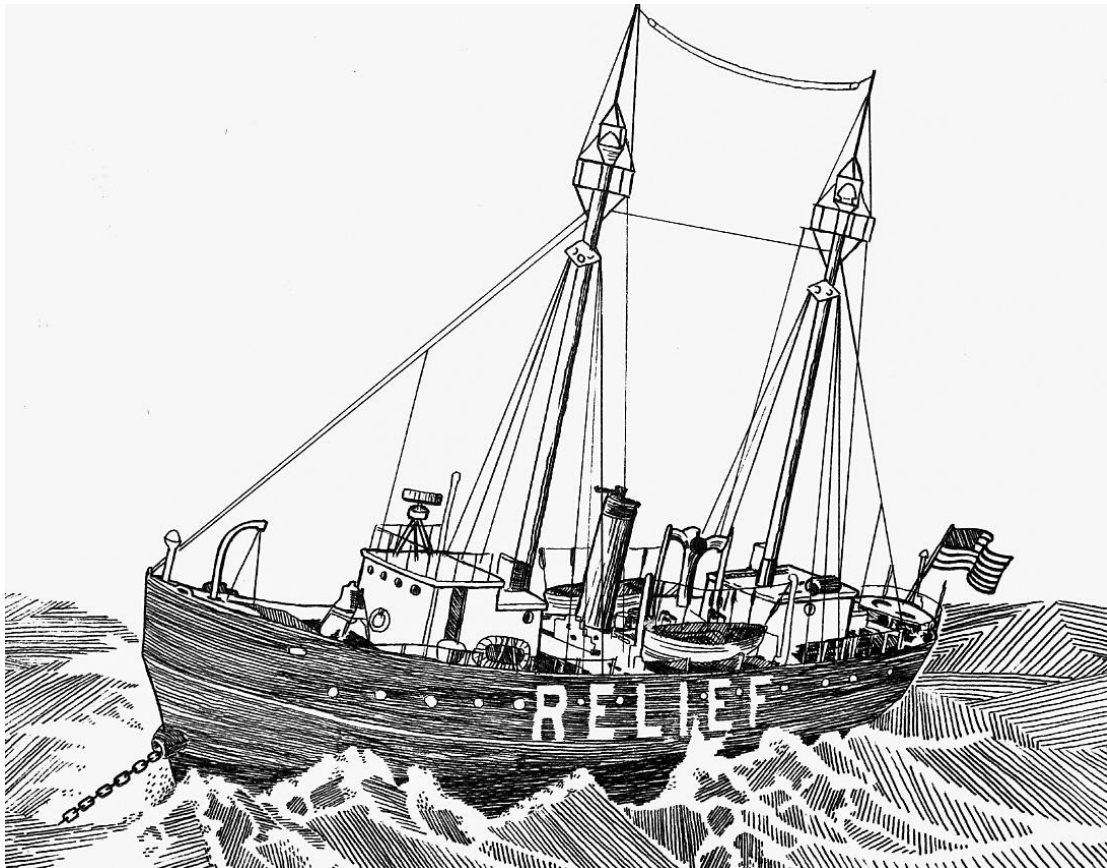


LIGHTSHIP

Memories of RELIEF Lightship

LV-78 / WAL-505 in the late 1950's



By J. F. "Jay" McCarthy

Copyright @ 2016 by J. F. "Jay" McCarthy

Uploaded for educational and research purposes only! Rights go to their respective owners.

“There are three kinds of people;

those that are alive,

those that are dead,

and those that are at sea.”

Anacharsis,

Athens 594

CONTENTS

DEDICATION

FOREWARD: American Lightships

PROLOGUE:

HISTORY and DESCRIPTION of RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505

VIEWS of RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505, 1904 - 1958.

MEMORIES: Crew and Lightship Stations relieved
RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505

PART ONE;

USCG Base St. George Staten Island, New York

PART TWO;

History of the four Lightship Stations we relieved during this time period

PART THREE;

AMBROSE Lightship Station, New York, Relieving WLW-613

PART FOUR;

SCOTLAND Lightship Station, New Jersey, Relieving LV-87 / WAL-512

PART FIVE;

CORNFIELD Point Lightship Station, Connecticut, Relieving LV-118 / WAL-539

PART SIX;

OVERFALLS Lightship Station, Delaware, Relieving WVL-605

EPILOGUE;

Final Thoughts

BONUS;

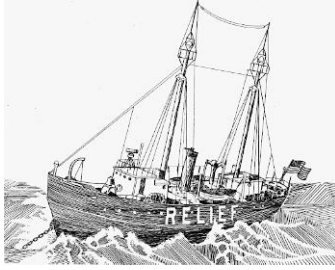
Photos and Memories;

Old RELIEF 78/505 shipmates re-unite.

Other photos and information

Old Sailor BONUS Story;

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and SOURCES



Dedication

*Lightship Sailors were a special breed of sailor who risked their lives in unimaginable danger during horrendous weather and fog to maintain the light and aids to navigation in order to keep others safe. During the days of Lightships;
The U. S. Coast Guard described Lightship Duty as their most Hazardous Duty of that Time Period.*

Lightships no longer sail the seas, but their contribution to maritime heritage is so rich that no matter where you look in the world, the mention of Lightship service brings respect and pride to those whom have been served by their unselfish dedication.

In researching this book, many have been most helpful and I thank them all for their friendship, time, effort, knowledge, wisdom and support. Special thanks go out to shipmates, friends in the USCG Lightship Sailors International Association, Inc., USCG Historians Office Also, the many USCG Veterans, for their many calls, correspondence and photos.

Of course, I can't forget my grandfather, Bartholomew "Pop" Lordan. I was very fortunate as a young boy growing up next door to my grandparent's on City Island, NY. My grandfather instilled in me a love of the sea. "Pop" had sailed around the world several times on 3 masted sailing ships out of Queenstown (Cobh), County Cork, Ireland in the late 1800's and very early 1900's. His global voyages carried him around Cape Horn several times and over the wrecks of at least eight hundred ships and the graves of over ten thousand sailors. Pop taught me my knots, how to splice and how to pack the seams between the planks of my small rowboat with oakum using a chisel and mallet to make it water tight. Above all, he taught me a respect of the sea. He passed on long before I joined the Coast Guard, but his memories stayed with me while at sea.

To the forgotten heroes who served on these little red Lightships, these all too short pages are respectfully dedicated.

SEMPER PARATUS

FOREWORD

When I started research on this book, my sole purpose was to provide a fully accurate and detailed accounting of my two years aboard the RELIEF LV-78/WAL-505. However, in my ongoing research and conversing with some in the non-nautical community, I was constantly being asked many of the same type questions;

What is a Lightship? What does a Lightship do? What kind of men sailed aboard them?

Unfortunately, a number of people are not aware of Lightships and their contributions to maritime history. I am taking a moment to add a very brief overview on Lightships.

Lightships;

The little red ships that spent more time at sea, and sailed less miles, than most ships of their era.

American Lightships

What is a LIGHTSHIP?

Between 1820 and 1983, the U.S. Government established 113 Lightship stations on three coasts and on the Great Lakes. 179 Lightships were built in the United States. In 1909, the heyday of the United States Lighthouse Service (USLHS duties were transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939), there were 51 Lightships (46 on the eastern seaboard and 5 on the Pacific Coast), on station in the United States.

The little Red Lightships were often called floating Lighthouses. They were stationed where it would not be practicable to place a Lighthouse. Some were anchored in shoal water, with soft sandy bottoms or treacherous / shifting shoals, where the sea is sure to run high, and the tossing and rolling of the round bottomed craft in rough seas makes life upon it harsh, cruel and miserable. They are almost always farther out to sea than the lighthouses, and the opportunities for the crews to get ashore to their families are correspondently fewer. The isolation these men had to cope with was intense.

In heavy storms their decks are awash, and the interiors are sometimes in shambles and wet; the flashing mast light beacon, instead of being at the top of a firm dry land based lighthouse tower, is perched on masts over which the spray flies with every wave. During long days and weeks of heavy storms there is no possible way of escaping from the ship, or of bringing supplies or mail aboard, and the crews are as shut off from the world as though being marooned on a deserted island.

Lightships were also anchored in busy shipping channels, or wherever maritime needs dictated. Fog, ice floes, collisions, severe violent storms resulting in sheer terror at times were some of the dangers Lightships and their crews faced. When the weather deteriorated and nature's fury erupted into raging mountainous seas with fierce winds that drove other ships to seek safe harbor and refuge out of harm's way, duty demanded Lightships to remain at anchor on their dangerous designated stations. For you see, as an aid to navigation, other maritime forces depended on the fixed position of the Lightships Radio Beacon, Flashing Light Beacon, and Fog Horn to help them find their way.

Lightships served in the days before Satellites and GPS. The developments of Satellite Navigation and GPS Technology signaled the end of the Lightship era.

Quite often, ships would home in on the Lightships Radio Beacon (sometimes steering directly at the Lightship) to get a “final true bearing” before heading out on their trans-oceanic voyage, or used it as a landfall on their way back to port. Often, the defenseless Lightship, anchored and incapable of avoiding a collision, paid the ultimate price for remaining in this hazardous and vulnerable position.

Among the more famous and significant United States Lightship Stations was AMBROSE Station. It was on AMBROSE Station that the 129’ USCG Lightship, RELIEF LV 78 / WAL 505 while relieving AMBROSE Lightship WLV-613, was struck and sunk as the 438’9” SS Green Bay homed in on her radio beacon in dense fog, and zero visibility on 24 June 1960.

INFORMATIVE DATA RELATED TO LIGHTSHIPS;

The Regulations of the Life-saving Service of 1899, Article VI,” section 252, page 58. This section of the Regulations remained in force after the creation of the United States Coast Guard in 1915. The USCG adopted the following in their Instruction Manual of 1934. Paragraph 28, page 4;

“The manual says you’ve got to go out; it doesn’t say anything about coming back!”

In the era from 1820 thru 1983, historical documentation shows;

Over 10 U.S. Lightships have gone out to sea and have not come back...

They were lost to storms, ice and collisions. Most famous was; Nantucket Lightship 117 was rammed and sunk by liner SS OLYMPIC with loss of 7 crewmen. Also, one was sunk by a German Submarine in 1918, another by Confederates in 1862.

Official Records show that 237 instances have been documented where Lightships were blown adrift or dragged off station by severe weather or moving ice resulting in loss of life.

Well over 55 LIGHTSHIP SAILORS have been lost at sea.

Records indicate;

Many other Lightships “suffered major damage from collisions and storms, yet managed to survive”.

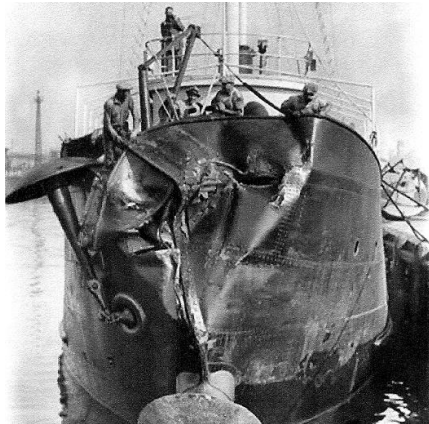
“150 serious collisions resulting in major damage occurred where LIGHTSHIPS did not sink”.

There were frequent minor bumps, side swipes and near misses...

Historical Documentation shows:

In the 25 years prior to the sinking of RELIEF 78/505 on 24 June 1960 on AMBROSE Station.

“AMBROSE Station Lightships had brushes with disasters on 3 notable occasions.”



13 September 1935, Ambrose Lightship LV 111, was rammed and damaged by the Grace Line vessel Santa Barbara.

13 January 1950, Lightship LV 111 was “brushed” in a heavy Fog by an unidentified vessel, and lost a spare anchor and suffered damage to her radio antenna in the collision.

28 March 1950 (11 weeks later), Lightship LV 111 was rammed and her hull punctured by the Grace Line vessel Santa Monica. The collision occurred in a dense fog.

AMBROSE Lightship LV 111 - 13 September 1935 New York Times photo

Bonus; LV-111 – her final days were in South America;

<http://www.uscglightsailsors.org/lightships/remaining/Status3DecommissionedUSCGLightshipstransferredtoTwoSouthAmericaCountriesUpdatedJUNE2015.pdf>

END OF AN ERA;

In 1983 the last U.S. LIGHTSHIP weighed anchor and sailed back into port and into history.

Modern maritime technology through the use of Light Towers, New Large Navigation Buoys (LNB's), Satellite Navigation and GPS aids to navigation are but some of the replacements for these great ships. Of the over 179 U.S. LIGHTSHIPS that sailed the seas, from 1820 thru 1983, only about 15 are left. Of those, about 11 or 12 (mostly in maritime Museums) stand the best chance of survival. The remainders are endangered and are in various stages of deterioration.

For more information on Lightships, here are some great United States Lightship resources;

The USCG Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc. ... (Aka LSA)

An association of Lightship Sailor Veterans and Lightship buffs who are dedicated to keeping the memories of "LIGHTSHIPS and their CREWS" history alive. The LSA is working diligently to preserve the memories of their crews, and help save these historic ships, Anyone may join the LSA. www.uscglightshipsailors.org Information and membership application available on website.

USCG Historians Office

U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters

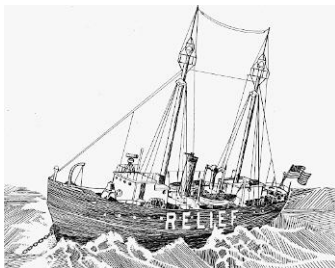
2100 Second Street SW

Washington, DC 20593

http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/Lightship_Index.asp

AUTHORS' NOTE

Note; Lightship Stations were manned by dedicated Lightships with the name of the station written in big bold white lettering on their red hulls. Periodically, these ships had to return to port for maintenance and major overhaul purposes. In their absence a RELIEF Lightship with RELIEF spelt out on her hull would take their place. The RELIEF Lightship would man the designated station for a minimum of 6 -8 weeks, sometimes longer depending on the port requirements of the station Lightship.



PROLOUGE;

When writing the book “Collision at Sea” the true life story of the collision and sinking of RELIEF Lightship WAL-78 / WAL-505 on 24 June 1960.

I heard from a number of other Lightship Sailors interested in the story. Some of whom suggested I add in, not alone my memories and photos of the ship to the book, but some of others as well.

I took all this into account and decided to keep the “Collision at Sea” story intact in its own book, with a sequel to follow to incorporate all these additional memories and photos.

The following pages contain that sequel.

For those that have read “Collision at Sea”, the pages in the beginning will be familiar, but we have to include them again for those that have not read the book yet. The pages will quickly change as we travel back in time to life aboard the RELIEF 78/505 in the late 1950’s. These pages provide future generations a feel for what life was like aboard a USCG Lightship.

After some discussion, a decision was made by myself and family, not to publish this sequel manuscript, but rather to donate it to the USCG Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc. the USCG Historians Office, the National Coast Guard Museum Association, the National Lighthouse Museum, and have it posted on their Web Sites. The LSA and USCG Historians Web Sites have become a world-wide destination source for those seeking factual, informative and first hand Lightship and Lightship Sailor History.

We will start the “Sequel” by viewing the description of the RELIEF 78/505 directly from the USCG Historians Office and then photos of her from 1904 through 1958.

Moving forward, we will first visit our memories and then travel back to our Home Port of USCG Base St. George Staten Island, NY. The base was housed on a very historical area, and we will take a quick peek at its earlier occupants, and into its current status. We will then continue on to the four Lightship Stations we relieved over this two year period, plus a bonus or two.

Enjoy,

J. F. “Jay” McCarthy

***The following historical description of RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505;
courtesy of the USCG Historians Office;***

<http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/LV78.asp>

VESSEL DESIGNATION: LV 78/ WAL 505

YEAR BUILT: 1904

BUILT AT: Camden (NJ)

APPROPRIATION: \$90,000

BUILDER: New York Shipbuilding Co

CONTRACT PRICE: \$89,030

SISTER VESSELS: LV 79, 80, 81, 83

DESIGN: Steam screw; steel hull; 2 steel masts with wood spencers; stack amidships; small wheelhouse ahead of foremast

LENGTH: 129'0" (loa); BEAM: 28'6"; DRAFT: 12'6"; TONNAGE: 668 displ

PROPULSION: Steam - one compound surface condensing engine, 16 and 31" bores x 24" stroke, 325 IHP; two fire-tube boilers 9'3" dia x 16'4" long; propeller 7'9" dia; max speed 10 knots; also rigged for sail

ILLUMINATING APPARATUS: Cluster of 3 oil lens lanterns raised to each masthead

FOG SIGNAL: 10" steam whistle; hand operated bell

CONSTRUCTION NOTES - MODIFICATIONS - EQUIPMENT CHANGES & IMPROVEMENTS:

-1905: Completed vessel delivered by contractor

-1906: Submarine bell signal installed

-1906: Wireless telegraph equipment supplied, installed and operated. by Navy

-1915: Equipped with 375mm acetylene lens lanterns mounted at each masthead

-1917: Radio equipment provided and installed by Lighthouse Service

-1919: Steam siren added (original 10" whistle retained)

-1922: Radio-beacon installed

-1926: Illuminating apparatus converted to electric operation

-1934/35: Repowered with 600 HP GM geared diesel, 7' dia propeller, max speed 8 knots; auxiliary systems converted from steam to diesel

-1945: Fitted with search radar

-1954: Listed with 2 500mm lens lanterns, 15,000cp; air diaphragm horn (Leslie 17" typhon) and AN/SPN-11 radar.

-Radio and visual call sign NNGT (1940-1960)

STATION ASSIGNMENTS:

1905-1942: Relief (3d District)

1942-1945: Examination Vessel, WWII

1945-1947: Scotland (NJ)

1947-1960: Relief (3d District)

(1942-1945: Based at Staten Island; used as examination vessel in 1st and 3d Coast Guard Districts, no armament provided)

HISTORICAL NOTES:

-1905: Mar 2, delivered by contractor to Staten Island Depot; fitted out and supplied.

-1905: May 4-25, relieved Cornfield Point; May 27-Jul 5, relieved Brenton Reef; Aug 1-Sep 16, relieved Fire Island; Sep 16-Oct 4, relieved Scotland; Oct 9-28, relieved Brenton Reef.

-1906: Wireless telegraph equipment supplied, installed and operated by Navy Dept; submarine bell signal also installed same year.

-1906: Apr 16-May 23, relieved Overfalls (DE); Jun 9-Jul 25, relieved Sandy Hook; Jul 30-Aug 28, relieved Fire island; Oct 10-Nov 14, relieved Cornfield Point; Nov 21-Jan 2, 1907, relieved Nantucket Shoals.

-1907: Apr 1-Jul 11, relieved Fire Island.

-1913: Jan, while relieving Cape Lookout, parted chain and adrift; regained station using spare anchor.

-1913: Jul, while attempting to transfer mail to passing steamer CITY OF ATLANTA, the 5 lightship crewmen manning the whaleboat were drowned when run down by the steamer.

-1915: Apr, equipped with two 375mm acetylene lens lanterns, with clock and cam controller in engine room which in turn applied battery power to a solenoid gas valve in the lantern at each masthead. This arrangement allowed setting any flash characteristic on either or both lanterns; as necessary to relieve any station in the District.

-1960: Jun 24, while relieving Ambrose Channel station, was rammed and sunk by SS GREEN BAY.

RETIRED FROM LIGHTSHIP DUTY: 1960; AGE: 56

SUBSEQUENT DISPOSITION:

1960: Jun 24, while relieving Ambrose Channel station; rammed and sunk on station by steamer GREEN BAY.

COMMANDING OFFICERS: LV 78 / WAL 505

1914-1918: Sidney Ellis, Master

?-1914: Frank Tilghman, Mate

1918-?: Harry Hansen, Master

1919-1920: Hans Swensen, Mate

1920-?: Peter M Lied, Mate

1954-?: BMC Maxwell Fulcher, OIC

(?)1957-1958: CWO2 (BOSN) W.A. Wicks, CO; BMC Maxwell Fulcher, XO (to 1957)

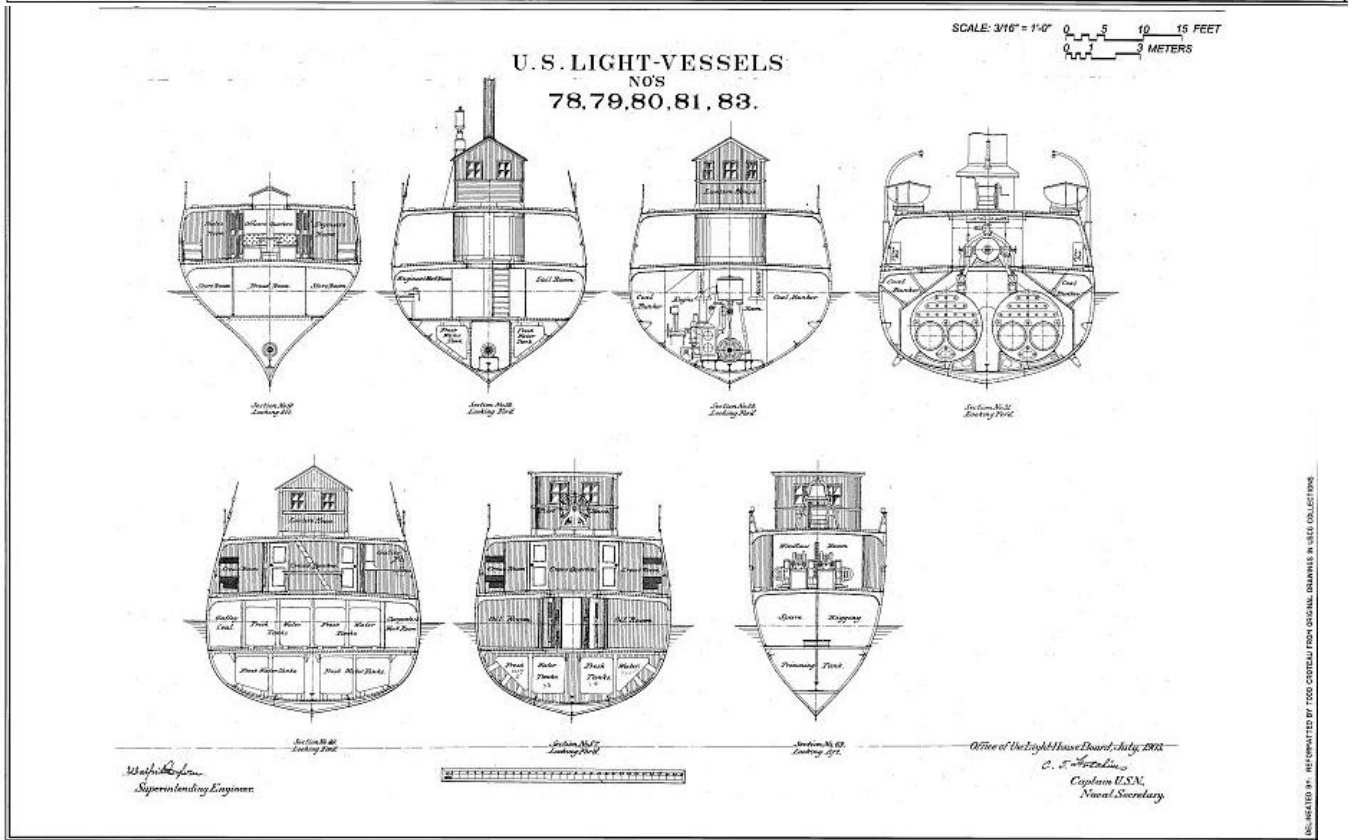
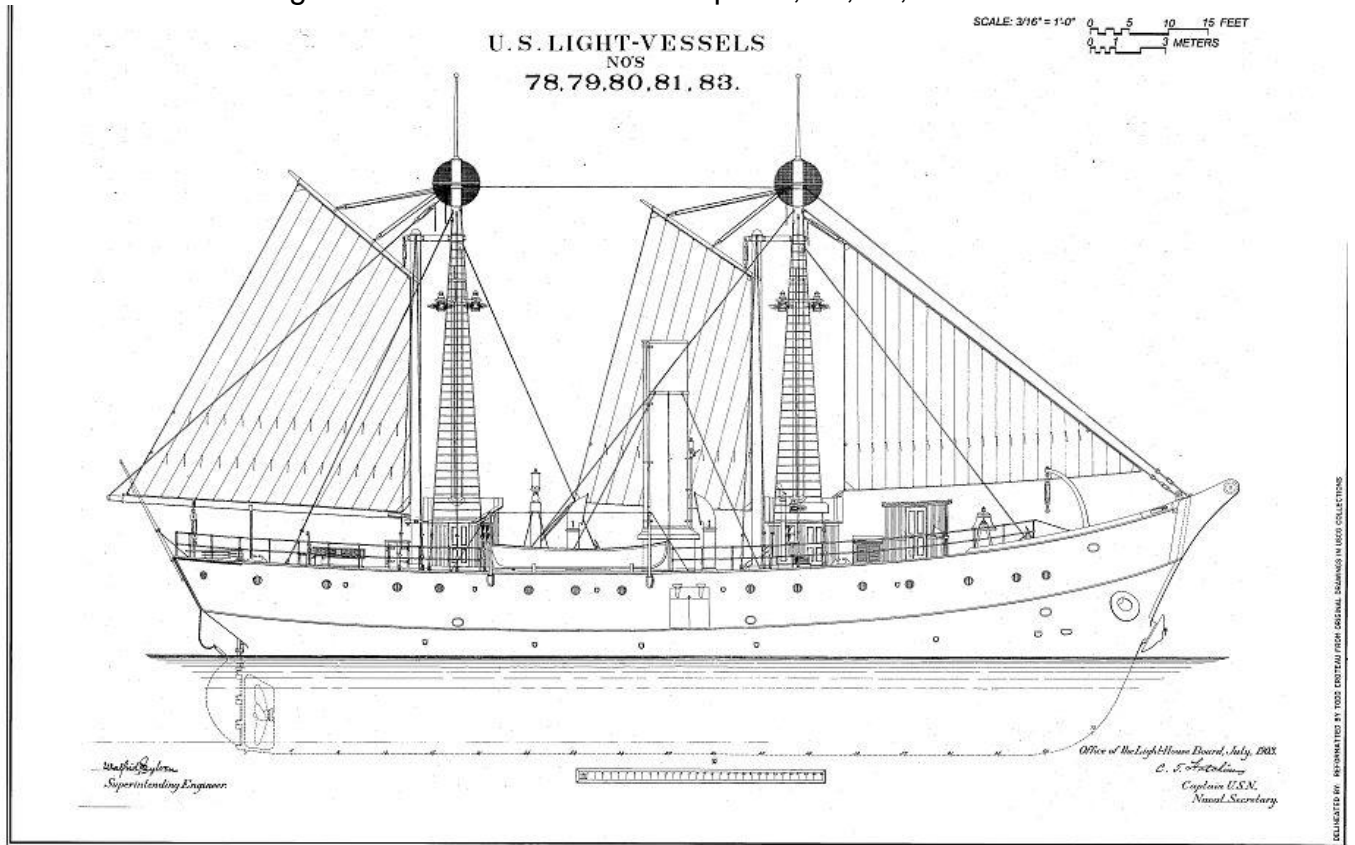
1958-1959(?): CWO1 (BOSN) G.R. Brower; BMC Louis C. Carter, XO (1957-1959?)

1959-1960: CWO1 (BOSN) Joseph Young; BMC Joseph E. Tamalonis, XO (was OIC on the night of the collision as Young was on leave.)

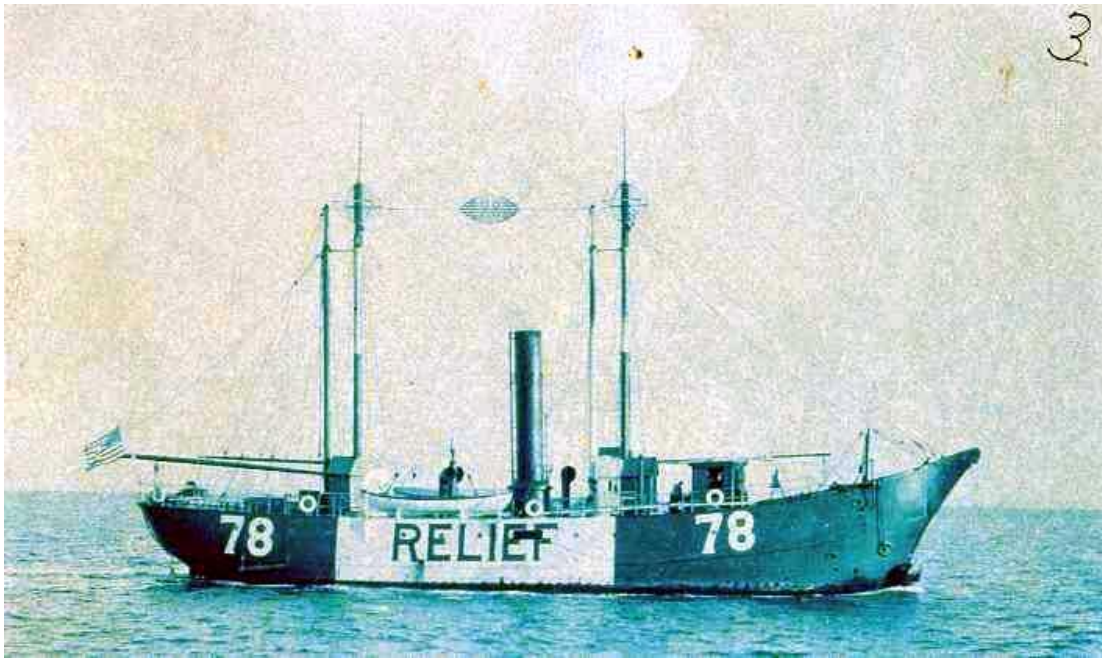
VIEWS of RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505

*The following pages contain some views of
RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505 from her early pre-construction
1904 drawings, to the last official USCG photo taken in 1958.*

Pre-construction drawings for LV 78 and her sister ships 79, 80, 81, and 83 built in 1904.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



RELIEF LV-78, undated photo circa 1910 - U.S. Lighthouse Service photo

She was Steam screw; steel hull; 2 steel masts with wood Spencer's for sails; stack amidships; small wheelhouse ahead of foremast. Wooden decks and housing, most of the interior 02 deck was also wood. LV-78 started her career as a steam (coal burner) powered ship; max. speed 10 knots. At the time she was launched in 1904, sail was still the most popular and dependable source of power.



RELIEF LV-78, 14 July 1936 - U.S. Lighthouse Service photo

Moored at USLHS Depot St. George Staten Island, NY

Note: The 2 extra masts have been removed, her bow has been straightened, and she also has new deck housing. She had been repowered in 1934/35 with a 600 HP GM geared diesel, 7" diameter propeller, max speed 8 knots; auxiliary system converted from steam to diesel. It is probable that the above physical changes were made during this 1934/35 time frame. The open hatch on her port side had been used for bringing coal and supplies aboard.



RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505 anchored on unidentified Lightship Station circa 1955

USCG photo taken from a Navy Blimp.

Note; skiff just aft of motor life (whale) boat starboard side. By the time I came aboard in 1957. The hatches on both sides had been welded shut for safety purposes, and the skiff and its davits were gone.



RELIEF WAL-505 photo 1958 USCG Official Photo, no #

Anchored on Ambrose Station, taken in same time period as next photo.



RELIEF WAL-505 photo 1958 USCG Official Photo # 3CGD-021253-603
Taken from twin engine USCG plane, while anchored on Ambrose Station, New York
Watching are the 3 men on deck, Ray D'urbano, Bud Fairfull and Jay McCarthy

MEMORIES;

Crew and Lightship Stations relieved; April 1957 through April 1959

Authors' note; While doing research for this book, I stopped at the National Archives in Washington, DC. I requested the "Original Deck Logs" for the Relief 78/505 covering the time period from April 1957 through April 1959. The time I had spent aboard the ship. What I received were the "Original Deck Logs" covering the time period from January 1957 through December 1958. No later deck logs were available, and one can only guess that they were still aboard the ship, and were lost when the ship was sunk on 24 June 1960. I copied some of the logs and made notes from the others.

