

When Animals Travelled First Class

by Charles A. Haas

ET Research

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Today's newscasts often feature airline passengers discussing their "being treated just like cattle." In the late 19th Century, Britain's White Star Line took the meaning of that phrase to new heights. While we recall the company's beautiful passenger liners, White Star also was a serious player in the world of cargo, and carriage of livestock comprised a significant part of that trade.

Unable to raise sufficient livestock for its own needs, Britain increasingly had turned to Australia and New Zealand as its food source, despite high shipping costs and months-long journeys.

As prices for meat rose, population grew in the American Great Plains and far west. More and more U.S. livestock growers and shippers had additional incentive to seek buyers in Europe.

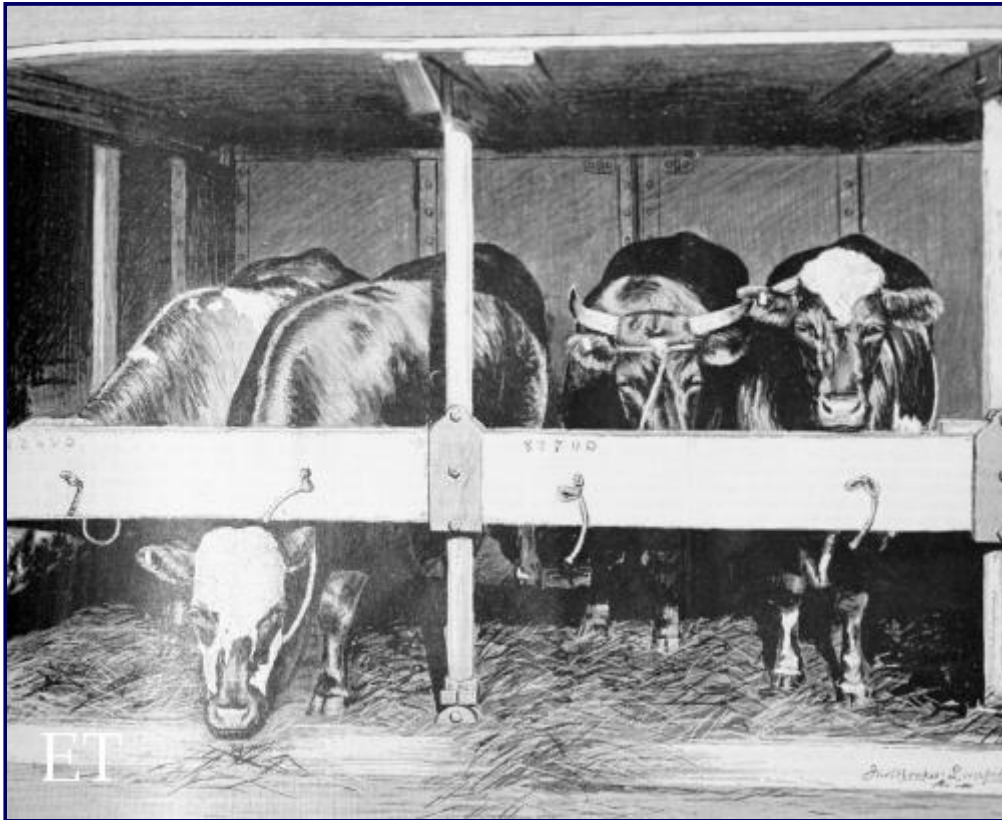
While it is difficult to pinpoint just when American livestock shipments to Europe began, in September 1873, the Anchor Line's *Europa* sailed from New York for Glasgow with 130 New Jersey cows, bound for Glasgow.

As TIS historian John P. Eaton wrote,

By 1877 importation of American live beef had become an appreciable factor in British trade. Annual totals increased rapidly until 1889, when some 451,799 animals were landed. Though numbers then decreased slightly (probably due to improvements in refrigeration, permitting carriage of carcasses), by 1893 eight shipping lines with nearly 50 transatlantic cattle vessels ran to Liverpool alone."¹

Big money was involved. In 1873, each cow sold for between \$100 and \$125. To this, shipping costs of \$50 per head were added. But there were considerable risks. Often, livestock was shipped uninsured; if a cow or a sheep died, it generally was a total loss to the stockist.

And the outlook was grim when livestock were herded aboard typical "cattle boats" of the late 19th Century. Filthy conditions on board, rampant disease and onboard deaths were commonplace. As just one example, 100 cows and 514 sheep had been washed overboard from open stalls on the decks of two British steamers in heavy seas.² Valuable cattle, horses and other livestock could be injured by the ship's motion. Sometimes, cases of unspeakable cruelty arose from badly trained and ill-paid handlers on board.



This 1891 illustration from the Breeder's Gazette shows how cattle were carried aboard the White Star freighters as truly contented cows.
(Charles Haas collection)

On May 17, 1891, the London-based Transatlantic Cattle Trade Committee issued a scathing report on "the present condition of the trade." It noted that,

Ocean steamships which are only occasionally chartered for the ocean cattle trade have, in some instances, an unsatisfactory class of officers, who are, generally speaking, without experience in this particular trade. The fittings and ventilation of such ships are also frequently unadapted to the uses to which they are put.

...Foremen engaged for the voyage are usually experienced and skillful men. On the other hand, it is added, the men who are employed under these foremen, to feed, water and otherwise attend to the cattle while traveling across the Atlantic are generally unskilled and in many instances totally unable physically to endure the exertion, privations and natural hardships of a rough voyage from America to England.

The report also says that the "cattlemen" as they are termed, who perform the difficult and dangerous duties of attending cattle in shipment to Europe, are badly paid and fed, being frequently compelled to work for nothing. As a result... the cattle are often left without food or water for considerable periods, especially in rough or cold weather, when the cattlemen are suffering from seasickness or other troubles.

