

Black Star Line

by *Milton H. Watson*

On November 23, 1919, thousands of Afro-Americans thronged the foot of West 135th Street to witness a pioneering event - the departure of Black Star Line's first steamship. What made this affair unique was the fact that Black Star was the first black-financed, -owned and -managed steamship company. The line was established by a Jamaican named Marcus Garvey. At the age of 27, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Im-

provement and Conservation Association and The African Communities League, quickly shortened to Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.). The chief objectives of this organization were to redeem the continent of Africa for Africans "at home and abroad," exhort racial pride and solidarity, and encourage economic self-sufficiency in the black communities of the United States and the world. When

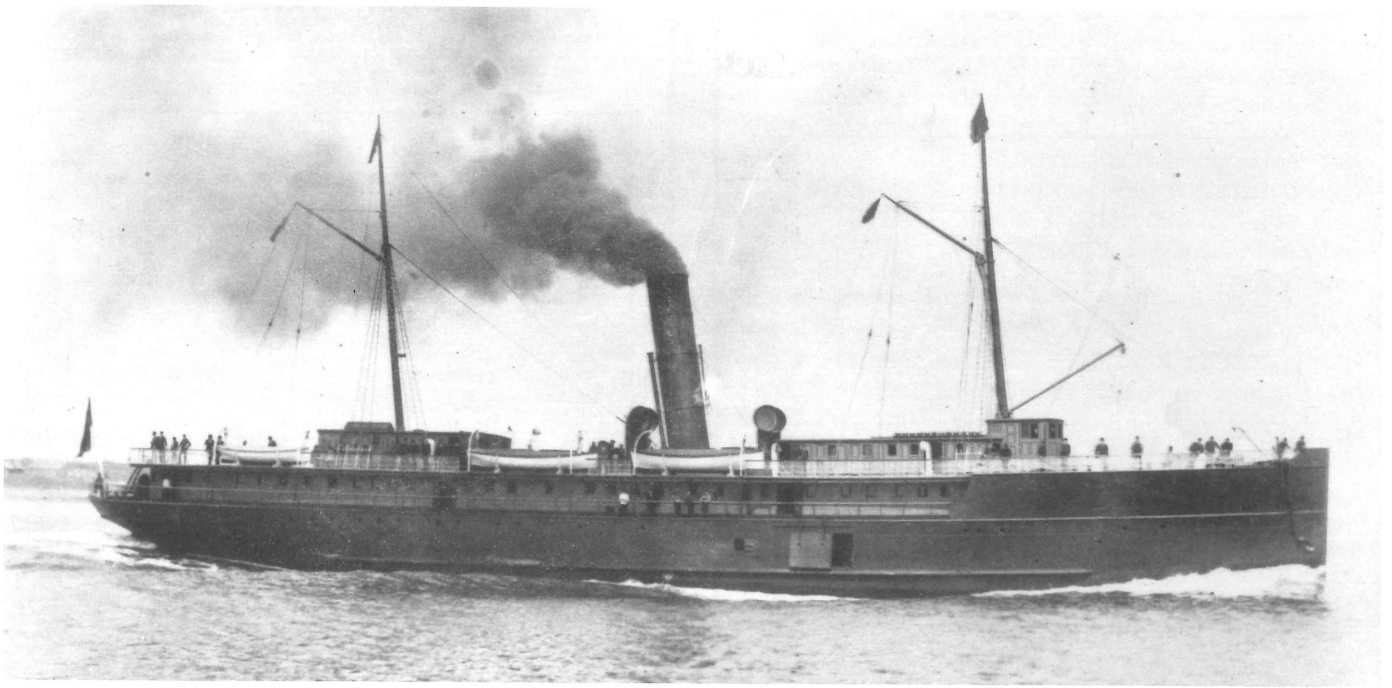
Garvey settled in New York in 1916, his organization headquarters was relocated to Harlem. To help improve blacks' social and economic status in America, Garvey established many fraternal and mutual organizations. However, his most important legacy was the creation of Black Star Line. According to him, the purposes of this shipping firm were: to carry Afro-Americans back to their homeland (Africa); to transport the black people whither they will without being given inferior accommodation or refused accommodation; and to be utilized as a tool to coordinate black commercial enterprises throughout the world in the hope of economic independence.

Blacks were enthusiastic about the idea and flooded the U.N.I.A. office with ticket requests. At U.N.I.A. conventions, black citizens were called upon to help launch this bold venture through financial contributions, and at one such convention, held on April 27, 1919, between \$7,000 and \$8,000 was collected in the form of cash and pledges. Inspired by this show of support, Garvey filed the necessary papers, and, on June 27, 1919, Black Star Steamship Co. was incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware with an authorized capitalization of \$500,000, to be raised by issuing 100,000 shares of stock at \$5.00 per share. The directors of the company were Marcus Garvey (President), Edgar M. Grey, Richard B. Warner, George Tobias, Jeremiah M. Certain, Henrietta Vinton Davis and Janie Jenkins. On June 27, 1919 they convened for the first time at the company's New York headquarters at 56 West 135th Street. As envisioned by the directors, the ships would engage in a triangular trade commencing in the United States and calling at ports in Canada, the West Indies, Central and South America, and Africa.

Inaugurating this bold venture was the steamer YARMOUTH, purchased on September 17, 1919 with the assistance of Captain Joshua Cockburn, a Bahamian who received his master's certificate at the age of 39 and later immigrated



Marcus Garvey was much more capable in developing schemes that he was in executing them. His free-wheeling use of funds collected in the name of his various organizations eventually led to his arrest and deportation - Author's collection.



