

mv Athol Voyage 10/5 Report. Chapter 1

This is the story of one voyage of a Fortune Class vessel carrying a full load of lumber from ports on Vancouver Island to Japan. The ship was the m.v. Athol. The vessel was chartered to the Canadian Transport Company (CTCo), a Division of MacMillan Bloedel. The Master of the ship was Captain Ed Monteiro FNI, who became the first Chairman of the Nautical Professional Education Society.

m.v. Athol. Report on Voyage Number 10/5: This voyage began at Chiba in Japan at 1530hours on October 20th 1973. After passing through Tokyo Bay the vessel was set on a course for the Juan de Fuca Strait, which separates Vancouver Island from Washington State. The intended route was a composite great circle track from Inubō-saki to a position 51°N 179°E thence along the 51°N parallel to longitude 177°W and continuing the great circle to Cape Flattery, but "Oceanroutes" recommended a rhumbline to 50°N 170°W, along the parallel to 140°W and a rhumbline to Cape Flattery. The vessel arrived at Victoria, B.C. late on October 31st, and with the pilot on board it proceeded to Chemainus, its first port of loading.



A Fortune class vessel: these ships were easily identified by their unusual high mount 10 tonne derricks. They were designed in collaboration with the Canadian designers Algonquin International of Montreal.

Loading commenced the following morning. All of the lumber loaded at Chemainus was underdeck except for 39 packages of timbers for Kawasaki that were stowed athwartships abreast of the No.5 hatch to a height of about 4 feet. The deck cargo securing arrangements were inspected and certified by the Port Warden before any deck cargo was loaded, and the stowage was inspected and certified a day later in Crofton. In Crofton all lumber loaded was underdeck. Approximately 2.56MFBM was loaded in Chemainus and 2.13MFBM in Crofton.

On November 4th the vessel sailed to Port Alberni. Loading underdeck was completed by November 9th except for No. 2 hold, which was completed a day later.

All the deck cargo was stowed fore and aft except for the spots between Nos. 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 where the cargo was stowed athwartships.

Loading at Port Alberni, a total of 5.72 MFBM, was completed at 1700 on November 11th. The stowage and securing of the deck cargo was inspected and certified by the Port Warden and that evening the vessel sailed, bound for Crofton once more.

In Crofton lumber was first loaded on deck from the dock but the rest had to come from scows. To accomplish this we had to vacate their berth and move to another in nearby Chemainus. A total of 1.9 MFBM was loaded at Crofton/Chemainus.

Apart from 80 pkgs of 4" x 4" lumber everything loaded on deck was 12" x 12" or larger timbers ranging in length from 16' to 40'. The heights of the deck load ranged from 8' at the forward end to 17'6" at No. 5 hatch.

The UCG booms were lowered into recesses that had been left in the top tier of timbers, chocked off and secured with wire pendants and turnbuckles. A chain was passed through the head of each boom and tightened by a turnbuckle. The topping wires were slackened just enough to enable the topping bars to rest on their supports. The pawls of the topping drums were in position. All other wires were correctly tensioned. Cargo blocks were stowed in their crutches and shackled on.

Prior to sailing the following cable was sent to Oceanroutes, San Francisco via the Canadian Transport Company (CTCo) office in Nanaimo: -

OCEANROUTES SANFRANCISCO

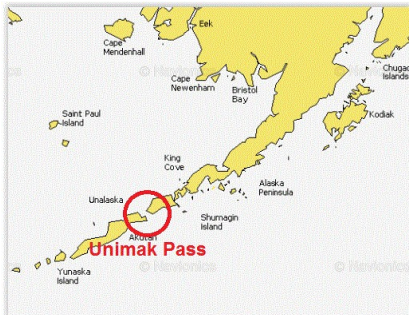
AL102 DEPARTURE CHEMAINUS 15TH AM BOUND KAWASAKI FULL LOAD LUMBER

INTEND FOLLOW ROUTE FLATTERY GC 35N 165W RL NOJIMASAKI PLEASE ADVISE

REGARDS MASTER

The vessel was prepared for sea and at 0200 hrs on November 15th she sailed from Chemainus, bound for Kawasaki and Yokohama. On the transit to Victoria the crew were employed in tightening the chains and squaring up for the voyage but darkness and wet weather made this difficult. The job was completed after the pilot had disembarked and while the ship proceeded at a reduced speed through the Juan de Fuca Strait.

