

Lightship Chesapeake



Welcome Aboard

A Proud Ship With a New Mission

Lightships are floating lighthouses. When anchored in coastal waters where other types of navigation aids were impractical, they marked major shipping channels and harbor entrances. A welcome sight to ships' captains for many years, these vessels were easily identified by their bright red hulls, the name of their duty station painted on the side in large white letters, and the beacon lantern atop the mainmast. Gradually, lightships have become victims of technology.

The Chesapeake was designed for maximum stability while riding at anchor under high wind and sea conditions. The high bow, rounded stern, and high freeboard (sides) are characteristic of lightships. Other unique features include the "mushroom" anchor in the bow near the waterline and the double lantern atop the masthead. While on station, the Chesapeake also collected meteorological and oceanographic data.

Gradually, lightships have become victims of technology. Most of those that dotted the United States seaboard have been replaced with modern, automated "super buoys", or steel tower structures.

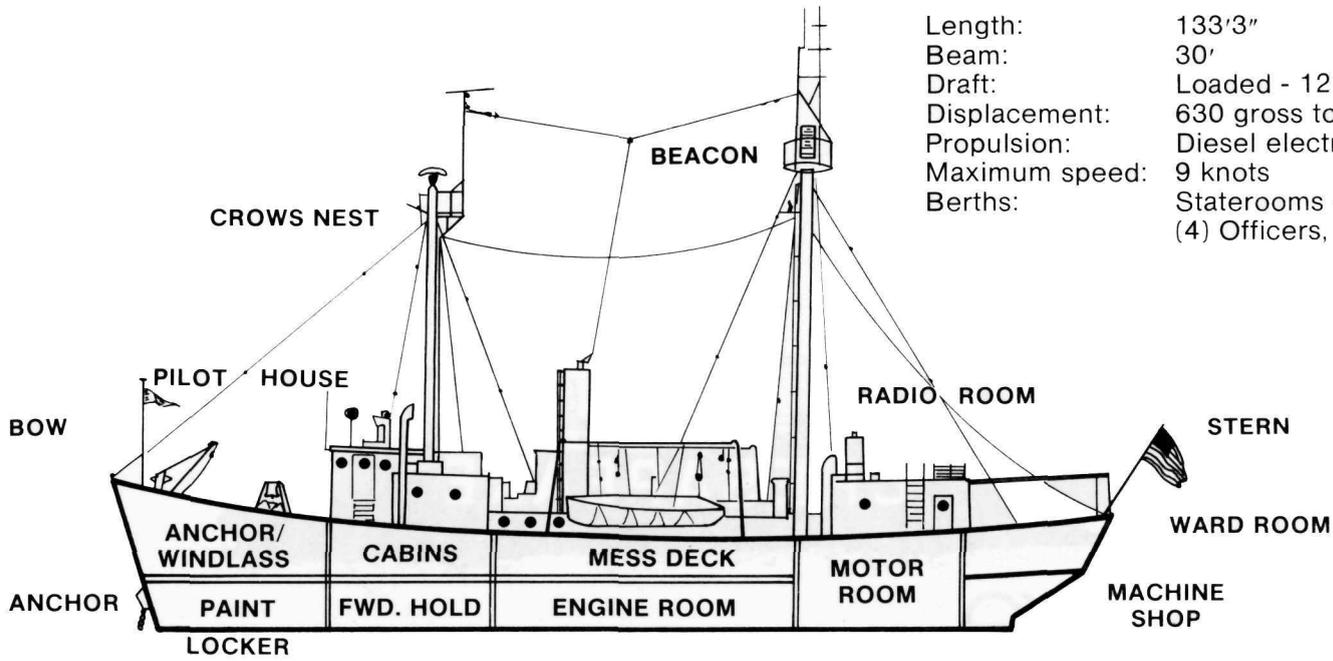
Thus it was, after 40 years of distinguished service that Lightship 116, the Chesapeake, was retired in 1971 and transferred to the National Park Service for conversion to a floating environmental study site. When refurbishing of the ship was completed at the Washington Navy Yard in the fall of 1972, the Chesapeake moved to her permanent mooring site off East Potomac Park in the Washington Channel.

