



Mr. Russ McCabe
DE State Archives
Dover, DE
October 9, 2003

Dear Russ:

The Board of Directors of The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation would like to thank you for your involvement in the creation of the Overfalls historical marker. Thank you, also for coming to the Lightship Sailor's Association's national reunion held on October 3, 2003 and for speaking at the historical marker dedication ceremony.

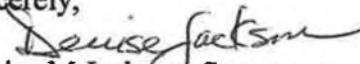
We are so thankful for your support for the Overfalls.

During this past year The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation offered guided tours of the lightship from May 23 through October 5, 2003. Our 26 ship guides met in the spring for training and contributed 885 volunteer hours, giving tours to approximately 1,000 visitors. Clothing and other gifts were sold on the ship and volunteers continued to offer these items at most community events. The work crew was busy power washing, sanding, welding, and painting throughout the season, completely restoring the forecastle, windlass, and crew's quarters. Our membership is now over four hundred - an increase of over 50% from last year.

As we move forward with a capital campaign we have made application to the Delaware River & Bay Association for an unrestricted grant and to Delaware's Grant-In-Aid program that provides funds for administrative costs for non-profit organizations. Additionally, we have made application for a sizable federal grant "Save America's Treasures" to repair the ship's hull, lift the ship, and place it in a permanent cradle. This will allow us to have access to the hull for future maintenance. Finally, The Greater Lewes Foundation has awarded us a grant that will be used to build a new entryway to the ship.

We thank you for your support and please join us on the second Friday of each month at St. Peter's Parish Hall on the corner of Mulberry and Second Street for interesting and worthwhile programs.

Sincerely,


Denise M Jackson, Secretary

NOTICE!

A List of the Justices of the Peace and Notaries Public Appointed by the Governor of this State from December 3, 1906, to December 2, 1907.

Table listing Justices of the Peace and Notaries Public with columns for DATE, NAME, FEE, OFFICE, and TERM. Includes names like Alton C. Pyle, Matthew S. Newton, Leonard W. Lovitt, etc.

See Menace in Tax Commission.

The State Revenue and Taxation Commission appointed by the last Legislature is viewed as a source of danger by New Castle county farmers. Such, at least, was indicated at the session of Pomona Grange...

The resolution was adopted without dissent after serious discussion and will be brought to the attention of the State Grange in Dover this week.

It is the feeling of farmers that the farming community, is not adequately represented on the commission, although it is one of the most strongly affecting interests in the commission's purpose of working for equitable taxation...

Prohibition was also a subject of interest at the afternoon session. New Castle county farmers evidently envy their neighbors in Kent and Sussex...

On the discussion at the ten percent fee of county officers in excess of their salaries. The members believe that the county officers are amply provided for in their salaries...

Mr. Dilworth, as the topic of his "timely talk," spoke on "The Rural Public School" and his address proved one of the most interesting of the meeting.

"Successful agriculture requires a knowledge of all sciences, the elements of which can be taught more easily and more successfully in the country school than in the city schools.

"It is just as essential that a man should be trained for farming as he should be trained for the law, or for medicine. It is sheer nonsense to take a young man from school at an early age because he expects to become a farmer...

Changes in Delaware Lighthouses

Captain Samuel Baker, for some time past master of the Overfalls Lightship, has been assigned to shore duty and stationed at Green Hill Light...

Here Is Your Information.

By an accidental glance at a small sheet of paper pinned to an old calendar in the store of Pierce & Carman, in South Milford, we saw the following statement made by the Levy Court man from the First Representative District of Sussex County...

Here is the notice he has written and pinned up:

Pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 144, Vol. 23 Laws of Delaware, entitled, An Act to provide for the permanent improvement of the public highways of Sussex County, I, Joseph G. Davis Levy Court Commissioner for the First Representative District of said county, do hereby publish a correct list of disbursements in the said district under the provisions of the said act, for year ending November 19th, 1907.

Table listing disbursements for year ending November 19th, 1907, including items like T. C. Holcomb, 200 bushels of shells at \$50.00, etc.

Making a total of \$108.93. Of the entire expense, the shells cost \$128.19, and labor and hauling \$142.15. The work is eminently satisfactory to the people, and the system will ultimately give Cedar Creek fine roads, but it is slow, as the amount spent each year is small.

Delaware Farmers Have Advanced Ideas

At the session of the State Grange held at Dover last week the farmers of Delaware took advanced grounds of most of the leading questions of the day. By a resolution they placed themselves on record as favoring the Rivers and Harbors Congress movement and called upon subordinate granges to meet and send delegations favoring the advancement of this movement with all possible haste.

Resolved, That the Delaware State Grange is in hearty sympathy with the movement looking toward the drainage of our lowlands, under Federal supervision. Resolved, further, that a copy of this resolution be sent to our representatives in Congress.

The members visited the Palmer Home for old people where both sex may spend the afternoon of life in comfort and mid home surroundings, and, on going back to the secret session the State Grange endorsed the institution, and pledged its support in the following resolution offered by Mrs. F. C. Bancroft, and adopted:

Resolved, That the Delaware State Grange desires to thank said management for the pleasure extended and recommends that each subordinate grange ask for donations for said institution.

With the farmers throughout Delaware donating to this institution from their plentiful stores, the success of the home is assured.

Is a Mother Worth Less Than a Father?

Two small children in New Jersey, Mildred and William Carter, lost their parents in a wreck, and a jury sitting in Camden has just awarded the orphans \$23,000 damages, \$5000 for the loss of their mother and \$18,000 for the loss of their father. There was no insinuation that Mrs. Carter was not a good mother, but, being a woman, it was assumed that her value to her children was less than one-third that of the father.

"PREPARE TO The United States"

offers exceptional opportunities years of age, and skilled mechanics. Pay \$16.00 to \$70.00 per month together with lodging, rations, and ADOPT A PROFESSION.



This Tells the Story.

There are scores of agreeable places for every man, if the right people could only get together. We have received a letter from a friend this week, who owns property and has other business which he can not afford to neglect, and he wants a man with a wife, to manage part of his agricultural enterprise...

Dear Colonel Townsend:—I want to get a good man, preferably a young married man without children, to take charge of my place. His duties principally will be to attend to the stock—chickens, cows and horses. I want first of all, a man who is a good milker; he will not be required to go into the field, as my farmer will attend to that work—but the man will have plenty of work to do, yet not so hard as the usual farm work. I take it as a personal favor to me, if you would put me into touch with a man to fill the position. I have had quite a few applicants, but they all seem to think that I am running the place for fun, and that all their duties would consist in over-seeing the place, and do no work. I want a man to work, and will pay liberally for it.

Yours sincerely, There are many places like the above, where a young man willing to work intelligently, and give valuable returns for the money received, would have a chance to do well. In this day no man can afford to be simply a "hired man"; he should use his brains as well as his hands when working for others; such men soon own their own business, and pass from the lists of those employed.

A Month's Medicine for 25 Cents.

Every bottle of Dr. Howard's Specific for the cure of constipation and dyspepsia contains sixty doses of a remedy that is pleasant and easy to take.

Used according to directions, this is sufficient for a month's treatment. Bought on E. H. Matthews' special half price offer of a regular-sized 50 cent bottle at half price you can get a month's supply of the best medicine in the world for only 25 cents.

Another reason why you should use Dr. Howard's Specific, or at least try it, if suffering with constipation, dyspepsia or liver trouble, is the fact that druggist Matthews sells every bottle under his personal guarantee to refund the money if the specific does not cure.

If you have any of the following symptoms, Dr. Howard's Specific will cure you: Loss of Appetite, Sick Headache, Distress in Stomach, Sour Stomach, General Mental Depression, Bloating Gas, Hoarseness, Constipation, Loss of Sleep, Nervousness, Weakness, Lack of Energy, Spots before the Eyes.

