

= SS Ohioan (1914) =

SS Ohioan was a cargo ship built in 1914 for the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company . During World War I , she was taken over by the United States Navy and commissioned as USS Ohioan (ID @-@ 3280) .

Ohioan was built by the Maryland Steel Company as one of eight sister ships ordered by the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company for inter @-@ coastal service cargo via the Panama Canal . When the canal was temporarily closed by landslides in late 1915 , Ohioan sailed via the Straits of Magellan until the canal reopened in mid 1916 . During World War I , USS Ohioan carried cargo , animals , and a limited number of passengers to France , and returned over 8 @, @ 000 American troops after the Armistice , including the highly decorated American soldier Alvin York . After Ohioan 's naval service ended in 1919 , she was returned to her original owners .

Ohioan 's post @-@ war career was relatively uneventful until 8 October 1936 , when she ran aground near Seal Rock at the Golden Gate , the entrance to San Francisco Bay . Attempts to free the ship were unsuccessful and , because of the close proximity of the wreck to San Francisco , the grounded Ohioan drew large crowds to watch salvage operations . Angelo J. Rossi , the mayor of San Francisco , toured the wreck on 19 October . Ohioan 's hulk caught fire in March 1937 , and the wreck broke into two pieces in a storm in December . As late as 1939 , some of Ohioan 's rusty steel beams were still visible on the rocks .

= = Design and construction = =

In May 1912 , the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company placed an order with the Maryland Steel Company of Sparrows Point , Maryland , for two new cargo ships ? Iowan and Ohioan . The contract cost of the ships was set at the construction cost plus an 8 % profit for Maryland Steel , but with a maximum price of \$ 640 @, @ 000 per ship . Maryland Steel financed the construction with a credit plan which called for a 5 % down payment in cash followed by nine monthly installments for the balance . The deal allowed for some of the nine installments to be converted into longer @-@ term notes or mortgages . The final cost of Ohioan , including financing costs , was \$ 73 @. @ 58 per deadweight ton , which came out to just under \$ 730 @, @ 000 .

Ohioan (Maryland Steel yard no . 133) was the second ship built under the contract . She was launched on 24 January 1914 , and delivered to American @-@ Hawaiian on 30 June . The ship was 6 @, @ 649 gross register tons (GRT) , and was 407 feet 7 inches (124 @. @ 23 m) in length (between perpendiculars) and 53 feet 8 inches (16 @. @ 36 m) abeam . She had a deadweight tonnage of 9 @, @ 920 LT DWT , and her cargo holds , which had a storage capacity of 438 @, @ 154 cubic feet (12 @, @ 407 @. @ 1 m³) , were outfitted with a complete refrigeration plant so that she could carry perishable products from the West Coast ? such as fresh produce from Southern California farms ? to the East Coast . Ohioan had a single steam engine powered by oil @-@ fired boilers that drove a single screw propeller at a speed of 12 knots (22 km / h) .

= = Early career = =

When Ohioan began sailing for American @-@ Hawaiian , the company shipped cargo from East Coast ports via the Straits of Magellan to West Coast ports and Hawaii , and vice versa . Eastbound shipments were primarily sugar and pineapple from Hawaii , but westbound cargoes were more general in nature . Following the opening of the Panama Canal on 15 August 1914 , American @-@ Hawaiian ships switched to take that route .

As World War I continued in Europe and increased the demand for defense @-@ related shipping , American @-@ Hawaiian stopped its sugar service . Ohioan 's specific activities during this time are not known . She may have been in the half of the American @-@ Hawaiian fleet that was chartered for transatlantic service , or she may have been in the group of American @-@ Hawaiian ships chartered for service to South America , delivering coal , gasoline , and steel in exchange for coffee , nitrates , cocoa , rubber , and manganese ore .

= = World War I = =

Unlike her surviving sister ships , there is no evidence that Ohioan was ever chartered by the United States Army ; Ohioan 's activities between the United States ' declaration of war on Germany in April 1917 , and her acquisition by the United States Navy on 5 August 1918 , are unknown . She was commissioned into the Naval Overseas Transportation Service (NOTS) two days later , under a loan charter . After a refit and taking on a load of cargo , Ohioan sailed for Saint @-@ Nazaire , France , where she arrived on 29 August . Dividing the next month between that port and Brest , Ohioan sailed for New York on 1 October . Fitted there with horse stalls , she loaded 60 officers and men , and equestrian and general cargo , before sailing on 1 November for La Pallice .

With the signing of the Armistice on 11 November the fighting came to an end , and the task of bringing home American soldiers began almost immediately . Upon her return to the United States on 5 December , Ohioan was selected to become a troop transport and transferred from the NOTS to the Cruiser and Transport Force . Before she could begin returning troops , Ohioan had to be converted from a cargo and animal ship . Although sources do not indicate the specific modifications Ohioan underwent , typical conversions for other ships included the installation of berths , and adding greatly expanded cooking and toilet facilities to handle the large numbers of men aboard . Similar modifications on Ohioan 's sister ship Minnesotan took three months , but it is not known how long Ohioan 's refit took .