The 32-year old Nova Scotia steamer *YARMOUTH* was the first vessel acquired and operated by the Black Star Line – T.H. Franklin/SSHA collection, University of Baltimore Library.

to the United States. Many ship brokers were reluctant to deal with blacks, but Cockburn's complexion enabled him to pass as a white and, through his negotiations, Black Star paid \$171,500 for the 32-year old relic. Captain Cockburn and four others later admitted they received a kickback on the deal. *YARMOUTH* was built in 1887 at A. McMillan & Son, Dumbarton, Scotland for Yarmouth Steamship's Yarmouth-Boston route. She was 1,452 tons, 220 feet long, 35 feet wide and powered by a triple-expansion engine turning a single screw producing a speed of fourteen knots. Her capacity was limited to fifty first class passengers. The purchase was promptly approved by BSL's Board of Directors, which also provided another \$18,342.90 for repairs. Two days after the purchase, Captain Cockburn was officially hired by Black Star Line as their captain. He sailed with *YARMOUTH* until 1920, when he turned against Garvey and sued him for \$6,000.

Referred to in the company's literature as FREDERICK DOUGLASS, a name which honored the famous abolitionist leader, the ship actually sailed as *YARMOUTH*. At 5:00 PM on November 23, 1919, *YARMOUTH* departed her 135th Street pier for the West Indies. She had 23 passengers aboard, who paid fares

of \$60 to Cuba, \$65 to Jamaica, and \$80 to Colon. She also carried a consignment of cement for Sagua La Grande, Cuba. Bidding her farewell were 15,000 jubilant and proud blacks, plus another 1,000 whites. From Cuba, Captain Cockburn informed Garvey that the ship's white officers (Chief Officer and Chief Engineer) were causing trouble, which included an attempt to run the ship aground. Problems with white officers were to plague Black Star Line and Black Cross throughout each firm's brief history. At the time, there were very few licensed black officers, and the few that obtained their licenses sought employment with the more established lines. *YARMOUTH* returned to New York on January 7, 1920, with 33 passengers and 300 tons of logwood. Unfortunately, no voyage descriptions by passengers could be located by this author.

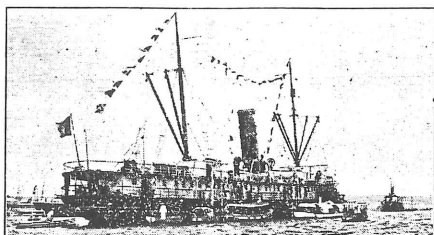
Her second voyage commenced on January 17, with a cargo of whisky, valued at \$2,000,000, for Havana. BSL received the paltry sum of \$11,000 for its transport, which was not even enough to cover the ship's expenses. During the night of January 18, *YARMOUTH* was reportedly sabotaged by her engineer off the Virginia Capes, and the Captain had to send out a distress call that was answered by the United States Coast

Guard cutter *SENECA*, which towed the crippled ship back to New York. The cargo of spirits was not seized since it was cleared before the Prohibition Law became effective. After repairs, *YARMOUTH* resumed her voyage on February 27, with cargo and 35 passengers destined for Havana and points south. According to Hugh Mulzac, a black who became *YARMOUTH*'s chief officer after boarding the vessel on January 23, 1920, upon arrival in Havana on March 3, U.N.I.A. sympathizers flocked from all parts of the island to greet the first ship they had ever seen entirely owned and operated by blacks. During *YARMOUTH*'s rather lengthy stay (five days at anchorage followed by a two-week delay resulting from a longshoremen's strike), the Captain and officers entertained Cuban President Menocal, Cuban businessmen, and landowners. Many of the visitors pledged their support by purchasing stock in BSL and promising cargo. After 32 days in port, *YARMOUTH* departed with passengers only for Jamaica. Again zealous supporters greeted the ship as she docked in Kingston. Boiler repairs were made and supplies taken aboard before she resumed her voyage to Colon, Panama. Hugh Mulzac described the arrival scene at Colon: "Literally thousands of Pana-

BLACK STAR LINE

INCORPORATED

56 WEST 135th STREET
NEW YORK CITY



Ss. "FREDERICK DOUGLAS"

**Invest Your Money in the Most Colossal,
Most Prosperous Negro Industry
of All Times**

Shares at Par Value of \$5.00 Each

WHY?

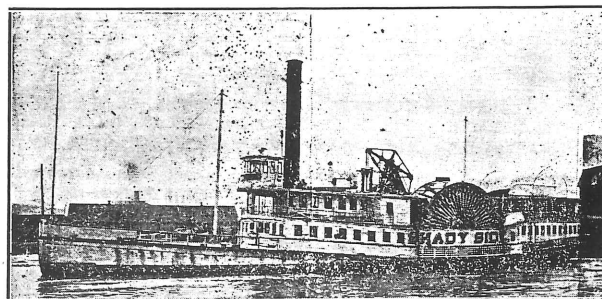
BECAUSE commercially there are few Negro concerns in this country, and none in the world, whose prospects are as bright. The BLACK STAR LINE is for the Colored Man a long-felt need.

It is the only line of steamships that gives, and will always give, to BLACK MEN—FAIR SERVICE and FAIR TREATMENT, FIRST-CLASS ACCOMMODATION FOR FIRST-CLASS TICKET. Those who travel constantly know it; but the Company must be able to secure enough ships to meet successfully the transportation problem between the Islands of the West Indies, South and Central America, and Africa. Therefore, the question of financial results is more than secured.

Invest Now and Help us Put More Ships on the Sea.

Management

Whatever might have been the errors of the past, the present administration of the Black Star Line is composed of trained business men and specialty service help, unquestionably equal to their responsible tasks; and improvement will always be gladly considered.
Remember: Criticism is Cheap and Cannot Feed Hungry Men.



Ss. "SHADYSIDE"
(River Excursion Steamer)

**Has the Black Star Line been Successful?
Read This:**

"When I speak of success I do not mean it in the sordid sense. A successful man is one who has tried, not cried; who has worked, not dodged; who has shouldered responsibility, not evaded it; who has got under the burden, not merely stood off looking on, giving advice and philosophizing on the situation.

The result of a man's work is not the measure of success. To go down with the ship in the storm and tempest is better than to paddle away to Paradise in an orthodox canoe.

To have worked is to have succeeded, we leave the results to time. Life is too short to gather the Harvest, we can only sow.
E. Hubbard.

Now we have worked day and night, it is for you to do something now by investing **RIGHT NOW** in the BLACK STAR LINE.