The accommodations and food provided for the cattlemen, the report continues, are often inadequate, and in numerous instances it is shown that the cattle on shipboard have been treated with great cruelty.³

The committee then proceeded to make several recommendations. Among them,

...Cattle should not be carried on poop decks or under temporary shelters on upper decks. The committee regards the comfort and safety of cattle on board ship as largely dependent upon the strength and efficiency of their pens and their fittings, which are often insecure....

...Where ample ventilation for cattle is impossible, such vessels should be considered to be unfit for the transatlantic cattle trade.... The committee is of the opinion that a foreman requires not less than four competent assistants for each hundred head of cattle. The employment of "stiffs" [physically or mentally unqualified cattlemen] should be stopped. The foreman and his assistants should be required to sign the

ship's articles, and the men should thus be placed under the authority of the captain of the vessel having the cattle on board.⁴

For companies engaged in livestock carriage, the committee's report served as a blueprint for change, and White Star took the lead in changing shipboard practices and the design of its livestock vessels.

Two years earlier, the company had placed into service two freighters intended for a never-realized Indian trade. Before launch, however, they were adapted to become livestock carriers. The 4,639-ton *Cufic* was launched at Harland and Wolff's Belfast yards on October 10, 1888, and entered service in December, making her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York. Her commander on her maiden voyage himself would go on to make history. His name was Edward John Smith.

A sister ship, *Runic*, made her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York in February 1889. (Smith would command her, too, in March and April 1891.)

Cufic and *Runic* could each carry 1,000 head on eastbound voyages, and huge general cargos westbound, as this story reports:

The White Star Line's big freight carrier, the new steamship *Cufic*, has just cleared for her second trip from this port. She left for the first time on Dec. 30, carrying out a cargo the size of which caused a great deal of wonder.... She had on board 8,300 tons by measurement. This time the measurement tonnage is just about the same.... The cargo includes 6,142 bales of cotton, 290 head of cattle, 400 bales of hay, 3,350 bags of flour, 66,429 bushels of corn, and a lot of other similar trifles....⁵

Encouraged by the two ships' immediate success, White Star ordered from Harland and Wolff a series of ever-larger vessels specially designed as livestock carriers. The first, *Nomadic*, 5,749 gross tons, was the world's first twin-screw freighter. Despite her massive size – she could carry 1,250 head of cattle and 9,800 tons of cargo – she was extremely economical, her triple-expansion engines burning just 50 tons of coal daily while making 13.5 to 14 knots. She made her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York on April 24, 1891. A contemporary newspaper account noted, “elaborate arrangements for ventilation and convenience in caring for live freight.”⁶

Horses were quartered in enclosures for two, mainly amidships where the ship's motion – potentially dangerous for horses' legs – was minimized. Cattle were all housed below decks in clean quarters. Accommodations for approximately 45 crew, including animal handlers, were clean and simple, but far better than anything previously seen.

Almost immediately, the White Star freighters became the vessels of choice for shipping animals. In June 1891, *Nomadic* was chosen for a shipment of thoroughbred breeding horses destined for W. K. Vanderbilt's stables.

Less than two months after *Nomadic*'s auspicious debut, her sister ship *Tauric* joined the service, sailing from Liverpool to New York on May 16. As word of the new freighters' accommodations spread, livestock journals began carrying White Star Line advertising, and several stories by knowledgeable reporters also heightened interest.



Cufic

Seen on her way to America. She was under the command of Edward J. Smith on her maiden voyage in December 1888. Note that her forward mast still carried sail. (Charles Haas collection)



Runic

Pulled by the White Star tender Magnetic, the livestock freighter *Runic* departs Liverpool. A sister ship of *Cufic*, she later was involved in the great Halifax explosion. (Charles Haas collection)



One report said,

...Care ... must of necessity be exercised in the safe ocean transport of such valuable breeding animals even when shipped on such reliable and thoroughly equipped steamships as those which fly the flag with a white star in the field of red.... We present herewith an accurate representation of the boxes in which horses are carried securely and comfortably over this long and oftentimes rough water journey. With padded stalls and knees well-booted, even the hard knocks which come when the ship is tossed about in a storm may be taken practically with impunity, and on these boats the horses are provided with all the comforts of a well-ordered stable save, of course, a footing on *terra firma*.

In the rear of the group of horses is seen the specially constructed gangway over which they safely debark and through the open doors of the covered deck the hull of the vessel is suggested rather than shown. This gangway is of ample width and height, to afford secure footing and prevent the possibility of accident in the debarkation. Occasionally a horse of nervous temperament is carried, which, thoroughly frightened at the unwonted sights and sounds which have attended his journey from his country home, absolutely refuses to "walk the plank," and to meet such an emergency a cage has been constructed of sufficient size to hold a horse, tightly boarded so high up that only his head is visible in order to discourage any attempt at jumping out, and into this the horse is led through the open end and tied, the end is raised to position and locked, a steam derrick lifts the load gently from the deck, swings it over the side and lands it on the dock, where the front of the cage is let down and the horse walks out. In fact, accident is guarded against in every possible way and it would seem that the White Star Line leaves nothing undone in the equipment of its boats and the devices for loading and unloading which would conduce to the safety and comfort of the animals are carried. ...No company has done more than the White Star to render an ocean voyage for livestock as safe and comfortable as human ingenuity can devise.⁷

Nomadic

Carrying both troops and horses during the Boer War, Nomadic was marked as "Transport 34." (Mariners Museum, Newport News, Va. / Charles Haas collection)



