

= USS West Bridge ( ID @-@ 2888 ) =

USS West Bridge ( ID @-@ 2888 ) was a cargo ship in the United States Navy during World War I. She was begun as SS War Topaz but was completed as SS West Bridge , though she was referred to in some publications under the spelling Westbridge . After the ship was decommissioned from the Navy , the ship returned to civilian service as SS West Bridge , but was renamed SS Barbara Cates , and SS Pan Gulf over the course of her civilian career under American registry . Near the end of World War II , the ship was renamed SS Lermontov ( Russian : ????????? ) when she sailed under the Soviet flag .

West Bridge was one of the West ships , a series of steel @-@ hulled cargo ships built for the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) on the West Coast of the United States . The ship was launched in April 1918 and delivered to the U.S. Navy upon completion in May . After commissioning , USS West Bridge sailed from the Pacific Northwest to the East Coast of the United States and joined a convoy of cargo ships headed to France in August . After West Bridge suffered an engine breakdown at sea , the convoy was attacked by two German submarines and West Bridge was torpedoed and abandoned . A salvage crew from American destroyer Smith boarded the ship the following day , and , working with four tugs dispatched from France , successfully brought the ship into port . Four men received the Navy Cross for their efforts in saving West Bridge .

After seven months of repair , West Bridge resumed Navy service until her December 1919 decommissioning and return to the USSB . West Bridge was laid up for nearly seven years from 1922 to 1929 , when she was sold for service on an intercoastal cargo service under the name SS Barbara Cates . By 1938 , the ship had been renamed Pan Gulf for service with a subsidiary of the Waterman Steamship Company . During World War II , Pan Gulf made nine roundtrips between the United States and the United Kingdom without incident in wartime convoys . She also sailed between New York and ports on the Gulf Coast and in the Caribbean . In May 1945 , the ship was transferred to the Soviet Union under Lend @-@ Lease . Renamed SS Lermontov , the ship sailed in support of the war and continued in civilian service for the Soviets until 1966 , when she was scrapped at Split .

= = Design and construction = =

To replace shipping tonnage lost to German submarines during World War I , the British Shipping Controller sought newly built ships from American shipyards . As part of 700 @,@ 000 long tons ( 710 @,@ 000 t ) of shipping which had been ordered by March 1917 , an order for nine vessels of 8 @,@ 800 long tons deadweight ( DWT ) was placed with J. F. Duthie & Company of Seattle . Because the United States had not yet entered World War I , the Shipping Controller , to skirt neutrality laws , placed orders through various British shipping companies . Although the specific company that placed the order with Duthie is not reported in secondary sources , the company most often used for these orders was the Cunard Steamship Company . As one of the nine ships ordered , J. F. Duthie & Company laid down the keel of War Topaz as the eleventh ship begun at their shipyard .

On 6 August 1917 , the Emergency Fleet Corporation ? an entity created by the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) shortly after the United States entered the war on 6 April and tasked with overseeing U.S. shipbuilding ? requisitioned most ships under construction in the United States ; included among those was War Topaz . By the time of her 24 April 1918 launch , the ship had been renamed West Bridge , becoming one of the West ships , cargo ships of similar size and design built by several shipyards on the West Coast of the United States . Just a bit over one month later , on 26 May , the finished West Bridge was delivered to the United States Navy .

As completed , the steel @-@ hulled ship was 409 feet 5 inches ( 124 @.@ 79 m ) long ( between perpendiculars ) , 54 feet ( 16 @.@ 5 m ) abeam , and drew 24 feet 1 inch ( 7 @.@ 34 m ) . West Bridge had a displacement of 12 @,@ 200 long tons ( 12 @,@ 400 t ) , and her 29 @-@ foot @-@ 9 @-@ inch ( 9 @.@ 07 m ) -deep hold allowed the ship to be rated at 5 @,@ 799 gross register tons ( GRT ) . The ship was powered by a single triple @-@ expansion steam engine built by the

Hooven , Owens , & Rentschler Company of Hamilton , Ohio . The engine , with cylinders of 24 1 ? 2 , 41 1 ? 2 , and 72 inches ( 62 , 105 , and 180 cm ) diameter with a 48 @-@ inch ( 120 cm ) stroke , was capable of generating up to 2 @,@ 500 horsepower ( 1 @,@ 900 kW ) , allowing the single screw propeller to move the ship at up 10 @.@ 5 knots ( 19 @.@ 4 km / h ) . For her U.S. Navy service in World War I , West Bridge was equipped with one 4 @-@ inch ( 102 mm ) and one 3 @-@ inch ( 76 mm ) gun .

