

A Tour for Docents of The Presidential Yacht Potomac



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Introduction

Docents on the Potomac have the opportunity to bring a unique story to visitors. Or, rather, three stories: the story of the ship itself; the story of a man - Franklin D. Roosevelt, our 32nd president; and the story of the times and circumstances. During the course of a tour, the docent will have many chances to interweave these three strands. How much of these stories will be told, the particular way information is conveyed, and the determination of where in the tour it will be used is up to the docent - as the docent interacts with an actual group of people forming the tour group.

The material that follows is in the form of an “annotated tour”. What is presented here is far too much for all of it to be included in any actual tour. Rather, the purpose of this “annotated tour” is to provide information that the docent can then draw upon in the course of an actual tour of the ship.

Normally, visitors to the Potomac start their tour by viewing the short video in the visitor’s center. It is assumed in the following that you also have seen it.

Obviously, the amount of information contained here is only the smallest fraction of what is available. Volumes can, and have been, written about the life and times of Franklin Roosevelt, his family, the people he knew, and the impact he had. And while the amount of material on the Potomac itself is more limited, it does exist. The Potomac Association office has reference material that you can use. Part of the fun of being a docent on the Potomac comes from doing some digging and adding to our common store of knowledge.

The particular route followed here is but one of several possible tour routes of the ship. Accordingly, you can think of this “annotated tour” as being made up of modules that can be shifted around and used in any way that may be appropriate.

Before starting the tour



Figure 1 – The Potomac; midships passageway indicated

Before boarding the Potomac, get an overall impression of the entire ship. A good way to do this is to pause on the entry ramp when you are just about opposite the middle of the ship, i. e. when you are opposite the “midships” passageway. (Figure 1.)

It is convenient to think of the front, or forward, part of the Potomac as being the “business” part of the ship. That is, areas such as quarters for the ship’s officers and crew, the radio room, the Pilot House, etc. are in this part. It is also the part of the ship whose profile was the least changed when she was converted from a Coast Guard cutter into a presidential yacht.

In contrast, the major changes which occurred and which involved constructing quarters and other facilities for the president and his guests are in the rear, or after, part of the ship.

One of the continuing themes of our “annotated tour” will be the identification of those changes which were made in converting the Electra into the Potomac, as well as those which occurred after she left presidential service, including those made during her restoration.

We might mention the result of one such change now. When she was the presidential yacht, the Potomac was a commissioned naval vessel, and as such she would have been painted in the familiar Navy grey. As we see her now she is white - a color which perhaps accords more with our sense of what a presidential yacht should look like. Then too, we know that President Truman had his presidential yacht, which also was a commissioned naval vessel - the Williamsburg - painted white. So, our intuition, a bit of presidential yacht history, together with the fact that white was more available and cheaper than grey, gives us our explanation.

When President Roosevelt boarded the Potomac appropriate naval honors were rendered: being saluted by officers and crew; being piped aboard and having the presidential flag flown. Generally, 21 gun salutes were used only on formal occasions.

PRESIDENTIAL FLAGS

Figure 2a shows the flag that would have flown from the Potomac’s mainmast. Four white stars in the corners surround the eagle design of the Seal of the President. This flag served as the presidential flag from 1916 until 1945, when President Truman modified it.

President Truman changed the central eagle design in two ways. First, rather than having an eagle *sinister* – that is, with the eagle looking to its *left* – he felt it would be more appropriate, now that World War II had ended and the country was at peace, to have an eagle *dexter*. Now, by looking to its right, the national symbol of the eagle would be looking towards the olive branch of peace rather than the arrows of war.

Secondly, he surrounded the central eagle design with a circle of fifty stars. Figure 2b shows the current Seal of the President.



Figure 2a – FDR's Flag



Figure 2b – Current Presidential Seal

A bit of nautical terminology

The docent's experience of touching the Potomac's history will be enhanced by knowing and using a bit of nautical terminology. For most of us, of course, it would be an affectation - obvious and distracting to our listeners - to use such terms overmuch. A little bit goes a long way. Most of the terms the docent will use are obvious in their meaning; it is just the special choice of certain words that make it "nautical". In this category are the following:

We walk on **decks**, rather than on floors; and go to the **head**, rather than to the toilet.

We go **fore** and **aft** (forward and after), rather than to the front or to the rear; and go **below** and **topside**.

We go up and down **ladders**, rather than stairs; and meals are prepared in the **galley**, rather than in the kitchen.

