

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary - Maritime Heritage Expedition 2015

Ituna, Former Luxury Steam Yacht, Passenger Ship, Fishing Trawler, Discovered 95 Years after Loss



Photo: Robert Schwemmer Maritime Library

Steam yacht *Ituna* underway in 1892.

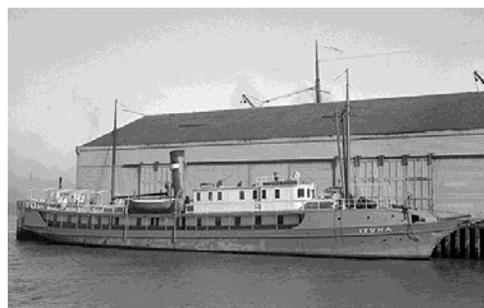


Photo: San Francisco Maritime Historical Park, P78-449A.00616gs

Passenger steamer *Ituna* broadside at dock circa 1917.

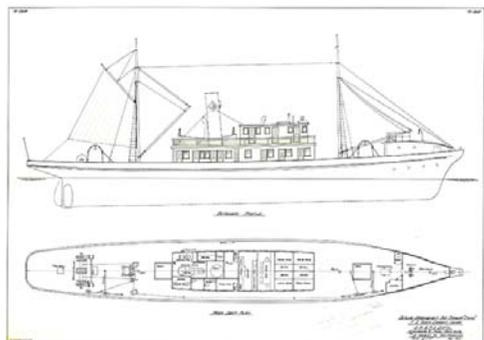


Photo: San Francisco Maritime Historical Park, HDC0128-0547-011

Steam otter fishing trawler *Ituna* drawings circa 1919.



Photo: San Francisco Maritime Historical Park, J07.21.289p

The Associated Oil Company's tanker S.S. *W. S. Porter* transported 12 survivors from the San Francisco Lightship to San Francisco, California after the *Ituna* foundered.

Luxury Steam Yacht

The British luxury steam yacht *Ituna* was designed by George Lennox Watson and built in 1886 by A. & J. Inglis at their Pointhouse shipyard in Glasgow, Scotland. The yacht was built for John G. Mackie of Balcary House, Auchencairn, Castle-Douglas, and launched on April 21, 1886.

On May 1, 1886, *The Marine Engineer* described the ship as follows: "The deckhouse is recessed 18 inches into the deck, showing less topweight than the ordinary design would have given. Forward of the engine-room have been placed the dining cabin and three state-rooms. Aft the engine-room are the drawing room and three sleeping cabins, with bath-room and cloak-room. Over a dado of polished and varnished pine a richly-toned cretonne design will give a comfortable and artistic finish. The dining cabin and drawing-room are finished in polished hardwood. The yacht is fitted by the builders with direct-acting triple-expansion compound engines of 300 I.H.P., and rigged as a pole-masted schooner. She is named the *Ituna*, the old Latin name of the Solway Firth, the naming ceremony being performed by Miss Mackie, sister-in-law of the owner."

As a steam yacht, *Ituna* had several owners. Under the ownership of Allison V. Amour, a wealthy socialite and yachtsman interested in the natural sciences, *Ituna* sailed from New York on December 16, 1894, for Havana and Atlantic ports of Mexico on a scientific research expedition. At Jacksonville, Florida, Professor Allan Marquand of Princeton, Dr. Charles F. Millspaugh, Curator of Botany in the Field of Columbian Museum, and Mr. William Henry Holmes, Curator of Anthropology in the same institution joined the expedition. For three months the yacht sailed to Yucatan, Chiapas, and Oaxaca and the science team examined and described archeological remains encountered during the journey. The expedition results were published as, *Archaeological Studies Among the Ancient Cities of Mexico*, which was immensely valued by scholars of Mesoamerican anthropology, then in its infancy.

Among the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution are William H. Holmes letters, and field drawings. Holmes, a water-colorist of some repute, was a pioneer of American archaeology. He started at the U.S. Geological Survey, moved to the University of Chicago and the Field (Columbian) Museum, and ended his career back at the Smithsonian Institution.

