

# Acania

1930

Olson Steel

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## ACANIA 1930

### History of The Motor Yacht Acania.

The Diesel yacht Acania designed by John H. Wells. For Arthur E. Wheeler of New York. She was built in 1930 at the famous New York ship builders, Consolidated Shipbuilding Corporation.

### Her Principal dimensions:

LOA	136ft 2 ½ inches
LWL	134ft 1 ½ inches
Beam	23ft 1 ¼ inches
Draft	8ft 9 ½ inches
Displacement	300 Tons

### Names Given to her over her 78 years.

Acania	27th August 1930 to 10th August 1935
Dixonia	10th August 1935 to 11th Feb 1947
Southern Seas	11th Feb 1947 to April 23 rd 1957
Liberty	Missing information
Americana	Missing information
Wild Catter	Missing information
Star Fjord	April 23rd 1995 to July 20th 2008
Returned to Acania	20th July 2008 ----- New Owner

Arthur E Wheeler was a prominent Wall Street banker, who despite the Wall Street crash of 1929, had two Acanias built. Acania I was constructed in 1929 by Pusey & Jones in Wilmington Delaware and this Acania was built in 1930. We have concluded from the short period of ownership of Acania I that Acania II may have been indeed built for the rumored silent owner, Al Capone. The rumor has persistently followed Acania II thought out her history and along with the secret bar the many hidden and disguised lockers and the unusual

coating on the water tank with out of place piping masquerading as tank vents and fill pipes give good reason maybe not to doubt the silent ownership.

From 1934 until 1947, she was owned by Charles R. Walgreen of the Walgreen pharmacy family. During the Walgreen ownership, Acania was commissioned by the USA Navy for WW II and used as a experimental submarine echo finder. She was also reportedly used on several occasions by President Roosevelt for war meetings.

In 1947, under the new owner Clifford Mooers, Acania left the USA bound for Canada, where she stayed until her return to the USA in 1957. She was not re-registered by the USCG until 1987. Little is known of her ownership between these dates. From 1988 until 1991, she was used by various charter companies on the east coast.

In 1995, Mr. Miles Davis purchased Acania in Miami from a scrap yard. Needless to say, without Mr. Davis, Acania might have been gone forever--a lost piece of maritime history. Star Fjord, as she was named during Miles Davis' ownership, spent her previous 13 years here in the Bay Area in San Francisco, the delta, Oakland and Richmond.

It was through a chance meeting with Miles Davis that Acania's current owner was able to purchase her for a long awaited restoration.

Her new owner intends to bring her back to her original layout, which will be surprisingly easy since Acania is 90% original from the 1930 build date. This is a very rare find since most vessels her age have had several refits and layout changes. The 10% of her that was changed consists of the day galley and the main galley, both of which were torn out in the 1970s. Thank goodness this was all that was changed.

Mystic Seaport museum has been fantastic in providing some 20 original black and white photos

of Acania's maiden voyage which can be viewed on this web site. ([see our photo gallery](#)). They have also researched and found a small selection of her construction drawings.

Her new owner will be re-powering and installing new systems that meet today's standards. This will include a new diesel electric propulsion system along with what we hope will be a hybrid option. Her original telegraphs will be kept as show and some of her incredible original electrical panels.

The Acania restoration crew looks forward to presenting her return to the oceans sometime in 2010 on her 80th birthday.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any information on this extraordinary motor yacht [richard@acania.net](mailto:richard@acania.net)

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## Acania - IMO 8332813

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Photo Details

**Photographer:** [Barry Graham \[View profile\]](#) **Title:** Acania **Added:** May 02, 2012  
**Captured:** April 09, 2012 **IMO:** 8332813 **Hits:** 726  
**Location:** [Seattle, United States](#)  
**Photo Category:** Ancient Motor Vessels

Description:

Acania laid up at Salmon Bay, Lake Washington Canal, Seattle. The following information about her history was obtained from the Intersea Foundation website: Acania, designed by J.H. Wells as a luxury diesel yacht, was launched in 1929. Her outfitting reflects the opulence of the 1920s. In 1931 she became the private yacht of movie actress Constance Bennett. The yacht was taken over by the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II. After the war, Acania was used by the Stanford Research Institute for upper-atmospheric research in the Central Pacific until 1971. She was then transferred to the U.S. Navy and operated as an oceanographic research vessel by the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. In 1986, Intersea Research Inc. purchased Acania for research operations in the Pacific Northwest and Southeast Alaska. To enhance her research and education capabilities, the ship was refitted with state-of-the-art electronics and her accommodations were restored to their former luxury.

