

Bluefields Factsheet

Bluefields

Year Built: 1917

Place Built: Manitowoc, Wisconsin

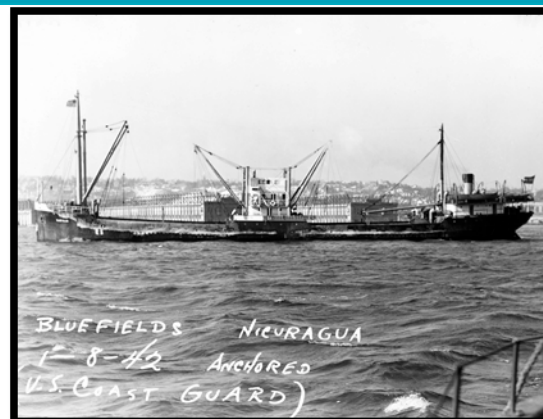
Shipyard: Manitowoc Shipbuilding Corp.

Original Name: *Motor I*

Original Owner: K. Salvesen, Oslo, Norway

Dimensions: Length Overall: 261 feet

Beam: 43.5 feet. Depth: 23 feet



Although technically a merchant vessel, the freighter *Bluefields* served in a critical capacity during both World War I and World War II. While under construction, the vessel was requisitioned by the United States Shipping Board in emergency response to the shipping needs of World War I. The vessel was ultimately launched in 1917 as the *Lake Mohonk*, and left the Great Lakes serving under the U.S. Shipping Board until 1919.

Following its wartime service, *Lake Mohonk* returned to private interests and went through several owners. First owned by Astmahco Navigation Co, of New York, the vessel was repowered and named *Astmacho III*. In 1921, it was sold to Ormidale Steamship Co. of Wilmington, Delaware, and renamed *Ormidale*. In 1927, the vessel returned to the Great Lakes after it was purchased by Gravel Motorship Company based in Buffalo, NY. During this time it kept the name *Ormidale* and transported bulk cargoes of stone and coal.

On October 31, 1935, heavy fog covered the waters in Thunder Bay near Alpena, Michigan and limited visibility caused problems for the *Ormidale* as it accidentally rammed and sunk the Norwegian oceangoing freighter, *Viator*. Unlike *Viator*, the *Ormidale* stayed afloat and was able to return to service.

In 1938, *Ormidale* was sold and renamed *Jupiter* and began running goods in Central America. The vessel changed hands for a final time in 1941 in Nicaragua and was renamed *Bluefields*.

On July 15, 1942, *Bluefields* was sailing as part of Convoy KS-520 when the mass of ships was suddenly attacked as it rounded Cape Hatteras by German submarine U-576. *Bluefields* was struck with a torpedo and sunk within 12 minutes but the crew escaped with minor injuries.