

= Seisho Maru =

Seisho Maru ( Japanese : 西条丸 , Seisho Maru ) was a cargo ship for Mitsui Bussan Kaisho in military service that was sunk by an American submarine during World War II . The ship had been built as SS West Caruth , a cargo ship for the United States Shipping Board ( USSB ) shortly after the end of World War I. Shortly after completion , the ship was inspected by the United States Navy for possible use as USS West Caruth ( ID # 2850 ) but was neither taken into the Navy nor ever commissioned under that name . Before being sold to Japanese owners in 1928 , she was also known as SS Exmoor and SS Antonio Tripovich .

West Caruth was built in 1918 for the USSB , as a part of the West boats , a series of steel hulled cargo ships built on the West Coast of the United States for the World War I war effort , and was the second ship built at Southwestern Shipbuilding in San Pedro , California . After operating for four years under American registry , she was sold several times and operated under British , Italian , and Japanese registry throughout the remainder of her career . In November 1944 , while serving as Japanese transport Seisho Maru during World War II , she was sunk by U.S. Navy submarine Sunfish .

= 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 Caruth , the second of some 18 West ships built by the Southwestern Shipbuilding of San Pedro , California . West Caruth ( Southwestern Shipbuilding No. 2 ) was launched at 08 : 00 on 31 December 1918 by sponsor Betty Howard , the nine year old daughter of company vice president , William F. Howard , and completed in February 1919 .

West Caruth was 5,632 gross register tons ( GRT ) , and was 410 feet 5 inches ( 125 @ 10 m ) long ( between perpendiculars ) and 54 feet 6 inches ( 16 @ 61 m ) abeam . The ship had a single triple expansion steam engine that drove a single screw propeller , and moved the ship at up to 10 @ 5 knots ( 19 @ 4 km / h ) .

= Career =

West Caruth was inspected by the 12th Naval District of the United States Navy after completion for possible use as a service collier and was assigned the identification number of 3850 . Had she been commissioned , she would have been known as USS West Caruth ( ID # 3850 ) , but the Navy neither took over the ship nor commissioned her .

The cargo ship sailed for the USSB under American registry for the first four years of her existence , and sailed to the west African ports of Dakar and Monrovia through 1921 . The Los Angeles Times reported that West Caruth sailed out of Los Angeles in both transpacific and European ? Pacific service for two years .

In 1923 , West Caruth was sold to the North Devon Steamship Company and operated as tramp steamer Exmoor under the British flag . In 1924 , she was purchased by the Tripovich Shipping Company of Trieste and sailed under the Italian flag as Antonio Tripovich . Four years later , she was renamed Seisho Maru as a part of Oguma Shoten Gomei Kaisha of Tsurumi under Japanese registry . By the early 1930s Seisho Maru had been sold to Mitsui Bussan Kaisho .

There is scant record of the ship 's movements under any of her later names . The Los Angeles Times reports her arrival at West Coast ports as Seisho Maru at least twice . In March 1930 , the ship arrived at Tacoma , Washington , from Singapore to pick up a load of logs for export . Another notice in November 1933 noted her impending return to Los Angeles , where she was scheduled to take on a load of borax and scrap brass . In early May 1939 , Seisho Maru ran aground in Tokyo Bay , but was refloated after several days .

During World War II , Seisho Maru served as an army transport , but sources reporting her

movements are incomplete . It is known that she was one of some 20 ships that departed Takau as part of three combined convoys ? TASA @-@ 17 , TE @-@ 03 , and No. 82 ? in mid @-@ April 1944 .

Seisho Maru and seven other ships formed convoy MI @-@ 27 which departed Moji for Miri , Borneo , on 15 November that same year . Escorted by a converted minesweeper and three smaller vessels , the convoy hugged the coast of the Korean peninsula to try to avoid American submarines . Nevertheless , a group of three submarines ? Peto , Spadefish , and Sunfish ? found and attacked the convoy on the night of 17 / 18 November . Torpedoes from Sunfish sank Edogawa Maru and damaged Seisho Maru shortly after 22 : 00 , while Peto sank Osakasan Maru at 23 : 40 . At 01 : 30 , the damaged Seisho Maru engaged in a gun battle with a surfaced submarine . Then , at 03 : 17 , another spread of torpedoes from Sunfish finished off Seisho Maru , which sank at position 33 ° 36 ? N 124 ° 18 ? E in the East China Sea .