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 Fruter."

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.

Dorothy Wintermote

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."

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

http://farallones.noaa.gov/heritage
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.

Photos (left): Multibeam sonar image processed by Gary Fabian of the shipwreck Dorothy Wintermote. The survey was conducted in 2007 off the F/V 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://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/maritime/