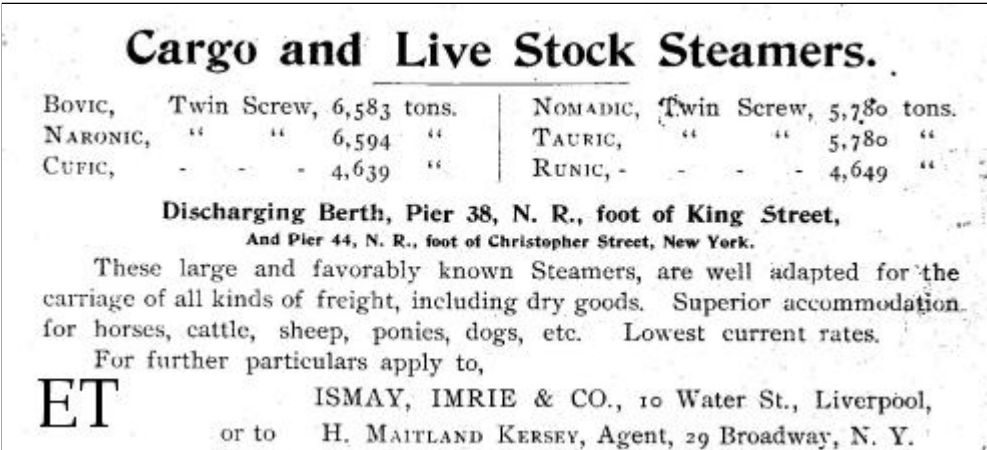
White Star Line!

LIVE-STOCK and CARGO STEAMERS.
Liverpool and New York.
REGULAR WEEKLY SAILINGS.

BOVIC (twin screw).....	6,583 tons.
NARONIC (twin screw).....	6,594 tons.
CUFIC.....	4,639 tons.
NOMADIC (twin screw).....	5,780 tons.
TAURIC (twin screw).....	5,780 tons.
RUNIC.....	4,649 tons.

SPECIFIED Atlantic Lane routes throughout the year. Large and powerful steamers, specially constructed for the safe, comfortable, and speedy conveyance of live stock, including horses, ponies, sheep, etc. Efficient fan and hatch ventilation. Electric light and water supply on each deck. All stock landed at the company's New York pier. Free transfer car-load lots to railroads in stock cars. Lowest current rates.
For further particulars apply to ISMAY, IMRIE & CO., 10 Water Street, Liverpool, or to H. MAITLAND KERSEY, Agent, 29 Broadway, New York

White Star's advertisement in the Breeder's Gazette of January 25, 1893 listed six of the eight livestock-carrying freighters, including Naronic. Oddly, the ill-fated liner's name was still appearing two months after her loss. (Charles Haas collection)



Cargo and Live Stock Steamers.

BOVIC, Twin Screw, 6,583 tons.	NOMADIC, Twin Screw, 5,780 tons.
NARONIC, " " 6,594 "	TAURIC, " " 5,780 "
CUFIC, - - - 4,639 "	RUNIC, - - - 4,649 "

Discharging Berth, Pier 38, N. R., foot of King Street,
And Pier 44, N. R., foot of Christopher Street, New York.

These large and favorably known Steamers, are well adapted for the carriage of all kinds of freight, including dry goods. Superior accommodation for horses, cattle, sheep, ponies, dogs, etc. Lowest current rates.

For further particulars apply to,

ET ISMAY, IMRIE & CO., 10 Water St., Liverpool,
or to H. MAITLAND KERSEY, Agent, 29 Broadway, N. Y.

Brief details of the Company's livestock service were included on this pocket-sized card, among the little White Star advertising that focused on cargo.

(Charles Haas collection)

The ships were not limited to horses and sheep, however. Noel Bonsor reports that on her maiden voyage,

Tauric carried two cabin and one steerage passenger.

...From then onwards there were numerous occasions when two or three handfuls were carried [aboard White Star's livestock carriers]. The largest numbers noted, all westbound, were seven cabin and 11 steerage by the *Nomadic* in 1891, seven cabin and 10 steerage by the *Tauric* in 1893, and two cabin and 14 steerage by the *Cufic* in 1892. The largest number noted on the *Georgic* was 10 cabin in 1900.⁸

In October 1891, *Runic*'s crew experienced a bit of trouble:

One of the ten buffalo which sailed for England on the White Star freight steamer *Runic* yesterday manifested a decided preference for remaining in the land of its birth. It managed to get loose, and then it behaved very much as a full-blooded Texas steer would have conducted itself under the circumstances. For a time things were very lively on the pier, but finally the buffalo was recaptured and loaded on the steamer.⁹

In November, the freighters' huge size proved a disadvantage when the eastbound *Tauric*, deeply laden with grain and cattle, grounded on the Dry Romer Shoals, two miles from Sandy Hook, New Jersey, while in charge of a New York pilot. It took 25 hours of concentrated effort by three tugs and the ship's captain to finally get *Tauric* free.

Nevertheless, the successes of these vessels continued, and on April 7, 1892, White Star announced construction of two additional livestock carriers, to replace the aging and jury-rigged *Cufic* and *Runic*.

The two new vessels, half-again as large as their predecessors *Tauric* and *Nomadic*, measured some 6,594 gross tons, and could accommodate 1,050 cattle on their upper and main decks.

The first of the pair, *Naronic*, completed her westbound maiden voyage on July 25, 1892, with her sister ship *Bovic* arriving about a month later. With their arrival, and the four other ships, White Star could maintain a weekly service, from New York every Tuesday and from Liverpool each Friday. The sailings' regularity and the safety the ships provided their living cargos made them immensely popular.

Bovic immediately set a record:

The new White Star steamship *Bovic* will start today on her first eastward transatlantic trip with one of the largest cargoes of the year, and with the greatest quantity of cotton, it is said, ever sent out from New York on a vessel. She has on board 8,093 bales.¹⁰

A pang of anxiety was felt in February 1893, when *Tauric* went overdue during a westbound crossing. She carried a general cargo and "a valuable consignment of livestock," including "thoroughbreds which Col. North, the Nitrate King, is sending to this country to enter in the big racing events."¹¹

Reports of heavy westerly gales allayed the fears. As the *Times* pointed out,

This has been assigned as one reason for the freighter's delayed arrival, and it is rendered probable from the fact that the racehorses which form part of her cargo are worth many thousands of dollars. Although the cells are padded, violent rolling or pitching of the vessel might lame them, despite all precautions that could be taken. The possibility of a derangement of machinery has also been discussed.