SHARES \$5.00 EACH

Buy 5, 10, 20, 50, 200. Cash or instalments. Ten (10) per cent with subscriptions, balance equal monthly payments.

N. B.—We are entirely open to investigation and will be glad to furnish information upon request

Black Star Line, Inc.

56 West 135th Street, New York.

MARCUS GARVEY, President

manians swarmed the docks with baskets of fruit, vegetables and other gifts. I was amazed that the YARMOUTH had become such a symbol for colored citizens of every land." Five hundred West Indian immigrants, fed up with American policies in the Canal Zone, boarded for the sugar plantations of Santiago de Cuba. The West Indians had arrived in Panama for the construction of the Panama Canal. Upon its completion, some elected to stay while other West Indians moved on and settled in various Latin American countries. In order to berth them, Mulzac hastily constructed temporary accommodations in the ship's cargo holds. YARMOUTH then sailed for the Panamanian ports of Bocas del Toro (where thousands greeted the ship) and Almirante, plus Puerto Limon, Costa Rica. There was no cargo to be loaded or discharged at these three ports. Instead, the idea was to gain support and raise the self-esteem of blacks in those areas. The visits demonstrated poor management, however, as such stopovers with 500 people on board proved

costly and meant wasted fuel. YARMOUTH finally arrived at Santiago de Cuba, disembarked her 500 immigrants, and then sailed for Jamaica. There she loaded 700 tons of coconuts and 45 passengers. After stops at Nassau and Norfolk for stores and fuel, she finally arrived at Philadelphia on May 7, 1920. After disembarking her passengers, YARMOUTH headed for Boston, arriving there on May 12. By the time she reached New York, the coconuts were rotten and their incensed owners filed a damage suit.

On February 14, 1920, the company was restyled Black Star Line Steamship Corp., which was incorporated in Delaware with a recapitalization of \$10 million. The infusion of new capital led the Board of Directors to embark on a buying spree. This time BSL was looking at the potential of the Hudson River excursion market. Up until then, there were only white-owned companies operating boats on the Hudson. The directors reasoned, if white companies could do it, why not blacks, and wouldn't

blacks patronize their own? On March 22, 1920, therefore, Black Star Line spent \$35,000 for the vintage excursion boat SHADY SIDE. She was built in 1873 at Bulls Ferry, New Jersey, for the North & East River Steam Boat Co. She was 444 tons, 168 feet long, 27 feet wide and propelled by paddle wheels. Under the command of Captain Jacob Wise, SHADY SIDE made a number of trips up the Hudson following her purchase. Black Star's dreams failed to materialize as she was not well patronized. Many believed that the \$1.05 fare may have been too steep, especially when compared to a full day round trip to Bear Mountain for sixty cents aboard the steamers HIGHLANDER and GRAND REPUBLIC which included music, refreshments and dancing. SHADY SIDE incurred a \$10,952.43 operating loss during her inaugural season and, upon the advice of Captain Wise, Black Star Line directors withdrew the money loser in August. She was laid up at Fort Lee, New Jersey, where she sank during a 1921 snow storm.

On April 23, 1920, Black Star purchased the steam yacht KANAWHA from mining and railroad magnate Henry Huddleston Rogers for \$60,000. KANAWHA was built at New York (NY) in 1899, and measured 475 tons, 227 feet long and 24 feet wide. Black Star incurred additional expenses of \$15,539.45 to make the vessel seaworthy. She was registered under Black Star Line of Canada, but after petitions to American authorities, KANAWHA was brought under the American flag, the prerequisite being that the firm must be 90 per cent led by Americans.

Under the command of Captain Dixon, a Canadian (by this time Cockburn had been fired for dishonesty), YARMOUTH departed New York in May, 1920 on her third and final voyage. She had 35 passengers aboard destined for Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. Following her arrival in Kingston, she spent two weeks undergoing engine and boiler room repairs. While there, the line's shipping agent, a Mr. Wilson, contracted to assist the refloating of the Japanese vessel KYO MARU, which had run aground on Serrana Banks, 500 miles South of

