



Tour Fact Sheet for *Mary A. Whalen*

Welcome to the *Mary A. Whalen's* inauguration of her new life. The tanker serves as PortSide NewYork's home office, a public access-vessel with the deck serving as patio and stage, site of historic ship tours where you can learn about her working life and American fuel distribution issues, and -- down the road once we convert the cargo tanks to human use -- an exhibit and classroom space. The boat will serves as a dock receiving other boats.

The *Mary A. 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 up and down the Atlantic Coast from Maine to Maryland. She held 8,019 barrels and over the years carried gasoline and diesel products. Boats are always female; one of the few gendered nouns in English. The *Mary A. 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 *Mary A. Whalen* went out of service March 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.

Visiting her now gives you a nautical This Old House experience—at the "before" (actually, a little past "before" and moving towards the "after" stage.) Some of her paint is faded, chipped or rusty, 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 (he's worked on restoration projects from *The Intrepid* to South Street Seaport's little wooden **continued on other side**

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tug *W.O. Decker*). If the *Mary A. Whalen*'s hull were verging on rusty swiss cheese, she would have been a no go. Charlie performed audio gauge readings, sonograms of the whole hull, just as is done with humans. We didn't find many thin spots, and so she was spared being sent to the bottom as an artificial reef.

The *Mary A. Whalen* has quite a fan club among folks working on the water here. She is considered an attractive, comfortable 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 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 early 80s. 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've pierced 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 did this because we plan to take her places that have no piers or those silly newfangled piers that are not built for boats.

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.

In the engine room, make sure you check out the electrical panel or "Frankenstein board." Also, note the "telegraph" a brass stand with long levers: This is a "bell boat." The captain only controlled left/right motions of the boat, the speed and forward/reverse directions were controlled by an engineer operating the "telegraph." He received sounds commands sent by the captain who rang, via cables from the wheelhouse, a bell and a jingle in the fidley, the 2nd floor of the engine room, above the engine proper. See if you can find the crib sheet on bells and jingles on the fidley! Also, look for the speaking tubes connecting fidley and wheelhouse.

Looking ahead: April 2009, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) sole-sourced PortSide to create a maritime hub and cultural center in Atlantic Basin. This will finally enable PortSide to become a place, as was our original plan, and not just a ship project.

Thanks to our generous hosts at American Stevedoring Inc. who have provided a home for PortSide and the *Mary A. Whalen* for several years during our search for a home.