Begin to get well today. Dr. Howard's Specific will make a permanent cure. It gives lasting health.

Keep Stock and Poultry Healthy.

Rex Lice Killer kills lice and mites on poultry and disinfects. Rex Poultry Tonic digests food, prevents and cures disease. Satisfaction guaranteed.

The best preparation ever made for stock is Rex Conditioner. Satisfaction guaranteed. Every stock owner should see the valuable \$2.00 gift that goes free with a \$1.00 package of Rex Conditioner. At Store of E. F. Betts, South Milford.

STATE OF DELAWARE, OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE. I, Joseph L. Cahall, Secretary of State of the State of Delaware, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a correct list of the appointments of the Justices of the Peace and Notaries Public made by the Governor of this State during the period commencing December 3rd, A.D. 1906 and ending December 2, A.D. 1907, that being the first Monday of said month. IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal at Dover, this second day of December, in the year of our [L. S.] Lord one thousand nine hundred and seven. JOSEPH L. CAHALL, Secretary of State

CASTORIA For Infants and Children. The Kind You Have Always Bought. Bears the Signature of J. C. Fletcher

CURE Do Not Eat Citrus

Why the agonies, ache, urina, aches, langu, to become a twin cure? Doan's use, because help they us. If you have symptoms self now, Bright's Kidney Pills, as all J. H. G. Frederica R. ford, Del., mentioning Doan's number of the more 1 lb years of age and ever ache. I never to have a sh. These attacks at a time and almost helpless to pick up and down, on get have to pull m, to regain an en free from a pai never attribute neys until I saw Doan's Kidney of pain in the I decided to try, after all my kid of the trouble, using them. Th because of my com pletely and then it since. I made itation in 1903 Kidney Pills, as all I said in the May 5, 1907. For sale by all d Foster-Milburn Co. sole agents for U Remember the take no other.



A History of U.S. Lightships

by

Willard Flint

[Click here to see a gallery of historic images of U.S. lightships](#)

"Lonely Sentinels of the Sea-Lanes," lightships owe their origin to Ancient Romans-early galleys provided lighted beacons, deterred pirates

Lightships, as we commonly know or remember them, have been around little more than two centuries, though a prototype existed in the ancient world. During the last few centuries BC, Roman coast guard galleys carried at their mastheads open framework baskets in which a fire sometimes was built, serving as a signal light. Manned by an armed crew, such vessels patrolled the Roman coasts to guide and protect incoming vessels by providing a beacon and to deter piracy by showing that a warship was at hand. But, since the prudent Roman sailor tried to avoid nighttime voyages whenever possible, the first lightships never attained the importance of their successors.

By the 18th century, however, maritime commerce had become a 24-hour-a-day undertaking, with ships ranging the entire globe. In 1731, Robert Hamblin, an Englishman, obtained permission from King George II to outfit what would become the first modern lightship. His single-masted vessel was given the name *Nore* and took up its position a year later in England at Nore Sands in the Thames estuary. Resembling a small fishing sloop, *Nore* carried two ship's lanterns, hung 12 feet apart from a cross arm high above the deck wherein burned flat wicks in oil. The *Nore's* log lists several accounts of almost futile struggles to keep the lanterns lit during any appreciable strength of wind, still, ship's masters considered the lightship a godsend, and similar vessels soon entered similar service off the coasts of most every seafaring nation.

FIRST U.S. LIGHTSHIP ENTERS SERVICE

At least six lightships were in use off England's coasts before the United States even ventured into the concept of lightships. The first U.S. contract was awarded in 1819 to John Pool of Hampton, Va., for a vessel of "...70 tons burthen, copper-fastened a cabin with four berths, at least ...spars, a capstan, belfry, yawl and davits..." Delivered in the summer of 1820, this first "light boat" was initially stationed off Willoughby Spit, Va., as an aid to Chesapeake Bay commerce. Storms and heavy seas, however, scourged this exposed position, and the vessel

had to be shifted to a safer anchorage off Craney Island, near Norfolk, VA. Within a year, four more lightships appeared, marking dangerous shoals in the Chesapeake. America's first true "outside" lightship, anchored in the open sea instead of in a bay or inlet, entered service off Sandy Hook, N.J. in 1823.

The lightship proved as successful on this side of the Atlantic as it had on the other. During the period 1820-1983, 116 lightship stations were established by the United States at one time or another. This figure includes those stations that were renamed and moved to a different position to better serve the same purpose, and those taken over later by Canada. The number of stations existing at any one time peaked in 1909 when 56 lightships were maintained. By 1927, 68 stations had been discontinued, replaced by lighthouses or buoys, taken over by Canada, or considered unnecessary.

In 1939, when the Coast Guard assumed responsibility for aids to navigation, the number of stations had been reduced to 30, and although three additional stations were established during the 1954-1965 period, the total number of lightship stations continued to decline steadily until 1983 when replacement of the *Nantucket Shoals Lightship* with a large navigational buoy marked the end of America's lightship era.

LIGHTSHIPS SATISFIED MULTIPLE ATON REQUIREMENTS

As seamarks, lightships satisfied multiple requirements. They could be moored in shallow water, even near shifting shoals where fixed structures could not be placed. They could just as easily be stationed in deep water many miles from shore, to serve as a landfall or a point of departure for trans-oceanic traffic. And being vessels, they could be readily repositioned to suit changing needs. In these roles, lightships served as day beacons, as light platforms by night, as sound signal stations in times of reduced visibility, and around the clock as transmitters of bearing- and distance-finding electronic signals. Outages or difficulties with any of their systems and equipment could be immediately detected and remedied on the spot by the crew. During their relatively brief era, U.S. lightships evolved into highly sophisticated and efficient aids to navigation.

Progress and development in the early years of lightships was woefully inadequate, due primarily to organizational and management deficiencies that were allowed to persist for many years. Initially, little consideration was given to suitable design and construction characteristics. Early light vessels were largely a product of opinion and arbitrary judgment on the part of builders who were often ignorant of the true purpose of the vessel or its harsh operating environment.

Initially, lightships were exceedingly poor light platforms; their full body, shoal draft and light displacement combining to cause undue rolling and violent pitching. Thirty-one years after the first American lightship dropped anchor in Chesapeake Bay, the skipper of a seagoing light was complaining that "her broad bluff bow is not at all calculated to resist the fury of the sea, which in some of the gales we experience in the winter season, break against us and over us with almost impending fury." Such rolling and pitching, in turn, resulted in frequent loss of moorings and breakage or damage to the lanterns.

The captain of another such vessel described its hull as being "similar to a barrel," so that "she

is constantly in motion, and when it is in any ways rough, she rolls and labors to such a degree as to heave the glass out of the lanterns, the beds out of the berths, tearing out the chain-plates, etc. and rendering her unsafe and uncomfortable."

Certainly by present-day standards, crew accommodations on early lightships would have been judged uninhabitable. Even years later, in 1891, a visitor to the *Nantucket Lightship* reported on the boredom and discomfort he found there. The weather could toss the vessel about so violently that even veteran sailors became seasick. On calm days, nausea gave way to tedium, for the crew could service the light and make things shipshape within a few hours, leaving the rest of the day for making rattan baskets to sell ashore or for simply whittling away the hours. Seldom did anyone visit the ship's small library, and even shipboard food was monotonous, wholesome though it was. The most common dish was "scouse," which impressed the visitor as a "wonderful commingling of salt beef, potatoes and onions." And, in terms of tours of duty aboard early lightships, crewmembers spent eight months of the year at sea, two four-month stints separated by shore leave.

SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES

A visit to the *Nantucket* in the early 1970s would have produced a much different report. Scientific advances in hull design, the use of bilge keels, plus adoption of improved ballasting techniques produced more stable vessels. Not only did new hull designs reduce roll, but diesel engines also helped the captain keep his vessel headed into the wind for even greater stability. Unfortunately for some, however, the smell of diesel fuel was almost as distressing as the motion the engines helped prevent.

