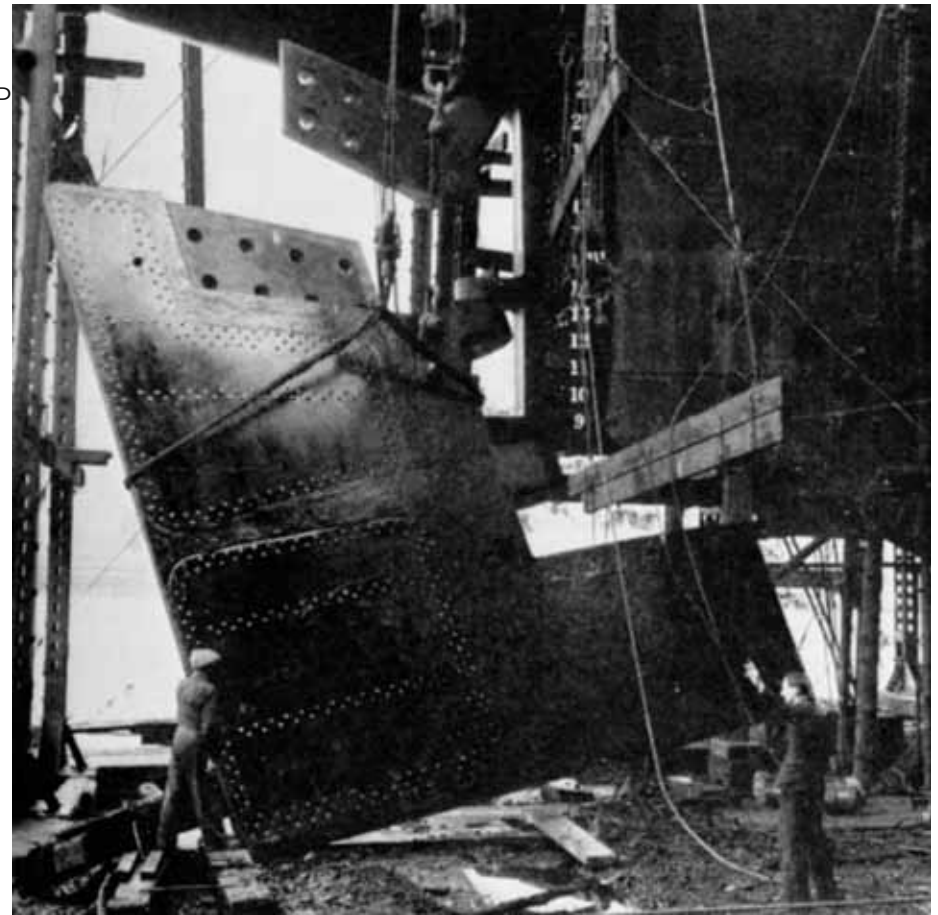


With no name yet chosen, during the early stages of construction, the *Caronia* was simply known as 'Hull 635'.

1920s, the *Scythia*, the *Samaria*, the *Franconia* and the *Ascania*. Later, in 1949, Cunard would also 'inherit' on charter use of the Government-owned *Georgic*, which had been heavily damaged during the war and, with great effort, was repaired, but only partially restored. In those passenger-pressed years, the *Georgic* was Cunard's low-fare, austerity liner, useful for budget tourists and immigrants. Clearly, however, Cunard was thinking about, and then precisely planning for, new post-war tonnage.

Two large freighters with twelve passenger berths that had been ordered for the Port Line, a Cunard affiliate, were redesigned and reassigned for Cunard passenger services. They were the 13,300-ton *Media* and *Parthia*, which were reworked in early construction as large passenger-cargo ships with 250 all-first-class berths and which seemed to be following the plan executed by Cunard in the 1920s with smaller and slower ships able to carry lots of cargo. Rather unlike prior Cunarders, they seemed ideal for the Company's weekly Liverpool–New York service, rotating with the larger, 993-passenger *Britannic*. The pair would later prove to be less-than-satisfactory sea boats and less-than-profitable ships, however. The 530ft-long *Media*, for example, sailed for Cunard for only fourteen years.



Shipping the *Caronia*'s semi-balanced rudder, which weighed in at some 50 tons.

The premier express service between Southampton and New York, with short calls at Cherbourg in each direction, was maintained, quite profitably as it turned out, by the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Queen Mary* with assistance from the splendid second *Mauretania*. The quartet from the 1920s, the *Scythia*, the *Samaria*, the *Franconia* and the *Ascania* would handle Cunard's seasonal service to Canada. The austere *Georgic* with as many as 1,962 berths was used for an inexpensive, all-tourist-class service to Halifax and New York beginning in 1949 and, to assist in a surge of peak season bookings, the 1,011-berth *Stratheden* was chartered from P&O for the summer of 1950. The beloved but creaky *Aquitania* would finish her Cunard service with austerity sailings to Canada. The Canadian Government, welcoming immigrants, the 'new settlers,' guaranteed Cunard a profit of £25,000 per voyage. After completing her Canadian duty and having sailed for Cunard for thirty-five years, *Aquitania* was sent off to the breakers in Scotland in 1950. She left an extraordinary record. She made 580 crossings and carried some 1,500,000 passengers in both war and peace.