Then there are the few more technical terms:

Port and **starboard**. Facing forward, left and right respectively. [People have suggested various ways to remember the definitions, for example - as the letter "l" comes before the letter "r", so does "p" before "s"; or again, as "left" is a shorter word than "right", so "port" is a shorter word than "starboard"]

Coaming. The sill or ledge which you step over as you enter a room or compartment.

The Main Dining Room or Saloon



Figure 3a – Saloon, Looking Forward



Figure 3b – Saloon, Looking Aft

While there are many possible places to start the tour, the saloon provides a convenient and logical starting point, with the President's cabin and fantail as natural next stops. (Figures 3a and 3b.)

A word about the terminology. Although “saloon” is perhaps most often used today to indicate a place serving liquor, it also has the more traditional meaning of a large public area and, particularly in connection with ships, to refer to the dining cabin. In the naval architect’s drawing of the Potomac the main dining room is labeled “saloon”, so, as long as you feel comfortable with it, you should feel free to use the term.



Figure 4 – Dinnerware Cabinet

The video talked about the many contributions of time, money and effort that went into the restoration. One small example is the open cabinet for the saloon’s dinnerware that is on the bulkhead facing the port side entrance. (Figure 4.) This is the original; someone literally spent hundreds of hours restoring it.

The video also will have already mentioned the use of the Potomac as a way for President Roosevelt to get away from the daily pressures and routine of the White House. The saloon provides the docent the chance to reinforce the idea that all presidents have their own manner of doing so, and that for President Roosevelt the opportunity to take a cruise or a fishing trip was something he especially looked forward to. That it was also a chance to get away from the routine (and apparently unappetizing) cooking prepared under the direction of Mrs. Nesbitt, the Roosevelt’s Hyde Park neighbor whom Mrs. Roosevelt had brought to the White House as housekeeper might also be mentioned.

Mention of cooking provides an easy segue for a look into the galley where the meals for the President and his guests were prepared. Except for the microwave and coffeemaker, which obviously wasn’t there when the Potomac was the presidential yacht, and the fact that the stove was oil fired, the galley is as it was then.



Figure 5 – Photo from the Saloon

Returning to the saloon, you can direct attention to the small prints. (Figure 5.) We all know President Roosevelt as a collector of stamps, but he was also a collector of many other objects, among which were these sorts of prints and photographs. As one looks at them it will be seen that they are all of sailing ships and sea battles or of older naval vessels. This, of course, is a direct reflection of the President’s love of sailing and the sea.

FDR and SAILING

FDR was very taken with sailing and the sea from a very young age, - perhaps because of stories of the seafaring Delanos which he heard from his mother and grandfather. This picture of FDR on the deck of his father's yacht (Figure 6a) was taken at Campobello when he was six years old and already he looks quite comfortable there. The name of that yacht was the Half Moon – probably as appropriate a name for a ship as there ever was since it was originally the name of the ship with which Hendrik Hudson explored the river that later bore his name and on whose banks the Roosevelts built Springwood, their home at Hyde Park. The second picture (Figure 6b) was taken ten years later in 1898 - again on the Half Moon at Campobello, but with a 16 year old FDR at the helm.

That same year FDR acquired his own yacht, which he named the New Moon, and which he continued to use throughout his years at Harvard University.



Figure 6a – AT SIX

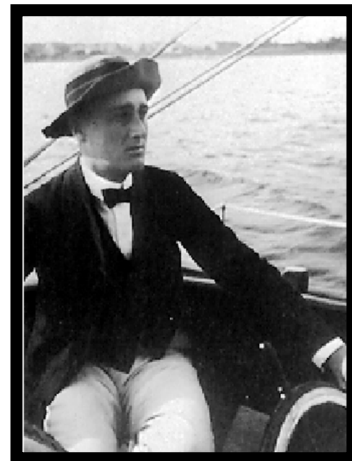


Figure 6b – AT SIXTEEN

SAILING AT CAMPOBELLO

Later, when serving as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the administration of Woodrow Wilson, his love of the sea was emphasized by the strong attachment to the Navy which he formed at that time and which he retained throughout the rest of his life. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy he had use of two ships, the Dolphin and the Sylph, each of which in turn had earlier served as the presidential yachts for Presidents Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison and William McKinley.

At this time he was a rising star in the Democratic Party. He had, after all, been chosen for the position of Assistant Secretary because of his leadership actions as a fighter in the New York legislature against the domination of the Tammany Hall machine and for the support he had given Wilson in the fiercely contested battle in 1912 for nomination as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate. We should also remember that he was chosen to be the Vice - Presidential candidate in the 1920 elections.