During my two years aboard the Relief 78/505, I took over 100 photos. After developing, I would record the scene on the back of the photo. Around 1960, I purchased a photo album and took what I had previously recorded on the back of the photos, added my memories and placed that information alongside the photo in the album.

I utilized the two above sources to assist in recording my memories.

The "Original Deck Logs" and my photo album with notes were my two main sources of dates, times, locations, names and activities. Without those "memory jogger" notes, there is no way I could remember all the many facts from over 50 years ago. Now, keep in mind, my memories may not be perfect, but it's the best I can do, over a half century later.



Color photo taken during the 16 February – 31 March, 1959
Time period on OVERFALLS Lightship Station.
From the collection of Jay McCarthy

U.S.C.G. RELIEF LIGHTSHIP LV-78 / WAL-505

Year Built 1904 ... Sunk 24 June 1960

CREW LIST

During My Time Aboard, from 26 APRIL 1957 thru 23 APRIL 1959

By James F. "Jay" McCarthy

CREW LIST:

OinC:

WICKS, B. A. CHBOSN, W-2 *Crossed Over the Bar*
Relieved on 19 MARCH 1958 by ...

BROWER, G. R. CHBOSN, W-1

XO:

FULCHER, Maxwell BMC *Crossed Over the Bar*
Relieved on 17 JULY 1957 by ...

CARTER, Louis, C. BMCM *Crossed Over the Bar*

THRUSH, Raymond, L. ENC *Crossed Over the Bar*

BURBAGE, Edmund, L. (Lee) BM1 *Crossed Over the Bar, 29 January 2009*

MITCHELL, Nolan D. EN1

FIFE, Wilbert SD1 (Temporary Duty)

BAGLIO, Frank F.

BOGARDUS, D.F.

BOISMENU, R.T.

BROWN, Edward J. (Ed)

DALOMBA, Virgilio

D'URBANO, Raymond, F. (Ray)

FAIRFULL, Ralph E. (Bud) *Crossed Over the Bar 2000*

FITERMAN, David T. (Dave)

FLORES, J.A.

GROBER, Stanley G.

HARDWICK, Clayton M.

KUHN, Blaine I.

McCARTHY, James F. (Jay)

McFARLAND, Harold E.

PIERCE, Bobbie R.

QUAIL, Robert W. (Bob)

QUINN, Edwin

ROBLES, Jose

SMITH, J.P

SULLIVAN, Charles D. (Sully)

WILSON, G.L.

Many of the above crew came and went during my time aboard. Not all ratings are shown, or current, as ratings changes were constant. Some ratings changed even as I left the ship.

The above list is noted to the best of my research and recollection. I might have missed some names. If I did, I apologize. Whenever I became aware of a crewman's passing, I noted it.

Quite often, while berthed at Base St. George, we would take aboard Base personnel on a temporary basis while some of the regular crew took leave time. Worked out good for us, and worked out good for the base. As a number of these men were awaiting orders for their next duty station or school, it provided the base with a place to temporarily assign these men,

STATIONS RELIEVED:

By U.S.C.G. RELIEF LIGHTSHIP LV-78 / WAL-505

26 APRIL 1957 ... I Reported aboard RELIEF Lightship LV 78 / WAL 505, at U. S. Coast Guard Base St. George, Staten Island, New York. The ship had just returned a week earlier, from relieving CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station off Old Saybrook, Connecticut.

DATES:

04-30-57 thru 06-08-57
06-08-57 thru 06-16-57
06-16-57 thru 07-27-57
07-27-57 thru 08-20-57
08-20-57 thru 08-30-57
08-30-57 thru 10-12-57
10-12-57 thru 11-27-57
11-27-57 thru 12-07-57
12-07-57 thru **01-19-58**
01-19-58 thru 01-27-58
01-27-58 thru 03-13-58
03-13-58 thru 04-29-58

04-29-58 thru 06-08-58
06-08-58 thru 06-14-58
06-14-58 thru 07-26-58
07-26-58 thru 11-29-58
11-29-58 thru **01-10-59**

Above "STATIONS" Assignments were obtained from researching the "Original Deck Logs" filed at the National Archives, Washington, DC on 8 August 2002... NO "LOGS" dated later than those listed above were available. We can only presume they went down with the ship, when she was Rammed and Sunk on AMBROSE Channel Lightship Station, 24 JUNE 1960.

The following are from my recollections:

01-10-59 thru 02-16-59 Base St. George, SINY
02-16-59 thru 03-31-59 **OVERFALLS** Lightship Station... Lewes, DE.
03-31-59 thru 04-23-59 Base St. George, SINY

23 APRIL, 1959 ... I Departed RELIEF Lightship LV 78 / WAL 505 on Berth "S", at Coast Guard Base St. George, SINY and was assigned to the In-Active USCG Reserve Status.

Current Status (2016) of the Lightships that were on the Stations we Relieved during this time period:

<u>LIGHTSHIP #</u>	<u>STATION NAME</u>	<u>CURRENT STATUS</u>
WLV 613	AMBROSE (NY)	Re-named, NANTUCKET (II) Privately owned, by Bill Golden owner of WLV-612 in MA.
LV 87 / WAL 512	SCOTLAND (NJ)	Re-named, AMBROSE. Acquired 1968, by The South Street Seaport, NYC... on Exhibit,
LV 118 / WAL 539	CORNFIELD (CT.)	Re-named, OVERFALLS. Owned by OVERFALLS Foundation, Lewes, DE... on Exhibit
LV 605	OVERFALLS (DE.)	Re-named, RELIEF. Owned by the U.S. Lighthouse Society, San Francisco, CA... on Exhibit

Please click on <http://www.uscglightsailsors.org/lightships/remaining/STATUS-15USCGLightshipsRemainingUpdatedJUNE2015.pdf>

USCG Lightship RELIEF 78/505 and other photos and memories;

In the following pages I hope to share memories and photos from the time frame of the late 1950's. I would like to take a moment and share with you my introduction into the US Coast Guard and then later share my memories while serving aboard the RELIEF 78/505 for two years from 26 April 1957 thru 23 April 1959, with antidotes and photos from my collection;

We will focus on CG BASE St. GEORGE, and AMBROSE, SCOTLAND, CORNFIELD and OVERFALLS Lightship Stations.

Not alone will I be using memories and photos from my collection, I will be utilizing the memories and photos contributed by others.

I will briefly start with the author's introduction to the US Coast Guard and then move on to the memories and photos of the RELIEF 78/505. This section provides a unique glimpse into life aboard a US Coast Guard Lightship in the late 1950's. Since the RELIEF 78/505 is now sitting approximately 110' below the Atlantic Ocean's surface of the old AMBROSE Lightship Station location, and all other USCG Lightships are no longer on active service, these pages will provide future generations a view of what a Lightship was, and what life was like aboard a USCG Lightship.

Introduction;

In my senior year of high school, my next door neighbor on City Island, NY was Jack Hartigan. Jack was on active duty with the USCG and was assigned to the Sandy Hook, NJ Life Boat Station. While home on leave, Jack recruited me into the USCG Reserve.

Active Reserve;

24 February 1955, at age seventeen;

I was assigned to the Organized Reserve Training Unit Port Security (ORTUPS) 03-408 in New Rochelle, NY. Each Friday evening, we had training, drills, and ongoing instructions on all matters concerning a USCGR Port Security Unit. I went through boot camp at Cape May, NJ in the summer of 1955 and two weeks of summer training in 1956 at Groton, CT.

In June of 1956 I was hired into the Bell System, working as an installer of telephone Switching Equipment at New York Telephone Company Central Offices in NYC and the surrounding area for the Western Electric Company (AT&T), and taking college courses at night.

During this time the draft was still in effect, and the USCG required an eight year military commitment. Two years of active reserve duty, two years of active duty and four years of inactive reserve. For those that enlisted for four years of active duty, they then had four years of inactive reserve remaining.

By the spring of 1957, after two years of active reserve duty, I decided to take a Military Leave of Absence from AT&T in order to fulfill my two year commitment of active duty.

Active Duty;

23 April 1957, Tuesday; at age nineteen;

My active duty orders had me report to US Coast Guard Base St. George Staten Island, NY. Over the next few days, I was temporarily assigned to the base while my orders were being processed.

My naive thoughts were that since I was in a Reserve Port Security Unit, I would naturally be assigned to Port Security Duties somewhere. The officer that greeted me and received my orders obviously (along with the USCG) had a different plan.

26 April 1957, Friday;

That same officer that had greeted me on Wednesday now gave me my new orders.

At 1300 today I was to go down to Berth "S" and report aboard the RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505 for "Sea Duty". Being from New York, I had heard of, and was familiar with the name AMBROSE Lightship, but I had never seen a Lightship and wasn't too sure what they did.

In addition to that, "I was going to sea". *I was stunned!!*

I shared with the officer that I was not sure what a Lightship was, or what it did? He took me outside the Administration building and pointed down to Berth "S". He said; "see that red ship tied to the pier with the white lettering RELIEF on her side? That's a Lightship! It's like a lighthouse, only it floats and is anchored in one assigned location. That's your new home!"



Report aboard RELIEF 78/505;

26 April 1957, at 1300, I reported aboard the RELIEF 78/505 for duty.

Maxwell Fulcher, a seasoned old school Chief Boatswain's Mate, and Executive Officer, only three months away from retirement, met me at the gangway, took me down below and assigned me a rack and told me where I could stow my sea bag.

Chief Fulcher then took me aft to the Ward Room to meet the skipper, B. A. Wicks, CHBOSN, W-1.

Mr. Wicks gave a short welcome aboard talk, told me the ship was sailing early next week to relieve AMBROSE Lightship Station. Mr. Wicks then issued me a “Liberty Pass” and said I was going on “Compensatory Leave” immediately. I later learned that since there was no liberty on station, we earned compensatory time off. I was given 4 days immediately, to fit in with the crew scheduling.

ARMED FORCES LIBERTY PASS	SERVICE USCG	DATE ISSUED 4-26-57
LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL MC CARTHY, James F.		CARD NO. 4
SERVICE NO. 2045-837	GRADE—RATE SA-2N - BM3	
ORGANIZATION—INSTALLATION—BASE RELIEF LIGHTSHIP (WAL-505)		
TIME LIMITS Watchstander		
SIGNATURE AND GRADE OF ISSUING OFFICER B.A. WICKS BOSN W-1 OinC		

DD FORM 345 1 Apr 50 REPLACES WD AGO FORMS 7 AND 8, NAV PERS FORM 507
GPO 16-49231-1 AND CG FORMS 2512 AND 2782 WHICH MAY BE USED.

I was told to report back to Base St. George at 0730, Wednesday morning 01 May 1957, and to report aboard the 180' Buoy Tender, CGC FIREBUSH (WAGL-393). The FIREBUSH will provide transportation for you and other RELIEF crew members returning from compensatory leave, she also will bring supplies and fresh water and fuel out to the RELIEF Lightship.

First impressions;

Chief Fulcher seemed to growl when he spoke and didn't seem pleased that he was being stuck with another “Reservist”. I got an uneasy feeling that I was in for a tough time over the next three months. Mr. Wicks on the other hand, spoke in a nice manner, seemed sincere in welcoming me aboard and impressed me from our brief meeting as being fair, but left no doubt that he was the Captain.

Out Bound Voyage to Station

*“The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.”*

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner – Part One
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798

Outward Bound - 1st. trip out to Station;

0730, 1 May 1957, Wednesday;

I reported aboard the CGC FIREBUSH (WAGL-393), met a couple of the returning RELIEF crew, and sat down for the long 2 ½ - 3 ½ hour trip out to AMBROSE Station.

As we traveled through the narrows and into Lower New York Bay, the seas were calm, but as we traveled farther east in Ambrose Channel heading out to sea, I noticed the winds and seas picking up. By the time we got out to the RELIEF, we had about 6 foot seas. The crew of the FIREBUSH was not happy, and kept grumbling that Lightship Sailors were a bunch of liars when reporting sea conditions to the buoy tender before she left port. At the time I had no idea what they were talking about. Later I learned, if you radioed in a true sea conditions report when it was just a little rough, then the buoy tender might not come out, you might miss your leave time, fresh food and mail. So, we fudged it a bit. Of course, if it was really so rough that it was dangerous, we would radio in an accurate sea conditions report.



180' Buoy Tender, CGC FIREBUSH (WAGL-393) underway
USCG Official Photo

A wet welcome aboard...

When we finally reached the Ambrose Lightship Station and after the FIREBUSH tied off astern of the Lightship, she passed over a water hose and started pumping fresh water onto the RELIEF 78/505. I had seen pictures of ships being resupplied at sea. But, this was a scene I had never personally seen before.

A 26' motor whale boat from the RELIEF came alongside, discharged the crew going on leave and the outgoing mail. The incoming mail bag, groceries and whatever other supplies, were loaded aboard. We donned the life jackets from the men that had just come over, and then we boarded the small boat. At this point, I realized that I was the only one still dressed in my uniform and pea coat. Everyone else had changed into work clothes and stored their uniforms safely away from the crashing waves.

The man standing at the tiller in the stern was Lee Burbage Boatswain's Mate 1st. Class. He was barking out orders and everyone complied for it was going to be a wet and dangerous trip back to the Lightship.

It was my first journey in an open small boat this far out to sea, to say that I was scared and in awe of everything going on would be an understatement. We received a constant sea spray on our faces and at various times waves would break over the rails. The bilge pump would kick on and off dependent on the amount of sea water taken aboard. With the good steady hand and seamanship of Lee Burbage, we came up alongside the RELIEF. At times, the rollers were so high they would take us up to a height almost equal with the deck of the ship.

Burbage said; "the small boat was too heavy in these seas, so we have to lessen the load before she can be hauled safely aboard." He ordered all but the man in the bow and the engineman to go up the Jacobs ladder. By this time a Jacobs's ladder had been placed over the side of the Lightship, and Burbage yelled; "McCarthy, when we ride up on the next wave, you jump onto the rung of the ladder and scamper up that ladder as fast as you can." Keep in mind, my brain by now was like scrambled eggs, I had never gone through an ordeal like this before. Now I'm being ordered to jump onto a Jacobs's ladder and hustle up onto the deck. I had heard of and seen pictures of Jacobs's ladders. I knew their purpose, but I had never actually seen one, much less climb one in rough seas.

Burbage yelled for me to jump, I did, I landed on a step and was so grateful that I didn't fall into the sea that I held on for dear life rather than immediately climbing up the ladder. Of course Burbage was shouting at me to move, but it was too late, the next wave rolled in and soaked me up to my thighs. Got my dress shoes, my dress blues and the bottom of my pea coat soaking wet. I scampered up the ladder and crawled onto the deck. Needless to say I received a very loud and not so warm welcome from BMC Maxwell Fulcher who screamed at me and told me how useless I was and wouldn't be of any help to him. By the time Burbage got the small boat aboard and secured, he realized I had, had a hard enough time, and just said; **"Welcome aboard the RELIEF Lightship 505 at sea"**.

This was my introduction to Lightship Sea Duty!

Authors note; Shown below is a photo of that same 26' motor whale boat in the above narrative 1 ½ years later, December 1958, and ready to pull away from the ship for weekly transfer to Buoy Tender.



In the bow is Bobbie Pierce, sitting on engine cover is G.R. Brower, CHBOSN W-1, our Captain, and in the stern, J. F. "Jay" McCarthy, (author) handling the tiller and engine throttle

Continuing Memories' of Jay McCarthy...

As I search back through long ago memories aboard ship, I think of the good times, the not so good times and also the moments of sheer terror. How do I convey my memories to the reader without letting the bad override the good? I pondered this dilemma, and then I thought about a book I read recently, and a quote from that book;

“Memories- shrouded in a wistful veil of time that made them bittersweet rather than painful-began to surface”. Cemetery Dance by Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child

“Memories-began to surface”, indeed they did;

I began by recalling life aboard the RELIEF Lightship 78/505 and decided to start with my reporting aboard at the age of nineteen. In the previous pages, I have shared this portion of my story with you. I would now like to continue on with my memories by including photos from my personal collection and adding antidotes.

As with all Lightships, we had our days of storms, interspersed with calm seas, winter snow, ice floes, fog, intense isolation, boredom, and the occasional moments of sheer terror.

At the time, she might have been an older ship, but she still was a dependable and sturdy ship. Riding out Nor'easters was always an adventure and could last for days, with huge raging seas, sometimes well over 30, 40+ feet, burying the bow, and the deck awash with boarding seas, then washing down the deck towards the stern as the bow lifted again before being buried by the next wave. One could hear and feel the anchor chain riding up and down and causing strain on the anchor chain pawl. The procedure would repeat itself over and over again. On the first day, everyone would continue to eat, and the cook would place a dampened table cloth on the mess deck table, to keep plates and food from sliding off. As the days of the storm continued, fewer crewmen would be taking their meals, and would switch to apples and saltines. I don't care what anybody says, if the storm was violent enough and lasted long enough, almost no one was exempt from being sea sick. Along each side of the 02 deck was an open trough, in which sea water (leaking in through the anchor chain hawse pipe) would run along and drain out the scuppers in the stern area. It always was a strange feeling to be lying in your bunk (holding on so you wouldn't be tossed off your bunk by the violent action of the waves) and watch the sea water traveling by below you in the trough.

Eventually, the seas would calm, winds would blow themselves out, and once more we would be treated to another incredibly beautiful sunrise or sunset.

On the RELIEF 78/505 we had a crew of 16. The Captain, was a Chief Warrant Officer-1, the Executive Officer, was a Boatswain's Mate Chief, and the Engineering Officer, was an Engineman Chief. In addition we had 13 enlisted ratings.

At night only 2 men were on duty; the Deck Watch Stander and the Engine Room Watch Stander.

When I came aboard;

The Captain was, B.A. Wicks CWO-1, later relieved by George R. Brower CWO-1.

The Executive Officer was, Maxwell Fulcher BMC, later relieved by Louis C. Carter BMC.

The Engineering Officer was, Raymond L. Thrush ENC, Chief Thrush was still aboard when I left the RELIEF in April of 1959.

The Wheelhouse (Bridge); was the hub of operations for everything aboard ship, except the engine room. The deck watch stander, stood watch here and was responsible for maintaining the log on which anything of any importance was noted. He monitored the radio and maintained communication with the outside world via incoming /outgoing messages including sending weather reports of air/sea



Wheel House with Radio & Log Station.
Note, tongue & groove planking

conditions, temperatures, cloud formations and visibility every 4 hours. The deck watch stander handled all of this, plus monitored the radar and radio beacon. He was also the lookout.

In May of 1957 on Ambrose station, I was standing the 2000 to 2400 watch when the out bound Ocean Liner “Stockholm”, came so close to us for a final fix before crossing the Atlantic for Europe, I was able to look in the stateroom portholes and see the passengers. I thought she was going to collide with us, and sounded the general alarm. The “Stockholm” had sunk the Ocean Liner “Andrea Doria” the year before, and that was fresh on our minds. The wake of the liner rocked us back and forth for quite some time afterwards.

Winter mid Watch;

I was never as cold as standing a “winter mid-watch” (midnight to 0400) in the wheelhouse. The wheelhouse was a wood frame structure, made with a single tongue and groove plank type construction. With one side of the plank on the exterior, and the other on the interior of the bulkhead.

There was NO insulation.

There was a very narrow radiator running horizontally about 2 feet below the port holes providing very minimal heat. The freezing winter wind blowing across the open sea was only slightly abated as it penetrated the wooden bulkhead, and the watch stander would stand pressed against the radiator to gather whatever little heat was available.

Whenever I think I’m cold, I just have to think back to those long cold nights aboard the RELIEF on the “winter mid watch” to remind myself that I’ve been colder.



Note; Radiator on bulkhead
Photos; Jay McCarthy collection

Authors’ note;

The wooden mahogany ships wheel depicted in the above photos was about four foot high and was original to the ship. Since the RELIEF was built in 1904 with a lot of “sailing” characteristics, it would stand to reason that she would have a sailing ship type wheel. While standing watches during vicious Nor’easters in the Wheel House, I would wrap my arms around the spokes of the wheel to help me maintain my balance. Since we did not have a steel breakwater on the foredeck to divert boarding seas before they slammed into the wooden Wheel House, I often would pray that a rogue wave would not wash the Wheel House away. While the ship lay at anchor on station, the wheel and rudder quadrant were “dogged” down (secured) to prevent them from turning. The Binnacle stand containing the compass was behind the wheel to the left also was made of mahogany.

Daily Routine;

Quite often, duty on a Lightship followed a daily routine that for the most part was as normal as anybody working on their regular job ashore. The difference came when we experienced time frames of sheer terror and deadly hazards.

The crew was broken up into three groups that worked exceptionally well together. Deck, Engine room and two cooks. No Signalman, Yeoman, Electronic Technicians, Radio Man or other ratings were aboard. All tasks were performed by the above three groups. In addition, if one cook was ashore on leave and the other cook got sick or had to take emergency leave. A seaman would then do the cooking; quite often a crewman would volunteer a recipe from home. A favorite was Italian pasta sauce from the memories of an enginemen's mother's recipes.



SUNRISE

On a normal day with good weather, if you were standing the 0400 to 0800 deck watch, you would be treated to a beautiful sunrise.

Depending on the time of year and station, a lobster boat, on its way to work its traps, would pull alongside and throw today's newspaper (the lobster boat crew would have read it on the way out) onto our deck. They never stopped, just a wave and a shouted friendly greeting. Their generosity was greatly appreciated by a Lightship crew that now had today's newspaper and a connection to what was happening in the world. What a treat!



SUNSET

Later in the day would be the daily maintenance tasks, drills, inspections, etc., followed by standing the 16:00 to 20:00 deck watch, where you would be treated to an incredibly beautiful sunset.

On other days, the fog would be so thick you couldn't see the stern from the wheel house.

PART ONE;

USCG Base St. George Staten Island, N.Y.

USCG Base St. George Staten Island, N.Y.

Formerly the US Lighthouse Service Depot for the Third District
1 Bay Street St. George, Staten Island, New York

During the time period of 26 April 1957 through 23 April 1959, I served aboard the RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505. CG Base St. George was our home port.



RELIEF 78/505 is shown here, moored port side to Cornfield Lightship LV-118/WAL-539 at berth "S" sometime between January and June 1958. Letters "C" & partial "O" are visible on hull of CORNFIELD.

327' CGC SPENCER WPG-36, is shown in background. , note the many buoys on opposite pier

http://www.coastguardchannel.com/cgi-bin/content/show_photo.pl?_r=1043

collection of Gary Hathorn on his way to duty on CGC Courier

Photo was taken from the elevated walkway for the Staten Island Ferry

Also, in the distance to the right, looking south towards the future Verrazano-Narrows Bridge (which is not visible in photo), are covered civilian piers serving the many freighters that docked there.

Bobbie Pierce shared with me, that one day out of curiosity; he walked over to those civilian freighter piers to see what was inside those covered areas. He said the piers were covered with a roof; three sides were enclosed, and divided internally into sections with the front open to the freighters for easy loading and unloading. From what he observed, they contained bales of cotton and feed. That would explain why they were covered and not fully exposed to the elements. Bobbie also said the feed storage areas had huge rats in them. Once he saw the huge rats, he decided his curiosity was satisfied and to end his tour.



USCG Base St. George Staten Island, NY – Date (possibly 1950's) & photographer unknown

Source; "National Lighthouse Museum" planning proposal pamphlet. <http://nationallighthousemuseum.org/>

A lot has changed since my days at Base St. George in the late 1950's.

Most of the buildings have been demolished to make room for the Staten Island Ferry Maintenance Building in the area nearest to the Ferry Terminal (towards the left), only five remain. Of the 3 piers jutting out into the harbor, the Ferry Maintenance took 2 and only the one on the right (shown with the Coast Guard Cutters) remains. Outside the base, the freighters and their piers on the right are all gone.

The site of the US Lighthouse Service Depot / USCG Base St. George Staten Island, NY has a very long and important historical place in the Nautical Community.

The following overview, is courtesy of the original "National Lighthouse Museum", and is obtained from their planning proposal pamphlet;

Pre 1671: The area was part of the Lenape tribal lands.

1671-1701: Duxbury Glebe (Dutch farm)

1756-1763: French & Indian War, British encampment.

1775-1786: Revolutionary War, British encampment.

1799-1863: Revenue Cutter Service and Quarantine Station.

1863-1867: US Lighthouse Board / Revenue Cutter Service.

1867: Site becomes US Lighthouse Board (later US Lighthouse Service)"Super Depot" supplying District depots along the East Coast. It becomes central headquarters for technological research and is home to lightships, buoy tenders and supply vessels.

1939-1966: The US Coast Guard takes over the Lighthouse Service. Site becomes major USCG base.

1966: US Coast Guard moves to Governors Island and the site is virtually abandoned.

1987-1992: Many of the historic buildings are demolished as the Staten Island Ferry maintenance facility is built on part of the site. (The two piers and area closest to the Ferry Terminal are now used for Ferry Maintenance).

1998: The site is selected as the future home of the “National Lighthouse Museum”.

2009: “National Lighthouse Museum” Board of Directors had disbanded in the latter part of 2009, thus ending a 10 year effort to preserve and showcase this very important piece of Nautical History. However, the demise was very short lived, as the “*The National Lighthouse Museum*” was revived, and has continued the struggle to get this site open as a dedicated Lighthouse Museum site. The aftermath of 911, the downturn of the economy, a number of other obstacles, and the severe damage caused by the 2012 Hurricane Sandy has only caused numerous setbacks for this well intentioned and much needed Lighthouse and Nautical Museum.

On the approximate 10 acres, only five historic buildings remain, along with one 850 foot pier.

Year

Built

1864 – Barracks building, is on the National Register

1867 – Original Lamp Shop, is on the National Register

1869 – Administration building, is a NYC Historic Landmark

- Is boldly detailed granite and red brick office building (now painted) and one of the few surviving examples of the French Second Empire Buildings designed by Alfred B. Mullet during his tenure as supervising architect of the Treasury. Source; <http://www.preserve.org/stgeorge/cg.htm>

There is also a small unidentified one story building behind the Barracks & Administration buildings. It is believed that the six underground oil vats are located in this neglected and overgrown area.

1907 – New Lamp Shop building

1912 - Machine Shop building

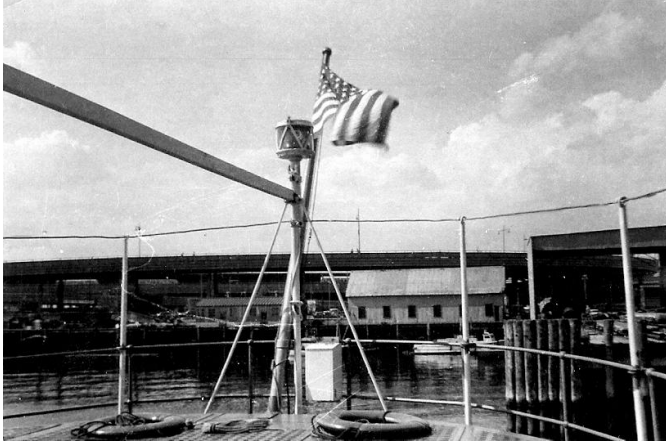
The remaining open space contains a public plaza.

The rich heritage experienced by the thousands of Coast Guardsmen who were stationed on, or passed through, CG Base St. George is demonstrated by their memories as posted on Fred’s Place, LSA, CG Historians, Coast Guard Channel, CG Cutter, etc. and various other related websites.

08 June 1957 – 16 June 1957;

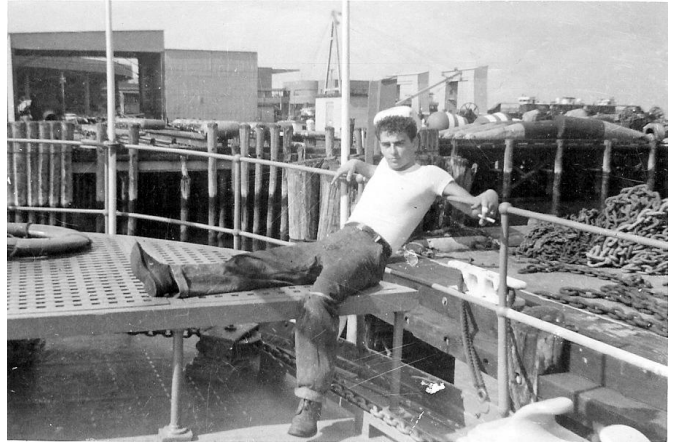
Saw us moored to berth 'S', Base St. George, SINY prior to going out to relieve Scotland station.

The following photo's are from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection taken during this time frame;



RELIEF 78/505 Fantail

Background, is the elevated walkway to the Staten Island Ferry



Frank Baglio, FN



Portside of Radio Beacon Shack view towards bow
Note; Pulling Boat (no engine, just oars and sail)



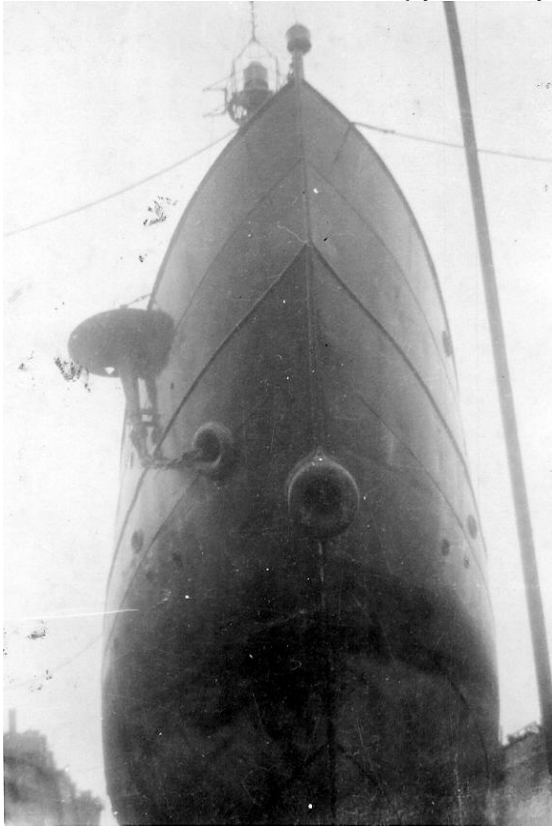
Starboard side of Radio Beacon Shack view towards bow
Note; Motor Whale Boat



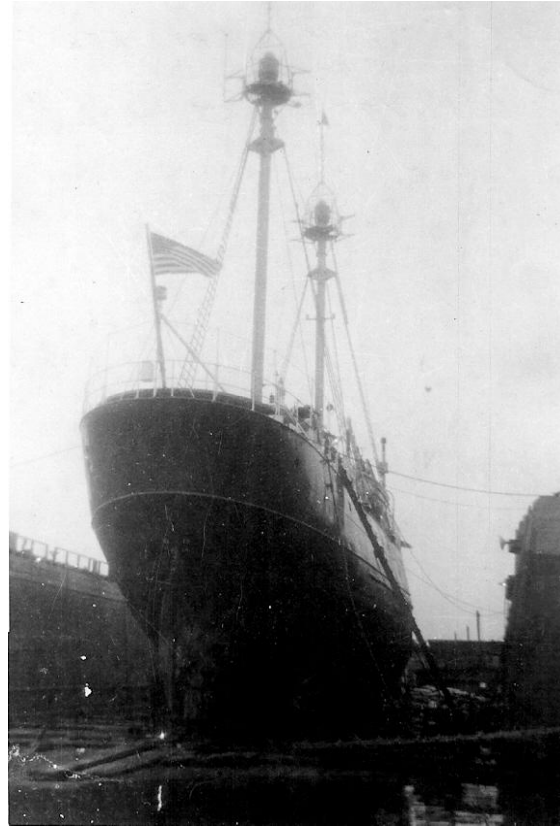
Radio Beacon, located in Radio Beacon Shack as shown above

20 August 1957 - 30 August 1957

Photo's below taken while at
BREWERS Shipyard, Dry-Dock #5, Staten Island, NY



Bow View



Stern View

As I recall, during the sandblasting of the hull, several plates were penetrated resulting with holes below the engine room. These plates were replaced, and the remainder of the hull was very thoroughly inspected. The ship was 53 years old at this time, with her original hull.



