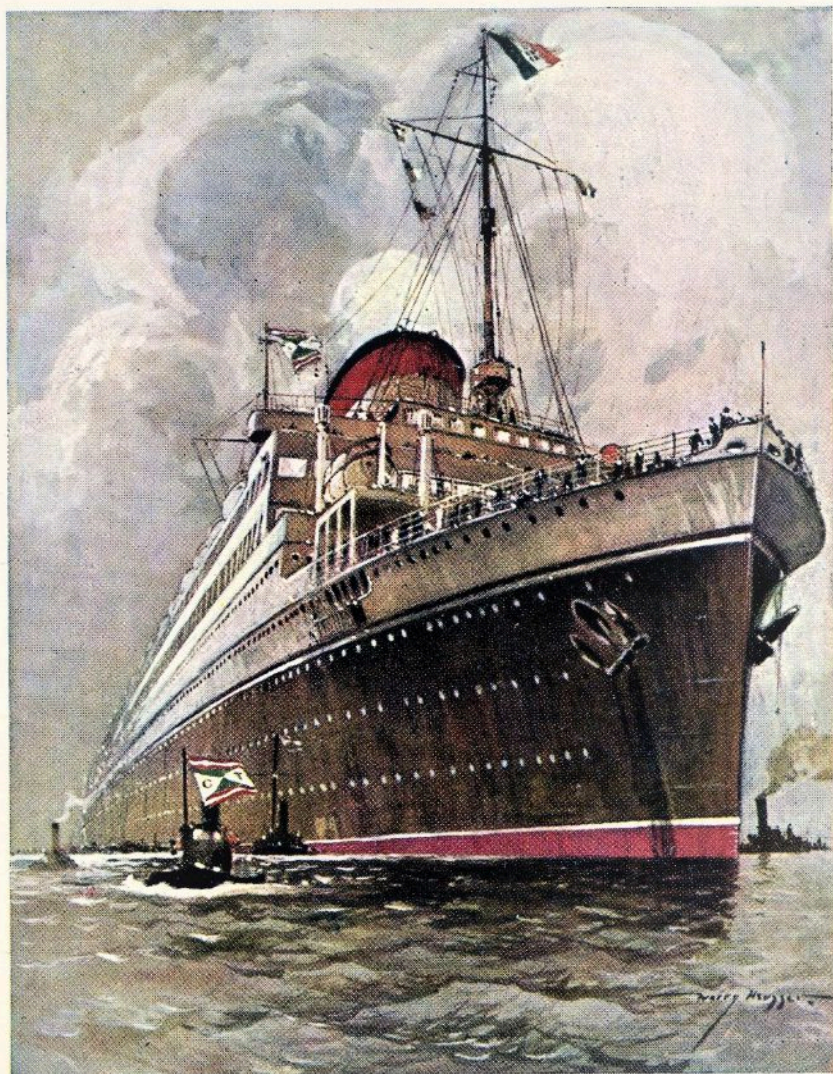
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

NOTICE of ANNUAL MEETING

The 2024 Annual Meeting of the Southern California Chapter of the Steamship Historical Society of America will be held on Saturday, November 9, 2024, at 2 p.m. (Pacific), in the Mauretania Room aboard the *Queen Mary*.

The main purposes of the Annual Meeting will be the election of members to the Chapter Board of Directors, and to address any other business that may be placed on the agenda from the floor by the Chapter Membership.

This meeting will be held in person, and via Zoom.
A Zoom meeting link will be sent out in advance.



SISTER MOTOR VESSELS
SATURNIA - VULCANIA
 (24,000 GROSS TONS)
Maiden Voyage of the M/S „VULCANIA“
from TRIESTE: 19th December 1928.

A 1920s promotion for the *Saturnia* and *Vulcania*. (Author's Collection)

continued from page 1

Both Captain Gavino's grandfather and father had been seamen. His father actually served with the Italian Line in the 1930s, sailing aboard such liners as the *Conte Grande* and *Conte Biancamano*. The young Gavino followed in the family footsteps and attended the naval college in the family's home town of Genoa. He too had hoped to join the Italian Line, but by the time of graduation in 1946, the Company's fleet

was hugely diminished. He had to wait a year, only after serving in very small coastal cargo vessels, before becoming a cadet on an Italian Line Liberty ship, the 7,200-grt *Tritone*.

The Italian merchant marine was in ruins following the Second World War, in 1945-46. Almost all large passenger ships were lost or at least in Allied hands. These included four of the nation's largest liners – the *Saturnia*, *Vulcania*, *Conte Biancamano*, and *Conte Grande* – which were with the Americans. Eventually, they would be returned and restored. Built in 1927 at Monfalcone, the *Saturnia* – which was used during the latter part of World War II as the US hospital ship *Frances Y Slinger* – weighed in at 24,346 tons in the late '40s. Near, but not identical sisters, the *Vulcania* was completed a year later, in 1928.

Once regular trans-Atlantic service, between Naples, Genoa, Cannes, Gibraltar, and New York (there was a westbound call at Halifax as well) was revived in 1948-49, the Italian Line was once again a very popular company. The business and tourist trades in first and cabin class resumed while immigration slowly soared, filling westbound tourist class berths.

"When I was six, in 1949, we went to Italy on the *Saturnia*. We sailed to Naples. My father had business interests in Rome and it was the first of many trips for me in those wonderful Italian Line ships," remembered John Palermo. "There weren't many tourists in first class back then. It was mostly business people and government officials and the high Catholic clergy, bishops and archbishops."

He added, "We returned to the States on the *Vulcania*, which was almost a



left: A brochure cover for the Cosulich Line.
below left: An evocative poster from the 1930s. (both from the Norman Knebel Collection)



twin to the *Saturnia*." The 19-knot motor liner had accommodations for 232 first class, 262 cabin class and 862 tourist class passengers.

"The *Saturnia* and *Vulcania* had very ornate interiors, which as I recall from later visits, were really heavy and dark and actually unlike the sleek, very contemporary Italian-Mediterranean styles of the 1950s and afterward. There was a very small top-deck pool and lido area, where the ship's staff organized games and other fun activities. Sitting on a long pole and then being knocked off and into the pool was one of them. There were children's activities as well and a special tea party in the afternoon and even separate meals for kids. Many of the first class staterooms, which I think were larger than ordinary cabins, had private verandas, a sort of balcony and the kind we find on cruise ships of

below: The first class main lounge on the *Vulcania* in 1949. **bottom:** The *Vulcania* in the Robins Shipyard in Brooklyn, with the *Savangerfjord* behind (both from the Author's Collection)



today. The Italian staff members were very courteous, very charming, very efficient and very friendly to regular passengers. All Italian crews, they seemed to have great pride in their work, in their ship, in Italy itself. Many had worked on the big Italian liners from before the Second World War, ships like the *Rex* and the *Conte di Savoia*."

In the early 1950s, Captain Gavino served aboard the stately *Vulcania*. "An older, very ornate ship, she was actually a 'castle-at-sea' with wood carvings, polished mahogany, a vestibule and grand stairwell, and a first class restaurant that was two decks high."





left: The handsome Conte Grande as built. (ALF Collection) **below:** The Conte Biancamano departing from Genoa. (Paolo Piccione Collection) **bottom:** A stunning postcard in a futurist style promoting The Famous Counts of Lloyd Sabaudo: Conte Rosso, Conte Biancamano, Conte Verde, and Conte Grande. (Wayne Yanda Collection)



The two ships were retired from Italian Line service in the spring of 1965, just as the brand-new *Michelangelo* and *Raffaello* were due to be commissioned. The *Saturnia* was scrapped later that same year, at La Spezia. The *Vulcania* was sold to Grimaldi-Siosa Lines, becoming their *Caribia* and running Europe-West Indies service and later Mediterranean cruising. She grounded in windy conditions off Cannes in September 1972 and was badly damaged. Too old for major repairs, she was later refloated, patched up at Genoa and then sold to Italian shipbreakers at La Spezia. They in turn resold the 44-year-old ship to breakers at Barcelona, who in turn resold her to Taiwanese scrap merchants, who had towed out to the Far East. In July 1974, while awaiting a berth at Kaohsiung, the old ship sprang leaks and began flooding. She was later pumped out and then brought into port to finally meet the demolition crews.

