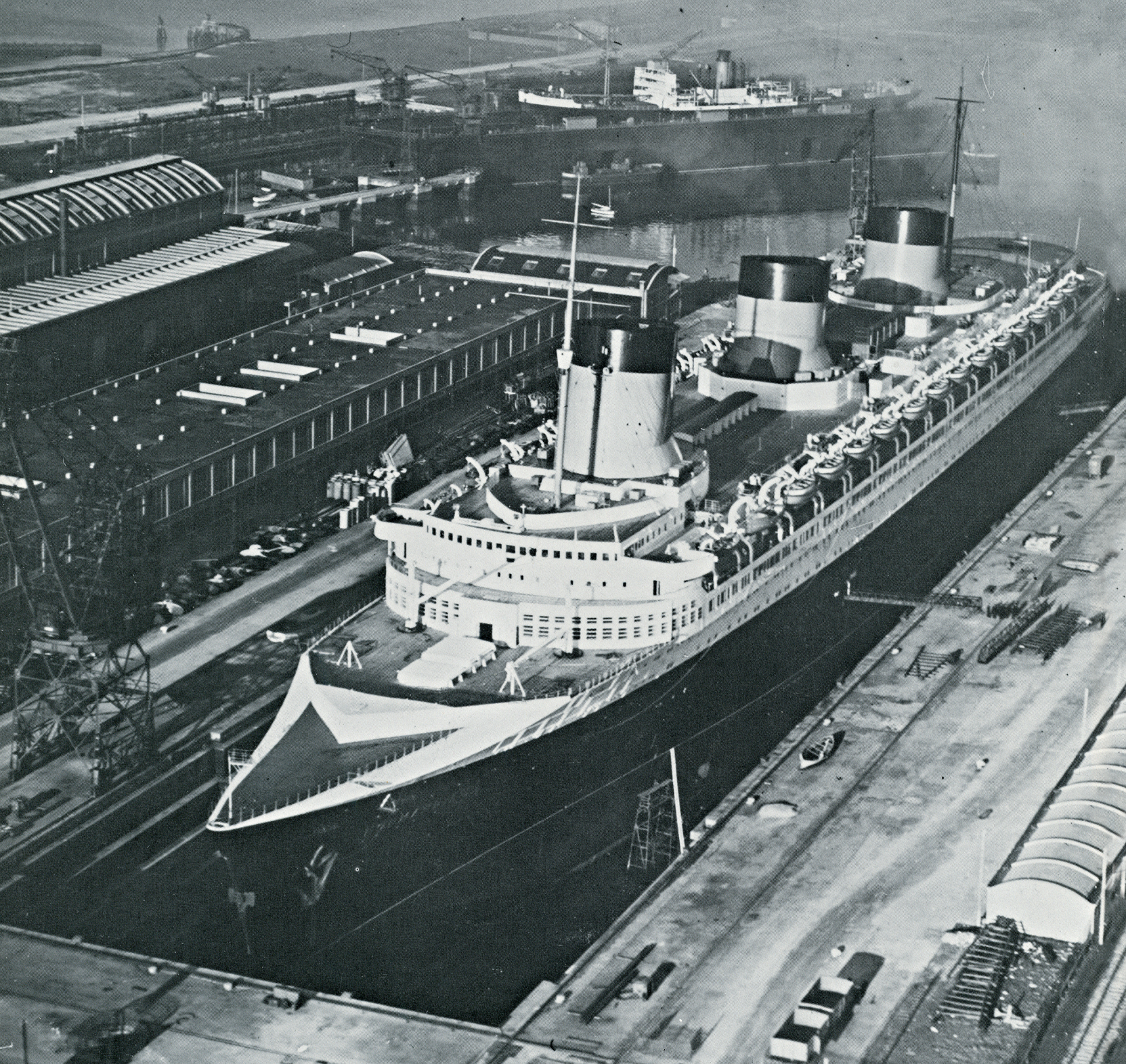


NORMANDIE



INTRODUCTION

Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (CGT), based in Le Havre, was founded in 1861, substituting the 1854 Compagnie Générale Maritime. Managed by the Péreire brothers, Emile and Isaac, the company had attained a firm position among the shipowning organisations of the world, upholding the prestige of maritime France. Though operating worldwide CGT – known throughout the English-speaking world as the French Line or TRANSAT – her story is one intimately bound up with the development of the North Atlantic passenger trade and the struggle for supremacy on this route.

In World War I CGT played a prominent part, practically all her vessels being on naval duty. The losses sustained were heavy. Under the terms of the mail contract with the French government, CGT was bound to replace the lost liners on the New York line. Representations were made to the government; the point was fully conceded, special arrangements being made to enable the company to build tonnage of the PARIS-type.



Realising the growth in traffic during the first few years of the 20th century CGT added two emigrant ships to her fleet. Both Chicago (1908) and Rochambeau (1911) must do without First Class accommodations and carried about 1.200 emigrants each.