L-R, Virgilio Dalomba, Ray D'urbano & author Jay McCarthy

April 6, 1958 - Awaiting Easter Sunday dinner aboard, on the mess deck in Base St. George
Note; the standard 1904 issue wooden louvered compartment door, behind that skinny kid on the right.

Photo; from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

Whenever we returned to Base St. George, any number of tasks had to be done, that couldn't be done at sea; To name just a few;
Engine overhauls / repairs, etc.
Radio Beacon, Radar, Radio Direction Finder, and our Radio, all had inspections, upgrades and testing.
Once a year, flake out anchor chain & main mushroom anchor on pier. Clean, inspect and paint.
Once a year, have a dockside crane lift small boat onto dock. Inspect, repair as needed, strip old paint & repaint.
Once a year, utilize float, clean, inspect, chip loose paint & rusted areas on hull, and repaint entire hull.
Misc., other repairs throughout the ship.
Masts were generally inspected & painted at sea, as were boat davits and deck housing.
A number of tasks could be done either at sea or in port. Sometimes, tasks started at sea, continued at the base. I recall starting to paint the passageways white while out at sea, and completing them at Base St. George. We used oil based paint back then, and Lee Burbage BM1 had us add a tube of blue dye to each gallon of paint. It kept the white paint from turning yellow on the bulkheads. I had never heard of that before, but it worked!
A top priority task; in between returning to port, and leaving again. Several of the crew would sign a car out of the base motor pool and drive over to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. There, we would return and sign out movies. No VCR's or DVD players in those days. Just a projector, and good old fashioned movies on a reel to watch at sea.

Some of memories that I can recall;

Weekend Liberty;

Being from New York City (City Island, up in the N/E Bronx) on weekend liberty, I would generally go home, as did most shipmates that didn't have to travel cross country. Pittsburg, Delaware, New Jersey, upstate New York were some examples.

Our old (1904) ship was loaded with cockroaches, as were most of the other older ships. No matter how you tried to get rid of them, you were fighting a losing battle. On my first visit home, I unknowingly brought some with me in my "Ditty Bag" (small handled zippered bag, to carry weekend clothes, etc.). Thereafter, my mother made me empty the bag out on the front porch and shake out its contents. She didn't want any more CG RELIEF Lightship cockroaches in her house.

Depending on what time liberty started on Friday, sometimes if possible, I would meet my father at his work, and get a ride home. My dad was Superintendent of Transportation for the Surface Transportation Company (provided bus service for Manhattan & the Bronx) and his office was on the 2nd. floor of a bus garage on Amsterdam Ave. & 128th. Street in Harlem. I would take the ferry over to Manhattan, then the subway up to 125th. Street. I would then walk across 125th. St., and then up Amsterdam Ave. to the Bus garage. My dad had a dry sense of humor, and would sometimes say while introducing me, "My sons on relief", which confused people as they saw me in uniform and tried to figure out how I was "on relief", never knowing I was on the RELIEF Lightship. We would drive home, often stopping for something to eat and a beer. I was the 2nd. oldest of five kids, and it was nice to spend quality time with my dad...

On weekday liberty;

We would hit the local watering holes; I can only remember the "Bay Café" up the hill in St. George. We also took the ferry over to Manhattan, went to the Bowery (lots of sailors joints back in the late 50's), Greenwich Village, and up to the Time Square area. I can recall the "Wagon Wheel" and a bartender that had been a Coastie.

Charlie Sullivan was from Brooklyn and we were always going back and forth about the Bronx being better than Brooklyn, and Brooklyn being better than the Bronx. Charlie had a car, so one evening myself, Bud Fairfull from Long Island, and a few non-New Yorkers climbed into Charlie's car in uniform and took a ride up to the Bronx and to my neighborhood of City Island to let them see what the Bronx was really like. We wound up in a local pub "The Club", and were bought quite a few free beers as thanks for serving our country. Matter of fact, it was hard to pay for a drink that night. Charlie never had anything bad to say about the Bronx after that. I also, was smart enough to cease any further negative comments on Brooklyn.

On the weekends, we sometimes pulled 12 hour watches, again to give shipmates more liberty time;

One Saturday sometime in 1957, I had the 1200 to 2400 deck watch. Before I went on watch, I went up to the Administration building and picked up our mail. On the way back, I had my head down sorting through the mail, when I passed an officer (a LCDR) from one of the High Endurance White Ocean Station Cutters. He yelled to me, "Don't you salute officers"? I recognized him, as he had been pointed out to me by one of his men as being a real stickler on regulations, I apologized, but that wasn't good enough. He inquired what my name was and the ship I was off, I told him and he said I'll be speaking to your OOD (Officer of the Deck). Now, as I have shared earlier. We were a small 129' ship with a 16 man crew. A CHBOSN, W-1 as the Captain, a BMC as XO, and ENC as Engineering Officer. We also had a BM1 and an EN1, everyone else at the time was a 3rd class or below.

Normally on weekends, one of the Chiefs would be the OOD, if for some reason one of them was not available, than a 1st class would be the OOD. When I came back, I discussed the situation with Lee Burbage BM1, as he had the duty. Lee assured me that he would handle things and just roll with whatever he said. Lee also said that most of the deep water cutter officers had never been aboard a ship like ours. He said to take him through the wheelhouse, down the ladder to the mess deck, and through the passageway back to the wardroom. In other words give him a tour; only don't tell him it's a tour.

About 1400 I saw the officer approaching. He looked the ship over, came up the gang way, saluted the flag, turned and saluted. I returned the salute, as he asked permission to come aboard. After granting permission, he stated he wanted to see the OOD. I said, please follow me sir. I first took him into the wheelhouse. Burbage was right, our ship having been built in 1904, was built with sailing ship configurations. He stared at the 4' Mahogany spoked wheel, Mahogany Binnacle stand containing the compass, other mahogany woodwork, and the simplicity of the ancient bridge. Next, I took him down the ladder to the mess (02) deck; his head was swiveling trying to take in the two man compartments with wooden louvered doors, etc. We then went aft down the port passageway over wooden decks, along the way; he stopped and he peeked down through the grating into the engine room which was completely visible (NO water tight compartments) from the 02 deck.

As we entered the Ward Room, I couldn't be sure if he was more surprised by the expanse of mahogany, or Burbage sitting in a chair in dungarees, chambray shirt, and a cup of coffee in his hand and watching a baseball game on the TV. Of course Lee stood and saluted. I excused myself and returned to the deck watch. The LCDR than asked to see the OOD, Burbage said, sir, I am the OOD. The cutter officer was incredulous. Lee then gave him a brief overview of our limited command structure, offered him a cup of coffee, and gave the history of the ship including how she started out in 1904 with 4 masts, 2 for sails, a coal burning steam power plant, etc. By now, the cutter officer was completely enthralled with this ancient ship.

Eventually, he told Burbage of my transgression of not saluting him, and Burbage strongly assured him that he would straighten me out on the proper protocol of passing an officer. Satisfied, the cutter officer left. Later, Burbage told me that if I saw the cutter officer on the base again, I was to turn around and go the other way. Lee Burbage was a big, tough Boatswain's Mate. However, Lee was very fair, had a great sense of humor and knew the scare put into a young seaman by a confrontation with a cutter officer was more than enough punishment. End of story.

Sometime in late 1957, a new man came aboard named Bob Quail;

From what I can remember, Bob was an EN1 assigned to Base St. George; he got himself into some kind of trouble on the base and got busted down to EN2. ENC Raymond Thrush knew Quail and interceded for him with Mr. Wicks, and he got Quail a berth on our RELIEF 78/505. Bob was older than most of us young guys on the ship. He was very active, seemed to be a nice guy who was always in motion. We soon learned that we now had our own "Sgt. Bilko" type guy aboard.

Bob was a live wire, always was wheeling and dealing in something. He was a very good engineman, had a ready smile & laugh, but the wheels in his mind were always turning. Quail seemed to know everybody on the base and the buoy tenders.

Quail once told us of a fellow Coastie, whom we didn't know, whose wife had just died. Quail said he had once been a Lightship sailor (Barnegat 79/506, I think?), had no family in the area and the Coast Guard was his family. He asked us to attend the funeral and backyard reception afterwards. So, a bunch of us young guys, passed the hat for wake/funeral expense donations, got in Quail's car and drove out through, at the time, very rural Staten Island (Verrazano-Narrows bridge construction had just started) to the funeral. Quail was right; we and the other Coasties that attended were his family. I have no recollection of the man's name, but do mention this event to show the compassionate side of Bob Quail and to share that the US Coast Guard is indeed, a family to their own.

Other Bob Quail stories that I can recall;

It was a weekday night in the winter and Quail said I know a bar that we can get pitchers of beers real cheap. So, once again his young single followers jumped in his car and we drove out to a bar near Ft. Wadsworth, Staten Island. Now remember, Staten Island was still rural at the time, and unless you had a car, we didn't go farther inland than St. George. We had no idea where Ft. Wadsworth was, nor the area surrounding it. We arrived in our Dress Blue uniforms, liked the price of the beer and began to settle in. Some local girls appeared on the scene, and we thought we had hit the mother lode. About an hour after that, some guys showed up, a few in Army uniforms. We didn't think anything of it, till more showed up. Then the bumping started on the dance floor, comments were made about sailors coming into their bar and trying to steal their women. Things started to get real serious as we realized that Quail took us to an Army bar next to Ft. Wadsworth. Some pushing and shoving started, with a few light jabs thrown in. We were outnumbered, couldn't find Quail and decided to hit the door. As we barely made it through the door, we found Quail parked out front with the engine running just steps from the bar door. We piled in the car and Quail quickly drove off as the Army guys poured out of the bar. When questioned where he was when things heated up, the older & wiser Quail simply stated; I came out to warm up the car engine for a quick getaway.

Another time, I was standing the 1800 to 2400 deck watch (as explained earlier, at times, we stood longer watches in port, 6 to 12 hours, in order to give others more liberty time). A group of shipmates went out with Quail to have a few drinks. After my watch, I hit the rack, and the liberty party had not yet returned. Around 0200 I heard them return, Ray D'urbano (shared my 2 man compartment, and had the rack above mine) was among them. I didn't inquire if they had a good time, but just rolled over facing the bulkhead and went back to sleep.

Sometime during the very early morning hours, I must have rolled over onto my back and stuck my arm outside my rack. I felt something warm very slowly dripping on my arm; I woke up to find Ray's blood drops on my arm and him groaning. It appears that during the evening of drinking, some including Ray, got tattoos. The big event was Quail crashing into a light pole on the bus ramp of the Staten Island Ferry? What he was doing up there, nobody could answer? Some men received minor injuries, including Ray. As it eventually turned out, nobody was seriously injured, I don't recall if any action was taken because of the accident, CG or civilian, I would imagine that at the least, Quail received a traffic summons and might have had some insurance problems. No one to the best of my memory had any CG related problems due to this accident.

To show Bob Quail's versatility;

In late 1957 he was selling bibles on the side. His sales pitch was, you're going to be out at sea for Christmas, why not give your mother a bible as an early Christmas present? I bought one and gave it to my mother before we set sail, I inscribed in it Merry Christmas Mom, 1957. I still have that bible, and my wife Barbara, updates the bible with all the important birth, deaths, etc. events.

Some good memories stick with you through the years;

Edmund “Lee” Burbage BM1;

As I recall, Lee, I would guess he was about 25 or 26 at the time. On his last compensatory leave to his home in Delaware, Lee had car trouble and had to leave his car behind in order to get back on time to catch a buoy tender out to the ship on station. Upon our ships return to Base St. George, Lee was pleasantly surprised to find his car parked on the base. It seems his father had the car repaired, gave it a tune up, new tires, new brakes, and the whole nine yards and drove it back up to Staten Island. For a struggling young serviceman, this was indeed a great surprise and gift.

In retrospect, Lee deserved this gift. He always had a ready smile, and outstretched helping hand. He was tough, but was very fair. “Boats” taught me many things when I first came aboard, among them was how to flake out a mooring line properly in overlapping figures of eight, which are more likely to uncoil cleanly, also how to make “monkey fists”, used for weight when throwing a heaving line. He also taught me how to properly throw the heaving line, plus much more. These lessons stayed with me for the two years I served aboard.

Lee was a good friend and sadly passed away on 29 January 2009.



Edmund “Lee” Burbage BM1, on stern of RELIEF 78/505, Base St. George, SINY summer of 1957

Photos; from the J. F. “Jay” McCarthy collection

My introduction to “Frozen Chicken Pot Pie”;

On weekends, generally both cooks would be off. In mid-week, a cook would ask the duty section, what would you like to eat over the weekend? They would then make sure it was available. I recall one Sunday experimenting with a new frozen dish called “chicken pot pie”. Remember this was the late 1950’s, and microwave ovens and the fast, ready to “heat up” meals we are used to today, didn’t exist. I boiled and mashed a few potatoes, defrosted and placed the “chicken pot pie” in the oven to heat it up. Then placed it on top of the mashed potatoes and thoroughly enjoyed it.

This was a “new” fully prepared frozen dish back in the late ‘50’s, and was a great treat!

I had it on the ship, before my family had it at home!

19 March 1958, Change of Command held at Base St. George;

WICKS, B.A. CHBOSN, W-2

Relieved by

BROWER, G.R. CHBOSN, W-1

Mr. Wicks was promoted to CHBOSN, **W-2**, and as such he had to leave the RELIEF 78/505 as its command called for a CHBOSN, **W-1**. Mr. Wicks next assignment took him across the docks at Base St. George for duty on a buoy tender (don't recall its name) and he became its Executive Officer. We would see Mr. Wicks up on the bridge as we rode out to station on his buoy tender from time to time. We always waved a greeting and smiled from a distance, but never again had the opportunity to speak.

Personally;

For 11 months I enjoyed sailing with Mr. Wicks. I felt very comfortable with his confident leadership. Mr. Wicks didn't interface with the crew very much, as was to be expected, after all he was the Skipper. He was a good sailor, but I felt he could be stern at times and rigid in his command.

I soon learned to like Mr. Brower. Mr. Brower, like Mr. Wicks, didn't interface with the crew very much. He demonstrated that he was a confident, knowledgeable leader and good sailor. However, I found Mr. Brower much more open and relaxed in his command.

Both command styles reflected the personalities of each man. Under each man, morale was high; the ship remained in excellent condition and in a full state of readiness to handle any task, storm or emergency.

CG Base St. George was home port for many High Endurance Coast Guard Cutters performing Ocean Station, Law Enforcement, and Search and Rescue (SAR) Duties. Some of the cutters I remember are; 327' foot WPG-32 Campbell, and WPG-36 Spencer, 311 foot, WAVP-370 McCullogh, WHEC- 371 Mackinac, WAVP-377 Rockaway & WHEC-378 Halfmoon



327' CGC Spencer WPG-36
 Photo taken from RELIF 78/505 mooring.
 Above 2 photo's from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection, at USCG Base St. George, SINY



311' CGC Half Moon WHEC-378
 Photo taken through Porthole of RELIF 78/505



WPG-32 CGC Campbell at Base St. George SINY
 Photo by Don Seifert, USCG Cutter Campbell Assoc.
<http://campbellw32w909.org/index.html> 1958



WAVP-377 CGC Rockaway at Base St. George SINY
 Suspect 311' on left is WHEC-32 CGC Halfmoon .
 Note; US Navy helicopter taking off from end of pier.
 CGC 65612 can be seen right foreground.
 Photo by J.M. Bruce, July 1966
 Source; <http://www.coastguardpics.com/id5.html>

Source of all of the following photos are by Jim Cronin USCG Cutter Campbell W-32 Pictures - taken at Base St. George 1965 http://campbellw32w909.org/Album_3_Cronin_Pics.htm



#B-37, looking toward Ferry Terminal St. George.

View towards Staten Island Ferry Terminal elevated walkway.
Several unidentified buoy tenders in foreground.



B-41, Base St. George

View south to 2 cutters;
WAVP-377 CGC Rockaway – closest
Possibly;
WHEC-378 CGC Halfmoon, farthest



B-39, Bow of Campbell

Bow view of WPG-32 CGC Campbell looking across pier to Five Fathom Lightship LV-108 / WAL-530.
Must have been low tide, normally the lightship would have been riding much higher.



B-40, Base St. George

View looking into Base St. George from the Campbell, with 3 cutters in the foreground. Far left on the other side of pier is an unidentified cutter, tied to right side of pier is WHEC-378 CGC Halfmoon, and moored alongside is WPG-36, CGC Spencer. Masts of unidentified Lightship visible on far side of inner basin mooring pier. Farther in are the buildings of old CG Base St. George.



B-35, St. George NY

A CG 40 foot Patrol Boat leaving Base St. George enroute across harbor to Manhattan after fueling up. The 40 footer passes a RELIEF Lightship (Hull # unknown, possibly WLW-612? after sailing east through the Panama Canal from her last duty station, San Francisco) moored to outer pier.



http://campbellw32w909.org/Images/aCronin_9.jpg

Photo by Jim Cronin –
1966 - Base St. George SINY

View into Base St. George from CGC Campbell – AMBROSE Lightship WLW-613 straight ahead on far side of pier inside inner mooring basin. Buoy Tender, W-393, CGC Firebush on right in front of unidentified cutter. All other ships in port are unidentified.



USCG Base St. George Staten Island, NY

This is another photo which appears to have been taken from the Staten Island Ferry Terminal walkway.

The view of the inner mooring basin shows, Ambrose Lightship WLV-613 (Berth S).

To the right of her is a 40 foot Patrol Boat, probably in for repairs at the Small Boat Repair Shop.

There are other unidentified vessels near the 40 footer.

Bottom of photo shows an unidentified Lightship, and to the left two unidentified Buoy Tenders.

Moored together on the south main pier (1 of 3 jutting out into harbor) are the

327' WPLG-36 CGC Spencer, inboard against the pier is the 311' WAVP-377 CGC Rockaway

Date is unknown? Quite possibly, sometime in the 1950's to the mid 1960's?

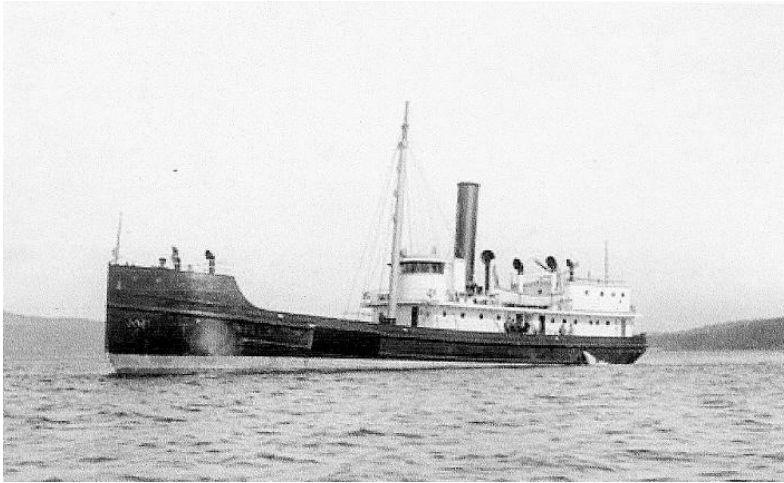
1966, USCG moved from Base St. George, SINY across the harbor to Governors Island.

Photographer is also unknown? Source; "National Lighthouse Museum" planning proposal pamphlet.

<http://nationallighthousemuseum.org/>

There were also many Buoy Tenders, Tugs and various other craft that called CG Base St. George home.

Buoy (Lighthouse Service) Tenders



160' CGC OAK WAGL-239

Buoy (Lighthouse Service) Tender

Photo; Consolidated Shipbuilding Corporation

Nov. 15, 1921 photo # 7440-F

Source; courtesy of USCG Historians office

http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/Oak_1921.pdf



180' WAGL-393 CGC Firebush
Official USCG photo

Source; courtesy of USCG Historians office

http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/Firebush_1944.asp

Buoy (Lighthouse Service) Tenders, also based at CG Base St. George that I can recall in addition to the Oak and Firebush, are the following;

174' WAGL-203 CGC Artbutus

131' WAGL-219 CGC Hickory

101' WAGL-206 CGC Beech

There might have been more, but these are all that I can remember.

TUGS

As I recall, there were various Tug Boats coming and going from Base St. George



205' CGC TAMAROA (WAT-166); with a Black Hull circa 1960
Duties included Ocean Going Tug, Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue.

USCG Official Photo # 032047-2

<http://www.uscg.mil/history/webcutters/Tamaroa1943.asp>



CGC TAMAROA (WAT-166)

Above photo, white with Racing Stripe source unknown USCG Official Photo # 911030-1-00A-002

Picture on above right taken during the attempted rescue of sailboat SATORI on 30 October 1991,
Later on the night of 31 October 1991, TAMAROA rescued 4 of the 5 Air National Guard Helicopter crew that
crashed into the sea during the height of the infamous “Perfect Storm”, off the New England coast.

Authors Note:

During 1957-1959, the “TAM” was quite often in Base St. George SINY, when we returned to port. In June
1960, she towed AMBROSE WLV-613 back out to AMBROSE Station after the RELIEF 78/505 was sunk.

Other Tug Boats, also based at CG Base St. George that I can recall;

- 110' WYTM-60 CGC Manitou
- 110' WYTM- 88 CGC Navesink
- 110' WYTM-91 CGC Mahoning

There probably were more, but these are all that I can remember.

Base St. George had a very active Small Boat Repair Shop.



I believe the boat sizes ranged from about 26' Motor Whale Boats up to 95' Patrol Boats. Perhaps some were smaller, while others were larger, I guess it was dependent on the needs?

View into Small Boat Repair Shop, Base St. George

J.M. Bruce Photo; Date unknown

Source; courtesy of Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>



Buoy Boats;

45 foot Buoy Boat – 9 July 1959
undergoing repairs at
Base St. George Small Boat Repair Shop

Official USCG Photo

Source; courtesy of Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>



30 Footers;

CG-30520, July 1966 - awaiting repairs at
Base St. George Small Boat Repair Shop

Delaware Lightship 116 / 538 in background.

J. M. Bruce Photo

Source; courtesy of Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>



40 Footers;

CG-40370 (wooden 40 footer) and CG-40398 at Base St. George (awaiting repairs at Base St. George Small Boat Repair Shop?) Unidentified Lightship in background. Possibly Ambrose WLV-613? Note; Navy type spare anchor and steel Breakwater on forward deck
110' WYTM-88 CGC Navesink (Tug) on left

J. M. Bruce Photo – no photo date

Source; courtesy of Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>



44 Footers;

CG-44333, July 1966 - awaiting repairs Base St. George Small Boat Repair Shop. Down from Station Chatham, Cape Cod. Unidentified Lightship in background. Possibly Nantucket 112/534. Note; spare mushroom anchor mounted just below starboard bow rail. Unidentified Buoy Tender in right background.

J. M. Bruce Photo

Source; courtesy of Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>



44 Footers;

CG-44333, July 1966 - awaiting repairs at Base St. George Small Boat Repair Shop. Down from Station Chatham, Cape Cod.

Another view of dock area looking onto base repair area, with small boats, etc. on dock in various stages of repair.

J. M. Bruce Photo

Source; courtesy of Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>



95 foot Patrol Boat, CGC-95308 Cape Strait moored alongside unidentified 83 footer.

Base St. George (awaiting repairs at Base St. George Small Boat Repair Shop?) 110' WYTM-91 Mahoning – CG Tug in background. Also, right background is a 40 footer up on blocks on Small Boat Repair Shop portion of pier.

Photo courtesy of Robert Beyer

Above photo source found on;

http://www.uscg.mil/history/WEBCUTTERS/95308_Mooney_Memoir.pdf



A view from Bay Street looking into the abandoned USCG Base / USLHS Depot St. George SINY

The Staten Island Ferry Terminal is to the left. To the right of the Ferry Terminal is the Ferry Maintenance area. For those of us old Coasties that served on the base, were on ships based at the base, or traveled through Base St. George. The site looks nothing like the photos in the preceding pages, or of your memories. As stated earlier, on the approximately 10 original acres only five original buildings remain, and one (850 foot) pier out of the original three that jugged out into the harbor.

2010, The gates are currently locked.

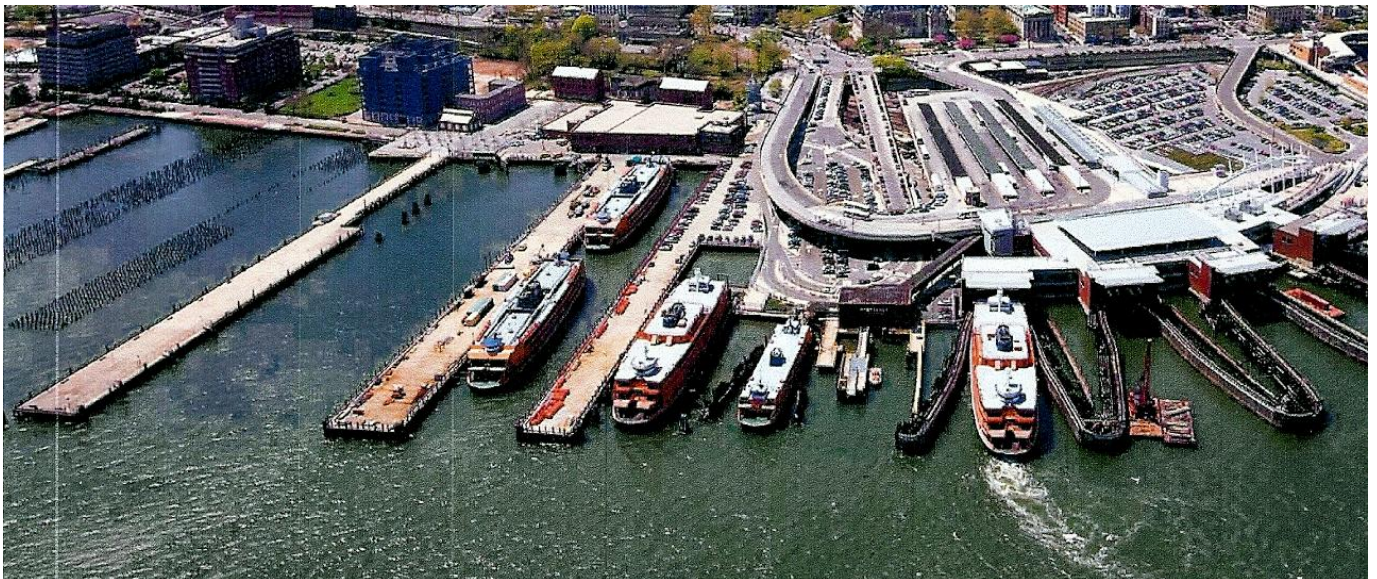
Source; 2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM



View is how the USCG Base looked back in the 1950's & 1960's

This photo shows the three piers jutting out into the harbor, the inner mooring basin, and the buildings required to keep the base operational. It also doesn't show much activity going on. Perhaps it was taken during the 1966 transition move from Base St. George SINY to Governors Island? Photographer & date are unknown?

Source; "National Lighthouse Museum" planning proposal pamphlet.



This is a photo and shows the difference from when the site was a USCG Base and how it looks in 2008. Staten Island Ferry Terminal is on the right and center. Immediately to its left are the two piers and area taken from the old CG Base for the Ferry Maintenance area expansion. The one 850' pier (on left), and five original buildings from the USCG / USLHS site remain. The vacant space shown is dedicated as a public multi use area, to be used for a park and special events.

Note; on the far left side, outside the base, is the site that once held piers. Both the piers and the freighters that used them are now long gone.

Photo source; courtesy of Staten Island's Borough Presidents Office promotion, pamphlet / pdf file of 2008;

Gateway To Staten Island, St. George photography by Michael Falco

http://stateninsula.com/pdf/stgeorge_final-web.pdf

Artist's rendering of site;

White area = F, Staten Island Ferry Maintenance area, including building and two piers.

Yellow area = National Lighthouse Museum site.

1 = the 850 foot Pier

11 = the 1912 Machine Shop Building

10 = the 1907 New Lamp Shop Building



8 = the 1867 Original lamp Shop Building

7 = the 1869 Administration Building

6 = the 1864 Barracks Building

5 = unidentified small one story building behind the Barracks Building, and next to six underground oil vats in overgrown area.

Source;

"National Lighthouse Museum" planning proposal pamphlet.

The following pages contain **2010** photos of the buildings, and the land portion of the site.

Courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM

Pier # 1 –

Lone remaining Base pier jutting 850' out into harbor.

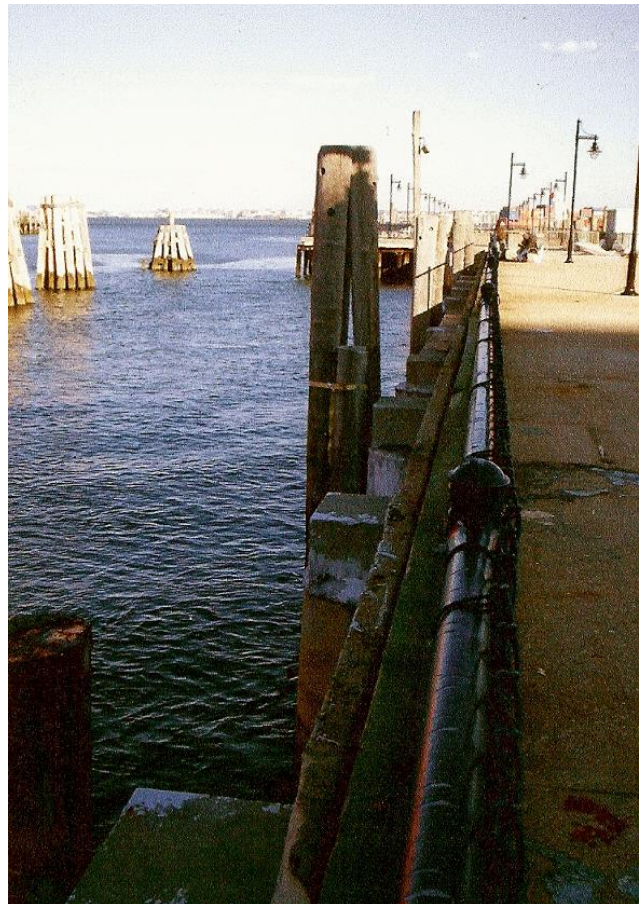
Area in foreground was site of the inner basin moorings, where the Lightships, Tugs, etc. were moored.

In addition a number of small boats used this immediate area while awaiting repairs at the Small Boat Repair Shop.

Outer (background) portion of pier is where the High Endurance Cutters were once moored.

Source;

2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM





Overview of current site at ground level. Foreground is part of the vacant space shown in earlier aerial view and dedicated as a public multi use area, to be used for a park and special events. Background left side is Building # 11, 1912 Machine Shop, beyond that is Building # 10, 1907 new Lamp Shop. Continuing along the background is Building # 8, 1867 the Original Lamp Shop, to its right is building # 7, 1869 the Administration Building. The roof of building # 6, 1864 the Barracks can be seen in the right background. The brick wall to the right is part of the Ferry Maintenance area. Pier 1 is behind photographer.
Source;
2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM

L-R, # 8, 1867 Old Lamp Building, # 7, 1869 Administration Building, and # 6, 1864 Barracks Building. In background is the elevated walkway to the Staten Island Ferry. Also, a stairway tower built to provide access to and from the site.

Source;
2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM



View of the current condition of # 7, 1869 Administration Building. The years have not been kind to this Historic Building, and we can see evidence of a fire on the top floor.

