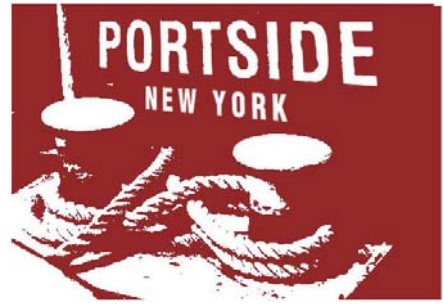


Welcome to the *Mary A. Whalen's* inauguration of her new life. The tanker will become our home office, a public access-vessel with the deck serving as patio, and exhibit space. The boat will also be a dock receiving other boats.



The *Whalen* was built in 1938. She is 172' long and weighs 613 gross tons. She's a "coastal tanker" which means she delivered fuel products (diesel, gas, kerosene etc) up and down the Atlantic Coast from Maine to Maryland. Boats are always female; one of the few gendered nouns in English. The *Whalen's* traditional work is still big around here; New York is the largest petroleum through port in the USA, a refining and distribution center for the whole northeast.

The *Whalen* went out of service around 1994. She was then bought by the folks who run the Erie Basin Bargeport in Red Hook, for use as a dock and office. Her eight cargo tanks were cleaned of all fuel residues, and they began to rust up. Now, these spaces feel like a cross between a Richard Serra sculpture and an immersion tank meditation room. They will be converted into to an exhibition space and function hall.

Today, we're giving you a nautical This Old House experience—at the "before" stage. Her paint is faded, but she has good bones and great steel. Vintage steel is better than the stuff fabricated today. To assess it, we called in Charlie Deroko, marine surveyor (latest project *The Intrepid*). If the *Whalen's* hull were verging on rusty swiss cheese, she would be a no go. Charlie performed audio gauge readings, sonograms of the whole hull, just as is done with humans—likewise using KY jelly. Yes, KY. We didn't find many thin spots, and so she was spared being sent to the bottom as an artificial reef.

The *Whalen* is has quite a fan club among folks working on the water here. She is considered an attractive and well-built workboat, and she represents a type of boat (a coastal tanker and a "Bushey Boat") going the way of the dodo. The former are mostly

more on other side

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replaced by barges, useful but homely boxes, and Bushey is no more. Ira Bushey & Sons was a famous shipyard and fuel terminal in Red Hook that closed in the 70s. Hess and Hornbeck operate in that place today.

Though she is a “historic ship,” our plans differ from the usual plans for a historic vessel in that we’ll make changes—respectfully. That means we won’t destroy any of the vintage accommodations and gear, and we’ll try to make exterior modifications fit her traditional ship-y look; but we won’t be doing a restoration.

We’ll pierce her hull with installing spuds. On the water, spuds are only sometimes potatoes; they are usually pilings carried by the vessel that run right through the hull. We’re doing this because there is no pier at her future home, and the spuds will keep her in place, just as they keep the Water Taxi docks (spud barges) in place. But the spuds have a future advantage; they will allow us to visit locations that don’t have piers or that have piers with no cleats or bollards (the things you tie ships to; you’ll see them labeled on the pier).

The tour: As you visit, be aware that the boat offers many ways to stub your toe, whack your head, or snag your waist. Note that when something is painted yellow or white, it means it is a likely tripping hazard, something you should hold on to (a railing), in short something you should pay extra attention to. For example, the engine room deck (floor) has a few holes in it so the engineer could reach valves; these holes are rimmed in yellow.

Our museum designer Tim Ventimiglia will be around the better part of the weekend to explain future museum plans.

In the engine room explaining the vintage systems, will be Captain Dick Forster, owner and operator of many tugs and workboats. He’s eager to put the Whalen engine room back together. Make sure you check out the electrical panel or “Frankenstein board.”

The boat predates cellphones and intercoms, the captain communicated with the engineer who was effectively 2-3 floors below him, by ringing a bell and a smaller jingle. We have taken the bell, jingle, wheel and compass off the boat to prevent theft, until we have someone aboard full time.

Looking ahead: The Economic Development Corporation (aka The City) EDC has announced plans for Atlantic Basin to be a “maritime-themed weekend destination” so PortSide submitted a response to their Atlantic Basin RFEI. We requested waterspace (docks), to include our partner, the non-profit historic Tug Pegasus, and upland space to include a waterfront museum, a Bait & Tackle shop, café, marine career center, tourism center, and youth and community programs.

Thanks to our generous hosts at American Stevedoring Inc. who made such unusual access to this terminal possible.