

[#56]

## ***Star of Peru ex Himalaya ex Bougainville***

Rig: Iron 3-masted ship

Launch: 1863

End: 1926 (hulked in New Caledonia)

Built: Sunderland, England by Pile & Hay for J. D. Tyser & Co.

Dimensions: 201.6' x 33' x 20.5'

Tonnage: 1027 tons

I recall in the 1969 or 1970 some wreckers got the contract to tear down an old movie palace in Seattle built nearly fifty years before. The wreckers could not seem to make headway with the building, so they looked up the original architect who was still living, to get his opinion of the best way to go about knocking down this steel-reinforced building. The elderly architect admitted that it was one of his first commissions, and owing to lack of experience, he doubled the reinforcing bar requirements. In other words, it was not going to come down without a struggle.

In some ways the early iron sailing ships built in the United Kingdom were like this architect's vision of what needed to happen. Unsure of the medium, often they were over-designed and over built. *Himalaya* and *Euterpe*, both built in 1863, were constructed heavier than Lloyd's required with thicker iron plates and stronger frames. All of which accounted for extraordinary longevity. *Euterpe*, as *Star of India*, is still with us in San Diego and continues to sail.

*Himalaya* had a long poop with a half-round (as the photograph shows, the deck extended well past the mizzen) and at over one thousand tons was a large ship as iron ships went in the early 1860s. Built as a full-rigger, *Himalaya* was cut down to a bark in 1880. J. D. Tyser operated *Himalaya* for only two years, and sold the ship to Shaw, Savill & Co., which used the ship to carry immigrants out to New Zealand and occasionally to Australia.

In 1898, Shaw, Savill & Co., sold *Himalaya* to J. J. Moore of San Francisco who placed the ship under Hawaiian registry. Thereafter for a number of years, *Himalaya* engaged in the so-called triangular Pacific trade, taking lumber out to Australia, coal from Newcastle NSW to Hawaii, and sugar to the west coast. When Hawaii was annexed to the United States in 1900, many formerly British ships came under USA registry, and *Himalaya* was one of these.

J. J. Moore sold *Himalaya* at auction to the Alaska Packers Association for \$18,000 in 1902, and the Alaska Packers Association lengthened the poop to accommodate more hands. They also rebuilt the forward house for greater accommodation. The company built a Chinese galley under the forecastle deck and installed steam windlasses. The ship was thirty years old at the time, and the Alaska Packers Association had begun to update their fleet inventory with metal-hulled vessels in some cases replacing newer wooden vessels with older iron and later steel vessels. In 1906, the same year as the great San Francisco earthquake and fire, the Alaska Packers

Association changed *Himalaya*'s name to *Star of Peru* (see photograph). At *Star of Peru*'s age of fifty-eight in 1921, the Alaska Packers Association performed a thorough inspection and survey of the old iron ship. Holes bored in the iron plates revealed that the venerable vessel was in such good condition that it was worth the investment to keep *Star of Peru* in first class condition. Thus *Star of Peru* continued until 1925, when the ship was laid up after sixty-two years of sailing. In 1926, the ship sold to French owners and renamed *Bougainville*. Before this occurred, the male figurehead was removed and became a decoration on one of the Alaska Packers Association buildings in Alameda. *Bougainville* sailed to the New Hebrides, became a copra hulk and rode out World War II as such—*Bougainville* was still afloat in 1948. I do not know the ship's ultimate fate.

I have seen some documentation confusing *Star of Russia*, ex *La Perouse* with *Star of Peru*, ex *Bougainville*—easy to do inasmuch as they had similar careers.