At 1200 that day, the vessel rounded Cape Flattery and set a course of 257°(T) to follow the intended route. The ETA at Kawasaki was 1800 on November 29th, and cables to this effect were sent.



Soon afterwards, Oceanroutes sent the following message: -
 MASTER ATHOL EXPECT SOUTHWESTERLIES DEPARTURE BECOMING
 NORTHWESTERLY VICINITY 130W SOUTH 50N FOR BETTER CLEARANCE CENTRAL
 PACIFIC LOWS RECOMMEND AS CONDITIONS PERMIT RL 54N 140W RL UNIMAKPASS
 THEN SHORTEST ROUTE NOJIMASAKI VIA 51N 165E =OCEANROUTES

After due consideration and considering the weather situation at our position, 48° 23'N 125°33'W, course was altered to 300°(T) for Unimak Pass, the route recommended by Oceanroutes. Messages to this effect were sent to the Owners, CTCo and Oceanroutes.

At this point the voyage was mostly moderate and the vessel was behaving normally. At noon on November 17th, in position 53°56'N 141°08'W the course was altered to 270°(T) for Umiak Pass per the Oceanroutes recommendation.

On the evening of November 18th the NW wind began to freshen and the vessel

began to pitch moderately. Engine speed was reduced slightly. The next day, just 12 hours before entering the Unimak Pass the following message was received.

MASTER ATHOL. UNDERSTAND PROCEEDING VIA UNIMAK PASS STOP BERING SEA OUT OF INSTITUTE WARRANTEE LIMITS THEREFORE PLEASE DO NOT ENTER THIS AREA CONFIRM URGENTLY REGARDS
 = GTRC CROYDON

(This was the reminder of the phrase used in charter parties – that the insurers would not cover a passage through the Bering Sea. American ships were under no such restrictions and used that route all the time, hence the recommendation from Oceanroutes, an American company. Editor.)

That noon, in position 54° 09'N 159°50'W, course was altered to 253°(T) to pass south of the Aleutian Islands, and Oceanroutes were so advised...Just prior to midnight that day the following reply was received from San Francisco: -

MASTER HEAVY SOUTHERLIES VICINITY 168W SHIFTING WESTERLY 172W PERMIT CONCUR YOUR INTENTIONS = OCEANROUTES

Shortly after altering course the wind shifted to WSW/SW and increased to force 6/8. The swell also shifted with the wind to a height of 10/12 feet. Engine speed was reduced to ride the swell more easily. That night the deck cargo at No.1 hatch shifted forward due to the continuous pitching of the vessel.

On November 20th at 0810 hrs, speed was reduced and the vessel turned to a course of 040°(T). The shifted cargo was chocked off and all lashings retightened. Oceanroutes, CTCo and the owners were advised of the situation, the message to the owners reading: -

ALGONQUIN CROYDON AL119 NUMBERONE DECK CARGO SHIFTED FORWARD ABOUT 8 FEET PRESENTLY HOVETO OFF UNALASKA RESECURING BEST POSSIBLE CHARTERERS ADVISED EVENT NECESSARY ENTER BERING SEA THEY LIABLE ADDITIONAL PREMIUM SUBJECT YOUR APPROVAL STOP ENDEAVOURING STAY OUTSIDE THIS AREA IF IMPOSSIBLE WILL ADVISE = MASTER

At 1130 hrs the cargo was secure again and the vessel proceeded on a course of 180°(T) at a reduced speed in an attempt to move away from the area of heavy swells. Four hours later San Francisco sent the following cable: -