The agents find comfort in the fact that the vessel is provided with a duplicate set of engines and has twin



Tauric

Under two owners, White Star and the Dominion Line, *Tauric*'s career spanned 29 years. (Charles Haas collection)



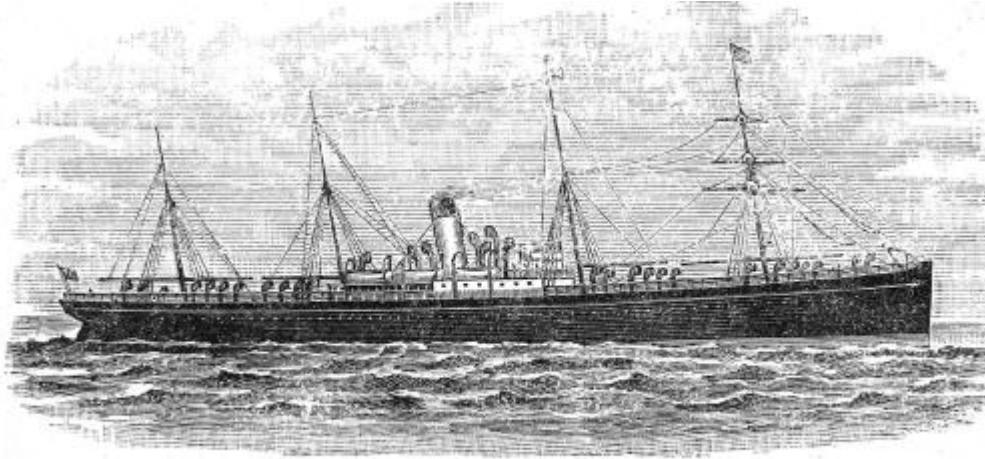
Naronic

So far as can be determined, no photographs of the vanished *Naronic* exist, likely due to her very short lifespan. This woodcut engraving illustrates her appearance. (Library of Congress / Charles Haas collection)

propellers. They do not consider it at all probable that both have become disabled.¹²

Tauric arrived at New York on February 12, five days late and with her coal supply exhausted, having battled a hurricane and continuous gales at sea. Meanwhile, her sister ship *Bovic* was selected for an honor: A model of the livestock carrier was among four White Star ship models sent to Chicago for the company's pavilion at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

But there was far worse to come. The brand-new *Naronic*, the world's largest cargo ship, left Liverpool on her thirteenth journey with an experienced crew; her first and second mate, four of five engineering officers and all the greasers had been on all her previous voyages. She carried 2,876 tons of cargo, 1,017 tons of coal and stores for her crew. As usual, on this westbound trip, no cattle were aboard, but two horses owned by a W. Burgess of Trenton, New Jersey were there, with 15 crates of assorted fowl. Also on board were 11 cattle drovers, deadheading their way back to America, and a crew of about 60.



Steamers, Bovic, Naronic, Tauric and Nomadic.

On February 11, 1893, *Naronic* dropped her pilot at Point Lynas. She was never seen again. No news wasn't necessarily bad news. The gales and hurricane *Tauric* had encountered surely had lingered to affect *Naronic*. Daily newspaper accounts initially were positive and upbeat. But concern began to manifest itself when *Bovic*, a slower vessel that had left six days after *Naronic*, arrived in New York on March 1.

On March 19, Captain Wilson of the British steamer *Coventry* reported in Bremerhaven that on March 4 he had passed a lifeboat floating keel-up in latitude 44°02'N., longitude 45°25'W. On its bow: "*Naronic*. Liverpool."

In June, an official board of inquiry into the freighter's loss was convened in Liverpool. After careful examination of her design, crew, loading and other factors, and even a stability test involving *Naronic*'s sister *Bovic*, the inspectors issued their report on July 25, 1893. It said, in part, "Unless, therefore, any further evidence is hereafter forthcoming, the probable cause of the loss of this vessel remains a mere matter of speculation, and adds one more to the mysteries of the sea."¹³

WHITE STAR LINE, FREIGHT SERVICE.

PROPOSED SAILINGS.—SUBJECT TO ALTERATION.

JANUARY, 1893.

FROM LIVERPOOL.	STEAMER.	FROM NEW YORK.
Friday Jan. 13	BOVIC	Tuesday Jan. 31.
" " 20	RUNIC	" Feb. 7.
" " 27	TAURIC	" " 14.
" Feb. 3	NOMADIC	" " 21.
" " 10	NARONIC	" " 28.
" " 17	BOVIC	" Mar. 7.
" " 24	RUNIC	" " 14.
" Mar. 3	BOVIC	" " 21.
" " 10	TAURIC	" " 28.
" " 17	NOMADIC	" April 4.
" " 24	NARONIC	" " 11.
" " 31	BOVIC	" " 18.
" April 7	RUNIC	" " 25.
" " 14	BOVIC	" May 2.
" " 21	TAURIC	" " 9.
" " 28	NOMADIC	" " 16.
" May 5	NARONIC	" " 23.
" " 12	BOVIC	" " 30.
" " 19	RUNIC	" June 6.
" " 26	BOVIC	" " 13.
" June 2	TAURIC	" " 20.
" " 9	NOMADIC	" " 27.
" " 16	NARONIC	" July 4.
" " 23	BOVIC	" " 11.
" " 30	RUNIC	" " 18.
" July 7	BOVIC	" " 25.
" " 14	TAURIC	" Aug. 1.
" " 21	NOMADIC	" " 8.
" " 28	NARONIC	" " 15.
" Aug. 4	NARONIC	" " 22.