One year later, in 1921, he was struck by polio (infantile paralysis as it was then called).

Because of the President's disability, getting him from the saloon to the fantail on the boat deck presented a real problem for the naval architects when designing the conversion of the Electra into the Potomac. Their solution, using the aft smokestack as a housing for a small elevator was very ingenious. When we open the door now, we see a gated, electric elevator, as required by current regulations. (Normally, for dockside tours, the elevator door in the saloon is locked – it can be viewed when on the boat deck.) When President Roosevelt was using it, it was more like a dumbwaiter; that is, a platform operated by means of ropes and pulleys. Remember that he was very strong in the upper body and he could probably operate it more easily than many of us. Being able to operate the elevator without assistance was important to President Roosevelt's desire to be as independent as possible. That same need for independence is why he had an automobile specially fitted with levers on the steering post to serve as brake, clutch and accelerator so that he could drive himself around Hyde Park or the Washington, D.C. countryside.

Before going on into the President's cabin, you may want to emphasize the fact that much of what the visitor will see is restoration. Part of the reason that it took 14 years between the acquisition of the Potomac after its sinking in 1981 and its opening to the public in 1995 was the dedication to doing the restoration in a historically accurate way. This meant spending the time and effort necessary to acquire the plans, photographs and documents which would assure accuracy, as well as finding the right people to do the job. Placed throughout the Potomac now are historic photographs which enable comparisons to be made with the restored Potomac.

The President's Cabin

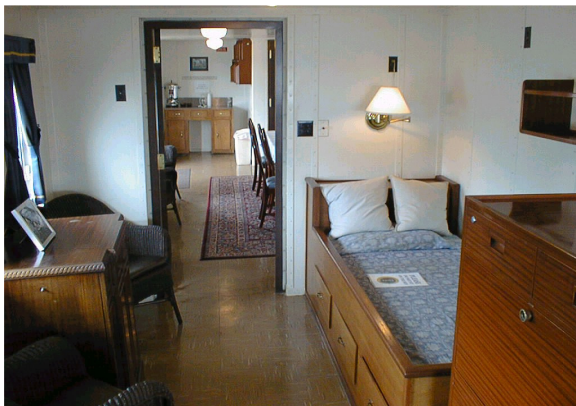


Figure 7a – View of the President's Cabin,
Looking Foreward



Figure 7b – View of the President's Cabin,
Looking Aft

Because the cabin is quite small and narrow, you may want to have a large group simply walk through - reminding them to look into the head to see the bathtub mentioned in the video - while reserving any comments until everyone is in the fantail.

Perhaps the single most usually expressed comment of visitors to the Potomac occurs when they see the President's cabin and react to its simplicity. Almost universally, whatever they may have conjured up in their mind's eye when hearing the term "presidential cabin", they expected to see something bigger, grander or more elegant.

Anyone who has visited the Roosevelt home in Hyde Park, or, indeed, Theodore Roosevelt's Oyster Bay home will have noticed that while these are large homes, on estates, there is also a simplicity to them. Although both of the Roosevelt branches were part of "society", their family's roots went back to before the Revolutionary War; and their sense of place and comfort meant that they did not need to indulge in ostentatious display.

But there was, of course, another reason which argued for simplicity. The Potomac was commissioned in March, 1936 when the country was still in the midst of the "Great Depression". It would have been impolitic, to say the least, to spend large sums of money furnishing a yacht for the president.

The question of spending for presidential yachts has arisen several times in our history. So, for example, Presidents Hoover, Eisenhower and Carter, early in each of their respective administrations decided that, for reasons of economy, they would not continue to have a presidential yacht. [See Appendix B for material on presidential yachts.]

The President's Bathtub



Figure 8 – President's Bathtub

The stainless steel bathtub was designed by the President. He would sit on the side and “sponge bathe” himself. Again, because of the strength in his upper body, the President could raise himself by pressing down on the arms of his wheelchair and then swinging his body to the tub. Of course, stewards were available to provide such assistance as might be needed.

While in this cabin, note Fala’s accommodations. Fala was given to President Roosevelt in November, 1940 and accompanied him nearly everywhere. [See Appendix C for Fala material.]

The Fantail



Figure 9 – View of the Fantail

Entering the fantail, we come to one of President Roosevelt’s favorite places on the ship. For the President, the social interchange occurring when meeting, talking, getting reports, having a cocktail, exchanging stories or jokes etc. was a very important part of his life. For President Roosevelt, perhaps more than for any other president, there was a reliance on such personal, face- to - face, contacts to obtain the information he needed. His wife Eleanor was particularly important to him in this regard, serving as his eyes and legs and reporting back to him about the effects of a program; or, perhaps, what conditions were like in the places she had traveled through. This was something she had learned to do for him when he was governor of New York, and which was carried on to the White House.