In March , Ohioan returned 1 @, @ 627 men to New York , mostly from the 348th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 87th Infantry Division , followed by another 1 @, @ 596 officers and men , and 1 @, @ 000 homing pigeons on 16 April . Among the pigeons was Cher Ami ? the only bird sent out by the Lost Battalion that was able to get a message through ? and 100 captured German pigeons . Cher Ami had received the French Croix de Guerre with Palm and had been recommended for the U.S. Army Distinguished Service Cross by General John J. Pershing .

Ohioan docked at New York on 22 May on her next voyage with a portion of the 328th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 82nd Infantry Division . One of the members of the unit was Sergeant Alvin C. York , who had led an attack on a German machine gun nest during the Meuse @-@ Argonne Offensive and captured 132 German officers and men . York had been honored with the U.S. Medal of Honor and the French Croix de Guerre with Palm (among other awards) , both of which he wore on his coat on arrival at New York . After Ohioan docked , York held a well @-@ attended press conference on board .

On 20 June , Ohioan returned another load of troops that included Base Hospital 98 , and the 20th Engineers . By the time Ohioan had completed her sixth and final trooping voyage on 16 September 1919 , Ohioan had carried home 8 @, @ 383 healthy and wounded men . USS Ohioan was decommissioned on 6 October 1919 , and returned to American @-@ Hawaiian .

= = Later career = =

Ohioan resumed cargo service with American @-@ Hawaiian after her return from World War I service . Although the company had abandoned its original Hawaiian sugar routes by that time , Ohioan continued inter @-@ coastal service through the Panama Canal relatively uneventfully for the next 17 years . On 23 November 1933 , Ohioan collided with Liberty in the Ambrose Channel . She was consequently beached near the West Bank Light . Ohioan was refloated on 26 November .

In early morning hours of 8 October 1936 , however , Ohioan ran aground near Seal Rock on the south shore of the Golden Gate , just outside San Francisco Bay . The ship , sailing in a dense fog , strayed too close to shore and grounded on the rocks , sending a shower of sparks that lit up the night . When the fog cleared later in the morning , the ship was firmly seated on the rocks at the base of a 250 @-@ foot (76 m) cliff , and some 300 feet (91 m) from the mainland . Coast Guardsmen on shore attached three lines to the ship and set up a breeches buoy to take off the harbor pilot , but the crew stayed on board the ship in hopes that the high tide would free her from

the rocky perch . As word of the shipwreck spread , spectators clambered over the cliff to get a view of the scene ; one man died from a heart attack and two women broke ankles in separate falls . Newsboys soon arrived on the scene , selling newspapers telling of Ohioan 's woe within sight of the stranded ship . Policemen were called out to keep order as the crowd grew into the thousands .

The next day , as the seas battered the ship and drove her farther on the rocks , two Coast Guard boats took 31 men from the ship . American @-@ Hawaiian announced that a Los Angeles salvage firm had been hired to retrieve the 1 @,@ 500 @-@ long @-@ ton (1 @,@ 520 t) cargo , which included explosives and oil . Two heavy @-@ duty electric pumps were lowered to the ship via the breeches buoy , and plans were drawn up for connecting them to the San Francisco municipal electric system in order to pump out the ship .

The crowds of onlookers continued to watch as salvage efforts progressed ; a 75 @-@ year @-@ old woman from Oakland fell down the embankment while watching the action on 13 October . The mayor of San Francisco , Angelo J. Rossi , rode the breeches buoy to the ship and toured it for 45 minutes on 19 October . On 22 October , the Los Angeles Times ran an Associated Press story saying that marine experts were considering the use of a method first patented by Abraham Lincoln in May 1849 in order to re @-@ float the stranded ship . All efforts , however , were unsuccessful , and by 31 October , American @-@ Hawaiian placed an advertisement in the Los Angeles Times requesting bids for the purchase of the ship and her cargo " as and where she now lies ... on the rocks near Point Lobos , San Francisco " . E. J. Mitchell was the winning bidder , securing rights to the ship and its cargo for \$ 2 @,@ 800 .

In March 1937 , five months after the wreck , the hulk of Ohioan ? still aground near Seal Rock ? caught fire when a watchman aboard the ship attempted to burn some meat in a refrigerator . The flames died out before reaching the explosives that remained aboard the wreck . A Pacific storm in December the same year caused the hulk of Ohioan to break in two . By 1939 , only remnants of some of Ohioan 's rusty steel beams were still visible on the rocks .

Author Mark Ellis Thomas suggests that English poet and novelist Malcolm Lowry may have been inspired by the wreck of Ohioan in his poem " In Tempest 's Tavern " . One excerpt from the poem refers to " The Ohio [sic] smoking in Frisco on a sharp pen / Of rock " . At the time of Ohioan 's grounding , Lowry was in San Diego , preparing to sail to Acapulco .