

SS *Dakotan*



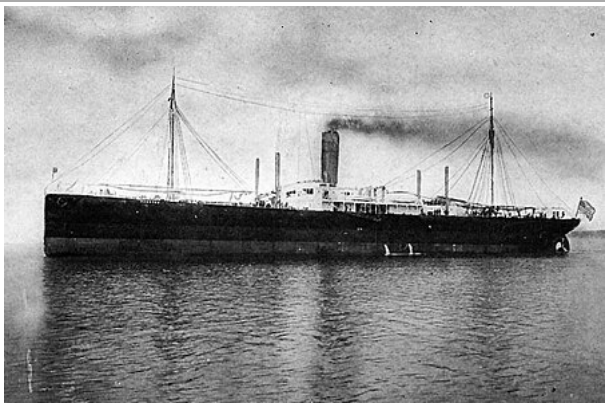
SS *Dakotan* was a cargo ship built in 1912 for the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company that served as a transport ship in the United States Army Transport Service in World War I, and then was transferred to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease in World War II before being finally scrapped in 1969. During World War I, she was taken over by the United States Army as **USAT *Dakotan***. Near the end of that war she was transferred to the United States Navy and commissioned as **USS *Dakotan* (ID-3882)**. During World War II, the ship was transferred to the Soviet Union and renamed **SS *Zyrianin*** (or *Зырянин* in Cyrillic).

Dakotan was built by the Maryland Steel Company as one of eight sister ships for the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company, and was employed in inter-coastal service via the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Panama Canal after it opened. During World War I, as *USAT Dakotan*, the ship carried cargo and animals to France. *Dakotan* was in the first American convoy to sail to France after the United States entered the war in April 1917. In Navy service, *USS Dakotan* carried cargo to France and returned over 8,800 American troops after the Armistice.

After her Navy service ended in 1919, she was returned to her original owners and resumed relatively uneventful cargo service over the next twenty years. *Dakotan* ran aground off the coast of Mexico in 1923 but was freed and towed to port for repairs. Early in World War II, the ship was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration and transferred to the Soviet Union under the terms of Lend-Lease in December 1942. Sailing as *SS Zyrianin*, the ship remained a part of the Soviet merchant fleet into the late 1960s.

Design and construction

In September 1911, the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company placed an order with the Maryland Steel Company of Sparrows Point, Maryland, for four new cargo ships—*Minnesotan*, *Dakotan*, *Pennsylvanian*, and *Montanan*.^[Note 1] The contract cost of the ships



SS *Dakotan* prior to World War I

History	
Name	SS <i>Dakotan</i>
Owner	<u>American-Hawaiian Steamship Company</u>
Port of registry	New York ^[1]
Ordered	September 1911 ^[3]
Builder	<u>Maryland Steel</u> <div>Sparrows Point, Maryland</div>
Cost	\$672,000 ^[4]
Yard number	125 ^[2]
Launched	10 August 1912
Completed	November 1912 ^[2]
Identification	U.S. official number: 210753
Fate	expropriated by U.S. Army, 29 May 1917
	United States
Name	USAT <i>Dakotan</i>
Acquired	29 May 1917 ^[5]
Fate	transferred to U.S. Navy, 29 January 1919
	United States
Name	USS <i>Dakotan</i>


was set at the construction cost plus an 8% profit for Maryland Steel, but with a maximum cost of \$640,000 per ship. The construction was financed by Maryland Steel with a credit plan that called for a 5% down payment in cash with nine monthly installments for the balance. The deal had provisions that allowed some of the nine installments to be converted into longer-term notes or mortgages. The final cost of *Dakotan*, including financing costs, was \$66.00 per deadweight ton, which totaled just under \$672,000.^[3]

Dakotan (Maryland Steel yard no. 125)^[2] was the second ship built under the original contract.^[Note 2] She was launched on 10 August 1912,^[10] and delivered to American-Hawaiian in November.^[2] *Dakotan* was 6,537 gross register tons (GRT),^[4] and was 428 feet 9 inches (130.68 m) in length and 53 feet 6 inches (16.31 m) abeam.^[6] She had a deadweight tonnage of 10,175 LT DWT and a storage capacity of 492,519 cubic feet (13,946.6 m³).^[4] A single steam engine with oil-fired boilers driving a single screw propeller provided her power;^[9] her speed was 15 knots (28 km/h).^[6] The steamer had accommodations for 18 officers, 40 crewmen, and could carry up to 16 passengers.^[10]