Also important to him, and also started when he was governor and brought over to his presidency, was the formal cocktail hour. One can easily visualize him in the fantail of the Potomac acting as host and enjoying his martini.

A striking feature of the fantail is the curving settee. In the center it is four feet deep. The President would often sit here in the center, using it as a chaise lounge. The sense of touching history easily comes to the fore here, as visitors sit on the settee or

chairs and imagine themselves guests of the President, cruising down the Potomac River. As one visitor (someone herself confined to a wheelchair who we helped onto the settee) put it: "I want to put my bottom where the President put his."

Just above the settee are glass windshields. When the Potomac was used as the presidential yacht these would have been made of bullet - proof glass.

The fantail also is an area where you may want to fill out the history of the Potomac. The video has given the visitor a good deal of the ship's history. But the story of the Potomac during the years after the President's death up until it was seized is passed over rather quickly.

Because of the extensive changes which had been made to the Electra in converting her into the Potomac, she had become top-heavy. At times, in the open sea, she would roll to an angle of forty-eight degrees, causing many a guest to turn green and head for the rail. The President, incidentally, being the sailor that he was, would not be affected. Shortly after the President's death the Navy, declaring the Potomac to be unseaworthy, asked that the Nourmahal, the former pleasure craft of Vincent Astor, be used by President Truman as the presidential yacht. In the event, President Truman turned down the Nourmahal as being "a larger and more commodious vessel than was required for presidential use." In September of 1945, the Williamsburg was accepted for service as the next presidential yacht.

The Potomac itself was decommissioned and returned to the Coast Guard in November 1945. After about six months, and by now stripped of most of her presidential fittings, she was transferred to Maryland to be used as a research vessel - or, occasionally, as the governor's yacht. Then, in 1960, she was sold to an individual. Her use? - ferrying passengers between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

By 1962, having become a pretty shabby looking ship, she was sold to a company which took her through the Panama Canal and on to Southern California, with the idea of restoring her and making her into an attraction at the Seattle World's Fair. Although the Potomac never did get to Seattle because the whole operation turned out to be much more difficult and expensive than originally thought, it was how she got to the West Coast. She was now in Southern California, rotting away.

In January 1964, Elvis Presley acquired her with the specific purpose of preventing her from being sold as junk. He kept her only briefly after he acquired her; and then, after first trying to donate the ship to several other charities, finally donated her to Saint Jude's Hospital.

Saint Jude's also had the Potomac for only a short time. She was auctioned off again in March to a consortium of individuals, one of whom tried, unsuccessfully, to make the Potomac into a floating disco. Part of this conversion of the Potomac into a disco involved putting concrete down on the boat deck fantail.

After many financial and legal problems, clear title passed to Carton Taylor in 1970; then, in 1971, he leased the Potomac to Aubrey Phillips, a bail bondsman and fisherman, ostensibly to be restored as a museum. Moved from one Southern California berth to another, the Potomac suffered from neglect and vandalism becoming little more than a rusty hulk badly in need of an overhaul. Suffice it to say that this Aubrey Phillips was one of those arrested when the Potomac was seized in connection with drug running on September 11, 1980. Ironically, the ship was draped with a banner reading "Crippled Children's Society of America".

Our tour continues by going below using the ladder on the starboard side to see the guest cabins.

The Guest Cabins



Figure 10 – One of the Guest Cabins; a double

Originally the Potomac had four guest cabins. However, in order to meet current regulations, one of the cabins had to be removed and the space used to put in the ladder you have just come down. The cabin which was removed was a single; another single and two doubles remain. Thus there were accommodations for only 6 guests – emphasizing again that the Potomac was used for rest and relaxation and to get away from large numbers of people. Of course, a president can never get away completely and no cruise was ever purely for relaxation or purely for work.



Figure 11 – The Bath in Cabin B

Visitors are free to enter and look around any or all of the cabins. While not huge, and certainly not elegant, they are actually pretty nice. Cabin B, a double, has a bath (Figure 11); the other cabins have showers.