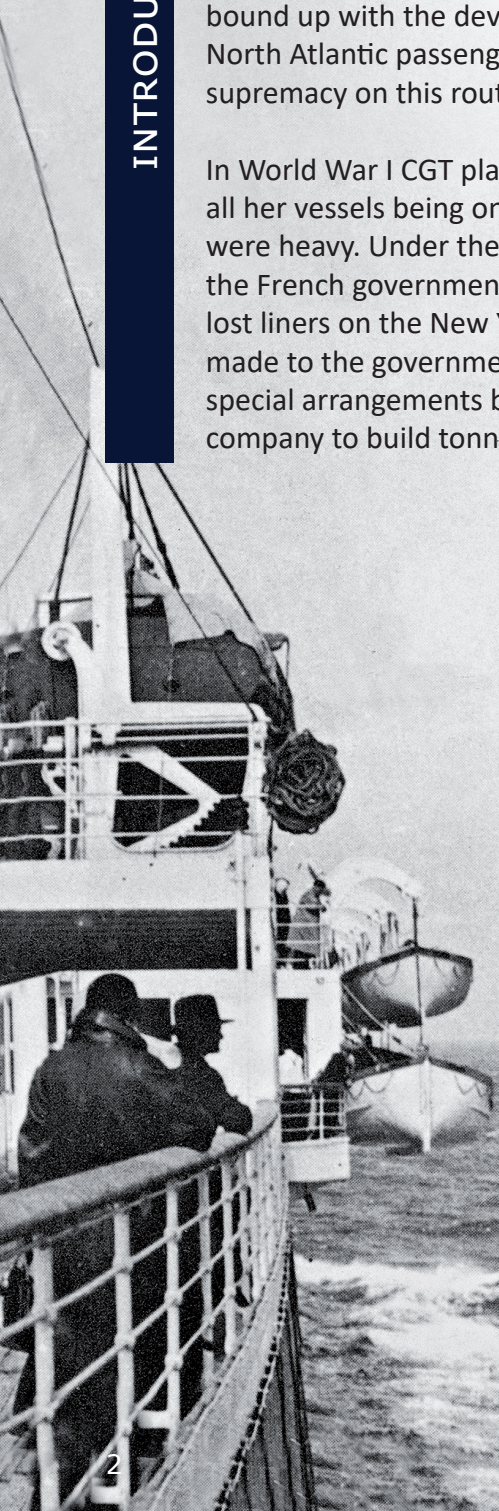


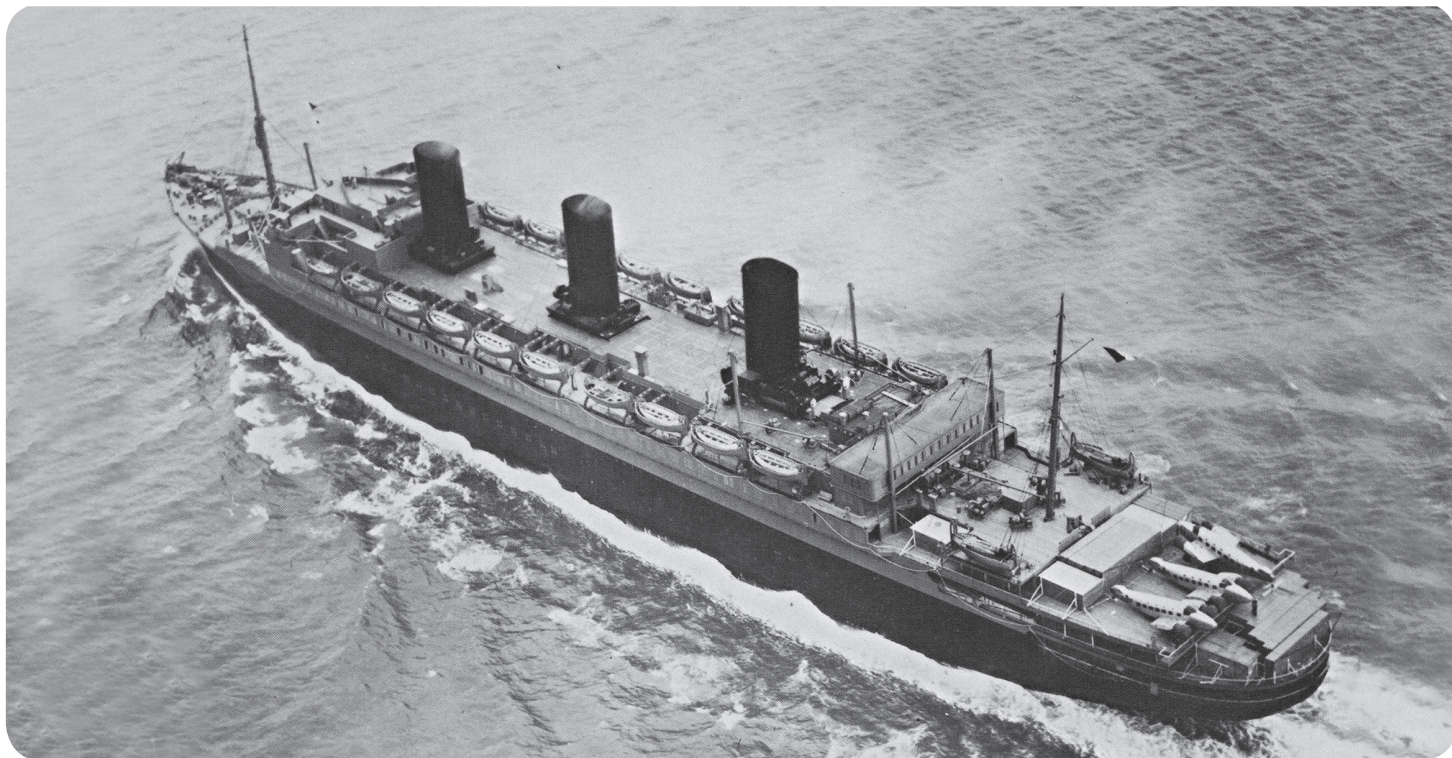
As early as 1921 the French Line started a commercial air service between Paris and Le Havre. Here pictured is ss PARIS (1921; 34.569 grt) preceding the imposing lines of the future NORMANDIE.

