

Unsightly Ferry Hulk Gives State Blasters Rough Time

They built 'em plenty tough in the shipyards back in the "good old days." State Department of Public Works powdermen, blasting the wooden hulk of a beached ferryboat at the California Maritime Academy will testify to that. A new high explosive—60 per cent nitro-glycerin compound has been used in big charges, sending water and debris more than 150 feet skyward.

But big timbers in the old S. S. Contra Costa, once the world's biggest ferryboat, when she carried Southern Pacific trains across Carquinez Straits from Benicia to Port Costa, are not giving up too easily.

Jack Estes, from the state department, who has been placing the blasting charges, said the old ferryboat still is plenty solid.

Quite a pile of her timbers have been "snaked" out on the beach just south of Mayo Hall.

at the academy after the explosions have ripped them to shreds. Despite having lain in the silt and mud of Morrow Cove since 1930 or thereabouts, the remains of the once proud Contra Costa

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State Blasters Rough Time

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show old-time shipwrights really knew their trade.

Most of the timbers were huge

—a foot square or better. And they are still solid despite the action of the water, wind, barnacles and weather.

The dynamite is taking the hulk apart bit by bit, but Estes says it will be two weeks or better before the job is completed. Several thousand pounds of the blasting compound will be touched off.

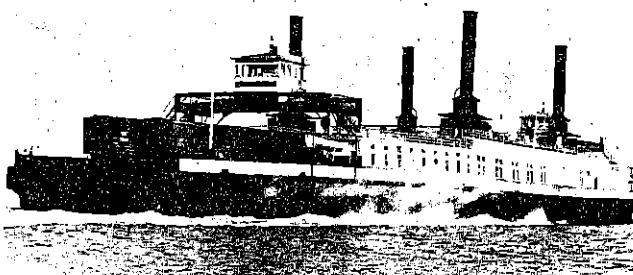
The old ferryboat—known as a "Jonah" by her bosses — was built by the Southern Pacific in 1914. She cost \$300,000 and was 440 feet long, making her the biggest ferryboat in the world. She extended 90 feet across the beam.

The monster could carry 6,000 tons of railroad equipment.

When the Martinez-Benicia railroad bridge was erected, the S. S. Contra Costa was forced into retirement as a fishing resort at Morrow Cove. She caught fire and burned to the water line some years ago.

Now the state has the job of breaking up her unsightly skeleton.

There's plenty of strength in the old skeleton's bones, however, and she's fighting to the end.



Contra Costa 212630

Side wheel

Built, 1914, Southern Pacific, Oakland

Operated by Southern Pacific, train ferry, Port Costa-Benicia

Steel hull, 433' x 67.2' x 18.5'

4483 tons

Two compound engines; 2 cylinders, 60" x 96"

3000 hp

Vacated, 1930

