

## SS Dorothy Wintermote

### Early History

This "Laker class"-designed cargo freighter's keel was laid down as *SS War Lilly* for the Cunard Steamship Company, Ltd., the agent for the Shipping Controller in London, England during World War I. The U.S. entered the war while the freighter was being built at the Toledo Shipbuilding Company in Ohio, and the U.S. Shipping Board requisitioned the ship under the Urgent Deficiencies Act of June 13, 1917, and renamed it *Lake Cayuga*. By the time *Lake Cayuga* was launched on April 6, 1918, Toledo Shipbuilding was averaging completion of one ship per month for the U.S. government.

*Lake Cayuga* was constructed of steel with a double bottom, with an over-all length of 261 feet and a beam of 43.6 feet. The freighter's tonnage was 2010 gross and 1227 net, with a plain bow and round stern. The vessel was powered by a triple-expansion marine steam engine built by the same yard and rated at 1250 horse power indicated. Steam was generated by two single-ended Scotch marine boilers. *Lake Cayuga* was equipped with a single mast and eight cargo booms to load and unload cargo through the four hatches that led into its two cargo holds.

The U.S. Shipping Board took delivery of *Lake Cayuga* on June 6, 1918, with a home port of Boston, Massachusetts. The Board was established as an emergency agency under the Shipping Act, September 7, 1916, for the purpose of encouraging, developing, and creating a naval auxiliary and naval reserve and a Merchant Marine in part. By 1917, the Board's construction program was executed through the Emergency Fleet Corporation, concluding in 1922. The U.S. Shipping Board chartered *Lake Cayuga* to the United Fruit Company for the West Indies trade.

During one of its voyages the *Shoe and Leather Reporter*, March 18, 1920, provided the following: "'Large Cargo for Havana' The steamer *Lake Cayuga*, Boston to Havana, sailing last week carried one of the largest most varied cargos leaving Boston in recent years, including more than 2,000 cases of shoes, tons of leather, shoe findings and machinery. The recent strike at Havana resulted in a large accumulation of merchandise at the Boston wharf of the United Fruit Co., the *Lake Cayuga* being a United Fruiter." The *Pacific Marine Review*, February 1923, reported Joseph Moore of the Moore Shipbuilding Company of San Francisco, California traveled to the east coast and purchased the *Lake Cayuga* and *Lake Francis* and refitted them for the Pacific coast lumber trade.

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*Lake Cayuga's* modifications included removing the single mast and adding four new masts rigged to the eight cargo handling booms and was well suited for the Pacific coast lumber trade. In 1923, the vessel was sold to Frank Paramino of San Francisco, California, listed as the Managing Owner, together with the Hammond Lumber Company who owned the largest share of the freighter, and Stella W. Lillick of Menlo Park, California. In 1923, *Lake Cayuga* was renamed *Dorothy Wintermote*, in honor of the daughter of Edwin V. Wintermote, president of the Puget Sound Lumber Company, of Tacoma, Washington. In addition to carrying lumber from the Pacific Northwest in its holds, lumber was also loaded on the open deck. For the next 15 years *Dorothy Wintermote* had a successful career in the lumber trade but on occasion newspaper accounts reported on near misses. *Madera Tribune*, November 16, 1928 "The steamer *Dorothy Wintermote* lost a deckload of lumber [in a gale] and was otherwise damaged. The *Wintermote* is expected to halt here for repairs to her mast and life boats."



Photo: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, John Proctor Collection  
*Dorothy Wintermote* unloading a cargo of lumber at the port of San Francisco, California on April 21, 1932.



As the remaining nine members of the crew rowed in the *Dorothy Wintermote's* lifeboat to the Coast Guard boat *Shooshone* standing nearby.



Last man to leave the ship was Captain O. J. Olson (left) shown with Lieutenant Commander Clarence Paden of the *Shooshone*. The *Wintermote's* mascot cat (right) was saved.



The rescued crew of the freighter is shown here on the *Shooshone's* deck bound for Oakland and waiting members of their families.

Photo: Oakland Tribune September 21, 1938

*Dorothy Wintermote's* crew and their mascot were saved.

