

= SS Kentuckian =

SS Kentuckian was a cargo ship built in 1910 for the American @-@ Hawaiian Steamship Company . During World War I she was known as USAT Kentuckian in service for the United States Army and USS Kentuckian (ID @-@ 1544) in service for the United States Navy . After her Navy career , she reverted to her original name of SS Kentuckian .

She was built by the Maryland Steel Company as first of three ships ordered by 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 Kentuckian carried cargo and animals to France under charter to the U.S. Army . When transferred to the U.S. Navy in December 1918 , a month after the Armistice , USS Kentuckian was converted to a troop transport and returned almost 8 @,@ 900 American troops from France . Returned to American @-@ Hawaiian in 1919 , Kentuckian resumed inter @-@ coastal cargo service .

Shortly before World War II , Kentuckian was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration and sailed between Trinidad and African ports , between New York and Caribbean ports , and in transatlantic convoys through mid 1944 . In mid @-@ July 1944 , the ship was scuttled as part of the breakwater for one of the Mulberry artificial harbors built to support the Normandy Invasion .

= = Design and construction = =

In the second quarter of 1909 , American @-@ Hawaiian , looking to expand its fleet , placed an order with the Maryland Steel Company of Sparrows Point , Maryland , for three new cargo ships ? Kentuckian , Georgian , and Honolulan . The contract for the ships required that American @-@ Hawaiian pay \$ 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 in cash and a further \$ 650 @,@ 000 in twelve monthly notes at 5 % interest . Provisions of the deal allowed that the monthly notes could be converted into longer @-@ term mortgages at 6 % interest , and secured by the ships themselves . The final cost of Kentuckian , including financing costs , was \$ 58 @.@ 33 per deadweight ton , which came out to just under \$ 579 @,@ 000 .

Kentuckian (Maryland Steel yard no . 104) was the first ship built under the contract . She was launched on 19 March 1910 , by Miss Nancy Johnson , the daughter of U.S. Representative Ben Johnson (D @-@ KY) , who christened the ship with sparkling spring water from the Kentucky farms of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis . The completed ship , delivered to American @-@ Hawaiian on 1 June , was 6 @,@ 479 gross register tons (GRT) , and was 414 feet 2 inches (126 @.@ 24 m) in length (between perpendiculars) and 53 feet 6 inches (16 @.@ 31 m) abeam . She had a deadweight tonnage of 9 @,@ 925 LT DWT , and her cargo holds had a storage capacity of 428 @,@ 145 cubic feet (12 @,@ 123 @.@ 7 m³) . Kentuckian had a single quadruple @-@ expansion steam engine powered by oil @-@ fired boilers that drove a single screw propeller at a speed of 11 knots (20 km / h) .

= = Early career = =

When Kentuckian 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 . Kentuckian sailed in this service but it is not clear from sources whether on the east or west 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 Kentuckian , returned to the Straits of Magellan route again . Kentuckian 's exact movements from this time through early 1918 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 = =

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

Details about Kentuckian 's first animal transport journey are not known , but her second trip began 14 March 1918 when she sailed from Newport News , Virginia , with 848 animals for Saint @-@ Nazaire , where she unloaded all but the four animals that had died or were destroyed during the voyage . On 24 April , during a convoy crossing in Army service , Naval Armed Guardsmen on Kentuckian sighted a torpedo heading towards the second ship behind her in the column . Opening fire on the torpedo , the gun crew claimed the hit that caused the torpedo to explode short of its intended target . Further details of Kentuckian 's Army service are not available .

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 . To that end , Kentuckian was acquired by the United States Navy on 16 December , and commissioned on 28 January 1919 with Lieutenant Commander Carrol E. Higgins , NAR , in command . Before she could begin returning troops , though , Kentuckian had to undergo conversion from a cargo and animal ship . Though sources do not indicate the specific modifications Kentuckian underwent , typical conversions for other ships included the installation of berths for troops , and adding greatly expanded cooking and toilet facilities to handle the large numbers of men aboard . Similar modifications on a fellow American @-@ Hawaiian cargo ship , the two @-@ years @-@ younger Minnesotan , took three months , but it is not known how long Kentuckian 's refit took .

Kentuckian departed New York for her first trooping voyage on 2 March , picking up nearly 2 @,@ 000 soldiers at Saint @-@ Nazaire ? among them some 1 @,@ 500 men of the 363rd Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 91st Infantry Division , and a number from the U.S. 33rd Infantry Division ? before returning to New York on 1 April . Her arrival on another trooping run in June returned 1 @,@ 860 men , including over 1 @,@ 500 members of the 345th Field Artillery Regiment of the U.S. 90th Infantry Division . An officer of that unit brought back a black police dog named Pat , who , purportedly , had been the personal dog of Germany 's Crown Prince Wilhelm . Another trip in July returned another 1 @,@ 852 men from Saint @-@ Nazaire . In all , Kentuckian made a total of five trooping runs from France , bringing back 8 @,@ 895 men by the time she completed her last trip on 31 August at Norfolk , Virginia . She was decommissioned on 15 September and returned to American @-@ Hawaiian the same day .