Vessel Identification

  
**Name:** Acania  
**IMO:** 8332813  
**Call sign:** KIPF  
**Last known flag:** U.S.A.  
**Former name(s):**  
 - [Nelwood 11](#) (Until 1950)  
 - [Murdona](#) (Until 1932)  
 - [Nelwood II](#) (Until 1929)

Technical Data

**Vessel type:** Research/survey Vessel  
**Gross tonnage:** 246 tons

Additional Information

**Status:** Dead  
**Build year:** 1929  
**Builder\*:** Pusey & Jones  
 Wilmington De, U.s.a.  
**Owner:** -

AIS Information

**AIS information:** N/A

Ship information by [AirNav ShipTrax](#) and [GrossTonnage.com](#). [Report error in ship details.](#)

More Of This Ship



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### Photo Comments (0)

Comments sorting method : **Newest First** ▾

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ACANIA OWNERS

1929	Built for Actress Constance Bennett	
1943	USCG NELL WOOD	
1944	USCG NELL WOOD	
1945	USCG NELL WOOD	
1946	USCG NELL WOOD	
1947		
1948		
1949		
1950		
1951		
1952		
1953		
1954		
1955		
1956		
1957	Nutrilita Corporation	Newport Beach Harbor
1958	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	USN was in Hawaii
1959	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	Feb. In Jacksonville FLA
1960	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	Los Angeles CA
1961	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	Jacksonville FLA
1962	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	Los Angeles CA
1963	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	
1964	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	
1965	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	Department Of Defence Atomic Support Agency
1966	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	
1967	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	
1968	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	
1969	Stanford Research Institute Oakland	
1970	Department Of Defence Atomic Support Agency San	
1971	Department Of Defence Atomic Support Agency San	
1972	Department Of Defence Atomic Support Agency San	
1973	Department Of Defence Atomic Support Agency San	
1974	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	Department Of Defence Atomic Support Agency San Francisco
	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	10/74 Rolled over in drydock on stbd side. Caved in stbd frames: 37-
1975	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	Port damage: 29-30 39-40 43-44 44-46 49-51
1976	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	Stem modified as she is today wellah installed
1977	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	
1978	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	Deck fibreglassed metal rails aft to replace wood
1979	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	
1980	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	
1981	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	Rolling chocks bilge keels extended 4" electric heat installed new
1982	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	
1983	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	
1984	Department Of Oceanography Naval Postgrad School	
1985	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1986	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1987	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1988	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1989	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1990	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1991	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1992	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1993	Intersea Research Eridav Harbour	
1994	Norm	
1995	Norm	
1996	Norm	
1997	Norm	
1998	Norm	
1999	Norm	
2000	Norm	
2001	Norm	

Intersea Foundation, <http://www.intersea.org/accomp.html>

1987 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. ACANIA and VARUA.

\* 1988 Southeast Alaska - Contracted by Miramar Productions for feature film on our vessel and work "Third Stone from the Sun" ACANIA and VARUA.

\* 1988 Southeast Alaska - Filming of humpback whale studies for ABC's "Spirit of Adventure" with Jim Fowler for Mutual of Omaha. Contracted by American Adventure Productions. ACANIA.

\* 1988 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. VARUA.