One question frequently comes up when visitors are in this area - it can also come up when in the President's cabin - and has to do with the fact that there is only a single bed in the President's cabin. The question can be phrased in various ways. One of the forms it takes is whether Eleanor Roosevelt ever was on a cruise. While she was on a few day cruises, boarded to receive important guests - such as King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1939 - and once celebrated her birthday with a party on board the ship, to all intents and purposes she did not go on overnight cruises. She was on an overnight cruise on the Potomac River, May 7 and 8, 1939, however; and she did use the Potomac as an overnight accommodation on July 4, 1936 while it sailed overnight from Richmond, Virginia to Jamestown.

Eleanor Roosevelt was never comfortable on the sea. This can be traced back, at least in part, to the fact that when she was very young, about two and a half, she had a terrible experience at sea. She was aboard the Britannic, going to Europe with her family, and just a few days out from New York, when the ship was rammed in a fog. The collision caused panic on board the Britannic; she had to be dropped over the side to her father who was standing in the lifeboat below.

Sometimes these questions are in a form which asks (whether explicitly or implicitly) about the personal relationship of Eleanor and Franklin. Their relationship was a complex one over the many years of their marriage. But we do know that it changed significantly in 1918 when Eleanor found out that he was having an affair with Lucy Mercer, her social secretary.

It's interesting to know how she found out about it. By 1918 we were in the First World War, and Franklin, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was overseas on an inspection trip. He became ill and returned home while still sick. She, in unpacking his bags, came across a packet of love letters. Eleanor was very deeply hurt and offered Franklin a divorce, which he turned down. It would, of course, have meant the end of his political career. There were also other reasons why the affair ended: Lucy Mercer was Catholic while he was Episcopalian; also, his mother told him that he would be disinherited.

Certainly in the years after they continued to love and respect one another, to work together and to support each other - but on a deeper, personal level things had changed.

Lucy Mercer subsequently got married and lived her own life. But years later, after her husband had died, she and Franklin reestablished contact unbeknownst to Eleanor. Indeed, she, as Eleanor was not, was in Warm Springs with the President in April 1945 when he died - he was having his portrait done by an artist friend of hers.

Often the area around the guest cabins is where visitors will ask about "famous people" who have been on the ship. Before mentioning those who have been on board, you may want to mention someone who was not: Winston Churchill. Although he was a good friend of the President, a visitor to the White House and was a visitor on board President Truman's presidential yacht, the Williamsburg, he was never on the Potomac.

The visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth occurred on June 9, 1939. It was part of an extended visit to Canada and the United States to help cement relationships. Their time on board was actually quite short. After a 21-gun salute and being piped on board, the King and Queen went to the fantail where they were greeted by President and Mrs. Roosevelt. The ship then sailed down the Potomac River to

Mount Vernon. After seeing Washington's home and Arlington they returned to the White House by car.

Other royalty that were guests on the Potomac included Prince Karl of Sweden, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands and Crown Princess Martha of Norway.

Princess Martha was a particular favorite of the President. After Norway was overrun by Germany, she and her family escaped to England. Her husband remained in England to head the Norwegian government in exile while Princess Martha and her children came to the United States. She was young, attractive and an excellent conversationalist - just the sort of person the President enjoyed having around him. She settled in a house not too far outside of Washington where the President would drive out to visit her from time to time. Princess Martha died in 1954.

The next stop on our tour will be the fantail of the boat deck. So, lets go up the ladder to the saloon and then just continue on up topside.

The Boat Deck Fantail



Figure 12 – Boat Deck Fantail; view from the Elevator

The fantail of the boat deck is the largest open area on the ship. It's a marvelous place to enjoy the weather on a fine day and to observe and talk about the activities going on in the estuary.

The deck on which you are standing represents one of the major changes that was made to convert the Electra into the Potomac. That is, the Electra did not have the boat deck that we now see. You should take a moment or two, when in the visitor center, to look at the model which shows the Electra before its conversion as well as the comparable model of the Potomac.

While on the fantail there is a good opportunity to mention subjects not otherwise covered. For example: Since the Potomac did not become the President's yacht until the spring of 1936 there is a natural question about what he used in the time between taking office in March 1933 and the commissioning of the Potomac. The presidential yacht used before the Potomac was the Sequoia. Like the Potomac, the Sequoia started out as something other than a presidential yacht. Originally a Department of Commerce inspection ship, she was used by President Hoover for two fishing trips during the very last months of his administration. Then, in March 1933 she was commissioned a naval vessel to serve as President Roosevelt's yacht.

When it was announced in November 1935 that the President was to have another yacht instead of the Sequoia, three reasons were given for the change. The Sequoia had a wooden hull, which presented a fire hazard. There was always concern for the safety of the President and there was an understandable insistence on its being replaced. The Potomac has a steel hull.

