

Reflections ELAINE TRUCKE

The rediscovered history of the SS Cannon Beach

In my last article, I reached out for information on the Oregon Coast during WWII and a local man, Ed Johnson, contacted me with a question. He wondered if I had ever heard of a ship called the “USS Cannon Beach.” I hadn’t. It is a rare thing for me to be stumped when it comes to our town history, but here I was, and I wasn’t the first. Never one to pass up a good historic tidbit, my colleague and I delved into the archives and even touched base with Salem. I guess we weren’t the only ones who hadn’t heard of the ship named for our beloved town.

Even several decades ago, not many in Cannon Beach had heard of the ship that was named for the town. Former crew member, Fred Walburn, was so surprised he shot an email to the Historical Society.

“Several years ago I was in Cannon Beach for a few days and was surprised to learn that no one seemed to know that a ship had been named for your fair city,” said Walburn. He was a crew member on the SS Cannon Beach for a short period after its construction in 1945. They sailed from the port of Los Angeles (San Pedro) on October 8, 1945 with a cargo of aviation fuel. They were bound for the port at Yokohama, Japan. However, just outside of the Aleutian Islands the ship was caught in a severe storm, which caused significant damage to the bulkheads. The Cannon Beach was ordered back to San Pedro for repairs and that was the last time that Walburn saw her.

The SS Cannon Beach was christened on August 25, 1945 at Swan Island Yard. While my knowledge of nautical terminology is rather limited, I was told that USS



ELAINE TRUCKE

stands for United States Ship (or something along those lines), while SS can mean “steamed ship” or “screwed steamer” (referring to a ship driven by propellers or screws). Don’t quote me on those prefixes! What is clear is that the ship was christened the SS Cannon Beach.

The Cannon Beach was constructed by the Kaiser Company for the United States Maritime Commission. According to documents in the museum’s archive, the ship was one of several emergency tankers planned in 1941. These ships were of a commercial design that the Sun Ship Building Company had been building for the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. A total of 525 of these ships were contracted between 1942 and 1948.

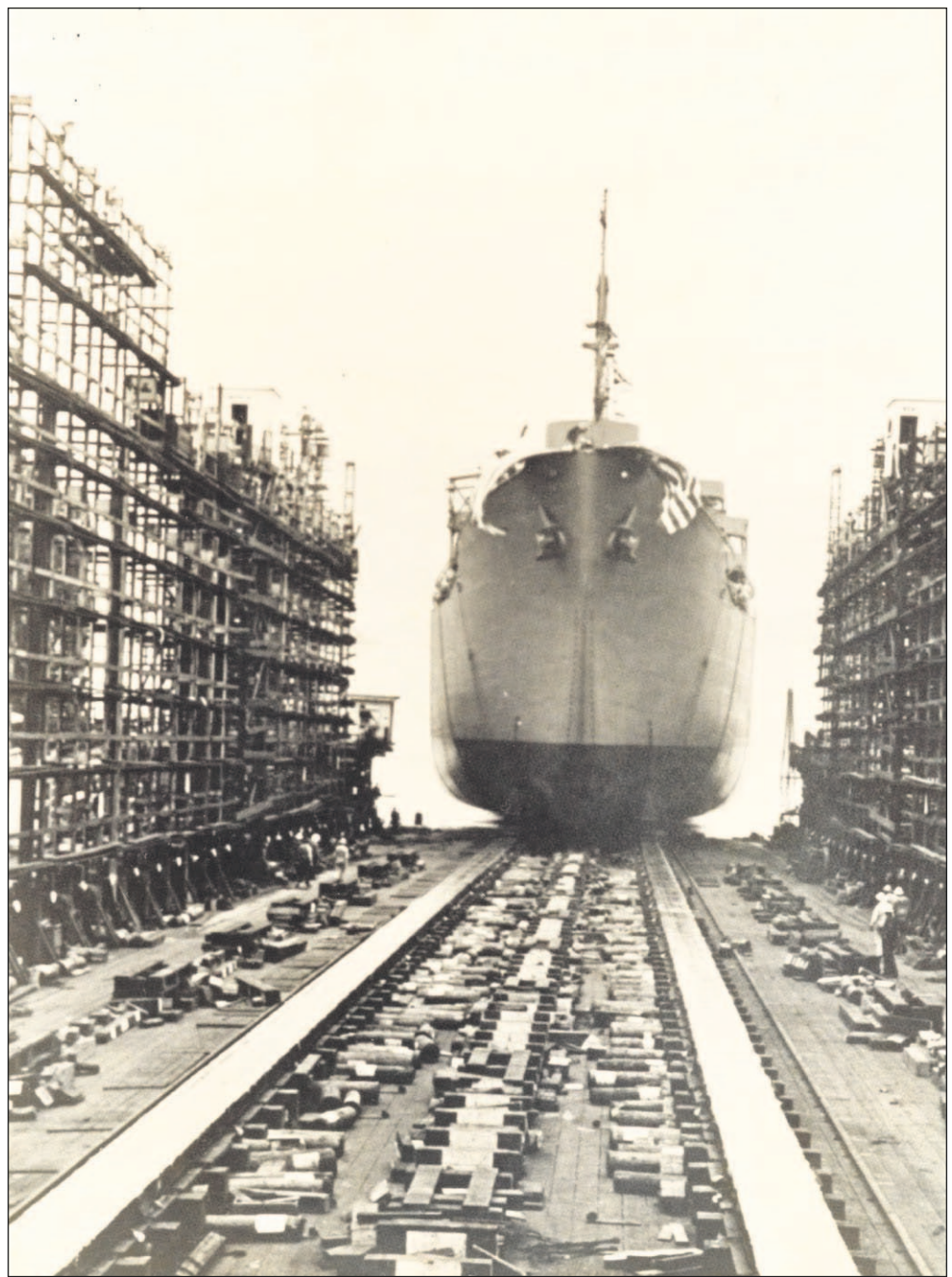
Many of these ships were of the classification SE-A1 and were equipped with turbo electric machinery producing a shaft horsepower of 6,000. The ships had a top speed of between 14.5 and 15 knots. Construction of these ships was shared between the “Alabama Dry-dock & Shipbuilding Company, of Mobile, Alabama, the Kaiser Company’s Swan Island Yard at Portland, Oregon, the Marine Ship Corporation at Sausalito, California and the Sun Shipbuilding & Dry-dock Company of Chester, Pennsylvania.”