MASTER ATHOL EXPECT HEAVIEST SOUTHWESTERLY SWELL SOUTH ALEUTIANS UNTIL 180 AS CONDITIONS PERMIT BERING SEA TRANSIT BEST = OCEANROUTES

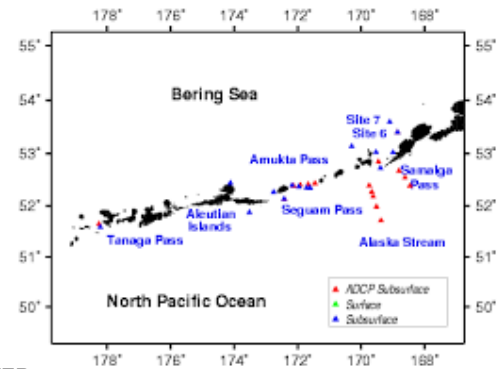
At 1600 hrs, in position 52° 47'N 165°57'W, course was altered to 265°(T) and at reduced speed proceeded to Amukta Pass. That night the No.1 deck cargo shifted and broke loose again. It became necessary to quickly seek the lee of the Aleutian Islands in order to prevent that cargo from being lost overboard. Accordingly at 0730hrs on November 21st, with wind force 8 from SW by S and a 12/15 feet swell from the southwest, course was altered to 000°(T) to enter the Bering Sea between Chuginadak Island and Samalga Island.

At 1000hrs the following cable was received: -
 MASTER ATHOL WE AGREE ADDITIONAL PREMIUM IF NECESSARY PROCEED BERING SEA SUBJECT OWNERS APPROVAL WHICH HAVE REQUESTED OCEANROUTES CONFIRM RECOMMEND BERING SEA AS BEST TRACK FOR PREVAILING CONDITIONS PLEASE KEEP ADVISED YOUR CONDITION AND INTENTIONS = MONAGHAN TRANSMACAN

Simultaneously cables were despatched to Oceanroutes, CTCo and the Owners. To the latter the message read: -
 ALGONQUIN CROYDON AL120 DUE HEAVY WEATHER AND FURTHER CARGO SHIFTS ENTERED BERING SEA 212030Z 5249N 16930W EXPECT TRAVERSE TWO/THREE DAYS PLEASE COVER ACCORDINGLY CHARTERERS AGREEABLE ADDITIONAL PREMIUM =MASTER

Due to the presence of a low already in the Bering Sea, conditions inside the Bering Sea did not appreciably improve.

The continuous pitching had caused the majority of lumber stowed up forward to fall apart. Timbers had slid off the hatchcover causing voids in the stow. It was not practical to re-secure using



SKIPPER Ed Monteiro, left, plots the Athol's course with Chief Mate Inder Kakan.

chains. Considering the situation and the expected weather, the Master decided to find a convenient place to anchor in order to restow and secure the No.1 deck cargo.

Charts on board the ship were not detailed enough to find a spot for anchoring but from the Sailing Directions it seemed the best place was Nazan Bay on Atka Island. With the aid of the Sailing Directions the Master drew a large-scale chart of Nazan Bay on graph paper to assist in anchoring.

Cables were sent to Oceanroutes, Owners, CTCo and to the US Coast Guard in Adak. The latter read: -

LIBERIAN FREIGHTER ATHOL DECKLOAD LUMBER EX VANCOUVER ISLAND BOUND JAPAN CHARTERED BY CANADIAN TRANSPORT VANCOUVER REQUESTS PERMISSION TO SHELTER OFF EASTERN ATKA ISLAND POSSIBLY ANCHOR NAZAN BAY ENABLE RESTOW AND SECURE SHIFTED DECK CARGO STOP ETA22ND 1900Z DURATION ABOUT 12 HOURS THANKS =MASTER

At 0001 on November 22nd, in DR Position 53° 09'N 173°20'W, course was altered to 205°(T) heading to Eastern Atka Island. The US Coast Guard, Juneau, had given permission to anchor, with a few restrictions and requirements.