Loss of the steam otter trawler *Ituna*

On March 13, 1920, *Ituna* - owned by the Frank E. Booth Company and under charter to Reedsport Fish Company - was en route from San Francisco, California to Reedsport, Oregon when the fishing trawler encountered a storm. At 10:30 p.m. the vessel foundered in the gale 15 miles northwest of the San Francisco Lightship. On board were 14 crewmen. Two crewmen, George Orton, a fireman from Aberdeen, Washington, and George Nevins Jr., a cannery hand from Pittsburg, California, became trapped in their bunks and drowned. *Ituna* went down by the bow within 10 minutes of springing a leak in the forward hold. The cargo included machinery worth \$30,000, and cement. Fighting heavy seas in a lifeboat for four hours the survivors made it to the San Francisco Lightship where they were rescued and later transferred to the Associated Oil Company's tanker S.S. *W. S. Porter*, which brought the 12 crewmen to San Francisco.

American Registry

During the week ending June 3, 1916, *Ituna* was admitted to American registry under the Act of August 18, 1914. *Ituna*, formerly an American undocumented steam yacht, was assigned official number 214119 and signal letters LGBR, and was owned by R. Fred Vogle, with a home port of Los Angeles, California.

Passenger – Cargo Steamship

On October 14, 1916, the *Weekly Commercial News* reported, "The steam yacht *Ituna* recently sold by C. E. Vogel to A. K. McClure, a Los Angeles attorney, is being converted into a cargo boat with passenger accommodations and will be used in service to Mexico. She will be converted into an oil burner at Fulton yards."

New Line of West Coast Steamers

In February 1917, *The Mexican Review*, reported (in part), "A Company has recently been organized in Los Angeles under the title of the Mexican Navigation and Commercial Company, and comprising a number of well known business men who recognize the possibilities in the way of building up a large and profitable business between the ports of the West Coast of Mexico and those of the United States. The company has recently purchased the famous ocean-going steel steam yacht *Ituna*, and she is now undergoing

extensive repairs at the shipyard of Charles Fulton at Wilmington, fitting out as first-class freight and passenger vessel. No expense is being spared to make this vessel first-class in every respect."

Mexican Navigation and Commercial Company took advantage of *Ituna's* cold storage plant, sufficient to hold 120 tons of sea-food transported between Baja California, Mexico and San Diego, California. On one voyage in 1917, it transported 6970 pounds of yellowtail and 2341 pounds of lobster from individual fishing vessels. There were plans to bring frozen cargos of seafood directly from Turtle Bay, Mexico.

Otter Trawler

Frank E. Booth, president of F. E. Booth Canning Company of San Francisco, California entered into the deep-sea trawling business on a substantial scale. In 1918, he purchased and converted *Ituna* into a fishing trawler at a total expense of \$65,000. In 1918, California's *State Fish Exchange* reported, "The new trawler, known as *Ituna*, was equipped in the most modern and practical manner, with gear of a type new to this coast. The *Ituna*, with a capacity of 120 tons, as against the average of 35 tons of the boats in current use, carried the "English Otter Trawl," which proved so successful in English waters; the nets costing some \$600 apiece."

For some months the otter trawl experiment was unsuccessful due to the lack of experienced fishermen. Captain C. Ramsey, a veteran Scotch fishing expert, was brought to San Francisco from Leith, Scotland to supervise the nets of the *Ituna*. In July 1919, the *Pacific Fisherman* reported (in part), "...utilizing its equipment in the neighborhood of San Francisco, from Half Moon Bay on the south to Salt Point above Fort Ross on the north, the *Ituna* has been able to gather in large catches of 'steamer fish' (largely sole) during the past three months. During the fishermen's strike against the continuance of the California Fish Exchange the *Ituna* brought in fish every day, and in fact was the only source of fresh fish for San Francisco during that period. Another advantage which the *Ituna* has in this matter is that she is a sea-going vessel of considerable size compared with the average fishing boat and can go out in the severest weather, when the rest of the fishing fleet is tied up to the wharves."

Specifications as a Fishing Trawler

Nationality: United States
Type: Otter Fishing Trawler
Owner: Frank E. Booth Company
Builder: A. & J. Inglis at Glasgow, Scotland
Designer: George Lennox Watson
Launched: August 21, 1886
Hull Material: Iron
Machinery: Triple expansion steam engine
Horsepower: 300 Indicated
Length Registered (feet): 133.8
Beam (feet): 19.0
Depth of Hold (feet): 11.1



Photo: San Francisco Chronicle March 15, 1920

"Here are ten of the rescued men, and the captain of the ill-fated trawler *Ituna*, which foundered late Saturday night..." *San Francisco Chronicle*



Photo: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, David W. Dickie Photographs, P78-449A.00618gs

Otter fishing trawler *Ituna*. Photographed before its loss in 1920 at an unidentified location.