

Synopsis

NOMADIC was ordered by the White Star Line in 1910 to serve as a tender for a trio of huge ocean liners...including the ill-fated TITANIC...which were too large to dock in the harbor of Cherbourg, France. NOMADIC and a similar vessel ferried passengers, their baggage, mail and supplies to and from liners when anchored a few miles offshore.

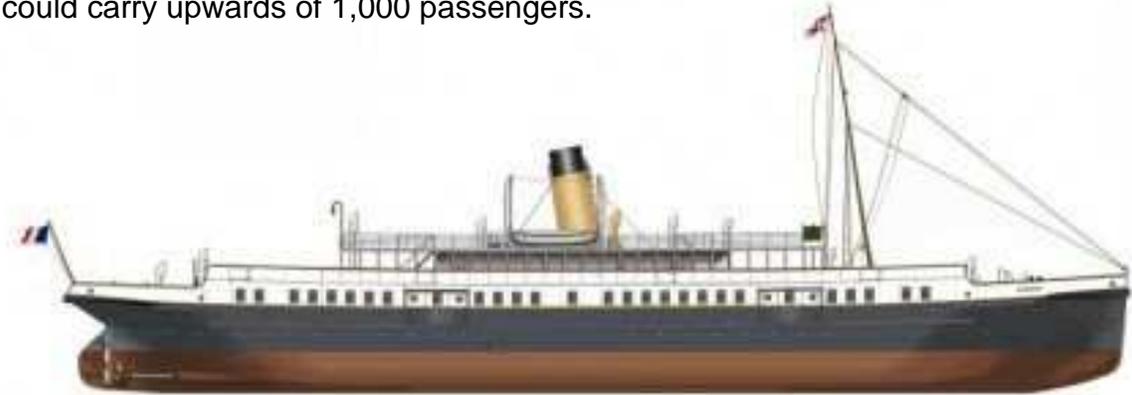
All of those liners and the other tender that once serviced them are long gone. But NOMADIC, after nearly a century of usefulness in a variety of services, still exists. She returned to her birthplace in 2006 and has now been meticulously restored to near her original configuration.

Permanently docked in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the NOMADIC reflects the art of shipbuilding as it exists in the early 20th century for all to see and appreciate.



Design & Construction

The NOMADIC is 230 feet long, has a beam of 37 feet and when completed in 1911, displaced 1,273 tons. She has a riveted steel hull and when fully loaded could carry upwards of 1,000 passengers.



Large lounges dominated her two interior passenger decks. The vessel was divided into separate areas for first and second class passengers, plus a small area aft and on the lowest deck for third-class passengers. Because of her intended service as a tender, passenger amenities provided were minimal.

Nevertheless, her passenger spaces were better appointed than other tenders of that era. NOMADIC boasted of cushioned benches, porcelain water fountains, spacious rest rooms and a buffet bar. Woodwork was also fitted throughout, with that in the first class lounges being more ornate than in other spaces.

NOMADIC had a pair of coal-fired boilers and two compound steam engines. Her maximum speed was twelve knots. No data pertaining to range was published.

Her keel was laid late in 1910 on a small inclined shipway adjacent to the building site of the White Star Line's trio of ocean liners at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast. She was launched on April 25, 1911 and delivered a little over a month later.

Although built in the United Kingdom for a domestic shipping line, NOMADIC was initially operated in French waters by a French crew. She had imperial and metric draft marks on opposing sides of her hull.



Initial Tender Duties

NOMADIC first arrived in Cherbourg, her home port on June 3, 1911 to begin serving as a tender for the White Star Line. Initially, she interfaced with RMS OLYMPIC and later RMS TITANIC...but only once... Images from that period of time, provided below, show her receiving passengers from an ocean liner, underway in French coastal waters, and discharging passengers at Cherbourg.



On April 10, 1912, she transported 274 passengers from Cherbourg harbor to RMS TITANIC to sail on the doomed liner's maiden voyage. One of those passengers was American millionairess Margaret Brown. She survived, was called a heroine and became famous as 'the unsinkable Molly Brown'...a nick name that was later the title of both a musical and a motion picture about her life.

Service During, Between and After Two World Wars

When World War I commenced, NOMADIC was requisitioned by the French Government. She saw service as an auxiliary minesweeper and a patrol vessel. She also was put to use ferrying American soldiers ashore from troop ships anchored off Brest, France.



After the war, she resumed her tendering duties for the White Star Line until 1927, when she was sold to a French firm. Under new ownership, she continued to serve as a tender for liners too big to enter the port of Cherbourg until 1934, when that harbor was enlarged.

Sold again to the Cherbourg Tow and Rescue Society, she was renamed INGENIEUR MINARD. Then, in June of 1940, she went to war again. She first participated in the evacuation of British troops from Cherbourg, shortly after the larger and more famous evacuation from Dunkirk.

Once safely in Great Britain, INGENIEUR MINARD was requisitioned by the Royal Navy. Based in Portsmouth for the next five years, she served mainly as an intercoastal troop ship, ferrying soldiers between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. At the end of World War II, she was returned to French ownership.

The port of Cherbourg had been heavily damaged during the war; preventing large ocean liners from docking there. Used once again as a tender, she ferried thousands of passengers to and from ocean liners lying offshore, including the first QUEEN ELIZABETH. The little tender ended that service in late 1968.



NOMADIC's Paris Period

After lying idle for five years, INGENIEUR MINARD seemed destined to be scrapped. But a private individual purchased her and restored her original name. NOMADIC was then extensively converted to become a floating restaurant. In October of 1974, she was moved to Paris and moored across the River Seine from the Eiffel Tower.



However, by 1999 the NOMADIC's owner had died, and the business was in financial difficulty. In 2002, the elderly vessel was siezed by Paris authorities and towed to Le Havre; presumably destined to be scrapped. Upon learning of her impending fate, heritage and maritime enthusiasts in both France and Northern Ireland swung into action.

Rescued, Returned and Restored

By 2006, sufficient funds had been raised to purchase the vessel and have her moved to Befast. In mid-July, 2006, NOMADIC returned to her birthplace; 'piggybacked' on a barge. She was welcomed by a host of dignitaries, well wishers and employees of the shipyard where she was built.



More fund-raising then took place. In August of 2009, NOMADIC was permanently moved into a Belfast dry dock that had been restored and which is believed to have been utilized to prepare her for sea trials in 1911. In 2011, her builders, Harland and Wolff undertook restoration of the aged tender.

Included in this work was recreation of her bridge and flying bridge decks, and funnel, which had been removed years before to permit her to pass under the River Seine's low bridges. Externally, she was repainted in her original colors.

Internally, she was beautifully restored to her early 20th century charm. Multiple museum exhibits were installed in her passenger lounges. The entire multi-million dollar effort was completed in 2012...and at long last allowing her to be enjoyed by the public.



~ NOMADIC ~

~ Tender to TITANIC ~

Last remaining White Star Line vessel in the world