In a letter addressed to former Oregon State Sen-

ator Mark O. Hatfield and dated April 4, 1985, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration department, states that the SS Cannon Beach was operated by Pacific Tankers under a General Agency Agreement with the War Shipping Administration. From September 1945 to September 1947, the ship primarily carried petroleum products in the Pacific. In October 1947, the SS Cannon Beach was sold to the Lanmore Company and registered under the Panamanian flag. It continued to transport petroleum until it was sold in December of 1960 to the Panama Trans-Oceanic Company, S.A. She was then placed in the shipyard of Hamburg, Germany, where she was lengthened to 575 feet and renamed the Carolyn E. Conway.

The former SS Cannon Beach continued to operate for another fifteen years before the ship was sold for scrap. Sadly, breaking up of the vessel was completed in Taiwan in 1976.

Though the SS Cannon Beach had a sad ending and a rather uneventful history, there is no doubt that she brought a little international prestige to our small town and adds an interesting twist in Cannon Beach’s unique history.



Christened the SS Cannon Beach on August 25, 1945, the WWII era “emergency tanker” had a rather “uneventful history.”



Officials gather for a photograph to commemorate the christening of the SS Cannon Beach in August 1945.



The SS Cannon Beach hard at work. Images could be from Swan Island Yard.

Uncorked Ramblings STEVEN SINKLER

A wine competition, a haunted room and a surprise ending

Demanding work, this wine judging thing. Three days of delicious food, world class wine and sleeping in a beautiful, historic hotel. Funny how the invite forgot to mention the hotel was haunted.

Having been invited to be a wine judge for the 2015 Great Northwest Wine Competition, Maryann and I happily headed off to Hood River. After spending the past three years as a wine panel moderator for the Savor Northwest Wine Awards, this was my first competition as a full-blown judge.

The competition was held at the Columbia Gorge Hotel, which was built in 1920. This beautifully restored inn has hosted many famous entertainers, including Rudolf Valentino. Period music plays throughout the hotel, taking you back in time to the hotel’s grandest days.