Source;
2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM



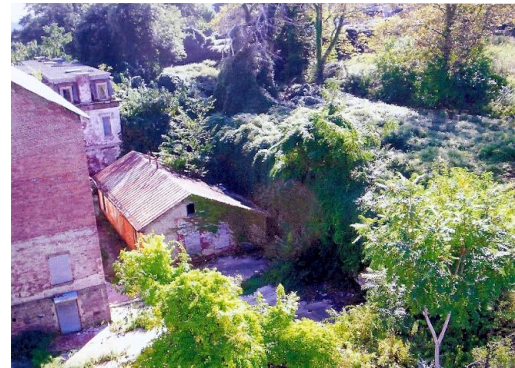


This is a view looking into the site from the elevated walkway to the Staten Island Ferry. On the immediate right is the stairwell tower built to give access to and from the site. Just beyond that on the right is # 6, 1864 The Barracks Building, following along in line and just barely visible are # 7, 1869 Administration Building and # 8, 1867 The Old Lamp Shop Building. Visible in the background with boarded up windows is the three story # 10, 1907 the New Lamp Shop Building. On the left is the (New) Ferry Maintenance Building.

Source;
2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM

Looking down from the elevated walkway to the Staten Island Ferry, is an unidentified one story building, located directly behind # 6, 1864 The Barracks Building with a view of # 7, 1869 the Administration Building behind it. Somewhere under all the overgrowth are six underground oil vats.

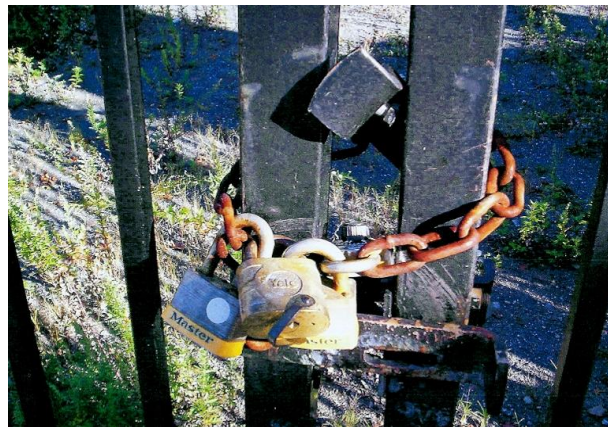
Source;
2010 Photo courtesy of Ronald Meisels, of the NLM



This concludes my memories and photos, along with the many photo contributions of others, of CG Base St. George. Things will never be the same, but at least a glimpse into the past was made. What the future holds for these Historic Buildings, and most certainly this very important link to USLHS and USCG Nautical History is unclear and remains to be seen.

The National Lighthouse Museum had been struggling to get this site open as a dedicated Lighthouse Museum site for many years. I have heard that they would like to have a Lightship berthed there. The slowdown in the economy, and the severe damage caused by the 2012 Hurricane Sandy has only caused setbacks for this fine cause.

Please visit their Web Site at; <http://lighthousemuseum.org/> for more information on the successful opening in Bldg. 11 of the *National Lighthouse Museum Educational Resource Center* on August 7, 2015, with an eventual move to Bldg. 10, and how you can help.



Locked gates tell the story, as we close this segment on USCG Base St. George SINY.
SEMPER PARATUS

JUNE 2016 UPDATE;

Much good news has emerged regarding this Historic Site. The National Lighthouse Museum is very much alive, well and successful. The following has been obtained from their website;

<http://lighthousemuseum.org/welcome/museum-history/>

Today Building 11 (1912) has been renovated and will soon be the home of the National Lighthouse Museum Educational Resource Center. Several of the original buildings including the lamp shops, barracks and administration building still stand onsite, but are in near-ruin. The present owner of the site, the New York City Economic Development Corporation has awarded the development of the entire land tract to Triangle Equities. Plans for the Lighthouse Point development project include residential and commercial space with renovation and reuse of several of the site's historic structures. The National Lighthouse Museum, the cultural component of the site development, plans to expand into Building 10 (1907) within the next five years.



August 7, 2015 Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Building 11, Educational Resource Center



Building 11 on the left, with Bldg. 10 to the right



The above is Courtesy of the National Lighthouse Museum;
<http://lighthousemuseum.org/welcome/museum-history/#>

Please take a moment and consider offering some assistance to this fine organization. They would be most appreciative for any time you may wish to volunteer, or money you may wish to donate, in order to help keep this site and its “National Treasures” available for future generations.
<http://lighthousemuseum.org/> Don't forget to please visit this great National Lighthouse Museum, if you're in the St. George Staten Island, NY area. *SEMPER PARATUS*

PART TWO;

**During my two years aboard the RELIEF 78/505.
We regularly relieved four Lightship Stations;**

AMBROSE, SCOTLAND, CORNFIELD and OVERFALLS.

Lightship Stations got their names for a variety of reasons. Some were named for an area on land, a point, a town or city, or landmark closest to the Station. Others were named for shoals, rivers, channels, ship wrecks, even the depth of the ocean at that location. Reasons were quite varied. While the Lightship Station names remained the same, the Lightships manning those Stations often had previous assignments. Lightships had individual hull numbers so one could keep track of that ship. When a Lightship assumed a Station, the name of that Station was painted on the ship. The exception being the RELIEF Lightships, which temporarily filled in for the Station Lightship while they went back into port for refitting or repairs. Thus over time, quite a number of different Lightships might have served on the same Lightship Station.

AMBROSE Channel, 1823-1967

Lightships assigned:

1823-1829: "V V "
1829-1838: station discontinued
1839-1854: "W W "
1854-1891: LV-16
1891-1894: LV-48
1894-1908: LV-51
1908-1932: LV-87 / WAL-512
1932-1952: LV-111 / WAL-533
1952-1967: **WLV-613**

SCOTLAND (Wreck of), 1868-1962

Lightships assigned:

1868-1870: LV-20
1870-1874: station discontinued
1874-1876: LV-23
1876-1880: LV-20
1881-1902: LV-7
1902-1925: LV-11
1925-1936: LV-69
1936-1942: LV-87 / WAL-512
1942-1945: marked by a buoy during World War II
1945-1947: LV-78 / WAL-505
1947-1962: **LV-87 / WAL-512**

CORNFIELD POINT, 1856-1957

Lightships assigned:

1856-1872: LV-14
1872-1882: LV-12 (ex-LV-22)
1882-1892: LV-23
1892-1894: LV-51
1894-1895: Relief LV-20
1895-1925: LV-48
1926-1939: LV-44
1939-1957: **LV-118 / WAL-539**

OVERFALLS, 1898-1960

Lightships assigned:

1898-1901: LV-46
1901-1925: LV-69
1926-1951: LV-101 / WAL-524
1951-1960: **WLV-605**

Highlighted Hulls; were the Lightships we relieved during my 2 years aboard the Relief 78/505.

Note; Hull designations:

Up until 1939, the United States Lighthouse Service was responsible for ALL Lightships.

LV = Light Vessel

After 1939, the United States Coast Guard assumed responsibility for ALL Lightships.

WAL = US Coast Guard Anchored Light

WLV = US Coast Guard Light Vessel

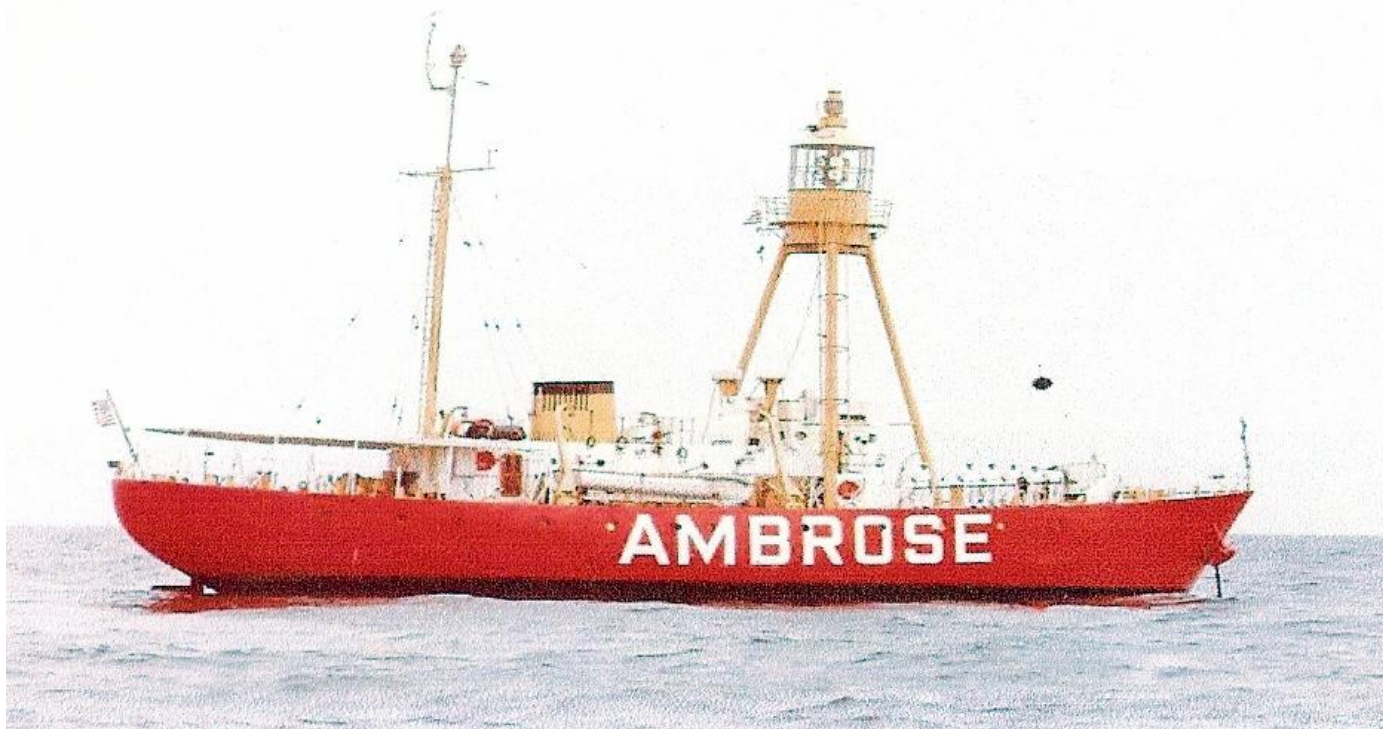
Source: USCG Historians office

As shown above, indeed, quite a few different lightships had manned the same Lightship Station.

PART THREE;

AMBROSE Lightship Station

AMBROSE Lightship Station



AMBROSE Lightship WLV-613
USCG Official Photo, No Date

Location & historical notes: Ambrose Channel, New York, off the entrance to New York Bay, east and south of Sandy Hook, 6.2 miles and 097 degrees from the Sandy Hook Lighthouse.

The station was replaced by the Ambrose Light Tower. The station was originally named "Sandy Hook" from 1823-1908.

Historical Notes on WLV-613 pictured above;

1952-1967: Ambrose Channel station (NY)

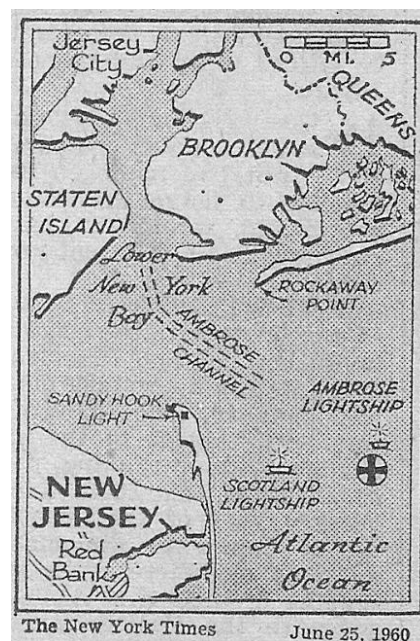
1967-1979: Relief (MA)

1976: During the 1976 Nor'easter, 120 knot winds and 50 foot seas caused the WLV-613 to drag its 7000 lb mushroom anchor twelve miles.

1979-1983: Nantucket Shoals (MA) as Nantucket II.

Shared duty with WLV-612, Nantucket I.

20 December 1983: WLV 613 relieved WLV 612 at 0230 remaining on the Nantucket station until approximately 0800 when replaced by a LNB. Therefore, even though not completing a full duty tour, WLV 613 was the last U.S. lightship to mark the Nantucket Shoals station.

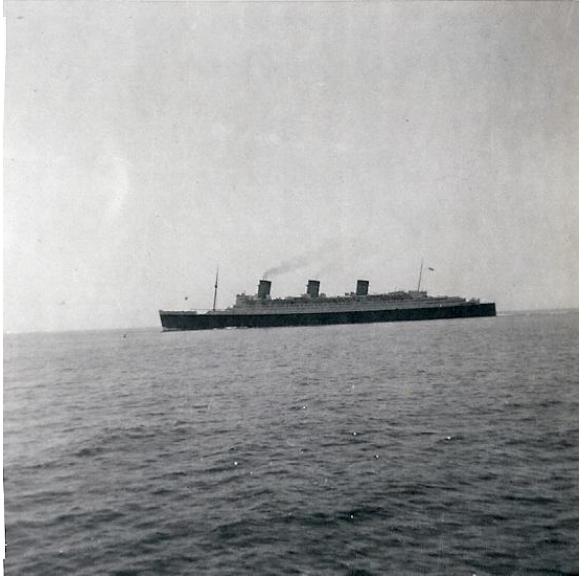


RETIRED FROM LIGHTSHIP DUTY: 1983; AGE: 31

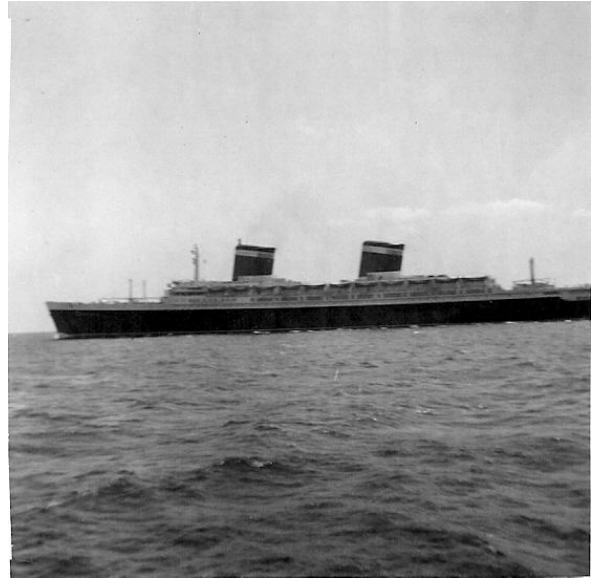
Source: USCG Historians office <http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/WLV613.asp>

We relieved **AMBROSE Lightship WLV-613**, 4 times during my time aboard the **RELIEF 78 / 505**.

AMBROSE Station was a great location for viewing an abundance of ship traffic. You could see everything from freighters, tankers, military vessels, all the way to the magnificent ocean liners of that time outbound or inbound to New York Harbor.

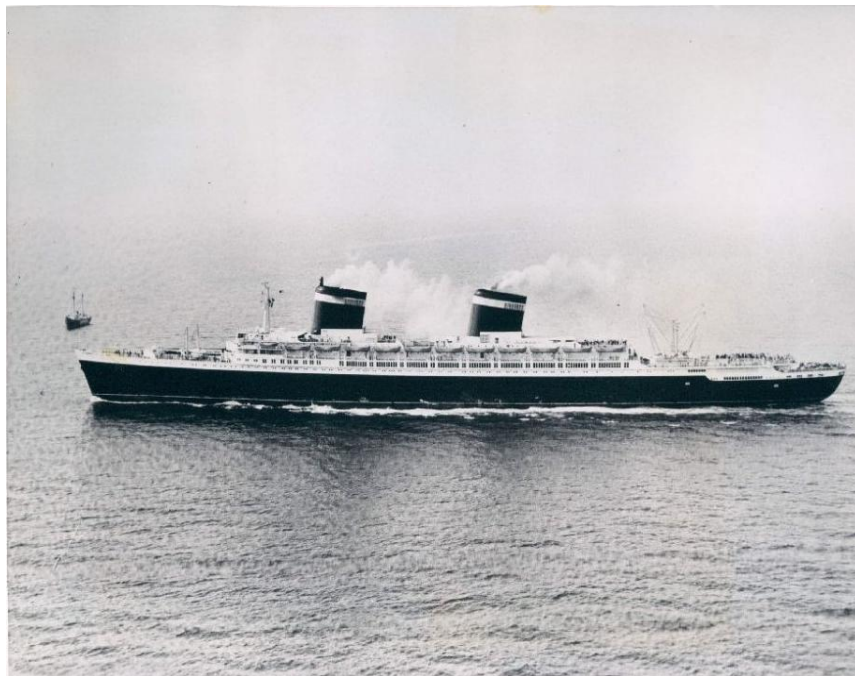


Queen Mary



SS United States

Photos; taken by and from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

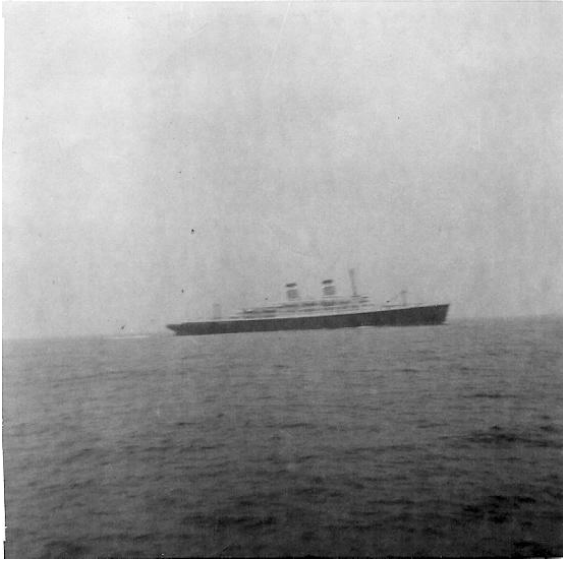


SS United States passing AMBROSE Lightship Station (upper left)

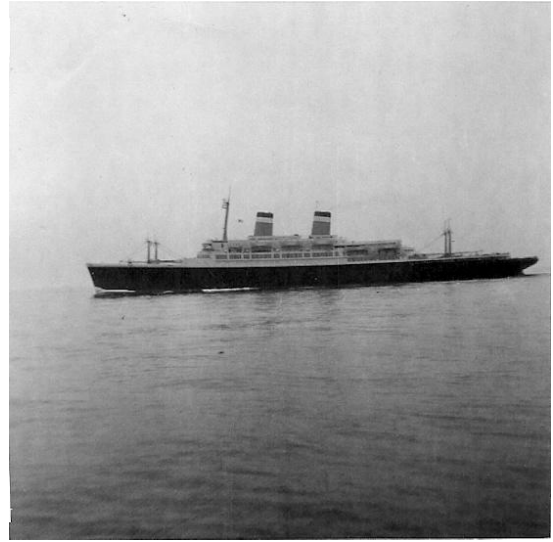
Note: SS United States is approx. 990 feet long,

While RELIEF Lightship 78/505 "relieving AMBROSE Station" was only 129 feet long.

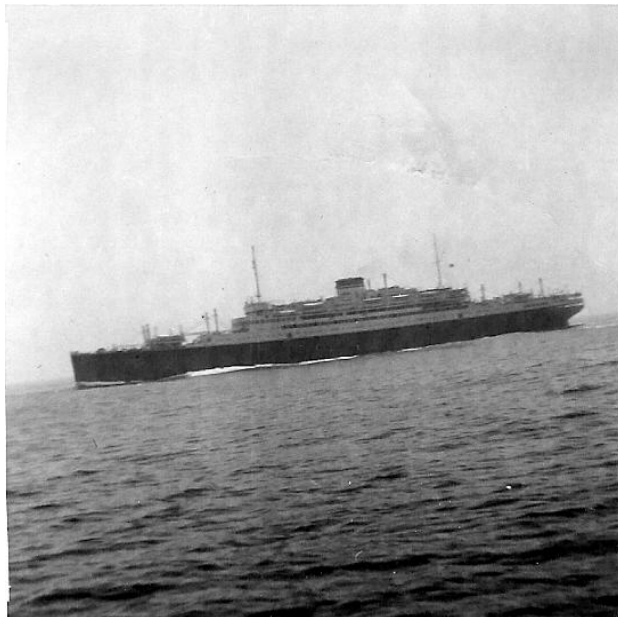
Courtesy of; 60_57.jpgumiye united states and ambrose (2)



SS Independence



SS Constitution



Cristoro Colombo

Note; USCG records show that the Italian liner Cristoro Colombo passed close by the RELIEF 78/505 as she was sinking on 06/24/1960

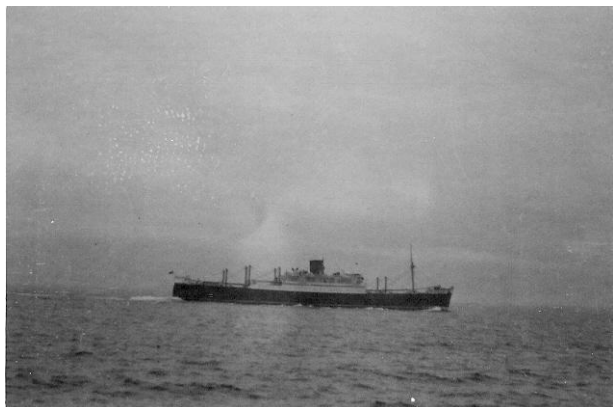
Photos; taken by and from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

These are but some of the magnificent Ocean Liners of a by-gone era that passed by AMBROSE Station. I only took photos of a few of them.

Others that I recall are the America, the Queen Elizabeth (had 2 stacks), the Ile de France, had her name spelt out in lights at the base of her two stacks. A beautiful sight as she sailed by at night, the new France, Nieuw Amsterdam, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Stockholm to name just a few.

Almost always, these magnificent Ocean Liners, as they passed us on the start of their Trans Oceanic voyage, would sound their horn a number of times as a salute, we of course sounded our horn in a return salute. These salutes only took place in daytime, guess they didn't want to wake/scare the passengers at night.

I recall one beautiful summer Sunday afternoon when most of the crew were off duty, taking it easy after a swim off the side of the ship and lying around on the deck sunbathing, when the Leonardo da Vinci came close by on our starboard side. She sounded her horn; all of her officers and crew were at attention giving us a hand salute, while a large number of passengers looked on. As we staggered to our feet in just our bathing suits, we struggled to return their salute. The man on the Deck Watch sounded our horn in a return salute, but he suffered our wrath for not warning us in advance of the presence of the Leonardo da Vinci. What an embarrassment!



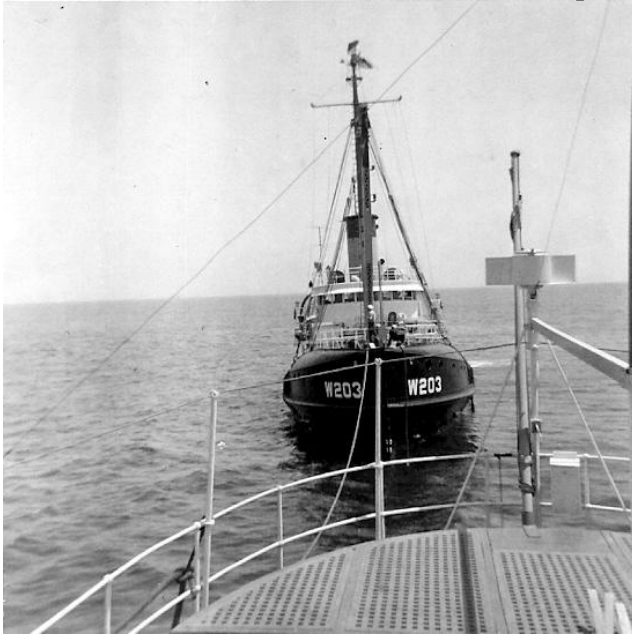
Unidentified freighters and other ships passing by. Perhaps the SS Green Bay was one of them?

Jay McCarthy checking out a passing freighter.



US Navy Destroyer passing on our starboard side.
Photos; by and from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

30 April 1957 – 08 June 1957, Spring of '57 on AMBROSE Lightship Station



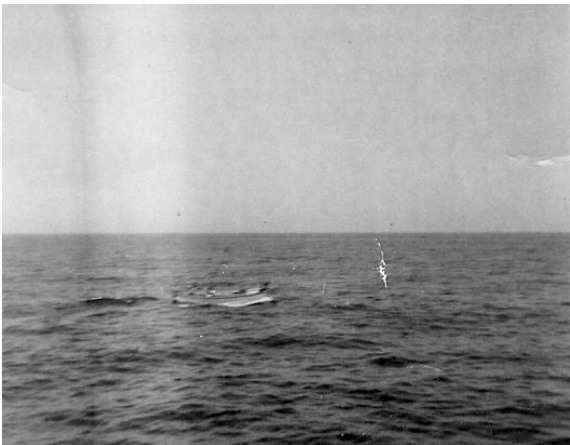
174' WAGL-203, CGC Arbutus, a Buoy Tender.

The following would be the normal procedure that would occur when the Buoy Tender would come up astern of the Lightship.

The Lightship crew would throw a heaving line over to the Buoy Tender, and then pull a mooring line back, which would be used to secure the Buoy Tender off the stern of the Lightship. The Lightship crew would then throw another heaving line over, and a water hose would then be pulled over to the Lightship. This hose would be connected to a fitting for our water tank, and then the Buoy Tender would pump fresh water to the Lightship.

(if we needed fuel, A fuel line would also be passed over)

Only after these tasks were accomplished, would our small boat (26' motor whaleboat) be lowered.



Small boat enroute to Buoy Tender. The purpose was for the weekly transfer of compensatory leave personnel, mail, supplies and fresh food to and from the Buoy (Lighthouse) Tender

CGC Arbutus WAGL-203.



Our small boat alongside the CGC Arbutus WAGL-203 on her port side, swapping out compensatory leave crews, and sending out mail. Then bringing incoming mail, supplies and fresh food aboard.

The small boat would return, be hoisted aboard, and the crew and supplies would be off loaded. By that time, our fresh water tanks would be topped off.

We would then, disconnect the water hose, the Buoy Tender crew would pull it back, and then pull back their mooring line. Shortly thereafter, the Buoy Tender would depart and we would return to our normal regular duty activities.

Note; these photos depict good clear weather. Many a time these activities were conducted in unfavorable weather conditions. Rain, snow, ice and sometimes, much to the consternation of the Buoy Tender crews, rough seas.

Photos; by and from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

Standing Deck Watch;

This was my first Lightship Station assignment and I had an awful lot to learn. One of the first things I had to learn was standing the deck watch. For my first deck watch, I was very fortunate to be able to share the watch with Ray D'urbano. Normally, you stand the watch alone, but in this case Ray was my mentor and Lee Burbage BM1, assigned us together and told me to pay strict attention to Ray, as my next watch I would be on my own. It was a lot to absorb and for my first watch, I most certainly was happy I wasn't alone.

Ray instructed me on what to look for when scanning the open seas, showed me the all important "General Alarm (aka General Quarters) button located on the exterior front of the Wheel House. The Alarm was to be sounded in case of an imminent collision (ship too close), or other such emergency.

As noted earlier; I did sound this alarm during this time frame on Ambrose Station. The Ocean Liner Andrea Doria outbound at night, passed very close to our starboard side and I thought she was going to hit us.

Ray also covered me on the Fog Horn procedures, use of the radar, how to fill in the Log Book, how to use and monitor the radio, took me aft to the after Deck House which housed the Radio Beacon. There I learned what to inspect, verify the time was correct using a Greenwich Meridian time monitor, and perform this mandatory routine every hour. Other ships and planes depended on the accuracy of our Radio Beacon. Back in the Wheel House, Ray instructed me on how to take the weather report, including recording sea temperatures, sea conditions, clouds, wind, and air temperatures and radio the report into Coast Guard Radio New York at the start of each watch. Chief instruction was to keep my eyes open and stay alert. Everything else would fall into place.

As I took my turn standing deck watches (which were rotated) on my own, I gained confidence until one morning when standing the 0400 to 0800 watch. On this watch, among other responsibilities, you had the duty to sound reveille. At 0600 you woke the cooks; at 0700 you woke the crew.

We had no audible speaker system, nor was a Bosun's whistle blown. Instead, we did it the old fashioned way. On our 1904 ship, we had two man compartments with wooden louvered sliding doors. We simply knocked and opened the door, saying anything from time to get up, to get your lazy butt up (depending on how well you got along with the shipmate), but avoided saying anything that would require you to get a punch in the mouth. After waking the crew, you would go aft through the passageway to the Ward Room, wake the Skipper, XO, ENC, and at this time Lee Burbage BM1 was residing there also. Each man had his own small compartment.

You also were required to put on the Ward Room coffee pot and get it brewing before heading back topside to the Wheelhouse. On this particular morning, I forgot to put the coffee pot on. I learned the hard way that the Skipper, Mr. Wicks liked his cup of coffee 1st. thing in the morning, as did BMC Maxwell Fulcher.

Sometime after returning topside, Mr. Wicks came up to the bridge and demanded to know if I had problems remembering my duties. I stammered out, no sir, and had no idea what the problem was?

He then proceeded to ream me out about not putting the coffee pot on and that it was of utmost importance that the coffee was brewing when he first walked into the mini Ward Room galley.

Author Note; our gun armory, consisting of 45 cal. Pistol, M1 rifle and line gun (used for water rescues) was also located there. All guns were in a locked wooden cabinet mounted on the bulkhead.

Mr. Wicks then proceeded to tell me that if I screwed up again by not putting the coffee pot on, I would lose my compensatory leave time and would be restricted to the ship till we got back into port.

As a 19 year old, and my first time on a Lightship Station, to say that I was shook up and scared would be an understatement. After that, I never again forgot to put the coffee pot on.

Maxwell Fulcher BMC;

Later that day, while working topside, Burbage told me that it was BMC Fulcher who really made the big stink about the coffee pot, and told Mr. Wicks that he thought I was too overwhelmed (?) to remember all my duties.

Mr. Wicks was a fairly decent man who didn't speak or interface with the crew much. Occasionally, I would see him smile, but had little opportunity to hold a conversation with him. When I did have the occasion to speak with him, mostly he conducted himself in an official like capacity with little small talk banter. He seemed like a decent man, but always looked to have a lot on his mind.

Boatswain's Mate Chief Maxwell Fulcher on the other hand, was in my opinion, for the less than three months that I knew him before he retired, bad news.

From the first day that I reported aboard the RELIEF 78/505 at sea (remember my grand entrance on my hands and knees onto the deck after climbing up the Jacobs ladder, as part of the crew returning to the RELIEF on AMBROSE Station during heavy seas), he never let up his harassment. Burbage told me that Fulcher didn't like New Yorkers. I have no idea why? Coming from NYC, I didn't stand a chance, Ray D'urbano suffered the same fate even though he came from Rochester in upstate NY, and not NYC, it didn't matter to Fulcher. ALL New Yorkers were the same. Perhaps it was where he was from, or perhaps he had a bad experience while ashore on liberty in NYC? I have absolutely no idea what was in his head.

I tried to avoid him as much as possible, but on a small 129' ship at sea it was hard to do. In my first six weeks at sea, he had me chip and wire brush paint inside the small boat davits and apply red lead paint (we didn't know red lead paint was hazardous to your health back then), climb to the top of both 60' masts to do maintenance tasks (note; in those days there were no safety lines or harnesses), and as the waves hit the ship I held on tight while climbing up and down on the Ratlines (rope ladder going up to the top of the masts, nothing solid underfoot).

On numerous occasions, he had me buff the 02 decks with a big old electric floor buffer that probably weighed more than me; the buffer and I were tossed from bulkhead to bulkhead during rough seas. When AMBROSE WLV-613 came back out to station, I had to go down into the chain locker to flake out the anchor chain as it was being hauled up. It was a dirty, smelly and very scary job. Of course in fairness, all seamen at one time or another had to take their turn down into the chain locker.

For the non-nautical types reading this; flaking out the anchor chain, meant to place / lay out the anchor chain in long layers going back and forth atop each lower layer in such a way, that when the next time we would have to drop the anchor, the chain would flow out the anchor hawse pipe smoothly and cleanly.

Now, in his life with his family and friends, Chief Fulcher might have been a wonderful and great guy. But, as a young Seaman Apprentice and with the way he treated me, I saw him as a miserable, gruff old SOB.

Sometime after we returned from Ambrose Lightship Station to Base St. George and before we sailed out two weeks later to relieve Scotland Lightship Station, BMC Maxwell Fulcher went ashore...

