UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Lightship Chesapeake

2 LOCATION
Moved - see continuation Sheet dated 7-80
STREET & NUMBER
East Potomac Park
CITY, TOWN
Washington
STATE
D.C.

3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<td>X OCCUPIED</td>
<td>X AGRICULTURE</td>
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<td>BUILDING(S)</td>
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<td>UNOCCUPIED</td>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
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<td>BOTH</td>
<td>WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL</td>
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<td>SITE</td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>PARK</td>
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<td>OBJECT</td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>X YES: RESTRICTED</td>
<td>PRIVATE RESIDENCE</td>
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<td>OTHER</td>
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4 AGENCY
REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)
National Capital Region, National Park Service
STREET & NUMBER
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
CITY, TOWN
Washington
STATE
D.C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
STATE
D.C. 20242

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
List of Classified Structures, National Park Service
DATE
1976
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Historic Resource Services Division
National Capital Region, National Park Service
CITY, TOWN
Washington
STATE
D.C.
The Lightship Chesapeake is a steel-hulled vessel 133'3" in length and 30' in beam. It draws approximately 12'6" and displaces 630 gross tons. The hull has the high bow and freeboard and rounded stern characteristic of lightships, designed for maximum stability while riding at anchor under heavy wind and sea conditions. A diesel-electric motor of 350 horsepower turning a single screw propels the ship at a maximum speed of nine knots.

Within the hull at the bow is an anchor/windlass compartment over a paint locker. Just aft, beneath the pilot house and captain's cabin, are cabins for 10 seamen (two per cabin) over the forward hold. Amidships are the mess deck and cook's cabin over the engine room. Next aft is the galley. Beneath the radio room above-deck at the stern is the wardroom with individual cabins for four officers, with the machine shop below. Between the machine shop and the engine room in the bottom of the ship is the motor room.

A tall mast rising from the deck ahead of the radio room carries two 30,000 candle-power beacons with Fresnel lenses, one intended for auxiliary use. A shorter mast just aft of the pilot house carries a radar scanner installed about 1950. Previously the auxiliary light was mounted atop this mast.

The hull is painted red with large white letters bearing the name of the ship's duty station (Chesapeake) on each side. Between 1930 and 1933 it was lettered "Fenwick" for its station off Fenwick Island, Delaware. From 1966 to 1970 it bore the name "Delaware" for its post at the mouth of Delaware Bay. Following its transfer to the National Park Service it was relabeled "Chesapeake" in recognition of its longest tour of duty at that location.

During its years of service several additional modifications were made to the ship. There was some replacement of diesel generating engines, and a number of hatches and portholes were closed or relocated. When the ship was decommissioned its foghorn, most radio equipment, and the original wooden wheel were removed. Since then the engine room controls have been enclosed, there has been some modern refurbishing, and some cabins have been adapted for use as offices. The vessel is unchanged for the most part, however, and retains its original character to a great extent.

An elevation drawing of the ship is provided in the accompanying leaflet.
The Lightship Chesapeake is significant as a rare operational example of a type of navigational aid now almost extinct in the United States.

A lightship is a floating lighthouse, designed for use in coastal waters where a fixed beacon cannot readily be placed. The idea may be traced to the days of the Roman Empire, when galleys with lighted fire baskets at their mastheads were occasionally used as aids to navigation. In 1731 Robert Hamblin, a British entrepreneur, received a patent to place a single-masted sloop with two lanterns in the Thames estuary and collect duties from ship owners. The first lightship in the United States was placed off the Virginia coast in 1820 by the United States Lighthouse Establishment, which placed four more such vessels in the Chesapeake Bay the next year at public expense.

The number of United States lightship stations reached a maximum of 56 in 1909. Many of these were in outer waters, since lighthouses employing the new screw-pile construction had replaced many of the "inner" lightships. Thereafter the number declined as more economical and efficient light buoys and ultimately Texas towers supplanted even the outer lightships.

LS 116, exemplifying the best lightship technology of its time, left the Charleston Drydock and Machine Company, Charleston, S.C., on August 17, 1930, for its maiden voyage to Norfolk, Va. Only five more American lightships would be built. Until 1933 LS 116 was stationed off Fenwick Island, Del., and designated Fenwick. On July 17 of that year it began its long service off the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, acquiring the name Chesapeake.

When the U.S. Lighthouse Service and its vessels were absorbed by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939, LS 116 was renumbered WAL 538 and later WLV 538. During World War II it was pressed into U.S. Navy service and was stationed off Sandwich, Mass., until 1945, when it returned to duty at the mouth of the Chesapeake. There in 1962 the Chesapeake survived a major storm in which a mountainous wave buckled the forward bulkhead of the pilot house.

(continued)
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


National Park Service. "Lightship Chesapeake" (leaflet), N.d.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: N/A

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

A

18

380

B

17

18

C

32

42

D

31

47

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nomination includes only the ship, which is by nature movable and which is not historically associated with the referenced location.

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Barry Mackintosh, Regional Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Capital Region, National Park Service

ADDRESS

1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

CODE

20242

DATE

April 11, 1980

CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES x

NO

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

DATE

MAY 23, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 8/1/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE July 30, 1980
In September 1965 the Chesapeake's station was taken by a Texas tower light, and the vessel moved to its last official tour of duty at the entrance to the Delaware Bay. In 1970 an automated Large Navigational Buoy (LNB) again replaced the lightship, which was mothballed at Cape May, N.J., and decommissioned on January 6, 1971.

The National Park Service acquired the vessel in August 1971, refurbished it as a historical exhibit and a vehicle for maritime environmental education, and stationed it in the Washington Channel of the Potomac River off East Potomac Park, Washington, D.C. From here it makes occasional cruises down the Potomac and periodically displays its beacon. Its present mooring is unrelated to its historical significance and is subject to change without effect on that significance.

At this time (1980) only one American lightship—the Nantucket, off Nantucket Island, Mass.—remains in active service, and its days are numbered. The Chesapeake therefore illustrates a nearly bygone era of navigational assistance in the United States.
On May 27, 1981, the Lightship Chesapeake was loaned by the National Park Service to the City of Baltimore, Maryland, for a term of 25 years. The ship will be moored in Baltimore's Inner Harbor during this period.

UTM Reference: 18/361380/4349360
Lightship Chesapeake
U.S. COast Guard 1965

JUN 11 1980 Washy D.C.