= = Interwar years = =

Kentuckian 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 , Kentuckian continued inter @-@ coastal service through the Panama Canal with a few incidents that interrupted what was a mostly uneventful twenty years . In September 1928 , a day after sailing from San Francisco , Kentuckian was rammed by the General Petroleum tanker Los Alamos near Point Sur , California , in a thick fog . Kentuckian had a leak in her number two cargo hold and

damage to her port bilge keel and returned to San Francisco for repairs . In early April 1933 , a fire broke out in Kentuckian 's number two cargo hold , which resulted in the delay of the ship at Panama from 8 to 14 April . Kentuckian made her way to Los Angeles over the next ten days , where surveyors examined the ship and her general cargo .

For the most part , Kentuckian primarily carried general cargoes whose contents were not noteworthy . One exception occurred in July 1929 , when The New York Times reported that Kentuckian was carrying , Pirate , an R @-@ class racing yacht to races at Larchmont and Marblehead . The newspaper reported that Pirate was the first West Coast designed and built yacht to race in the East .

Unlike SS Minnesotan , a fellow American @-@ Hawaiian ship that was plagued with labor difficulties , Kentuckian seems to have escaped much of the maritime labor turmoil of the mid @-@ 1930s . One incident was reported by the Los Angeles Times in August 1936 . The news item reported that a portion of Kentuckian 's crew went on strike in protest against unsafe working conditions . The ship 's master had ordered the deckhands to rig one of the cargo booms after the ship docked in Los Angeles , but they refused because the deck was slippery and therefore , in their opinion , unsafe .

= = World War II = =

Shortly before the United States entered World War II , Kentuckian was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration (WSA) , but continued to be operated by American @-@ Hawaiian . On 19 November 1941 , Kentuckian sailed from New York for Durban , where she arrived on 21 December . Kentuckian spent the next two months sailing between ports in South Africa and Mozambique , calling at Port Elizabeth , Cape Town , and East London in the former , and Lourenco Marques , and Beira in the latter , before heading to Trinidad from Cape Town on 28 February 1942 . Arriving at Trinidad three weeks later , she made her way up to Boston by early April , before putting in at New York for about six weeks . Sailing from New York in late May , Kentuckian joined a southbound Hampton Roads , Virginia ? Key West , Florida convoy . She left the convoy before Key West and headed back across the Atlantic to Cape Town , where she arrived on 7 July . Kentuckian spent the next month sailing between Cape Town , East London , and Durban . Kentuckian concluded her second trip to Africa when she sailed for South America on 1 August .

After a three @-@ week crossing of the South Atlantic , Kentuckian arrived at Paramaribo on 22 August , where she took on a load of bauxite and made her way to New York , where she docked on 20 September . The cargo ship slowly made her way south , calling at Charleston , Key West , and Guantánamo Bay along her way to Trinidad , where she arrived on 5 November . Sailing 11 November , Kentuckian began her third and final trip to Africa . She arrived at Freetown on 25 November and called at Bathurst and Takoradi over the next two months before returning to Trinidad on 31 January 1943 . Sailing from Trinidad on 4 February , she called at Guantánamo Bay and Baltimore on her way to New York , where , arriving in late March , she prepared to begin transatlantic convoy sailings to the United Kingdom .

On 1 April , Kentuckian , loaded with grain and general cargo , departed as a part of Convoy HX @-@ 232 , the 232nd New York ? Halifax ? Liverpool convoy . Developing some unreported problem , she returned to New York on 3 April . The problem must have been minor , because she sailed as part of Convoy HX @-@ 233 three days later . This convoy was attacked by no fewer than eight German submarines , which resulted in the loss of only one ship , the British cargo ship Fort Rampart , and the sinking of 175 by convoy escorts . There is no evidence that Kentuckian played any direct part in the sinking of the German submarine , but , nevertheless , members of her Naval Armed Guard were awarded a battle star for actions in the convoy from 16 ? 18 April . Kentuckian arrived at Liverpool on 21 April . Over the next ten months , Kentuckian made nine more convoy crossings between the UK ? where she called at Liverpool , Swansea , Milford Haven , Methil , Loch Ewe , Immingham , and Belfast Lough ? and New York . She ended her tenth North Atlantic crossing when she arrived at New York on 16 February 1944 .

Sailing from New York on 26 February , Kentuckian made two circuits between that port and the

Caribbean , calling at Nuevitas , Cuba , and Manatí , Puerto Rico , and making stops at Key West and Philadelphia along the way , before putting in at New York on 15 April . Kentuckian departed the United States for the final time on 19 May and headed for Milford Haven . After arriving there on 3 June , the cargo ship arrived at Barry via Plymouth , Belfast Lough , and Falmouth , on 27 June . Departing Barry on 8 July as a part of Convoy EBC @-@ 35 , Kentuckian arrived at Arromanches on 10 July and was scuttled there as part of a breakwater protecting the mulberry harbor constructed there in support of the Normandy invasion .

In March 1945 , the WSA offered a payment of \$ 565 @, @ 910 to American @-@ Hawaiian for Kentuckian as part of a \$ 7 @.@ 2 million settlement for eleven requisitioned American @-@ Hawaiian ships that had either been sunk , scuttled (like Kentuckian) , or were to be retained by the government .