(poster by A. Seville)



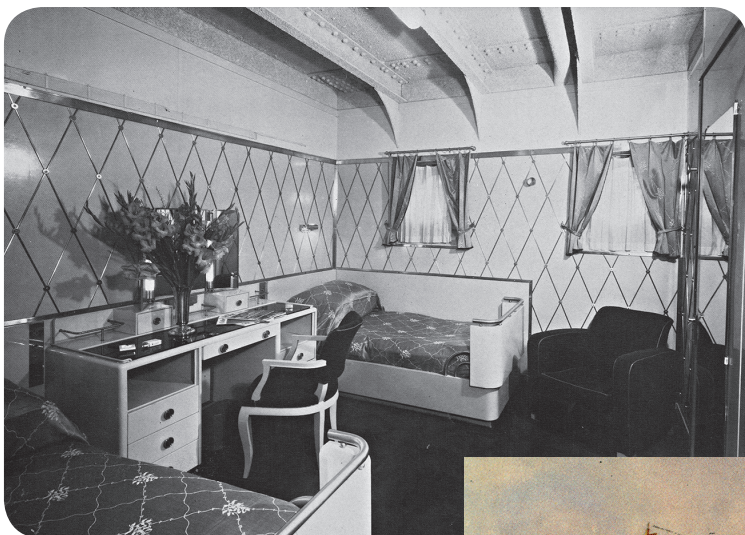
France faced the Atlantic Ocean. CGT had her head-office in the port of Le Havre, situated on the Southern coast of the Channel. In St. Nazaire, at the mouth of the river Loire, we find the wharf that built most of the company's ships.





Prior to the advent of Normandie, the French Line's flagship was Île de France (1927; 43.153 tons gross), noteworthy for the extreme luxury and lavish style of her passenger accommodation. All these asserted a new expression of ocean-going comfort, expressed in the

scale and geometry of the ship herself. During her career that was to last 32 years, she enjoyed great popularity with First Class passengers on the North Atlantic route.

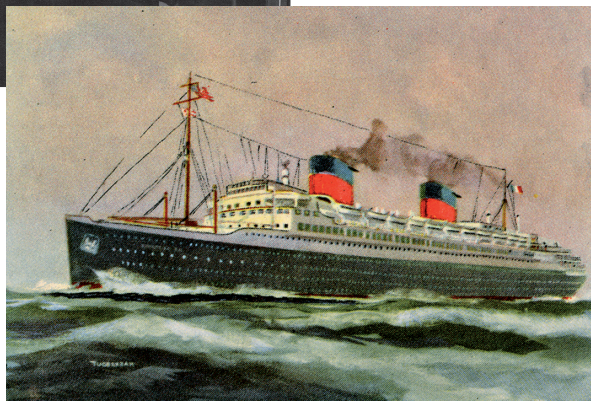


First Class suite de luxe in Île de France.

The strength of CGT's fleet in the early thirties was close on 100 vessels with an aggregate gross tonnage passing 600.000. The Line's flagship was *Île de France* (1927; 43.450 t). Like *ss Paris* she had quadruple screws with direct-driven Parsons turbine machinery, the 64.000 hp developed giving her a service speed of 23,5 knots. *Île de France* was noteworthy for the extreme luxury and lavish style of her accommodations, so enjoying popularity with First Class passengers on the North Atlantic route.

Right:
After a refit that lasted nearly two years (1947-'9) ss Île de France sported two funnels in place of her former three. Her gross tonnage then was 44.356.

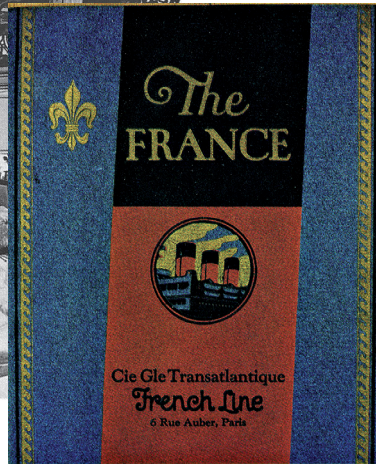
(ill.: G.J. Frans Naerebout)



On the Le Havre-Plymouth-New York run CGT operated three cabin-class ships. These were *tsts De Grasse* (1924; 18.435 t; 16 kn), built by Messrs. Cammell, Laird & Co., Birkenhead; *qsms Lafayette* (1929; 25.178 t; 17,5 kn); and *tsts Champlain* (1932; 28.124 t; 20 kn). The last two were built by SA Chantier et Ateliers de Penhoët, Saint Nazaire.

