

LOST AT SEA

MORE SHIPS WHOSE SAILING DAYS ARE LONG OVER AND IN THIS INSTALLEMENT WE FEATURE VESSELS ABANDONED AT THE VERY STRANGE STATEN ISLAND SHIP GRAVEYARD BY SUSAN DUPREY

Sometimes the owners of vessels have the best of intentions but then certain things happen — like running out of money. That is what took place with the owners of the tug *Caleb*, which had been anchored at Pillar Point Harbor in California. In 2022, the local government declared the veteran tug to be “abandoned property.” A resolution was passed stating the vessel was a hazard to navigation and to the environment. This cleared the way for the disposal of the ship. *Caleb* had entered Pillar Point Harbor on 8 July 2017, seeking safe harbor from a dangerous sea state but it quickly became derelict and it seemed various people were taking shelter in the tug.



Derelict tug *Lumberman* at anchor in the Gastineau Channel of Juneau, Alaska, during 2019. During that year, the tug began taking on water and \$5000 was allocated by the local government so that the ship would not sink. The 107-foot WWII-era tug became a big problem for local bureaucrats. It appears that homeless people began going out to live on the tug and in 2017 a skiff with five people and a dog overturned while attempting to get to the 192-ton steel-hulled vessel. Two people were never found. Various plans were put forth to convert the tug into everything from a beachside fish and chips stand to a community flower garden. Finally, a plan was approved for the Coast Guard to tow the tug some 50 miles away and sink it in 8500 feet of water. A system was installed that would sink the tug “in a flick of a switch” and the towing took place on 2 May 2021. The switch was flicked and the tug sank — sort of. Its bow remained bobbing on the surface to the embarrassment of all involved and the towing ship, the USCG *John McCormick*, had to use its 25mm deck gun to complete the sinking.



For maritime enthusiasts, one of the strangest — and most dangerous — sites to view derelict and abandoned vessels is the Staten Island Boat Graveyard. Founded during the 1930s as a scrapping facility, over the decades hundreds of vessels in varying stages of abandonment have been anchored and now litter the area. We have decided to extend “Lost at Sea” in this Issue to include more shots from this unique area. Now, a quick word. This is not a safe area to enter. Nor is it particularly easy. People that have visited before have left markers, painted stones, and other reference points that make entry a bit easier. I joined three friends last October who invited me on a “penetration mission” into the graveyard. My friends classify themselves as “urban explorers” and for years they have documented historic sites in the New York City area — many of which no longer exist. One friend had already made a rough guide to what she considered to be historic ships and she wanted to confirm they were there. As noted, it was October and in New York that means evening comes early. We parked a safe distance away, unloaded our kayaks from the van, and then hoofed it using a hand-drawn map that another friend provided while also following the various markers. Just getting to the water was quite an adventure and I am glad we brought warm clothes, energy bars, our faithful drone, and plenty of liquid.



As can be seen, it appears that scrapping was started out on some ships and then just stopped at a certain point. *Lumberman* appears to have been salvaged wherever possible but then just simply dumped. Local authorities seem to have turned a blind eye to just how toxic the whole area is but it seems that hardy life forms abound in the water and on the marshland surrounding the graveyard.