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# PowerShips

THE MAGAZINE OF ENGINE-POWERED VESSELS FROM THE STEAMSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

## *Ships of the Year*

*SS United States* • 6

*SY Cangarda* • 8

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

*Freighters for the  
Lykes Bros.* • 10

*Nantucket Lightship  
LV-112* • 22



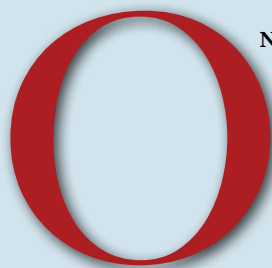
# Nantucket

## LIGHTSHIP LV-II2



# Rescuing & Preserving a National Historic Treasure

by Robert Mannino, Jr.



ON JANUARY 6, 1934, THE 630-TON *NANTUCKET/LV-117*—anchored in complete isolation at Nantucket Shoals Station during heavy fog—was sideswiped by the 24,200-ton United States Lines luxury liner *Washington*, at that time the largest U.S.-built ocean liner. Fortunately, *LV-117* escaped a fatal blow, receiving only minor damage to her steel hull plates. A few months later, her luck ran out. On May 14, the 52,000-ton White Star Line *Olympic* was making 16 knots through patchy fog when she sighted the *Nantucket Lightship* lying across its course, less than two ship's lengths ahead. Unable to avoid a collision, the massive liner plowed into the lightship, slicing the vessel in half and sending the lightship to its watery grave. Four of the lightship's 11-man crew were killed instantly, and three more died of injuries or exposure after their rescue by *Olympic's* crew. The culprit was fog, a common occurrence on Nantucket Shoals, dominating the area more than two-thirds of the year. Two years later, the most famous lightship of all—*Nantucket Lightship/LV-112*—was built and stationed on Nantucket Shoals.

## An Isolated and Treacherous Lightship Station

AS A LIGHT VESSEL (LV) IN THE U.S. COAST GUARD'S FLEET, THE JOB OF A NANTUCKET lightship was to guide ships through the channel beyond Nantucket, past the treacherous shoals. Regardless of conditions, the lightship was to stay permanently anchored over 45 miles southeast of Nantucket, approximately 100 miles off the mainland—the farthest station from the coast and subject to the North Atlantic's heaviest seas and most unpredictable weather. Its high-powered mast lights were the main focal point for all transoceanic shipping navigating to and from the United States and Europe—known as the "Grand Circle Route," "Times Square," and "the crossroads of Atlantic shipping." Because of this critical location, Nantucket station was considered the most exposed and remote lightship station on the East Coast and arguably in the world.

THE DANGEROUS SHOALS and inclement weather led to more than 700 shipwrecks in the surrounding waters of Nantucket, causing the area to be dubbed a "graveyard of the Atlantic." Notable sinkings included the *Republic*, *Andrea Doria*, the freighter *Canonbury*, *Cross Rip Lightship*, the tug *Lackawanna* and the Liberian oil tanker *Argo Merchant*, which ran aground on Nantucket Shoals and spewed oil into the Atlantic just 29 nautical miles southeast of U.S. shores. In fact, the *Mayflower* may not have landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620 if it were not for Nantucket Shoals and adjoining Pollack Rip shoals area. The *Mayflower's* original destination was the mouth of the Hudson River, but as it headed south towards the Hudson, the tides changed, the wind died and the depth of the water plummeted. The *Mayflower* had sailed into a dangerous area of ever-changing sand bars and shoals, the graveyard of many a shipwreck known as Pollack Rip, basically hell's gateway to the Nantucket Shoals. The *Mayflower* risked becoming shipwrecked on the shoals, so Captain Christopher Jones wisely decided to head north, toward New England.

## Built to be Unsinkable

AS REPARATION FOR THE SINKING OF THE 135-FOOT *LV-117*, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT paid the United States \$500,000, of which Pusey & Jones at Wilmington, Delaware, was awarded \$300,956 to construct a replacement lightship in 1936. With a length of 148 feet and a displacement of 1,050 tons, *Nantucket Lightship/LV-112* was designed as the largest U.S. lightship ever built. Because of recurring severe weather conditions and the high level of shipping traffic exposing *Nantucket Lightship* to an extremely dangerous environment subject to collisions, *LV-112* was designed and constructed with a double hull and heavy reinforced riveted 1-3/8-inch armor plating on her hull with a high degree of watertight



## The Loss of *LV-112*'s Predecessor

■ (Above) White Star Line's *Olympic* passes very close to the *LV-117*, an earlier *Nantucket Lightship*, in early April 1934. — U.S. Coast Guard photo. (Below) On May 14, 1934, the *Olympic* cut the *LV-117* in half in heavy fog. — Painting by Charles Mazoujian.



compartmentalization (43 watertight compartments) to prevent repetition of the tragedy that befell *LV-117*.