The ship is open free to the public for tours. Area educational institutions use the ship to supplement their programs in nautical and environmental studies. Environmental awareness programs for adults are also available.

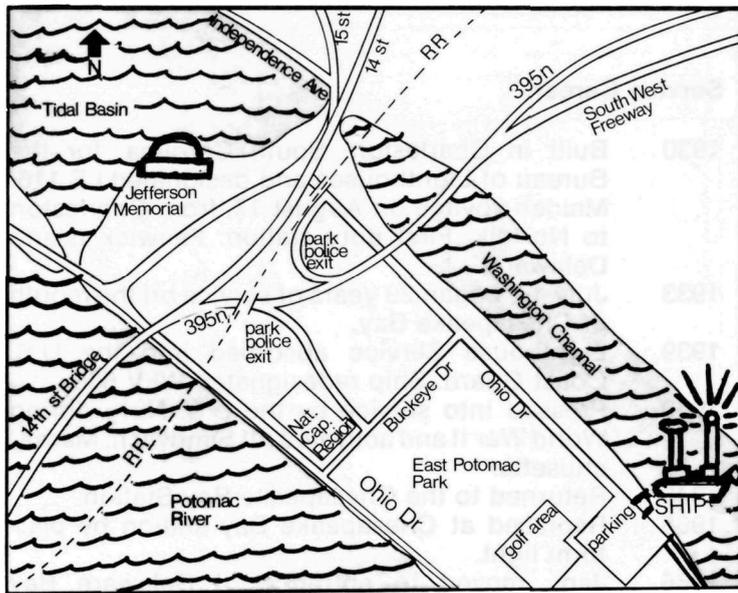
Service Career

- 1930 Built in Charleston, South Carolina, for the Bureau of Lighthouses and designated LS 116. Maiden voyage on August 17, from Charleston to Norfolk. First duty station: Fenwick Island Delaware.
- 1933 July 17, began 29 years of service off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay.
- 1939 Lighthouse Service absorbed into the U.S. Coast Guard. Ship redesignated WLV 538.
- 1940 Pressed into service by the U.S. Navy during World War II and activated off Sandwich, Massachusetts.
- 1945 Returned to the Chesapeake Bay Station.
- 1965 Replaced at Chesapeake Bay station by platform light.
- 1966 Jan., moved to entrance of Delaware Bay assuming the name Delaware.
- 1970 Replaced at Delaware Bay station by large navigational buoy.
- 1971 Decommissioned by the U.S. Coast Guard; transferred to the National Park Service.





Length: 133'3"
 Beam: 30'
 Draft: Loaded - 12' forward, 13'9" AFT
 Displacement: 630 gross tons
 Propulsion: Diesel electric, 350 horsepower
 Maximum speed: 9 knots
 Berths: Staterooms - (1) Captain, (1) Cook
 (4) Officers, (10) Seamen



From Virginia: I-395 N across 14th St. Bridge, take Park Police exit, left on Buckeye Dr. to Ohio Dr., then right, to the ship.

From Southwest Freeway: I-395 S, take Park Police exit, right on Ohio Drive.

From Rock Creek Parkway: just under Memorial Bridge go right on Ohio Drive. Keeping to the right follow it along the river through Potomac Park West, then into Potomac Park East. Left on Buckeye Dr., then right on Ohio Dr.

From Downtown D.C.: 15th St. past Washington Monument and Bureau of Printing and Engraving. Follow sign to Jefferson Memorial, but take the first left, which is Ohio Dr., to the ship.

The Lightship Chesapeake is administered by the National Capital Region of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For additional information, write: National Capital Region, Lightship Chesapeake, 1200 Ohio Drive, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20242; or call (202) 426-6896. Soft soled shoes are recommended.

Special recognition is given to the District of Columbia Public Schools for assisting in the development of the original education program, and to the Washington area Explorer Scouts who assisted in refurbishing the ship.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 National Capital Region
 Lightship Chesapeake
 1200 Ohio Drive, S. W.
 Washington, D. C. 20242

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