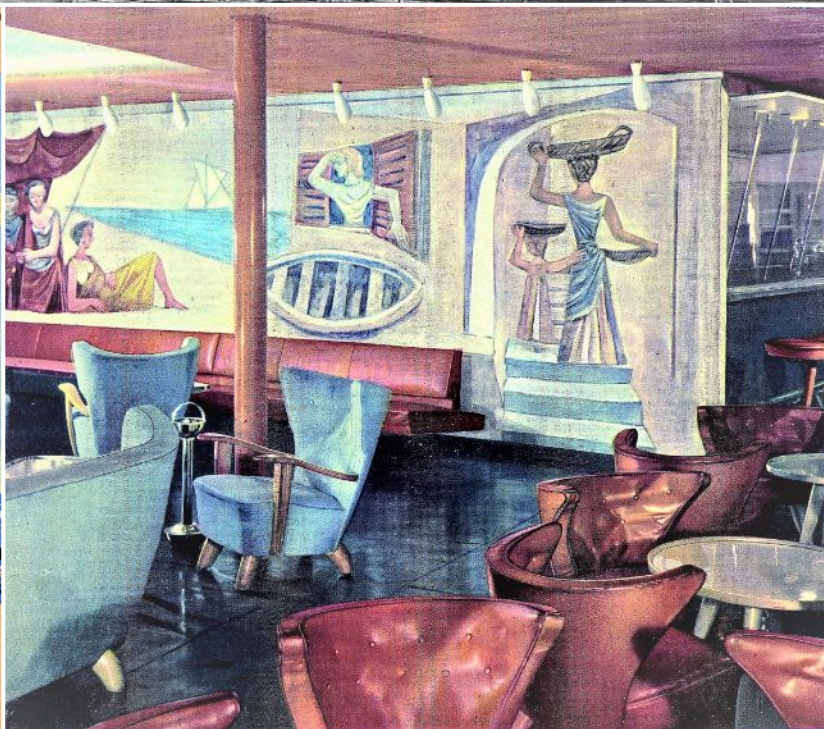




"CONTE GRANDE" "CONTE BIANCAMANO"



DALL' ITALIA AL SUD AMERICA
tutti i comforti nelle tre classi
"ITALIA" SOCIETA' DI NAVIGAZIONE - GENOVA



top: Busy day at Naples: The Conte Grande is in the foreground, with the Vulcania at right, and the Orsony in the background, at left. (Author's Collection)
above left: Postwar brochure cover. **above right:** Postwar modern décor on the Conte Biancamano. (last two, Norman Knebel Collection)

Near-sisters as well, the *Conte Biancamano* and *Conte Grande* were restored for their Genoa-based owners after the War. The Glasgow-built *Conte Biancamano* had been commissioned in 1925 while the Italian-constructed *Conte Grande* made her first debut three years later. They were used on the Italy-New York and later South American runs, and later were used in Lloyd Triestino's service out to the Far East. Laid-up at Santos after Italy entered the war in

Europe in the spring of 1940, the *Conte Grande* was seized a year later by the Brazilian Government, but then promptly resold to the U.S. Government, becoming the trooper USS *Monticello*. The *Conte Biancamano* was laid up at Cristobal in Panama in early 1940, and then she too went to the Americans in December 1941. She became the USS *Hermitage*. Both ships gave heroic service until returned to Italy in 1947. Unlike the other surviving



Roundtrip voyages on the Italian Line.
(Author's Collection)

pair of *Saturnia* and *Vulcania*, the *Conte Biancamano* and *Conte Grande* underwent two-year refits and modernizations. The *Biancamano* was even lengthened by 12 feet and fitted with a more modern bow; the *Conte Grande* was lengthened as well, but also was also given new, wider funnels.

While suited primarily to the post-war tourist and immigrant trades, their berthing arrangements included the still traditional three classes. The 23,842-ton *Conte Biancamano*, for example, carried 1,578 passengers in her post-war guise – 215 in first class, 333 in cabin class, and 1,030 in tourist.

Being among the most lavishly ornate and stylized of the prewar liners, their post-war interiors were changed drastically. They were often said to be the first contemporary large Italian liners, featuring the sleek, modern decor that would go into the likes of the 1951-

52 built *Augustus* and *Giulio Cesare* and then the *Andrea Doria* and *Cristoforo Colombo* of 1952-54. "In the '50s, we crossed on the *Conte Biancamano*, *Augustus*, *Cristoforo Colombo* and, my favorite of all, the *Leonardo da Vinci*," added John Palermo. "Sadly, we never made trips on the *Andrea Doria* or the last two Italian liners, the *Michelangelo* and *Raffaello*. I remember that the *Conte Biancamano* looked old on the outside with two lean stacks and lots of ventilators, but had been greatly modernized, updated on the inside.

"After the war, and then her refurbishing, she hinted at stylish, very contemporary, almost sleek decor that became the signature of the Italian Line at that time. Uniquely, I seem to remember the *Biancamano* had a pool placed between her two stacks. The *Conte Grande* did too, but I think they



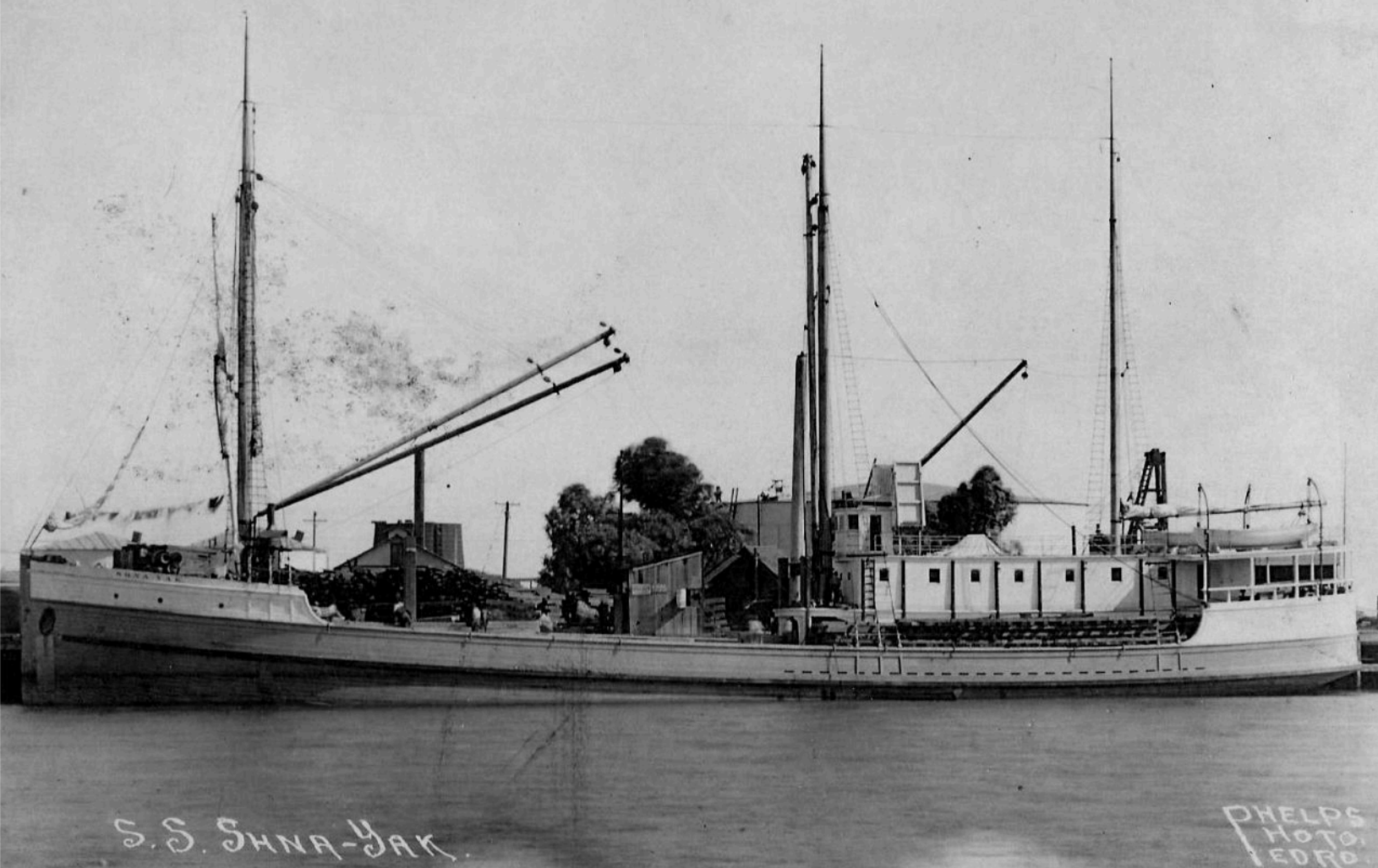
top: "Luxury Liner Row," New York, June 1960, with the Media at top, then the Caronia, Queen Mary, Britannic, Liberte, America, Saturnia, and Constitution. **above left:** Farewell departure at New York for the Saturnia. **above right:** Double Departure: The Conte Biancamano at left, with the Conte Grande at right ready to go. (all three, Author's Collection)

