

Address reply to  
Senior Coast Guard Officer  
and refer to 601



Office of  
Senior Coast Guard Officer  
Eighth Naval District

6087

~~TREASURY DEPARTMENT~~

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

New Orleans, Louisiana.

21 November, 1941.

11-1

From: Senior Coast Guard Officer, Eighth Naval District.  
To: Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard.  
Via: Commandant, Eighth Naval District.  
Subject: Investigation of fire on American S.S. CHIPANA.  
Inclosure: (A) Report of JOHNSON, Roland G. (105-452) C.B.M.,  
dated 21 November, 1941.  
(B) Photograph of subject vessel.

1. The inclosures are forwarded herewith for the information  
of Headquarters.

First Endorsement

New Orleans, La.,  
25 November 1941.

From: The Commandant, EIGHTH Naval District.  
To: The Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard.

1. Forwarded.

T. A. THOMSON, Jr.,  
Acting.

B. CONNELLY,  
By direction.



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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

New Orleans, Louisiana.

21 November, 1941.

INVESTIGATION OF FIRE DISCOVERED ON THE AMERICAN S.S. CHIPANA, ON  
20 NOVEMBER, 1941.

S.S. CHIPANA - Official No. 219833

Home port - New York, N.Y.

Owners - Grace Line's (Delaware)

Built - Mobile, Alabama; 1920.

Length - 320'; breadth - 46'2".

Gross tonnage - 3,280; net - 1,997.

Call letters - KUML.

At about 10:00 a.m., 20 November, 1941, received telephone call from duty officer, U. S. Coast Guard, Custom House, New Orleans, Louisiana, advising that Lieutenant Commander Fernandez, U. S. Navy, had called and requested that I be informed that a fire had been discovered on the CHIPANA, then moored at the foot of Washington Street, New Orleans, Louisiana. Immediately proceeded to that point and upon arrival found two City Fire Department trucks at the scene and was advised that the fire had been extinguished.

Inquiries regarding the fire revealed that at about 9:15 a.m., 20 November, after the hatch cover had been placed in position and when the tarpaulin was being stretched across the hatch, smoke was noticed coming from the hold below which contained various canned goods in cartons and bales of cotton; that several lots of the canned goods were removed and it was found that the smoke was coming from three bales of cotton; the fire was extinguished and the bales of cotton placed on deck. It was learned that the Gulf Engineering Company, Inc., 916 Peters Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, Telephone - RA-1311, had, at about 8:00 a.m., on 20 November, 1941, performed repairs, involving welding, to a stanchion socket, on the port side of the vessel, directly above No. 3 hatch (shelter hatch), where the fire occurred. The socket in question was secured by three bolts through the deck into the hold. This socket is used to secure the life-line stanchion in place and has a cotter pin through a hole in the socket and stanchion. (The socket is secured to the deck). The deck at this point is constructed of very thin steel. Contacted the Gulf Engineering Company and verified the fact that this company had performed the welding as stated.

Made an inspection of the hold of this vessel and found that the bales of cotton were stored in an upright position with the ends very close to the deck, directly beneath the above-mentioned socket where the welding had been performed. It was also noted that the paint at this point had been burned from the welding operations, which caused the hot paint from beneath the deck

to form blisters and portions thereof to become detached from the metal and fall on the cotton. Personnel of the Gulf Engineering Company stated that water was kept running over the deck while the welding operations were in progress, but inasmuch as the paint on the underside of the deck was scorched, the fact is revealed that sufficient heat penetrated the deck to result in the hot paint falling on the cotton resulting in the fire.


All indications are that the fire was accidental and it is my opinion that no attempt at sabotage was involved.

This case has been referred to the Local Inspectors, Department of Commerce, and a copy of this report will be furnished that office.

The CHIPANA departed New Orleans at 4:20 p.m., November 20, 1941, for Chile and other South American ports, with 700 bales of cotton, 9 drums of pine oil, 305 drums of lubricating oil, 900 drums of gasoline and general cargo.

*Roland G. Johnson*  
Roland G. Johnson,  
C.B.M., U. S. Coast Guard.

Inclosure - Photograph of subject vessel.



INTELLIGENCE

REC'D NOV 21 1941

ASST