

## SULPHITE

Some of the most beautiful tugs ever built in North America were the classic United States Shipping Board tugs of the First World War era. A few of them were built on the Great Lakes but most originated at salt water shipyards. A number of them eventually made it to the Lakes to serve here and, as it has been quite a while since we featured a tug in these pages, now would seem a good time to feature one of these beauties.

The United States Shipping Board was a forerunner of what later was known as the United States Maritime Commission (latterly Administration, rather than Commission), and it oversaw the construction of vessels and their equipment during World War One. It planned and had built a number of handsome, large tugs for deep sea service and, as it turned out, many of them wound up being used to tow coal barges from the Hampton Roads area of Virginia to the New England states, as many of the steam-powered freighters that normally would have been used in that trade had been diverted to wartime service in which many of them had been lost. Many of the Shipping Board tugs and other vessels and equipment were not actually completed until after the 1918 end of World War One. It must be remembered that the United States did not officially enter the war until 1917, whereas Canada had been involved in it since its beginning in September of 1914, and thus Canada's war shipbuilding programme had begun long before that in the U.S.

The particular tug with which we are concerned was named BALLEW; we know not why except that most of the salt water built tugs of her class had names beginning with the letter 'B'. She was enrolled at Newark, New Jersey, in 1919 under U.S. official number 217678, her registered owner being the United States Shipping Board. She was built by the Moore Plant of the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation Limited at Elizabeth (sometimes referred to as Elizabethport), New Jersey, as the yard's Hull 2123.

BALLEW's steel hull was 142.0 feet in length, 27.7 feet in the beam and 14.8 feet in depth, and her tonnage was calculated as 437 Gross and 203 Net. She was built with transverse framing and there were (reportedly) five watertight bulkheads. Her engine and boilers also were built by Bethlehem at the Moore Plant. The triple expansion steam engine had cylinders of 17½, 25 1/8 and 43 5/8 inches diameter and a stroke of 30 inches, and it produced 101 Nominal Horsepower. There were two coal-fired, single-ended Scotch boilers, each of which measured 11'6" by 12'0". Total heating surface was 3,100 square feet, while grate surface measured 96 square feet, and steam was produced with a working pressure of 160 p.s.i.

BALLEW was an extremely handsome tug whose appearance changed very little over the years. She had a straight stem and a pretty counter stern, and her hull sported a major and graceful sheer. There was a closed steel bulwark all around her deck, and two fender strakes ran along her sides, the uppermost of these running completely around the fantail at deck level. The towing winch and bitts were located on the flush quarterdeck. The anchor was carried on the foredeck, hoisted by a steel davit. There were large bitts on the foredeck, together with a big anchor windlass that could run chains out through hawseholes located in the bulwarks on either side of the stem. Originally there was no steering pole, but one was fitted at the stem in later years.

The large cabin on the main deck was built of steel and it sported a number of doors and portholes. On the hurricane deck above was a large wooden pilothouse which had a door on each side and eight big windows in its face. The pilothouse roof protruded straight out forward to form a sunvisor, and through it rose the heavy pole foremast immediately in front of the pilothouse and between the two centre windows. A small texas cabin, containing the master's quarters and office, was set immediately abaft the pilothouse. An open rail ran around the monkey's island and the texas roof, as well as around the hurricane deck.

Well abaft the texas rose the very tall, heavy and well-raked smokestack, on whose forward face was mounted a single steam whistle, fed by a steam pipe which rose inside the funnel. Near the base of the stack were several large ventilator cowls which fed fresh air down to the engine and boiler rooms. A large lifeboat was located on either side of the boat deck aft, each worked with luffing steel davits. The tall pole mainmast, raked to match the stack and the foremast, was stepped almost at the after end of the boat deck.

We know little about BALLEW's operations on salt water, but by the early 1920s, the Shipping Board was selling off these tugs, and most found service with privately-owned towing firms as they were such efficient tugs. Notable amongst those sold were BUTTERCUP, BARLOW,