Over the years, creature comforts were upgraded too. Reading would become a popular pastime on lightships while radio, and later, television, helped to dispel boredom. Cooks produced a surprising variety of meals, and the murderous four-month tour was eventually reduced to approximately 30 days. One change, though, was for the worse, at least as far as crew comfort was concerned. The bleat of modern fog-horns was so loud that anyone venturing on deck without ear protectors risked pain and deafness. These changes in safety practices, living conditions, and in ship and equipment design were slow in coming, and to understand why this was so, one must first understand how America's lightships were managed.

Supervisory responsibility for lightships, as well as all other navigational aids, was assigned in 1820 to the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury Department, with control being exercised through what was known as the Lighthouse Establishment — a loosely structured organization administered at the local level by the Collectors of Customs. These people operated independently, acquiring material and equipment, contracting for construction and deciding on their own what requirements were to be satisfied. They also hired and fired personnel, paid the wages and carried out or arranged for the annual inspections of existing aids to navigation. The inspection reports, together with recommendations which were based largely on personal preference and opinion, were then forwarded to the Fifth Auditor.

Stephen Pleasonton, the Fifth Auditor, had no familiarity with the nature of his maritime involvement, and little interest in requirements for assisting mariners, distancing himself entirely from the events in progress. Control was exercised in singlehanded fashion by

arbitrary findings based on review of the inspection reports, and by tight control of the purse strings. This resulted in a host of misguided decisions, shoddy and unsafe construction, and a system of navigational aids which was inadequate to the need, behind the times and technically inefficient.

EIGHT LIGHTHOUSE DISTRICTS ESTABLISHED

In 1838, the situation was improved somewhat when Congress divided the Atlantic Coast into six lighthouse districts and the Great Lakes into two, each with a Navy officer assigned, and a revenue cutter or leased vessel made available for conducting inspections. Reports generated by this action gave evidence of large-scale mismanagement and pointed out in great detail, defects in equipment, low morale, incompetence among personnel, and irresponsible performance by contractors. Although Pleasonton was apparently displeased by these reports, he continued to sidestep any remedies and remained unduly concerned with the costs cited for improving the situation.

Due largely to the meager funds made available, lightship development continued to lag far behind progress being made in Europe. Although some standardization had been achieved, by 1842, the 30 lightships in U.S. service ranged from 40- to 230-tons burden, constructed entirely of wood, poorly rigged in many cases, and had no machinery-driven means of propulsion. Illuminating apparatus was limited to multiple-wick sperm oil lamps of poor visibility that had to be raised and lowered to the deck for servicing. Ground tackle was inadequate and hull design still failed to consider the weather and sea conditions encountered by these small vessels. Neither tenders nor relief vessels were available at the time, and, as a consequence when the vessels were frequently blown adrift, stations remained unmarked for periods measured in weeks and months.

Congress eventually became aware of the serious disarray and, using competent and qualified inspectors, carried out an investigation in 1851. A voluminous but meaningful report resulted. This report was extremely critical, pointing out that many of the lightships were extensively rotted and poorly maintained; their lighting equipment inadequate; and that entire crew complements were often absent for lengthy periods. Also criticized was the practice of hiring farmers and other landsman as officers and crewmembers who, in some cases hired stand-ins to perform their duty. Much was made of the fact that the published range of visibility of all lights was erroneous; that there was no uniform system for coloring, numbering or otherwise identifying floating aids; that the positions of many lightships had been poorly selected; and that additional vessels were required. Recommendations were comprehensive, specific and, for the most part, worthwhile.

LIGHTHOUSE BOARD FORMED

The outcome of this report led to formation of the Lighthouse Board in 1852 as a separate branch of the Treasury Department. This was a nine-member committee composed of officers of the Navy, Army Corps of Engineers and civilian scientists. The board, guided by conclusions and recommendations of the 1851 investigation, acted at once to take advantage of available technology, to upgrade equipment and to revise contracting procedures.

The organizational structure was drastically overhauled to provide seven districts on the Atlantic coast, two on the Gulf coast, two on the Great Lakes and one on the Pacific coast, each with a Navy officer as district inspector. Separate subcommittees were established to address all requirements for ATON. These included finance and contract management, design and engineering, and lighting, as well as one that tested and evaluated new equipment, determined requirements and developed standard maintenance procedures.

By 1855, this had led to construction of several lightships of new, and more or less standard, design, and installation of new and more efficient illuminating apparatus on most existing vessels. The merits of various types of sound signals, illuminants and methods of marking or otherwise distinguishing one lightship from another were also investigated.

Until this time, lightships were identified only by the name of the station which they occupied, and no specification or requirement existed for color or marking. Although station names were painted on the sides of lightships at about this time, no numbers were used to identify individual vessels until 1867.

As progress in the technical area continued, so did efforts to upgrade the caliber and competence of lightship crews. However, with the 1852 ration allowance for lightship crewmembers being set at 20 cents per day, wages, benefits, accommodations and food remained rather spartan.

At the district level, an engineer was assigned to assist the inspector and, as time progressed, each district established a depot for supply and maintenance of its own equipment. Modern equipment continued to be introduced, and supervision and general effectiveness was improved.

There is little question that the Lighthouse Board caused noteworthy progress, however, the committee organization did not lend itself to prompt action on day-to-day operating matters, and translating plans and recommendations into accomplishment continued to be a cumbersome and diffuse process.

Congress again stepped in, considering that the board structure was unwieldy, and hindered by undue military influence and bickering. Feeling the need for an improved command structure and an organization capable of functioning as an entity responsive to a single civilian authority, the Lighthouse Board was disbanded in 1910. In its place was established a Bureau of Lighthouses within the Department of Commerce, having as its operating agency the U.S. Lighthouse Service. Heading up the bureau, a commissioner of lighthouses reported directly to the secretary of commerce, and also directly controlled the day-to-day operations of the service. For the first time, lightships, as well as all other aspects of navigational aids had found a place in a service-oriented organization with an adequate command structure.

GEORGE PUTNAM NAMED COMMISSIONER OF LIGHTHOUSES

Under the able and progressive leadership of Commissioner George Putnam, the Bureau of Lighthouses moved rapidly to the forefront of the world's agencies engaged in developing and maintaining ATON. Although technological advances were highlighted during Putnam's tenure, his most valuable contribution was probably in the area of organization and personnel administration. Here he emphasized competence and demanded professional performance by

all employees, and he was responsible for remedying the long-standing problems with pay, living conditions, benefits, and a safe and efficient work environment.

This organization prospered for nearly 30 years, developing and perfecting the use of the radio beacon, modernizing illuminants and optical equipment, improving signalling methods, advancing the use of automated aids, and demonstrating the feasibility of unattended and radio-controlled light vessels and lighthouses. The lightship itself, through innovative engineering and naval

architecture, was developed into an effective vessel specifically built to handle its environmental requirements, and with propulsion and auxiliary systems adequate to its needs. Watertight integrity and a variety of other safety features were also highly developed in lightships of the late 1930s.

LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE MERGES WITH THE COAST GUARD

In 1939, the mission of the Coast Guard was expanded to include responsibility for ATON, and resources of the former Lighthouse Service were transferred at that time. Lightship officers and crews, as well as other civilian employees, were offered two choices- integration into the Coast Guard with military rank commensurate with existing salary; or retention in civilian status under Coast Guard command. Exercise of these options resulted in about a 50-50 split. For lightships, many operated initially with either an all-military or an all-civilian complement. This later gave way to a mix of military and civilian personnel. The mixed crews were in evidence well after World War II and a few of the Lighthouse Service civilian employees were still active into the 1970s. In 1967, the Coast Guard became part of the Department of Transportation.