were the only two ships then afloat with such a feature."

Resuming service in 1949, the *Conte Biancamano* and *Conte Grande* were used in the full resumption of Italian Line's South American service – from Naples, Genoa, Cannes, Barcelona, Lisbon and Dakar to Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Montevideo and Buenos Aires. In peak summers, the *Conte Biancamano* was used on the New York run; the *Conte*

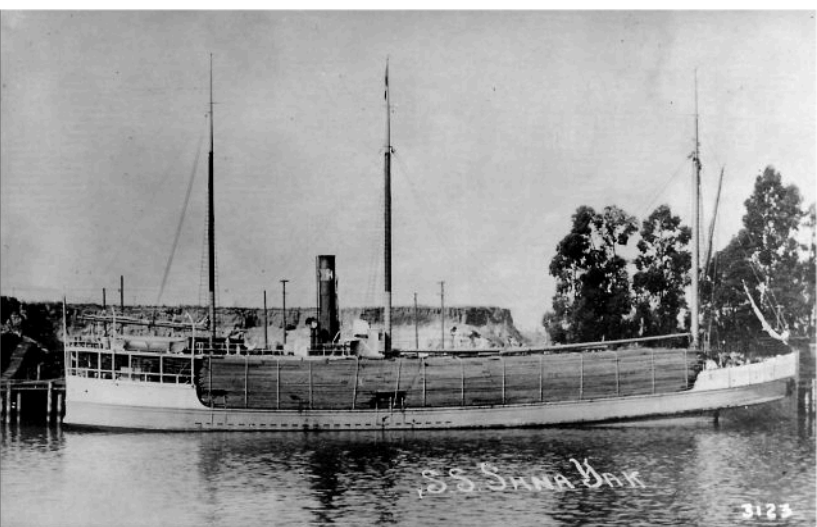
Grande helped also, but only for two voyages in 1956 following the loss of the *Andrea Doria*.

These two liners had long, busy and popular lives, but grew tired by the late 1950s. The *Conte Biancamano* was laid-up in April 1960 and sold to scrappers at La Spezia four months later. The *Conte Grande* was demolished a year later.



above: Steam schooner Shna Yak at San Pedro having discharged her cargo at a lumbar yard, circa 1907-1916. She is also missing her funnel, note the "dome" aft of the pilot house.

below: Shna Yak with a load of lumber, and a funnel.



Not A Chinese Junk

by Jim Shuttleworth

"Not A Chinese Junk" is the title of a newspaper article in the September 24, 1907 issue of the *San Pedro Daily News*. It is an article about the newly built steam schooner *Shna Yak*. The referral to a Chinese Junk apparently stemmed from the name "*Shna Yak*," which the article implies looks like

Chinese. I guess people were not thought to be as worldly then as they are today. I would never have thought of *Shna Yak* was Chinese. According to the article it is Chinook for "Little Queen," referring to an "Alaskan Pocahontas" who saved the life of Win Hall, aka: Winslow Hall, shipbuilder and shipmaster.

Shna Yak was a single-ended steam schooner, 188.7 feet in length, 39.8 feet in beam, 839 tons, with a lumber carrying capacity of 900,000 board feet, built by the Hall Brothers Marine Railway and Shipbuilding Co. of Winslow, Washington (Eagle Harbor, Bainbridge Island) in 1907. *Shna Yak* had a 600-horse-power, triple-expansion steam engine, and was owned and managed by George E. Billings of San Francisco. The engine was built by Fulton Iron

of San Francisco. She lasted thirty years, finally being broken up at San Pablo, California in 1937.

One of more than 200 steam schooners built between the 1880s and 1920s, *Shna Yak*'s working life was not free of accidents – she was actually quite lucky – usually avoiding serious damage. She once crashed into a pier when her reversing engine failed to reverse. Another time she had to be towed into port, waterlogged and needing to be pumped out. When just a year old, she crashed onto some rocks at Point Arena in a dense fog, only being spared by jettisoning her deck load of lumber. Several crew members were injured, but once lightened, she floated free.

One accident stands out though, and it changed the vessel's life. In July 1916, *Shna Yak* ran aground, again in a dense fog, at night, eight miles south of Point Sur, near Pfeiffer's Point, Monterey County, California. Fortunately, the sea was calm and the crew was able reach the beach in the lifeboats. Some spent the night on the beach, others hiked to a ranch a mile or two away. Four crew members had reached San Francisco by the next day. The week prior, *Shna Yak* had broken her crank shaft when enroute to San Pedro from San Francisco with a load of lumber. She had to be towed to San Pedro where the lumber was unloaded and the shaft was replaced in Long Beach.

On this 1916 trip she was headed up coast to Puget Sound for a cargo of lumber; she was empty at the time. At first, *Shna Yak* was considered a total loss, but later her captain declared she could be refloated. The damage included loss of her propeller and stern post, and damage to her keel. It is not

clear who salvaged her, nor when she was sold to Sudden and Christensen. They may have bought, then salvaged her. Or, George E. Billings, the owner, may have salvaged her, then sold *Shna Yak* to Sudden and Christensen. Either way, Sudden and Christensen purchased her.