17 July 1957; was the official date for Change of Executive Officers;

Fulcher, Maxwell BMC... retired from the USCG

Relieved by,

Carter, Louis C. BMC... Chief Carter was a breath of fresh air. He was tough, knowledgeable and very fair.

This was my happiest day aboard the RELIEF 78/505 so far!

07 December 1957 – 19 January 1958, Christmas and New Years on AMBROSE Lightship Station

Motor Whaleboat Foundered;

Shortly after arriving on Ambrose Station in early December 1957, the weather turned bad. I can't recall all the details, but I do know we did not have a full complement of crew aboard. Anyway, somewhere around 1030, on a Wednesday, I recall the Buoy Tender (name unknown) arriving for our weekly resupply and rotation of compensatory leave personnel. We went through the normal procedures of her tying up astern, passed over the water hose and started pumping fresh water into our tanks.

The seas were very choppy at about four foot and increasing to six foot. Mr. Wicks, in a very unusual move, stated that he would be the coxswain on the small boat for the trip back and forth to the buoy tender. As the Skipper, and being shorthanded, he weighed his options thoroughly and decided on his plan of action. From what I heard he was an excellent small boat coxswain (although I had not seen him running the small boat before) and he clearly thought this situation out. Now that would leave only ENC Thrush, I believe Ray D'urbano (not sure) who just made BM3, a Fireman (Engineman striker), a cook and myself aboard. I had the 0800 to 1200 deck watch, and Mr. Wicks calmly spoke to me before leaving. McCarthy, I want you to stay very vigilant throughout this passage and stand by the radio should we have to contact you. I replied, yes sir, but got a very uneasy feeling inside. In the eight months I had been aboard, we never once used the radio to communicate with our small boat crew over at the buoy tender. The Jacobs ladder was then placed over the side and several men that had helped us crank out and lower the small boat climbed down the ladder into the boat to go on compensatory leave. The idea was that when the small boat returned, several of the returning men would climb back up the ladder and help us hoist and bring the small boat back aboard. Note; we had more men returning than leaving, some had taken leave over Thanksgiving, including BMC Carter. Thus the uneven crew level aboard.

Away the small boat; all went well as the motor whaleboat came alongside the Buoy Tender on her starboard side. She would take some white water from the waves over the rail, but nothing that couldn't be handled. The outgoing crew and mail got out of the small boat. As the supplies and mail were being loaded aboard, suddenly out of seemingly nowhere, a rogue wave hit the motor whaleboat and it foundered. She did not sink, but she took on a lot of water and was down close by the gunwale. Mr. Wicks got out; the buoy tender crew was great and almost immediately started to pump her out. Once the water was pumped out, then numerous enginemen tried to get the small inboard gasoline engine started again.

The seas were getting rougher, when after about 20 minutes I heard Mr. Wicks on the radio. No wonder he was the Skipper, in a calm but very authoritative voice, he told me, McCarthy get Chief Thrush and the rest of the crew into the wheelhouse. I did, and Mr. Wicks then explained the situation. They couldn't get the engine started and didn't have much time to work on it as the seas were getting worse. Mr. Wicks stated that we were going to tow the motor whaleboat back alongside. Okay, I had made Seaman several months before and was now going to embark on a task I have never done, or even heard of before.

Mr. Wicks instructed (I believe) D'urbano to get one of the bow mooring lines, tie one end off on the Ships Bell Stantion, so it wouldn't come loose during the upcoming actions, then wrap several turns on the Capstan, feed the other end of the line through the starboard side bow hawse pipe and pull it down to the stern. After tying the line off to the bell, taking several turns on the capstan, we fed the other end through the bow hawse pipe; we then had the cook continue to feed the line through the hawse pipe, as the rest of us (under the direction of ENC Thrush) fed the line down along the outboard side of the starboard rail to the stern. As we went between the boat davits, we were real nervous and feared falling overboard from this open and exposed space (no railings) into the rough seas. We were so focused on getting the line to the stern, that when we got to the big open spacing, we had never given a thought to put life jackets on. After all we were aboard the ship, were perfectly safe and had no prior need for life jackets! So we thought! At the time it still didn't register with us that we didn't have life jackets on. Finally, we got past the boat davits (thank God) and we reached the stern, the crew of the buoy tender then threw a heaving line over. We tied off our mooring line to the heaving line; the buoy tender crew then pulled it back over, and attached it to the bow of our motor whaleboat.

In the meantime, we had topped off our water tanks, ENC Thrush had gone below to verify, then he gave the OK for the Fireman to disconnect the water hose, and the crew of the buoy tender retrieved it.

Mr. Wick's next instructions were to start pulling in the mooring line by use of the capstan. We were going to tow our motor whaleboat back via the capstan. As we worked the line on the capstan with D'urbano, myself the Fireman, and the cook. ENC Thrush monitored the progress of the small boat, constantly providing us feedback along the way. The motor whaleboat was taking on water, and without the engine running, they couldn't use the bilge pump to pump the water out.

Gradually, in what seemed a lifetime, but probably was no more than 5 – 10 minutes, we pulled the small boat back alongside to the point that they could attach the falls to the motor whale boat to hoist her out of the water. Most of the returning crew climbed up the Jacobs ladder to lend assistance. We hoisted the boat up, swung her aboard, lowered and secured her into her cradle.

Next, we let go the mooring line to the buoy tender. They hauled in the line and were on their way back to Base St. George or to their next assignment.

Everyone was cold, wet, exhausted, but yet happy that everybody was safe, and no one was hurt.

Throughout this whole ordeal I was scared stiff, for fear something might go wrong and if I screwed anything up, Mr. Wicks was going to kill me.

After taking a shower, changing his clothes and getting a cup of coffee. Mr. Wicks came forward, shook my hand and said; good job McCarthy, he then went and shook hands with the remainder of the crew.

No, I can't remember the name of the cook (maybe McFarland or Hardwick), or the Fireman (maybe Baglio), as all I can recall was that they weren't with us too long into 1958.

I recall the incident clearly, but after almost 59 years, memories of the exact names of all those involved are a little fuzzy.

I do know that I would never want to go through anything like that experience again.

Oh yes, for the next week, we ate a lot of fish and rice, as our food supplies were ruined.

The following week the seas were calm, the resupply, mail and compensatory leave transfer went well, and we had good weather (no Nor'easters) for the remainder of the year.

We once again ate well, and things got back to normal as we prepared for Christmas at sea.



The crew posed for a picture before lowering the small boat for the compensatory leave crew transfer over to the Buoy Tender. The small boat is swung out and partially lowered and is behind them at deck level. Note the men in life jackets, were the men manning the small boat on this trip.

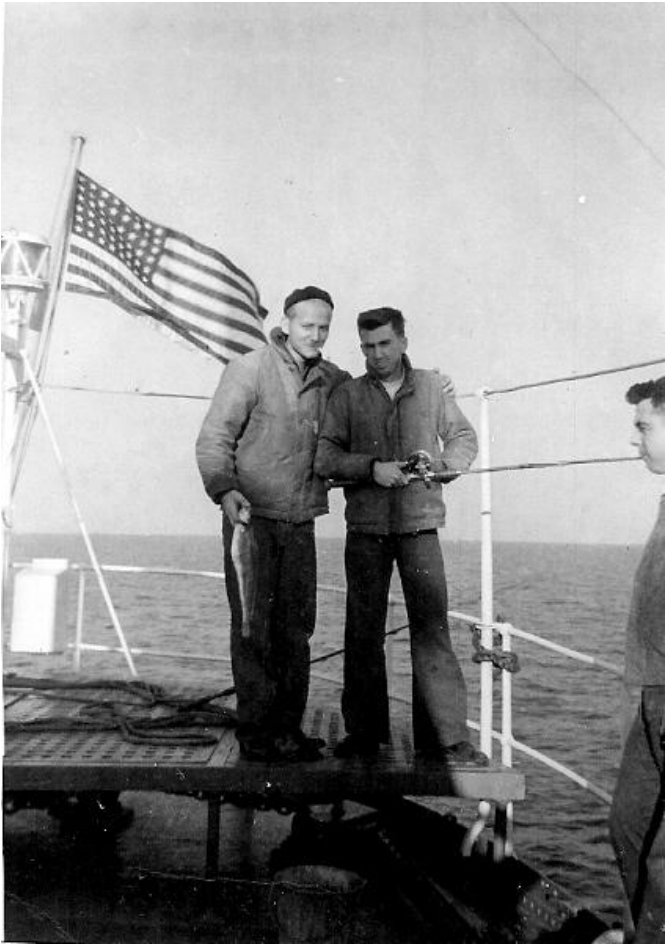
L-R, Virgilio Dalomba – Rhode Island, Ray D’urbano – Rochester, NY, J. F. “Jay” McCarthy (author) - City Island, Bronx NYC, Dave Fiterman – Fargo, North Dakota, Frank Baglio – Pittsburgh, PA, Bob Quail – not sure, but I think somewhere in New Jersey, Louis C. Carter, BMC - Connecticut



Freighter passing AMBROSE Lightship Station, mid December 1957

Photos; from the J. F. “Jay” McCarthy collection

Christmas Day 1957...



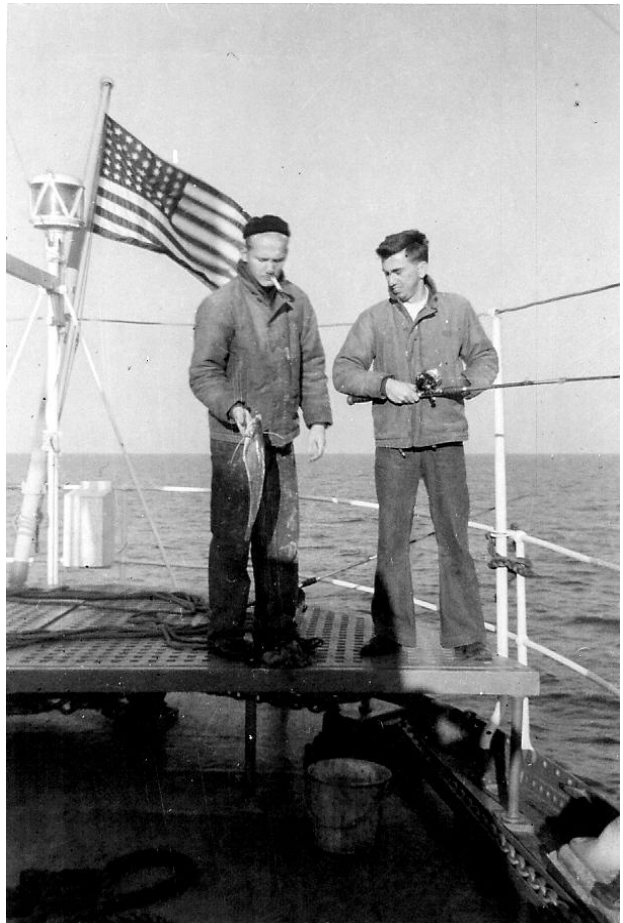
The weather was beautiful with calm seas.

While awaiting Christmas Day dinner.
Bud Fairfull (L) and I decided to take some time out
to do some fishing.

Looking on is Lee Burbage BM1.

Bud and myself looking over our catch.

Note; most fish caught were cleaned and cooked.





Time for a little clowning around.



The author getting some fresh air after Christmas dinner.

Note, steering chains passing through pulleys to rudder quadrant and shaft.

Photos; from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection.

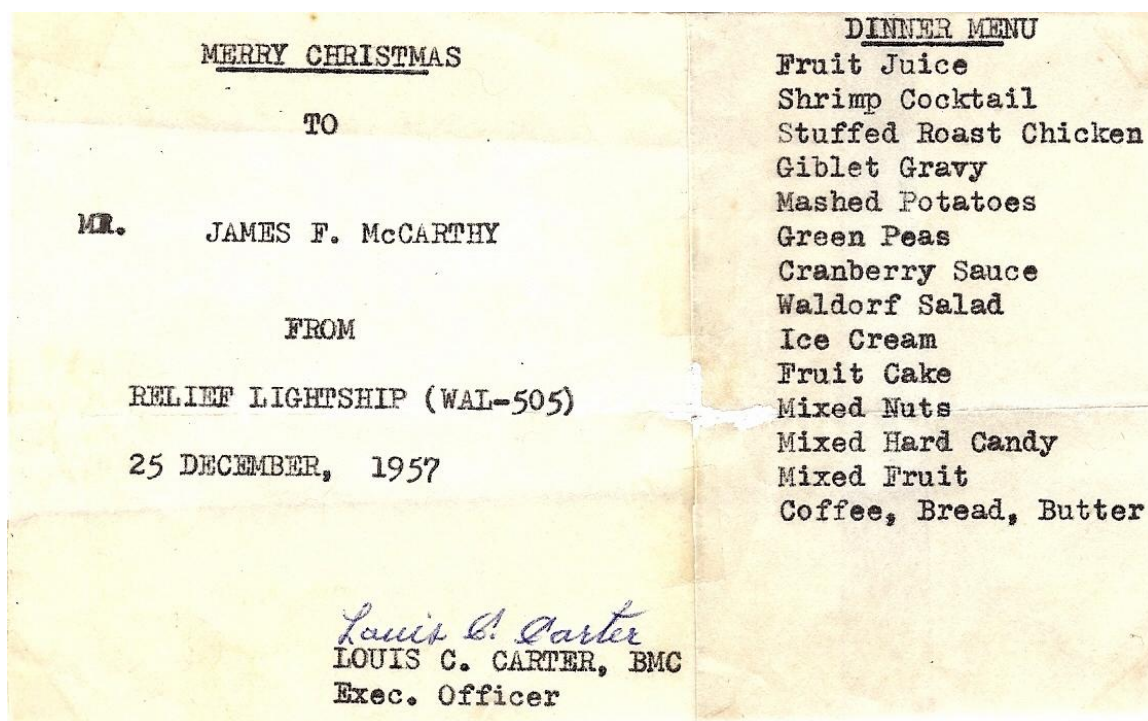
Christmas Menu 1957

For our 1st. time, myself and a number of other young shipmates spent Christmas at sea in 1957, and for many of us, it was also our 1st. Christmas away from home.

BMC Louis Carter realized that, as he typed up each of us a special Christmas Menu, and gave us all a much appreciated USCG Base St. George inscribed lighter as a present. I still have both;

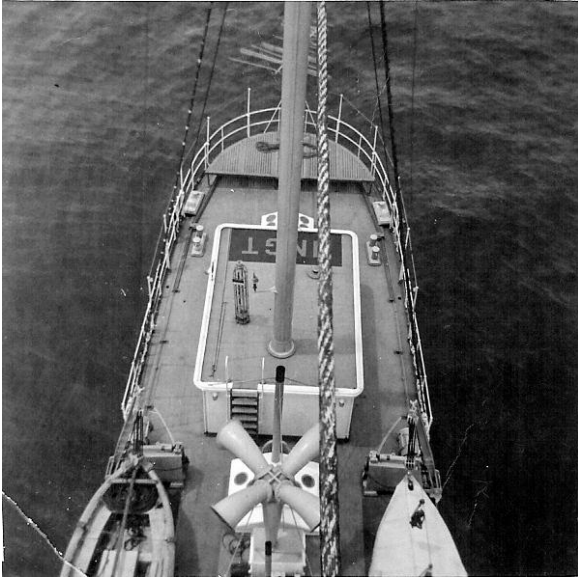
Lee Burbage reminded me, that Boatswain's Mate Chief Carter also bought a bottle forward from the Wardroom, and gave each of us, one Christmas holiday drink at dinner. Truly, Chief Carter didn't have to, but it shows what kind of man he was.

Author's Note; since it was against regulations to have liquor aboard, none of us said a word about this holiday drink till many years later. Chief Carter also shared Christmas dinner with us on the mess deck instead of in the Ward Room.



1957 Christmas Menu & Lighter Gift from Chief Carter - Above:

29 April 1958 – 08 June 1958, on AMBROSE Lightship Station

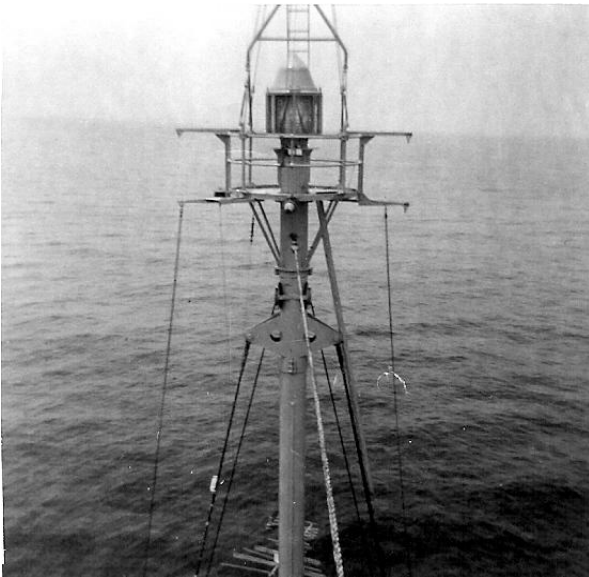


This photo was taken from the top of the forward mast (stick), looking down on the stern.

The Radio Beacon is housed in this after deck house.

The odd looking stack at the bottom of photo, with the 4 outlets was our fog horn.

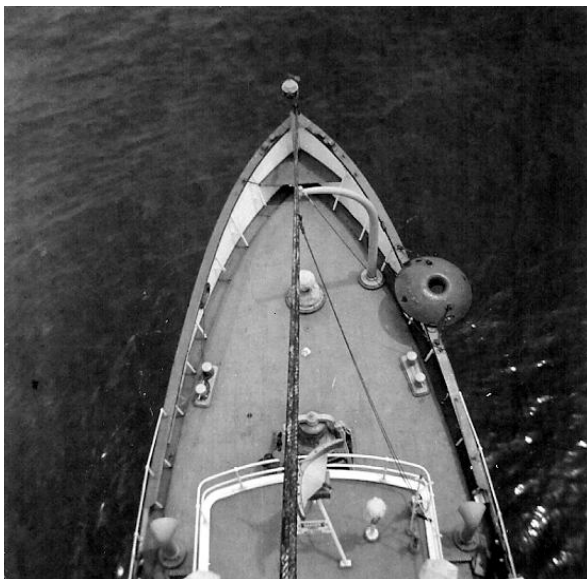
Sometime after I took these photos, and upon our return to CG Base St. George, the emergency inflatable life raft, was installed on top of the after deck house. This is the life raft that was used on 24 June 1960 when the ship was sunk.



Again, this photo was taken from the top of the forward mast (stick), looking at the after mast light beacon (lantern). These combinations of three photos were all taken from the forward mast. The masts were approximately 60' above the deck, and there was probably another 20'-25' to the waterline. I could look into the distance and see where the Horizon met the Sky.

Back then I (we) used to climb aloft at various times for numerous maintenance tasks on both masts. We used to hang in a bosun's chair while painting the masts. No safety lines or safety vests (pre OSHA) in those days.

Today, I own a one story house and don't even like to climb up on my roof! There is no way I would climb aloft today.

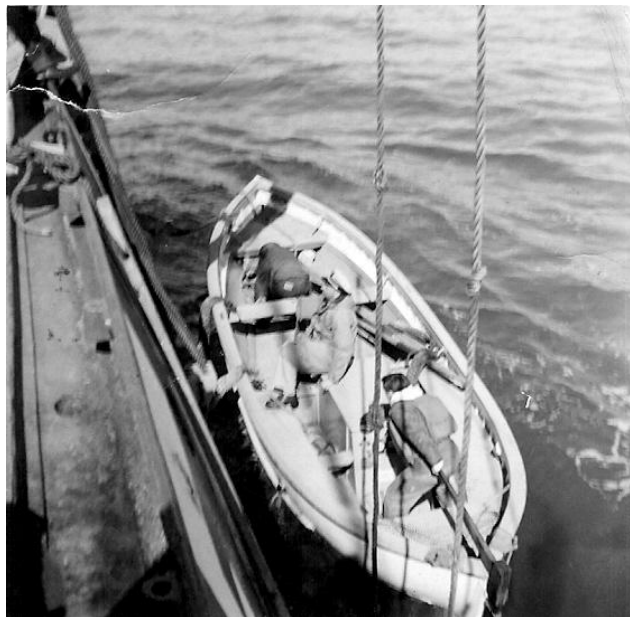


This photo provides a view from the top of the forward mast looking down at the bow. Directly below is the Wheelhouse, the ships bell is just forward of Wheelhouse (aka Bridge). Moving towards the bow, we can see the capstan in the middle. On the starboard rail is our 5000 pound spare mushroom anchor. Just forward of the anchor is the davit used to hoist and put the anchor over the side in the event of the loss of our main anchor, or some other such emergency.

These views from aloft, demonstrate how insignificant we were in relation to our surroundings!

Photos; from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection.

29 November 1958 – 10 January 1959, another Christmas and New Years spent on Ambrose Station.

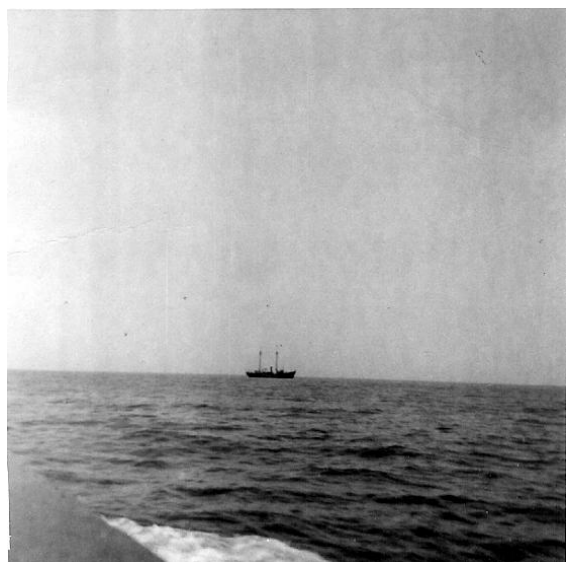


Early December, the weekly transfer to Buoy Tender, by the motor whaleboat.

Looking at this photo reminds me of winter at sea. Handling the “falls” in ice cold weather, going through the process of launching and recovering the small boat, with ice on the lines, ice underfoot, ice cold winds and worth every minute of it for liberty, fresh food and mail. Ahh, memories.

Note, our Skipper was very tolerant, that’s a white “USA Drinking Team” sweatshirt, with hood, that I’m wearing under my foul weather jacket and life vest and no hat. Wouldn’t get away with that on one of the big white cutters.

Small boat view, bow to stern; Bobbie Pierce, G.R. Brower, CHBOSN W-1, our Captain sitting on engine cover, and J. F. “Jay” McCarthy, (author) handling the tiller.



View of RELIEF 78/505 from the deck of Buoy Tender.

Returning from compensatory leave.



Getting closer to the RELIEF 78/505 as viewed from the deck of Buoy Tender

December 1958, pre Christmas Nor'easter;

Sometime in mid December of 1958 we were hit with a horrific Nor'easter. I don't recall the exact date, but do know it was before the Christmas compensatory leave Buoy Tender visit was scheduled. Those going ashore (mostly the married crew) for Christmas were quite concerned the storm wouldn't blow out before the Buoy Tender could come out. Even though I (single at the time) was staying aboard, I could understand their anguish. However, first things first, we had to survive this storm.

It seemed to come out of nowhere, as most winter Nor'easters seem to do, and grew to what seemed a deafening crescendo on about the second night. I recall being on the 2000 to 2400 deck watch and was in the wheelhouse where flashes of lightning illuminated the drawn faces of all. Mr. Brower was also there surveying the situation when Chief Carter came topside and reported that there was an awful lot of strain on the anchor chain and the anchor pawl kept riding up the link. I don't know how much chain we had out, but Mr. Brower ordered several more shots (about 180 feet) of chain out. He also ordered the engine room to bring the engine on line should we need it. The wheel and rudder were both still dogged down as we were taking the (I would guess, 35-50 foot) waves directly over the bow and there was no need to try to change our direction. The "anemometer" (wind speed & direction) was fluctuating between 60 and 70 knots and the direction kept spinning like crazy. BMC Carter returned to the bridge after letting out the additional two shots of anchor chain to report it looked like the anchor chain and anchor pawl were riding much better.

Mr. Brower and Chief Carter swayed in time with each swell, as towering waves pounded our small ship. They stood discussing the pros and cons of whether to try and bring the engine to slow ahead in an attempt to reduce the strain on the anchor chain, when all of a sudden the engine died.

All we heard now was the splattering of hail hitting the portholes and the wooden bulkhead of the wheelhouse caused by sheer cliffs of black water driven by the icy wind. It sounded like we were being sandblasted. Then out of the black night, the ship suddenly heaved over 15 to 20 degrees to the starboard side, as a rogue wave hit us and everyone was thrown off balance. It was dark and we never saw the wave coming. A quick check was made and no one was hurt. If a crewman had been thrown onto or across the deck into a bulkhead, he quite possibly could have been seriously injured with a broken arm, leg or worse. Below deck was a mess, but thankfully, all were OK, shook up, but OK.

Our anchor chain was still intact. The fear now was that if the chain parted, and we remained without engine power, we could be cast adrift and be helpless in the elements. You could feel the tension in the wheelhouse as Chief Carter and Mr. Brower discussed the possibility of having to use the spare anchor. Neither one wanted to use it if they could at all avoid it. It was a very difficult procedure in the best of times, and could cause more harm than good if the anchor was released improperly, it quite possibly could put a hole in our hull on the starboard side. Our spare anchor was a 5000 pound mushroom anchor that was secured on top of the starboard bow rail. Use of this anchor was complicated, labor intensive and a very dangerous task, if it were to be attempted in the middle of a raging storm. Mr. Brower proposed a plan if needed, and BMC Carter agreed with his plan. This plan would be enacted only as a last resort.

About this time, thankfully the engine came back on line. ENC Thrush had worked his magic and he explained to Mr. Brower what went wrong. Something about a fuel line transfer problem was the rumor I heard. The engine room force weren't talking! The "snipes" stuck together in silence which made the deck force suspicious of some underlying shenanigans! We didn't push it, as the importance of the engine being back on line took precedence.

The atmosphere in the wheelhouse quickly returned to the calm, professional condition it had been in before. Mr. Brower and Chief Carter spoke to each other in low deliberate tones of voice relaying confidence in our situation. That was them, me, I was just plain scared!

They returned to their discussion about using the engine at slow ahead speed to relieve the strain on the anchor chain. Mr. Brower finally made the decision to keep monitoring the anchor chain, and use the engine only if really needed. Both men were still in the wheelhouse when I went off watch. Nobody slept that night, and a fresh pot of coffee was brewing all night.

During the night, at least several more shots of anchor chain were let out, as the storm continued unabated.

As dawn broke on the third day, through the rain and sleet we could see the tattered remnants of the canvas cover on the motor whaleboat. Also, tattered was our American flag. Before the storm started, we had hoisted our colors off the stern as usual when anchored. Mr. Brower refused to let anyone out on deck due to the danger of being washed overboard. Thus as long as the storm lasted, our colors were flying, day and night. Same went for our every four hour weather report to CG Radio New York. Sea temperatures were not taken, air temps. and real time visual storm weather conditions were taken from the safety of the Wheelhouse and were reported.

Authors' Note; in the mid to late 1950's, weather forecasts and reporting were nothing like we see on TV today. There were no satellites, etc. to give forecasters a clear picture from outer space of what was approaching and what was actually happening. Our weather reports submitted, along with the many other Lightships and other sources, provided real time information to the weather bureau. I would imagine that combined with other data received, they were able to come up with "SWAG" (Scientific Wild Ass Guess) for the forecasted weather.

Throughout the third day and evening, the roar of the sea, howling of the wind, heavy rain and sleet continued unabated, seemingly from all directions. Some icing started, but didn't get heavy enough to warrant sending anyone out to break it up before it made the ship top heavy.

Some said at the storms height, seas ran as high as 60 feet with winds exceeding 75 knots, hurricane strength. I don't doubt those figures, as it was a really bad storm. However, during my watch, I never recorded figures as high as those in the log book.

Not many of the crew were eating much more than apples and saltine crackers. Coffee was still being consumed at a record level.

In the early morning hours of the fourth day, the storm began to blow itself out. The winds continued, with sporadic high gusts, the seas came down to 15 to 20 foot, and the rain / sleet turned into snow.

When the weather cleared enough, Mr. Brower took a sexton reading; amazingly we weren't blown off station. BMC Carter then took another reading and verified our position. Our 7,500 pound mushroom anchor held us on station. WOW, maybe letting out all that extra anchor chain helped. I do know that several days later, we took back in about three or four shots of chain.

From what I can remember, remnants of the storm hung around for at least another week.

During this time frame while standing the deck watch, I observed the passing of many ships, as many had stayed in port until the storm passed. Many others had stayed safely farther out to sea. Occasionally, my thoughts turned to the unknown number of ships that might have passed us during the storm. How many tracked our radio beacon and were able to see our mast light beacon?

We'll never know, but I would imagine the Skipper of a number of inbound ships during the storm, and being buffeted unmercifully by the same horrendous weather as us, would have been ecstatic to find us.

Yes, we maintained our station, the many ships homing in on our radio beacon, found us right where we were marked on their navigational charts. *I can imagine the glee of the lookout as he reported to the Captain; I can see a flashing light 20 degrees off our port bow over the breaking wave tops. The Captain, already having the Radio Direction Finder readings and now a visual sighting, replies, aye lad, it's Ambrose Lightship Station, we're "homeward bound". He turns to the helmsman, and gives him a new course and says we'll use the Lightships light and radio beacon to guide us safely back to port, and to "home".*

I don't know of what I just described is fact, but based on the long history of Lightships, and the testimony of countless mariners who found the Lightship flashing mast light beacon in the black of night, and over wave tops, I would be hard pressed to believe these scenes were not re-enacted countless times.

I'm not sure if the Christmas Compensatory leave crew left on the next scheduled buoy tender visit, or if it was the following one. I do know, they made it home for Christmas.

Winter scenes on AMBROSE Station, just before Christmas 1958.

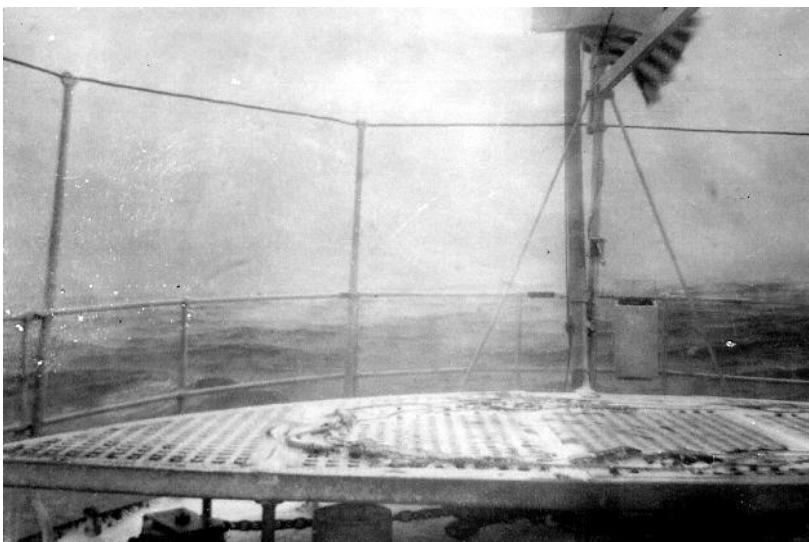


Spare 5000 pound mushroom anchor, sitting on the starboard bow rail.