During the first night’s welcome dinner, we learned that over 1,200 wines had been submitted for judging, making this the largest wine competition ever held in the Pacific Northwest. Wines were submitted from as far away as British Columbia and Idaho, although the vast majority came from Oregon and Washington. We also learned

our judging team assignments and I was pleased to be teamed up with Stephen Reustle, the wine maker at Reustle Prayer-Rock Vineyards, located in Roseburg, and Ilene Dudunake, owner of A New Vintage Wine Shop from Boise. I enjoyed working with Stephen at Savor Northwest in 2014 and I was certain that we’d make a great team again.

After dinner, Maryann and I returned to our room, Room 333, and called it a night. We were both tired as we had left Cannon Beach early in the morning and took the scenic route to Hood River, which included a stop at Multnomah Falls, Cathedral Ridge Winery and shopping in downtown Hood River, prior to checking into our hotel.

I woke up at about 2:30 a.m. and was lying awake in bed when suddenly the closet light turned on. Whoa! The closet door was closed, but I could see the closet light coming from between the door and the frame. I also knew that the closet light was activated by a motion detector. Something had moved in the closet. Then, suddenly the light went off. Ahhh... back to normal. Then, the light came back on, again! What? I looked for any sign of movement in the closet. I



STEVEN SINKLER

can assure you that if I had seen a shadow or detected any movement, I would’ve been out of that room immediately. And, then again, the light went out. Ahhh... relief. Then, the light came on a third time! Are you kidding me? I kept perfectly still while watching for movement. Then, the light went out. Thank you. I didn’t wake up Maryann during this episode as I’m not sure how she would’ve reacted, but I’m pretty sure she wouldn’t have hung around for all three of the closet lightings. I fell back to sleep with no further ghostly encounters. In the morning, I told Maryann what had happened and she was glad that I didn’t wake her up.

I went downstairs for breakfast and I asked some of the hotel staff whether the hotel was haunted. Each gave the same reply, “The



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The historic Columbia Gorge Hotel in Hood River is a great place to visit, but be wary of Room 333, columnist Steve Sinkler advises.

hotel is absolutely haunted and Room 333 is the most active.” Great. Later, during a break in the wine competition, I was talking to another judge about my closet light experience the night before and a nearby hotel employee asked if I was talking about Room 333. When I told him that, indeed, I was, he responded that he wasn’t surprised at all.

We didn’t have any further eerie visits, but we did have an unexpected occurrence. A Washington pinot

noir rosé took the Best of Show Award. You read that correctly. A rosé made from Washington pinot noir was selected as the very best wine in the entire competition. So much for Washington and their big, bold cabernet sauvignon or the delicate and delicious pinot noir from Oregon. Both of these iconic wines were taken down by Victor Palencia’s 2014 Vino La Monarcha Pinot Noir Rosé, a dry wine jam packed with flavors of strawberry, apricot

and tangerine. This wine is made in very small quantities so I don’t expect that you’ll be seeing this on the Wine Shack’s shelves. But, I was fortunate to taste this amazing wine and respect it for the shock it gave to both Washington and Oregon wineries.

Please drink responsibly. Don’t drink and drive.

Steven and Maryann Sinkler own The Wine Shack in Cannon Beach. His column appears every month.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why not pave the streets?

To the editor,
We are Cannon Beach residents whose street is graveled and quite steep. We have had to call the city frequently to request grading and addition of

more gravel due to extreme troughs. Regarding the recent articles about paving the gravel streets in Cannon Beach, we would like to offer the following:

Gravel: The advantage, as stated by the mayor, is that it “maintains the ‘village atmosphere’ of the

town,” an obviously subjective opinion.

The disadvantages: More costly to maintain (lots of online information), noise and dust pollution, inaccessible for wheelchairs.

Pavement: Advantages are lower maintenance cost, quieter (goes along with the

“village” effect), creates less dust pollution, safer (have you ever tried to stop or turn quickly on gravel?), better handicapped accessibility.

The disadvantages: We see no inherent disadvantage to paving. Seventy-five percent of streets are

already paved, so how does having 25 percent of them gravel create or maintain a “village atmosphere?”

We would encourage the city to simply pave streets, particularly steep ones, using our tax dollars rather than going through some byzantine process of get-

ting home owners to “vote” if they want to spend 80 percent of some unknown cost to pave their street, a benefit enjoyed by 75 percent of the other residents at no direct cost to themselves.

Philip and Helene Hall
Cannon Beach