**LV-112 WAS THE LAST** U.S. steam-powered lightship. She had a 600-hp compound reciprocating engine and two oil-fired Babcock-Wilcox water tube boilers that powered the eight-foot diameter propeller and gave her a maximum speed of 12 knots. *LV-112*'s light beacons were two 500mm electric lens lanterns, installed at each of the two mastheads. The ship's fog

signal was a deep bull-throated two-tone air diaphone with a range of 14 miles, synchronized with the radio beacon. *LV-112* as was also equipped with a ship-to-shore radio beacon and short-range radio beacon. A submarine oscillator was installed, later declared obsolete and removed. In case the ship lost power, a large hand-operated warning bell was mounted on the foredeck to signal oncoming ships. *LV-112* was also equipped to convert seawater to potable drinking water.

## Guiding Famous Ships and Transoceanic Commerce

**FOR 39 YEARS**, *NANTUCKET LIGHTSHIP LV-112* guided transoceanic commerce to and from U.S. East Coast ports, through some of the most treacherous shipping lanes in the world. She was the first symbol of America encountered by thousands of immigrants. Many famous vessels such as the *United States*, the *Queen Mary*, *Normandie* and other merchant and naval vessels depended on *Nantucket Lightship* to guide them safely to their destinations.

**ESTABLISHED IN 1854**, the Nantucket Shoals lightship station was originally known as the Nantucket New South Shoal Station, before the name was changed in 1896. The exact position of the lightship, whose purpose was to mark the southern extremity of the shoals that extend south and east from Nantucket Island, varied through the years to provide a greater safety margin from the shoals or to better serve shipping lanes.

**OVER THE YEARS**, 15 lightships served at Nantucket Shoals. Three of these ships, *LV-112*, *WLV-612*, and *WLV-613*, still have NANTUCKET, their final station, painted in large white letters on red hulls. *Nantucket / LV-112* is the only Nantucket Lightship that is a non-profit museum open to the general public; *WLV-612* and *WLV-613* are privately owned. In fact, *LV-112* is the only lightship museum in New England and a designated National Historic Landmark. Of the fewer than 17 U.S. lightships that remain, the three Nantucket lightships are the only ones to share the same station marking. This isn't too surprising, as the Nantucket Shoals Station had been the only remaining lightship station in the country and last U.S. lightship station to be discontinued, when it was replaced by an un-manned large navigational buoy in 1983. The U.S. Lightship Service was discontinued in 1985.

## Service in World War II

**LV-112 SERVED AT NANTUCKET SHOALS** from 1936 until 1942, when she was withdrawn from Nantucket Shoals station,

renamed USS *Nantucket*. Her light beacons, bell and fog signal were removed, she was painted battleship gray and converted to an armed Examination Patrol Vessel off Portland, Maine, for service during World War II. The *Nantucket* was armed with two 20-mm water-cooled machine guns on her foredeck and a 3-inch gun mounted on a specially built and raised platform on the fantail. In addition, she was equipped with newly developed detection radar that proved to be an asset after the war as a lightship. In 1945 the USS *Nantucket* saved crewmembers of the USS *Eagle-56*, sunk off Portland by the German U-Boat, *U-853*. The submarine was later sunk off Point Judith, Rhode Island, after sinking another vessel.

**AFTER THE WAR**, *LV-112* returned to her former station in 1945 and served there for the next 30 years, serving from 1958 to 1960 as a relief lightship. During this two-year period, *LV-112* relieved stations throughout the Coast Guard First District including Portland, Boston, Pollack Rip, Cross Rip/Buzzards Bay and Brenton Reef stations. The Coast Guard First District, headquartered in Boston, was always *LV-112*'s homeport. Commencing in April 1960, a major modification, modernization and refit were carried out at the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay near Baltimore. *LV-112*'s steam engine was removed and she was repowered with a 900-hp Cooper-Bessemer diesel main engine that was previously used in a Navy minesweeper. The new power conversion included replacing the tall smoke stack with a lower profile version.

