

= SS Minnesotan =

SS Minnesotan was a cargo ship built in 1912 for the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company . During World War I she was known as USAT Minnesotan in service for the United States Army and USS Minnesotan (ID @-@ 4545) in service for the United States Navy . She ended her career as the SS Maria Luisa R. under Italian ownership . She was built by the Maryland Steel Company as one of eight sister ships for the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company , and was employed in inter @-@ coastal service via the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Panama Canal after it opened .

In World War I , USAT Minnesotan carried cargo and animals to France under charter to the U.S. Army from September 1917 . When transferred to the U.S. Navy in August 1918 , USS Minnesotan continued in the same duties , but after the Armistice she was converted to a troop transport and returned over 8 @, @ 000 American troops from France . Returned to American @-@ Hawaiian in 1919 , Minnesotan resumed inter @-@ coastal cargo service , and , at least twice , carried racing yachts from the U.S. East Coast to California .

During World War II , Minnesotan was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration and initially sailed between New York and Caribbean ports . In the latter half of 1943 , Minnesotan sailed between Indian Ocean ports . The following year the cargo ship sailed between New York and ports in the United Kingdom , before returning to the Caribbean . In July 1949 , American @-@ Hawaiian sold Minnesotan to Italian owners who renamed her Maria Luisa R. ; she was scrapped in 1952 at Bari .

= = Design and construction = =

In September 1911 , the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company placed an order with the Maryland Steel Company of Sparrows Point , Maryland , for four new cargo ships ? Minnesotan , Dakotan , Montanan , and Pennsylvanian . The contract cost of the ships was set at the construction cost plus an 8 % profit for Maryland Steel , but with a maximum cost of \$ 640 @, @ 000 per ship . The construction was financed by Maryland Steel with a credit plan that called for a 5 % down payment in cash with nine monthly installments for the balance . Provisions of the deal allowed that some of the nine installments could be converted into longer @-@ term notes or mortgages . The final cost of Minnesotan , including financing costs , was \$ 65 @. @ 65 per deadweight ton , which totaled just under \$ 668 @, @ 000 .

Minnesotan (Maryland Steel yard no . 124) was the first ship built under the original contract . She was launched on 8 June 1912 , and delivered to American @-@ Hawaiian in September . Minnesotan was 6 @, @ 617 gross register tons (GRT) , and was 428 feet 9 inches (130 @. @ 68 m) in length and 53 feet 7 inches (16 @. @ 33 m) abeam . She had a deadweight tonnage of 10 @, @ 175 LT DWT , and her cargo holds had a storage capacity of 490 @, @ 838 cubic feet (13 @, @ 899 @. @ 0 m3) . Minnesotan had a speed of 15 knots (28 km / h) , and was powered by a single quadruple @-@ expansion steam engine with oil @-@ fired boilers , that drove a single screw propeller .

= = Early career = =

When Minnesotan began sailing for American @-@ Hawaiian , the company shipped cargo from East Coast ports via the Tehuantepec Route to West Coast ports and Hawaii , and vice versa . Shipments on the Tehuantepec Route would arrive at Mexican ports ? Salina Cruz , Oaxaca , for eastbound cargo , and Coatzacoalcas , Veracruz , for westbound cargo ? and would traverse the Isthmus of Tehuantepec on the Tehuantepec National Railway . Eastbound shipments were primarily sugar and pineapple from Hawaii , while westbound cargoes were more general in nature . Minnesotan sailed in this service on the east side of North America .

After the United States occupation of Veracruz on 21 April 1914 (which found six American @-@ Hawaiian ships in Mexican ports) , the Huerta @-@ led Mexican government closed the

Tehuantepec National Railway to American shipping . This loss of access , coupled with the fact that the Panama Canal was not yet open , caused American @-@ Hawaii to return in late April to its historic route of sailing around South America via the Straits of Magellan . With the opening of the Panama Canal on 15 August , American @-@ Hawaiian ships switched to taking that route .