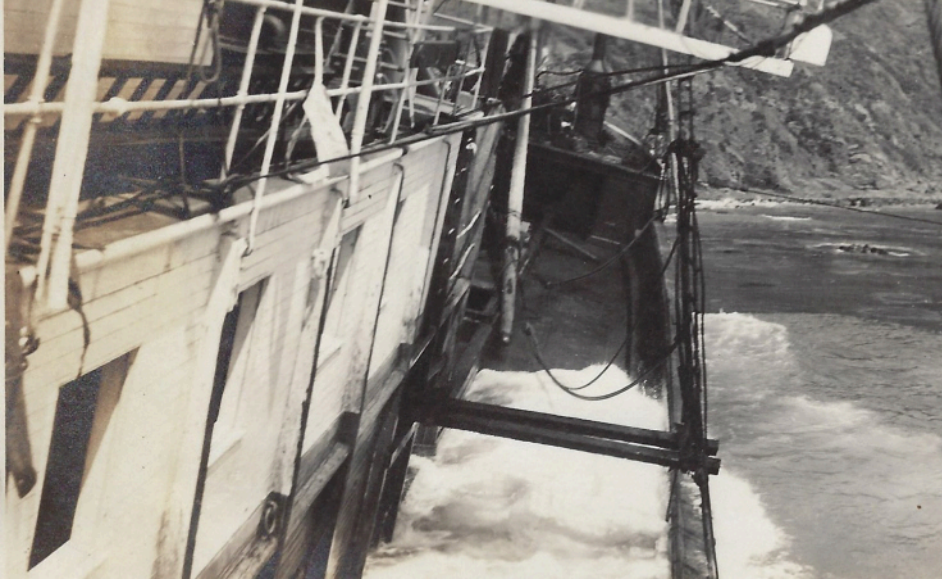
The *Shna Yak* had been seen as a potential supply vessel for Mexico – the Carranza government long interested in buying the vessel, thought to be a bargain at \$150,000. (She had cost \$122,000 new.) However, now she would have to be salvaged. Waterlogged due to five or six feet of water in her hold, by October 1916 she had been refloated and towed to San Francisco for repairs. The new owners named her the *Charles Christensen*. In 1926 they renamed her the *Annie Christensen*. Under the latter two names she may have avoided serious accidents, serving another 20 years, as nothing appears in newspapers through her 1937 scrapping.

Steam schooners are unique to the U.S. West Coast and are a special interest of mine. Even the prestigious Pacific Coast Steamship Company owned steam schooners, especially in the early years. Builders started putting steam engines in sailing schooners so they could more easily enter and depart the small coves known as dogholes (due to their small size). This is why they are called steam schooners – thought to be a misnomer by the uninformed and purists. It is a prolific and widespread term, but newspapers usually just called them steamers. These dangerous small coves were where many lumber mills exported their products. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, roads were still a rarity in Northern California and the Pacific Northwest and steamers provided passenger as well as cargo services to many isolated areas along the coast. The shipping news features of that era's newspapers are full of arrivals and departures from Gray's Harbor, Ventura, Albion, Santa Barbara, Portland, Willapa, and other small ports.

The main cargo carried in steam schooners was lumber until the 1930s. But larger vessels, such as "Lakers" and bigger freighters began to cut into the steam schooner trade as early as the end of WWI. However, until about the 1950s, any vessel that carried lumber was called a steam schooner even if it had a diesel engine. So,

below: Steam schooner
Shna Yak ashore in late
1916 near Pfeiffer's
Point.





left: Starboard deck, looking forward, of grounded steam schooner Shna Yak, awash near Pfeiffer's Point, late 1916.

below: Steam schooner Shna Yak salvage crew beach camp at Pfeiffer's Point, late 1916.



the term steam schooner really was applied to lumber carriers.

The original steam schooners carried much of their lumber cargo on deck. Shorter pieces of lumber could be stowed below; about one-third of the total load. Sometimes, the deck loads of lumber would be lost, or had to be jettisoned in rough seas. Often, they were so overloaded, the lumber kept them afloat. There were two basic types: single enders and double enders. This is determined by where the superstructure (cabins, pilot house, etc.) was located: aft, or in the middle. Many had unobstructed openings along the sides of the superstructure for long pieces of lumber. The largest steam schooners of the original types never exceeded about 250 feet in length. After 1900, many were made of steel rather than wood.

The steam schooner *Esther Johnson* served in WWII. The steam schooner *Wapama* existed until recent years, but her wood was too rotten to be saved. Almost all of her wood would have needed to be replaced, so the National Park Service (her owner) had her scrapped. Pieces of this famous steam schooner, such as her engine, were saved and can be seen in San Francisco on the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park's Hyde Street Pier.

In 1937, one of *Annie Christensen's* (ex-*Charles Christensen*, ex-*Shna Yak*) lifeboats was converted into a pleasure fishing craft named *Cherokee*. In 1977, it was converted into a champagne and cocktail cruise boat.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

On eBay I found half a dozen small photos of a steam schooner on the beach being salvaged. Using a 10-power magnifying glass I was able to determine the vessel's name: *Shna Yak*. Later, I bought a cabinet photo of her at San Pedro (ca 1907-1916).

Using several references and newspaper articles, I have been able to put together this history. Below is a list of those sources for your research use.

List of Merchant Vessels of the US. 1917. US Government.

"Pacific Coast Wooden Steam Schooners 1884-1924." John Lyman (appeared in *The Marine Digest*, 1942-43). Available on the Internet.

Ships of the Redwood Coast. 1945. Jerry Mac Mullen and Jack McNairn.

Steel Steam Schooners of the Pacific Coast. John Lyman (appeared in *The Marine Digest*, 1944). Available on the Internet.

ShipIndex.org.

The California Digital Newspaper Collection. www.cdnc.ucr.edu.

Newspapers consulted for this article:

Humboldt Times: Oct. 11 & 15, 1916.

Oakland Tribune: Feb 11, 1937.

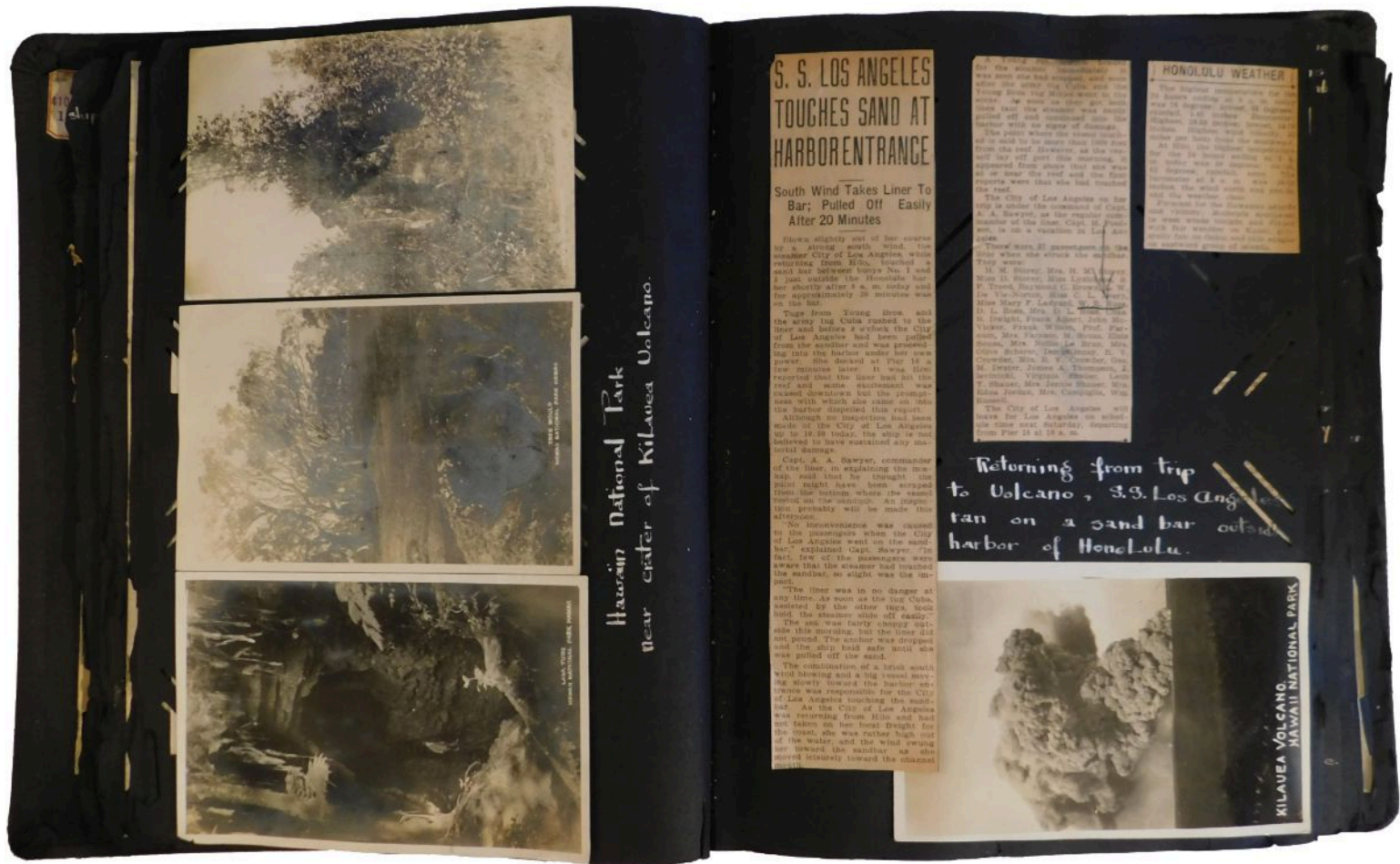
San Francisco Call: Mar 19, 1909; Sept. 6, 1908; Jan 2, 1911.