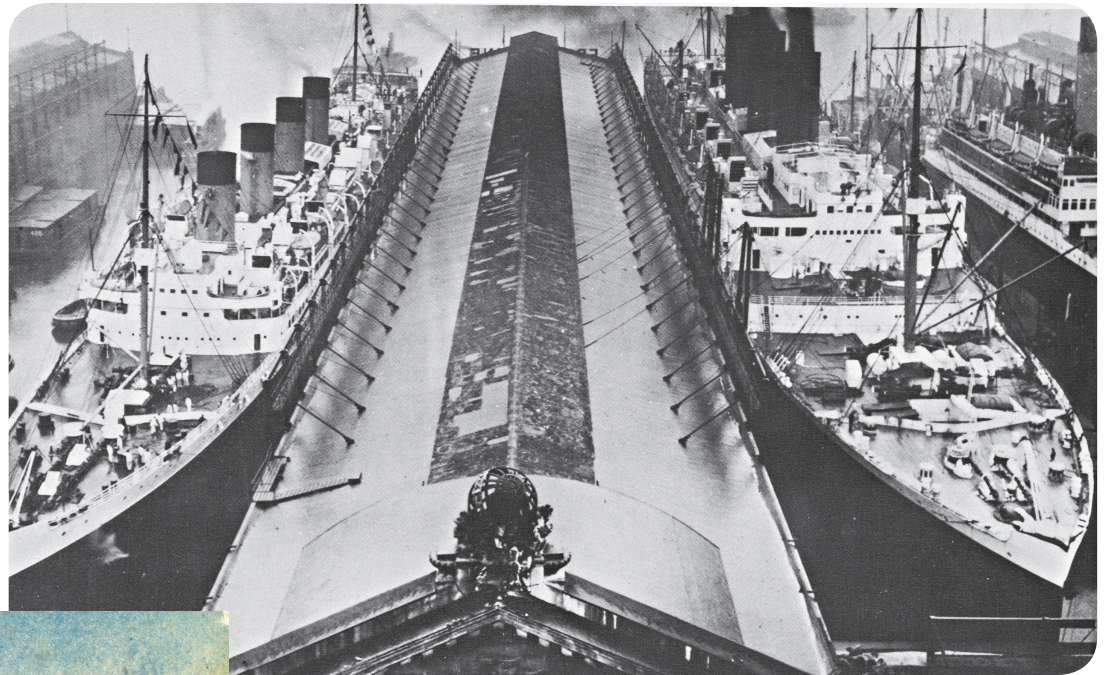


Left: The Grand Staircase of ss France (1912) was a copy of the one R. de Cotte designed for the townhouse of the Duke of Toulouse.

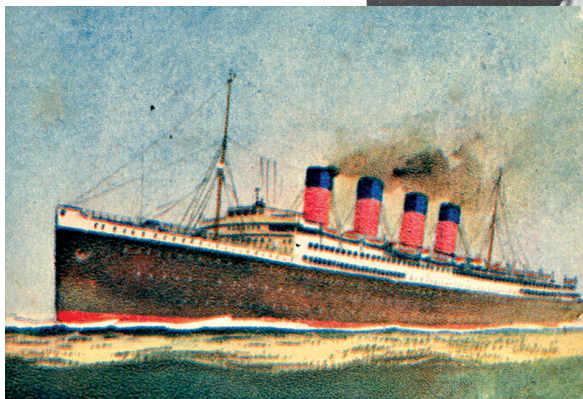


Grand Staircase ss Paris (1921).

Shipping design in the 1930's was a far cry from the conceptions in the days of CGT's *France* (1912). However, her sweeping arrangement of a grand staircase in the First Class dining room developed such appeal that it became a highlight in many a luxurious liner after her. In fact *France* (23.769tG) was the first of three great liners projected by CGT for the luxury express services. As a result of World War I the second ship, *Paris*, did not enter service until 1921, while *Île de France* was delayed until 1927.

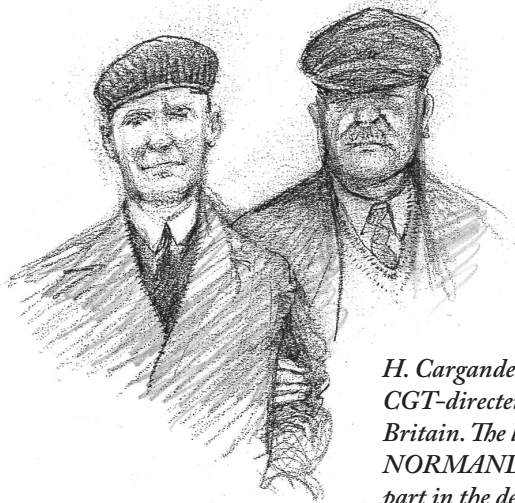


Two ocean giants in port together: ss France (left) and ss Paris at New York. Paris was the first of CGT's great ships following WW I, and like ss France very much a product of Belle Epoque design styling and genteel living. While France sported an outdoor bowling alley, Paris had a croquet court



Four-stack France (1912). (ill.: G.J. Frans Naerebout)

In the years before the outbreak of World War II the transatlantic express luxury liner was developed in size, speed and magnificence to an extent never seen before and which probably will never be seen again.

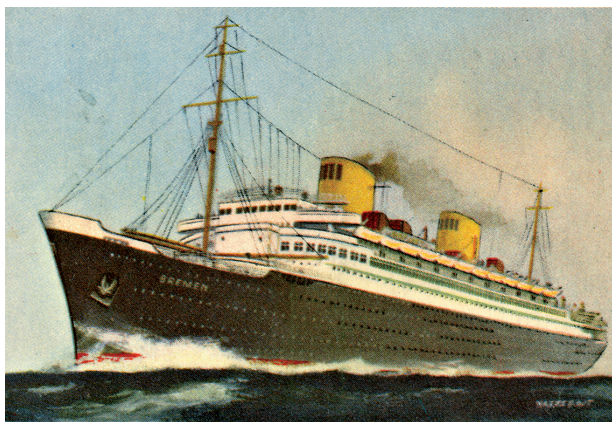


H. Cargandel, CGT-directeur général; P. de Malglaive, CGT-directeur and resident director of CGT in Great Britain. The latter was the originator of the idea that NORMANDIE should be built; he took a prominent part in the designing and building of the vessel.