Early career

When *Dakotan* began sailing for American-Hawaiian, the company shipped cargo from East Coast ports via the Tehuantepec Route to West Coast ports and Hawaii, and vice versa. Shipments on the Tehuantepec Route arrived at Mexican ports—Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, for eastbound cargo, and Coatzacoalcos for westbound cargo—and traversed the Isthmus of Tehuantepec on the Tehuantepec National Railway.^[12] Eastbound shipments were primarily sugar and pineapple from Hawaii, while westbound cargoes were general in nature.^[13] *Dakotan* sailed in this service on the east side of North America.^{[14][15]}

At the time of the United States occupation of Veracruz on 21 April 1914, *Dakotan* was in port at Coatzacoalcos.^[16] There she loaded 127 American refugees from sugar plantations in the area and steamed to Veracruz.^[17] As a consequence of the American action, the Huerta-led Mexican government closed the Tehuantepec National Railway to American shipping.^[18]

Acquired	29 January 1919
Commissioned	29 January 1919
Decommissioned	31 July 1919
Identification	ID-3882
Fate	returned to owners, 31 July 1919 ^[6]
Name	SS <i>Dakotan</i>
Owner	<u>American-Hawaiian Steamship Company</u>
Acquired	31 July 1919
Fate	requisitioned by <u>War Shipping Administration</u> ; transferred to <u>Soviet Union</u> under <u>Lend-Lease</u>
	Soviet Union
Name	SS <i>Zyrianin</i> (<i>Зырянин</i> in Cyrillic) ^[8]
Namesake	<u>Komi peoples</u>
Operator	1943–1957: <u>Far East Shipping Company</u> ^[8] 1957–1969: <u>Black Sea Shipping Company</u> ^[8]
Acquired	December 1942
Identification	IMO number: 5399664 (http://www.marinetraffic.com/ais/details/ships/imo:5399664) ^[7]
Fate	Scrapped 1969
General characteristics	
Type	<u>Cargo ship</u>
Tonnage	6,537 GRT ^[4] 10,175 LT <u>DWT</u> ^[4]
Length	407 ft 10 in (124.31 m) (LPP) ^[7] 428 ft 9 in (130.68 m) (overall) ^[6]
Beam	53 ft 6 in (16.31 m) ^[6]
Draft	23 ft (7.0 m) ^[6]
Depth of hold	29 ft 6 in (8.99 m) ^[10]

In early May, *The New York Times* reported that *Dakotan* had sailed to Cristóbal to pick up a cargo of sugar that had been originally slated for transport via Tehuantepec. According to the article, the sugar was to be carried on barges through the still-unopened Panama Canal, then loaded onto *Dakotan*.^[19] There was no indication in the newspaper whether this mission was completed or not, but it is known that American-Hawaii returned to its historic route of sailing cargo around South America via the Straits of Magellan after Tehuantepec was closed but before the canal opened.^[18]

With the opening of the Panama Canal on 15 August, American-Hawaiian ships switched to using the canal.^[18] In early September, American-Hawaiian announced that *Dakotan* would sail on a route from New York via the canal to San Francisco and on to either Seattle or Tacoma.^[20] When landslides closed the canal in October 1915, all American-Hawaiian ships, including *Dakotan*, returned to the Straits of Magellan route.^[21]

In 1916, *Dakotan* was one of several American-Hawaiian cargo ships chartered by the DuPont Nitrate Company to carry sodium nitrate from Chile to the United States.^[22] *Dakotan* and the other cargo ships in this South American service would typically deliver loads of coal, gasoline, or steel in exchange for the sodium nitrate.^[23] In May, *The Christian Science Monitor* reported on what may have been a typical delivery for *Dakotan*. The ship had left Tocopilla with 91,872 bags—about 9,000 long tons (9,100 t)—of sodium nitrate for use in making explosives, and, after transiting the newly reopened Panama Canal, arrived in Philadelphia.^{[22][Note 3]}

World War I

After the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, the United States Army, needing transports to move its men and materiel to France, convened a select committee of shipping executives who pored over registries of American shipping to evaluate transport capabilities. The committee selected *Dakotan*, her sister ship *Montanan*, and twelve other American-flagged ships that were sufficiently fast, could carry enough fuel in their bunkers for transatlantic crossings, and, most importantly, were in port or not far at sea.^{[24][25]} After *Dakotan* discharged her last load of cargo, she was officially handed over to the Army on 29 May.^[5]