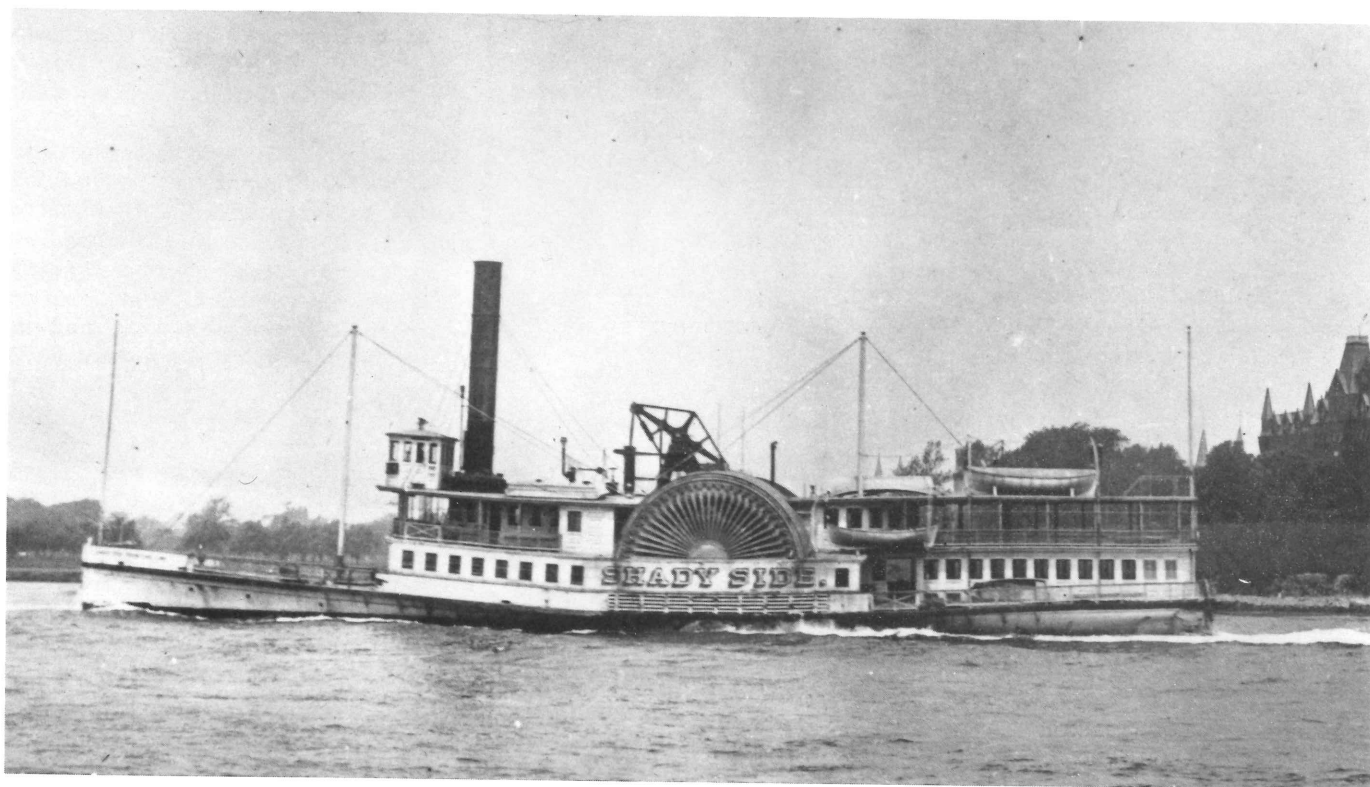
Jamaica. Dixon and Mulzac suggested charging the owners \$45,000, which was reasonable considering the value of the cargo. But Wilson, who knew less about shipping than Garvey, drew up a contract for \$12,000, which was barely enough to cover expenses out to the Banks and back again. On the strength of the contract, YARMOUTH sailed with 32 passengers, refloated KYO MARU, and then proceeded to New York via Charleston, South Carolina, where she stopped for refueling. Upon arrival at New York in August, she was taken out of service as a result of having been libeled by several creditors. On September 30, 1920, while anchored off Bay Ridge (Brooklyn) a strong wind blew the ship into the steamer WESTPOOL. Tugboats towed YARMOUTH to a berth in a sinking condition. To satisfy a judgement against BSL, Judge Garvin approved the sale of YARMOUTH by auction. She fetched \$1,625, less than a hundredth of her original purchase price. During her life at BSL she swallowed up \$136,011.62 of the company's funds.

In addition to unscrupulous employ-

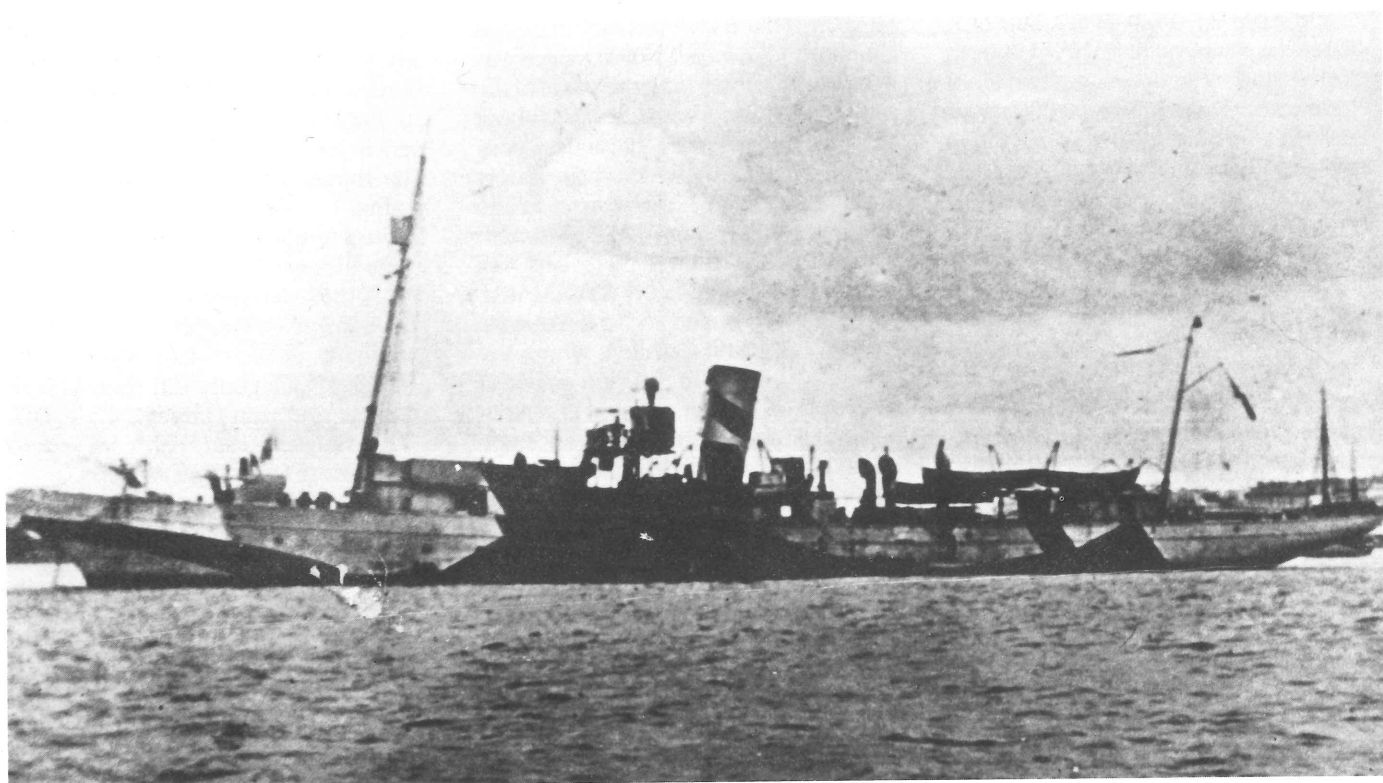
ees, Garvey faced a number of other adversaries. A United States government Bureau of Investigation report dated July 10, 1919 called Garvey "the most prominent negro radical agitator in New York." The Bureau of Investigation, led by a young J. Edgar Hoover, the Justice Department's Edwin P. Kilroe, black integrationists like W.E.B. Du Bois of N.A.A.C.P., James Weldon Johnson, secretary of N.A.A.C.P. and A. Philip Randolph, Socialist, and editor of the Messenger allegedly did their best to disgrace and ruin Garvey's endeavors by planting spies at U.N.I.A. rallies and in the Black Star office itself.