In those years the principal competitors were Cunard/White Star for Britain, Norddeutscher Lloyd for Germany, Italia for Italy and Compagnie Générale Transatlantique for France. The French company provided by far the most interesting of the great liners. In October 1929 Cunard publicized plans for two redoubtable liners: *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, motivated by fears of competition to come from Germany, Italy and the United States.



Much expectation was placed on the designer V. Yourkevitch, an employee of Renault in Paris who had been a naval engineer working on the Czar's warships in St. Petersburg.

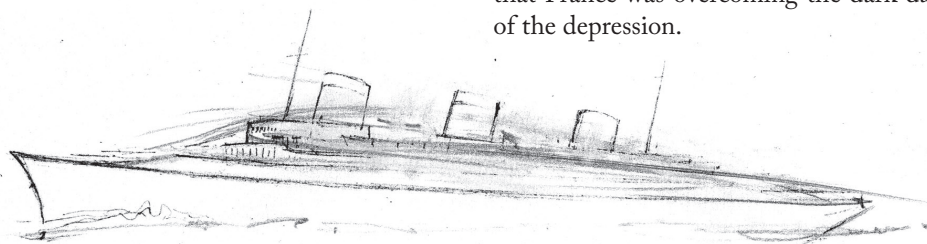


Bremen (pictured here) and sister Europa were symbols of national pride, meant to bring post-war Germany back to the forefront of the shipping world.

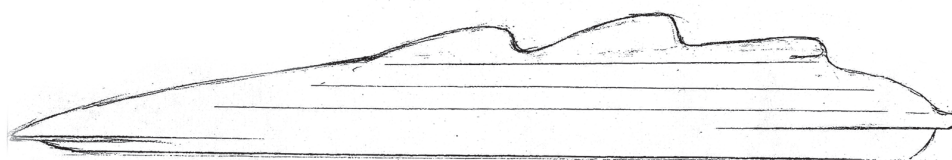
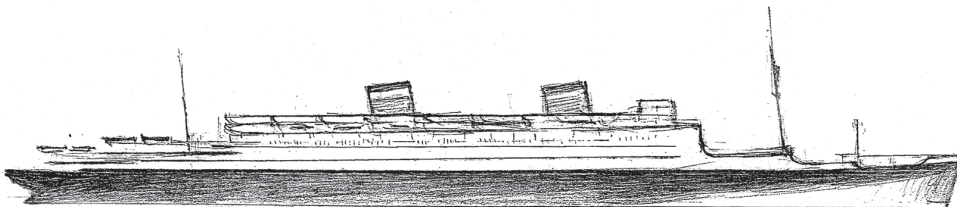
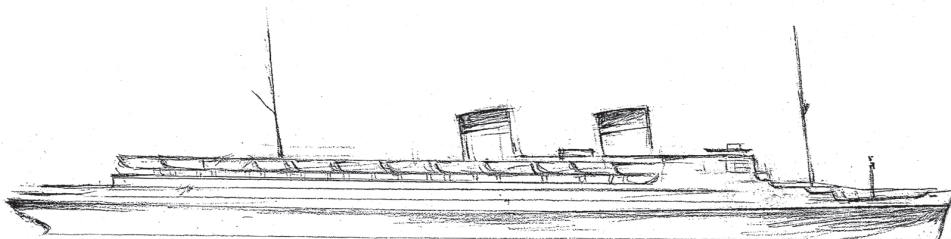
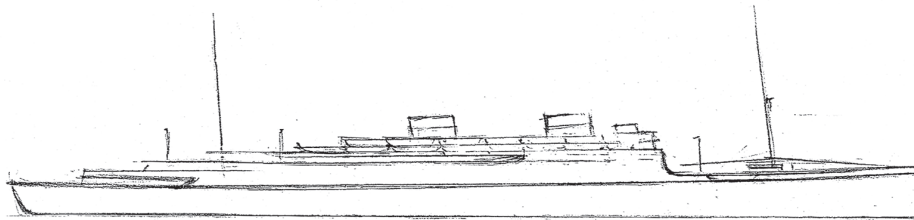
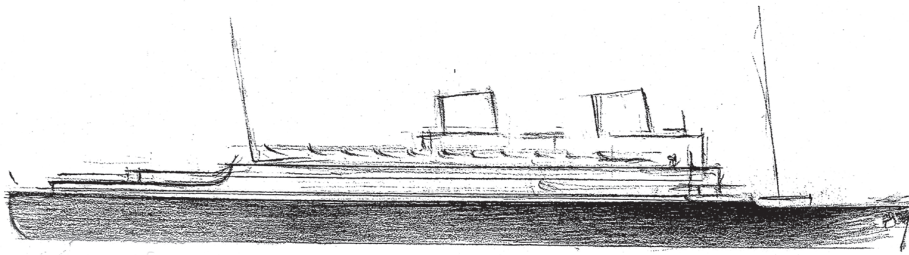
(ill.: G.J. Frans Naerebout)

Launched into service during the late '20's, liners like *Île de France* and the German *Bremen/Europa* gave maritime expression to the changing forms and values of a world transformed to a radically different outlook. CGT's future flagship had to be an indelible public part of the world, her presence to provide people with a sense of the rapidly changing lines, forms and presentations.

