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Lightship LV-84 / WAL-509 Completing the Final Chapter of her 100 year History

By J. F. "Jay" McCarthy



LV-84 / WAL-509 as a RELIEF Lightship



Former LV-84 / WAL-509 beginning to sink

Through the years, many stories have been written about Lightship LV-84 / WAL-509.

As a Lightship for the USLHS, 1907-1939, with Hull Designation LV-84

As a Lightship for the USCG, 1939- 1965, with Hull Designation WAL-509

Continuing; through her tumultuous days after Retirement and Decommissioning in 1965. Going from port to port, owner to owner, and finally being abandoned in the Erie Basin pier of the abandoned Revere Sugar Refinery in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, NY, where she sank in either 1996 or 1997.

She remained there until Sunday January 28, 2007 when she was reportedly hauled out by a massive crane and either scrapped or sunk offshore.

LV-84/WAL-509

Official USCG History

The following information obtained from; <http://www.uscg.mil/history/weblightships/LV84.asp>

YEAR BUILT: 1907

BUILT AT: Camden (NJ)

SISTER VESSELS: LV 85, 86, 87, 88

DESIGN: Steam screw: steel hull, wood pilot house and deck houses, 2 steel masts, wood spencer on main only; smokestack

LENGTH: 135'S" (loa); BEAM: 29'0"; DRAFT: 12'9": TONNAGE: 683 displ

1934: Repowered; Atlas Imperial 375 HP Diesel main engine; 5' dia 4 blade propeller

STATION ASSIGNMENTS:

1907-1929: Brunswick (GA) (Brunswick station discontinued 1929)

1929-1954: St. Johns River (FL)

1954-1960: Relief (6th. District)

1960-1965: Relief (3rd. District)

(1942-1945: During WW II remained on St. Johns River station; no armament provided)

RETIRED FROM USCG LIGHTSHIP DUTY: 1965; AGE 58

SUBSEQUENT DISPOSITION: Decommissioned Oct. 26, 1965; donated Aug 7, 1968 then used by Harry LUNDEBURG School, Seafarers Int'l Union, Piney Point MD; renamed Big Red; 1987 sold and towed to Yonkers NY to be used as floating restaurant. Original compartmentation and interior no longer is intact.

This ends the Official USCG History of LV-84 / WAL-509

Authors note;

In August 1960, RELIEF Lightship LV-84/WAL-509 was transferred from the 7th. CG District in the Jacksonville, FL. area to the 3rd. CG District, CG Base St. George Staten Island, NY. She was sent north to replace RELIEF Lightship LV-78/WAL-505, which had been rammed and sunk while relieving AMBROSE Lightship WLV-613 on AMBROSE Station, on 24 June 1960.

Her first relief duty in the 3rd. CG District in September 1960 was on AMBROSE Station.

Among her crew on her 1st new assignment, was Joseph Young CWO-1 and Bobbie R. Pierce BM3. Mr. Young was the new C.O., and had been the last C.O. of the RELIEF 78/505. He was ashore on leave on the night of her sinking. Bobbie Pierce was on watch on the night of the collision and sinking. He sounded the General Alarm awaking / alerting the crew to the impending disaster.

Pierce expressed trepidation returning to AMBROSE Station, especially while viewing the Lighted Wreck Buoy, marking the wreck site of the RELIEF 78/505, ¼ mile from the new AMBROSE Station location. Pierce remained aboard the RELIEF 84/509 until his discharge in August 1961.

Picking up where the USCG Historians Office left off; with the former Lightship 84/509 after being towed up to Yonkers, NY...

There were a number of stories written about this next period in her life.

Among them is; **A N.Y. Times story of August 17, 2003 by Wendell Jamieson titled; "A Long Voyage to the Bottom of Erie Basin"**

This is a well written, long and detailed article, with input from Mr. Greg O'Connell, an ex-detective who developed the Warehouse Pier and watched the 84/509 slowly sink over a several week period. John Krevey, owner of the ex-Lightship Frying Pan 115/537, also contributed to Mr. Jamieson's story.

There are numerous other publications and stories. However, back in 2003, Mr. Jamieson gave the USCG Lightship Sailors Association, Inc. permission to reprint his NY Times article on our Web Site. So rather than replicate the entire story again, we will draw from its highlights at this time to close out this Final Chapter.

1968; the ship was donated to a seafaring school in Maryland. Most of its interior walls were removed and the ship was painted white.

1987, she was sold and towed to Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., just south of the Tappan Zee Bridge. The new owners wanted to convert her into a floating restaurant. However, as best as can be determined, they apparently went bankrupt and left her tied to a bulkhead at this location. She sat there unattended for a number of years, and she deteriorated rapidly.

Then Jerry Roberts, who at that time ran the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum on the West Side of Manhattan, happened to see the ship while traveling up the Hudson River. "We found out the owners were in some kind of default". Said Roberts; we envisioned the ship as a floating classroom to take up and down the Hudson River. He paid the owners \$1,000.00, and started basic maintenance.

1991, Mr. Roberts and some volunteers towed the Lightship down the Hudson. For three years it was either moored to the dock, or nudging up against the steel hull of the Intrepid. She needed a lot of work, a budget was outlined, plans made, money was raised.

But then Mr. Roberts got lucky, and the No. 84 got unlucky again: The museum was offered a fully restored operational Lightship that had been docked in Portland, ME. This was the **Nantucket 112/534** (*which later had her own run of bad luck, she is now back home in Boston being lovingly restored. See her story on the LSA web site*). Mr. Roberts bought the 112 for \$1.00 (yes, one dollar). Mr. Roberts then tried to find an honorable home for the white hulled Lightship 84.

1994, September, two buyers, Michael Anzalone and Patrick King materialized and paid \$20,000 for the ship. They said they had plans to make it into a restaurant. However, she needed repairs first.