From 1939 until the end of the lightship era in 1983, the high standards of professionalism and technology introduced by the Lighthouse Service were carried forward and improved upon by the Coast Guard, well in keeping with its long history of dedication to the interest of mariners.

LIGHTSHIPS CONTEND WITH NATURE' S FURY

Life aboard the lightships, aside from being viewed as monotonous by many, was exposed to many hazards. Survivors from *Five Fathom Lightship #37*, which took four men to the bottom with it, told of how their ship foundered off Five Fathom Bank, N.J. after an army of mountainous waves marched across its bulwarks, tore off its ventilators and hatch covers and filled it with water through the resulting deck openings.

There were no survivors, however, when *Buffalo Lightship #82*, located near Buffalo, N.Y., foundered in a gale that swept across Lake Erie in November, 1913, but a message from its dead captain to his wife told it all. Scrawled on a board that washed ashore a few days after the disaster, the message read: "Goodbye, Nellie, ship is breaking up fast. — Williams." Six months passed before the submerged wreck was located, more than two miles from its assigned station.

A diver who penetrated the 63 feet of water that enshrouded *Buffalo #82* reported that the

storm had apparently parted its cables, battered in its superstructure, then dragged it to destruction. The body of one of the six men lost with it was found a year later, 13 miles from the site of the sinking.

Cross Rip Lightship #6 left no survivors or messages when it vanished off Massachusetts with all hands Feb. 5, 1918. Observers on shore reported seeing the helpless lightship torn loose from its moorings by a huge mass of windblown ice and carried away. The aged wooden vessel had no masts, sails or other means of motive power and, not being equipped with a radio, its fate and that of its six-man crew remained a mystery for 15 years. No trace of the ship was found until 1933, when a government dredge working in the Vineyard Sound area sucked up splintered pieces of oak planking and ribs, and a section of a windlass believed to be from the long-lost vessel. The most likely explanation for its loss is that the ice crushed its hull, and the crewmen perished in the winter sea.

Another mystery surrounds the loss of *Vineyard Sound Lightship #73*, which foundered during a 1944 hurricane with the loss of all hands. Its storm-battered wreck was explored by divers a few weeks after it sank, and again 20 years later, yet the actual cause of its loss remains unknown. Residents of Westport, Mass., reported seeing a series of red and white flares streaking across the cloud-filled skies in the general direction of the lightship. After the storm abated somewhat, they struggled down to the beach and scanned the murky horizon, only to discover that *Vineyard Sound #73*, which had been guarding Sow and Pigs Reef, had vanished from its station. This account of the incident and the rather intriguing aftermath is dedicated to its crew who remained at their posts until the end.

In December 1936, a 100-mph gale assailed the *Swiftsure Lightship #113*, anchored in the Strait of Juan de Fuca off the Washington coast.

"The wind came shrieking and snarling out of the south," its skipper recalled, "blowing a hurricane." The sea, he declared "writhed and steamed like a bowl of boiling milk," and the sky

was "full of innumerable tiny particles of water torn from the crests of the waves until the air was so thick we could barely see half the length of our vessel." Captain Eric Lindman flinched as waves broke over the pilothouse and the seas forced its way "through every fissure, no matter how small, even squirting in through the keyholes in the outer cabin doors." Unlike its ill-fated sisters, however, *Swiftsure* survived the intense 12-hour battering.

Storms were certainly not a lightship's only threat. Man, rather than nature, caused the loss of the *Diamond Shoals Lightship #71* in 1918 off Cape Hatteras, N.C. A German submarine, provoked by the lightship's radio message warning off shipping, surfaced and, after allowing the 12-man crew to abandon ship, sank it with shellfire. The lightship's sacrifice was not in vain though, for more than 25 Allied ships had received its timely radio warning.

Sixteen years later, on May 15, 1934, the *Nantucket Lightship #117* was riding at anchor in 192 feet of water off Nantucket Shoals. Its horn boomed into the fog to warn away the trans-Atlantic shipping that passed nearby. Unseen by sailors aboard the *Nantucket* was the 47,000-ton British luxury liner *Olympic*. Steering to the lightship's radio beacon signal, the ocean liner intended to alter course at the last moment and pass close by the *Nantucket*.

On the bridge of the *Olympic*, someone miscalculated though. The liner, sister ship to the *Titanic*, suddenly materialized out of the fog; its towering bow hung poised like the blade of a

guillotine, then severed the lightship in two. Seven of the *Nantucket's* 11-man crew died in the collision. In response to the tragedy, the British government replaced the *Nantucket* with a new lightship, one resembling a miniature battleship. Its hull was fashioned from armor plate, enclosing a maze of 43 watertight compartments. Atop its mast was a light visible from almost 50 miles. And, whenever the foghorn would sound, a radio transmitter would automatically broadcast a signal, enabling navigators of oncoming ships to calculate the distance to the lightship.

Certainly, dangers posed by weather and collision were ever-present. Official records contain 237 instances of lightships being blown adrift or dragged off-station in severe weather or moving ice. Five lightships were lost under such conditions, but the majority, despite heavy damage to hull and superstructure on many of these occasions, remained on station unassisted. This attests to a high order of seamanship, and commendations for bravery and outstanding ship handling often resulted.

MINOR BUMPS, SIDESWIPE AND NEAR-MISSES

Without regard to frequent minor bumps, sideswipes and near-misses, 150 more serious collisions with lightships are documented. Most of these involved sailing vessels, but long tows of multiple barges accounted for a sizeable number. Collision damage ranged from superficial to severe, and, in at least one case, the lightship came out unscathed, with the colliding vessel going down nearby. On another occasion when a lightship was struck by a passing vessel, the impact was sufficient to knock the on-watch lightship crew from their feet, and shatter all 16-lamp chimneys in the masthead lanterns. Besides the *Nantucket* in 1934, four other lightships were sunk as the result of being rammed. Fog was a factor in many of these collisions, however most occurred under conditions of reasonably good visibility. Vessels attempting to cross the bow of the lightship without making due allowance for current and leeway were found to be the usual cause.

Although compensated for to some extent in later years, a variety of factors contributed to lightships being veritable targets for all traffic. Many were positioned in mid-channel. Early charts were overprinted with dotted lines running from lightship to lightship giving the course and distance, and sailing directions in early *Coast Pilots* openly encouraged passing lightships close aboard. Ships' officers handling coasters during the 1800s were by and large sadly deficient in the practice of piloting and navigation. Charts were often either not carried at all, or were not used for plotting. Instead, reliance was placed on listings of courses, bearings and distances found in a variety of government and commercial publications, or simply passed on by word of mouth. Little wonder that lightshipping carried with it such a large measure of apprehension.

AMERICA'S LIGHTSHIP ERA ENDS

March 29, 1985, saw the final chapter of America's lightship era come to a close with the decommissioning of the *Nantucket I*. In a farewell message, Coast Guard Commandant ADM James S. Gracey said, "Technology has found a way to replace her with a more cost-effective aid to navigation, but *Nantucket I's* sailors can never be replaced."

In many cases lightships were replaced with "Texas Tower" type offshore light platforms, other fixed structures or large navigational buoys, all offering considerable savings in manpower and in construction and maintenance costs.

The last message sent by the ship read in part, "An important part of Coast Guard history ended today. We must now look somewhere else to find the stuff that sea stories are made of."

Most of the decommissioned lightships are long gone. Quite a few were sold and served in coastwise and harbor roles. Two provided bonfires at Fourth of July celebrations and several were used as target ships by the Navy. A few were transferred to other countries for use as lightships, some were used as floating clubhouses by various organizations, but the majority ended up in a ship breakers yard. However, 19 lightships still survive, the three oldest built in 1904. Most of these veterans remain afloat, restored for use as museums or exhibits open to the public. Two serve as floating restaurants and one is in use in the charter trade.

