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Red Hook tanker is history

BY ALEX RUSH AND J.J. DESPAIN

A 73-year-old ship that's been converted into a Red Hook cultural center may soon be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

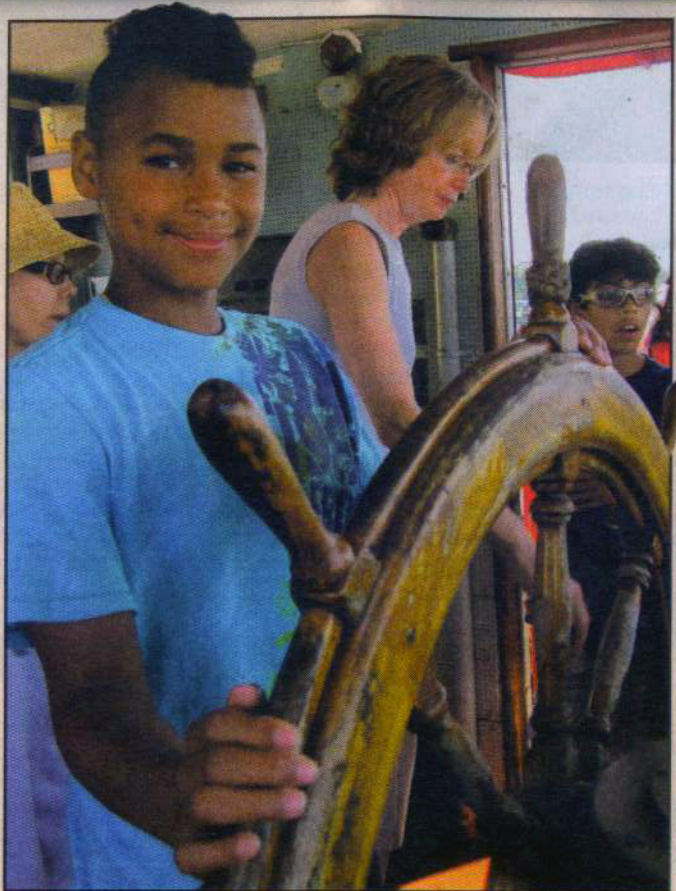
The state Historic Preservation Office this month said that the Mary A. Whalen, a Depression-era fuel tanker that hosts movies, concerts and maritime history lessons, deserves to be a federally protected landmark.

The agency acknowledged that the ship is one of the few remaining symbols of the good ol' days of the Red Hook shipping industry.

"Few vessels of her period and class remain," reads the state's report.

The Whalen was purchased for 16,000 in 2008 by PortSide, a

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The Mary A. Whalen, a Depression-era fuel tanker, doubles as a cultural and educational center for Red Hook residents. The ship is applying for a spot on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo by Carolina Salguero

PIZZA STABBERS GET OFF

THEY WON'T TALK

BY DAN MACLEOD
AND HARU CORYNE

Silence is indeed golden.

District Attorney Charles Hynes dropped attempted murder charges on Tuesday against

famed pizzaman Mark Iacono and mob-linked Benny Geritano after the two refused to sing to a grand jury about the stabbing of the mozzarella maestro on Smith

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Tanker

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group of maritime enthusiasts who last summer held more than 50 events on the 172-foot deck. The tanker, which docked in the Atlantic Basin, featured free tours, concerts, movies and a staged production of an opera (not kidding!), Puccini's "Il Tabarro." That's a lot of activities for a boat whose engine broke down 15 years ago.

PortSide Director Carolina Salguero says that landmark status could help the ship for years to come, as the group is currently in negotiations with the city to establish a permanent maritime center in the Atlantic Basin. But getting listed on the National Register is a lengthy process: The ship must be visited by officials, nominated by the



The Whalen returned to Red Hook in 2007. File photo by Tom Callan

state Board for Historic Preservation and approved by the National Park Service. Then the National Register makes the final decision.

But Salguero is optimistic.

"We're hoping for to get recognized as quickly as possible," she said.

The ship's status may

not be set, but that hasn't stopped PortSide from restoring it. The group has spent \$125,000 to restore the hull — the part of the boat that floats in the water — plug leaks and repaint the deck. The group also plans to upgrade the Captain's Cabin by August.

And this summer, the group plans to seek ap-

proval from the city to dock its ship for soirees off the coast of Brooklyn Bridge Park.

The Mary A. Whalen was built in 1938 to carry fuel to ships along the East Coast. It was stationed in the Court Street shipyard of Ira Bushey, a Brooklyn maritime legend who built fuel storage terminals and likely designed the Whalen.

The Whalen crashed 30 years later, which led to a monumental U.S. Supreme Court case dealing with the accident. *United States v. Reliable Transfer Co* overturned more than 120 years of maritime law by ruling that damages in marine accidents should always be apportioned according to blame instead of split evenly.

The repaired Whalen continued to deliver fuel along the Gowanus Canal until 1994.