In October 1915 , landslides closed the Panama Canal and all American @-@ Hawaiian ships , including Minnesotan , returned to the Straits of Magellan route again . Minnesotan 's exact movements from this time through early 1917 are unclear . She may have been in the half of the American @-@ Hawaiian fleet that was chartered for transatlantic service . She may also 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 = =

On 11 September 1917 , some five months after the United States declared war on Germany , the United States Army chartered Minnesotan for transporting animals to Europe in support of the American Expeditionary Force . Although there is no information about the specific conversion of Minnesotan , for other ships this typically meant that passenger accommodations had to be ripped out and replaced with ramps and stalls for the horses and mules carried .

On 23 August 1918 , Minnesotan was transferred to the United States Navy at Norfolk , Virginia . She was commissioned into the Naval Overseas Transportation Service the same day , with Lieutenant Commander E. L. Smith , USNRF , in command . Minnesotan was refitted and rearmed and made a brief roundtrip to New York . After taking on a general cargo , Minnesotan sailed 4 September to join a convoy from New York . After passing Gibraltar on 21 September , the cargo ship sailed on to Marseille and unloaded . Departing there on 21 October , she sailed for Newport News via Gibraltar , arriving back in the United States on 7 November .

Minnesotan next took on a load of 798 horses and sailed on 30 November for Bordeaux , where she arrived on 13 December . Stopping at Saint @-@ Nazaire the following day , Minnesotan departed for Norfolk on 21 December . After making port at Norfolk on 3 January 1919 , the cargo ship sailed for New York , where she was inspected and found to be suitable for use as a troop transport . She was transferred to the Cruiser and Transport Force on 7 January and fitted with bunks and living facilities over the next three months .

Sailing from New York on 30 March , Minnesotan began the first of her four voyages returning American servicemen from France . On 16 April at Saint @-@ Nazaire , Minnesotan began her first homeward journey with troops , embarking several companies of the 111th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 28th Infantry Division . George W. Cooper , historian of the 2nd Battalion of the 111th Infantry , reported that even though the fighting had been over for some five months , the fear of striking floating mines necessitated that the men wear life jackets for the first three days at sea . Minnesotan landed her 1 @, @ 765 troops in New York on 28 April .

On her next journey , Minnesotan loaded some 2 @, @ 000 men of the 304th Ammunition Train and the U.S. 24th Infantry Division , for what turned out to be a rough passage with widespread seasickness . The men on board were greatly relieved when land was spotted , and the ship docked at Charleston , South Carolina , on 29 May .

Details of Minnesotan 's third journey are not available , but her final journey began by sailing from Brest on 23 July with elements of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division and ended upon arrival at Philadelphia on 3 August . In total , she carried 8 @, @ 038 troops in four voyages from France . By 15 August , Minnesotan had entered dry dock at the Philadelphia Navy Yard to prepare for decommissioning , which took place six days later . She was then returned to American @-@ Hawaiian . Leslie White , later a noted American anthropologist , was a crewman aboard USS Minnesotan .

= = Interwar years = =

Minnesotan resumed cargo service with American @-@ Hawaiian after her return from World War I

service . Though the company had abandoned its original Hawaiian sugar routes by this time , Minnesotan continued inter @-@ coastal service through the Panama Canal . Hints at cargos she carried during this time can be gleaned from contemporary news reports from the Los Angeles Times . In March 1928 , for example , the newspaper reported that Minnesotan sailed from Los Angeles with a \$ 2 @, @ 500 @, @ 000 cargo that included raw silk and 1 @, @ 000 long tons (1 @, @ 000 t) of copper bullion . The 1 @, @ 000 bales of silk , picked up in Seattle , were worth \$ 1 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 on their own , while the load of copper was reportedly the largest water shipment of Arizona copper to that time . Canned goods , grape juice , and locally grown cotton completed the load . The Los Angeles Times also reported that Minnesotan delivered a then @-@ record 3 @, @ 000 @-@ long @-@ ton (3 @, @ 000 t) cargo from the East Coast to Los Angeles in October 1930 . Minnesotan also carried some less @-@ traditional cargo . In February 1928 , she delivered one R @-@ class and four six @-@ meter (twenty @-@ foot) sloops to Los Angeles . The five racing yachts , all from East Coast yacht clubs , arrived to sail in the national championships of six @-@ meter and R @-@ class sloops held 10 ? 18 March . Minnesotan delivered two other six @-@ meter sloops for new owners in November 1938 .