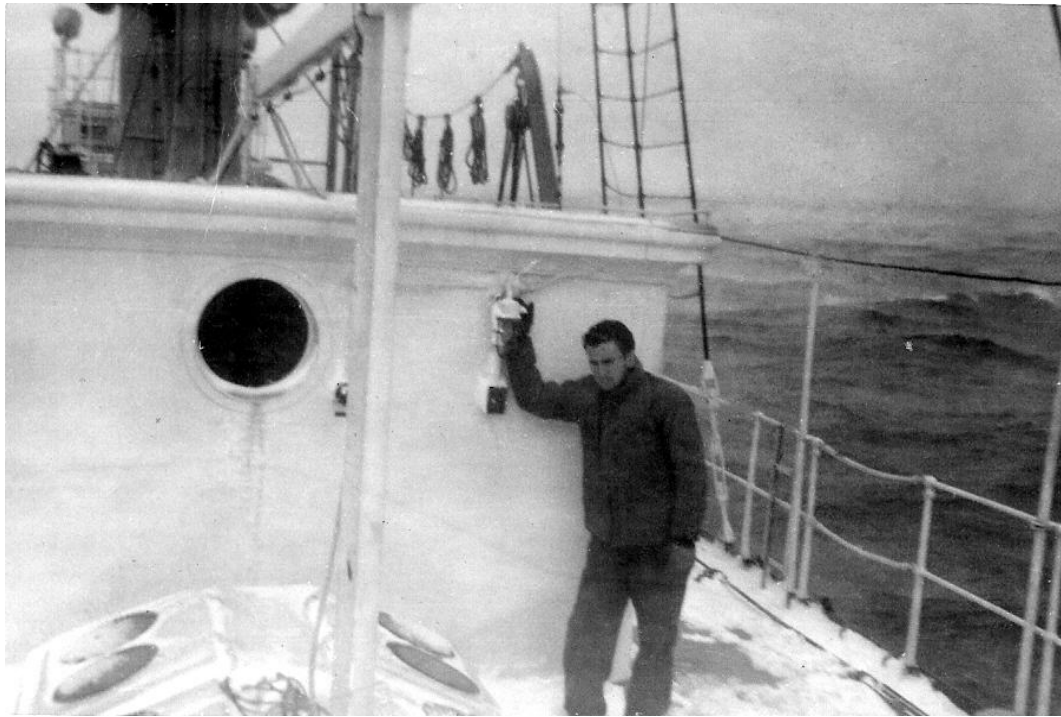
Ships Bell in front of Wheelhouse.



Winter, just before Christmas 1958, this photo shows the motor whale boat on the starboard side, to the right is the fog horn, and below it are the skylights to the engine room. Radio Beacon is located in the after deck house in the background. We had just gone through a very bad storm, followed by snow just before Christmas of '58. The canvas cover on the boat was torn and shredded during the storm. Thus, no cover on the small boat.



Winter, just before Christmas 1958, this photo shows a deck view of the fan tail (stern) area with snow and the fairly rough seas we were still experiencing from a recent storm.



Winter, just before Christmas 1958.

Photo shows the author holding onto a light fixture (slippery underfoot) at rear of the aft deck house (radio beacon room). Skylights are for the Ward Room located directly below on the 02 deck. The snow still aboard and some rough seas from the recent storm. Ship is rockin' and rollin', with a lean toward the starboard side.



Winter, just before Christmas 1958.

This photo shows the author lashing a line for a temporary repair on the aft starboard railing.



Christmas 1958, AMBROSE Lightship Station
Photos; from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

*After having served two Christmas's at sea, some thoughts come to mind:
The holidays have long been the tale of those serving at sea and those safe at home.*

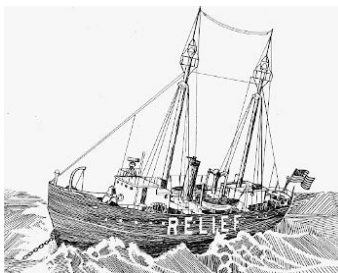
Writing in the 1800's, **Robert Louis Stevenson** captured this balance in the following verses from

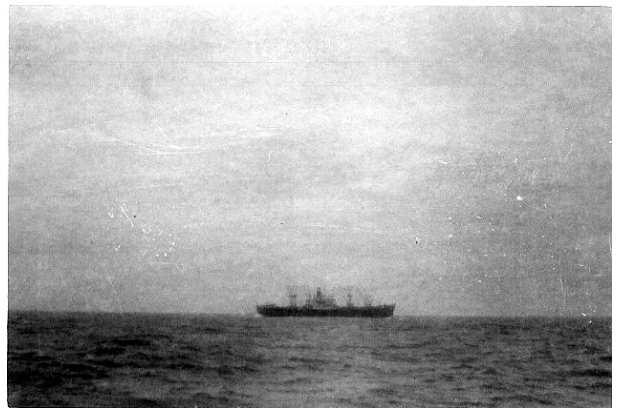
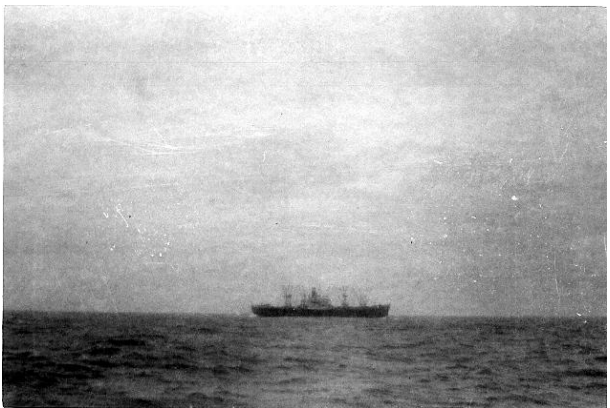
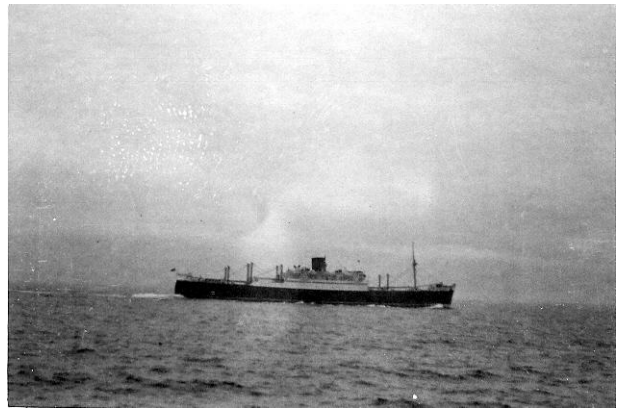
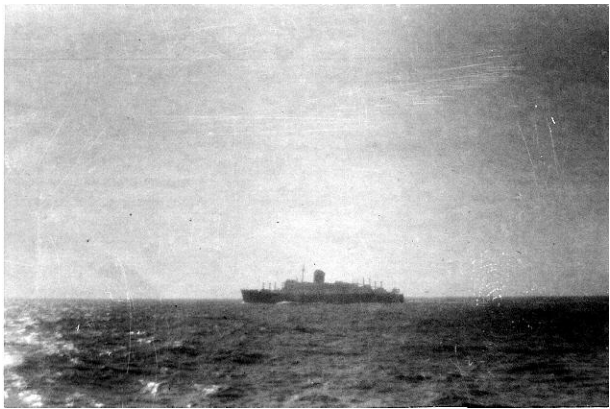
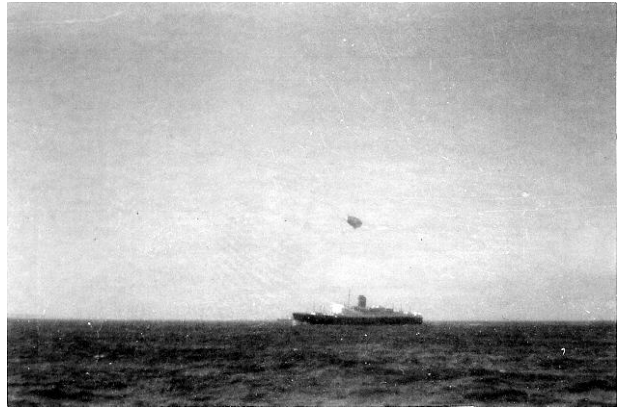
Christmas at Sea:

***"The sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;
The wind was a nor'wester, blowing equally off the sea;
And cliffs and spouting breakers were the only things to lee.***

***"And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that was of me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went to sea;
And O the wicked fool that I seemed in every kind of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessed Christmas Day."***

*To those that have followed us and are deployed at sea over Christmas, we give our thanks.
You are in our thoughts and prayers; we look to your successful voyage and safe return.*





Unidentified ships passing AMBROSE Lightship Station. I took photos, but have no idea what ships they were.

Photos; from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection



AMBROSE WLV-613 circling AMBROSE Light Tower

Source; official USCG photo

24 August 1967 - AMBROSE Lightship Station decommissioned, and replaced by a manned Light Tower.

15 March 1988 - AMBROSE Light Tower crew was permanently removed from the station.

The Light Tower was then controlled electronically from the Coast Guard Base on Governor's Island.

The Light Tower was heavily damaged by a collision with the oil tanker Aegeo in October 1996, resulting in the loss of one of her four 42" diameter steel pipe legs.



Source; official USCG photo

1999 – The original (1967) AMBROSE Light tower, after many collisions was replaced by a new 3 legged automatic Light Tower. The new Tower itself was damaged many times including a collision with the freighter Kouros V in January 2001. The Tower was repaired and stayed in service.

28 July 2008, the 2nd. AMBROSE Light Tower, after many serious collisions was decommissioned.

September 2008 - AMBROSE Light Tower was dismantled, and replaced by a flashing automated buoy, with 4 additional nearby buoys to mark the channel. No photos available of flashing automated buoy.

Authors' note; Over the years AMBROSE LIGHTSHIP Station experienced many collisions, some very serious, including LV-111 which was rammed 3 times over a 15 year period but managed to stay afloat. And cumulating on 26 June 1960, with the eventual collision & sinking of RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505 while on station.

The replacement of the AMBROSE Lightship Station by two unmanned automatic Light Towers did little to slow down the many collisions, some of which were extremely serious. These continued collisions resulted in the eventual demolition of both Light Towers and replacement by 5 flashing automated buoys.

Historical documentation shows that AMBROSE STATION was indeed, a very hazardous Station.

WLV-613 SUBSEQUENT DISPOSITION:

She sailed north and became NANTUCKET II. After leaving station in 1983, participated in various law enforcement, security, and public relations missions; sold 7 July 1984 to New England Historic Seaport, for use as floating museum in Boston.

Present at Statue of Liberty rededication ceremony on 3&4 July 1986, New York Harbor.

Sometime after, she was purchased by Jack Baker who put well over a million dollars of his own money into an overhaul. Mr. Baker was an outstanding steward of the ship.

In early 2015, Mr. Bill Golden and his wife Kristen, owners of the Nantucket I, WVL-612, purchased the WLV-613 from her owner Jack Baker of Wareham Steamship Corporation, Wareham, Massachusetts. She was moved to DRYDOCK in New Bedford, MA. for a complete restoration back to her original configuration. Tentative plans call for her to be both a museum and restaurant. Perhaps, either in New England or in the NYC area.



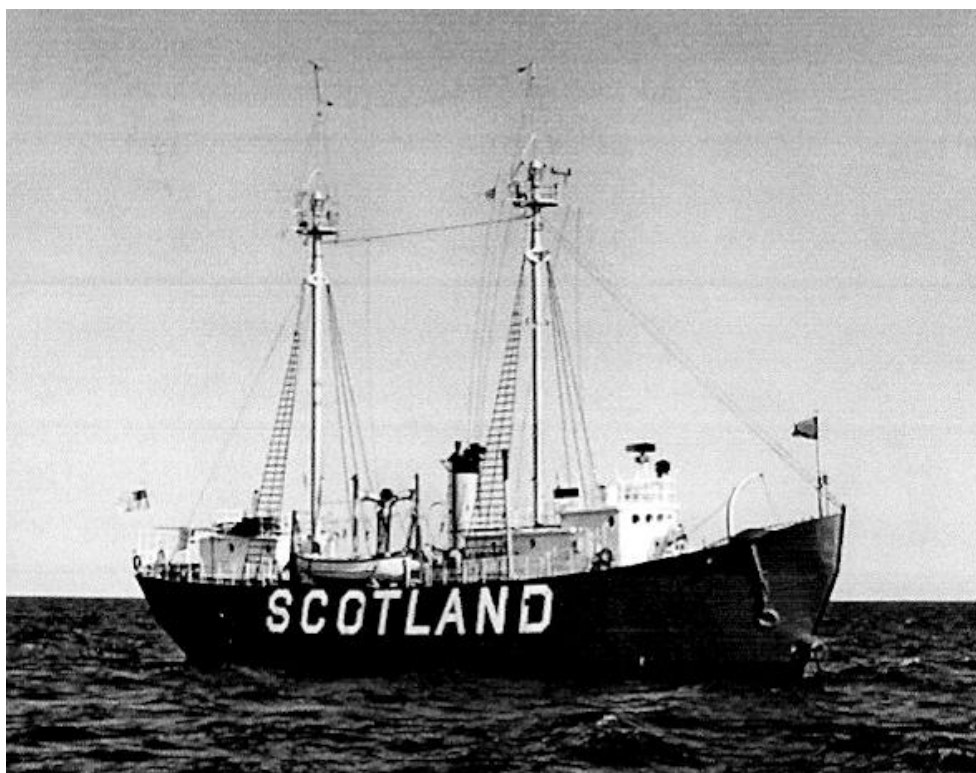
WLV-613, shown as renamed Nantucket
Privately owned and not open to the public.

Photo courtesy of Ron Janard, 02 March 2010 #2
Historian for the
US Coast Guard Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc.
<http://www.uscglightsailors.org/lightships/>

PART FOUR;

SCOTLAND Lightship Station

SCOTLAND Lightship Station



SCOTLAND LV 87 / WAL 512 off Sandy Hook, NJ,
USCG photo

Location & historical notes:

New Jersey, established in 1868 to mark the wreck of the SS *Scotland*. The wreck was removed in 1870 and the station was discontinued. Shipping interests considered the station necessary and therefore it was reestablished in 1874. Moored 3.2 miles and 103 degrees from the Sandy Hook Lighthouse and about 4 1/2 miles westerly from the Ambrose Lightship.

Used as a reference mark primarily by north-south coastwise traffic using the Sandy Hook and Ambrose channels in the approaches to New York Bay. The Scotland radio-beacon was said to have been widely used by commercial aircraft making an approach to Idlewild/JFK airport. Station was named "Wreck of Scotland" from 1868 through 1891 and was then renamed "Scotland".

Historical Notes on LV- 87 / WAL-512 pictured above;

1908-1932: Ambrose Channel (NY)

1932-1936: Relief (NY)

1936-1942: Scotland (NJ)

1942-1944: Examination Vessel WWII

1944-1947: Vineyard Sound (MA)

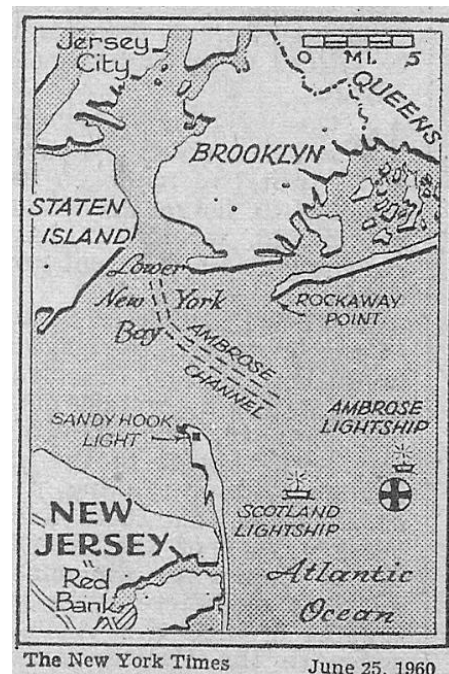
1947-1962: Scotland (NJ)

RETIRED FROM LIGHTSHIP DUTY: 1966; AGE: 59

SUBSEQUENT DISPOSITION: Decommissioned Mar 4, 1966; donated Aug 4, 1968 for use as floating exhibit at South Street Seaport, New York City.

She was renamed Ambrose, as she served on Ambrose Station from 1908-1932.

Source: USCG Historians office <http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/LV87.asp>



We relieved Scotland Lightship LV-87 / WAL-512, three times during my time aboard the RELIEF 78/505.

16 June 1957 - 27 July 1957, summer of '57 on Scotland Station

Injured on my second Lightship Station assignment;

During my first trip out to Scotland Station, I was injured while helping hoist the small boat back aboard. Just about everything on our ship was manual, with very little electrical or hydraulic assistance. When hoisting the small boat out of the water, the small boat was attached to the “falls” (block & tackle for the non-nautical) which was eventually hauled up by the capstan winch. Once up above deck level, the davits had to be hand cranked in by a handle fore & aft. This required two men to crank each handle. Once the davits were cranked straight up, the weight of the boat shifted as you began cranking the boat inward toward its cradle. It's very important for both men to hold onto the handle tightly, as you get it over the cradle and get ready to lower the boat down, otherwise the handle can run free. In my case, the man on the other side of the handle, misjudged the distance remaining for the boat to rest in its cradle. He let go! The handle ran free, spun around and caught me in the upper left cheek. It was a pretty good size injury, with lots of blood and I was told, white flesh.

Prior to the incident, Lee Burbage BM1 had been sewing grommets on the canvas cover over the stern area, which provided shade to those on the aft deck area, and helped keep the summer sun off the Ward room located directly below. Lee came forward with his big needle, and asked BMC Louis Carter, Officer in Charge, if he wanted Lee to sew me up? I was just a kid at the time, probably in shock, and didn't realize he was kidding. I begged Chief Carter not to let Burbage near me with that big needle. Everyone but me got a big laugh out of it.

The following are excerpts from the deck logs; I copied from the National Archives in Washington, DC; *3 July 1957; 1215 McCarthy, James F. received lacerations of left cheek caused by cranking handle of starboard davit running free while hoisting boat aboard. Administered first aid treatment.*

1235 CGC ARTBUS (WAGL-203) departed. Delivered 1300 gallons fresh water, & compensatory leave crews.

1320 CGC 83381 alongside to transfer McCarthy, James F. to Sandy Hook LBS for medical treatment.

Note; while aboard the 83 foot Patrol Boat, the Skipper asked if I wanted to go below and lay down. I declined, afraid that I would pass out. Instead I sat in the deck 20mm gun mount area, out in the fresh air for the trip in. The 83 footer ran at top speed, and used its siren and horn traveling through the many fishing boats offshore. Once at the base, two enlisted men (don't remember names or ratings) put me in a Jeep and traveled rather quickly down to the U.S. Army hospital at Ft. Monmouth, NJ. My head was heavily bandaged and I had not had an opportunity to see what I looked like. On the way inside, we passed two men coming out of the E.R., one had an arm in a sling, and a big bandage on his forehead. His friend said, while pointing at me, you think you're bad, just look at this guy. My knees then began to shake and I felt weak.

An Army Doctor (Captain) sewed 7 stitches in my upper cheek just at the cheek bone, and dressed the wound. I returned to the Sandy Hook Life Boat Station and spent the night on the 83 footer.



Official RELIEF 78/505 Deck Log continues;

“4 July 1957 1030 CGC 83381 arrived with McCarthy, James F. returning from outpatient treatment at U.S. Army hospital, Fort Monmouth, NJ 1035 CGC 83381 departed.”

1200-1600 & 1600-2000, I stood both deck watches.

Photo of CGC-83391, similar to CGC-83381
Source; uscg83footers.org

*“The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!”*

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner – Part One
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798*

27 January 1958 -13 March 1958 - Winter of '58 on Scotland Station.



Being so close to shore (*a little over 3 miles*) during a freezing winter, often the water closest to shore would freeze up, and then as the tide changed and went out, the ice would crack and drift outbound in ice flows.

The shoreline of Sandy Hook, NJ is barely visible in this picture.

The ice floes would encircle the ship, and at night while lying in your bunk, the ice chunks would bang against the hull, much like someone with a hammer.



A lone fishing boat plies the icy waters.

Water fowl resting in the water



14 June 1958 – 26 July 1958 - summer of '58 on Scotland Station



Lowering the small boat, for the weekly transfer of compensatory leave personal, mail, supplies, and fresh food to and from USCG Buoy Tender OAK (W-239).

L-R; Bud Fairfull, G.R. Brower CHBOSN-WI OinC,
Bob Quail EN2 and Ray D'urbano BM3.

Mr. Brower's pipe visible in edge of picture with RELIEF 78/505 in background en route to Buoy Tender.



View of RELIEF 78/505 from Buoy tender

Scotland station was close in to the Sandy Hook, NJ shore at 3.2 miles distance.
Sandy Hook, NJ is visible in this photo.



All eight of the preceding photos are from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection.

Rollers;

At times in the summer months, due to its closeness to shore and shallow waters (I don't recall the actual depth, but have been told, the depth varies from 55 - 90 feet deep-not confirmed). We experienced some good size rollers that would last for a long time.

If you are not familiar, rollers are the big waves you see while standing on the beach looking out to sea. Not all rollers have white caps and sometimes there is a good bit of space between them.

One day during the summer of '58, as we were anchored on Scotland Station, we were caught broadside in a "trough" for most of the day. Broadside in the "trough" meant, our bow was not facing into the oncoming roller. Instead, we rocked back and forth sideways as the roller first hit the starboard side of the ship and then rocked the other way as it came out the port side. We kept hoping for a change in the wind or that the rollers would lessen.

As I started standing the 2000 to 2400 deck watch, nothing had changed.

Around 2100, BMC Louis Carter came into the wheelhouse. He ordered me to un-dog (unlash) the wheel and then go astern to un-dog (unlash) the rudder quadrant & shaft. While anchored on station, both the wheel & rudder quadrant are dogged (lashed) down, so neither will move. In the meantime, Chief Carter had ordered the engine room to place the engine on line (start the engine). Since the Captain, G. R. Brower CWO-1 was ashore on leave; BMC Carter was the Officer in Charge. Chief Carter said that no one will get any sleep tonight while hanging onto their racks as the ship rolled from side to side. His plan was to turn the bow into the oncoming rollers (waves); the bow would cut through the rollers and make for a more normal condition. Once the engine room was ready, he ordered slow ahead, and ordered me to come to full right rudder.

As I have shared earlier, we were built in 1904, with a sailing ship type wheel and no hydraulic assisted steering. It was all manual. Think of driving a car without power steering. On the road, it was fairly easy to turn the wheel to change lanes; the same was true for the ship while she was underway. Now try getting the car out of a tight parking spot without power steering, you struggle turning the steering wheel as you maneuver the car back and forth to get out. The ship was at anchor so we were in a similar type situation trying to turn the wheel from a dead stop. Our ships wheel had steering cables wrapped around a drum on the wheel, from the wheel they went down below the wheelhouse deck to pulleys which took them out to both port & starboard sides via a pipe to another pulley in each trough into a pipe that ran down both sides of the ship to the stern and another set of pulleys where the cables connected to chains attached to the rudder quadrant & shaft. So now you get the idea. It took a lot of strength to turn the wheel to full right rudder from a dead stop. As a skinny kid back then, I struggled with the wheel. Chief Carter didn't hesitate, he pitched right in, and between the two of us, we brought the wheel all the way around. Slowly the bow turned, Chief Carter was cognizant at all times on the location of the anchor chain. Once we swung around enough, he ordered the engine to "Full Stop"; we brought the wheel back amidships. After Chief Carter was satisfied that we were taking the rollers straight into the bow, he ordered the engine room to shut the engine down, and me to re-dog the wheel and rudder quadrant. Chief Carter then returned below to the Ward Room, we hardly felt the rollers, and everyone got a good night's sleep!

1962 Scotland Station Decommissioned March 4, 1966.



The station was replaced by the Scotland Lighted Horn Buoy "S", which was 0.4 miles and 143 degrees from the final lightship station, and was equipped with RACON (= RAdar and beaCON) and passing light.

Scotland Lighted Horn Buoy "S"
USCG photo



After retirement LV-87/WAL-512;
was donated on Aug 4, 1968 for use as floating
exhibit at South Street Seaport, New York City.
SCOTLAND was renamed AMBROSE.
She is open for tours and on exhibit daily.
<http://www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org>

Photo courtesy of Blaine Kuhn



LV-87/WAL-512 returning to South Street Seaport after DRYDOCK
<http://www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org>

PART FIVE;

CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station

CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station



CORNFIELD POINT LV 118 / WAL 539 off Old Saybrook, Connecticut
Courtesy [USCG](#) Photo

CORNFIELD Lightship Station

Location & historical

notes: Connecticut, southerly from the town of Old Saybrook, off Cornfield Point and the mouth of the Connecticut River, 3.3 miles and 211 degrees from Lynde Point Lighthouse. Moored south of the center of Long Sand Shoal. An important reference mark for traffic passing through Long Island Sound. Cornfield Lightship station was discontinued in late December 1957, and was replaced by a lighted bell buoy located about 2 miles northeasterly from the former lightship station.

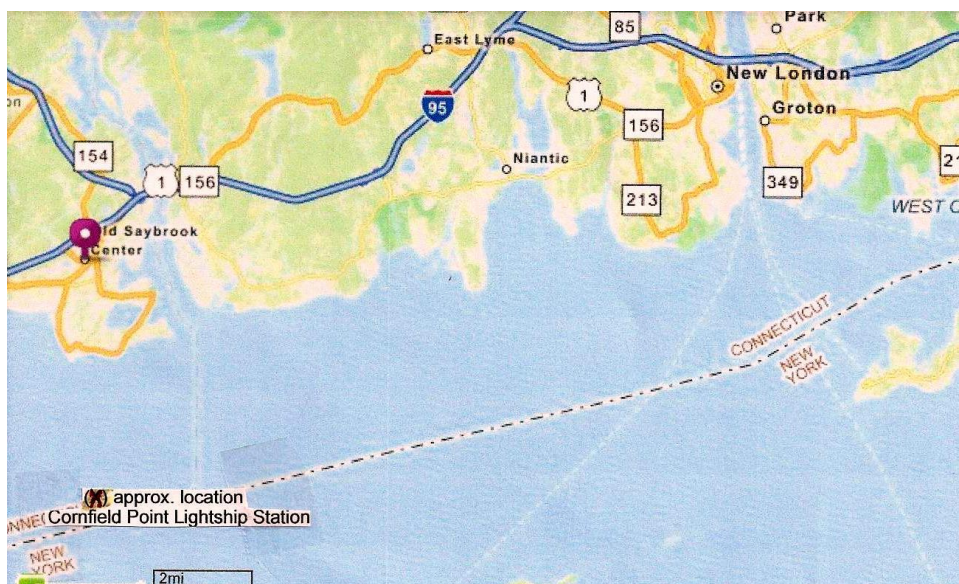
HISTORICAL NOTES on

LV-118 / WAL-539 pictured above:

1939-1957: Cornfield Point (CT)

1958-1962: Cross Rip (MA)

1962-1972: Boston (MA)



RETIRED FROM LIGHTSHIP DUTY: 1972; AGE: 34

<http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/LV118.asp>

We relieved Cornfield Point LV-118/WAL539 Station, from 12 October 1957 through 27 November 1957.

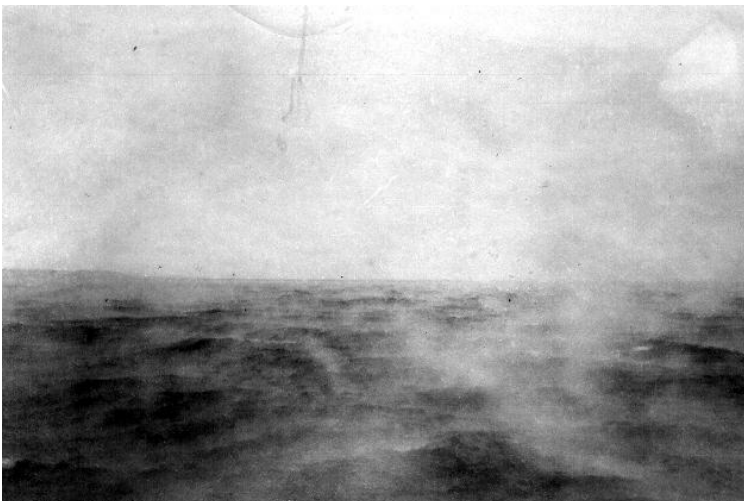
This was my first and only voyage to Cornfield Point Lightship Station; Cornfield Point Lightship Station was discontinued in late December 1957.

USCG 95 foot Patrol Boats resupplied us and a Lighthouse along the way. They took our compensatory leave personnel back and forth to New London, CT. I recall once returning to the ship from leave, sailing down the New Thames River on a 95' Patrol Boat which was keeping pace with a US Navy submarine out of Submarine Base Groton (Submarine HQ was in New London). As we inched ahead, the sub would catch up and pass us. By the time we reached Long Island Sound, both boats were going along at a pretty good rate of speed. The 95 footer would then turn south to take us down to Cornfield Point Lightship Station, while the sub turned north, presumably heading towards Block Island and out into the Atlantic. Both blew their horns in a farewell salute.

A buoy tender only came out whenever we needed to top off our fresh water tanks or fuel. On one trip, a buoy tender needing to replenish our fresh water, stood in and handled the normal weekly run of the 95 footer. On this particular trip, several officers were aboard to do an inspection of the Lighthouse. I know they weren't happy, for they got wet going back and forth in the tenders small boat. I recall a controversy concerning a dog on the Lighthouse. I believe the crew was ordered to have the dog removed. Don't know how that turned out, or the results of their inspection? They did not board our ship for an inspection. I can't recall the 95 footer's #, or buoy tender's name. To the best of my recollection, as to the Lighthouse, I believe it was Falkner Island Lighthouse.



I only took several pictures on this trip. Note the foggy conditions.



During that time frame we experienced a lot of fog; don't know if it was the time of year or because we were in close to shore. No matter, the Fog Horn was on a lot. Quite often, after securing the Fog Horn and we once more had clear visibility around us. We found numerous fishing boats as close to us as they could get, for you see, they sought the security of our Fog Horn and stayed next to us for safety. Once the fog cleared, they waved and were on their way. We encountered this more on Cornfield Station than any other station. We also had one Nor'easter that demonstrated that the waters of Long Island Sound could get just as rough as the Atlantic Ocean.

Temporary Cook Replacement;

We had two cooks aboard. If one was ashore and the other one got sick, then a seaman would have to do the cooking. In this particular incident, one cook was ashore in the hospital, while the one aboard needed to take his compensatory leave time. Chief Carter asked among the seaman, who could cook. Several of us replied that we had cooked at home, and if need be, we could take turns. I won't even attempt to describe the stove, or how it worked, other than to say it was a big black ugly cast iron thing that looked and worked nothing at all like your stove at home. The cook going on leave took us in the galley and gave us a quick rundown on how everything worked, and left us a menu plan (simplified) for the week he would be gone. On the day he was leaving he made breakfast, and showed the seaman the lunch menu (soup and sandwiches) and the dinner he had prepared and placed in the refrigerator for that night. Just had to heat it up that night and serve.

My turn came the next day, and the breakfast menu called for pancakes and sausage. No problem, I can do that. I whipped up the batter and put the sausages on to cook. I then made several stacks of pancakes with sausages, and the crew came in the small galley and helped themselves. In the meantime I had to prepare the dishes for the Ward Room. I made two stacks of pancakes added sausages, poured on syrup, and took the two plates back to the Skipper and XO. I came back up to the galley and just finished making up the next two plates for the ENC & BM1, also in the Ward Room. All of a sudden, Mr. Wicks appeared in the hatch, he was livid! He had his plate of pancakes, and sausage in his hand. He started yelling and wanted to know if I was trying to get him sick or worse, kill him. I had no idea what was wrong until he pointed to his plate. I looked, and then looked again. Remember me sharing that the ship was overrun with cockroaches? Well, it seems one of them somehow had gotten into the syrup bottle and when I poured syrup on Mr. Wicks pancakes, he came out (dead, of course). I never saw him when I poured the syrup and neither had Mr. Wicks till after he cut his pancakes and put his fork in the portion he was going to eat. Then all hell broke loose.

Mr. Wicks ordered me out of the galley, put me on restriction, no compensatory leave, and God knows what else, all the while holding the plate with the dead roach on it. The ENC & BM1 in the meantime came forward, found their plates of pancakes and sausage, inspected them and brought them back to the Ward Room to eat. Everyone else finished their breakfast, except for Mr. Wicks, he lost his appetite.