Yet despite the hostile environment, Black Star forged ahead. The number of stockholders continued to increase. From July, 1919 to August, 1921, Black Star Line issued 151,430 shares, of which 148,973 were outstanding. Due to expenses and waste, such as overpaying company officials, poor record keeping for supplies, etc., BSL reported a loss of \$209,456.34 as of June 30, 1921.

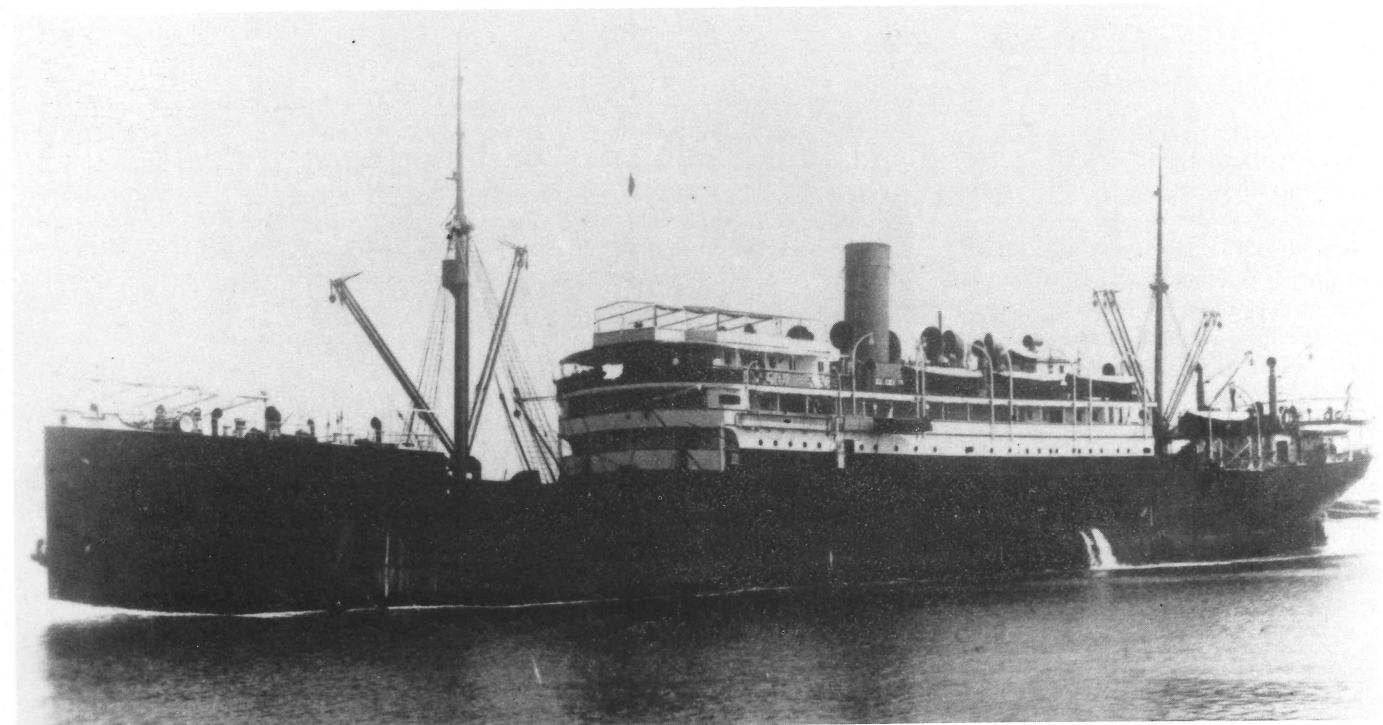
KANAWHA was rechristened ANTONIO MACEO, a name honoring a Cuban general of African descent. The ship



The New York excursion steamboat *SHADY SIDE*, obviously showing her age, proved to be another Black Star fiasco – William Miller photo, SSHSA collection, University of Baltimore Library.



U.S.S. PIQUA (SP 130) as she appeared in September 1917, a few months after she arrived at Brest, France. Several public archives contain good photographs of this vessel during her halcyon days as an express yacht, but none are available at this time.



Although advertised as *PHYLLIS WHEATLEY*, the former HAPAG liner *PRINZ OSKAR*, which had been seized by the U.S. in World War I and renamed *ORION*, never ran for Black Star Line – Alex Shaw/SSHSA collection, University of Baltimore Library.

actually sailed from New York as KANAWHA on March 25, 1921, amidst much fanfare. On board were forty passengers headed for the West Indies. She was under the command of a caucasian captain, Leon Swift. The passage fares were: \$80 to Havana, \$90 to Kingston, and \$100 to Colon. Enroute, a valve in the engine blew, forcing her to return to New York for repairs. She sailed again on March 28, and between Norfolk and Jacksonville the fan engine broke down despite warning signals that were ignored. Repairs required a stop at Jacksonville. Back underway, the belt broke again, and the chief engineer damaged her boiler by using salt water. She eventually made Havana on April 9, 1921 and was well received by the port's citizens. After necessary repairs, KANAWHA sailed for Kingston. Several hours after this departure, the fan engine broke again. In addition, the piston rods and other machinery parts suffered damage due to the earlier intake of salt water. After calls at Sagua La Grande and Santiago de Cuba (where Garvey boarded) for repairs, KANAWHA sailed for Jamaica in May. Again, the boilers were left without water, salt water was introduced into the boilers, and other mechanical failures occurred. At no time were engineers found at the scene during these mechanical malfunctions. She eventually arrived to a warm welcome at Kingston on May 17. Eleven days later KANAWHA departed for Cuba, only to limp back into Kingston on May 31. Another departure was made on June 18, but again, mechanical difficulties forced KANAWHA to return to Kingston on June 22. Garvey charged Captain Swift and his white officers with gross neglect and sabotage. Captain Swift resigned and was replaced by Captain Adrian Richardson, a black, who remained with the company until he was removed by Garvey in July, 1921. KANAWHA was repaired by August, and setting a northern course, arrived at Santiago where she was greeted by Governor Alfredo Lora of Oriente province and his retinue. KANAWHA then sailed for New York, but made it only as far as Antilla, Cuba, where she broke down and was abandoned on August 24, 1921. When the balance sheets were tallied on December 31, 1921, KANAWHA consumed \$132,733.48 in corporate funds. In 1925 a storm swept KANAWHA from her moorings, caus-

ing her to sink.