Minnesotan did have one mishap during the interwar period . On 3 May 1936 , The New York Times reported that the day before , a receding tide had stranded Minnesotan about a half @-@ mile (800 m) off of Monomoy Point , Massachusetts . Any damage the freighter sustained must have been minor ; the cargo ship sailed from New York for San Francisco two weeks later .

= = = Labor difficulties = = =

Minnesotan played a part in several labor difficulties in the interwar years . In March 1935 , the crew of Minnesotan called a wildcat strike that delayed the ship 's sailing from Los Angeles by a day , but ended the strike after they were ordered back to work by their union . In October 1935 , the deckhands and firemen of Minnesotan and fellow Hawaiian @-@ American ships Nevadan and Golden Tide walked out ? this time with the sanction of their union , the Sailors ' Union of the Pacific (SUP) ? after American @-@ Hawaiian had suspended a member of the International Seamen 's Union . In that same month , Minnesotan 's deck engineer , Otto Blaczinsky , was murdered while the ship was in Los Angeles Harbor . The Industrial Association of San Francisco , an organization of anti @-@ union businessmen and employers , believed that Blaczinsky was killed because he opposed union policies , and offered a \$ 1 @, @ 000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Blaczinsky 's killer . Threats of another Pacific coast strike in late 1936 caused west coast shippers to squeeze as much cargo as possible into Minnesotan and other ships ; when Minnesotan arrived at Boston in October , The Christian Science Monitor reported that the ship had arrived " literally laden to her Plimsoll line " .

In September 1941 , Minnesotan played a peripheral part in a larger protest by union sailors over war bonuses for sailing in the West Indies . The SUP struck on Minnesotan and fellow American @-@ Hawaiian ship Oklahoman on 18 September in sympathy with the Seafarers International Organization , which had called a strike on eleven ships a week before . Both of the American @-@ Hawaiian ships were idled while docked in New York . President Franklin D. Roosevelt called on the unions to end the strike three separate times during his press conference on 24 September . Roosevelt 's admonition was heeded and both unions ended their strike after the National Mediation Board agreed to address the wartime bonus dispute .

= = World War II = =

By January 1941 , Minnesotan , though still operated by American @-@ Hawaiian , was engaged in defense work for the U.S. government , sailing to ports in South Africa . After the United States entered World War II , Minnesotan was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration and frequently sailed in convoys . Though complete records of her sailings are unavailable , partial records indicate some of the ports Minnesotan visited during the conflict and some of the cargo she carried . From July 1942 to April 1943 , Minnesotan sailed between New York and Caribbean ports ,

calling at Trinidad , Key West , Hampton Roads , Guantánamo Bay , and Cristóbal .

In June 1943 , Minnesotan called at Bombay . She sailed in the Indian Ocean between Calcutta , Colombo , and Bandar Abbas through August . On her last recorded sailing in the Indian Ocean , Minnesotan carried steel rails between Colombo and Calcutta . Minnesotan was back in New York by early December , and sailed to Florida and back by the end of the month .

On 29 December , Minnesotan , loaded with a general cargo that included machinery and explosives , sailed as part of convoy HX 273 from New York for Liverpool . Minnesotan developed an undisclosed problem and returned to St. John 's , Newfoundland , where she arrived on 13 January 1944 . Thirteen days later , she sailed from St. John 's to join convoy HX 276 for Liverpool , where she arrived with the convoy on 7 February . After calling at Methil and Loch Ewe , Minnesotan returned to New York in mid March .

Minnesotan sailed on another roundtrip to Liverpool in May , but was back in New York by early June . Her last recorded World War II sailings were from New York to Key West , Guantánamo Bay , and Cristóbal , where she arrived in late July 1944 . Sources do not reveal where or in what capacity Minnesotan spent the remainder of the war .

= = Later career = =

After the war 's end , American @-@ Hawaiian continued operating Minnesotan for several more years , but in mid @-@ July 1949 , the company announced the sale of Minnesotan to Italian owners in a move approved by the United States Maritime Commission several days later . The sale of Minnesotan was protested by the Congress of Industrial Organizations which urged the United States Congress to intervene and to help retain American Merchant Marine jobs . Nevertheless , Maria Luisa R. , the new name of the former Minnesotan , remained in Italian hands until she was scrapped in 1952 at Bari .