*LV-112*'s original mechanical systems, which included the steering and anchor windlass, remained. Systems that were steam-powered were converted to compressed air. The light beacons on both masts also were updated. She was fitted with a duplex 500mm lens lantern on the foremast, and the mainmast (aft) was equipped with a high-intensity light consisting of 24 locomotive headlights mounted in groups of six on each face of a four-sided revolving lamp housing that produced up to 500,000 candlepower with a range of 23 miles. However, it was

reported that on a clear evening at sea, *LV-112*'s light beacon could be seen as far as 50 miles. All systems requiring compressed air are now supplied by three separate GM 2-71 diesels. The ship includes two mushroom anchors (5,000 lbs. and 7,000 lbs.) and is equipped with Di-Lock forged-steel anchor chain, 1-5/8 inches thick.

### **Life on *Nantucket Lightship***

**A SAILOR'S LIFE ON NANTUCKET SHOALS** Station was bittersweet. Many would say "mostly bitter." Being isolated on a relatively small ship anchored in 190 feet of water with no sight of land, surrounded

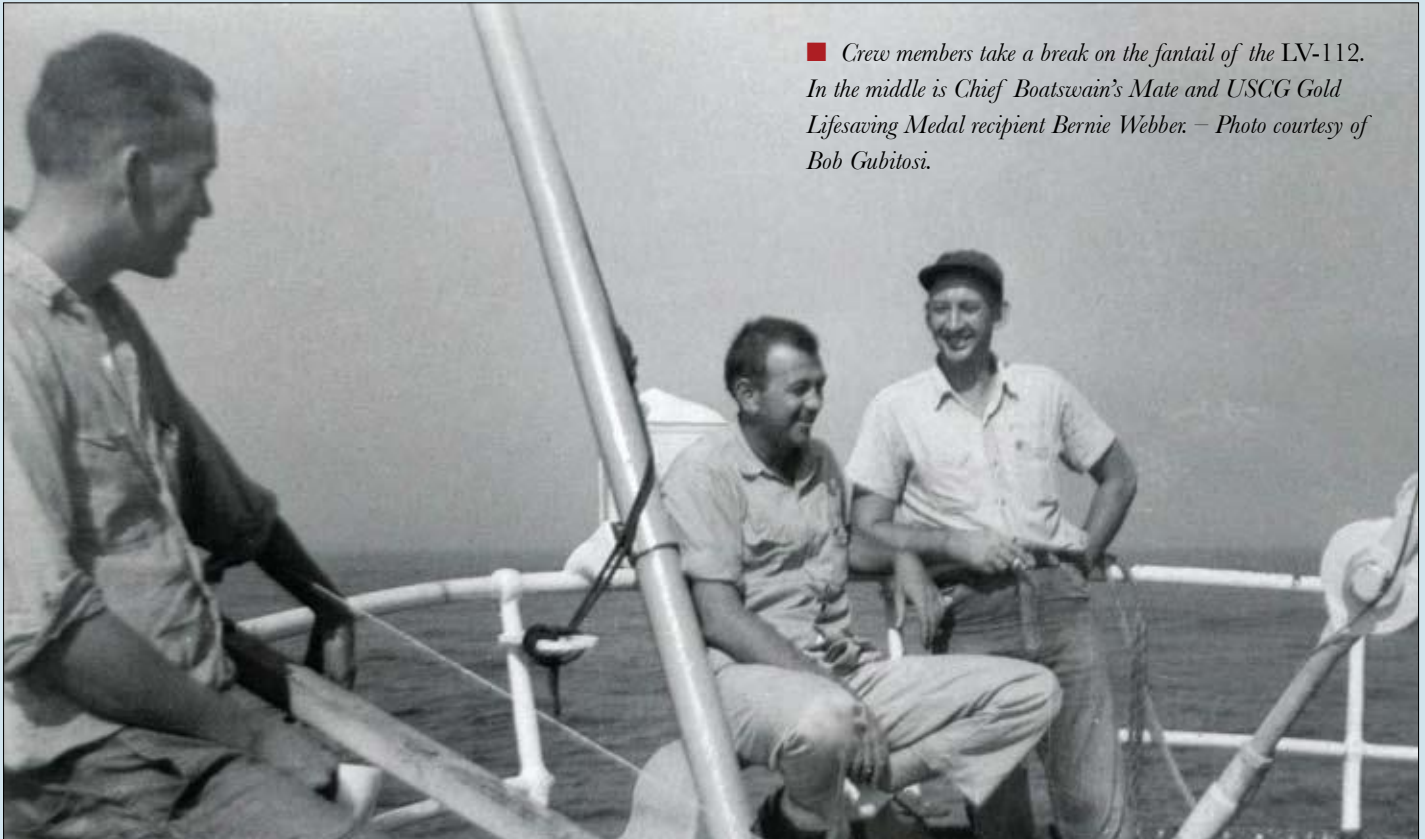
by an unpredictable and temperamental ocean, was nerve-racking and scary, to say the least. In fact, some sailors would refer to duty on *Nantucket Lightship* as like being in exile or sentenced to solitary confinement in prison.

