

## BLACK POINT



S.S. Black Point

The steamship Black Point was an aging coal carrier. She was built in Camden, New Jersey in 1918 by the New York Ship Building Corporation for the Coastwise Transportation Company, Inc. in Boston, Massachusetts. She was then acquired by the U.S. Navy as a cargo transport and named U.S.S. Fairmont, where she labored for a short time as an overseas transport. She was then returned to her owners on February 1919. In 1921 she was sold to American Hawaiian Steam Ship Company and renamed The Nebraskan. In 1927 she was sold to C.H. Sprague and Son Boston Mass. and renamed The Black Point.

It was once said, by whom I don't know that it's bad luck to rename a ship. Well, whoever that person was in this case, they were right. Three names, three torpedoes, spells bad luck.

Captain Charles E. Prior, Master of The Black Point was short in stature but large in heart and spirit. I first made contact with Captain Prior through a club that chartered me to take them to the U-853. Well, don't you know that trip to the U-853 winds up in the Hartford Courant news paper. The wire service picks it up and the end result is that Captain Prior reads the article and sends a letter to the diving club, The Hartford Gillmen. They in turn forward the letter to me which reads something like this: After the sinking of my boat (The Black Point) I contacted the Navy and asked them for a piece of the sub that

sank me, all of my requests were ignored, so if you or your club has something even a nail from the deck of that sub I would certainly appreciate it.

Well, I go out to my garage and dig through some of the junk I have collected and come up with a tattered escape vest. I dust it off and send it to Captain Prior with a little note telling him what it is that I have sent him. In a few days I get a letter from the good Captain telling me that I had fulfilled a quest of his that had lasted all these years. He also said he had a son who lived in Connecticut and that the next time he goes to visit him he will make it a point to call me.

A few weeks go by and I get a phone call from Captain Prior saying that he is in the neighborhood and would like to stop by and meet me. Well, I can't tell you how excited I felt about meeting a man who was in the last battle of the Atlantic. He had his ship shot out from under him. He saved his crew and is now coming to my house to pay me a visit. It is like being in a time warp. I only read about this man, now he is coming to visit me. I consider it truly an honor to meet and talk with a man who sailed his ship during the war years knowing that at any moment his ship could be torpedoed and in this case it was.



Capt. Charles E. Prior of the Black Point



Capt. Prior pointing to where his ship was torpedoed and sunk by the U-853