

Steamship Company, gained control of the Minnesota Steamship Company in 1900, and accordingly the Minnesota fleet became one of those concerns that, in 1901, were swallowed up in the formation by J. Pierpont Morgan and Elbert H. Gary of the largest United States flag fleet ever to operate on the Great Lakes, namely the Pittsburgh Steamship Company, originally of Duluth.

MARUBA thus joined the "tinstack" fleet, so nicknamed because of the all-silver smokestacks sported by its vessels. Originally, MARUBA had been painted in Minnesota's red hull, white cabins, and black stack on which was carried a white triangle (point upwards) on which appeared the letter 'M', although we do not know the colour of the letter. When she joined the newly-formed Pittsburgh fleet, she was given a dark green hull, with straw-yellow cabins and an all-silver smokestack. To camouflage the inevitable streaks of iron ore dust on her sides, MARUBA and her fleetmates soon were given an ore-red hull and white cabins, and by 1905 the stack had been given a black smokeband at the top.

MARUBA sailed for the Pittsburgh Steamship Company until 1912, looking much the same structurally during this whole period except that the top was cut off her tall foremast to ensure clearance for dockside loading and unloading gear. On June 26th of 1912, however, the "Cleveland Plain Dealer" reported that MARUBA had been sold to the Lakewood Steamship Company, of Cleveland, one of the Hutchinson companies. At this stage of her career, she had a red hull, white forecastle and cabins, and a black stack on which appeared a large, white letter 'H'. We know very little about her activities under Hutchinson management, except that she served in most of the various bulk trades, the most common being iron ore downbound, and coal upbound from Lake Erie. MARUBA remained under ownership of the Lakewood fleet until February 14th, 1918, when she was taken over by the United States Government's Emergency Fleet Corp. for salt water service in aid of the effort during World War One.

MARUBA was taken to the shipyard of the Great Lakes Engineering Works at Ashtabula, Ohio, where she underwent a two-part operation. The first step of this involved her reconstruction for deep-sea service as a three-island type freighter, with a high topgallant forecastle, centre island, and high poop. A brand new three-deck bridge structure was built atop the centre castle, with flying bridge wings and a big, rectangular pilothouse with five large windows in its front and with a prominent sunvisor over them. A large gun platform was built over the forecastle head. An entirely new steel cabin was built aft atop the poop, with a fat and rather stubby, and also unraked, smokestack. Two new shorter pole masts were fitted, one rising out of each of the open sections of the spar deck.

We have no actual photograph of MARUBA undergoing this major reconstruction, but we know what she looked like afterward, and we do have a splendid photo of her sistership MANOLA undergoing a similar rebuild on the drydock at Buffalo, so we do know how MARUBA came to look the way she did after the war.

The second part of the reconstruction process was to cut MARUBA into two sections so that she could be towed down through the old Welland and St. Lawrence canals en route to salt water. In due course of time, the two halves were towed safely down to Quebec, where they were rejoined, although she was so late in reaching salt water that the war was almost over. The steamer, which by now had revised tonnage of 2637 Gross and 1487 Net, was operated after the Armistice on the each coast of the United States, and around the Caribbean Sea, under the ownership of the Inter Coast Steamship Company, of Boston, Massachusetts. One of our photos of MARUBA shows her at what apparently is a Caribbean port, although the location of the scene is not identified.

During the 1923 lake navigation season, four former U.S.-flag lakers which had been requisitioned for wartime salt-water service in 1917 and 1918,