Concurrent with KANAWHA's New York departure were advertisements appearing in the Negro World, a black weekly started by Garvey. The ad stated, "Black Star Line sailings for Liberia, West Africa. The S.S. YARMOUTH will sail with cargo and passengers from New York on or about 27th March, 1921 at 3 P.M. Other ships of the line will sail with cargo and passengers on or about the 2nd of April, 1921; May 8th; May 29th; June 12th; June 26th, and regular weekly and fortnightly sailings thereafter." YARMOUTH at this stage was out of

commission, yet appeared in their 1921 ads. Another issue of Negro World had an ad that described KANAWHA as, "Luxurious S.S. ANTONIO MACEO, Speediest and Best Passenger Accommodation to the Islands of the Black Star Line...."

In February, 1921, Garvey departed New York for the West Indies on a fund raising drive. After a triumphant tour of Cuba and Jamaica, Garvey was ready to return to the United States via Latin America in April. He presented himself at the American Consul in Kingston for a visa and was refused one. In

BLACK STAR LINE

Incorporated

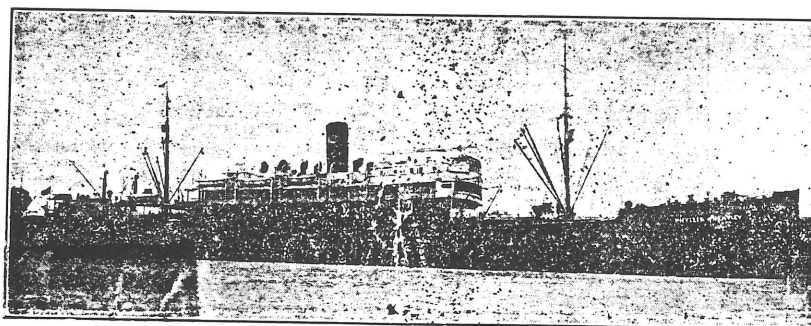
56 West 136th Street

New York City

Incorporated under the State Laws of Delaware - June 26, 1919

Capital Stock \$10,000,000 (Common)

Shares at \$5 each



S.S. "PHYLLIS WHEATLEY"

Colored Men! Would you like to be **Ship Masters? Engineers? Wireless Operators?**

Would you be proud to have a great line of steamships owned and controlled by MEN of your RACE?
Do you believe that Men of your Race can do everything that other men have done?

DO and BE

"There are two kinds of people in this world—those who are always getting ready to do something, and those who go ahead and do it."

"Wishing accomplishes nothing. Only by BEING and DOING we bring about what wishing merely dreams and never gets. The best preparation for the world to come is not dreaming nor wishing, but the proper employment of OUR POWERS IN ACHIEVING THE GREATEST AND BEST THINGS POSSIBLE TO US IN THIS WORLD. Future rewards depend upon present work and faithfulness. He who today is faithful in little things, tomorrow becomes the ruler over ten cities. "Be thou faithful—NOW."

H. A. PRICE.

The BLACK STAR LINE believes in the above quotations, and that is why in two years of operation, with insufficient capital, opposition from within and without the Race, abuses of all kinds, still to-day the BLACK STAR LINE is up and doing.

DOING WHAT?

RUNNING STEAMSHIPS!

Help us keep them running by buying your shares today. Mail check or money order to Black Star Line, 56 West 135th Street, New York City.

Garvey's absence, Black Star's vice-president, Orlando Thompson, was left in charge to administer the affairs of the company. Unable to return to the United States, Garvey sent the monies from stock offerings to Black Star's headquarters. On his end, Thompson was supposed to be negotiating with the United States Shipping Board (U.S.S.B.) for the purchase of a large ship for the North America-Africa service advertised above. The ship Thompson had his eyes on was ORION, built in 1902 as PRINZ OSKAR for Hamburg-America's North and South American trade. In 1917 she was seized by the United States government, renamed ORION, and after hostilities, handed over to the U.S.S.B. and offered for sale "as is." Thompson wrote Garvey stating the company had acquired ORION and had paid \$20,000 of the total price due of \$225,000. The acquisition was supposed to be renamed PHYLLIS WHEATLEY, thus honoring an Afro-American poet who was the second woman to be published in America.

Through a fortuitous and simultaneous change of personnel handling his case in both Kingston and Washington, Garvey managed to obtain a visa and arrived at New Orleans via Guatemala in July, 1921. Upon his return to New York, he found to his horror that no ship had been purchased by Black Star, and that only \$12,500 had been lodged with the Shipping Board through ship bro-