Chief Carter assigned someone else to finish the breakfast, lunch and dinner cooking for the day. BM1 Burbage had me stand a double deck watch from 1200 to 2000, mainly to get me out of sight of Mr. Wicks.

Around 1800, BMC Carter came up to the wheel house and spoke with me. He said he understood it was an honest mistake, but unfortunately it occurred to Mr. Wicks. Chief Carter went on to say my saving grace came because of Engineman Chief Thrush. Chief Thrush didn't come to my defense, but instead tried to make light of my misfortune by saying that I didn't know any better, as I was a Seaman / Boatswain Mate striker. Only an Engineman would have been alert and smart enough to recognize the roach in the syrup. That went over like a lead balloon, as Mr. Wicks, Chief Carter and Lee Burbage, all in attendance, and all Boatswain Mates, didn't appreciate his alleged sense of humor.

Editors note; for the non-nautical type, there always has been a big ongoing rivalry between the deck force (Seamen/Boatswain Mates) and the engine room force (Fireman/Engineman) with a lot of good natured bantering about deck apes and grease monkeys (snipes), etc.

However, Chief Thrush's comments gave Mr. Wicks (now calmed down) pause for thought in the sense that he knew the ship was overrun with cockroaches and that in all honesty; it probably was just a mistake that could have happened to anyone. Unfortunately I made it, and Mr. Wicks was the recipient. Chief Carter and Lee Burbage told Mr. Wicks that it wasn't in my nature to do anything like that on purpose, and that I had a lot of respect for Mr. Wicks. All of which was true.

Mr. Wicks instructed Chief Carter to put me back in the galley tomorrow, and if all went well, he would lift the restrictions and restore my compensatory leave.

The menu for tomorrow called for ham & cheese omelets which I knew I could make, grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch, and spaghetti & meatballs for dinner.

Ed Brown EN2 saw the menu posted and volunteered to make the sauce from memories of his mother's recipe. He started placing the ingredients in the pot even before I got off watch at 2000. The sauce simmered all night and all the next day on one of the coffee pots burners located on the mess deck. Every watch stander, deck & engine room alike checked and stirred that pot at different times during the night and throughout the next day.

As I have mentioned earlier, being the second oldest of five children, I had to learn to cook so I could pitch in where needed. I had no problem making the ham & cheese omelets. I added 3 eggs instead of the usual two for Mr. Wicks, BMC Carter and Lee Burbage. ENC Thrush got the normal two eggs. Fortunately, since we were just resupplied, we had some fresh tomatoes aboard, so I sliced some thin slices to add to the plate. I inspected the plates thoroughly before bringing them back to the Ward Room. I just delivered the food and left. Later, when I went aft to retrieve the plates, I had the opportunity to speak to Mr. Wicks quietly, and I apologized for the previous day's fiasco. Mr. Wicks looked me right in the eye and told me I had redeemed myself with today's breakfast. He said he was looking forward to the meal tonight as he had smelled Brown's mother's spaghetti sauce all night.

The meals that day and for the remainder of the time it was my turn to cook during the week, turned out fine. Oh yes, Browns mothers spaghetti sauce, was the hit of the week!

Assistance to a USCG 95' Harbor Entrance Patrol Boat Backfires;

An interesting event occurred one evening while Bud Fairfull was standing the 2000 to 2400 deck watch. A CG 95' Harbor Entrance Patrol Boat radioed us that they were trying to stop a freighter that had come in from overseas, she was heading south down Long Island Sound and had slipped by them up near Block Island. They requested we try to signal the freighter to stop and wait for the 95 footer. Fairfull radioed back, that if the freighter didn't stop, we would blow them out of the water. Of course, Bud was only kidding (the only weapons we had were a 45cal. Pistol, M1 rifle and a line gun), but the Lieutenant JG on the 95 footer didn't know that. He got upset and demanded the Officer in Charge get on the radio. BMC Louis Carter was the OinC as the Skipper; Mr. Wicks was ashore on leave. After a lengthy discussion with the Lieutenant JG, Chief Carter said we would try to signal the freighter. Attempts to reach them on the radio and via the signal light failed. Chief Carter then fired off several flares to get their attention. Shortly thereafter, Coast Guard Radio New York radioed us asking if we were in danger. It seems that the freighter saw our flares, notified CG Radio NY that their Lightship was in trouble, and they were changing course to come and assist us. In the meantime the 95' Harbor Entrance Patrol Boat reached the freighter by radio, the freighter stopped, and later the boarding party from the 95 footer went aboard to conduct their inspections. WOW, what a night, and what an embarrassment!

Needless to say, Bud got an earful from Chief Carter.

En route back to Base St. George, SINY

When relieved by Cornfield Point Lightship LV-118 / WAL-539, and on our way back down Long Island Sound to Base St. George. We took duty tours on the helm. On my second time at the helm, we were approaching the lower end of Long Island Sound where it narrows, and we were several miles north of the East River.

Before assuming the helm, Mr. Wicks bought me over to the chart table and showed me the course we were taking and what I had to look out for. I told Mr. Wicks I was very familiar with this area, as I had boated on it almost all my life and pointed out on the chart where I grew up, went to school and still lived on City Island. I then took the helm. BMC Carter came up on the Bridge shortly thereafter and Mr. Wicks told me to give the Chief an overview of the area as we passed by. I pointed out Port Washington on the Long Island (port side), Execution Lighthouse on the starboard side, Harts Island (was a NYC Prison at that time, and also held Potters Field), and City Island on the Bronx (all on the starboard) side. Also, Stepping Stone Lighthouse straight ahead.

Mr. Wicks told BMC Carter that I lived on City Island. There was a little discussion about City Island and its history going way back to 1614 when it was claimed by the Dutch. Later around 1654 a man named Thomas Pell purchased a very large parcel of land and the island from the Siwanoy Indians who frequented the island to fish and hunt. During WW II, a number of shipyards on the island built PT Boats, Landing Craft, Mine Sweepers, etc.

Afterwards they built a number of 12 meter sloops (Columbia, Constellation, Intrepid, etc.) defending the America's Cup. After sharing some of the City Island history, I figured I would take a chance and I then asked Mr. Wicks if there was any way we could stop, lower the small boat, and I could go ashore and start my liberty now rather than wait till we got back down to Base St. George. The reply was instantaneous; "McCarthy", maintain your course, ALL hands are needed for docking at Base St. George. Well, I truly expected that answer, but it was worth a try anyway.

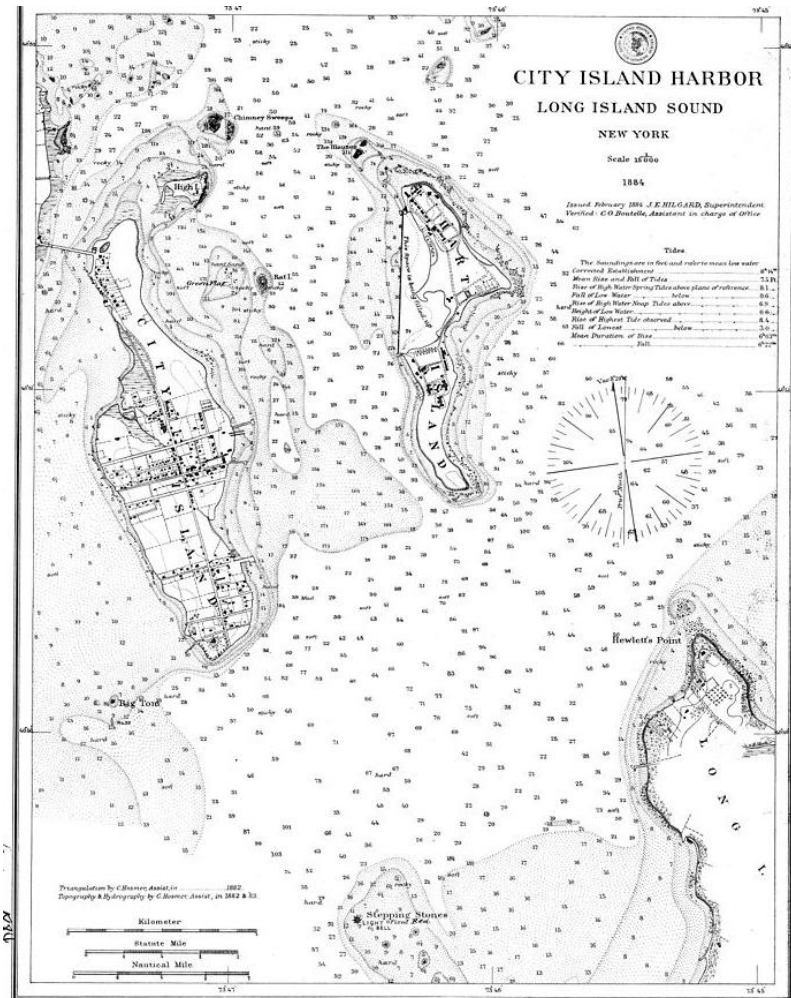


Chart courtesy of;

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Island,_Bronx#/media/File:USCGS_Chart_number_361_\(1884\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Island,_Bronx#/media/File:USCGS_Chart_number_361_(1884).jpg)

Also thanks to; <http://www.cityislandmuseum.org/history.html>

As we passed under the Whitestone Bridge (construction of the Throgs Neck Bridge was just starting (Oct. '57) and sailed past Fort Schuyler (US Merchant Marine Academy) into the upper reaches of the East River. A USCG Tug came up to assist us through Hell Gate and the rest of our voyage back to Base St. George, SINY.

Ralph “Bud” Fairfull;

Sometime after we returned to Base St. George, Bud Fairfull left the deck force, and became a cook. Obviously, he enjoyed taking his turn as a replacement cook while on station, and decided on a new direction. Don’t know if his private conversation with BMC Carter had any effect on his new direction plans?

Bud was a bit of a character, got along with most everyone and loved playing cards. Bud was also a good Seaman, and as a cook, always volunteered to help the boat crew and deck force if he had time. Bud didn’t go to Commissaryman School, but instead took correspondence courses and became a fairly decent cook. Sometime after his hitch was up in the early summer of 1959, Bud joined the NYPD. He eventually made Sergeant, worked in Brooklyn, NY and lived on Long Island.

Bobbie Pierce & Bud stayed in touch throughout the years. Sometime after retiring from the NYPD he moved to New Mexico. Bobbie had lived in New Mexico for 25 years working in the copper mine industry. Bobbie had made prior plans to retire and move back home to Virginia. Bud arrived in New Mexico in 1998 and stayed with Bobbie and Frances Pierce for about five days. He mentioned that he wasn’t happy living down in the area where Pierce lived and wanted to move up into the mountains. So on the sixth day, he left the hospitality of the Pierces and moved up into the mountains, shortly thereafter, Bobbie and Frances moved back to Virginia.

Bud remained in New Mexico and passed away there in 2000.



Ralph “Bud” Fairfull, on stern of RELIEF 78/505, Base St. George, SINY summer of 1957



These two photo's were given to me by Lee Burbage, and were taken a week before I reported aboard the Relief

Easter Sunday, 1957,

RELIEF 78/505, being assisted by a 110' USCG Tug through "Hell Gate" on the East River, NYC, returning from relieving Cornfield Point Lightship Station, off Old Saybrook, CT. to USCG Base St. George, SINY.

"Hell Gate" is where the Harlem River and the East Rivers meet causing waters so turbulent, that the "old RELIEF 78/505" didn't have enough power to get through on her own, thus the USCG Tug assistance.

The Harlem River runs across the northern tip of Manhattan and connects the Hudson & East Rivers.

L-R; B.A. Wicks CHBOSN-W1, OinC, Lee Burbage, BM1 and J.P. Smith, CS2



Some of the crew members posed for this picture in the bow, as the ship continued her trip down the East River on their return to USCG Base St. George, SINY

Standing, L-R, J.P. Smith CS2 & Edmund "Lee" Burbage BM1;
Kneeling, L-R, Frank Baglio FN, J.A. Flores SN & Jose Robles SN.

The above photos were taken by Seaman Stanley G. Grober of Long Island, NY. Stanley was a photography buff, and an excellent photographer. While at that time, the rest of us used box or point & shoot type cameras, Stanley used a 35mm camera with numerous lenses, a light meter, and all the latest features. Stanley left the ship sometime in late 1957 or early 1958.



RELIEF LV-78 / WAL-505 underway, circa 1950 USCG photo

Note; Starboard side hatch open, and davits for skiff aft of motor life (whale) boat.

http://www.mels-place.com/Contents/mmm/lightstn/lights/lights_12.htm

Old friend John Biermaas, who served aboard the Relief 78/505 as a BM3, 1948-1951, shared with me some memories of when they relieved Cornfield Station off Old Saybrook, CT and things were different during that time period in the “Old Coast Guard”.

Supplies replenishment;

Buoy Tender only came out to resupply fresh water and fuel. Mail, supplies or crew rotation were not included. No CG 83 footer or other CG craft were used for weekly food supplies, mail, etc. and crew rotational transfers.

These were all handled directly by the ship’s crew by going ashore in Old Saybrook, CT.

Prior to going ashore, the cook radioed in their food supply order to the **Lynde Point Lighthouse** at the mouth of the Connecticut River Breakwater, (they were equipped with a telephone), they in turn, passed the food supply order on to the local shops.



Lynde Point Lighthouse
U.S.C.G. Archive Photo circa 1905?

To come ashore, arrangements had been made with the Dock and Dine waterfront Restaurant to use their dock. In the winter, if the Connecticut River was frozen, arrangements had also been made with movie actress Katherine Hepburn who had a waterfront estate in Old Saybrook at the time, located at the tip of the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound. She gave permission for the Coast Guard to come ashore on her property and cross it for access to town. The RELIEF 78/505 crew never had the pleasure to meet Katherine Hepburn.

Weekly routine;

Small boat pulled into the Dock and Dine Restaurant dock. Alternate was the Katherine Hepburn’s estate.

No ships Chandler met them with their order, instead arrangements were in place for the crew to order supplies directly from local shops via the Lighthouse, and have lodging provided in the hotel if needed. The crew walked into town and directly to the butcher shop. Gave their order for meat and “borrowed” the butcher’s pickup truck. They then used the pickup truck to shop for other food supplies, needed miscellaneous supplies, and the mail. They also picked up returning crewmembers from the train station. John shared, that the compensatory leave crew used the train station in town for transportation.

If rough weather delayed their pick up by the boat crew, they were authorized to stay overnight at the “Peace House” hotel. The stranded crew was also authorized to go to the butcher shop, pick up a steak and bring it back to the hotel. Prior arrangements were made with the “Peace House” to have the hotel, cook it for them.

After completing their rounds, the crew then returned to the butcher shop, returned the pickup truck, picked up their meat order and walked back to the Dock and Dive Restaurant dock (or the alternate Hepburn estate), with their supplies. They then took the small boat back out to the ship.



John Biermaas in bow of RELIEF 78/505 small boat on Cornfield Station 1950’s circa Photo Courtesy of; LSA website

John also shared that the hatches (shown in photo) on both sides of the ship originally were used to load coal, but were later just used to pass through supplies, mail & liberty parties. During hot summer days / nights and in good weather, the hatches were left open for ventilation purposes.

In the fall of 1957, when we went up to relieve Cornfield Lightship Station, the deck housing was painted white, the side hatches were welded shut, the skiff and its davits were gone, and access ashore was not available. We were resupplied by USCG 95 footer and a Buoy Tender out of New London, Connecticut. Gone were the good old, laid back, friendlier days of the late 1940’s and early 1950’s of the “old Coast Guard” when things were handled differently.

LV-118/ WAL-539 SUBSEQUENT DISPOSITION:

Decommissioned Nov. 7, 1972; donated to Lewes Historical Society (DE) Aug. 9 1973; Afloat and on display at Lewes, DE; marked OVERFALLS (although never assigned to that station). Source; USCG Historians Office

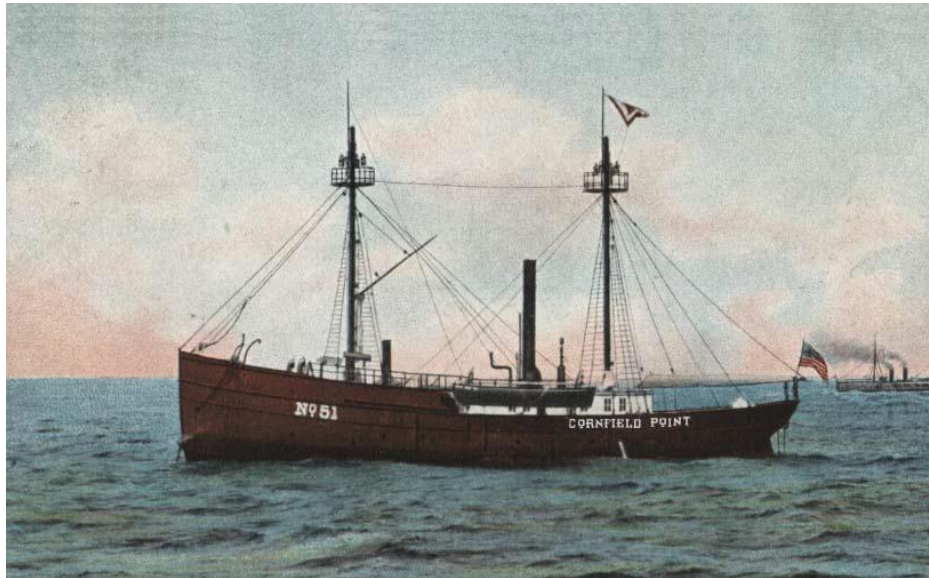
Current owner; OVERFALLS Foundation. The OVERFALLS Foundation has recently completed a major hull overhaul and restoration. The ship is well maintained and supported. The OVERFALLS Foundation are outstanding stewards of this fine ship.

LV-118 / WAL- 539, after her restoration in her newly refurbished berth on the canal, downtown Lewes, DE Photo source; www.overfalls.org



One more comment from the author;

CORNFIELD POINT Light Vessel LV-51



*Courtesy of; Archaeological Preserve
Old Saybrook, Connecticut*

<http://www.iaismuseum.org/research-and-collections/preserve-booklets/preserve-booklet-cornfield-point.pdf>

CORNFIELD POINT Light Vessel LV-51

Before relieving CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station and leaving Base St. George, I heard many stories about how I was going on vacation, as Long Island Sound is not like the ocean and will be a piece of cake!

Boy were these individuals wrong! As I have mentioned in the beginning of this CORNFIELD POINT Segment. Long Island Sound and CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station could experience weather as rough as the open Atlantic Ocean. Likewise one was as subject to the same dangers experienced by Lightships elsewhere...

CORNFIELD POINT Light Vessel LV-51 served on CORNFIELD POINT Light Station 1892-1894. Then much later in her career, returned on numerous occasions to CORNFIELD POINT Light Station as a RELIEF Light Vessel. On a sunny Thursday afternoon of April 14, 1919 as she was relieving CORNFIELD POINT Light Vessel she was rammed by a towed barge, the Standard Oil Company "Socony Barge" # 58, she foundered in the water and sank within 8 minutes. No lives were lost, although all personal belongs were lost. She sank in roughly 170' to 190' of water.

LV-51 was the third Light Vessel of the U.S. Lighthouse Service to have been lost in 15 months. The other two being;

1913; LV-82 BUFFALO Lightship on Lake Erie by a winter storm with ALL hands lost.

1918; LV-71 DIAMOND SHOALS, Lightship sunk by a German U-Boat.

CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station on Long Island Sound was indeed a very dangerous station!

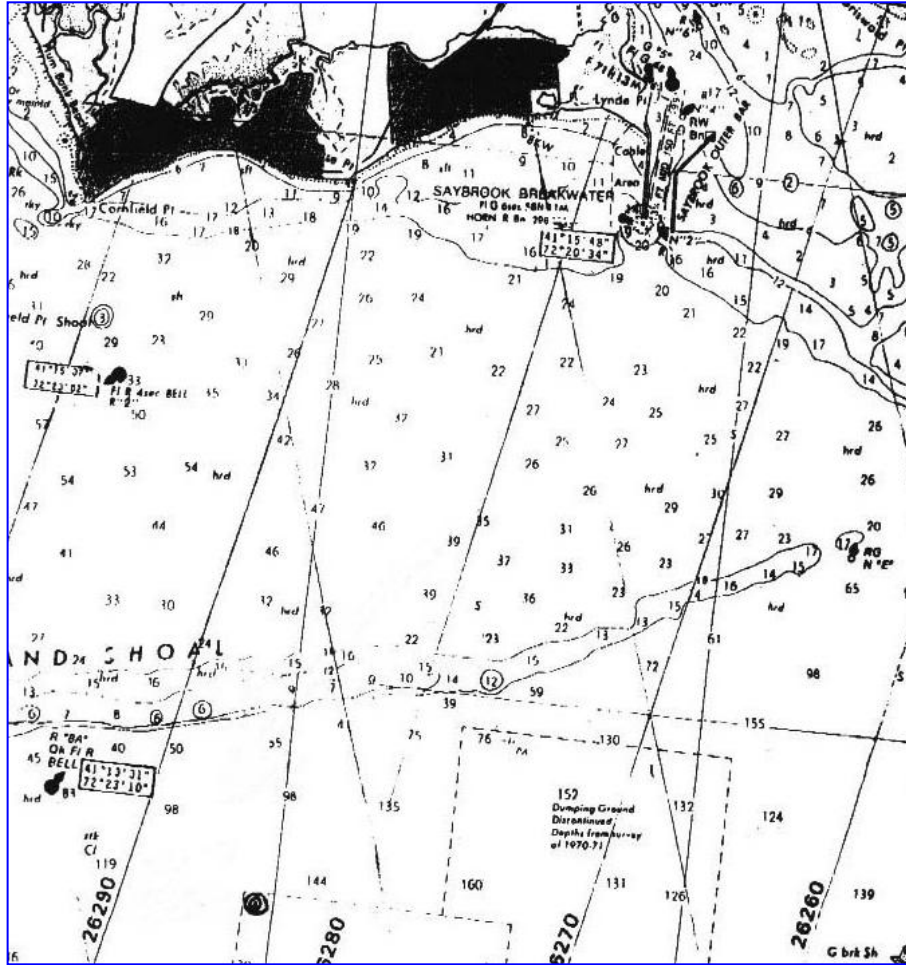


Chart courtesy of; <http://www.iaismuseum.org/research-and-collections/preserve-booklets/preserve-booklet-cornfield-point.pdf>

U.S. coastal chart includes Cornfield Point on the upper left, the Saybrook Breakwater, and the mouth of the Connecticut River on the upper right.

The location of the LV-51 shipwreck is approximated.

At the bottom left of the chart, between 26290 and 26280 by a round circle, in roughly 170-190 feet of water

Wreck of LV-51

Wreck of LV-51

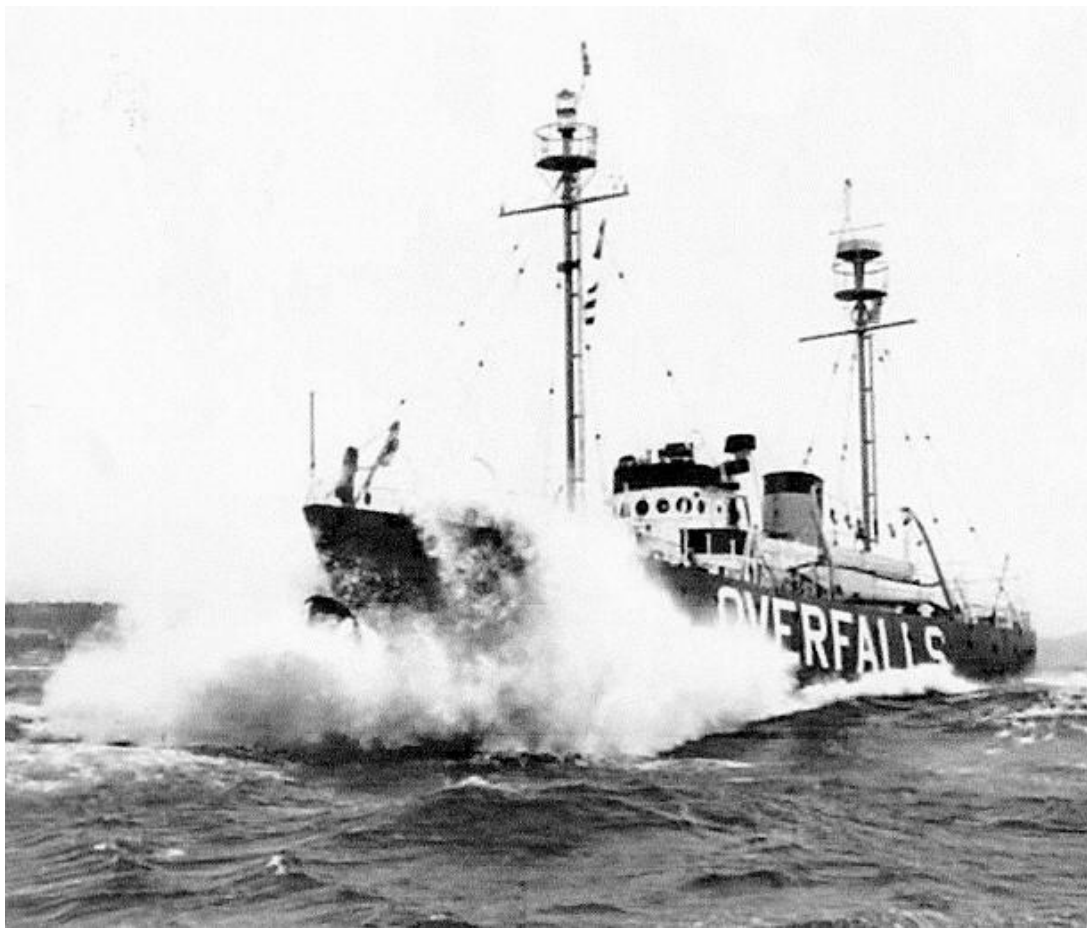


<http://www.wreckhunter.net/DataPages/cornfieldlightship-dat.htm>

PART SIX;

OVERFALLS Lightship Station

OVERFALLS Lightship Station



OVERFALLS WAL-605 off Lewes / Rehoboth Beach, DE.
USCG Official Photo

OVERFALLS Lightship Station Location & Historical notes:

Delaware, off the south side of the entrance to the Delaware Bay, about 3.5 miles east of Cape Henlopen and 8.5 miles and 200 degrees from the Cape May Lighthouse. The station was discontinued in 1960, and was replaced by a lighted bell buoy.

HISTORICAL NOTES on WAL-605 pictured above:

1951-1960: OVERFALLS (DE)

1960, traveled from the East Coast to the West Coast through the Panama Canal.

1960-1969: BLUNTS REEF' (CA)

1969-1975: RELIEF (West Coast)

RETIRED FROM LIGHTSHIP DUTY: 1975; AGE: 25

<http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/LV605.asp>

Note: LSA President Larry Ryan made this voyage aboard the 605 from the East to West coast, through Panama Canal.



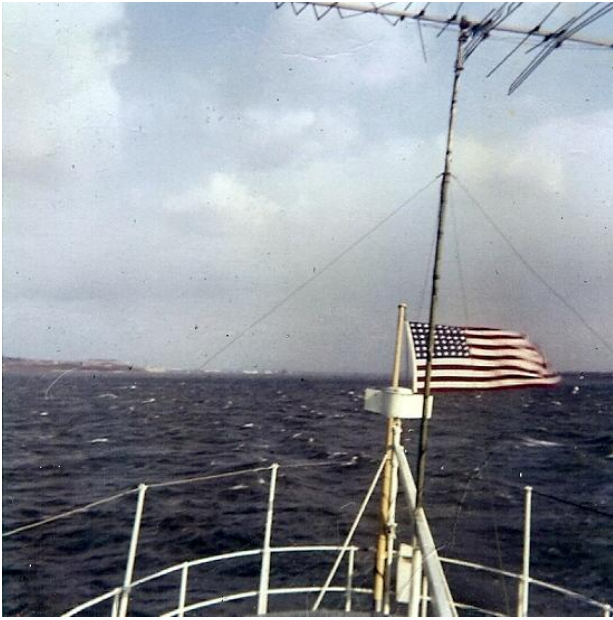
Photo courtesy of

http://www.overfalls.org/duty_station.html

We relieved OVERFALLS Lightship WLV-605, from 16 February 1959 through 31 March 1959.

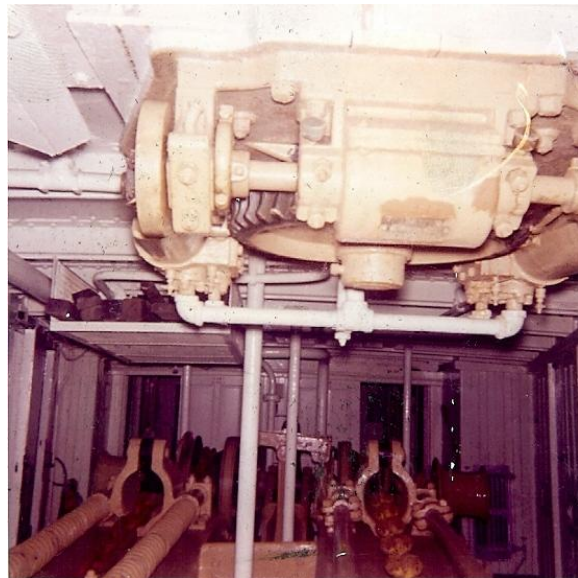
I only made one voyage down to OVERFALLS Lightship Station in my 2 years aboard the RELIEF 78/505.

I took most of my color photos on this trip.



Heading out to sea with the Narrows and Lower New York Bay in the background. Start of our voyage south to OVERFALLS Lightship Station.

Windlass room... right (on 02) deck, in bow and just forward of the mess deck and berthing area. Head and shower are on the left, ships pantry is on the right. The Capstan is located directly above on the weather deck. Note; the anchor chain on the left is for the spare / emergency (5,000 lb. mushroom) anchor... anchor chain on the right was for the main (7,500 lb. mushroom) anchor.



“Ward Room”

L-R; Louis C. Carter, BMC and Raymond L. Thrush, ENC. Chief Carter was the Executive Officer, and Officer in Charge when the Captain, George R. Brower CHBOSN-W1 was ashore. Chief Thrush was the Engineering Officer.

Chief Carter was a good Chief, tough but fair. He also had a soft side... what he did for us young guys (providing a touch of home in 1957) while spending our first Christmas at sea away from home was really a great gesture. I think that he would be proud to know that his act of kindness shown to his young crew would be shared with so many others, all these years later. Chief Carter's quarters were to the left, the small office with typewriter was farther back on the left. Directly behind both men, were the files and ships records.





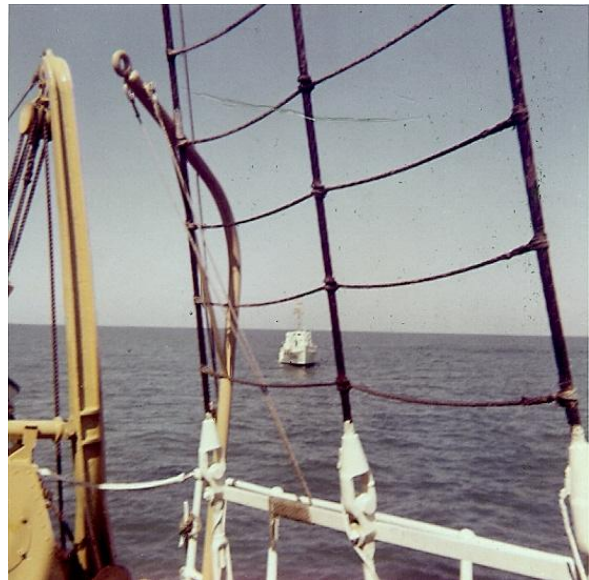
Relief 78/505, Mess Deck Card Game on OVERFALLS Station;

Almost every night, whether in port or at sea, you would find a card game in progress on the mess deck. Of course, no money was exchanged; it just helped to pass the time. Good memories!

