

## The CAPITAINE REMY, built 1918, lost 1920



The capsized CAPITAINE REMY

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE CAPITAINE REMY

The USA's Emergency Fleet Corporation was born in 1917 out of a proposal to the United States Shipping Board to construct wooden vessels; it was hoped that these would help to offset the losses resulting from the unrestricted German submarine activity which had intensified losses from February 1917. Simultaneously, the Foundation Company of New York visited engineering and construction firms in the Pacific North-West of the USA to establish the feasibility of constructing such vessels in this area, mostly from entirely new shipyards. By the end of December 1917 the first of these had been launched. By this time (and when any Armistice must have seemed like a very distant prospect) a French contract had been awarded for the building forty 5-masted wooden auxiliary steam engine-powered schooners for delivery by December 1918.

The CAPITAINE REMY was one of these auxiliary schooners, and was built in a Foundation Co yard in Portland, Oregon, which was home – by this time – to 17 shipyards constructing wooden ships and a further 4 producing steel ships. The timber was largely Douglas fir, plentiful in the area. Oregon produced 125 of the 521 wooden vessels constructed under the EFC auspices. Germany agreed to sign the Armistice on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and WW1 thereby ended with many of these vessels unfinished and their contracts cancelled.

The CAPITAINE REMY was delivered, arriving in France at the end of 1919. None of the vessels was built for a long-life. They were turned out quickly to meet emergency requirements and their production was thought to be viable even if they were seaworthy for only a few years. The majority of the schooners ordered by the French Government were laid up after the end of the Great War

Almost all were broken up by the mid-1920s, but the CAPITAINE REMY became a shipwreck, though fortunately without loss of life, before she too was broken up.

There are photographs of the CAPITAINE REMY under construction and in her finished state on the L'Union Industrielle et Maritime web pages at <http://uim.marine.free.fr/flotte-etat/remy.htm>.

### THE LOSS OF THE CAPITAINE REMY

On Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1920 the seas were heavy in a fresh southerly gale after the CAPITAINE REMY rounded Land's End on her voyage from Barry, in South Wales, to Nantes in western France, with a cargo of coal. She was plainly in difficulty when, some 10 miles off the Lizard, she was sighted, at 3am flying signals of distress, by the Brixham fishing smack VIGILANT (which was returning from her Bristol Channel fishing grounds). As the VIGILANT drew near, the CAPITAINE REMY's deck was only just clear of the sea and three boats were astern of the schooner, already filled with men. The 38 occupants were transferred to the VIGILANT with some considerable difficulty in the sea conditions and taken to Brixham. The abandoned CAPITAINE REMY was left drifting, in a sinking condition.

She was subsequently found floating bottom up 8 miles south-east of the Lizard. At first she was thought to be another wooden cargo ship produced under EFC auspices, the "ferris" steam cargo

ship BURNSIDE which had caught fire in the English Channel on 19<sup>th</sup> October but which had subsequently been towed in to Gerrans Bay near St Mawes as a hazard to navigation. By Wednesday (1<sup>st</sup> December), the derelict CAPITAINE REMY was off Pentewan, and was towed to a sandy beach 300 yards from Polkerris, to remove her rigging and gear in preparation for righting the hull.

She remained in St. Austell Bay, bottom up, for several years, but was later towed into Fowey and scrapped. But some parts of her remained off Little Hell and Polkerris and those remains were the catalyst of your enquiry.

#### DETAILS OF THE CAPITAINE REMY

Date Lost	Monday, 29 November 1920
Voyage from (to)	Barry (en route Nantes)
Location detail	nr Polkerris, St. Austell Bay (prior to removal of main hull to Fowey)
Lat , Long	50:20.4N , 04:41.6W
People	All 38 crew of the CAPITAINE REMY were saved by the Brixham fishing smack VIGILANT
Causes	foundered : capsized
Cargo	Solid fuel (Coal)
Registration and Ownership	<i>Flag:</i> France <i>Port of Registry:</i> Bordeaux, France <i>Owner location:</i> Bordeaux <i>Owner:</i> French Government
Construction and Dimensions	<i>Builder:</i> Foundation Co. <i>Built at:</i> Portland, Oregon, USA <i>Built in:</i> 1918 (shipyard work completed June 1918) <i>Construction:</i> Wood <i>Gross tonnage:</i> 2,114 <i>Net tonnage:</i> 1,583 <i>Deadweight tonnage:</i> 3,100 <i>Length(m):</i> 79.09 <i>Breadth(m):</i> 13.84 <i>Depth(m):</i> 6.83 <i>Ship Type:</i> Five-masted Schooner with auxiliary steam engines
Propulsion	<i>Propulsion:</i> Sail, plus 2 auxiliary steam engines with 6 cylinders powering 2 screws <i>Rig:</i> Schooner
Bibliography	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 29.10.1923(R) : Lloyd's List, from 1741 (bi-weekly until July 1837, then daily to date). Lloyd's of London Press Ltd., London</li> <li>2. FP.03 &amp; 17.12.1920(Fri)(R)</li> <li>3. Ship Wrecks (Falmouth-Looe),R and B Larn 1993 p22 [ISBN 0850253381]</li> <li>4. <a href="http://uim.marine.free.fr/flotte-etat/remy.htm">http://uim.marine.free.fr/flotte-etat/remy.htm</a></li> <li>5. Emergency Fleet Corporation Ship Construction in World War I in the Pacific Northwest, by Fred Hopkins (from the Northern Mariner, IV, No 4 (October 1994), pps15-22</li> </ol>