San Jose Mercury-News: July 23, 1916.

San Pedro Daily News: Sept. 24, 1907; Jan 29 & Feb 23, 1919.

San Pedro News Pilot: Sept 5, 1908; Jan 18, 1911; July 22 & 24, 1916; Sept 19, 1916; Mar 6, 1917.

Sausalito Marin Scope: May 22, 1984.



Editing a Scrapbook

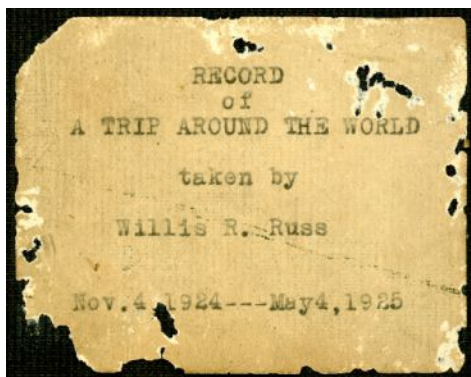
by Wayne Yanda

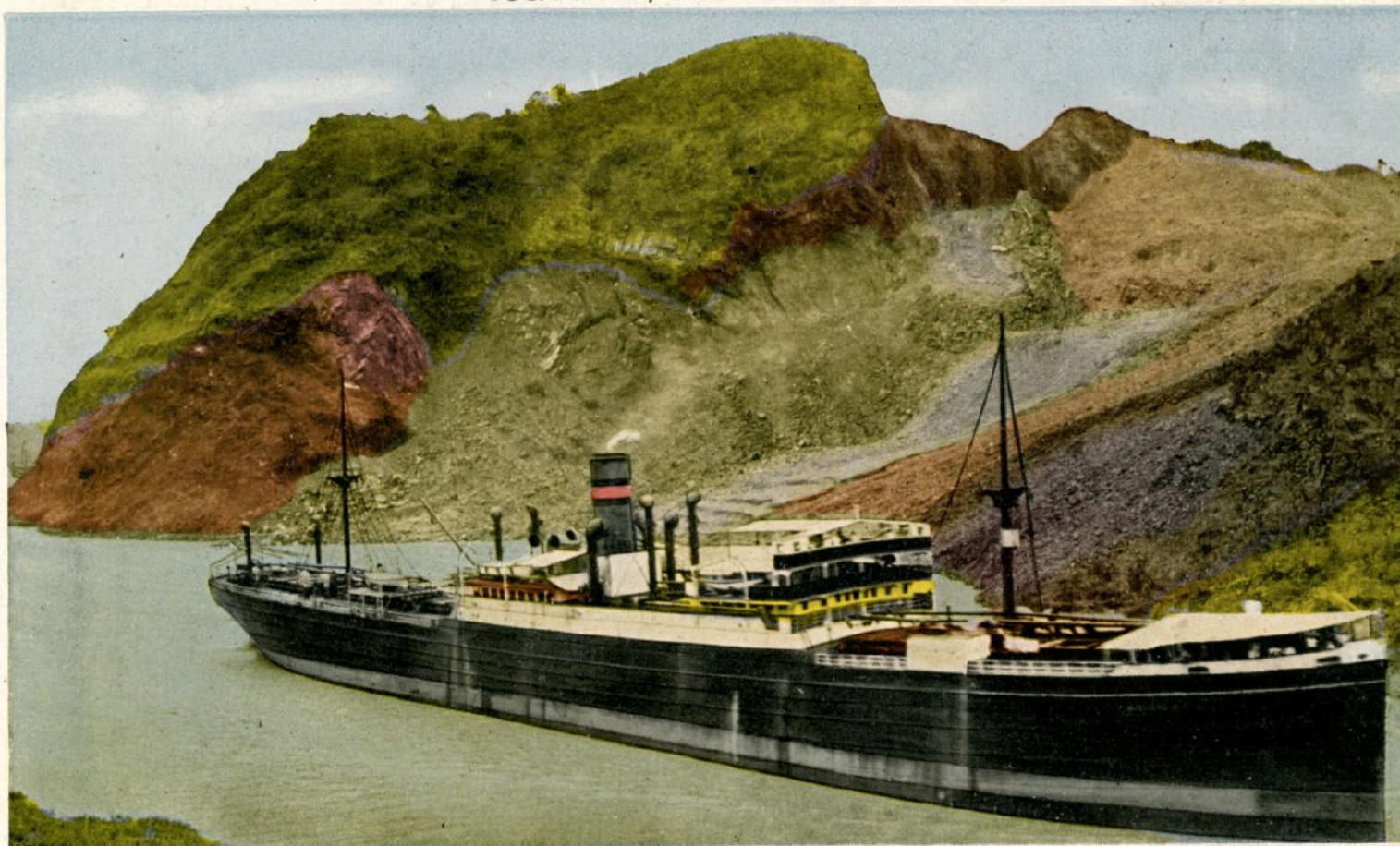
I found this scrapbook online a few years back, thought it a neat relic, and had to have it. When it arrived, I wondered ... What have I done? What have I gotten myself into? (This time.)

Some quick observations. It's a hardback book. The pages are black construction paper, and while all but a few are still solidly in place, the edges have crumbled over the decades. (Which has made reading the writing on some of those pages a bit tricky, if not impossible.) There are slots for photos, or in this case, postcards.

Now editing something that's already been curated is an interesting exercise. Fortunately (?) the decision of which images to include in the following story was made easier due to the fact that many of the postcards were pasted in. (Like the items in the top and bottom left images.) And, given the overall fragility of the book, I was not about to manhandle it any further by flipping it over for the flatbed scanner. The simple act of turning the pages normally was stressful enough.

Overall, it is a fascinating look at travel and tourism from a century ago.





SHIP PASSING GAILLARD OR CULEBRA CUT, RIGHT OPPOSITE CUCARACHA SLIDE, PANAMA CANAL. No. 675

Around the World in 1924

Part 1: New York to Japan

One of the many postcards Willis R. Russ purchased during his round-the-world trip, which took place from November 1924 to May 1925.

Life-long Boston resident Willis R. Russ, having just turned 70, arrived in New York in November 1924 to embark on a world tour; returning in May 1925. He graduated from the Boston School of Technology (now MIT) in 1874, having studied civil engineering. He also did a year at Harvard Medical School, and served in the Massachusetts State Legislature. His wife, Carolyn Hale Russ, who was related to Nathan Hale, and thus a prominent member of Boston's Paul Revere Chapter of the D.A.R., remained at home.* He sent many postcards to her, and the immediate family, and purchased many, many more as souvenirs. His words have been preserved as written, aside from correcting a misspelled word here and there.