= = Military career = =

USS West Bridge ( ID @-@ 2888 ) was commissioned into the Naval Overseas Transportation Service ( NOTS ) at the Puget Sound Navy Yard on 26 May with Lieutenant Commander Mortimer Hawkins , USNRF , in command . West Bridge took on an initial load of flour and departed 10 June for the East Coast . Along the way , the ship developed troubles with her engine , which required her to put in at Balboa in the Panama Canal Zone for repairs . Getting under way again on 4 July , West Bridge sailed for New York , arriving on 16 July .

After refueling at New York , West Bridge joined Convoy HB @-@ 8 bound for France , sailing on 1 August in company with Navy cargo ship West Alsek , United States Army transport Montanan , and 13 others . Escorted by armed yacht Noma , destroyers Burrows and Smith , and French cruiser Marseillaise , the convoy was some 500 nautical miles ( 900 km ) west of its destination of Le Verdon @-@ sur @-@ Mer by the end of the day on 15 August .

= = = Torpedo attack = = =

At 17 : 40 , West Bridge 's engine broke down once again and her crew was unable to repair it . West Bridge , falling off the back of the convoy and adrift , signaled Marseillaise to request a tow . At sundown , shortly before 18 : 00 , Montanan ? still in the convoy , which was by now some 4 nautical miles ( 7 @.@ 4 km ) ahead of West Bridge ? was hit by one of three torpedoes launched by German submarine U @-@ 90 . Montanan began to settle and was quickly abandoned . On West Bridge , Lieutenant Commander Hawkins realized the potential for another submarine attack and ordered his crew to general quarters and reduced the number of men in the mechanical spaces below decks . Noma sailed back to West Bridge , ordered the freighter to extinguish her lights , and stood by . At nearly the same time , U @-@ 107 approached and launched two torpedoes at the stationary cargo ship , scoring hits with both . The first struck near the No. 3 cargo hold in the front of the ship , while the second hit amidships near the engine room . West Bridge immediately began listing to starboard , and Hawkins ordered the crew to abandon the vessel . He and two crewmen remained behind until they felt sure that everyone else had departed . By the time they left the stricken ship , water was up to the gunwales and lapping at the well deck .

Immediately after the attack , Noma sped off to depth charge the submarine while sending an SOS for West Bridge , since the initial explosion destroyed the cargo ship 's wireless . Destroyer Burrows arrived to take on West Bridge 's survivors , who had situated themselves about a mile ( 2 km ) from the still @-@ floating West Bridge . After boarding the destroyer , a head count revealed that four men were missing , but it also turned up two female stowaways .

By the morning of 16 August , both Montanan and West Bridge were still afloat , albeit with decks awash . Despite attempts to get Montanan under tow , she foundered later in the morning . Meanwhile , Hawkins and his executive officer were taken by boat to West Bridge to assess her situation . After boarding the ship and finding three cargo holds and her engineering spaces completely flooded , Hawkins advised Burrows ' captain that the situation was hopeless and he would only be endangering his ship , crew , and the West Bridge survivors by remaining alongside . Consequently , Burrows departed for Brest , France , leaving destroyer Smith to stand by West Bridge .

A volunteer work and salvage party from Smith , led by Lieutenant Richard L. Conolly , and which included Chief Boatswain 's Mate John Henry Caudell , and Construction Mechanic , 3rd class Walter Homer Todd , boarded West Bridge and awaited four tugs which had been dispatched from

Brest : the U.S. Navy tug Favorite , two French tugs , and one British tug . Over the course of the next five days , the tugs , joined by patrol yacht Isabel , slowly made their way to the French coast , eventually arriving at Brest . West Bridge was towed over 400 nautical miles ( 740 km ) with only 1 % buoyancy remaining . Conolly , Caudell , and Todd were each awarded the Navy Cross for their efforts in saving West Bridge ; W. W. Wotherspoon , the fleet salvage officer on Favorite was also honored with a Navy Cross , in part for his salvage efforts for West Bridge .