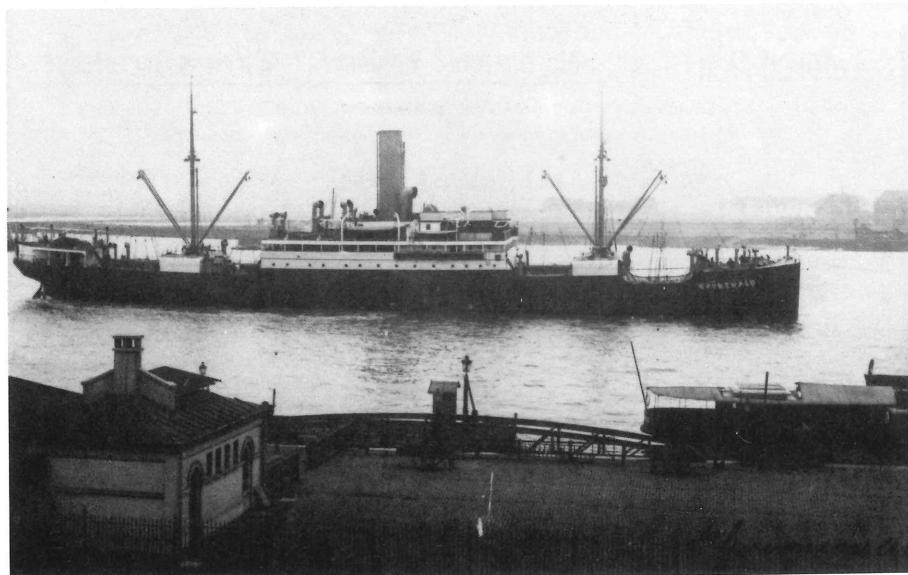
ker A. Rudolph Silverstone, who supposedly already had \$20,000 of the line's money. Furthermore, Thompson tried to cover up the apparent fraud by borrowing \$10,000 from the International Finance Corporation to add to the sum already deposited with the Shipping Board. In December, 1921 the bonding company demanded payment. Black Star felt swindled through the incompetence of Thompson, and Garvey started an investigation into the affair, preparatory to taking legal action to recover the monies. Instead of getting assistance from the District Attorney's office, Garvey was arrested by the Department of Justice on January 12, 1922 and charged with violation of Postal Law Section 215 and 37 U.S.C.C., using the mails to defraud the public.

Garvey was arraigned before U.S. Commissioner Samuel M. Hitchcock. Bail was fixed at \$2,500, which was promptly furnished. A month later (February 17), three top officials of Black Star Line were also indicted. They were vice-president Orlando Thompson, treasurer George Tobias, and secretary Eli Garcia. Meanwhile, the District Attorney's office seized all the books and records of Black Star Line along with U.N.I.A. material and copies of the *Negro World* that contained advertisements of PHYLLIS WHEATLEY. Their case was constructed around the lack of written evidence of PHYLLIS WHEATLEY's reported purchase, the

advertising by Black Star of such a ship, and the selling of passage on a non-existent ship. Black Star actually collected \$8,900 from persons who booked passage. These monies were kept separate from the general BSL funds. Even though evidence was found of the money borrowed by Thompson, plus records for YARMOUTH, SHADY SIDE and KANAWHA, the government appeared intent on silencing Garvey and placing a lid on his "radical" ideas.

Adding fuel to the government's case was a "Garvey Must Go" campaign initiated in July, 1922 by "prominent Negro citizens" of the time. They included DuBois, Johnson, Randolph, Chandler Owen, and William Pickens to name a few. These integrationists reportedly were jealous of Garvey's popularity among the black masses and his Negro first separatist stance. On January 15, 1923, eight of these leaders signed a letter to the Attorney General begging him to "vigorously and speedily pursue the government's case against Marcus Garvey for using the mails to defraud." The mail fraud trials began in May, 1923 and a month later the three officials were found innocent. Garvey, on the other hand, was found guilty, was sentenced to a maximum of five years in jail, and was given a \$1,000 fine.

Garvey was immediately incarcerated in the New York Tombs while his supporters formed the Marcus Garvey Committee of Justice to free their leader. In August bail was finally allowed and set at \$15,000, an amount raised in cash by his supporters. Garvey was out of prison by September. Wasting no time, Garvey set to work on the 1924 Universal Negro Improvement Association convention, with renewed optimism of reviving a steamship service to Africa. In a remarkable display of devotion, thousands of his supporters bought stock in his new steamship line, officially established in March, 1924 as Black Cross Navigation & Trading Co., which was incorporated under the laws of the State of New Jersey. Through the efforts of Cyril Briggs, a mulatto, Black Cross purchased GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS in August, 1924 for a reported \$100,000 from Panama Railroad Steamship Line; and as with previous tonnage, Black Cross' new flagship needed \$25,000 in repairs. GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS was built by Bremer-Vulkan, Vegesack, Germany in 1911 as GRUNEWALD for



Named *BOOKER T. WASHINGTON* without benefit of re-registration, Black Cross Navigation acquired the former HAPAG liner *GRUNEWALD* from the U.S. Government, who had changed her name to *GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS* when she was seized in 1917 – Author's collection.

Hamburg-America Line. She was 4,418 tons, 353 feet long and 48 feet wide and powered by quadruple-expansion engines turning a single screw for a speed of thirteen knots. In April, 1917, the ship was taken over by the United States and served as the transport GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS. A year after hostilities ended she was handed over to Panama Railroad Steamship Line.

A full page advertisement describing her up-coming itinerary appeared in the January 3, 1925 edition of the Negro World. The ad read, "Big Negro Excursion to Central America, the West Indies, Panama and south of the United States aboard the palatial steamer of 5,300 tons S.S. GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS rechristened S.S. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON ... Ship sails from North River and 135th Street at 4 o'clock Sunday, 11th January, 1925 and returns 7th February, 1925." First class accommodations were offered for 31-days with round trip fares at \$350 and \$400 per berth. This sailing date, however, was postponed by seven days because "Black Cross had not accumulated the balance of money that was necessary to pay off the vessel by 31st December."

The big day arrived on January 18. While docked at Pier 75 at the foot of West 135th Street, Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, with Marcus and honorary guests by her side, christened the ship in the name of the prominent educator and one time President of Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington. After the ceremony, 4,000 men and women (many of whom had purchased shares in Black Cross) paid \$1.00 each to visit the ship during embarkation. At 6:40 PM the ship, with the name GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS still painted on her sides, sailed under the command of Captain Jacob De Rotter Hiorth. The Norwegian captain was assisted by six officers (two were white), three white engineers, and an all black crew. Aided by tugs, she was backed into the Hudson River and then turned so that her bow headed downstream toward the Atlantic Ocean. On board for this epic voyage of encouragement and inspiration were only fourteen passengers, way under her capacity of 170 (70 first and 100 second class). It is interesting to note the January 24th issue of Negro World devoted six pages to this spectacular event and its ramifications. The New York Amsterdam News, another black

weekly, gave it front page billing with an illustration. The New York Times featured a single long column on its page 18.