This cannot end with the traditional look to the future of lightships, for there is none. However, the vessels themselves, and certainly all those who served in them, constitute a unique and proud segment of America's maritime heritage- one sometimes overlooked, but never to be forgotten.

ADDITIONAL READING

Bennett, William E. *White for Danger: True Dramas of Lightships and Lighthouses*. New York: The John Day Company, 1963.

Ehrman, CDR William E., USCG (Ret.). *Lost on Voyages to Nowhere*. Washington, D.C.:

Commandant's Bulletin - Jul/Aug 1984.

Flint, Willard. *Lightships and Lightship Stations of the U.S. Government*. Washington, D.C.:

Coast Guard Historian's Office, 1989.

Floherly, John J. *Men Without Fear*. New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1940.

Natty, Bernard C. and Strobridge, Truman R. *Bright and Steadfast Light*. New London, Conn.: *U.S Coast Guard Academy Alumni Bulletin* - Nov/Dec 1975.

U.S. LIGHTSHIPS PRESERVED AS MUSEUMS

(Last known locations)

Lightship #79 — A survivor of the second generation of steam-propelled lightships, LV-79 is being restored by the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild, Delaware Avenue & Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. Built in 1904 at Camden, N.J. The LV-79 displays the name *Barnegat*,

is afloat and open to the public. Its last official designation was *WAL-506*.

Lightship #83 — Built as part of a five-vessel contract, *LV-83* served three major ports (Eureka and San Francisco, Calif., and Seattle) between 1905-1960. The ship is owned by Northwest Seaport, Inc., 1002 Valley St., Seattle, WA 98111. The *LV-83* displays the name *Relief*, is afloat and open to the public. The ship's last official designation was *WAL-508*.

Lightship #87 — While serving the port of New York (1908-1932), the *LV-87* was the site of the first successful shipboard radio beacon used to guide ships at long distances in poor weather. The *LV-87* is owned by the South Street Seaport Museum, 207 Front St., New York, NY 10038. The vessel displays the name *Ambrose*, is afloat and open to the public. Its last official designation was *WAL-512*.

Lightship #101 — The *LV-JOJ* served at least five stations in the middle-Atlantic states between 1916-1954. The vessel is owned by the Portsmouth Lightship Museum, P.O. Box 248, Portsmouth, VA 23705. The ship is located on land and open to the public. It displays the name *Portsmouth* although there was never a station by that name. Its last official designation was *WAL-524*.

Lightship #103 — The *LV-103* is the only surviving lightship type specifically built for service on the Great Lakes. It is owned by the City of Huron, 905 7th St., Port Huron, MI 48060. The *LV-103* is exhibited on land at Pine Grove Park and open to the public. The *LV-103* displays the name *Huron*. Its last official designation was *WAL-526*.

Lightships #112 and #84 — The *LV-112* is the only U.S. lightship still operating on the open seas, occasionally cruising the New England coast. It, and *LV-84*, are owned by the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum, W. 46th St., & 12th Ave., New York, NY 10035. Both vessels are afloat and open to the public. *LV-112* displays the name *Nantucket* and its last official designation was *WAL-534*. *LV-84* displays the name *Relief* and its last official designation was *WAL-509*.

Lightship #116 — In addition to serving the "Fenwick" "Chesapeake," and "Delaware" stations, the *LV-116* served as an examination vessel off Cape Cod, Mass., protecting the port of Boston during World War II. It is owned by the National Park Service and on loan to the City of Baltimore. The ship is part of the Baltimore Maritime Museum, Pier 4, Pratt St., Baltimore, MD 21202. The *LV-116* displays the name *Chesapeake*, is afloat and open to the public. Its last official designation was *WAL-538*.

Lightship #118 — Although never actually assigned to "Overfalls" station off the Delaware coast, that is the name this vessel displays. The *LV-118* actually served several other stations between 1938-1972. The *LV-118* is owned by the Lewes Historical Society, West 3rd St., Lewes, DE 19958. *Lightship #118* is afloat and open to the public. Its last official designation was *WAL-539*.

Lightship (WAL-604) — One of two of the last class of lightships built by the Coast Guard, the *WAL-604* spent its entire 28 years of duty off Columbia River, Ore, station. Retired in

1979, it was the last lightship serving on the Pacific Coast. The ship is owned by the Columbia River Maritime Museum, 1792 Marine Dr., Astoria, OR 97103. The *WAL-604* displays the name *Columbia*, is afloat, open to the public and capable of operating under its own power.

Lightship (WAL-605) — Originally stationed at "Overfalls" on the East Coast, this vessel was subsequently sent to the Pacific to serve at the "Blunt's Reef" station off Cape Mendocino, Calif. It is currently being restored as an operating museum vessel. The *WAL-605* is owned by the U.S. Lighthouse Society, 244 Kearny St., 5th floor, San Francisco, CA 94108. The *WAL-605* displays the name *Relief*, is afloat, open to the public and capable of operating under its own power.

*For more information on the current locations of these vessels you should contact Kevin Foster of the National Park Service's National Maritime Initiative. His address is:

Kevin Foster
National Maritime Initiative
National Park Service
PO Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

[\[Historians' Office Home Page\]](#) [\[Lightship Index\]](#)

[\[USCG Home Page\]](#)

Added: January 1999

Save America's Treasures
 FY 2003 Historic Preservation Fund Grants to Preserve
 Nationally Significant Intellectual and Cultural Artifacts and Historic Structures and Sites

APPLICATION

Please follow the Guidelines and Application Instructions to complete this application. Applicants must submit one (1) signed original and seven (7) copies of a complete application plus one (1) additional photocopy of this page for each project. See Additional Information on page 7 for program contacts and instructions on how to receive an electronic version of this application.

1. PROJECT INFORMATION

Title of Project (no more than 10 words) Overfalls Lightship WLV539 Restoration

Historic Property Address or Location of Collection On the Canal Front in Lewes, Delaware

City Lewes County Sussex Congressional District 1 State DE Zip 19958

Type of project (select only one)

Historic district _____ Site _____ Building _____ Structure X Object _____

Artifact _____ Collection _____ Document _____ Sculpture _____ Work of art _____

Amount Requested (Federal share) \$ 455,280 TOTAL Project Cost \$ 910,560

2. APPLICANT AND PROJECT DIRECTOR

APPLICANT AGENCY / ORGANIZATION

Authorizing Official's Name Gary Stabley Title Chairman

Organization The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation

Address P.O. Box 413

City Lewes State DE Zip 19958

Phone 302 645 0761 Fax 302 645 4526 e-mail gstabley@aol.com

PROJECT DIRECTOR (if different from Authorizing Official)

Name Elaine Simmerman Title Vice-Chairman

Organization The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation

Address 418 W. Fourth Street

City Lewes State DE Zip 19958

Phone 302-645-4733 Fax 302-645-4733 (call first) E-mail elainesimmerman@earthlink.net

3. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL The applicant's authorizing official must sign and date this form.
 Signatures must be original and in ink.

Signature

Gary Stabley

Date

5/14/03

4. OWNERSHIP AND PROOF OF NONPROFIT STATUS

Does the applicant own this property or collection?

Yes No.

If the applicant does not own this property, attach a letter explaining the relationship between the owner and the applicant and the authority under which the applicant will be the grantee of record to undertake preservation work on the property or collection. The letter must be on the owner's letterhead and must be signed by the owner's authorizing official.

If the applicant is not a Federal agency, proof of nonprofit status must be attached to this application. Proof of nonprofit status may be:

- A copy of the Federal IRS letter indicating the applicant's eligibility for nonprofit status under the applicable provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.
- An official document identifying the applicant as a unit of state or local government or other tax exempt multipurpose organization. If prepared specifically for this application, the certification must be on the parent organization letterhead and certified by an official of the parent organization.