**MOST LIGHTSHIPS** included a crew of approximately 12 sailors. *Nantucket Lightship / LV-112* was designed and built to accommodate 21 sailors. However, its crews were mostly around 17 including 14 enlisted sailors and three officers. Most lightship sailors served four to six weeks on station and would go on leave ashore for two weeks at a time. The weather also



■ (Above) *LV-112*, being christened at a launching ceremony in Wilmington, Delaware, 1936. — Photo courtesy of Don Yeskoo. (Below) *LV-112* en route to her station on the *Nantucket Shoals*.





■ Crew members take a break on the fantail of the LV-112. In the middle is Chief Boatswain's Mate and USCG Gold Lifesaving Medal recipient Bernie Webber. — Photo courtesy of Bob Gubitosi.

determined shore leave schedules. A tour of duty was anywhere from three to 18 months (average was 12 to 18 months). However, one LV-112 crewmember, Bob Gubitosi, who was a ship's cook, served virtually his entire time in the Coast Guard on LV-112 from 1957 to 1961. Bob's reputation for home-cooked meals prepared for his fellow shipmates on board LV-112 was legendary. When his normal tour of duty on LV-112 would have been completed, he repeatedly requested transfers. But his requests were always denied. Needless to say, the crew ate very well on LV-112.

**RAGING STORMS** could last for days, with waves breaking over the bow. As the bow rose up from under its enormous weight, tons of water would wash down the deck and off the stern. Then the bow would be buried under the next wave, and the procedure would repeat itself over and over again. On the first day, everyone would continue to eat, and the cook would place a dampened tablecloth on the mess deck table to keep plates and food from sliding off. As the storm continued, fewer crewmen would be taking their meals; they would switch to apple and saltines. If the storm was violent



■ Cook Bob Gubitosi photographed United States Lines' America passing close to the LV-112 from the lightship's light beacon mast in 1959. — Photo courtesy of Bob Gubitosi.

enough and lasted long enough, almost nobody was exempt from being seasick. Eventually, the seas would calm, winds would blow themselves out, and once more the crew would be treated to another incredibly beautiful sunset. It was also not uncommon for some crewmembers to wear a coffee can with a string attached to it around their neck during moments of seasickness.

**DURING FOGGY DAYS**—frequent for most of the year—the ship's ear-piercing, deep-throated foghorn would be activated as a

warning for shipping. Ear-protection equipment was virtually nonexistent and would force the crew to remain below deck. When vessels came within half a mile, the general alarm was sounded, and everyone donned life jackets and went out on deck so they would at least have a “swimmer's chance” of surviving a collision.

**WHEN OFF DUTY**, crew members would fish, socialize, exercise their arts and crafts talents, read, write letters, listen to the shortwave radio, watch 16mm first run



■ LV-112 as she looked prior to being damaged by Hurricane Edna on September 14, 1954.

movies, etc. Shark fishing was a favorite and risky activity. Blue sharks were common and plentiful. It was not uncommon to catch up to 15 sharks in one day that averaged six feet in length. They were usually thrown back in the water alive. During the Cold War days, it was fairly common to spot Russian trawlers nearby. In fact, Russian and *LV-112* crewmembers occasionally had encounters and traded items such as cigarettes, fish, trinkets, and the like.

### Accounts of Duty from *LV-112* Crewmembers

**NORMAL DUTY ON *LV-112* AND MOST** other isolated stations would be four to six weeks on, then two weeks off. The crew was split into thirds, with crews overlapping. The only time the three weeks of duty was extended was due to weather. The returning crew had to literally jump from the “tender” to the lightship via a Jacob’s Ladder as they came alongside.

The ship’s stores would need to be replenished more often, generally at least every two weeks. At this point, mail was also delivered from the mainland and crewmembers could send their mail.

**TWENTY-ONE** former *LV-112* crew members now live in different parts of the country and shared memories of their time aboard. The late Bernie Webber, who served on *LV-112* from 1958 to 60, was awarded the Coast Guard Gold Life Saving Medal for his involvement in the tanker *Pendleton* disaster that occurred off Cape Cod’s Monomoy Island, featured in the book *The Finest Hours*. Unfortunately, Webber passed away unexpectedly in 2008. He was very helpful and involved with the *LV-112* rescue and preservation.