- \* 1989 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. Chartered vessels.
- \* 1989 Bering, Beaufort and Chuckchi Sea - Geophysical survey contracted by Ocean Engineering. ACANIA.
- \* 1990 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. ACANIA.
- \* 1991 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. Chartered vessels.
- \* 1991 Kenai Coast, Prince William Sound, Aleutian Islands - Marine mammal research and survey contracted by University of Alaska. ACANIA.
- \* 1991 Gulf of Alaska to Hawaiian Islands - Drift net entrapment study contracted by National Marine Fisheries Service. ACANIA.
- \* 1991 Hawaiian Islands to Nikumaroro Island in Southern Hemisphere - Expedition to locate and recover Amelia Earhart's aircraft, contracted by The International Group for the Recovery of Ancient Aircraft, LIFE Magazine and NBC. ACANIA.
- \* 1992 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. ACANIA.
- \* 1993 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. Chartered vessels.
- \* 1994 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpbacks whales. ACANIA.
- \* 1994 Southeast Alaska - Humpback whale studies filmed by Cinema Direct for the Discovery Channel. ACANIA.
- \* 1995 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on cooperative groups, feeding ecology, behavioral characteristics, distribution and census of humpback whales. ACANIA.
- \* 1995 Southeast Alaska - Contracted by Graphic Films for feature IMAX film "The Triumph of Life". ACANIA.
- \* 1996 Southeast Alaska - Educational programs and research on feeding ecology of humpback whales. ACANIA.

"America's Two Hundred Largest Yachts," <http://powerandmotoryacht.about.com/library/weekly/november01/aa1108011.htm>

#### 151. ACANIA

126'0" 1929 Here's your chance to acquire a piece of history for \$395,000. This classic fantail motoryacht, located in the Seattle area, was once owned by silent film actress Constance Bennett. During World War II and for 40 years thereafter, the U.S. government used Acania for a variety of things, including tracking Apollo spacecraft. A private owner purchased her in the 1980s and refitted much of her interior and machinery. *B: Pusey & Jones, USA; N: J. H. Wells; H: Steel; E: unknown*



Are you an intrepid soul (with deep pockets) who could take on one of these projects? If so, you would be rewarded with a unique yacht that will turn heads wherever she goes, and offer you the satisfaction of bringing back to life a thing of beauty from a remarkable era. Each of these vessels is chronicled in Volume I of THE GOLDEN CENTURY.

#### ACANIA

This elegant, 126-foot, 1929 John H. Wells design is extensively chronicled in Volume I of THE GOLDEN CENTURY. It is hoped that an enlightened buyer can restore this Pusey & Jones-built yacht to her original splendor. Morris Rosenfeld extensively photographed her original interior; these images constitute an invaluable aid to her restoration. For information regarding the current status of ACANIA, please contact:

[http://www2.yachtworld.com/boats/view\\_result.cgi?Boat\\_ID=18541&units=Feet&Listing\\_ID=983&page=broker](http://www2.yachtworld.com/boats/view_result.cgi?Boat_ID=18541&units=Feet&Listing_ID=983&page=broker)



#### 126' Pusey & Jones, Wilmington Classic Steel Fantail

- \* Year: 1929
- \* Price: US\$ 285,000
- \* Located in Seattle, WA
- \* Hull Material: Steel

\* Engine/Fuel Type: Twin Diesel  
\* YW# 983-18541

#### [FULL SPECS.](#)

Other photos: Main Saloon, Dining Area, Typical Cabin, Fantail Stern.

Most recently used for research and other charter work, 'ACANIA' has a history as fascinating and inspiring as her looks! U.S. built as a luxury yacht with no expense spared a for Wall Street banker, she was later gifted to silent screen actress, Constance Bennett, who entertained on board until the vessel was appropriated for WWII. Construction is of riveted steel; twin 280-hp GM mains were rebuilt in 1990; 12,500 gallons fuel and 2,700 gallons water; (2) triple cabins, (5) double cabins, separate captain's quarters aft of the wheelhouse, (3) heads and (3) showers. A bit of maritime history never to be replaced, she's showing her years and needs upgrades to her accommodations and systems.