Please note – A letter of sales tax exemption is not acceptable as proof of nonprofit status.

5. DOCUMENTATION

A minimum of four (4), 4"x6" or larger black and white or color photographs must accompany each copy of the application. Two must be general views of the historic property or collection, and the other two must document the threat or damage. Photographs must be labeled. Photocopies and photographs submitted electronically will not be accepted. Photographs will not be returned. **Please note** – Submission of printed digital photographs will not disqualify an application; however, photographs of lesser quality could affect reviewers' evaluation of an application.

6. PROJECT SUMMARY

In the space below, briefly summarize the proposed project. Discuss the national significance of the resource, its current condition, the nature of the threat, and the proposed preservation and/or conservation work. One continuation sheet may be attached; however, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide brief, concise narratives.

From 1820 to 1985 there were 179 manned lightships or "floating lighthouses" built to aid navigation of the nation's waterways. They were assigned the most difficult waters where it was impossible or nearly so to build a lighthouse. The beacon on the lightship's mast and the sound of its fog horn assisted seamen as they guided ships loaded with food and supplies past perilous shoals to cities like Wilmington, New York, Boston and Philadelphia. The Overfalls Lightship WLVS39 was built in 1938 and served in Boston (MA), Cornfield Point (CT), and Cross Rip (MA). The ship was overhauled in 1972 and then decommissioned in 1973.

There are currently only fourteen lightships remaining in the United States. Some are privately owned; some are owned by public agencies; all are in danger of becoming scrap metal because of neglect. Since 1972 the Overfalls Lightship has been moored in shallow water and mud in the canal in downtown Lewes, Delaware, a former Dutch settlement founded in 1631. Little maintenance was performed on the ship for 30 years, and the thickness of the hull in many areas is half the original thickness. Some of the ship's ribs have deteriorated.

Under normal conditions the ship sits in the mud with the tides rising and falling along its hull, causing corrosion and damage. Although the ship does not float except in extremely high tides, the primary danger is that the hull could easily be punctured in a severe storm or hurricane.

In 1999, twenty-three concerned Lewes citizens met on the bow of the ship and vowed to save the Overfalls Lightship. This small group has grown to become The Overfalls Museum Foundation, a vibrant organization of over two hundred fifty members. A volunteer restoration crew of over twenty people meets weekly to do washing, chipping, painting and welding of the ship.

In order to prevent corrosion to the ship's hull and permit easier hull maintenance, the Overfalls Board of Directors adopted a marine engineer's engineering study and recommendation to lift the Lightship from the water and set it in a permanent cradle at grade level. After reinforcing the deteriorated ribs of the ship and doing some patchwork welding repairs, the Lightship will be ready to be lifted. Eight clusters of pilings will be driven, four on each side of the ship, to form a stable lifting base. The land around the present boat slip will be stabilized and strengthened as needed. Steel frame towers will be built to support the ship as it is lifted slowly out of the water. A cradle will be built under the raised ship. Using hydraulics, the ship will be lowered onto the cradle for permanent display and easier maintenance.

7. NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Applications not meeting this criterion will not receive further consideration. Complete either section A or section B, as appropriate.

A. FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Check one of the following and complete item "e".

The district, site, building, structure, or object is:

- a) Designated as a National Historic Landmark.
- b) **Listed in the National Register of Historic Places for national significance. Please note that properties can be listed in the National Register for their significance at the local, state, or national level; most properties are not listed for national significance.** The level of significance can be found in Section 3 - State/Federal Agency Certification of the property's approved National Register nomination. Contact your State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) if you have questions about the level of significance or do not have a copy of the approved nomination. If the property is listed for local or state significance, please go to item "d" below.
- c) **Determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its national significance by the Keeper of the National Register.** Documentation of this determination by the Keeper must be attached to the application. If funded, the grantee must submit a National Register nomination to the State Historic Preservation Office within 12 months. Nomination preparation costs may be included in section 9 of the project budget.
- d) **Evaluated as being eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).** The SHPO evaluates a property according to criteria laid out in 36 CFR 60 - *National Register of Historic Places* and may determine that the property is eligible for listing for its significance at the local, state or national level. The property must be determined to be eligible for listing for its national significance in order to be eligible for a Save America's Treasures grant. **A letter from the State Historic Preservation Office clearly stating that the building has been evaluated and is considered to be eligible for listing for its national significance and explaining the reasons why it is nationally significant must be attached to this application. Letters sent separately will not be considered part of the application.** If funded, the grantee must submit a National Register nomination, or an amended nomination supporting the national significance if the property is currently listed for its state or local significance, to the State Historic Preservation Office within 12 months. Nomination preparation costs may be included in section 9 of the project budget.
- e) Briefly explain the reasons why the property is nationally significant; one continuation form may be attached. If you checked "a" or "b" above, you may attach a copy of Section 8, Statement of Significance of the property's National Register nomination form instead of writing a narrative.

See Attached copy of Section 8, Statement of Significance of property's National Register nomination form.

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Section number 8 Page 3

coming up the Atlantic Coast from the south. A northern sea lane was marked by other lightships and now by an unmanned navigational buoy.

Life on board a lightship was basically monotonous duty. The light above the ship was lit from one hour before dusk till one hour after dawn. It was also lit during inclement or overcast conditions. The Lightship WLV 539 light is visible for a distance of 12 miles. ←

The lightship also used a foghorn when conditions warranted. The foghorn can be heard for five miles. While the blare of the foghorn made life difficult on board ship, it did serve to warn approaching ships away from the station. There are, however, known occasions when a ship would steer towards the sound of the horn and actually sail into the lightship. Such a mishap did not occur to this vessel or to previous Overfalls. The lightship also had a radio beacon with a range of 100 miles. The radar system installed on the lightship after World War II can track ships approaching within 15 miles.

The entire lightship's crew would not be on board at one time. Each man received one week off for each two weeks worked. The men usually worked one month or double shifts. Consequently about 1/3 of the crew would be ashore during each shift. The lightship itself stayed on station for 12 to 18 months. After that it was brought into overhaul. While in port a relief lightship was established on station. The relief ship had RELIEF painted in white on its hull.

Special consideration - Integrity of location technically, the Lightship WLV 539 is in a location not associated with its years of service as a lightship. However, the very nature of the service it performed, was transitory. This lightship and other such vessels were shifted on an as-needed basis. As the lightships ended their period of useful service, they were either replaced by other lightships or, in the modern period, by navigational buoys. Lightships such as the WLV 539 are an example of an obsolete technology that would be a hazard to navigation if they were kept on station. Accordingly, the remaining lightships are museum pieces used to interpret our nation's maritime heritage.

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COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

The Lightship WLV 539, known as Overfalls, represents an important part of the aids to navigation system established by the federal government to make the use of the Delaware Bay and River more easily accessible to ships calling at ports on the Bay or River. In Delaware, this would be principally at Wilmington, although some coastal trade ships would stop at Lewes, Milton, Milford and Delaware City. The later location was usually for ships planning to traverse the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal.

The lightship as an aid to navigation relates to the coastal zone of Delaware. Thematically it represents improvements to the transportation system, a government function as well as an engineering achievement that provided the skill to produce iron hulled ships with both radio and light beacons. Chronologically the lightship falls within the 1880-1940 period which in Delaware was a period of urbanization and suburbanization or consolidation of the population towards the port city of Wilmington.

8. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Additional sheets may be attached; however, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide brief, concise narratives.

A. WHAT IS THE THREAT TO THE HISTORIC PROPERTY OR COLLECTION? Briefly describe the current physical condition and the source(s) and effect(s) of the threat, danger or damage to the historic property or collection.