The boards of directors of the steamship companies kept an eye on one another in assuming national success for achieving either the most beautiful or the most massive ship. The race for the Blue Riband was but one part of the rivalry between the French, British and German companies. Other considerations included aesthetic all-over design, hull length, height from waterline to top of smokestacks, comfort of cabins, and quality of cuisine. In the case of her future flagship the French Line, seeing much of the ship's expense underwritten by the French government, desired a ship with as a showcase of national art, design and decoration, and mechanical genius lavished on her. One of the reasons for this exposure of power also was to suggest to the world that France was overcoming the dark days of the depression.



Quick sketch of T6's best possible styling features.

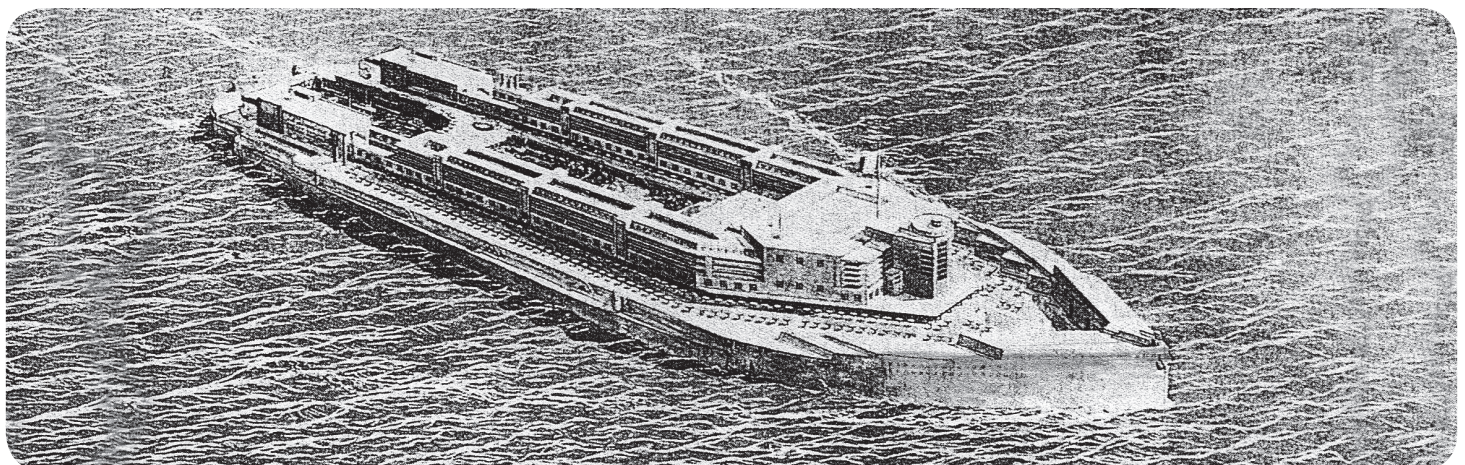


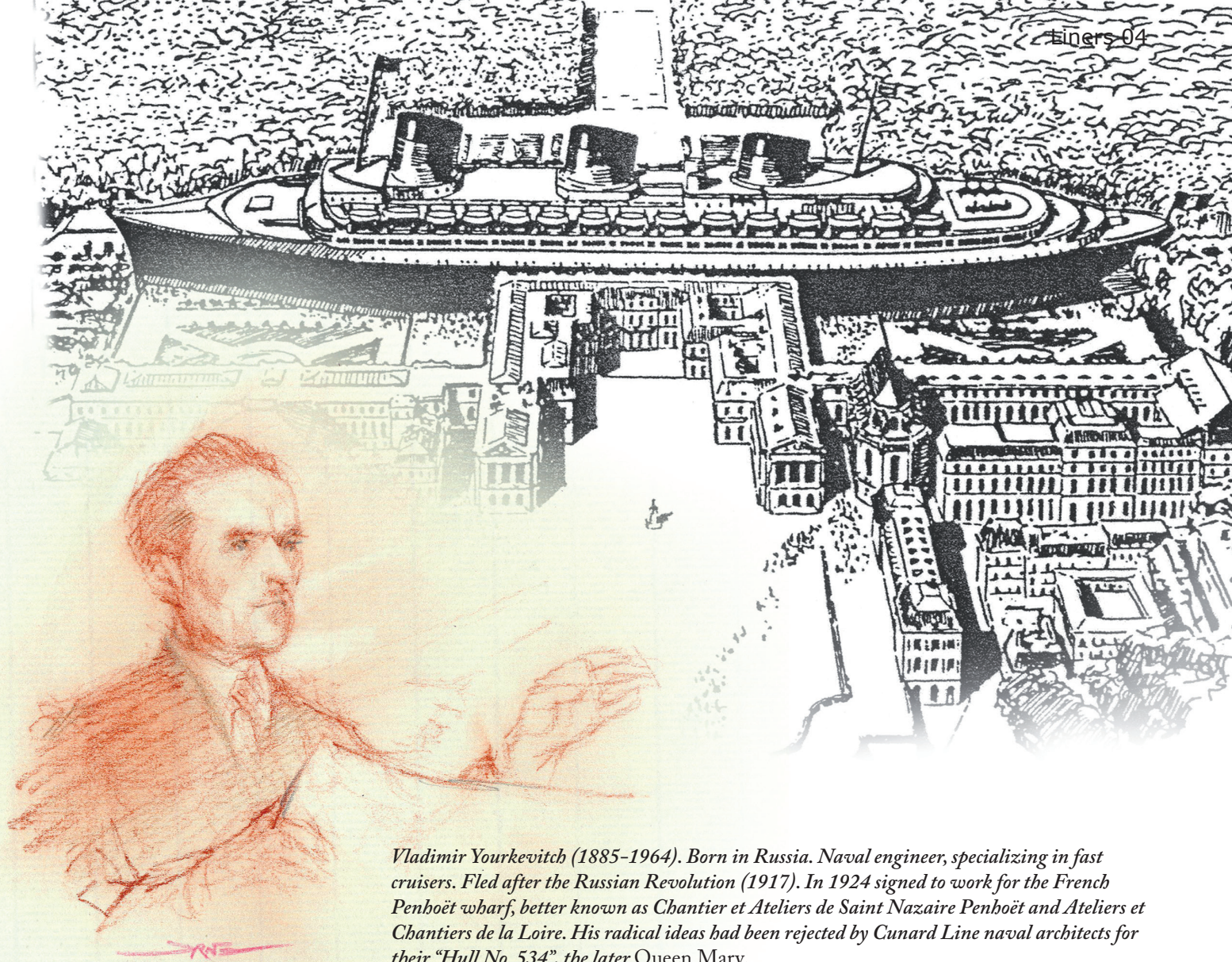
Compared to *Normandie* both future *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* looked old-fashioned. Even so *Normandie* looked old-fashioned according to some industrial designers like N. Bel Gebbes. In 1934, one year before *Normandie* entered the Atlantic ocean, Bel Gebbes publicized his passenger liner of the future as an avant-garde design. In fact his ideas were too farfetched, causing many technical impossibilities. His plans, in spite of a brilliantly drawn hull-form, have not been realised to this very day.

