THE BLACK STAR LINE · 1919 TO 1927, AND AFTER

Eight years, from a $5 share to a pardon

The rise, the wrecks, the trial, and the second try. Dates come from Watson's ship history unless marked; Du Bois's dates are from the Negro World issues he quotes.

BUILDING · BREAKING · THE STATE AND THE CRITICS

1919

- **27 APR** — At a UNIA meeting, $7,000 to $8,000 is raised in cash and pledges for a steamship line.
- **27 JUN** — Black Star Line incorporated in Delaware: $500,000 in $5 shares. Directors include Henrietta Vinton Davis and Janie Jenkins. The brochure says 26 June.
- **17 SEP** — The *Yarmouth* is bought for $171,500.
- **17 NOV** — Edward Warner buys five shares, certificate No. 6952. Read off the certificate.
- **23 NOV** — The *Yarmouth* sails for the West Indies from the 135th Street pier, seen off by some 16,000 people.
- **22 DEC** — Capital raised to $10,000,000. Federal indictment.

1920

- **22 MAR · 23 APR** — The *Shadyside* ($35,000) and the *Kanawha* ($60,000) are bought.
- **AUG** — The *Shadyside* is withdrawn after one losing summer on the Hudson.
- **30 SEP** — The *Yarmouth*, held by creditors, is blown into another steamer off Brooklyn. Later sold at auction for $1,625.

1921

- **25 MAR** — The *Kanawha* sails with 40 passengers. Breakdowns follow at almost every port.
- **10 APR** — At Liberty Hall, the *Phyllis Wheatley* is announced to sail for Africa by 1 May. Ads run for months. Negro World, via Du Bois.
- **30 JUN** — The line reports a $209,456 loss. By August it has issued 151,430 shares.
- **24 AUG** — The *Kanawha* breaks down and is abandoned at Antilla, Cuba.

1922

- **12 JAN** — Garvey arrested for using the mails to defraud. Three officers indicted in February.
- **1 APR** — "We have suspended the activities of the Black Star Line." Negro World, via Du Bois.
- **SEPT** — Du Bois publishes "The Black Star Line" in *The Crisis*.

1923

- **15 JAN** — Eight Black leaders write the Attorney General urging him to press the case.
- **JUN** — Garvey convicted; the three officers acquitted. Five years and a $1,000 fine. Out on bail by September.

1924 · 1925

- **MAR 1924** — Black Cross Navigation & Trading Co. founded; the *General G. W. Goethals* bought that year.
- **18 JAN 1925** — Christened *Booker T. Washington* by Amy Jacques Garvey; 4,000 people pay $1 each to go aboard.
- **8 FEB 1925** — Garvey enters Atlanta Federal Penitentiary after losing his appeal.
- **MAY 1925** — The ship returns to New York and is seized for debt.

1927 · 2025

- **18 NOV 1927** — President Coolidge commutes the sentence. Garvey is deported to Jamaica.
- **19 JAN 2025** — Posthumous presidential pardon, after years of campaigning led by his son Julius Garvey.

Mark the moment you think it could still have been saved.

Where do the state and the critics enter? What would have happened without them?

Three years after the arrest, people still paid $1 just to see a ship. Why?

MILTON H. WATSON, "BLACK STAR LINE," STEAMBOAT BILL (STEAMSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA), PP. 264–72. W. E. B. DU BOIS, "THE BLACK STAR LINE," THE CRISIS, SEPT 1922. MAIL-FRAUD INDICTMENT C33-688 (NARA). CERTIFICATE NO. 6952 (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS). PARDON: WHITE HOUSE, 19 JAN 2025. BLACK STAR ARCHIVE × RADICAL IMAGINATION.