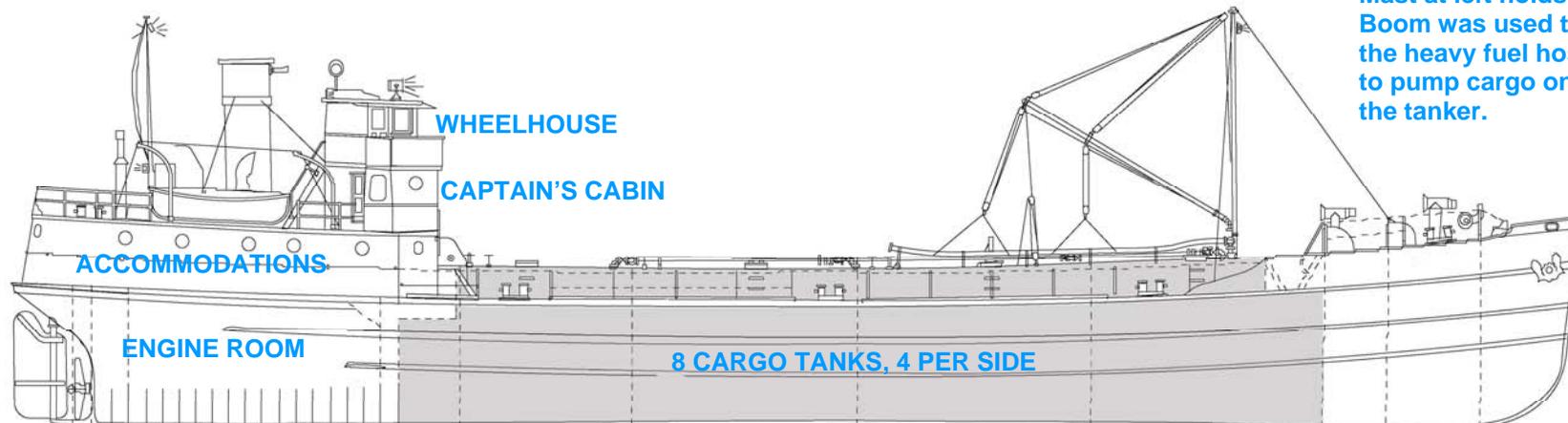


**PortSide NewYork is a living lab for better urban waterways.** We are an innovative non-profit created in 2005 to connect New Yorkers to the benefits of our waterways and ports and more fully tap the potential of our harbor. PortSide serves people of all ages, incomes, with a special focus on connecting NYC's economically and socially distressed communities. We bring the community afloat and community ashore closer together for the benefit of both, via programs in education, arts, and job training. We provide physical experiences and digital programs on and off our flagship, the historic tanker MARY A. WHALEN. She is part of our e-museum [www.RedHookWaterStories.org](http://www.RedHookWaterStories.org) that tells the story of this peninsula along a water theme, and tells NYC's maritime history in microcosm.

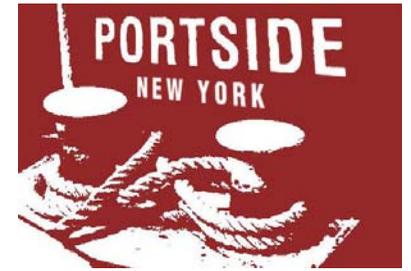
**MARY A. WHALEN** You can hear an audio tour at <http://bit.ly/MARYtour>. The MARY is a Red Hook artifact of **national significance**. She is the last of her kind in the USA and on the National Register of Historic Places. She was involved in a major 1975 Supreme Court decision, US vs Reliable Transfer which determined that guilty parties have to pay damages proportional to blame. Oddly, before that it was a 50/50 split! The MARY was **built in 1938** for **Ira S. Bushey & Sons**, a nationally significant Red Hook shipyard, fuel terminal, and fuel delivery company at the foot of Court Street. Bushey's built over 200 vessels and ran a large fleet of tankers, tugs and barges. They went out of business in the 1980s. The MARY went out of service in March 1994 and became a floating office and dock for the Erie Basin Bargeport in Red Hook. In 2006, she became PortSide's flagship.

**What, When, Where:** The MARY is a "**coastal tanker**" meaning she delivered fuel up and down the coast (not from overseas) and up rivers and little canals doing "creek work." She worked from Maine to Virginia, based out of NYC. The MARY is 172' long and weighs 613 gross tons. She held 8,019 barrels, and carried gasoline, kerosene, home heating oil and ship fuel (bunker). The MARY's work is still big around here. The port of NY & NJ is the largest petroleum through port in the USA; it is a refining and distribution center for the whole northeast.