Some notes on the text ...

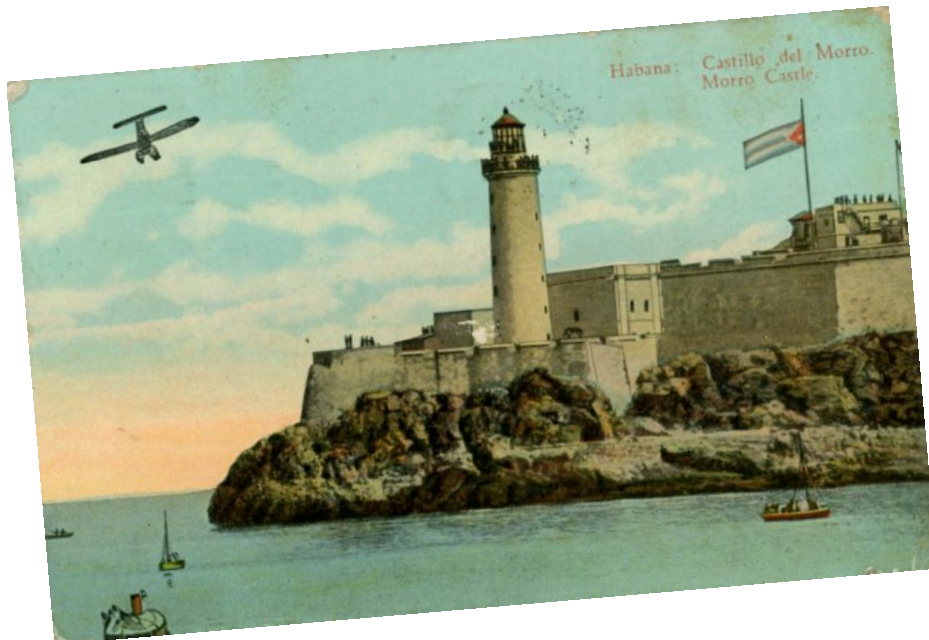
Text in this font are Russ' words as written in the scrapbook.

Text in this font are notes Russ sent home via postcard.

Text in this font are notes from the Editor.

Part II will appear in the April *Ocean Times*, and cover the rest of Russ' trip; including China and India.

*In 1923, Carolyn Hale Russ edited her father's journals of sailing to California and exploring the Pacific Coast during the Gold Rush into the book *The Log of a Forty-Niner*. (You can download a copy from archive.org.)



A clipping from *The Technology Review*, MIT's alumni magazine, reported that during the quarterly lunch on October 15, 1924, Willis R. Russ told those in attendance he would start a trip around the world in November; returning to Boston in May 1925.

HAVANA, CUBA

We reached Havana, Cuba at daybreak, Monday Nov. 10, 1924, and lay off outside the harbor entrance at Morro Castle until about 6 a.m. when we entered between the Morro and Melecon and dropped two anchors into the mud of Havana harbor. We left the ship at 9 a.m. for a sightseeing trip. We only had 3 hours in Havana. Ship left at 1 p.m. while passengers were at lunch.

"Have not yet recovered from the heart break I felt at waving goodbye to poor "Mama" left alone on Pier 61, and deserted in the big city of New York" (Russ to daughter, Ann Bellamy, 11.10.24)

"Trip so far has been ideal. Fine weather smooth seas and all conditions perfect. Am feeling physically all right in every way." (Russ to wife, Carolyn, 11.10.24)

"Have had fairly smooth sea so far. But heat is great. So spend time in a 'gorgeous' loaf." (Russ to daughter, Ann, 11.15.24)



PANAMA

We reached Panama (Cristobal) at daybreak, Thursday, Nov. 20, 1924, and entered the canal about 7 a.m. Passed through the three steps of Gatun Locks, across Gatun Lake, through the one step lock at Pedro Miguel and the Miraflores Locks, two steps, and arrived at Balboa, the Pacific terminal about 3 p.m.

Everything moves with the precision of a perfect machine. On entering a lock the ship is moored on both side fore and aft, then fastened by steel cables to 4 electric locomotives, 2 on each side, which tow the



ship into position and move her from lock to lock. The water enters very fast, but quietly, and ship is raised to height of 85 ft. when massive steel and concrete gates are opened and ship is moved into next lock.

CALIFORNIA

S.S. *Manchuria* docked at San Diego at 10 a.m. Friday, Nov 21, 1924. Visited whole city including Balboa Park where old exhibition buildings of 1915 are still standing. Leave for Los Angeles tonight at 10 p.m.

Great celebration when *Manchuria* left dock, inaugurating new service. Confetti, music, etc. This arrival in San Diego was the opening of regular service between this port and NY. The *Manchuria* was the first boat of the Panama-Pacific to stop here.

Ship arrived at San Pedro Nov. 22, 1924 at 4 a.m. Off ship at 9 a.m. and to Los Angeles on the electric cars. Reached there at 10 a.m. Goodbye to S.S. *Manchuria*.

Russ would stay at the Hotel Rosslyn, on 5th and Main in Los Angeles.

This a.m. – Tuesday Nov. 25 – took Palace Bus for a 3-hour ride to Pasadena. This morning – Thanksgiving Day – I took steamer to Catalina Island, a beautiful steamer trip of 25 miles. Catalina Island is owned by Wm Wrigley the chewing gum magnate.

THE \$ LINE

Got on board the \$ Line S.S. *President Harrison* Dec. 2.

Russ amassed a variety of postcards showing the many sights he saw on his journey. The Hotel del Coronado would serve as Miami's Seminole Ritz Hotel in director Billy Wilder's 1959 classic, *Some Like It Hot*.





Russ included an article on the Harrison's captain, K. A. Ahlin. For 76,830 miles and 63 landings, Ahlin had, in all weather conditions, "never been as much as one minute late in either arriving at or sailing from a port." Also, "on each trip around the world, the President Harrison [had] loaded and discharged from three to six times both her passenger and freight capacity."

ON BOARD THE \$ LINE

As [we] left dock, passengers were loaded with rolls of colored streamers until ship was encased in a web of streamers fluttering in the breeze. Band played, and there was cheering and weeping – a soul stirring spectacle. Good passage up rugged coast of California. [We] docked here at 9.30 p.m., Dec. 3. The next morning, I left ship and tramped around [San Francisco].

"We entered Golden Gate after dark. Too late to see this sunset effect, but it is a true picture of numerous sun-sets we have had on Pacific in sailing up the coast." (Russ to daughter Ann Bellamy, 12.4.24)

In the Souvenir Passenger List, Russ was one of the 24 named as "round the world," along with those from Chicago, Michigan, New York, Oregon, Ohio, and a Baroness Virginia Van Horn from Naples.

President Harrison left San Francisco for Honolulu at 3.45 p.m. Dec. 6. Great excitement.

HAWAII

Called at 6 a.m. Dec. 13 as Islands of Hawaii came into sight. At 9 a.m. we docked and went ashore.

"Here Saturday a.m. Also Elks Club on this beach. 'Going' all the time." (Russ to daughter Ann Bellamy, 12.14.24)

Russ took the *City of Los Angeles* to Hilo to see Kilauea in Hawaii National Park. On the way back, the ship was blown slightly off course, hitting a sandbar outside of Honolulu. She was pulled off in 20 minutes, before many of the 37 passengers onboard had any idea what was going on.

On December 19, 1924, Russ made the news when *The Honolulu Advertiser* reported the meeting of Russ and Joseph S. Emerson. They had last seen each other 50 years prior as graduates of MIT.