The second reason for replacing the Sequoia was that it had gasoline engines. The Potomac, with its Diesel engines, would be safer and more fuel-efficient. The third reason offered was that because of its larger size, the Potomac would have room for the Secret Service men. [The Potomac is 165 feet long; the Sequoia was about 100 feet] When the President was using the Sequoia, the Secret Service men (together with the press) would follow in another ship, the Cuyahoga.

Although not stated, there was a further reason for replacing the Sequoia. When President Roosevelt was on the Sequoia, he had to be carried from deck to deck. Having the elevator on the Potomac allowed him to be much more independent. President Roosevelt got the idea for an on-board elevator from his friend Vincent Astor's yacht, the Nourmahal.

Perhaps the boat deck fantail is as good a place as any to talk about the trips and cruises made by the Potomac. Important members of Congress and cabinet officers were among those who would have been guests of the President. The President could also use a cruise as an opportunity of talking with someone who was about to be appointed to a crucial position in a private and relaxed atmosphere.

By far, the most common cruise was the relatively short weekend cruise. Whenever his schedule would permit it, President Roosevelt would try to get away for the weekend. The cruise would generally start early Saturday afternoon, although it would sometimes start on Friday. The ship would sail down the Potomac River into Chesapeake Bay until a small cove was found which promised good fishing. The ship would anchor and the fishing boats lowered over the side. Over the years several methods were used for getting the President into his fishing boat. One way was simply to have him in the boat before it was hoisted out and lowered. Then there were some occasions when he was hoisted over the side in a boatswain's chair. This wasn't a really great method since any roll of the ship might drop him hard in the boat and then jerk him back in the air on the return roll before he could be released. The third method was to rig the ship's gangway ladder and have the President's boat brought alongside. Then, after the President was wheeled to the gangway, two sailors would form a fireman's carry by locking their hands; he would put his arms around their shoulders and they would pick him up and walk down the gangway to the boat. These cruises would end with the return to Washington on Sunday evening or Monday morning.

In addition to these short weekend cruises there were the longer fishing trips. The first fishing trip the President made on the Potomac was to the Bahamas and began at the end of March 1936, right after the commissioning of the Potomac. Incidentally, this is the trip that is shown in the video. There is also a picture of the President entertaining the Governor of the Bahamas at a luncheon on board the Potomac in the visitor center. For this trip the President took a train down from Washington to Florida; boarded the destroyer Monaghan at Fort Lauderdale; and then, on the third day out transferred to the Potomac at sea. On longer cruises, the President often did not board (or return from) his ship at the Washington Navy Yard, where the Potomac was based.

One of the most notable trips took place in August of 1941, when President Roosevelt boarded the Potomac for a secret meeting with Winston Churchill. When the Potomac sailed out of the harbor of New London on August 3rd, elaborate precautions had been taken to have it appear that this was merely another fishing trip. In fact, the President would shortly transfer to the cruiser Augusta at Martha's Vineyard, to be taken to Newfoundland, where, on August 9th, he would begin a series of meetings with the Prime Minister. Today, our mental image of the meetings tends to be dominated by the scene of the joint religious service held Sunday morning, August 10th, on the quarter-deck of the British battleship, the Prince of Wales. Most of his meetings with Winston Churchill actually took place on board the Augusta because of the difficulty of transferring the President to the Prince of Wales.

It was at these meetings, the first between them as heads of their respective governments, that what came to be called the Atlantic Charter was drawn up. Agreement to its principles by the countries allied in the war against the Axis powers later became the basis for the creation of the United Nations. Interestingly, there has never been an actual document, a "Charter" signed by the President and the Prime Minister that could be seen or exhibited. What does exist is the text of the official statement containing their joint declaration that was given to the media.

One of the ways used to conceal the fact that the President was participating in the secret meeting was to have the Potomac continue to cruise the coastal waters with the chief of the White House Secret Service detail sitting on the fantail dressed in typical Roosevelt sea - faring clothes, such as the naval cloak which had been given to him by Eleanor and his slouch hat. There were many people who would swear that the President had waved to them while holding his cigarette holder at the well - known 45- degree angle.

At the time that the Potomac sailed with the President for the meeting with Winston Churchill it was equipped with an anti-aircraft gun located in the fantail area. Indeed, the extra weight of this gun added to the weight of the boat deck fantail made the ship so top heavy that the Navy decided to declare the Potomac "unseaworthy" after the President's death. The restored ship does not have any armaments.