The Overfalls Lightship WL539 has been sitting in shallow water and mud in the Lewes canal with no maintenance to its hull for thirty years. In 1996, a survey by Mr. A. Randall Jordan, CMS, determined that the thickness of the hull in many areas is half the original thickness due to corrosion. In some areas the thickness is as thin as 3/16." At least four main ribs of the ship have completely disintegrated.

Overall, the vessel above the platform deck is in good condition. The areas of the ship below the platform deck in the bilge sections are in poor condition, including the deck, the ship's bulkheads and frames below the deck. Due to the extent of the corrosion in the framing and bulkheads in the bilge areas, these structures must be reinforced.

The primary danger is that the hull could be punctured in a severe storm or hurricane. The ship is not seaworthy and must be moved out of the mud and away from the tides. Necessary restoration not only will move the Lightship away from the danger of storms in the harbor but also will allow maintenance to remove the corrosive effects of mud and water.

B. WHAT WORK WILL BE SUPPORTED BY THIS GRANT AND HOW WILL IT ADDRESS THE THREAT TO THE HISTORIC PROPERTY OR COLLECTION? Briefly describe the key project activities and products to be supported by this grant and the required non-Federal matching share. Describe how the work will significantly diminish or eliminate the threat, danger or damage described above. List the key personnel undertaking the work and briefly describe their qualifications. If personnel have not been selected, briefly describe the qualifications you will require. (Please note: Do not send vitae. Grantee consultants must be selected competitively.) Describe how the project will have a clear public benefit. Explain how your organization will ensure continued maintenance of the historic property or collection in the context of your organization-wide preservation or conservation activities. On a separate sheet, provide a timeline for project completion, including each major activity with a schedule for its completion and its cost. Projects must be completed within the grant period, which is generally 2 to 3 years.

Key Project Activities: After consultation with several engineers, The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation has adopted a plan by Gredell and Associates Structural Engineers from Wilmington, DE, to save our Lightship by lifting it and setting it in a permanent cradle at grade level. The first element of the project would be to have our marine engineers draw up detailed engineering studies of the entire project. The Lightship would be completely rewired electrically. Also heating, ventilation, and air conditioning would be added to help maintain the condition of the ship and to encourage year-round public and educational tours of the ship.

The activities required to lift the Lightship out of the water and set it in a cradle are listed in order below:

1. Draw up detailed engineering plans.
2. Obtain necessary permits.
3. Hold bidding process, make awards and begin mobilization.
4. Engage project manager.

5. Lift Lightship and place in cradle:
 - a) Reinforce the hull and repair the four deteriorated ship's ribs.
 - b) Build a canal bulkhead at the entrance to the current boat slip, which contains the Lightship.
 - c) Drive in eight sets of pilings - four on each side of the ship.
 - d) Place concrete caps on the top of each of the eight clusters of pilings.
 - e) Erect steel frame towers on lifting foundations; lift Lightship; slide I-beams under ship.
 - f) Build a steel cradle to sit atop the I-beams and lower the Lightship into the cradle.
 - g) Dredge silt out of the existing boat slip.
 - h) Backfill the slip with approved engineering material.
6. Paint Lightship, gangways and storage shed.
7. Upgrade the ship's electrical systems.
8. Install climate control system.
9. Construct access to Lightship for visitors.

Elimination of Threat: This plan would prevent further hull deterioration due to corrosion and also provide easy access to the hull for maintenance by members of the Overfalls Foundation in the future. The engineer's review of the ship reveals that bulkhead and framing steel in the bilge area has partially wasted. Therefore, before any lifting or moving can be done, the weakened portion of the vessel in the bilge areas must be reinforced. The reinforcement and repair can be achieved by welding steel shapes to the existing structure. The work would provide a bulkhead section in the ship that is equal in strength to the original construction. Analysis of the ship indicates that four of the five watertight bulkhead sections would need to be reinforced to accommodate the loads associated with lifting, moving and permanently placing the ship.

The ship would be lifted from points located at the port and starboard sides at the four bulkhead locations. A total of eight foundations would be required to lift the ship approximately 13 feet.

The foundations for lifting, moving and final placement have been considered in developing this plan. Construction of the foundations would occur during the same period that the reinforcement work was being done in the ship. In order to gain a better understanding of the methods used for lifting and moving the vessel, we consulted with representatives of Expert Housemovers who have many years of experience moving buildings and other large structures, most recently the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

Once the ship has been raised to the required elevation, transverse steel beams would be installed under the ship and the ship would rest on the concrete pile caps. The ship would then be lowered onto the cradle assemblies supported by cylindrical steel rollers. The cradle assembly used for the move would be incorporated into the final position. This would simplify the placement operation since no transfer of loads would be required at the final location.

Key Personnel:

Project Manager: William Reader, chairman of the Lightship Restoration committee. Mr. Reader is a retired Hewlett Packard Facilities Manager who managed two major construction projects at a total cost of \$80 million. He was responsible for the maintenance of a 355,000 square foot plant and the safety and health of its employees.

Project Engineers: Gredell & Associates Structural Engineers, Wilmington, DE. For 18 years, Gredell has specialized in structural engineering for historic buildings and waterfront facilities. The firm is practiced in the use of a full range of structural elements, construction materials, building systems and technology, offering practical, innovative and cost-sensitive solutions.

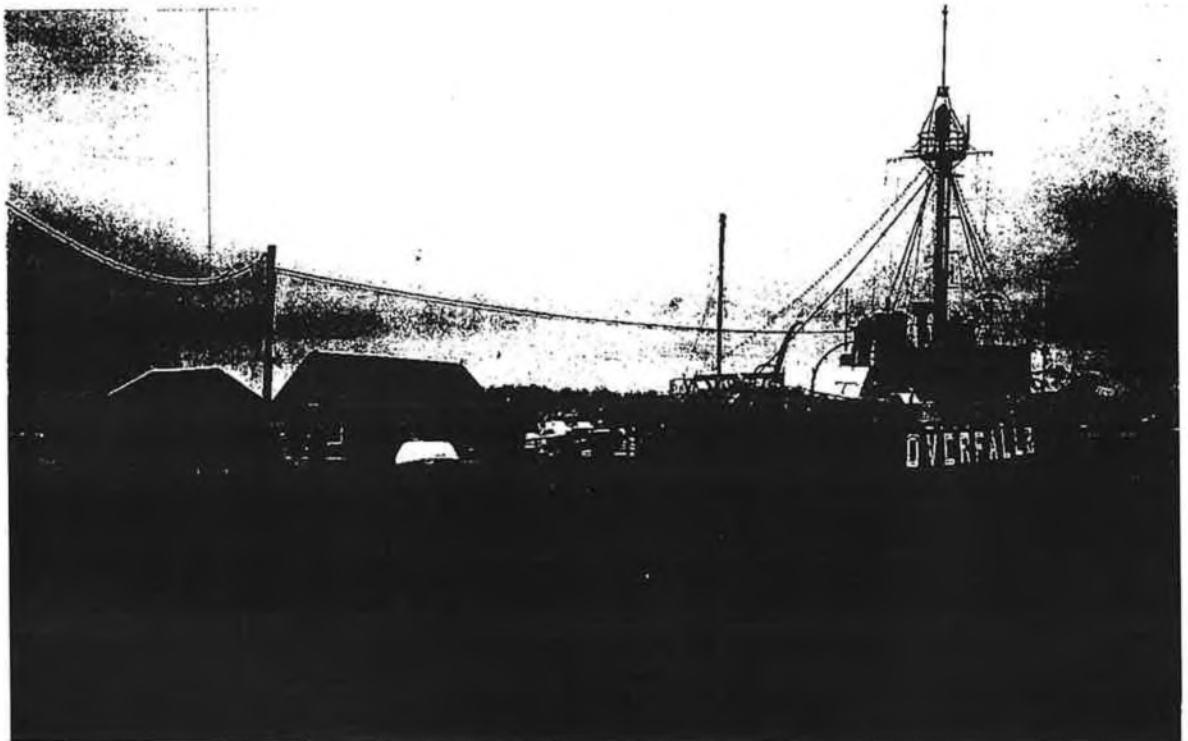
annual membership and donation program, raising about \$20,000 each year from contributions. The Foundation has allocated approximately \$6,000 for marine paint in its regular budget. Revenue for this expense comes not only from annual donations, but also from gift shop sales and nautical special events. All labor for ship maintenance is donated.