Thurs. Dec. 25. Xmas Day! An ideal day – mild, balmy, with clear blue sky. A feeling of peacefulness and contentment all about the city.

Xmas Eve we all took part in grand open air celebration – a concert by the great [Royal] Hawaiian band, singing, and the lighting of a great Xmas tree decorated with colored lights.

The celebration took place on the grounds of the capitol, with hundreds of singers gathered by the Interchurch Federation leading the thousands that had gathered in several carols.

Russ boarded the *President Van Buren* on December 27. On December 29, passengers were asked to “appear at dinner decorated. With heads in general, and faces in particular.”

JAPAN

S.S. *President Van Buren* docked at Kobe at 7 a.m. Jan. 9. After baggage inspection at Custom House, had lunch at Oriental Hotel and planned for trip through Japan.

An undated newspaper article pasted in the scrapbook marking the *Van Buren's* arrival noted the “prominent list” onboard, including a prominent Chicago surgeon, a New Jersey brick manufacturer, and “Mr. Willis Russ of Boston, who ... spends his leisure hours writing poetry.” Several





would stop off at Kobe for tours, others at Egypt, and France. The *Van Buren* offloaded 100 tons of cargo at Kobe, took on 1,000 tons, and carried 5,800 tons for other ports.

NARA

Jan. 10 th. Took train to Nara where we arrived at 1p.m. – 3 hr. ride. Thousands of deer roam at liberty thru temple grounds and streets near park. These deer mob one for cakes, and nudge one so that one can scarcely walk about – a wonderful sight!

KYOTO

“Left Nara for Kyoto Sunday P.M. Long ride to these rapids! (in car) yesterday, then down in boat, 12 miles in about 1 hour, quite exciting. P.M. to temples and tomb of Emperor – back at 5. Eving at theatre, when had to cover



Russ thoughtfully bought a postcard detailing the history of the Kamakura Daibutsu. Cast in September 1252, the bronze stands about 50 feet high, and is 98 feet in circumference. The face is 8 ½ feet long. From knee to knee is 36 feet. It survived a tidal wave in 1495, and still stands to this day.



shoes with soft sandals. Before entering temples had to remove shoes & go in stockings. Cold here – but am all right.” (Russ to Carolyn, 1.13.25)

[The Kyoto Hotel] is a very grand hotel and I have a great big room with open fireplace (& fire in it) also a bathroom as big as our kitchen and a big closet as big as Arthur’s office. After supper we all go to Japanese Theatre. **Arthur was a son-in-law.**

Everything in Japan is very strange and unusual to us. We stare and the natives stare. Children everywhere, just like our

Japanese dolls in their queer little kimonos and clogs or sandals.

KAMAKURA

Arrived here Jan. 16.

NIKKO

2000 ft. elevation

"You would like it here. Plenty of snow, high mountains, rivers, lakes. Grand scenery. Children in quaint garments, mincing along with dainty steps – in clogs and sandals. All new & strange." (Russ to daughter Ann Bellamy, 1.18.25)

"We move so rapidly that it is hard work to find time to write you. Yesterday we visited the big Dai-butsu at Kamakura, also sacred island of Enoshima, then ruins of Yokohama & Tokyo and slept in Nikko, where we now are." (Russ to Carolyn, 1.18.25)

"Today we visit the many shrines & temples of Nikko, Japan. We arrived here at 9.15 last night. After supper, watched skating on rink of hotel till 11." (Russ to son-in-law, Arthur Bellamy, 1.18.25)

There are very strong currents and tides in this beautiful "Inland Sea of Japan." The water is always boiling and swirling, and it is dangerous to navigate.

TOKYO

Russ included several views of the Imperial Hotel, which had opened in September 1923, and was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. No notes saying he stayed there. (No notes saying he didn't.)

Among the non-postcard ephemera pasted in this section of the scrap book is an ad from a Japanese newspaper for *The White Sister*, a movie starring Lillian Gish.

Russ was apparently so on the go, that from January 19 to January 22, he sent four postcards to family simply saying, "Greetings from Tokyo, Japan."

Look for Part 2 in 2025!





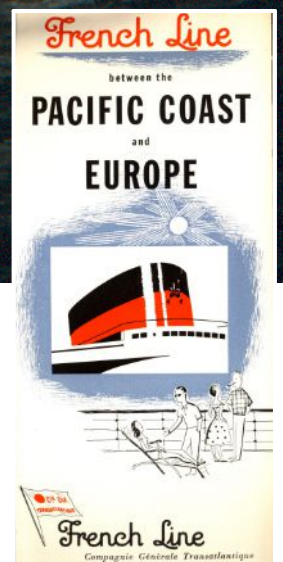
One of four French Line freighters serving the Pacific coast until the mid-1970s, the 9,224gt *Maryland* is seen with containers crowding her decks only a few years before her sale to Singapore interests for further trading.

(J. Shaw Collection)

The French Line's Pacific Coast Liners

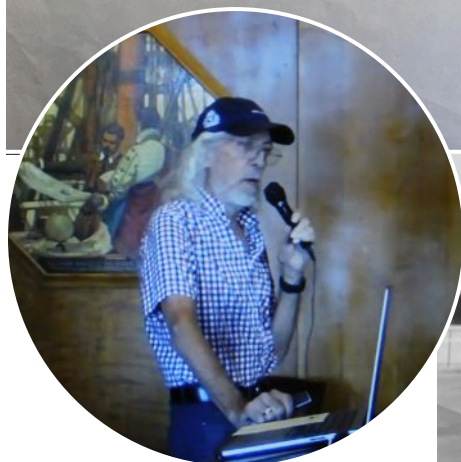
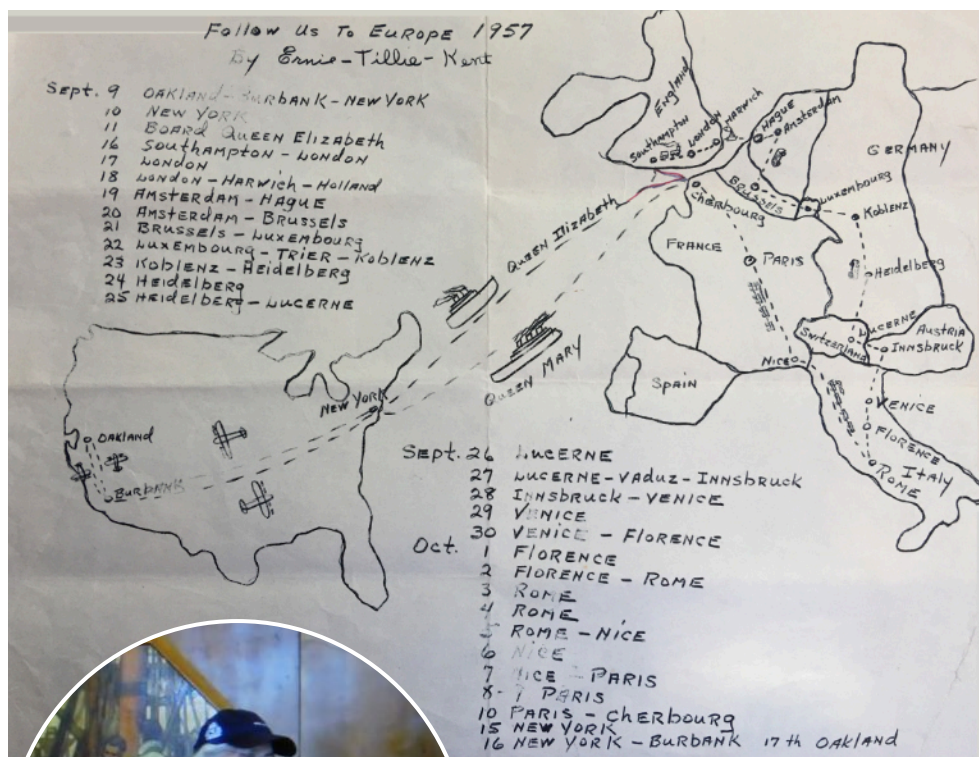
The French Line was well known on the U.S. East Coast for its large transatlantic passenger liners but the Pacific Coast was also visited by this famous European company, although the ships were not quite as glamorous as the firm's transatlantic greyhounds. In the late 1950s, a series of four 490-foot by 62-foot "M" class vessels were commissioned to replace the French company's earlier "W" class ships - Wyoming, Winnipeg, Washington, and Chili - all completed just after the war.