#### Additional Specs, Equipment and Information:

Builder/Designer

Builder: Pusey & Jones, Wilmington Designer: J.H. Wells

#### Dimensions

LOA: 126' Beam: 21'6 Displacement: 247 tons

Draft: 9'3

#### Engines

Engine(s): Twin diesel GM Engine(s) HP: 280-hp Engine Model: 6-110

Cruising Speed: 10 knots Max Speed: 11 knots

#### Tankage

Fuel: 12500 Water: 2700

#### Accommodations

Sleeps up to 16 belowdecks in two triple cabins and five double cabins; crew quarters include two double cabins plus separate abovedecks captain's cabin aft of the wheelhouse; 3 heads and 3 showers plus separate day head for the captain.

LAYOUT BELOWDECKS: Foc'sle is followed by storage and a MACHINE SHOP with drill press, arc welder (200 amp), oxyactylene cutting torch, and standard mechanic's tools plus electronics tools - all located to port. To starboard is a head, pantry and two double crew cabins. This area is separated from the engine room by watertight bulkheads. Aft of the engine room are the seven accommodations staterooms, and the second and third heads and showers.

MAIN DECK: Forward on the main deck is the DINING SALOON with seating for eighteen. This area is followed by the stainless steel commercial-style GALLEY, equipped with a 4-burner electric stove, griddle, (2) ovens, coffee maker, double sinks, 50-cu.ft. refrigerator and lots of cabinet and drawer storage throughout. Next aft is the FIDLEY (engine room hatch grating), followed by a 120-sq.ft. WET LAB with 60-sq.ft. of stainless steel workbench. MAIN SALOON follows, measuring 14' x 24' and featuring fireplace and beautiful white oak paneling and joinery.

BOAT DECK: WHEELHOUSE is followed by private CAPTAINS QUARTERS. BOAT DECK can carry two tenders, and four cannister-type life rafts.

#### Electronics & Navigation Equipment

- \* Furuno 1525D 96-mile radar
- \* Furuno FR 360 MkII 36-mile radar
- \* Trimble 10X GPS navigation system
- \* (2) Sailor RT-144 AC VHF radiophones
- \* Furuno 208 weatherfax
- \* Raytheon DE-731 recording fathometer
- \* Sperry SR220 Gyro (new 1991)
- \* Harris RF 230-252 SSB (fully synth.)
- \* Harris RF 3200 SSB (fully synth.)
- \* Robertson AP9 MK autopilot
- \* 7-station intercom system
- \* Speich revolving windows on bridge

#### Electrical

440/208/120vAC systems; 3-phase from (2) GM 4-71's each with 40kW generator; (1) 6-71 with 100kW generator; battery capacity - 12vDC/500 amp hours.

#### Deck

Hydraulic anchor windlass with 1000' (500' x 2) of 7/8" chain; 350# and 500# anchors; (4) 12-man Elliott inflatable liferafts; Husky Brute articulated crane (2500# with 19' reach); life vests for full party; work vests for full party; EPIRB unit; various quartz lights for decks.

#### Other Features/Notes

Construction is of riveted steel. Both engines were rebuilt in November of 1990 (engine rebuild spares included); engines are fresh water cooled.

#### Broker Remarks

ACANIA was designed by J.H. Wells as a luxury diesel yacht, commissioned by Wall Street banker, A.E. Wheeler. She was built with no expense spared by the famous Pusey and Jones yard in Wilmington, Delaware, and is considered by many to be one of the very best vessels that this venerable yard created. Shortly after her launching in 1929, the vessel was acquired by a French film director and given as a gift to silent film actress, Constance Bennett, who entertained aboard until the government appropriated the vessel for service in World War II. Operated and maintained by the United States government for the next 40 years, ACANIA served a number of different agencies in roles as diverse as tracking Apollo space craft, intelligence work, and oceanographic research. Returning to private hands in the mid 1980's, much of the vessel's interior was rejuvenated or replaced, to exacting standards, meeting or exceeding those of 1929. Her mechanical and electrical systems are modernized where desirable with such additions as electro-hydraulic drives for steering and anchor winch, etc. Her watermaking capacity, large fuel tanks, low fuel consumption, and comfortable motion at sea combine to make her a unique and able long range cruising vessel.

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