On this page we call his project *Norman* (Norman being Bel Gebbes' christian name). *Norman* would measure a 320 meter to *Normandie's* 313,8 m. From top to bottom (not drawn to scale):

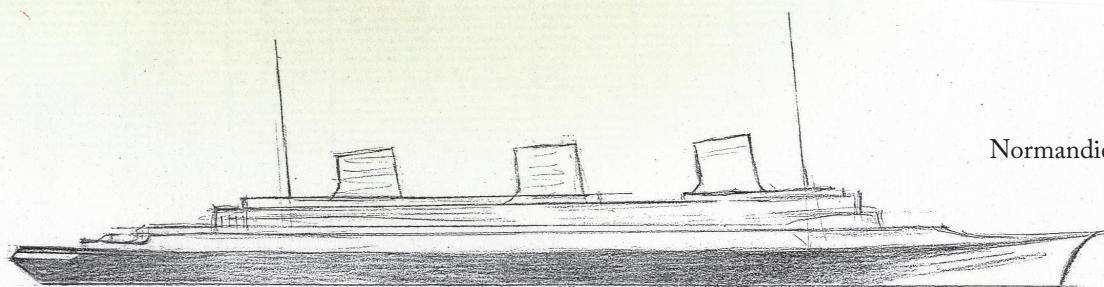
- *Europa* (1929; Norddeutscher Lloyd; 51.656tG)
- *Britannic* (1932; White Star Line; 26.943tG)
- *Rex* (1932; Italia Line; 51.062tG)
- *Washington* (1933; United States Line; 24.289tG)
- *Norman* (1934)

Below:
Floating hotelship (1929; mr. Chapcy)

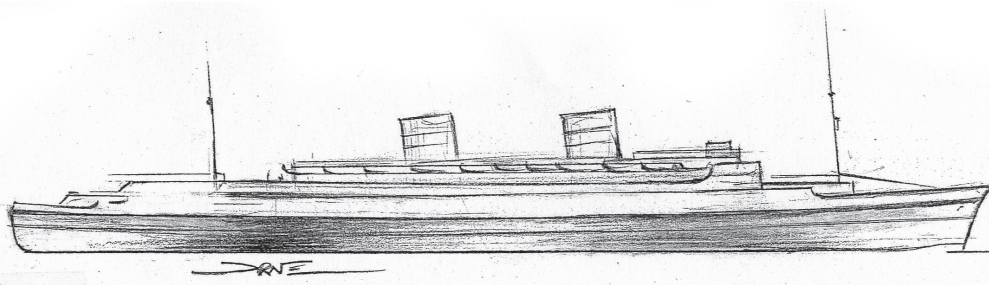




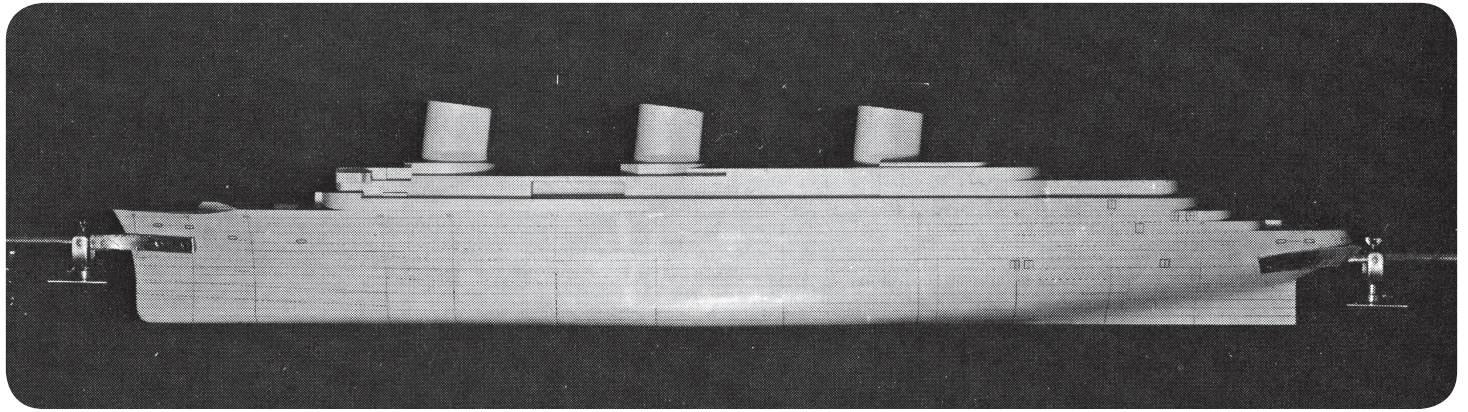
Vladimir Yourkevitch (1885–1964). Born in Russia. Naval engineer, specializing in fast cruisers. Fled after the Russian Revolution (1917). In 1924 signed to work for the French Penhoët wharf, better known as Chantier et Ateliers de Saint Nazaire Penhoët and Ateliers et Chantiers de la Loire. His radical ideas had been rejected by Cunard Line naval architects for their “Hull No. 534”, the later Queen Mary.