The "M"s - Maryland, Mississippi, Michigan, and Magellan - were among the last split superstructure cargo vessels to be built and were larger and faster than their predecessors but like the earlier ships still accommodated 12 passengers in first class luxury. They were all phased out of service in the mid-1970s as containerization took hold, the 9,224gt Maryland going to Singapore interests for further trading between South East Asia and South America as the Senang Island in 1976, after which the ship was broken up in Pakistan during 1981.



story & images
by Jim Shaw





Scenes from SoCal's August Meeting

For our August 3rd meeting, member Kent Sanctuary regaled those in attendance with his adventures aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary* during crossings taken with his parents in the fall of 1957.

Among the images shared was a map he drew illustrating the trip, candid and posed shots of Kent and his parents, and many scenes in and about the ships. He also remembered the fun he had playing with the other kids his age and sneaking into first class areas.

Having sailed on both, Kent said he liked the *Elizabeth* because she was bigger, newer, cleaner, but also said there's a "special place" in his heart for the *Mary*, before finally admitting that it was a toss-up.

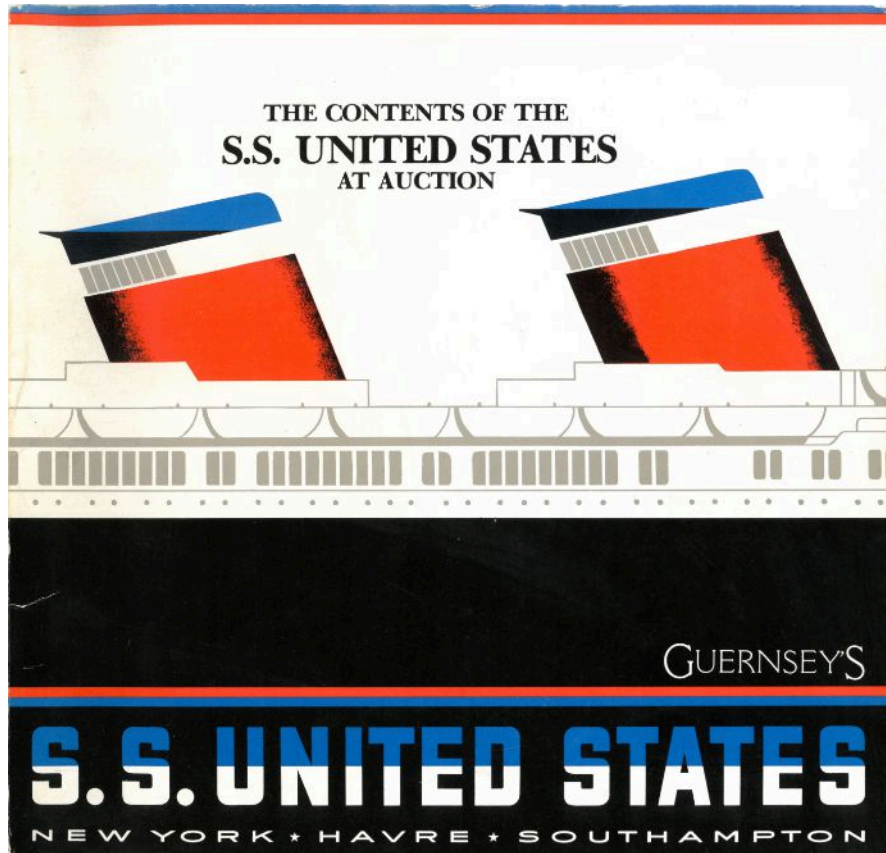
Our popular raffle at the end was once again organized by board

members Jim Shuttleworth and Terry Tilton. Many thanks to them for all their hard work. If you have items that you are interested in donating for the raffle, please contact Jim Shuttleworth.

Please note that our next Chapter meeting will be November 8, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. (Pacific) on the *Queen Mary* and on Zoom. This will coincide with SSHSA's National Meeting. See page two for more details.

If you are interested in speaking to the SoCal Chapter, or have ideas about possible presenters, please contact Jim Shuttleworth for more information. We enjoy talks on a wide range of topics, including personal trips and experiences. We also welcome presentations on collections of items, or ships and maritime history topics that you are interested in.





The Mother of All Auctions

For one week, October 8-14, 1984, everything, save the engines, went under the gavel under the guise of prepping the ss *United States* for a \$125,000,000 *France-to-Norway*-style refit.

Rightly hailed as a “once in a lifetime event,” it’s still acknowledged as the largest auction ever held. Over 700 bidders gathered in a warehouse at the Norfolk International Terminals, as the Big U loomed in the distance.

Many pieces, including the ship’s bell, wound up in a restaurant in Nag’s Head, North Carolina. Now closed, most of those items now reside with the SS United States Conservancy.

Publisher Malcolm Forbes dropped \$2,200 for two dozen dinner plates. (No doubt they were used on his yacht, *The Highlander*.)

Mira Jedwabnik Van Doren, who executed enamel decorations for some of the first class suites, and the table tops for the first class observation lounge, walked away with one of those tables, and a set of enamels from one of the suites. (She would loan that table to the 2017 exhibit *Ocean Liners: Glamour, Speed and Style*.)

The Mariners’ Museum in Newport News, Virginia, has one of the more prominent artworks in Gwen Lux’s *Expressions of Freedom*, which once commanded attention in the first class dining room.

One of Guernsey’s owners nabbed Bill King’s Mercator map from the first class smoking room; the panel with the East Coast graces their lobby in New York.

The original plan was to dump everything they could into the Atlantic during the trip to the German shipyard set to do the (unrealized) refit. But if that Seattle real estate developer, who bought her in 1980, had had a lick of sense, they would’ve taken a page from the *Rotterdam*, which remained (mostly) unchanged since her introduction in 1959, and as a result, is still with us today; a testament to mid-century design. And that’s why hindsight is 20/20.



Southern California Chapter members continue to support *PowerShips* with the Summer 2024 issue. Member **Bill Miller** continues his “Lives of the Liners” series

presenting the story of French Line’s post-World War II return to transatlantic service starting with the passenger-cargo ship *Oregon* in *Crossing the Atlantic: Onboard French Line, Part I*. Looking forward to the next installment.

Recently departed member, and *PowerShips* West Coast Regional Editor, **Jim Shaw**, who authored more than 30 articles for *PowerShips*, and over two dozen for the *Ocean Times*, will be honored with the SSHSA’s Samuel Ward Stanton Lifetime Achievement Award at the coming National Convention to be held aboard the *Queen Mary*, November 8-10.

Aimee Bachari, SSHSA Educational Director conducted an interview with Shaw on the comradeship and experiences of life-long friendships started during long ocean voyages.

Finally, via Zoom, member **Peter Knego** wowed viewers with his presentation *Modernism at Sea*, as part of the Ocean Liner Society’s (UK) August program. Member **Wayne Yanda** impressed those tuning into the September meeting of the World Ship Society – Port of New York Branch with *The Art + Design of Matson’s Postwar Liners*.