The company's livestock freight schedule for 1893. Naronic's final voyage, shown in the left column as "February 10," actually began one day later. Once the ship was lost, the card's original owner made penciled and ink revisions to show how White Star shuffled its remaining fleet. The word "noch" may be a German word meaning "same," while "4 Arabs" may be another ship's name. (Charles Haas collection)

During research for their book *Falling Star: Misadventures of White Star Line Ships*, the present author and TIS historian John P. Eaton asked a chemist to examine *Naronic's* final cargo manifest, and postulated that an explosion caused by the mixing of chemicals known to have been on board, which could have spilled or broken loose during the ship's violent rolling and pitching, may have caused her loss. A sad postscript came on April 27 when the *Times* reported that the wives of *Naronic's* Captain William Roberts and chief officer George Wright were committed to an asylum, having "gone insane through despair caused by the loss of their husbands."

Though not intended as such, the March 8, 1893 arrival of *Runic* in New York seemed testament to the ships' stability. On her spar deck and in her hold were lashed the London and North Western Railway Company's locomotive "Queen Empress" and two passenger cars, on their way to Chicago as another exhibit for the World's Columbian Exposition. The locomotive alone weighed 80 tons.

The Exposition provided yet further business for White Star's cargo service. On April 5, 1893, a veritable menagerie arrived in New York aboard *Bovic*. The animals, belonging to Carl Hegenbeck's Zoological Gardens in Hamburg, consisted of 16 lions, five tigers, one baby elephant, five leopards, 12 boars, two zebras, one hyena and 16 cases of monkeys. Apparently the group's antics *en route* were sufficient to cause *Bovic's* purser Chapman to lock himself in his room every night. A female leopard put her paw through her cage into a lion's "turf," and received a deep cut in the paw when attacked.

The *Times* ran a delightful interview, in his own dialect, with the ship's cook, who reported dourly,

The blooming hannimals are 'ere orl right, barrin' the dead lion we 'ad to throw hoverboard with some monkeys as couldn't stand the ocean voyage...Wot with the lions a-growlin', an' the monkeys a-chatterin', and the 'eyena a'howlin' like a chap with the delery-im treemins, ve'ad a bloomin' foine time. 14

Upon arrival, the animals were hoisted in iron cages out of the holds and lowered onto a barge that took them to the foot of East 30th Street on the East River, where they were transferred to Grand Central Railroad cars for the journey to Chicago.

Runic was involved in a serious collision on September 4, 1893 when, under control of a New York Harbor pilot, it overtook and then swung into the path of the U. S. government-owned vessel *Ordnance*.

The *Times* account said,

There was a grinding crash of timbers, and then the small craft careened to starboard until her deck was almost perpendicular, and those aboard her clung to the guard-rail stanchions, momentarily expecting her to capsize....Boxes, packages and chairs went tumbling into the water, but the wash of the big ship providentially caught the little one, and the suction helped to swing her bows free and she righted as the firemen came running up with blanched faces. Captain Sullivan immediately ordered the pumps to be started, and a sail was hauled forward to be let over the bows in case a hole had been stoved in them. A hasty examination showed that no water was making, although bolts were sprung and supports wrenched out of place. ... The *Runic*... had run nearly a mile before she could be brought to a stop. Seeing no signal of distress, the big freighter did not lower a boat but put on steam again and began to make her way through the channel, heading for Liverpool with her cargo of live cattle and other shipments.¹⁵

The cargo service's weekly departures had been disrupted by *Naronic*'s disappearance, but in January 1894, yet another vessel debuted. The giant *Cevic*, 8,300 gross tons, represented another leap in size. On her first eastbound crossing, New York to Liverpool, she carried a world's record cargo of 144,000 bushels of grain, 9,000 bales of cotton, 800 head of cattle, 400 tons of copper and lead, 300 tons of fresh meat, 3,500 sacks of flour, 3,000 boxes of cheese, 2,000 barrels of oil, 600 barrels of paraffin, 2,000 bundles of salted hides, 300 tierces of beef and 500 bales of hay. Her immense holds could carry 14,000 tons of cargo.



Cevic

Entering service in 1894, *Cevic* served the company for 20 years before being converted to a dummy battleship *Queen Mary* during World War I. (Charles Haas collection)

An article in the *Breeder's Gazette* said of the new ship,

Anyone acquainted with the livestock boats of this favorite line knows what attention has been given to the important matters of ventilation, fresh water supply, etc., and will not be surprised to hear that the new steamer has every advantage in these respects, and if she combines greater speed with her other improvements as compared with her lesser sisters in the trade, the terror of delay on the Atlantic passage as regards valuable stock will be a thing of the past.¹⁶

Bovic brought another varied animal cargo to New York in February 1894. Monkeys, hyenas, foxes, kangaroos, snakes, a bear and a lion were her passengers. Three monkeys and a kangaroo died during the voyage, apparently due to the cold weather.

As well equipped as the freighters were, danger was never far away. In August 1894, New York longshoreman Michael Connors was engaged in unloading the *Bovic*. He fell backward through the main deck to the lower hold and was killed instantly. A widower with four children, his death left his family destitute.

Fears for *Bovic*, sister of the lost *Naronic*, arose in November 1894. The westbound ship carried 1,000 bales of jute, 60 bales of cotton, 96 boxes of machinery, 157 tons of cannel coal, an assortment of ales, wines and merchandise, and 12 mares, colts and fillies. She arrived five days overdue after encountering a

succession of heavy gales.

In February 1895, *Tauric* rescued the crew of a foundering bark laden with 2,385 tons of guano. The *Rialto*, bound from Peru to Antwerp, encountered heavy gales that soon evolved into a hurricane that tore off the ship's hatches and turned the guano into a mud-like mass that clogged the ship's pumps. The ship's holds were filled with nine feet of water that sloshed from side to side, threatening her stability, and the decks were continually submerged in high rolling waves when the tiller was ripped away. A Swedish bark happened by; her approach caused six of *Rialto's* crew to ignore their captain and abandon ship.