The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation will continue to perform maintenance on the ship, offer public education programs, run its gift shop and serve as Lightship docents and ambassadors.



#1 Overfalls Lightship LV118 – General view looking west from the center of town. It shows the Lewes Canal and boat slips along the canal to the right.

#2 Overfalls Lightship LV118 – General view looking north showing the old Coast Guard Life Saving Station on its right.



8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Maritime history

Period of Significance
1938

Significant Dates
1938

Cultural Affiliation
NA

Significant Person
NA

Architect/Builder
Rice Brothers Shipyard

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Lightship WLV 539 was built in 1938 at the Rice Brothers Shipyard in East Boothbay, Maine. It was one of the last lightships ordered by the U.S. Light Service which was merged with the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939. It is also one of the last five lightships ever built in the United States. It served as a lightship until 1973. As one of the few remaining lightships left in the United States the Lightship WLV 539 is eligible for listing as an example of the federal government's role in providing aid to navigation through the marking of ship channels and dangerous shoals and points of land.

The lightship's first and longest station was at Boston Harbor. As lightships are named for their station, the name BOSTON was painted in large letters on the sides of the hull. As a guide to the painters, the letters were picked out by welds.

The lightship also served at two locations near Long Island, New York, "Pollock Rip" and "Cornfields."

As an aid to navigation, a lightship is a floating lighthouse. Its function is to mark ship channels or dangerous points of land. The first American lightship was launched in 1821. The use of lightships was an English technique that had been developed in the late eighteenth century. In this country, lighthouses or beacons date to the early eighteenth century. The first were erected by local citizens or merchant's groups. One of the first light beacons was established at Cape Henlopen at Lewes, Delaware in 1725. Erected by Philadelphia merchants it was replaced by a brick lighthouse in 1761. The federal govern-

See continuation sheet

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Section number 8 Page 2

ment took over the lighthouse in the late eighteenth century as the U.S. Government began to assure responsibility for interstate trade and for aids to navigation.

Lightships were used at locations that were not suitable for a traditional lighthouse. They were either located in deep water or where the water bottom would not permit a lighthouse to be erected. Lightships were once common along both coasts and on some inland waterways. The entrance to the Delaware Bay, for instance, was marked by both a northern and a southern lightship. As engineering technology developed in the nineteenth century, permanent manned lighthouses could be constructed in deep water or on previously unsuitable bottoms. On the Delaware Bay, improved technology enabled the U.S. Light Service to replace the lightship with lighthouses.

In the twentieth century, reliable automatic systems and radio began to make manned light-stations obsolete. Automatic radio beacons and lights did not need the constant attention of a manned light station. Gradually all light stations were converted to unmanned automatic lights. All of these are checked on a regular schedule by the U.S. Coast Guard. That agency has responsibility for all aids to navigation in the United States.

Those ship channels and dangerous shoals that are in water too deep for automated light beacons are now guarded by large platforms known as Texas Towers or more properly "large navigational buoy" (LNBS). Most coastal lightship sites, including the Overfalls Shoals, have an LNB marking the shoal or ship channel.

When the Lightship WLV 539 was retired from active duty in 1973, it was given to the Lewes Historical Society for use as a museum. Upon arrival in Lewes, it was named the OVERFALLS. The Overfalls shoals is located just outside of the Lewes Harbor and Cape Henlopen. The shoal was marked by a lightship from 1892 until 1961. In 1961 an unmanned navigational beacon was erected at Overfalls. Two other lightships have carried the name Overfalls.

In addition to marking the shoal, the Overfalls lightship station marked the southern entrance to the Delaware Bay. The southern entrance was used by the deepest draft vessels and by ships

6/73 - Transfer to LHS.

12/7/01 - Transfer to Overfalls Museum.



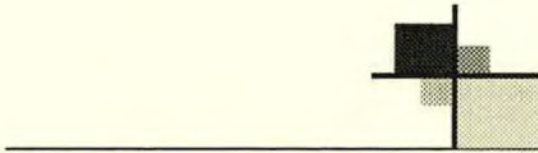
PROGRAM

**Lightship Sailors Association Ceremony
Honoring Lightship Sailors**

**Dedication of Historical Marker
State Senator F. Gary Simpson
Russ McCabe, Administrator
Delaware Historical Markers Programs**

Oct. 3 and 4, 2003

**At the Lightship
On the Canalfront**



The Overfalls Lightship LV - 118 will be open for tours from 11:00 to 4:00, Friday and Saturday, and from 1:00 to 4:00 on Sunday, Oct 3-5.

The gift shop under the red tent near the lightship will be open on Oct. 3. Membership applications are available at the gift shop. Profits from sales finance the restoration of the LV118.

The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation is honored to welcome two historic maritime groups to the weekend's lightship festivities. Members of the Lightship Sailors Association are attending a reunion at the Atlantic Sands Hotel in Rehoboth this weekend. At the same time the U.S. Life Saving Service Heritage Association is holding its reunion in Cape May, New Jersey.

Friday, Oct. 3, 2003:

- **12:00 to 12:30 p.m.**

Lightship Sailors Association Ceremony

There will be a special ceremony to honor those lightship sailors who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The ceremony will include a U.S. Coast Guard band and Honor Guard, 21 gun salute, speeches, and the throwing of a wreath into the water as a gesture of remembrance. The public is asked to gather near the bow of the lightship.

- **12:30 p.m.**

Lunch

A brown bag lunch will be served to all participants and the public at the baseball park bleachers.

- **1:30 p.m.**

Dedication of Historical Marker

Senator Gary Simpson will unveil a new bronze roadside marker on Pilottown Road near the tennis courts honoring Lightship Overfalls LV-118.

Saturday, Oct. 4, 2003:

- **1:00 p.m.**

Slide Show

The Lightship Sailors Association Historian, Douglas M. Bingham, will present a free lecture and slide show about the history of lightships at St. Peter's Parish Hall at the corner of Mulberry and Second Street in Lewes. His presentation is lively and considered the most thorough compilation of information about lightships in the country.



**Overfalls Maritime Museum
Foundation**

P.O. Box 413
Lewes, DE 19958

Phone: 302 645 4733
Fax: 302 645 4733 (Call first)
Email: elainesimmerman@earthlink.net















Historical marker with text, likely commemorating a local event or figure.









LIGHTSHIP-OVERFALLS

Impediment for establishing aids for the navigation of the water's edge, the United States Government ordered the use of anchored lightships or "float lightships" in 1792. These vessels performed many duties. They could be moved whenever necessary to improve, and they could be almost completely independent in operation, and they could be almost self-sufficient in every way. The keels on the lightships' masts and the masts of the lightships themselves were the only means of ships in various weather conditions. By the mid-19th century, the increasing use of steam and light and radio signals made these vessels obsolete. With the decommissioning of the last vessel in 1953, the art of the lightship was ended.

The Lightship Overfalls (LV-112 OR, WAL-100) was built in 1928 at the Ship Builders Shipyards in San Francisco, Maine. It was one of the last lightships commissioned. Very unique included James Horton and the location over Long Island, New York. After decommission from active service it was given to the Essex Historical Society in 1973. The ship was restored to the plankton observance in the Delaware Bay. On December 7, 2000, ownership of the ship was transferred to the Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation. The Lightship Overfalls is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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