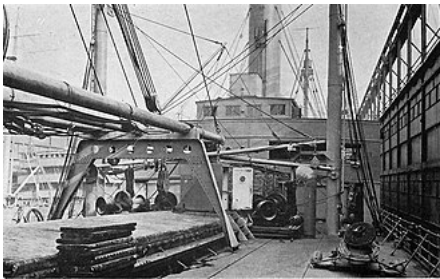
Before troop transportation began, all of the ships were hastily refitted. Of the fourteen ships, four, including *Dakotan* and *Montanan*, were designated to carry animals and cargo; the other ten were designated to carry human passengers. Ramps and stalls were built on the four ships chosen to carry animals. Gun platforms were installed on each ship before it docked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where the guns were put in place.^{[26][Note 4]} All the ships were manned by merchant officers and crews but

Propulsion	oil-fired boilers ^[9] <div>1 × <u>quadruple-expansion steam engine</u>^[7]<div>1 × <u>screw propeller</u>^[9]</div></div>
Speed	15 knots (28 km/h) ^[6]
Capacity	Cargo: 492,549 cubic feet (13,947.4 m³) ^[4] <div>Passengers: 16^[10]</div>
Crew	18 officers, 40 crewmen
Notes	Sister ships: <i>Minnesotan</i> , <i>Montanan</i> , <i>Pennsylvanian</i> , <i>Panaman</i> , <i>Washingtonian</i> , <i>Iowan</i> , <i>Ohioan</i> ^[2]
General characteristics (as USS <i>Dakotan</i>)	
Displacement	14,375 t ^[6]
Troops	1,685 ^[11]
Complement	88 ^[6]
Armament	2 × 5-inch (130 mm) guns (World War I) ^[6]

carried military personnel: two U.S. Navy officers, Navy gun crews, quartermasters, signalmen, and wireless operators. The senior Navy officer on board would take control if a ship came under attack.^[27]

The American convoy carrying the first units of the American Expeditionary Force was separated into four groups;^[Note 5] *Dakotan* was in the fourth group with her sister ship *Montanan*, Army transports *El Occidente* and *Edward Luckenbach*, and accompanied by the group's escorts: cruiser *St. Louis*, U.S. Navy transport *Hancock*, and destroyers *Shaw*, *Ammen*, and *Flusser*.^[28] *Dakotan* departed with her group on the morning of 17 June for Brest, France, steaming at an 11-knot (20 km/h) pace.^[29] A thwarted submarine attack on the first convoy group,^[30] and reports of heavy submarine activity off of Brest resulted in a change in the convoy's destination to Saint-Nazaire.^[31]

Dakotan departed Saint-Nazaire on 14 July in the company of her convoy mates *El Occidente*, *Montanan*, and *Edward Luckenbach*. Joining the return trip were Army transport *Momus*, Navy armed collier *Cyclops*, Navy oiler *Kanawha*, and cruiser *Seattle*, the flagship of Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves, the head of the Navy's Cruiser and Transport Force.^[32]



The bridge and foredeck of USS *Dakotan*, c. 1919

Sources do not reveal *Dakotan*'s movements over the next months, but on 6 September 1917, the Naval Armed Guardsmen aboard *Dakotan* shelled a German submarine after its periscope had been sighted.^[33] On 29 January 1919, *Dakotan* was transferred to the Navy and commissioned the same day.^[6] Outfitted for service as a troop transport to return American servicemen from Europe, *Dakotan* made five transatlantic roundtrips to France as part of the Navy's Cruiser and Transport Force between 15 February and 20 July. Eastbound journeys delivered cargo to Saint-Nazaire and Bordeaux for the Army of Occupation; westbound trips returned soldiers to the United States. *Dakotan* carried a total of 8,812 troops on her five

westbound voyages.^[34] *Dakotan* returned from her final voyage on 20 July,^[34] was decommissioned at New York on 31 July, and returned to American-Hawaiian the same day.^[6]