[For more details on the Atlantic Conference see my "Synchrony". It presents a day by day simultaneous look at the participants and events. It also discusses the development of the final joint declaration.]

[For more details about President Roosevelt's cruising see my "Cruising With The President". It is an annotated chronology of FDR's use of the Potomac from its inaugural cruise in March 1936 through the end of 1941. In addition to giving dates,

itineraries and guest lists it also includes notes about people and events so that the reader can have a background frame of reference for the cruises.]

[For more information on the general subject of presidential yachts, see Appendix B.]

The Boat Deck



Chris Craft Boat
--- Originally, there were 2 Chris Crafts on the boat deck This one shown on the Starboard (right) side and a second one on the Port (left) side. ---

Figure 13 – Boat Deck; view from the Fantail

Looking forward from the fantail (Figure 13.) you see the elevator that was built into the aft smoke stack. For those guests on the Potomac who were on the fantail, relaxing and enjoying themselves and who were not particularly aware of the elevator, seeing the President suddenly appearing from a smoke stack could have been quite unnerving. For dockside tours, the elevator is normally kept at the boat deck level with the door open, as shown above. If you look inside you will see that the elevator is not very large. It's about three feet by four - just large enough for the wheelchair to fit in.

As you move forward on the boat deck you see two motorboats. The two boats that were here when the Potomac was the presidential yacht were 1930's Chris Craft motorboats. The original boats were long since gone when Oakland acquired the Potomac; the boats you see now were the gift of Alan Firth. They are kept covered now because exposure to the elements have taken their toll; they have been repaired and restored several times.

Figure 14 – Whaleboat

Figure 15 – Life Raft

Just forward of the starboard side motorboat is the whaleboat (Figure 14); on the port side is a small utility boat. Before entering the Pilot House, note the two cylindrical containers on either side of the ship (Figure 15). These are automatically inflatable life rafts and hold 50 people each. Their presence reflects the fact that the Potomac is a fully functioning ship and meets all requirements.



The Pilot House



Figure 16 – General View of the Pilot House

Most of what the visitor has seen up to this point has been part of the restoration. Most of what is original will be seen in the Pilot House. (Figure 16.) These original parts include the teak doors, the binnacle (the compass housing) together with the iron balls on either side which function to neutralize magnetic interference [closeup view in Figure 17], the steering stand (but not the steering wheel, which was somewhat larger than the one you see now because there was a mechanical connection then, while there is a hydraulic connection now) and the speaker tube. Because the ship is fully functional the visitor also sees a lot of modern navigational equipment here in the Pilot House.

This is a good place to mention the various cruises out onto the Bay which the Potomac takes each month. (Figure 18.) You may also wish to mention that participants on our cruises get a chance to go into the Pilot House while the ship is underway and that they may even get the opportunity to steer her.