“**HAVING SPENT** some 45 years on the water, it’s difficult to think in terms of most pleasurable or terrifying,” he recalled. “However, on *LV-112* my most pleasurable was the day when Captain Robert J.W. Collins received a

message while we were on Nantucket Station that we were being relieved and brought in to become a Relief Lightship. The only terror I felt was when on Nantucket Station in rough foggy weather a radar target would be observed headed directly towards the lightship. As it got close, you could hear its engines, and soon out of the fog—so close you could spit on it—would come one of the great liners sailing the seas.”

“**I WENT ABOARD *LV-112*** on a foggy day in 1957,” remembered Bob Gubitosi. “I was 17 years old and saw this big red ship with *Nantucket* painted on it anchored in the calm sea belching out the most ear-piercing foghorn I have ever heard. I realized that my life was about to change. I was the ship’s new cook and had to feed 15 men aboard this ship, and I just came from Commissarymen School at Groton, Connecticut, where they taught me to feed about a thousand. I could not get a transfer and had four different skippers during my tour.”



■ LV-112 served as Relief Lightship from 1958 to 1960 on Boston, Pollack Rip, Cross Rip, Buzzards Bay and Brenton Reef light stations. – Photo courtesy of Bernie Webber.

“**THERE WERE MANY STORMS** and hurricanes,” Gubitosi continued. “One scary night, we broke our anchor chain and did not know it. We wound up off the coast of New Jersey the next day with our radio beacon still going. I remember going on the bridge that night and watching the ship through the porthole, going up walls of water that looked like five- to ten-story buildings, then taking a nose dive straight down. The most pleasurable times were when the mail came, the few calm summer days without the fog horn, the fishing, watching the aurora borealis and the sea life.”

**RICH RACICOTT** was a crew member from 1964 to 1966 and also remembers storms. “During one nor’easter, I remember the skipper and I were on the bridge watching the anemometer. It was marked 0 to 100, but gusts were pushing the needle into the space above 100 and against the pin on the dial,” he said. “We joked about it for a while and then it dropped

to zero and moments later we heard a crash. Seems that the anemometer blew off the yardarm, must have bounced once somewhere on the deck then disappeared over the side. We never found it.”

### Peter Brunk

“**THE WORST THING THAT HAPPENED WAS** going through a bad storm the first week of March 1971,” recalled Peter Brunk, commanding officer from 1970 to 1971. “My father died on March 7, and they couldn’t get me off the ship for over a week. We left Boston on the 6th and storm warnings were up. When we got to station, the Relief Lightship didn’t leave for almost a week, so we had two lightships on Nantucket Station. The wind blew at over 100mph for a week. Another interesting event happened in April or May 1970. We believe an American submarine hit the ship with what we think was a dummy torpedo. We were on the corner of the New London sub-operating area,

and they were around us a lot.”

### Surviving Hurricane Edna

**SERVING LONGER THAN ANY OTHER LIGHTSHIP** on Nantucket Shoals station, 39 years, *LV-112* endured many storms and hurricanes that plagued the Atlantic. Regardless of the weather conditions, it was mandatory for all U.S. lightships and their crews to remain on station. *Nantucket Lightship* was no exception. The most horrific hurricane that *LV-112* endured was Edna, which packed 110-mph wind and 70-foot seas. That day, she was in radio contact with Woods Hole, Massachusetts, when at 4 P.M. a terse message went out: “Nantucket Lightship S.O.S. – listing bad,” was received. The lightship was in danger of sinking.

**LV-112 WAS REPORTED** to have been hit by a 70-foot wave. Her life rafts were washed away and three lifeboats smashed to pieces. The monstrous seas crashed over the ship and poured into the smoke



■ (Above left) The pilot house of the LV-112 as it appeared in 2010. (Above right) LV-112's main engine room in 2010. The main engine is on the right and yellow fuel, orange lube oil, and transfer/system valves are visible. — Photo courtesy of Tim May. (Left) The 7,000-pound main and 5,000-pound auxiliary mushroom anchors that held the LV-112 on station off Nantucket Shoals.

stack, extinguishing the fires in the engine's boilers. Her famous lights went out, and the foghorn was silenced. *LV-112*'s two helm stations, one in the pilothouse and the other on the flying bridge, were destroyed. The oncoming seawater penetrated and short-circuited the electrical systems, causing fires to break out throughout the ship. Seawater surged

over the ship's bow and broke through the 3/4-inch glass wire-reinforced portholes on the pilothouse and ripped off the wheel. The heavy ship dangerously pitched and rolled broadside into the wild seas pounding over her shaking hull, listing 65 degrees at times.