## A VETERAN OF PACIFIC COAST SERVICE STRIKES ROCKS AND GOES TO THE BOTTOM

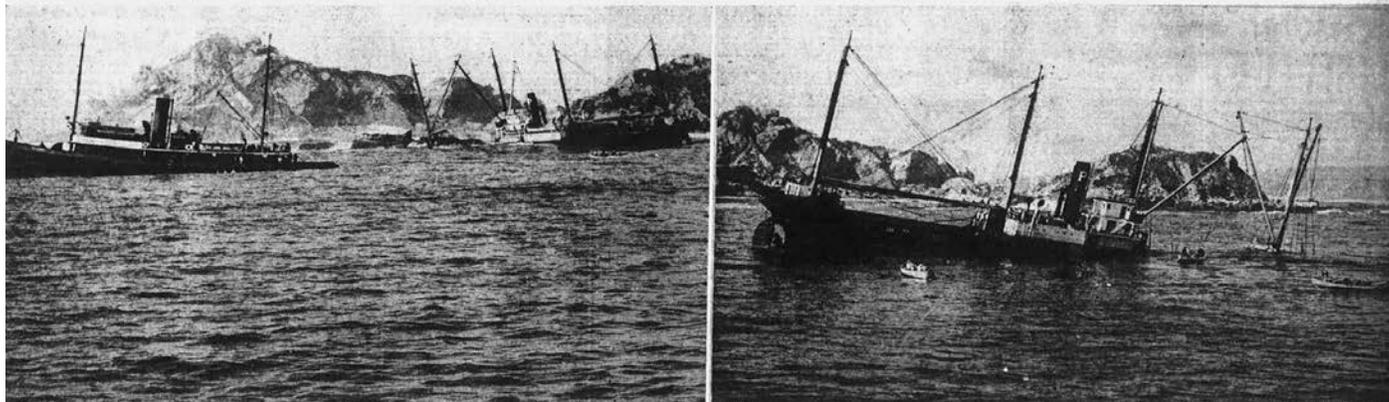


Photo: Oakland Tribune September 21, 1938

*Dorothy Wintermote* grounded off Fish Rock, Mendocino County in 1938, before being towed offshore where it foundered in deep water. Jessie O. Ely, U.S. Coast Guard, captured these dramatic photographs with the Red Stack tugboat *Sea Giant* standing by as the freighter is breaking free of the rocks.

### **Dorothy Wintermote Aground**

On September 17, 1938, *Dorothy Wintermote*, with a crew of 29, was en route from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon with a cargo of general cargo valued at \$115,000, likely with plans to return with a cargo of lumber. Captain O. J. Olsen encountered fog off the northern coast of California and gave orders for the vessel's speed to be reduced and was about to take soundings to determine water depth when the ship struck bottom off Fish Rock, 11 miles south of Point Arena. Fish Rock had claimed many vessels over the years.

The U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Shoshone*

responded to the S.O.S. sent by the stranded freighter's radio operator, and picked up survivors in the lifeboats. The fishing vessel *Santa Rosalie* also responded and took on some of the crew and then itself stranded to the north at Alder Creek, but there were no injuries. *Rosalie* was towed to San Francisco for repairs. The freighter became completely submerged from the bow up to the pilot house with the forward cargo hold underwater.

### **Dorothy Wintermote Founders**

On September 20, 1938, *Dorothy Wintermote* was refloated at 11:00 p.m. after a heavy sea broke it free and it was

taken in tow by the Red Stack tugboat *Sea Giant*. The freighter began to list as the sea poured into what was reported as a 15-foot hole forward. While under tow the *Dorothy Wintermote* sank in deep water offshore. The captain told the *Oakland Tribune*, "I never really knew before what Coastguardmen put up with and I now realize that I had never really been at sea until they took me ashore through a rough sea at Arena Cove. I even didn't get my feet wet." Captain Olsen was the last man to leave the ship was taken ashore when the *Dorothy Wintermote* sank.

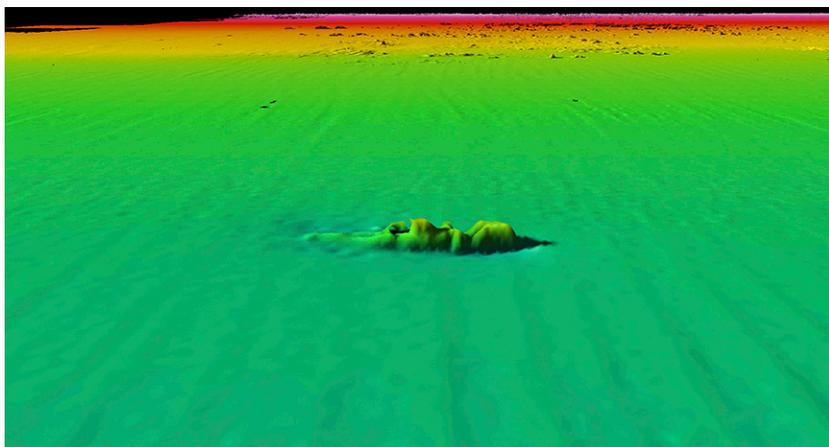


Photo: Fugro Pelagos & NOAA

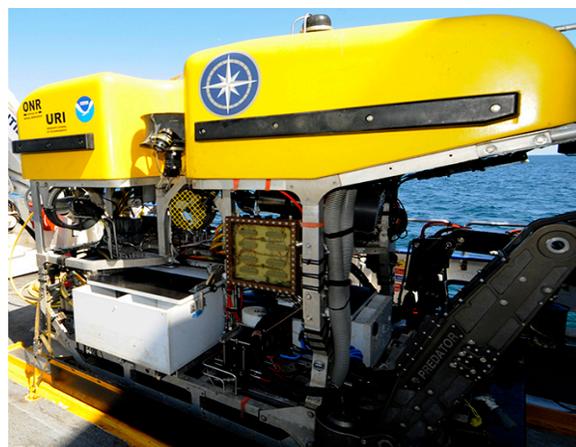


Photo: Robert V. Schwemmer NOAA

Photos (left): Multibeam sonar image processed by Gary Fabian of the shipwreck *Dorothy Wintermote*. The survey was conducted in 2007 off the *FV Pacific Star* by Fugro Pelagos for the Seafloor Mapping Lab at California State University Monterey Bay. The sonar data was later processed for NOAA's Office of Coast Survey. (Right): The remotely operated vehicle (ROV) *Hercules* will be deployed from the *E/V Nautilus* to survey the shipwreck in Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. The survey of the shipwreck will be steamed live to the public through the website [nautiluslive.org](http://nautiluslive.org).