Tauric arrived toward evening and saw *Rialto* flying signal flags indicating she was sinking. By this time, *Tauric's* rails and even her bridge wings, 40 feet above her normal waterline, were rolling into the sea; an immediate rescue seemed impossible. *Tauric's* first officer Kerr and seven seamen responded to their captain's call for volunteers. Away they went in one of the freighter's lifeboats, maneuvering with difficulty into the sinking *Rialto's* lee. Four of *Rialto's* crew, clad in the only available life preservers, swam immediately to the lifeboat. *Tauric's* crew, using a rope heaved from the *Rialto's* fantail, pulled their boat closer, then stood by as the remaining crew waited for the boat to rise before dropping themselves quickly. The task took six full hours. *Tauric* had rescued 14 men; the *Rialto* was abandoned and ultimately sank.

To replace the lost *Naronic*, White Star had commissioned yet another livestock carrier from Harland and Wolff. Like her predecessors, the new *Georgic* was the largest freighter in the world, at more than 10,000 gross registered tons. She could carry 15,000 tons of cargo, 1,000 head of livestock, and, in a departure from her fleet mates, had refrigerated capacity for 5,800 quarters of beef.

The *Breeder's Gazette* reported,

The quarters for those sailing in this ship leave nothing to be desired in the way of comfort and convenience. The accommodations for cattle are superior to anything heretofore offered even by this company, which was the pioneer in the amelioration of transatlantic conditions for livestock. In the bridge deckhouse stalls are provided for 350 cattle. All the fittings are of tubular iron and the floor is concreted. On the upper deck (the next one below), nearly 600 cattle can be accommodated, and the equipment includes a number of semi-permanent horse boxes. The cattle are stalled in six tiers across the ship. Below the upper deck are three laid-steel decks. In watertight compartments, steam fire extinguishers, water supply, electric lighting throughout the ship, and in every particular that goes to make up a staunch and thoroughly equipped steamship, the *Georgic* is measurably superior to any freight steamship that floats....In the service it extends stock shippers – not only in the character of its boats but also in the accommodation and courtesy of its captains and crews – the White Star Line is today without an equal in the transatlantic carrying trade.¹⁷




Thoroughbred racehorses were frequently passengers aboard the White Star livestock carriers. This illustration, “from a photograph taken on board a White Star steamship,” appeared in the *Breeder's Gazette* in March 1893.

Her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York began on August 16, 1895, and was not without drama. The new ship's crew rescued 12 crew from a sinking German bark, *Toni*, whose seams had been burst by the swelling of her cargo of wood. *Georgic's* Captain Henry Smith spotted the vessel's red distress rockets, and despite gales and high seas, a boat from the White Star vessel took off the entire crew without injury.

The New York Times reported that *Georgic* originally was to be named *Herdic*, and then *Fordic* before a name honoring England's monarch was chosen. On the return leg of her maiden voyage, *Georgic* carried 12,000 tons of cargo, 900 cattle and 2,000 sheep.¹⁸

WHITE STAR LINE.
 TWIN SCREW LIVE-STOCK STEAMERS--LIVERPOOL AND NEW YORK DIRECT.
 Regular Weekly Sailings. Tuesdays from New York; Fridays from Liverpool.
 (SUBJECT TO ALTERATION.)



Steamer Georgic, 1890 (see); length, 400 feet; beam, 60 feet; depth of hold, 40 feet. Largest freight steamer in the world. Capacity, 10,000 tons.

The Twin Screw Steamers Georgic, Cevic, Bovic, Tauric and Nomadic; also Cufic.
Special Atlantic Lane service throughout the year; large and powerful engines specially constructed for the carriage of valuable live-stock—horses, oxen, cattle, sheep, etc. Gasoline stoves, hot and cold water, electric lights, and water works on each deck. Greatest safety. Atlantic passage about ten days.

These Vessels are Specially Navigated to Avoid Injury to Stock in Bad Weather.
ALL STOCK LANDED ON COMPANY'S PIER, 38 NORTH RIVER, NEW YORK. RAILROAD TRACK ON DOCK. LOWEST CURRENT RATES.

THE UNITED STATES AND ROYAL MAIL STEAMERS, MAJESTIC, TEUTONIC, BRITANNIC, GERMANIC AND ADRIATIC.
ALL FROM LIVERPOOL AND NEW YORK EVERY WEDNESDAY, CALLING AT QUEENSTOWN.

The entire passenger accommodation in these vessels is unexcelled. Only a limited number of cabin passengers carried. Special comforts and deck accommodations for second class. Special berths for stowage passengers and storage outfit provided free for the Atlantic passage. For further particulars apply to

ISMAY, IMRIE & CO. 30 Water Street, Liverpool.
Or to H. MAITLAND KERSEY, 38 Broadway, New York, and 114 South Clark Street, Chicago.

Georgic

White Star's largest livestock carrier Georgic was featured in this wonderful half-page ad from an 1895 issue of the Breeder's Gazette. (Charles Haas collection)

A near-mutiny by seven drunken crewmen: That's what *Tauric's* captain faced in December 1898. Returning to New York after delivering livestock to Liverpool, the cattlemen were bored and restless. Captain William Clark, making his first voyage as *Tauric's* captain, discovered on December 3 that the men "were keeping up the traditions of the cattle pens on the second day out from Liverpool." Slightly tipsy, the men were more noisy than anything else, and the captain believed they would soon work through the liquor they had apparently smuggled on board and that would be that. For a full day, the men caroused. A storm intervened and lasted 36 hours. Then the steward discovered that 192 bottles of ale were missing from his stores. Simultaneously the officers found the men were beginning to emerge from their berths and, as *The New York Times* put it, "They were inclined to be ugly and showed a disposition to run things. There was some talk of putting the men in irons, but this did not become necessary."