*LV-112* DRIFTED 15 miles off station. The anchor chain had parted and separated sev-

eral hull plates on the bow, creating a hole that was allowing seawater to rush in. Crew members in neck-deep water fought the fury of the oncoming seas to finally plug the hole in the hull with mattresses and miscellaneous waste. When the crew finally restarted the ship's steam engine, they could not steer the vessel at all. They discovered that *LV-112*'s rudder had been torn off. At this point, the crew thought all was lost and the ship was going down. Crew members fought the relentless pounding of the oncoming seas on the ship's foredeck, risking being swept out to sea, and released the spare 5,000-pound mushroom anchor, which held the bow into the seas, prevented further destruction. With the anchor down and fires controlled, the crew managed to bring the ship around into the sea, permitting *LV-112* to stand her station again. The next day *LV-112* was relieved and towed to Boston for repairs.

**MOST OFFSHORE LIGHTSHIPS** made regular weather reports every six hours to the National Weather Service (NOAA) via Coast Guard radio stations. These included wind direction and speed, barometric pressure, humidity, cloud cover, sea



■ (Above) The chart table and ship's communication systems in the pilot house in 2010. (Facing page) The crew's mess on LV-112 as it appeared in 2010.

temperature and wave heights. In addition, selected lightships made and reported oceanographic observations. These varied between locations but usually included sea water samples and subsurface temperature measurements. On the East Coast these were coordinated by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on Cape Cod.

**BECAUSE OF ITS OFFSHORE** oceanic location the Nantucket Lightship participated in frequent marine science programs. These included net tows for biological sampling and bathythermograph casts. The bathythermograph, or BT as it was called, is an instrument, which when lowered into the sea, produces a plot of temperature versus depth. Developed during World War II the BT was used to adjust ships' sonars against submarines; and conversely, by submarines, in evading attacks. Peacetime research applications are global warming, fisheries, and ocean currents. The Nantucket Lightship made BT observations to measure night and day and seasonal changes and the results were transmitted to the National Oceanographic Data Center via the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

### Life after Decommissioning

**NANTUCKET LIGHTSHIP / LV-112** HAS BEEN the most orphaned of all lightships. After the *LV-112*'s decommissioning in 1975, Atlantic City, New Jersey, purchased the ship at a government surplus auction, but when Nantucket Island residents learned "their" lightship was going to leave the state, they sprang into action. They agreed to deliver a second surplus lightship to New Jersey, in exchange for title to *LV-112*.

**AFTER DELIVERING** the lightship to New Jersey, the men flew home to Nantucket and in early December of 1975, sailed *LV-112*, under the command of Captain Robertson P. Dinsmore (USCG RET) from Boston to the island, where the Nantucket Historical Association operated it as a museum. Captain Dinsmore is an active *LV-112* volunteer and financial contributor. After roughly a decade at the island, the lightship gradually fell into disrepair and was sold in 1985 to Nantucket Lightship Preservation, Inc., a New York nonprofit group.

**UNDER THIS ORGANIZATION**, the lightship traveled to various ports on educational tours before eventually finding a semi-permanent home as a floating museum in Portland, Maine. In 1989 the National Park Service designed *LV-112* as a National Historic Landmark, stating, "This vessel possesses national significance in commemorating the history of the United States of America."

**IN MARCH 1990**, *LV-112* vessel's ownership was transferred a group called Lightship Nantucket, Inc. (LNI). After three years of ownership, LNI was unable to obtain adequate funding and could no longer afford to maintain the famous lightship. In 1993, the Intrepid Air-Sea-Space Museum in New York City acquired *LV-112*, but four years later a retired Marine Corps major general, hired to help the museum turn a profit, donated the costly-to-maintain lightship to the H.M.S. Rose



Foundation in Bridgeport, Conn.

In 1998, the former U.S. Lighthouse Service Depot on Staten Island was selected as the home for the newly formed National Lighthouse Museum, and in 2002 the museum, though still in the planning stages, acquired *LV-112* from the H.M.S. Rose Foundation for \$1. The lightship was docked at the depot's pier for a few months before being towed to Oyster Bay, Long Island, in the fall of 2002 so that volunteers, who had completed restoration of a historic oyster sloop, could apply their skills to the lightship. Though slated to remain in Oyster Bay for just a short time, the lightship remained a long time. The effort to open the National Lighthouse Museum had all but fallen apart. *LV-112* remained tied to the public pier for the next eight years, virtually neglected, not properly maintained and victim to random acts of vandalism.

FOR THE EIGHT YEARS that *LV-112* was in Oyster Bay, William Perks, a retired Centerport, New York harbor master volunteered his time to keep a watchful eye on the vessel. If it were not for Mr. Perks and

a handful of area volunteers that cared about the ship, *LV-112* probably would not have survived while in Oyster Bay. To this day, Long Island residents, William Perks, Laura Phair and Lori Guglielmino are still *LV-112* volunteers.