The extent of the damage and the condition of West Bridge led to some erroneous reports of her loss . News articles on 24 August in both The New York Times and the Chicago Daily Tribune reported the loss of West Bridge , and the mistaken information also made it into book form . Authors Benedict Crowell and Robert Forrest Wilson , in their work The Road to France : The Transportation of Troops and Military Supplies , 1917 ? 1918 , repeat the misinformation about the loss of West Bridge .

After West Bridge underwent seven months of repairs , the ship resumed service with the NOTS through 1 December 1919 , at which time she was decommissioned and handed over to the USSB .

= = Interwar years = =

Little is known about West Bridge 's activities after her return to the USSB in 1919 , but in June 1922 she was laid up in Philadelphia , where she would remain for almost seven years . In March 1929 , the USSB approved the sale of West Bridge for \$ 57 @,@ 000 to the Sudden and Christenson Steamship Company of San Francisco . By May , the ship had been renamed Barbara Cates and was slated for service on the intercoastal freight service of their Arrow Line , which sailed to the Pacific coast from Baltimore ; Norfolk , Virginia ; Savannah , Georgia ; and Jacksonville , Florida . The addition of Barbara Cates and other ships purchased around the same time allowed the Arrow Line to increase its sailings from fortnightly to once every ten days . Barbara Cates ' nine years with the Arrow Line were uneventful .

By October 1938 , the ship had been renamed Pan Gulf to reflect the naming style of her new owners , the Pan @-@ Atlantic Steamship Company , a subsidiary of Waterman Steamship Company . The Pan @-@ Atlantic Line sailed in coastal service along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts , and it is likely that Pan Gulf called at typical Pan @-@ Atlantic ports such as Baltimore , Miami , Tampa , New Orleans , Philadelphia , New York , and Boston during this time .

In October 1941 , The Christian Science Monitor reported that Pan Gulf had become stuck in the mud off Governors Island after her crew misjudged how far to back out of her berth at the Army base there . The first , unsuccessful attempt to free Pan Gulf from her predicament involved eight tugs , but the ship did not budge . The newspaper , which had also reported that there was no apparent damage to Pan Gulf in the grounding , carried no further reports on the ship .

= = World War II and later career = =

After the United States entered World War II , Pan Gulf frequently sailed in convoys on the North Atlantic , as well as some in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico . Between April and September 1942 , Pan Gulf made two roundtrips from the U.S. to Liverpool . In September , the cargo ship sailed from New York to the Caribbean to take on a load of bauxite in early November , and then sailed on to Galveston , Texas , before returning to New York in mid @-@ February 1943 .

In late February , Pan Gulf began the first of a further seven roundtrips to the United Kingdom over the next 21 months , when she sailed from New York in Convoy HX 228 for Halifax . In July , the United States Maritime Commission ( USMC ) purchased Pan Gulf from the Pan @-@ Atlantic Line , overpaying her value by some 16 times , according to Senator George Aiken ( R @-@ VT ) .

On 5 May 1945 , the USMC turned over Pan Gulf to the Far East Shipping Company ( FESCO ) of the Soviet Union under Lend @-@ Lease ; FESCO renamed the ship SS Lermontov ( Russian : ????????? , Russian pronunciation : [ ?l??rm?nt?f ] ) after the poet Mikhail Lermontov . The Soviets armed the ship with a 4 @-@ inch ( 100 mm ) gun and other weapons and employed the ship in

cargo duties in support of the war .

At war 's end , Lermontov remained with FESCO through 1950 . At that time she was transferred to the Black Sea Shipping Company , with which she remained into the 1960s , IMO 5520680 . Lermontov was delivered to shipbreakers in Split on 26 June 1966 .