

MARUBA REVISITED

We know that our readers enjoyed our Ship of the Month No. 216 in the December issue, because a number of you wrote in to tell us so, and also to add information, especially in respect of what the steamer MARUBA did during the years after she returned from salt water to the Great Lakes after her deep-sea service during World War One. Regretfully, however, nobody has been able to come up with any more photographs of her during her years of idleness or of her being buried in the Cleveland waterfront landfill project. Neither have we been able to find any photos of her at the Ashtabula shipyard when she was being rebuilt and then cut in two in preparation for her trip out to salt water in 1918. Maybe, some day...

We are, however, able to add some information about the photo of MARUBA on salt water that we used on our photopage, thanks to member Ralph Roberts, of Saginaw, Michigan. Ralph has written to tell us that the late Captain Frank E. Hamilton, a longtime member of T.M.H.S. in its early years and a highly respected marine historian, had at one time loaned him a negative of MARUBA. This was a picture of the ship which Hamilton, himself, had taken when he was mate in the steamer LAKE FENN right after World War One. MARUBA was moored at the same dock as LAKE FENN, and both were loading cargoes of sugar. The photograph, which is the same one we used in the December issue, was taken at Antilla, Cuba. So at least one MARUBA mystery is solved!

Member Skip Gillham has written to us to advise that his notes contain mention of MARUBA being involved in a sideswipe collision with the big barge SAGAMORE (II), in the Upper St. Mary's River, on September 16th, 1909. SAGAMORE was being towed at the time by the whaleback steamer PATHFINDER, her usual towing steamer, and both SAGAMORE and MARUBA reportedly required repairs to their hull plating. We know nothing more about this incident, unfortunately, and would be pleased to learn more about it.

Skip also has noted a serious accident which occurred in eastern Lake Erie on Thursday, October 18th, 1917. We have checked further into this incident and can confirm that MARUBA, her consort, the schooner-barge ABYSSINIA, both went ashore on Tecumseh Reef, on the Canadian side of Lake Erie some three miles west of Buffalo. According to the wreck report of the Lake Carriers' Association, both vessels were loaded with wheat for Buffalo when the casualty occurred. MARUBA was able to release herself without significant damage, but before wrecking crews were able to reach ABYSSINIA, the latter was so severely damaged by the seas that efforts to save her had to be abandoned.

(ABYSSINIA [U.S.107221] was built of wood in 1896 as Hull 74 of the James Davidson shipyard at West Bay City, Michigan. She was 288.0 x 44.0 x 19.1, 2037 Gross and 1916 Net. She was built for the Davidson Steamship Company, which operated her for many years, and in 1912 she was rebuilt by the Empire Shipbuilding Company at Buffalo for the Hutchinson-managed Corsica Transit Company.)

Member George Ayoub, of Ottawa, has checked extensively with Lloyd's Register for us in respect of MARUBA, and also with his U.S. Merchant Vessels listings. The latter, unfortunately, did not show owners for any ships until 1925, but did show ports of registry. The U.S.M.V. reported Cleveland as MARUBA's home port until 1918, New York in 1919, and Boston from 1920 until 1931. The same source listed the owner as Inter Coast S.S. Co., Boston, from 1925 to 1931, and in the 1932 listing, she appears in the "Removals" section as "abandoned".

This, as George notes, would indicate that the sales to Thompson Transit Company or Westland Steamship Company were not finalized, and that Inter Coast still retained the mortgage. The word "abandoned" generally was used simply to indicate that a vessel was to be retired or to be scrapped, and not that she was to be, or had been, abandoned physically.