HOWEVER, all things considered, *LV-112*'s heavy riveted steel structure appeared to be in relatively good condition, aside from spotty rust patches and fading peeling paint. Although *LV-112* led its life in retirement, bouncing from one home to another, she remained virtually intact as a result of a covenant assigned to it upon its decommissioning. The covenant states that ownership can only be transferred to a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and can only be used as a museum and learning center open for the benefit of the general public. It also states the ship's historic integrity as a Coast Guard lightship must remain intact and the ship cannot be altered or sold for profit to a private entity.

THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY was growing impatient and wanted the neglected lightship to vacate the public pier, as it was

causing damage. There were no apparent worthy prospects for *LV-112* other than the occasional scrappers interested in the ship for scrap value.

### Preparing *LV-112*'s Homecoming

THE NATIONAL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM offered to sell the lightship for \$1 to a qualified support group, but finding an organization with the backing to restore and maintain the historic vessel was not easy. The author learned about *LV-112*'s plight through a *Boston Globe* newspaper article in August 2008 and led the effort to establish the United States Lightship Museum (USLM) in May 2009. The timing couldn't have been worse for embarking on such a daunting challenge. Yet despite the ailing economy, the USLM raised funds to assume ownership of the lightship and return *LV-112* to her original homeport of Boston. On October 20, 2009, Jerry Roberts, a board member of the National Lighthouse Museum, and the author, head of the USLM, signed transfer papers.



**THE GROUP HAD RAISED** roughly \$150,000 with a combination of cash and in-kind donations and started the arduous logistical planning process to prepare the ship for transport back to Boston. Marine insurance for the ship was obtained, and a trip-and-tow marine survey had to be conducted by an accredited marine surveyor. In addition, *LV-112* had a ten-degree list and was filled with rainwater contaminated with oil up to her deck plates in the engine rooms. The weather decks and interior of the ship were littered with miscellaneous junk and rubbish. There was no power on the ship and to complicate matters, she was berthed more than 300 feet from any vehicle access and had limited boarding facilities. If not for a small group of dedicated and passionate Oyster Bay area volunteers, who in fact kept an eye on the ship and kept her afloat, she might not have survived.

**VIRTUALLY EVERY WEEKEND** from

November 2009 through May 2010, members of the USLM group drove from Massachusetts and New Hampshire to Oyster Bay to prepare *LV-112* for her return home. Before the marine survey could be done, bilges had to be pumped and the ship trimmed. We contracted an environmental clean-up company with a tank truck to pump out the contaminated bilge water. Six thousand gallons were transferred and pumped out. The next step was to install the entire ship with temporary lighting and clean out the extraneous trash. We hired Charles Deroko from Brooklyn, New York, a seasoned and accredited marine surveyor experienced with surveying historic vessels. In preparation for the survey, every fuel, water and ballast tank had to be opened for inspection. The survey concluded that various sections of *LV-112* ranged from poor to excellent condition but that she was believed to be seaworthy enough for the

■ *On a bitterly cold weekend in January 2010, members of the Coast Guard Lightship Sailors Association, including former LV-112 crewmen, joined local volunteers aboard the vessel in Oyster Bay, New York, to begin preparing the ship for its tow to Boston. — Photo courtesy of Tim May.*

34-hour tow to Boston. *LV-112*'s forward ballast tanks and forward floor frames appeared to be the most compromised by salt-water corrosion. Numerous safety issues and tow requirements had to be resolved before *LV-112* would pass a final inspection for the tow, required by our insurance and the tow company's insurance company. In January, a dozen volunteers from the Coast Guard Lightship Sailors Association traveled to Oyster Bay from all over the U.S. for a weekend to help with our tow preparation efforts. It was one of the coldest days of the winter and there was very little heat on the ship.

**ALL THE WATERTIGHT HATCHES**, doors and exterior portholes had to be tested, sealed and secured. The propeller shaft as well as the ship's rudder had to be locked and secured from movement while the ship is in tow. All the watertight bulkheads and seawater valves had to be closed and secured. *LV-112* had not been dry-docked and had her hull inspected below the waterline since 1991. Needless to say, we were all very anxious about the long tow to Boston.