1994, October, The new owners and their ship arrived at the Caddell Dry Dock and Repair Company in the Kill Van Kull along the north shore of Staten Island. The president of the company Steven P. Kalil, remembers them well, for they bought him nothing but headaches. Lightship No. 84 was floated up on a dry dock for the first time in years, and the ship's hull was a mess.

Along with the normal marine growth, the rivets and edges of the steel plates were rusted. Sandblasting, revealed dozens of small holes. Workmen filled the openings, coated the hull with epoxy and paint, and replaced the propeller shaft with a plug. The job took three weeks and cost the two owners \$33,000. And it was just temporary; the thing was still leaking.

The owners paid. Then, Mr. Kalil said, they did something strange: they asked if they could leave their ship with him. He refused - but the ship remained, and he "got a good lesson in maritime law". The lesson is, if someone leaves a boat at your dock, it is your responsibility. You have to pump it out and keep it floating.

Eventually, Mr. Kalil got a friend in Brooklyn to take No. 84 off his hands, and the friend managed to get the owners to take the ship away. But not far, one morning, there it was, tied up at the Revere Sugar dock.

Numerous efforts to locate Mr. Anazalone and Mr. King to discuss what happened were unsuccessful. Their business phone has been disconnected. Their whereabouts are unknown, and the ship remained tied up to the pier for the next couple of years. In the meantime, many curious individuals went aboard to explore her and left hatches and doors open to the weather.

1996-1997, with each rainstorm, it seemed the old Lightship No.84 began to sink deeper and deeper. Sometime around this time period, people had been watching it sink little by little for weeks. A door in the steel hull had been left open; every day the surface of the Erie Basin got closer. The end came quickly. The door got too low the water poured in, and down it went.

It's a sad story, the story of the sunken ship, a nautical mystery with many clues hidden by the harbor water. The New York Police Department used the wreck as a training site for search-and-rescue divers. The sheltered harbor and high visibility gives new recruits an opportunity to learn the ropes in a safe environment.

2006,

Robert Gubitosi, 2nd. VP

USCG Lightship Sailors Assoc. Inc.

Received the following from Harvey L. Weinstein, Brooklyn, NY, Photographer;

One day in either 1996 or 1997, while near the pier in Red Hook, NY. I noticed the Lightship had settled deeper at the stern than normal, suddenly I realized what was happening. While others tried to locate the owner, to no avail, I got my camera along with a six pack, and starting clicking away.

Over the next two hours, I recorded what nobody could stop.

As she slowly settled to the bottom, it made every sound from every ship wreck movie ever made, the sounds of twisting steel, collapsing compartments, sounds I thought only existed in the movies.

It did not sink with a simple Pfffft ..

The poor thing groaned and boomed, and finally it did finish with a very loud Pfffffft, as the last of the air was blown from the bow.

Harvey L. Weinstein

Brooklyn, NY

It's a sad ending for a Lightship Sailors home, and a fine old gal.

Our sincere thanks to Mr. Weinstein for his generous contribution to Lightship History

This report was placed on our web site along with the photos that Mr. Weinstein had provided. Unfortunately, since that time frame, we have lost the photos.

We reached out to William "The Tugster" Van Dorp, at "The Tugster", A waterblog ; to see if he could help us find the photos.

Will, responded, with the following link;

<http://gowanuslounge.blogspot.com/2007/01/no-longer-sunken-red-hook-lightship.html>

THE GOWANUS LOUNGE

ABOUT LIFE AND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT IN POST-INDUSTRIAL
BROOKLYN AND NEW YORK CITY

Ever wonder about that **sunken lightship in Red Hook** by the Revere Sugar Plant whose masts were poking out of the water? The ship was reportedly removed from the water on Sunday by a massive crane floated into the Erie Basin by Thor Equities. We came across this flickr set of the lightship's actual sinking in the mid-1990s and thought we'd share in case you were curious and (like us) had never seen pics of the ship that had sat at the bottom. You can check out the entire set here or the slideshow of the set here. **These are the photos from Harvey Weinstein, found at;** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/harvenyc/sets/72057594129594392/>

After she sank, many others also took photos. Here are a few from;
<http://www.tug44.org/tugboats.trawlers/lightship-no-84/>

The Travels of Tug 44 The Wreck of Lightship No. 84



Sunken Lightship No.84 at the Revere Sugar Refinery's abandoned pier in Erie Basin at Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY. Revere Sugar went bankrupt in 1985.



Lightship No. 84 on the bottom of the equally destroyed pier since 1996/1997.

To close out this final chapter;

We were most interested in finding the current status of Lightship No. 84.

Was she still in her sunken state?

Did someone actually raise her out of the muddy bottom where she has sat since 1996/1997?

Can anyone confirm the rumor that she had been raised?

If so, what happened to her?

So, once again, we reached out to William "The Tugster" Van Dorp, at "The Tugster".

Will, quickly responded; with the following information;

“At some point in January 2007;

the vessel was pulled out and either scrapped or sunk offshore.

I know someone from the crane company, who confirmed this had happened”.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to Will, for his help to us in this Endeavour.

Summary;

Now that we have finished covering the 100 year voyage of Lightship No. 84; and have arrived at her final chapter, we find that she was finally raised from the bottom of the Erie Basin and taken away.

We still have two unanswered questions;

To completely close the story, we would like to verify if she was scrapped or sunk offshore?

If anyone has more definitive information on whether Lightship No. 84 was scrapped (*I think she was, as her removal would have cost well over \$100k and some money could be recovered in scrap*), if so, where was she scrapped?

Or, if she was sunk off shore; then where off shore?

If you have any further information;

Please contact LSA Webmaster at; webmaster@uscqlightshipsailors.org