Normandie (1935; CGT; 83.423tG)

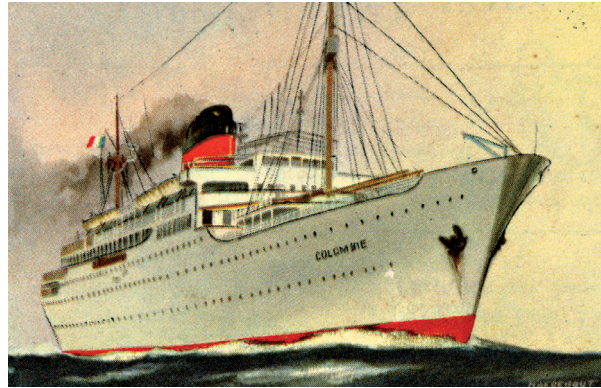


Nieuw Amsterdam, built three years after Normandie (Holland-Amerika Lijn; 36.667tG). Flagship of the Dutch nation, regarded by many to be one of the most beautiful examples ever of timeless classic modern ship-building.



DESIGN

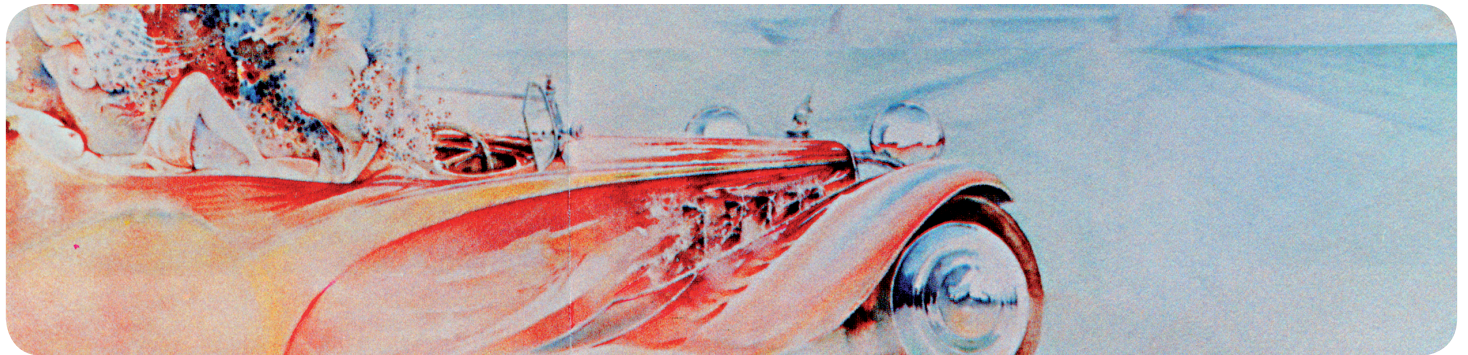
The ocean-going ship is one of man's greatest technical achievements, his means of using habitually and confidently the most dangerous of highways, which the North Atlantic route certainly is. So stern a function would seem to preclude all design considerations. Through an offshoot of apprehension the sailor identifies himself with the ship he sails in, and so must the naval architect. The degree to which a ship becomes a "living creature" may not be easily appreciated. It is a relationship for a ship of necessity to be feminine, and so beauty becomes an essential attribute of a good ship. "A ship that looks good is a good ship," is a well-known dogma for a yachtsman.



Above: Calculations and tank tests made on small models at Paris and Hamburg led to the adoption of very fine lines with a view to reducing as much as possible the water-resistance, and notably of a swelling-out in the shape of a "bulb" at the lower part of the stem, technically known as a bulbous-forefoot.

*T6 was one of the avant-garde vessels that explored gracious lines, inspired by the Art Deco style since the "Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes" at Paris, 1925. CGT's *tsst* *Colombie* (13.803tG) preceded T6. Built in 1931 by *Ateliers et Chantiers de France* she accommodated 584 passengers on the Cherbourg-West Indies run.*

(ill.: G.J. Frans Naerebout)



Streamlining and/or aqua dynamics became the rage, as shown in the Mercedes-Benz SSK sports car in the thirties (ill. A. Zuidhoek), strictly following feminine lines. Some of the overall lines in "Project T6" copied such ideas. Yurkevich created a beautiful but rather unusual hull, with a clipper bow and yet a bulbous forefoot. Forward she had a pronounced flare, but on the waterline, fore and aft, her hull was very fine while being extremely full amidships.