**Who:** Depending on the era and work, **crew size varied**. She started with 9, went up to 11, and then mostly had 7: Captain, Mate, Engineer, Assistant Engineer, Cook and two tankermen. The big strike of 1988-89 knocked out the cook position. We know of one woman crew member, tankerwoman Heidi Benedikt. We have begun interviewing the dozens of crew members and their descendants we know. In 2009, **ship cat Chiclet** came aboard to fulfill the traditional job of keeping the ship rodent free, though sometimes she brings us one as a present! She has been voted one of NYC's top mascots by Time Out NY. She has convinced us to offer Cat WaterStories programs, coming soon.



**Mast at left holds a boom. Boom was used to swing the heavy fuel hose used to pump cargo on or off the tanker.**



## **Aboard the tanker MARY A. WHALEN**

Pier 11, Atlantic Basin,  
Red Hook, Brooklyn

[portsidewyork.org](http://portsidewyork.org)  
[facebook.com/portsidewyork](https://www.facebook.com/portsidewyork)  
[@PortSideNewYork](https://twitter.com/PortSideNewYork)

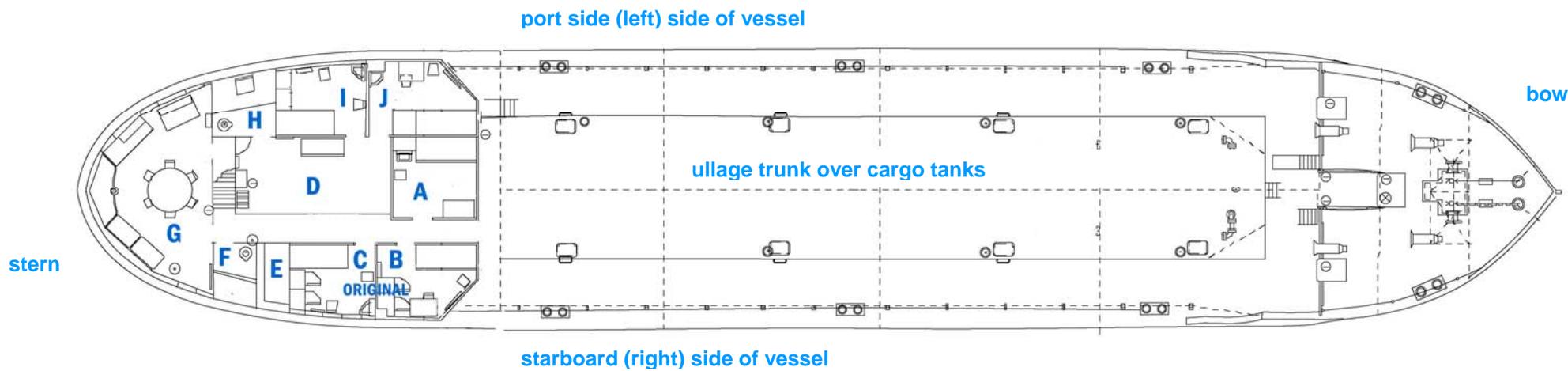


[RedHookWaterStories.org](http://RedHookWaterStories.org)  
e-museum & community guide



**The galley:** The galley is cozy but could be a battleground for issues between the crew. When Heidi Benedikt came on in the 80s, the cook dyed all her food pink for months. The last Engineer Jack Silva liked to cook but did not like the captain who did not like peas, so Jack put peas in as many dishes as he could! The space is built for **living on rough seas**: the rim around the table edge and the high-sided plate rack kept plates from crashing onto the floor at sea; the table is massively solid. The Webb Perfection stove burns diesel and was patented in 1918, and we still get customer service! The wood paneled cabinet is a fridge and freezer. We know of one cook who was lost overboard at sea.

**Bells are direction, jingles are speed:** The MARY is a **bell boat**, meaning key engine **instructions were communicated by bells**. The Captain or Mate steered and controlled only the left/right direction with the wheel. They rang a bell and small jingle to send commands about forward/reverse directions and speed to the engineer working two levels down in the **fidley**, the quirky maritime word for the space over an engine or boiler. The engineer, who couldn't see where the boat was going, responded by moving levers on the brass-handled **telegraph**. Can you find the bells cheat sheet in the fidley?



Forward of the tanks is a pump room, the forward engine room to power the cargo pumps, and the forepeak that held water. The water cooled the forward engines and served as ballast to weigh the bow down when the tanker was "light" (not loaded).

The Captain's Cabin is up one level on the Boat Deck level. Above that is the wheelhouse, also called the pilothouse or "the bridge."

- A – Cabin for 2 Tankermen
- B – Mate + one (Spaces B+C were combined into one office space by the last owner and are now main PortSide office space)
- C – Cook & Able Bodied Seaman
- D – The fidley, a space over an engine or boiler
- E – Paint & Gyro Compass locker (now electrical locker)
- F – Officer's Head ("head" is the maritime word for both bathroom and toilet)
- G – Galley
- H – Crew's Head ("head" is the maritime word for both the bathroom and a toilet)
- I – Assistant Engineer + one crewmember (This was converted to an office space by last owner and is office of our President)
- J – Engineer



MARYtour



donate