

= USS West Avenal ( ID @-@ 3871 ) =

USS West Avenal ( ID @-@ 3871 ) was a cargo ship in the United States Navy during World War I. She had been built as SS West Avenal for the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) as part of the West boats , a series of steel @-@ hulled cargo ships built on the West Coast of the United States . West Avenal was launched in October 1918 by the Western Pipe and Steel Company of San Francisco , California , and delivered to the US Navy when she was completed in February 1919 . After she was commissioned and had taken on a load of flour , West Avenal sailed to Norfolk , Virginia , where she was decommissioned in early April .

Though little is available regarding West Avenal 's civilian career , she is known from contemporary news account to have visited ports in Spain , Italy , France , Brazil and Uruguay in the early 1920s . In January 1920 , West Avenal was rammed by a British cargo ship in New York Harbor and was grounded to prevent her sinking . By late 1928 , West Avenal had been abandoned by the USSB , and was scrapped in August 1929 .

= = Design and construction = =

The West ships were cargo ships of similar size and design built by several shipyards on the West Coast of the United States for the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) for emergency use during World War I. All were given names that began with the word West , like West Avenal , one of some 15 West ships built by the Western Pipe and Steel Company of San Francisco , California .

West Avenal ( Western Pipe and Steel No. 3 ) was launched on 13 October 1918 , and delivered to the Navy upon completion on 1 February 1919 . The ship was 5 @,@ 692 gross register tons ( GRT ) , and was 410 feet 5 inches ( 125 @.@ 10 m ) long ( between perpendiculars ) and 54 feet ( 16 @.@ 5 m ) abeam . West Avenal had a steel hull and a 29 @-@ foot @-@ 9 @-@ inch ( 9 @.@ 07 m ) deep hold . She displaced 12 @,@ 200 t , and had a deadweight tonnage of 8 @,@ 735 DWT .

In common with the first eight ships built by Western Pipe & Steel , West Avenal was powered by a single General Electric steam turbine rated at 2 @,@ 500 shaft horsepower , that drove a single screw propeller , and moved the ship at a 10 @.@ 5 kn ( 19 @.@ 4 km / h ; 12 @.@ 1 mph ) pace . These General Electric turbines proved unreliable and most of the ships powered by them were either lost or scrapped by the end of the 1920s . Later vessels of the same type built by WPS for the USSB were powered by much more reliable Joshua Hendy triple expansion steam engines , and had considerably longer service lives .

= = Career = =

USS West Avenal ( ID @-@ 3871 ) was commissioned into the Navy on 1 February with Lieutenant Commander Franz Patterson , USNRF , in command . West Avenal took on an initial load of flour and departed San Francisco on 17 April for New York . She soon developed a steering gear problem and put in at San Diego for repairs . After getting underway again , she transited the Panama Canal and , cutting short her journey , arrived at Norfolk , Virginia , on 4 April . There she was decommissioned the next day and returned to the USSB .

West Avenal departed Norfolk on a voyage to Leith , Scotland on 9 April 1919 , but was forced to return to port after suffering an engine breakdown . Following repairs , she made several voyages between the East Coast of the United States and various destinations in South America , Spain , France and England . A few mentions of the ship crop up in contemporary news accounts . In August 1919 , for example , The New York Times shows West Avenal slated for departure to Buenos Aires , Argentina , on 12 August . The following January , the newspaper reported that West Avenal was rammed by the British Leyland Line cargo ship Lacastrian . Departing New York in a dense fog on the morning of 9 January 1920 for Antwerp , Lacastrian rammed into the port side of West Avenal , which was inbound with a load of onions from Valencia , Spain . The damage was severe enough that West Avenal 's captain ordered her grounded to avoid sinking in New York Harbor . More than two weeks later , The Washington Post printed a photograph of West Avenal ,

still grounded off the Red Hook flats . Another report in the Times a year later showed her arrival in Saint @-@ Nazaire , France , on 13 August 1920 .

In January 1921 , The Atlanta Constitution ran a travelogue of a local man who had sailed on West Avenal to South America in August 1919 . During his travels , West Avenal had departed the US on 27 August and called at Saint Thomas , U.S. Virgin Islands ; Rio de Janeiro ( where the ship arrived on 24 September ) Santos in Brazil ; and Montevideo , Uruguay . Another report in The New York Times the following year listed West Avenal 's arrival in Genoa , Italy , on 19 January 1921 .

West Avenal underwent further repairs in 1921 , after which she was laid up by the USSB in the Staten Island Reserve Fleet 3 Section 1 . The vessel was delivered at New York to the Union Shipbuilding Company of Baltimore , Maryland for scrapping on 29 August 1929 .