According to the late Captain Eric Ashton-Irvine, immediately after the war, Cunard had originally planned to build a transatlantic liner comparable to



'Tyme For Men.' Located amidships on Main Deck, the first-class barber shop is seen here as it appeared after the 1965 refit. The stainless steel box to the left of the door was a steamer for face towels. The second-class barber shop was located aft on B Deck.



In an unusual design move for Cunard, the aft wall of the second-class Lounge was glass and looked into the staircase. The forward wall was panelled in thuya burr with the rest of the room carried out in white sycamore. Like the first-class Lounge, a large parquet dance floor is positioned in the centre of the room, covered by rugs when not in use. Tucked into the forward alcoves of the room were writing desks and bookcases holding 600 volumes.



'The Spirit of Relaxation' by Barney Seale and Frederick Mancini. Standing 3ft high and affixed over the marble fireplace in the cabin-class Lounge, this sculpture represented 'rest and relaxation.' Fortunately, much of the art from the *Caronia* survives, thanks to various refits during which some of it was taken off the ship as well as the sale in 1974 and the foresight of Mr. Konstantinides (the ship's later owner) who removed many other pieces of art before the ship left New York for Taiwan.

Opposite: A powerful view of the liner at Southampton probably taken in May 1966.

Right: The *Caronia* in Southampton during the 1966 Seamen's Strike during which she was laid up for twenty days. When the strike ended, she departed for her North Cape cruise. Just to the stern of the *Caronia* is Union Castle's *Pendennis Castle*.

Below: Despite being near the end of her time with Cunard, the liner still looks good.





Above: The *Caribia* sitting forlorn at her pier.

Ships Memorabilia
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Pier 56 North River
 Large Quantities Chairs,
 Tables, Chests, Beds, Doors,
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 Architectural and Decorator
 Objects, Brass, Hardware,
 Mirrors, Housewares, Office
 Furniture, Theatre Seats,
 China, Silverware, Miscel-
 laneous Items Too Numer-
 ous To Mention.
Pier 56, 14th St., Hudson River
691-7112 OPEN NOON-7 PM,
except Mondays

Left: A newspaper advertisement from *The New York Times* dated 18 October 1974, announcing the sale of items from the old *Caronia*. These sales were eventually stopped by Customs officials when it was discovered that import duties had not been paid on the fittings that were being sold.

then seemed intent on buying many idle and out-of-work passenger ships, wanted her. His plan was to use the *Caribia* for worldwide cruising but with economy fares. Nothing came to pass, and further rumours followed, including reports that Greece's Chandris Lines and that two Italian companies, Grimaldi-Siosa Lines and Lauro Line, were each interested in the idle *Caribia*.

'Many still remembered the grand luxuries and style of the *Caronia*,' said Everett Viez. But the baton of 'world's finest ship for long cruises' had been passed to the likes of two newcomers, Norway's *Sagafjord* and Sweden's *Kungsholm*. Other onetime *Caronia* loyalists had defected to the annual, ninety-day world cruise of Holland America Line's *Rotterdam*. Then, in 1972, there would be new and further competition in the luxury cruise market with the introduction of the Royal Viking Line and their first ship, the 539-passenger *Royal Viking Star*. Two sister ships followed, and, into the 1980s, Oslo-based Royal Viking wrote the book on luxury cruise styles and standards.

Fred Rodriguez followed the sad fortunes – and misfortunes – of his favourite liner. 'She was moored and berthed in no less than nine locations in New York Harbor in five years and thirty-four days,' he noted. 'She was at the Bush Terminal over in Brooklyn, once with the bow pointed in and another time with the bow out. She was also anchored off 69th Street in Brooklyn and where, in the very early 1970s, the light porno film *Cry Uncle* was filmed on board.'

The *Caribia* was a 'gypsy' in New York Harbour. After leaving the Bush Terminal in 1970, she lingered at anchor in the port's Lower Bay, increasingly looking a sorry, neglected sight. She sought refuge, and Kostantinides, still very much involved despite the formal bankruptcy of Universal, arranged for the oddest of berths. Formerly part of Luxury Liner Row, Piers 84 and 86, between West 44th and 46th Streets, were then empty and idle. They had been used by American Export, Italian, United States, Home and Inces lines. The faded *Caribia* was moved by tugs to a position between Piers 84 and 86. She was not actually berthed at either but was secured by ropes and then boarded through a long gangway that was connected to the street along 12th Avenue. Sitting stern-in and moored between two piers, the ship made an unusual sight amidst the comings and goings of the usual liner traffic. 'The *Caribia*'s winches fore and aft were used for the mooring lines between the two piers,' added Fred Rodriguez.

