

MARUBA

As we have mentioned on various occasions in these pages, there are many considerations that go into the choosing of certain vessels to be featured as "Ship of the Month". Sometimes, a particular ship had a very long and varied career; sometimes she was much loved as an overnight or excursion passenger vessel; perhaps she met a tragic end, or had a distinctive appearance or served an unusual trade. And on several occasions, it has been the discovery of a particularly rare or unusual photograph of a ship that has prompted us to prepare a feature around that photo.

This just happens to be one of those latter occasions. During the course of a trip home across Toronto Bay one afternoon aboard the WILLIAM INGLIS, we were shown a small print of the photograph that is presented on the back side of this month's photopage. We were so impressed with this extremely rare view, having immediately recognized it as something that we had never before imagined that we ever would see, that we asked to be permitted to share it with all of our members. That permission was granted by the owner of the original photo, but we felt that we could not just show the picture all by itself. Thus was born the idea for our Ship of the Month No. 216, and we hope that our readers will enjoy the story of the ship as well as the absolutely spectacular photograph.

MARUBA was one of a series of steel-hulled bulk carriers that were built for the Minnesota Steamship Company, of Duluth, back when steel shipbuilding on the Great Lakes was truly in its infancy. She was constructed in 1890 at Cleveland, Ohio, as Hull 33 of the Globe Iron Works Company, and she was launched on Saturday, May 17th. Back in those early years, big ships almost always were launched on Saturdays so that those very popular events could be witnessed by as many members of the admiring public as possible.

The steamer was small by today's standards, but of a size natural for a type of ship that had just evolved from its wooden-hulled forebears. MARUBA had a length of 290.6 feet, a beam of 40.3 feet, and a depth of hull of 21.2 feet, and her tonnage was calculated as 2311 Gross and 1836 Net. She was powered by a triple expansion engine which had cylinders of 24, 38 and 61 inches diameter, and a piston stroke of 42 inches. Steam was provided by two single-ended, coal-fired, Scotch boilers which measured 14 feet by 12 feet, 6 inches. The engine and boilers all were built for the ship by the Globe Iron Works. As built, the steamer had a carrying capacity of 3,500 gross tons.

Like her fleetmate near-sisterships MATOA, MARISKA and MANOLA (other similar boats were built for other fleets), MARUBA was a handsome steamer with a straight stem, a finely-cut counter stern, and a sweeping sheer to her hull that caused her to ride with her bow and fantail high. She had a full topgallant forecastle, although some observers might be tricked into thinking that she had only a half-raised forecastle because of the fact that, as she originally was built, she had a closed rail from the break of the fore-castle all the way down the spar deck and around the fantail, while there was only an open railing around the fore-castle head, rather than a closed bulwark. After a few years, the closed rail was removed from the central section of the ship's sides, and a more open rail was installed so as not to "trap" boarding seas on deck in times of heavy weather.

The stocked anchors were carried atop the fore-castle head, worked by a radial steel davit that was set near the steering pole, and with their chains emerging from hawseholes set close to the stempost and well below the fore-castle head. As time passed, many steamers of this period had one of their stocked anchors replaced by a mushroom anchor before the advent of more modern stockless, fluked anchors. The hull was protected from damage when docking and canalling by heavy, wooden fender-strakes which ran down the ship's side, parallel to the spar deck gunwale.