At Havana GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS was warmly greeted by the general populace, then delayed by vigilant creditors who wanted to seize the ship. Garvey placated them, and the ship departed for Kingston. Shortly after arriving, her boiler broke down. Adding insult to injury was the near collapse of discipline as the officers exchanged insults with the crew and passengers. The vessel was again libeled for debt. The GENERAL was temporarily repaired and, after the Jamaica agents received \$3,800 from New York, was allowed to sail in March for Colon. Outside the harbor, the GENERAL's boiler malfunctioned again, and the ship was forced to return to port. The crew made allegations of sabotage against the ship's captain, his officers,

and engineers. As in 1920 and 1921, Garvey was forced to resort to hiring white officers due to extreme shortages of black licensed officers. Again, the GENERAL was repaired, and set course for Colon. Upon arrival, the crew almost mutinied for their wages. At this point the captain and chief engineer quit and were replaced. Black Cross coffers were practically exhausted, but enough funds were forwarded to ward off trouble and to allow the ship to continue the northward journey. The GENERAL arrived in New York on May 31, and was immediately attached for debt, which was satisfied by her sale to Winthrop, Waite & Company. Two years later GENERAL G.W. GOETHALS was purchased by Munson Line and sailed as MUNORLEANS. She was laid up in 1933 and sold for scrap in 1936.

On February 2, 1925 the Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the mail fraud conviction, and three days later Garvey was

THE NEGRO WORLD, SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 1925

A GREAT DAY

FOR THE NEGRO PEOPLE OF NEW YORK AND THEIR FRIENDS

The Christening and Sailing of the Great, Big Ocean Liner

S. S. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

THE FLAGSHIP OF THE
BLACK CROSS NAVIGATION AND TRADING COMPANY
For a cruise of the West Indies and Central America, carrying freight and passengers

This giant ship of the Negro Race will sail from Pier 75, North River at West 35th Street and North River on

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 1925

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS TO TAKE PLACE

The christening and inspecting of the boat before she sails will take place at Pier 75, North River, West 35th Street and North River, from 2 P. M. to 5 P. M., Sunday, 18th January

PROGRAM

SPEECHES BY PROMINENT CITIZENS. AMONG THEM TO BE PRESENT

State Assemblyman POPE BILLUPS, Alderman JOHN WILLIAM SMITH, Bishop GEORGE ALEXANDER MCGUIRE, HON. MARCUS GARVEY, Sir WILLIAM SHERRILL, Lady HENRIETTA VINTON DAVIS, Hon. Surrogate Judge JOHN O'BRIEN, HON. G. E. CARTER, HON. CLIFFORD S. BOURNE and HON. PERCIVAL BURROWS

SINGERS FOR THE OCCASION WILL BE

MADAM FRAZIER ROBINSON	PROFESSOR PACKER RAMSAY
MISS ETHEL OUGHTON CLARKE	MISS ETHEL COLLINS and others

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BOOKER T. WASHINGTON advertisement from *The Negro World*, January 17, 1925 – Author's collection.

arrested while detraining at the 125th Street Station in New York. On the eighth he was taken to Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Relenting to the clamour of Garvey's supporters, President Coolidge commuted his sentence on November 18, 1927. Although his release was to take effect immediately, Garvey was held extra days while the Immigration Department prepared deportation papers. Upon release, Garvey was escorted to New Orleans where he boarded United Fruit's SARAMACCA for deportation to Jamaica. Five thousand of his loyal supporters stood in a pouring rain to bid their hero farewell. Garvey eventually moved to London in 1935, where he died five years later.

Of all the enterprises Garvey initiated, the steamship lines were his financial quagmire. Their total operational deficit was estimated at \$1.25 million. Their failure was attributed to many factors: poor judgement in appointing subordinates, poor record keeping, Garvey's lack of knowledge of maritime finance, persistent and malicious attacks by enemies, graft, and sabotage by

employees. Though neither company carried a single passenger to Africa, the promise, the hope and the attempt did provide a psychological boost to the down trodden black masses in America and the world. Furthermore, the three trips undertaken by YARMOUTH, and the voyages of KANAWHA and the GENERAL showed that the possibilities for cargoes, a passenger business, and support (particularly of the last two vessels) were there. As the Negro World stated in its November 1, 1920 issue, it was a "Herculean effort...."

ADDENDUM

Marcus Garvey was neither the first person of African decent to promote repatriation to Africa nor the first to establish a trading link between Africa and North America. Among the earliest advocates of repatriation was a New Bedford shipowner, Paul Cuffee. In 1815, at his own expense, he took nine families and 38 other persons to Sierra Leone to begin the realization of his dream of bringing "Christian civilization" and

businesses owned and operated by blacks to the shores of Africa. The next venture to connect Afro-Americans with Africa was in 1878 when Dr. Martin R. Delany and Henry McNeil Turner formed the Liberian Exodus Company. Both gentlemen were proponents of black emigration, with Turner being among the first to raise the issue of reparations for the years of suffering. The monies collected would finance blacks' return to Africa. Liberian Exodus Company obtained the ship AZOR and successfully landed 200 emigrants in Liberia. The final effort in repatriation and commercial trading between the two continents was made by Alfred C. Sam, an Ashanti trader from Ghana who appealed to blacks in the Kansas-Oklahoma area. He reportedly raised \$100,000, purchased a ship, LIBERIA, and landed sixty Afro-Americans at the Gold Coast (Ghana) in January, 1915, in the face of suspicion and harassment from the wartime navies of both Germany and Britain.



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, formerly GRUNEWALD, made one voyage for Garvey before being seized for debt. She later was acquired by the Munson Line and renamed MUNORLEANS – Henry W. Uhle/SSHA collection, University of Baltimore Library.