



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

## U.S. Coast Guard Lightships & Those of the U.S. Lighthouse Service

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### U.S. NAVY TEMPORARY LIGHTSHIPS

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Under its responsibility for providing safe return of troops from Europe after World War I, and in view of the danger from enemy mines existing off the east coast, the Navy performed minesweeping to insure a safe channel into the principal ports of debarkation. The centerline of the offshore entrance to these one mile wide channels were marked by temporary lightship stations maintained by the Navy. These swept channels extended from existing approach aids maintained by the Lighthouse Service to more than 30 miles offshore from Boston, New York, Delaware Bay, Chesapeake Bay, and Charleston to facilitate landfall for troop carriers following great circle tracks from French and Mediterranean ports. The seven vessels involved were Navy minesweepers, using additional equipment provided by the Lighthouse Service. These "lightships" were placed on station commencing December 1918, and were discontinued during the summer of 1919.

A brief description of these vessels follows:

#### USS EASTHAMPTON (No. 573)

Former commercial ocean going tug

Built 1913 - 162'9" LOA - purchased by USN 1917 and converted for towing and minesweeping

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 41 feet, steam whistle, and submarine bell signal

Painted gray, no distinguishing marks

Stationed 16.4 mi - 077 degrees from Boston Lightship Decommissioned 1919, sold to private interests 1920

#### USS CARDINAL (AM-6)

Lapwing Class minesweeper

Built 1918 - 187'10" LOA x 36'6" x 10' - 950 tons displ

Crew complement 78

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 51 feet, steam siren, submarine bell signal

Painted gray with white bows, marked "NY 2" in black



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Stationed 29.5 mi - 115 degrees from Ambrose Lightship  
Later wrecked near Dutch Harbor AK in 1923

## USS FINCH (AM-9)

Lapwing Class minesweeper

Built 1918 - 187'10" LOA x 36'6" x 10' - 950 tons displ

Crew complement 78

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 51 feet, steam siren, and submarine bell signal

Painted gray with black bows, marked "NY 1" in white

Stationed 56 mi - 115 degrees from Ambrose Lightship

Later sunk by Japanese bomber near Corregidor in 1942

## USS FALCON (AM-28)

Lapwing Class minesweeper

Built 1918 - 187'10" LOA x 36'6" x 10' - 950 tons displ

Crew complement 78

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 51 feet, steam siren, and submarine bell signal

Painted gray, no distinguishing marks

Stationed 57 mi - 072 degrees from Five Fathom Bank Lightship

Later converted to submarine rescue vessel (ASR-2), and noted for participation in salvage operations in connection with submarines S-51 and SQUALUS.

Decommissioned 1946

## USS BRANT (AM-24)

Lapwing Class minesweeper

Built 1918 - 187'10" LOA x 36'6" x 10' - 950 tons displ

Crew complement '78

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 50 feet, and steam siren

Painted gray, marked BRANT on sides in black

Stationed 56.1 miles- 081 degrees from Cape Henry Light

Converted to tug (AT-132) in 1919, and during WWII to salvage tug (APS-32), then transferred to US Maritime Commission 1936



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## USS OWL (AM-2)

Lapwing CLss minesweeper

Built 1918 - 187'10" LOA x 36'6" x 10' - 950 tons displ Crew complement 78

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 50 feet, and steam siren

Painted gray, marked OWL on sides in black

Stationed 21 mi - 090 degrees from Cape Henry Light

Converted to tug (AT-137) in 1919, then (ATO-137). Later participated in "D-Day" operations during the Normandy landing. Decommissioned 1946

## USS LONG ISLAND

Former offshore trawler built 1912 - 164'4" loa x 24'1" x 6'9"

Purchased by USN 1917 and converted for towing and minesweeping

Equipped with a cluster of three 80cp electric lens lanterns at 50 feet, and steam whistle

Painted gray

Stationed 33.5 mi - 088 degrees from Charleston Lightship

Decommissioned and sold 1919

All of the foregoing vessels were converted to lightship use with equipment supplied by the United States Lighthouse Service

Canvas covered crows nests on each mast served as daymarks

A Crosby automatic signal control was fitted to the vessels' normal sound signal which then served as the fog signal. A controller was also provided to produce the specified light characteristic

All vessels were moored with a 5,000 pound mushroom, using 2 1/4 inch wire rope from the towing winch aft, led through a turning block and thence forward along the ports side passageway to the hawsepipe

(For further details, see also the Reference Notes for US Lightship Stations, Index Numbers 117 through 123)