Nevertheless, when *Tauric* was about to dock at New York on the morning of December 15, Capt. Clark signaled that he wanted the police. "The cattlemen, kits in hand, ran down the gangplank and were making for the street when they encountered a detail of policemen."

The seven, all but one New Yorkers, were arrested and marched to the Jefferson Market Police Court, where Capt. Clark testified against them. According to the *Times*, "He said that cattlemen often made it uncomfortable for the officers of a steamer. Being powerful and large men, the crew had a wholesome respect for them, and especially as they carried shooting irons, and were very expert with them. A certain amount of latitude was given to them but they usually took more. In this case they had resolved themselves into a drinking party and after fighting among themselves threatened to take possession of the ship."¹⁹

The magistrate decided that since the crime had been committed aboard a British vessel on the high seas, he lacked jurisdiction, and the rebellious seven were set free. White Star officials said that probably no further steps would be taken against the men.

Bovic had a close call at New York's Pier 49 on August 5, 1900 when fire was discovered in her hold. Firefighters arrived in four minutes and found 20 bales of cotton ablaze. They were dragged through hundreds of bales on the pier, out into the street nearby. Spontaneous combustion was blamed, the damage totaled \$1,000, and the fire in the ship was quickly extinguished.

Cufic found herself immobile in December 1900. In latitude 54.34N., longitude 21.24 W. on December 9,

she encountered a huge gale that carried away her only propeller. The Bristol City steamer *Kansas City* saw *Cufic*'s distress signal flying, and stood by the helpless White Star vessel for three days until the storm played itself out. *Kansas City*'s crew then managed to get hawsers on board and tow the freighter to Queenstown. The hawsers soon broke, and after a day's wait, new ones were strung. When the pair reached Kinsale, the hawsers snapped again, but with the help of tugs, *Cufic* was towed into Queenstown on the 16th. After lying in harbor for three days, a tow began to Liverpool, but weather in the Irish Sea churned into another raging storm, and *Cufic* was nearly lost on the Skerries off the Anglesey coast. *Cufic*'s chief officer Crosby drowned while trying to reach a line from the *Kansas City*. Both ships arrived safely at Liverpool on January 3, 1901, where *Cufic*'s crew declared the final storm the fiercest they had ever encountered. It had been a month-long odyssey for *Cufic*. Within a year, White Star had sold her to the Dominion Line, who renamed her *Manxman*. The *Kansas City* was awarded £6,800 in salvage fees.

Georgic had departed Liverpool on March 6 with the famous circus elephant Jingo on board. Jingo had been banished from the London Zoo, despite many protests, when his behavior had become too belligerent for safety's sake. He had been bundled off by train to Liverpool, then placed aboard *Georgic* in a large crate aft on the lower deck. Upon arrival he had commenced a hunger strike, eating only two buckets of sea biscuits soaked in whiskey. The first five days of the voyage had been rough, and he was exhausted from his struggles to stay upright.

On his last day, March 12, Jingo was found on his knees. *The New York Times* reporter jovially noted, "There was no doubt that he was booked for transfer to a submarine menagerie." He lapsed into a coma and died at 9 p.m. His tusks, more than two feet long, were removed and later offered to a New York museum.

Jingo's keepers watched solemnly as the captain ordered the ship's winches deployed over the hatchway. "With rope and chains and sixteen men, the one-time pride of London was hoisted from his house of death, up higher than the bulwarks and then swung off into the sea. The body of the broken-hearted beast floated away to become the food of sharks just halfway on the Atlantic between Sandy Hook and Land's End."²⁰

Shippers were astonished on June 13, 1908, when White Star totally suspended its freight services out of New York. A decline in cargo volume, coupled with what the company called "excessive" railroad rates on grain shipments was blamed for the action, which had come after a lengthy exchange of telegrams with the head office in Liverpool. The five vessels then in the service – *Georgic*, *Cevic*, *Bovic* and the *Armenian* and *Victorian* which had been transferred from the Dominion Line – were deployed elsewhere. An unnamed White Star source said, "For some time the line has been losing money, as a result of a falling off of about 66 per cent, in general freight and almost an entire loss of the grain shipments. Things could not go on under these conditions.... This condition has been brought about to a great extent by the railroads."

Under pressure from grain shippers, railroads relented in their rates, and business improved; White Star's cargo service between New York and Liverpool was resumed in mid-September 1908 after a three-month hiatus.

By now, advances in refrigeration had made the carriage of frozen carcasses preferable to transporting live animals. White Star itself had designed five new passenger steamers for the Australia-New Zealand trade with extensive refrigerated cargo capacity, ideal for bringing frozen lamb and cattle carcasses to Britain. By 1897, they had another livestock carrier on the stocks. *Cymric*, intended as an enlarged *Georgic*, measured 13,096 gross registered tons and was to carry up to 258 first class passengers and livestock. When she entered service, however, the livestock areas had become upgraded space for 1,160 steerage passengers. Though slow and ungainly, she was an excellent sea boat and was the first example of White Star's stressing size and steadiness over speed.

Speed and fog were the culprits on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1908, when *Georgic* ran down the Pacific Railroad Company's liner *Finance*, en route to the Panama Canal Zone, three miles east of the Sandy Hook lightship. Within 15 minutes, the *Finance* had sunk, with only her funnel, the top of her bridge and her masts showing above the water. Three passengers and the *Finance*'s assistant engineer drowned.

Fortunately, the doomed vessel was carrying only about 75 passengers. *Finance's* captain used a revolver to enforce the women-and-children first rule, and her crew launched her lifeboats, augmented by *Georgic's*. In December 1908 the U. S. government, major owner of the Panama Line, sued White Star for the lost ship's \$260,000, although efforts to salvage \$178,000 in gold and her other cargo were successful. Investigation had shown that *Georgic's* Captain Clarke had ordered the anchor dropped even before the two ships had separated after the collision. The anchor dropped into the hole in the *Finance's* hull, and when *Georgic* raised her anchor to move away, the anchor's flukes pulled additional plates out from *Finance*, assuring her destruction.