In January 1971, the World Ship Society's Port of New York branch had a programme entitled 'Mystery Ship Visit'. 'The meeting was arranged by the Branch Chairman John S. Rogers, who was an admiralty lawyer, and who had Kostantinides as a major client,' recalled Rodriguez. 'Members boarded the otherwise idle ship using the stern gangway. It was all very select, an opportunity only for certain members. There was a talk in the ship's theatre. But it was very cold on board, and there was water in places, dirt, stale smells and decay everywhere. The ship was also very dark.'

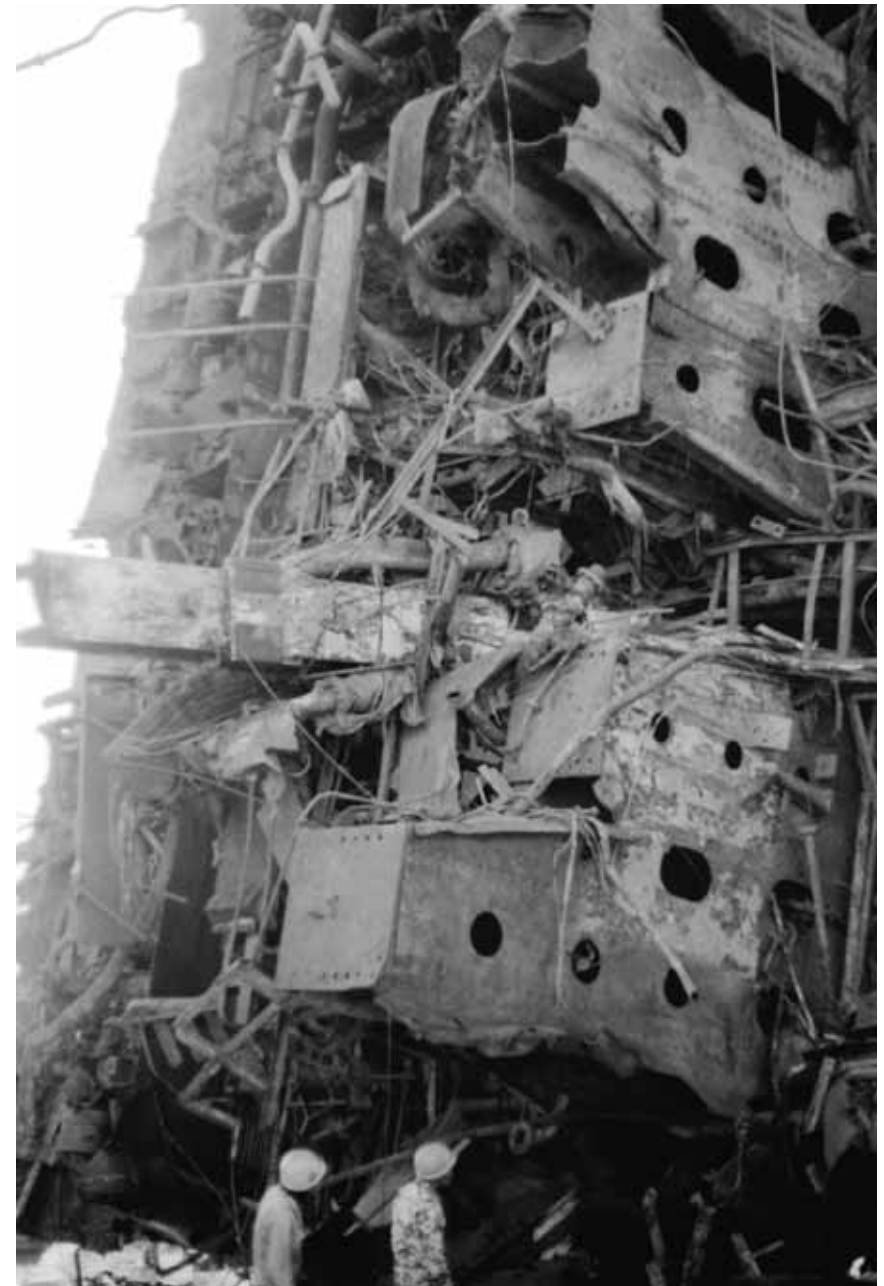
Later in 1971, the *Caribia* moved yet again. Inexpensive berthing was arranged at Pier 56, located at West 14th Street and itself built back in 1905–07 for the maiden arrivals of Cunard's new super liners, the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania*.



The massive floating crane *Hakuho* lifting a section of the *Caribia*. These chunks of the ship weighed up to 400 tons. (Yasuma Ogawa Collection)



The work barge *Masakuni*, which was fitted with permanent decompression rooms and recompression chambers as well as generators, oxygen tanks, and other necessary equipment. After the loss of the first work barge *Mekari* in the super typhoon Pamela, the *Masakuni* became the main support vessel. (Yasuma Ogawa Collection)



The foundations for the boilers. (Yasuma Ogawa Collection)