L-R;
 R.T. "Ron" Boismeno CS2, Ogdensburg, NY;
 Edward J. Brown EN2, Philadelphia, PA (?);
 Raymond F. "Ray" D'urbano BM2, Rochester, NY;
 Bobbie R. Pierce SN, Franklin, VA;
 Ralph E. "Bud" Fairfull CS3, Long Island, NY.

83 Footer from CG Base Cape May, NJ approaching RELIEF 78/505 on OVERFALLS Lightship Station. >

OVERFALLS was similar to CORNFIELD POINT Lightship Station, as both were serviced by either an 83 or 95 footer. A Buoy Tender came out only when we needed fresh water or fuel. All other tasks (compensatory leave personnel, supplies, food, and mail) were handled by the 83 footer. OVERFALLS Lightship Station was off Lewes / Rehoboth Beach, DE, however the 83 footer took us into the Cape May USCG Recruit Training Center as a transient point for our compensatory leave.



Base Cape May;

It was strange using Base Cape May as our transient point for our compensatory leave. The last time I had been at Base Cape May, USCG Recruit Training Center, I was in "Boot Camp". Now I was able to go through the base, the chow hall and the gate unhindered, and not as a "Seaman Recruit". That was a great feeling!

Unfortunately,

I couldn't remember, nor find the 83 footers hull # in my notes.

There were a number of 83 footers operating out of Group Cape May during this time frame.

Among them were the 83464, 83490, 83518, and 83529.



< 83 Footer pulling alongside RELIEF 78/505. L-R; Boismeno, Brown (in uniform, must have been going on compensatory leave), BMC Carter and Fairfull.



83 Footer pulling away from Relief 78/505 with compensatory leave personnel and outgoing mail aboard.



Relief LV-78/WAL-505 as seen as 83 Footer pulls away.



Another view of Relief LV-78/WAL-505 as seen from the deck of 83 Footer.

Compensatory Leave Memories;

I recall one instance where we all returned to Base Cape May from compensatory leave, reported down to the dock where the 83 footer was berthed, and were told it was too rough to go out to the Station safely. The Boatswain Mate Chief, who was Skipper of the boat, told us to go get some breakfast, enjoy ourselves, and check back in with him around 12:Noon and 1:00PM to see if it calmed down enough to go out.

I can't remember who was with us; I only recall Bob Quail EN2. Bob whom I described coming aboard in the earlier Base St. George segment; had not changed a bit and still seemed to always have something or another going on.

Bob came up with the idea to drive up to Wildwood, have breakfast in a bar he used to frequent from his days of being stationed in the area, and have a couple of drinks to pass the time. I have no idea where Quail borrowed the car, but he did, and drove us up to the Wildwood bar. It was open, and served us breakfast. Quail still had his connections.

Shortly after breakfast, Quail started playing the piano and we all started drinking. By the time Quail called the Chief back, we were all feeling pretty good. The Chief told Quail that the seas had calmed down enough to make a run out to the Lightship.

We got back to the 83 footer, where the "well over 20 years of service seasoned Boatswain's Mate Chief" took one look at us and declared, "The inside of my boat is off limits to you Lightship sailors, stay out on the deck". He didn't say it quite as nicely as that, but you get the idea.

We headed out into 4 to 6 foot seas. It was more than a tad rough at times as the boat heaved from side to side as she tried to avoid big waves. Come to think of it, I really don't know how hard the "old Chief" really tried to avoid the big ones?

By the time we reached the ship, every one of us had spent some time at the rail and were really sick sailors. Guess the "well seasoned" old Chief had us figured out, and knew what to expect.

Lesson learned by a bunch of young sailors; don't mix booze and rough seas!



RELIEF LV-78/WAL-505, is seen in distance to the right of the 20mm gun, as 83 Footer pulls away and heads toward Cape May, NJ.



OVERFALLS Station;

Jay McCarthy on fantail of Relief 78/505.
I'm standing on cover shielding rudder quadrant below.

Note; chains running from steering cables to rudder quadrant.

View of bow area. Jay McCarthy sitting on capstan, making monkey's fists for heaving lines. Note; heaving line with monkey's fist hanging on port side of Ships Bell Stanchion.



Pilot Boat Pilot Boat putting Pilot aboard Tanker heading into the Delaware River, and to ports upriver.



US Coast Guard “Albatross” amphibian, flying low over OVERFALLS Station, perhaps on a SAR mission?



Last view from OVERFALLS Station; as we get underway and headed back up to USCG Base St. George SINY.

Source of all of the above photos on OVERFALLS Station, from the J. F. “Jay” McCarthy collection

OVERFALLS Lightship Station;

As best as I can recall, our relief period on OVERFALLS Lightship Station was as normal as on most of our other relief stations. We had a fair amount of fog, only one bad storm, and overall we had no injuries, nor any serious problems.

Our voyage to and from OVERFALLS Lightship Station and USCG Base St. George, SINY took a lot of time.

We set sail from OVERFALLS Lightship Station on the morning of 31 March 1959, and arrived back in Base St. George on the morning of 1 April 1959.

I can't remember exactly how long it took, but at an average speed of maybe 6-7 knots, (the ships top speed was 8 knots) and without doing the math, I know it took a long time. I recall on our return voyage that somewhere off the New Jersey coast, we ran into an outgoing tide and made practically no headway for quite some time. The same landmark ashore remained in our sight for several hours. At one point, we put the small boat in the water, and it was going faster than the Lightship.

WLV-605, SUBSEQUENT DISPOSITION:

Decommissioned Jan 1, 1976;

acquired by State Capital Museum Association Olympia WA 1978;

sold 1979 to Alan Hoskins and used for tours at Half Moon Bay (CA).

Acquired by US Lighthouse Society San Francisco, Dec 1988.

Berthed at Jack London Square Oakland, CA on display as floating museum and open to the public.

http://uslhs.org/about_lightship_restoration.php

Source: USCG Historians office



2010 photo courtesy of Pete Marx, Director and
Photographer for USCG Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc.

EPILOGUE;

Completion of my Active Duty two year commitment;

OVERFALLS Lightship Station was my last voyage on the RELIEF Lightship LV-78/WAL-505.

We returned to port on 1 April 1959 and remained moored at Berth "S", Base St. George, SINY through the month of April.

22 April 1959, Mr. Brower instructed me to take the ferry over to Manhattan and to report to the USCG Third District Headquarters, located in the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House at One Bowling Green at the southern tip of Manhattan. There, I was to sign the paperwork releasing me from Active Duty and re-assigning me to 4 years of in-active Reserve Duty on the following day.

While there and signing the paperwork, lo and behold, who walks in, but my old Reserve buddy Bob Luce. Bob reported to Active Duty with me at Base St. George 2 years prior. I had not seen Bob since, as he was assigned to the Icebreaker, CGC WESTWIND, and had made two cruises to the Arctic and one to Antarctica. Bob had a car and offered to meet me at Base St. George the following day and drive me home. I readily agreed.

23 April 1959, was my last day aboard ship. I shook hands and said good bye to everyone. Ray D'urbano was already on the ship when I first reported aboard, Bud Fairfull followed and then Bobbie Pierce, Charlie Sullivan and Blaine Kuhn. Somewhere in between came Bob Quail, Ron Boismenu, and a host of others who were still aboard when I left.

A great bunch of guys whom I worked, shared meals and scuttlebutt with, and had many wonderful liberty adventures, laughs, fishing times, train trips down from New London (Cornfield Point Lightship Station), bus trips up from Cape May (OVERFALLS Lightship Station), storytelling (of many lies), perilous moments, and a bond of going through some of the most hazardous, dangerous and terrifying times of my life.

They were a wonderful group of shipmates and characters whom I will remember for the rest of my life.

I later went aft to the Ward Room and said goodbye to Mr. Brower. Mr. Brower had previously offered to write me a letter of recommendation for job hunting. I thanked him, but explained that I had taken a military leave of absence from A.T. & T. and my old job was waiting for me. I also said goodbye and shook hands with BMC Carter and ENC Thrush.

Mr. Brower released me from duty and as I walked down the gangplank, I felt a little nostalgia as I turned and saluted the flag for the last time.

Bob Luce was waiting with his car, I threw my sea bag in the back, waved goodbye to those that came up on the deck to see me off and left the RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505 and CG Base St. George for the last time. Bob Luce and I traveled over to Manhattan on the Staten Island Ferry, took the East River Drive north to Bruckner Blvd in the Bronx, and then the car promptly broke down. Fortunately, a small auto repair shop was nearby, we pushed the car over there and the owner/mechanic replaced the fuel filter and adjusted the carburetor. As we were in uniform and he was a vet, he said there was no charge and was proud to help fellow servicemen.

What a great guy!

We then continued our journey up to my neighborhood of City Island in the Bronx. We stopped in a bar (The Club) for a few beers, again we were in uniform and nobody would let us pay for anything. Since Bob himself had to get home, we didn't stay too long and Bob dropped me off at my house.

We were back in civilian life.

Bob Luce and I stayed in touch for several years, Bob got a job with the Port Authority and I went back to the Western Electric Co. (AT&T).

Over time, as our lives grew and changed, we gradually lost touch with each other.

Some final thoughts;

As I close out this sequel. I hope that by sharing some of my memories, photo's and the contributions of so many others, that you just might have a better understanding of what life was like aboard a United States Coast Guard Lightship and a little more about these little red ships and their crews.

If any individual or family member felt offended by anything I wrote, I do apologize. I just wanted to relay my memories as best I could remember them with no offense meant to anyone. Everything I wrote was as truthful as could be remembered, there might have been some embellishment on the stories told to me by some others, but everyone knows that I would never stretch the truth just to tell a good story.

If I left anyone or any incident out, then most certainly I apologize. I thank the many that helped me jog this old memory.

After all, it seems that when going back over half a century, some things remain as clear as a bell and I can recall them just like it was yesterday, while others seem to be lost in the fog that had often engulfed the ship. Hopefully, we came through loud and clear and shared with you a period of USCG Lightship History, that as "*Lightship Sailors*" we can only hope and pray the history books will not forget.

SEMPER PARATUS

***“A day in the life of a sailor offers more adventure than
the average man experiences in his entire lifetime”***

*Charles G. Davis, as quoted from
MAINSAIL to the WIND by William Galvani*

BONUS;

Photos and Memories;
Old RELIEF 78/505 shipmates re-unite
Other photos and information

A few memories and photos as old RELIEF 78/505 Shipmates reunite...



L-R; Deloris and Lee Burbage, Jay and Barbara McCarthy
Two old shipmates reunite for the first time in 44 years
30 July 2002, outside Doyle's Restaurant Selbyville, DE.



L-R; Bobbie Pierce, Lee Burbage and Jay McCarthy
Three old shipmates share dinner together for the first time in 45 years
03 October 2003, at the Captains Table Restaurant, Rehoboth Beach, DE.
Photos from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection



Bobbie Pierce and Jay McCarthy at the Columbia Lightship WLV-604
During the LSA Reunion in Astoria, Oregon 08 October 2004
Above photo from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection



Jay McCarthy and Blaine Kuhn meet in Newark, Delaware
On 08/24/2010 1st. time seeing each other in 51 years.
Above photo from the J. F. "Jay" McCarthy collection

Other photos and information...



L-R; John & Muriel Biermass (John was a BM3 on RELIEF 78/505 '48-'51)
Barbara Marx, Barb & Jay McCarthy on Oct. 18, 2008
Photo taken by Pete Marx (Five Fathom 108/530, '55-'56) LSA Reunion Cape Cod, MA.



Jay McCarthy, Spring 1958, outside USCG 3rd. District Headquarters
US Custom House Manhattan, NYC (film double exposure)



L-R; Blaine Kuhn and Bobbie Pierce, shipmates sharing a laugh somewhere at sea, '59 - '60



L-R; Ron Boismenu, Blaine Kuhn and Charlie Sullivan, preparing to go ashore on liberty, '59 - '60.
Above photos courtesy of the Blaine Kuhn collection

24 June, 1960-RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505 Rammed and Sunk!

Ambrose Lightship Is Hit and Sunk

By **GEORGE McEVOY**

A stubby little relief Ambrose Lightship—a “sitting duck” in the world’s busiest port—was rammed by a freighter in thick fog yesterday and sank within minutes.

All but one of its crew of nine Coast Guardsmen were asleep in their bunks below when the 6,125-ton Green Bay knifed into their 129-foot ship, the Relief 505, shortly after 4 a.m., and split it open amidships. As they rushed on deck, the ship already was going down in 90 feet of water.

THERE WAS NO TIME to launch lifeboats. A raft was thrown over the side and all nine clambered into it and began paddling with their hands. They paddled away just in time to miss being sucked under. The Green Bay, a Victory-type ship, sustained only bow scratches.

The Relief 505 was filling in

Pierce said later, “and then I heard a horn close by...suddenly a light came at me...I sounded the general alarm...within two minutes, the other ship hit us.”

PIERCE AND SKIPPER Tama-lonis roused the others on deck and onto the raft. Then began a long, tense hour drifting in the

30

NEW YORK MIRROR, SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 1960



Coast Guard ship Relief 505 sunk during stand-in duty. (Other photo on Page 1)

(UPI Photo)

LIGHTSHIP: Is Sunk



The New York Times June 25, 1960



438'9" SS Green Bay rammed and sunk 129' RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505



Crew of RELIEF Lightship LV-78/WAL-505 shortly after rescue and return to CG Base St. George
Shown above with life raft... L – R, name, age & home town at this time;

They are pictured above
On 24 June 1960,

Home residence
On 24 June 1960

Current status and
residence locations, as of 2011:

L – R:

Bobbie R. Pierce, 22, BM3 ...	Franklyn, VA.	retired and residing in Valentines, VA.
Blaine I. Kuhn, 22, SN ...	Wilmington, DE	retired and residing in Newark, DE.
Sidney Kyle Jr., 23, SN ...	San Marcos, TX	retired and residing in San Marcos, TX
Robert E. Lawrence, 21, CS3,	Unionville, CT.	<u>unable to locate...</u>
Eugene Murray, 28, EN1,	Staten Island, NY	retired after 22 years from USCG as a CWO-3,
resided in Pulaski, N.Y...		<i>Crossed Over The Bar, 07-22-2010</i>
Edward J. Rothaug, 22, EN3	Rochester, NY	retired from USCG as an ENC, resided in Hillsboro, OR.
		<i>Crossed Over The Bar, January 2011</i>
John L. Uhl, 25, FN...	Branford, CT.	residing in Walpole, MA.
Charles D. Sullivan, 22, SN ...	Brooklyn, NY	<u>unable to locate...</u>
Joseph E. Tamalonis, 27, BMC, Mt. Carmel, PA		retired after 31 yrs, from USCG as a Commander,
resided in Brandon, OR.		<i>Crossed Over The Bar, 03-01-2003</i>

Survivor's residences and status NOT current after 2011...



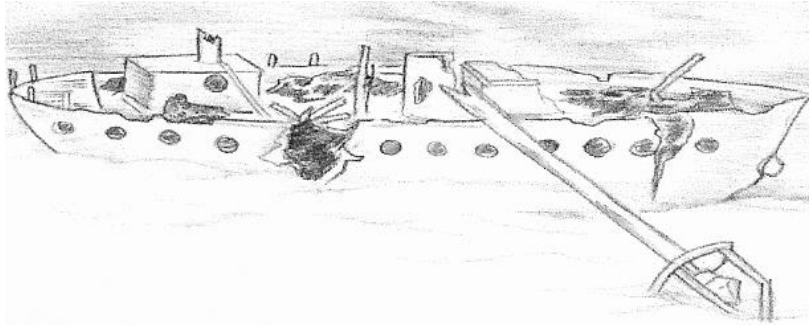
The RELIEF Lightship LV-78/WAL-505 crew, being interviewed by the news media shortly after rescue and return to CG Base St. George SINY, 24 June 1960. Note; AMBROSE Lightship WLV-613, at adjacent dock. The RELIEF was relieving the AMBROSE Lightship Station when sunk. As you can see, she had a lot of work to do, haul in anchor and chains, small boat, all of which are sitting on the dock. Her engine was inoperable, and she was not yet ready to set sail.



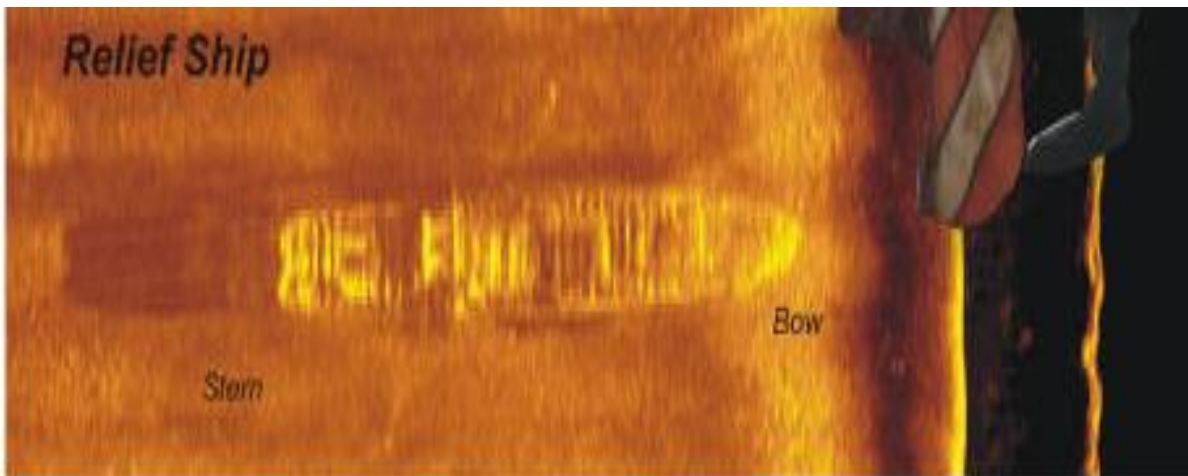
RELIEF 78/505 Survivors having breakfast in Mess Hall – USCG Base St. George, SINY 06-24-1960

Current status of RELIEF 78/505 wreck;

The Lightship still rests on the “old Ambrose Lightship Station”, approximately 12 miles SE of Rockaway inlet, just North West of Ambrose Buoy, upright in approximately 110 feet of water. She remains relatively intact with exception of her light masts that were wire dragged down by the US Navy, so as not to be a hazard to navigation. Her wooden deck housings, wooden decks, and interior wood bulkheads have deteriorated and all but disappeared. Visibility is usually good but is normally dark.



**Relief Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505 sketch,
courtesy of; Michael S. McCarthy**



Marine Sonic Sea Scan PC side scan
sonar image by Dan Berg.

**Above Scan, Courtesy of ;
Aqua Explorers, Inc. / Shipwrecks Expo
Captain Dan Berg**

AMBROSE LIGHTSHIP SUNK

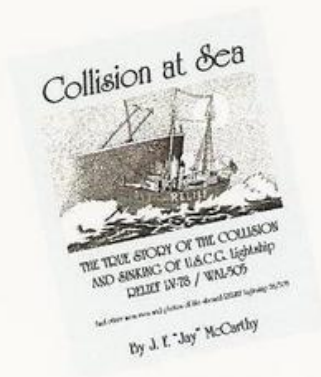
So read the headlines of every major New York City Newspaper on 24 June 1960

*In reality, it was not AMBROSE Lightship that was sunk;
It was her replacement RELIEF Lightship.*

Through the years nagging questions have been asked; How could a modern day Freighter equipped with the latest technology of the era, possibly collide with and sink an anchored U.S. Coast Guard Lightship on a well known and clearly marked position in AMBROSE Channel New York?

After much in depth research, I am now able to provide the answers to those questions...

The answers are all in my book, Collision at Sea...



INFINITY
PUBLISHING

is proud to announce:

Collision at Sea

by

J. F. "Jay" McCarthy

Research into how a modern day Freighter equipped with the latest technology, could possibly collide with and sink an anchored U.S. Coast Guard Lightship on AMBROSE Channel New York?

To order online:
www.buybooksontheweb.com
call toll free: (877) BUY-BOOK
local call: (610) 941-9999

Author: J. F. "Jay" McCarthy
Keyword: sea
ISBN#: 0-7414-6165-X
Price: 11.95 + 4.50 S&H

The book may be purchased directly from the publisher as shown above!

Sad Fate of RELIEF LV84/WAL509 that replaced RELIEF LV78/WAL505



LV-84 / WAL-509 as a RELIEF Lightship



Former LV-84 / WAL-509 beginning to sink

Authors Note:

After the RELIEF 78/505 was sunk. The USCG reassigned the RELIEF Lightship 84/509 from the Jacksonville, Florida area to replace her. Regrettably, her post active duty time was sad.

Please see below link for rest of her story:

<http://www.uscglightsailsors.org/lightships/LV-84/LV-84%20...%20WAL-509,%20Completing%20the%20Final%20Chapter%20of%20her%20100%20year%20History,%20March,%202013.pdf>

While serving as 1st. VP and Membership Director of the USCG Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc., 2004-2008. Quite often, I would send out recruitment inquires to various Veterans magazines, etc. to try to recruit new members. One day I received a call from a retired Chief Boatswains Mate who shared with me that he served aboard the RELIEF 84/509 somewhere around 1961 - 1965. I can't recall the man's name, but he told me a story of when they were out relieving AMBROSE WLV-613.

It was a foggy night with visibility of only about 50-100 feet. At about 2100, with the fog horn on, the seaman on deck watch came running down below to share with him that he heard voices. When the Chief inquired of the Seaman Apprentice, fresh out of Boot Camp what he meant. The reply was "it's the voices of the ghosts from the RELIEF 78/505", the wreck of which lay only about ¼ mile away. The Chief knew that nobody died when the RELIEF 78/505 was sunk in similar weather, but if the watch stander was hearing voices then something was wrong. As they made their way back up to the deck, he asked the Seaman Apprentice; who told you about the ghosts? He replied "the enginemen said that when it gets foggy like this, the ghosts from the wreck come out". Well, thought the Chief; leave it to the enginemen to try and scare a "kid" right out of Boot Camp... I'll take care of the "snipes" later! When they reached the deck and moved up near the bow (a little away from the braying fog horn), the Chief also heard voices nearby. The Chief ordered the S.A. to start ringing the Ships Bell on the deck in front of the wheelhouse, while he rang the "General Alarm". Moments later, out of the fog, he saw the bow of a freighter appear on his starboard side, then as the freighter slowly started running starboard side to starboard side, about 50 feet distance and slide past them. The Chief looked up and saw two lookouts on the bow looking down at him with open mouths as they very slowly glided by. The ships did not collide however the Chief got the name of the freighter, and passed it on up the line of command for a near collision investigation.

I forwarded Membership information to the retired Chief Boatswains Mate. However, he never responded nor joined our Lightship Sailors Association Veterans Group, and further attempts to contact him were unsuccessful. However, I do thank him for the story that I just shared with you.

Once again, AMBROSE Lightship Station was identified as having another near miss.

"Old Sailor" **BONUS** Story:



USCG RELIEF Lightship LV- 78 / WAL-505



USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CV-42)

The Little Red Lightship that brought a Big Aircraft Carrier to a Stop

By J. F. "Jay" McCarthy

It seems to me that seniors get a bad rap in this day and age. Some say that "old guys" embellish stories from past years, and none are worse than "old sailors telling sea stories". Well, this "old sailor" would like to share with you a short, but true sea story from my past.

It involves the US Navy Aircraft Carrier USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CV-42) at 968 feet long with a crew of 4,104 officers and men, when she met the anchored USCG RELIEF Lightship LV- 78/WAL-505 at 129' long with a crew of only 9 men on this day.

Briefly; for those not familiar with Lightships, the little red ships were often called floating Lighthouses. They were stationed where it would not be practicable to place a Lighthouse. Some were anchored in shoal water, with soft sandy or rocky bottoms; and in busy shipping channels.

Most were almost always anchored farther out to sea than Lighthouses. IE; Nantucket Shoals Lightship was roughly 50 miles out to sea from Nantucket Island. Most Lightships had a crew of only 16 men, with an average of only 9 aboard at most times. As being out to sea for extended periods of time, men rotated taking leave ashore.

On our ship we had a deck force, an engine room force, and 2 cooks. There were no specialty rates on our ship. No signalman, radioman, electronic technicians, etc.

During the days of Lightships; the United States Coast Guard described Lightship Duty as their most Hazardous Duty of that Time Period.

Lightships served in the days before satellites and GPS.

A USCG Lightship on Station faces many daily challenges. Some life threatening, some terrifying, some exciting, some routine and others like the following "True Story", just plain different.

Date... Sometime around May 1958

Location... AMBROSE Channel Lightship Station, NY, located in the Atlantic Ocean at the extreme eastern edge of Ambrose Channel leading into the Ports of New York and New Jersey. We were relieving AMBROSE Lightship WLV-613, which was in port for annual maintenance.

Duty... I was standing the 0400 to 0800 deck watch.

Note: from Midnight to 0800, only 2 men stand watch. One is in the engine room, the other in the Wheel House. The man standing the deck watch did so from the Wheel House. From there he could monitor the radio, radar, and conduct his assigned duties, including serving as the ships lookout.

Weather... Cool, calm seas and ½ mile visibility with early morning haze.

Vessel... Status Alpha (anchored)

Time...

0600... Called duty cook

0650... Secured Main and Anchor lights

0700... Reveille, called all hands

0735... Approaching out of the early morning haze on the Port (left) Side, with a heading that would take her into New York Harbor, was the U.S. Navy Aircraft Carrier, USS Franklin D. Roosevelt. Shortly after observing her, she began signaling us with her signal light.

As hard as I tried, I just couldn't read her message – the signal was too fast for me to read;

We mainly used our radio to communicate. I then tried reaching the Roosevelt on the radio, but I couldn't find their frequency and was unsuccessful.

I notified Executive Officer, Louis C. Carter, Boatswain's Mate Chief, as Commanding Officer, George Brower, CHBOSN W-1 was ashore on leave.

Chief Carter and the rest of the crew came up on deck. By now the Roosevelt had stopped all engines and was dead in the water, a little less than ¼ mile off our Port side.

Now, there are many things we on Lightships can do. However, if there was one thing on the "Old RELIEF 78/505" that we had difficulty with, it was reading a message from an extremely fast and fully experienced Signalman. As we didn't have a Signalman aboard, we weren't equipped to read any signal this fast. With the exception of an occasional normal / slow S-O-S light signal from a boat in distress (as I stated above), we used the radio. Chief Carter didn't have to ask if anyone could read the message being sent, as the blank look on our faces told him "we didn't have a clue" as to its content.

Chief Carter then went to our Signal Light on top of the Wheel House, and attempted to signal the Roosevelt back. Obviously the Navy signalman, being used to receiving "blinding fast signal speed" was unable to read the "slower" message Chief Carter was sending, or perhaps, (might I dare suggest) that not all of the dots and dashes we sent were in the proper order?

Whatever the reason, and unable to reach the Roosevelt by radio, an exasperated Chief Carter gave the order to "lower the small boat". In the finest tradition of a USCG Chief Boatswain's Mate (I shall leave out a large portion of the actual language used), Chief Carter ordered the small boat crew to go over to the Carrier and ask them what we could do to help them. He also gave instructions to the coxswain, tell them our "Signalman" had an appendicitis attack, was hospitalized ashore, and we have not received a replacement yet. In reality, our Lightship had NO designated staffing slot for a Signalman. Chief Carter was old school, and fully aware that the much larger U.S. Navy Air Craft Carrier wouldn't understand the minimum staffing of our small Lightship's crew, so don't waste time trying to explain it.

Not only was Chief Carter obviously agitated, he had not yet had his coffee. I asked, ‘will somebody go below and get the Chief a cup of coffee?’ The reply was unanimous, “*are you crazy?*”

This is the most excitement we’ve had in weeks; “we don’t want to miss a minute of it”. On a Lightship, we can go from days/weeks of complete boredom, to moments of sheer terror in a heartbeat. At this time, we had been going through our boring and dull every day’s the same routine period.

This truly was excitement!!

“Away the small boat”! The “26’ motor whaleboat” was lowered and under the command of Lee Burbage BM1. “Boats” could swap stories with the best of them, and was not easily intimidated. He was the right man for this task. They traveled over to the Roosevelt, which by this time had a gangway lowered; an officer and several enlisted men climbed down to greet our small boat.

After a short discussion, with occasional hand waving by both crews, the small boat got underway again.

When she returned and while the small boat crew, was still alongside the ship, and while attaching the falls, and not yet ready to be hoisted back aboard... Everyone was shouting over the side to them, “What did the Air Craft Carrier Roosevelt want?” “What did the Air Craft carrier Roosevelt want?”

“They’re looking for the Pilot Boat and wanted our help to locate it,” was the shouted reply!

WHAT!!! The PILOT BOAT!

We were incredulous, and couldn’t believe it. All that for the Pilot Boat!

Note: A “Maritime Pilot” is required aboard any and all ships entering or leaving port.

Without any further hesitation, Chief Carter instructed me to get on the radio, contact the Pilot Boat. Inform them of the Air Craft Carrier Roosevelt’s location, and forward their request for him to come aboard to guide them into the Port of New York, and the Brooklyn Navy yard.

A short time later, the Pilot Boat arrived and a Pilot boarded the Roosevelt; she got underway and headed into New York Harbor.

Everyone aboard went back below to finish their breakfast, get fresh hot coffee, and talk about the “mornings excitement”, before starting the normal routine of the day.

And that is the story of how;

A Little Red Lightship Brought a Big Aircraft Carrier to a Stop!

A little about the author;

The author, James F. “Jay” McCarthy, served 2 years (1957-1959) aboard the RELIEF Lightship LV-78 / WAL-505. He speaks with firsthand knowledge of the ship and crew. He also was shipmates with a number of the crew that survived the collision and sinking on 24 June 1960.

Jay had a 35 year career in the old “Bell System”. Starting as an installer of Telephone Switching Equipment in New York Telephone Company Central Offices in the New York City and surrounding area. Jay retired as a Manager in the BellSouth Network Operations Center near Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

After retirement, Jay formed his own company JFM Enterprises, providing Project Management, Consulting and Professional Services to BellSouth and AT&T.

Jay is a Past 1st. Vice President and Membership Director of the USCG Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc. 2004-2008.

Jay and Barbara married in 1965 and currently live in Delray Beach, FL. They have 2 sons, Michael of Asheville, N.C., and Kevin of Lake Worth, FL.



The author Jay McCarthy, at the helm of the barque Jeanie Johnson.

The Jeanie Johnson is a replica of the square-sterned, three masted barque which had carried Irish Immigrants during the dreaded Irish potato famine to North America. From 1848 to 1855, on 16, 2 month voyages, she carried over 2,500 Irish people to a new life.

Source; www.jeaniejohnson.net

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and SOURCES;

RELIEF Lightship Nomenclature provided by, Edmund "Lee" Burbage, BMCM USCG-Ret.
Crossed Over the Bar 29 January 2009

Edmund L. Burbage served aboard RELIEF, February 1957 - May 1958
J. F. "Jay" McCarthy served aboard RELIEF, 26 April 1957 - 23 April 1959
Bobbie R. Pierce served aboard RELIEF, 06 Dec. 1957 - 24 June 1960
Blaine Kuhn served aboard RELIEF, August 1958 - 24 June 1960
John Biermaas served aboard RELIEF, 1948-1951

References:

U.S. Coast Guard Historians Office, http://www.uscg.mil/history/cutters/WLV/Lightship_Index.asp
USCG Lightship Sailors Association International, Inc., www.uscglightsailsailors.org
A History of U.S. Lightships by Willard Flint,
James P. Delgado, Maritime Historian, National Park Service,
No Port in a Storm by Bob MacAlindin, www.merchantmarine.org
Doug Bingham, noted Lighthouse and Lightship Historian / Speaker
http://www.mels-place.com/Contents/mmm/lightstn/lights/lights_12.htm
National Lighthouse Museum, <http://nationallighthousemuseum.org/>
<http://campbellw32w909.org/index.html>
Dick Levesque website, <http://www.coastguardpics.net>
The Jeanie Johnson, www.jeaniejohnson.net
Also, the many other various sources as documented throughout this book.

Cover and Illustrations provided by Michael S. McCarthy
Computer Consulting and Technical Support provided by Kevin J. McCarthy