Gradually, the historic livestock freighters were sold off or scrapped. The First World War took its inevitable toll. *Georgic*, sailing from Philadelphia to Brest, France, had 1,200 horses, 98,000 bushels of wheat, 10,000 barrels of oil and 430 cases of rifles aboard when she was captured and sunk by the German raider *Moewe* 600 miles off Cape Race. All 60 aboard were lost.

Runic, transferred out of the White Star fleet in 1895, had truly a devastating ending and a remarkable rebirth. Sailing as the *Imo*, and chartered by the Belgian Relief Committee, the veteran vessel collided in Halifax Harbour with the French munitions ship *Mont Blanc* on December 6, 1917. *Imo's* crew threw themselves into the harbor's waters and swam ashore. With a shattering blast, the *Mont Blanc* exploded, driving the abandoned *Imo* ashore. The blast could be seen 100 miles away at sea, and killed 3,000 (the exact toll is uncertain) before a blizzard arrived to inflict further suffering on the city. It was the largest manmade explosion prior to the atomic bomb. Amazingly, the *Imo* was salvaged and became the Norwegian *Governoren*; she sailed until November 30, 1921, when she was lost through grounding in Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands – an amazing testimony to the strength of Harland and Wolff-built ships.

Records and wrecks, triumphs and tragedies – the White Star livestock carriers' services spanned nearly 40 years, and, like the company's passenger liners, had set new standards on the North Atlantic.

Name	GRT*	Dimensions (ft)	Launched	Left WSL	Disposition
<i>Cufic</i>	4,639	430.7 x 45.2 x 30	10 Oct. 1888	1901	12/1919: As <i>Manxman</i> , sank in North Atlantic; 45 lost
<i>Runic</i>	4,833	430.7 x 45.2 x 30	1 Jan. 1889	1895	11/1921: As <i>Governoren</i> , stranded off Port Stanley
<i>Nomadic</i>	5,749	460.8 x 49.1 x 30.9	11 Feb. 1891	1903	3/1926: As <i>Cornishman</i> , scrapped in Cornwall
<i>Tauric</i>	5,728	460.8 x 49.1 x 30.9	12 Mar. 1891	1903	12/1929: As <i>Welshman</i> , scrapped Bo'ness, Scotland
<i>Naronic</i>	6,594	470.0 x 53.0 x 31.6	26 May 1892	1893	11/1893: Vanished on way to New York; 74 lost
<i>Bovic</i>	6,583	470.0 x 53.0 x 31.6	28 Jun. 1892	1922	1928: As <i>Colonian</i> , scrapped at Rotterdam
<i>Cevic</i>	8,315	500.0 x 60.0 x 38.0	25 Sep. 1893	1914	7/1933: As <i>Pyrula</i> , scrapped at Genoa
<i>Georgic</i>	10,077	538.7 x 60.3 x 36.0	22 Jun. 1895	1916	12/1916: As <i>Cevic</i> , captured and sunk by <i>Moewe</i>

*Gross registered tons

Endnotes

1 John P. Eaton and Charles A. Haas, *Falling Star: Misadventures of White Star Line Ships*. Wellingborough: Patrick Stephens, Ltd., 1989, 50.

- 2 "October Gales at Sea." *The New York Times*. October 19, 1878, 2.
- 3 "Transatlantic Cattle Trade." *The New York Times*. May 17, 1895, 3.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 "The *Cufic's* Big Load." *The New York Times*. February 9, 1889, 8.
- 6 "Two Big Freight Steamers." *The New York Times*. April 28, 1891, 8.
- 7 "The Landing of the Hackneys." *Breeder's Gazette*. June 1, 1892, 442.
- 8 Noel R. P. Bonsor. *North Atlantic Seaway*. (Jersey, Channel Islands: Brookside Publications, 1978.) II: 739.
- 9 "City and Suburban News." *The New York Times*. October 28, 1891, 3.
- 10 "The *Bovic's* Big Cargo." *The New York Times*. September 13, 1892, 9.
- 11 "Overdue Ocean Steamers." *The New York Times*. February 10, 1893, 2.
- 12 "Some Overdue Vessels." *The New York Times*. February 11, 1893, 2.
- 13 Qtd. in Eaton and Haas, 58.
- 14 "Animals for the Fair." *The New York Times*. April 6, 1893, 2.
- 15 "Struck by the Big *Runic*." *The New York Times*. September 5, 1893, 1.
- 16 "A New White Star Boat." *Breeder's Gazette*. December 20, 1893, 415.
- 17 "The White Star Cargo Steamers." *Breeder's Gazette*. December 18, 1895, 451.
- 18 "The *Georgic's* First Voyage." *The New York Times*. August 28, 1895, 14.
- 19 "Cattlemen Cause Trouble." *The New York Times*. December 16, 1898, 4.
- 20 "Death of Jingo at Sea." *The New York Times*. March 19, 1903, 2.

About the Author

Charles Haas is a co-founder of Titanic International Society, served as editor of Voyage from 1988-2006. He became the first teacher in the world to dive to the wreck of Titanic in 1993, and made a second dive in 1996, serving as the narrator of the Discovery Channel's program, Titanic: Untold Stories. He was also a member of the 1998 Research and Recovery Expedition, and was closely involved in the design and construction of the Titanic artifact exhibitions prior to 2000. With his writing partner Jack Eaton, he has written five books about Titanic and White Star Line ships, with another book in the genesis stage. Charlie taught English and journalism at New Jersey's Randolph High School for 35 years, and was adviser to its award-winning student newspaper. A graduate of Rider University and William Paterson University, he was named his county's teacher of the year in 1989-90. Charlie has just retired from teaching and looks forward to more time for writing and research. He has just begun a three - year term as Titanic International Society's president.



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