

[#62]

Tillie E. Starbuck

Rig: Iron 3-masted ship

Launch: 1883

End: 1907

Built: Chester, Pennsylvania by J. Roach

Dimensions: 257' x 42.5' x 23.1'

Tonnage: 2033 tons

The United States did not actually get into iron shipbuilding late; it just started and stopped it—several times. J. Roach was well-known in maritime affairs as builder of merchant steam vessels and Navy vessels. *Tillie E. Starbuck* of 1883 was, of course, a latecomer to the iron shipbuilding business, but *Tillie E. Starbuck* was the first iron sailing vessel built in the United States—and there were not very many at that. Steel sailing vessels a decade later were almost as rare. The problem was not lack of skill nor lack of materials; it was lack of interest. The U.S. maritime after the War Between the States consisted largely of “coasting” voyages (New York to San Francisco was considered a coasting voyage and foreign flag vessels were forbidden such voyages by law) coupled with occasional offshore voyages of cargo in bulk. There was little incentive to turn the *craft* work of cutting down Maine trees or Oregon pine and whittling away anything that did not look like a ship, into the *industrial* work of building iron or steel ships with capital-invested tools and machines. Instead, capitalists of enterprise engaged in railroads, mining, and steelmaking—among other pursuits.

That being said, *Tillie E. Starbuck* was a handsome first iron sailing ship with skysails and a respectable sailing record. Sold to Welch and Company of San Francisco in 1902, *Tillie E. Starbuck* was lost off of Cape Horn in 1907.