**CONSTELLATION MARITIME**, a Foss Maritime Company, was contracted by the USLM to tow the ship to Boston. On May 8, 2010, the 74-foot tugboat *Lynx* arrived at Oyster Bay and rigged *LV-112* for her journey back home. Foul weather prevented the tow from getting underway, since *LV-112* was restricted from being towed in winds 20 knots or greater. Finally, on May 10 *Nantucket/LV-112* departed. The tow went smoothly until it exited the Cape Cod Canal and entered Massachusetts Bay. Contrary to the marine weather forecast, the wind was creating three- to seven-foot seas. It was a rough and sloppy trip all the way to Boston Harbor for the tug's crew and the three *LV-112* volunteers—the author, Captain Dinsmore and William Perk—who were also on the tug (a riding crew was not permitted on the lightship). At this point, virtually everyone on the tug wished they were riding on *LV-112* since she appeared to be riding the rough seas very nicely!

*LV-112* ARRIVED in Boston on May 11, 2010 and was welcomed by former crew members, National Park Service personnel from the Charlestown Navy Yard, the Boston news media and the general public. The historic *LV-112* had not been back to Boston since the U.S. Coast Guard decommissioned her in 1975.

## Restoration Process

TODAY, *LV-112* IS BERTHED AT THE BOSTON Harbor Shipyard & Marina (BHS&M) in East Boston, and is a featured landmark on the historic "Boston Harborwalk" trail. The BHS&M is the former Bethlehem Atlantic Works Shipyard, which was very active during World War II. The shipyard includes a dry dock facility where in 1968

*LV-112* was in for repairs and maintenance, approximately 100 yards from where she currently is berthed. The former Bethlehem facility is still used for yacht construction, ship and boat repair. However the dry dock is no longer in use.

**NANTUCKET LIGHTSHIP/LV-112** is currently undergoing restoration anticipated to take three years to complete. The USLM's goal is to restore the ship's structure and mechanical systems so she can operate under her own power again on a limited basis. *LV-112* was operational through 1998. Her engines last ran approximately six years ago and have been mothballed since. The highest priority is to stabilize the hull from further salt-water corrosion. However, restoration of the ship's electrical systems and inspecting and surveying the ship's plumbing and heating systems has begun.

**THE RESTORATION PROCESS** will be completed in two phases. Phase 1 will include placing her in dry dock to clean the hull, conduct a more comprehensive marine survey of her hull below the waterline that will include an audio-gauge survey of her hull, conduct necessary repairs and prepare the hull for new paint and install new zinc anodes. This work will be done at the Fitzgerald Shipyard in Chelsea in Boston. Phase 1 will also include restoring the entire exterior of *LV-112*. Phase 2 will include restoring all the ship's engines and mechanical systems.

**SO FAR APPROXIMATELY** 75 percent of the ship's lighting, her on-board alarm systems, public-address system and voice activated/sound powered telephones have been restored. We have several retired dedicated volunteers, who are retired Naval shipyard marine electricians and communication experts, who are helping to restore *LV-112*'s shipboard electrical and mechanical systems. In fact, one of our volunteers currently works for NAVSEA Systems.

**WE ALSO ARE FORTUNATE** to have help from the volunteer group working on the Fletcher Class Destroyer *Cassin Young* at the Charlestown Navy Yard. There has been no lack of volunteers coming forward to help with *LV-112*. Our volunteer group also consists of former *LV-112* crewmem-

bers and other former lightship sailors. Much of the up-front work involves cleaning out all the extraneous junk that accumulated over the years. A large part of our work also involves taking inventory of all the ship's contents, which include extra parts, log books and *LV-112* blueprints. It is amazing how much historic documentation and brand-new extra parts, stored for repair work, has been left on the ship.

## Help Save *LV-112*

**WE ESTIMATE THE TOTAL RESTORATION** costs for *LV-112* to be approximately \$1 million. In addition, we are fortunate to tap into professional volunteer services. We estimate that it will require a \$10-million endowment to maintain and care for *LV-112* in perpetuity.

**NANTUCKET LIGHTSHIP *LV-112*** is a time capsule and important National Historic Landmark that represents a significant segment of our nation's service, culture, commerce, ingenuity and state-of-the-art craftsmanship. *LV-112* is still at high risk, and funds must continue to be raised to help her survive. All funding to date has been from the generosity of private and corporate donors. Information on the preservation is available by logging onto [www.NantucketLightshipLV-112.org](http://www.NantucketLightshipLV-112.org). ↯

## About the Author

**ROBERT MANNINO, JR.**, of South



Hampton, New Hampshire, is president of the United States Lightship Museum and is spearheading the effort to save *Nantucket Lightship/LV-*

*112*. He is a marketing communications and public relations consultant, specializing in development programs for nonprofit organizations including maritime museums, historical societies and shipbuilding preservation projects. His experience also includes chairing municipal historical commissions.

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