Interwar years

Dakotan resumed cargo service with American-Hawaiian after her return from World War I service. Although the company had abandoned its original Hawaiian sugar routes,^[35] *Dakotan* continued inter-coastal service through the Panama Canal in a relatively uneventful manner over the next twenty years. One incident of note occurred on 20 August 1923 when *Dakotan* issued distress calls after she ran aground at Cabo San Lázaro on the Pacific coast of Mexico. The Navy transport ship *Henderson* and the Standard Oil tanker *Charles Pratt* responded to *Dakotan*'s calls.^[1] *Charles Pratt* successfully freed *Dakotan*, which had suffered damage to her rudder post in the accident. The American-Hawaiian ship *Nevadan* arrived and towed *Dakotan* to Los Angeles for repairs.^[36]

In 1933, two members of *Dakotan*'s crew had medical emergencies that received news coverage. The first, in February, involved a seaman with an abdominal disorder. He was transferred from the eastbound *Dakotan* to the Dollar Line ocean liner *President Hayes* which carried him to Los Angeles to receive medical attention.^[37] The second occurred in July when *Dakotan*'s quartermaster came

down with appendicitis near Balboa. Radio calls for assistance brought the U.S. Navy's Destroyer Division 7 to *Dakotan's* aid.^[Note 6] The destroyer unit's medical officer boarded *Dakotan* and performed an appendectomy on the man, who was too ill to be moved off the ship.^[38]

World War II and later career

After the United States entered World War II, in 1941 - though most of Europe had been involved since summer 1939 - *Dakotan* was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration (WSA), but continued to be operated by American-Hawaiian.^[39] In December 1942, *Dakotan* was transferred to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease, and renamed *Zyrianin* (*Зырянин* Russian pronunciation: [zɪˈrʲanʲɪn]).^{[8][40]} Throughout the rest of the war, *Dakotan* made at least one trip to the United States, being photographed in port at San Francisco in August 1943.^[40] Near the end of World War II, the WSA offered a payment of \$670,210 to American-Hawaiian for the former *Dakotan* as part of a \$7.2 million settlement for eleven American-Hawaiian ships that had been requisitioned by the WSA.^[39] *Zyrianin* remained a part of the Soviet merchant fleet through the 1960s, and was listed in *Lloyd's Register* until the 1970–71 edition.^[40]

Zyrianin was operated by the Far East Shipping Company (FESCO) from 1943 to 1957. From 1957, she was operated by the Black Sea Shipping Company. The ship was written off and scrapped at Split, Yugoslavia in 1969.^{[8][7]}



SS *Zyrianin* in port at San Francisco, c. 1943

Notes

1. Maryland Steel had built three ships—*Kentuckian*, *Georgian*, and *Honolulan*—for American-Hawaiian in 1909 in what proved to be a satisfactory arrangement for both companies. See: Cochran and Ginger, p. 358.
2. Further contracts on similar terms were signed in November 1911 and May 1912 to build four additional ships: *Panaman*, *Washingtonian*, *Iowan*, *Ohioan*. See: Cochran and Ginger, p. 358, and Colton.
3. *Dakotan* was the first steamer to arrive in Philadelphia via the Panama Canal after its reopening.
4. The only exception was for *SS Finland*, an American Line steamer in transatlantic service to Liverpool. *Finland* had already been outfitted for guns in early 1917.
5. The individual groups of the first convoy were typically counted as separate convoys in post-war sources. See, for example, Crowell and Wilson, Appendix G, p. 603.
6. Destroyer Division 7 consisted of *Childs*, *Barry*, and *Williamson*

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3. Cochran and Ginger, p. 358.

4. Cochran and Ginger, p. 365.
5. Crowell and Wilson, p. 315.
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21. Cochran and Ginger, p. 361.
22. "Ship brings cargo of soda nitrate". *The Christian Science Monitor*. 1 May 1916. p. 11.
23. Cochran and Ginger, p. 362.
24. Sharpe, p. 359.
25. Crowell and Wilson, pp. 313–14.
26. Crowell and Wilson, p. 316.
27. Gleaves, p. 102.
28. Gleaves, p. 38.
29. Gleaves, p. 42.
30. Gleaves, pp. 42–43.
31. Gleaves, p. 45.
32. Gleaves, p. 54.
33. Bureau of Ordnance, pp. 51–52.
34. Gleaves, pp. 254–55.
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External links

- Photo gallery (<http://www.navsource.org/archives/12/173882.htm>) of *Dakotan* at NavSource Naval History
 - Engine/engine room photos (<https://archive.org/stream/pacificmarinerev3437paci#page/n226/mod/e/1up>)
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