Figure 17 – The Binnacle



Figure 18 – Cruising; Bay Chart

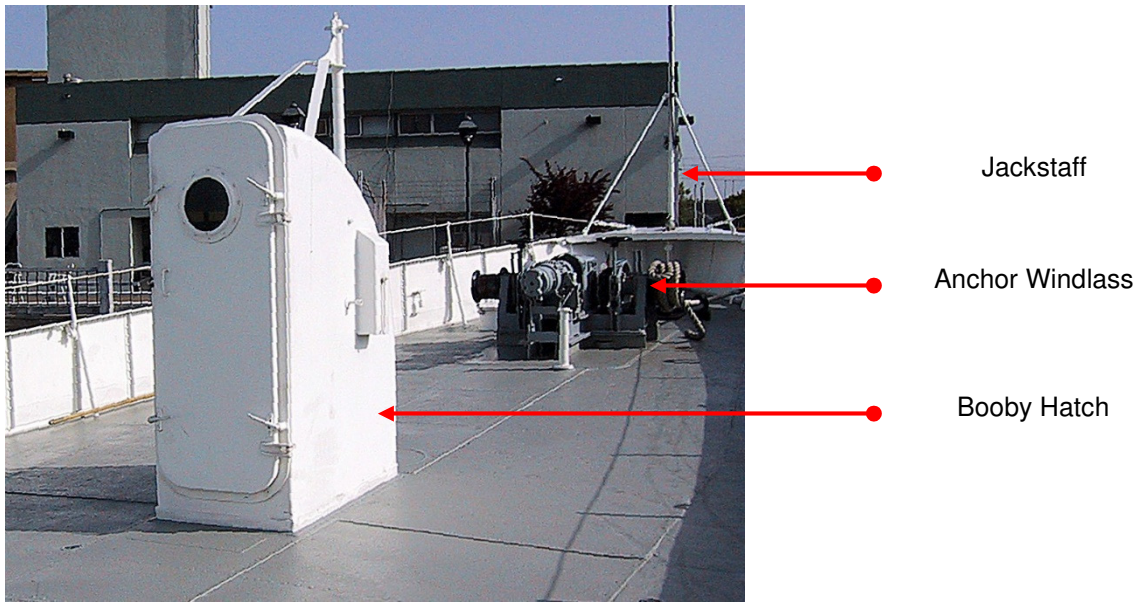


Figure 19 – View from the Bridge; looking toward the bow

Go out on the bridge and look toward the bow. (Figure 19.) You will see the booby hatch, the anchor windlass and the jackstaff. The booby hatch provides access to the crew’s quarters. Also, as you look out today, you will not see the .50 caliber machine gun mount which, when the ship was serving as the presidential yacht, used to be between the booby hatch and the anchor windlass. The gun itself was stored; it was mounted only when the President was on the Potomac. As mentioned earlier, the restored ship does not have any armaments.

Our tour returns to the main deck using the ladder on the starboard side. As we come down, we turn into the passageway to see the Radio Room and the Engine Room.

The Radio Room and The Engine Room



Figure 20 – The Radio Room

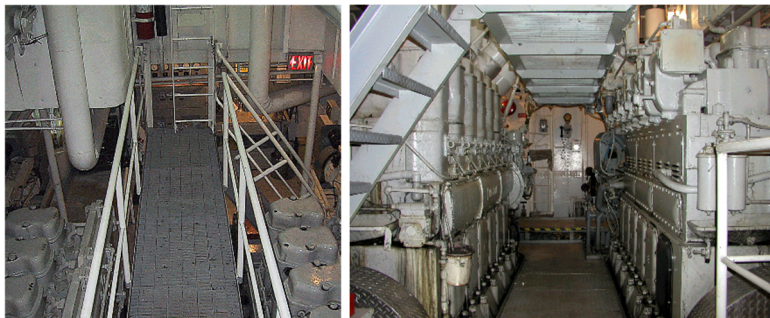


Figure 21 – The Engine Room; two views

The small radio room (Figure 20) has relatively little more than the radio, a typewriter and a telegraph key - they are from the 1940’s. When at sea, the President’s means of communication would be limited to an occasional mail pouch and the radio.

The mail, after having arrived by seaplane, was transferred to a small boat to be carried aboard.

On March 29, 1941 the radio facilities of the Potomac were used by President Roosevelt to speak to the American people. It is sometimes hard to remember now in our media dominated era that the idea that the primary target audience for a speech would be the radio audience - that is, the people at large - came about only with President Roosevelt through what came to be called "fireside chats".

The term "fireside chat" is not some officially defined category of speeches; and there is no official number or list of them. So different people have formed different lists. It is generally agreed that the speech on the bank crisis he made on March 12, 1933 soon after he took office was the first. The term itself was first applied by an executive of CBS in connection with the speech of May 7, 1933 outlining the New Deal program. There were about 27 to 30 of President Roosevelt's speeches that have been called "fireside chats"; they averaged about a half-hour in length and were most often given on a Sunday evening between 9 and 11 Eastern Standard Time.

The President was on a fishing trip when he made the radio address from the Potomac. She had pulled into the harbor at Fort Lauderdale, Florida early in the day to allow him time to work on his speech. The next morning he left by train to return to Washington. The Jackson Day dinners being held around the country provided the occasion for the speech. In those years the Democratic Party would hold these annual Jackson Day gatherings of the Party faithful - as the Republicans did for their Lincoln Day affairs - to raise campaign funds.

The real purpose of the speech was to further move the country to a recognition of the threat that Germany and the Axis powers posed to the United States if Great Britain, which was standing alone, succumbed. There was still a significant isolationist feeling in the country, although the greater part had already come together in support of the President, as evidenced by the fact that Wendell Wilkie, the Republican candidate for president in the 1940 election, was giving President Roosevelt bipartisan support and the fact that Congress had passed the Lend Lease Bill earlier in the month.

Perhaps of special interest to Potomac docents are the second and third paragraphs of the speech, where the President tells the nation why he goes on these cruises and how the time on board is spent.

Just opposite the radio room is the engine room.

Because of reasons of safety, visitors are not permitted to enter the engine room (Figure 21) when the Potomac is on a cruise. Even when giving a dockside tour the engine room is normally off-limits, although some discretion is allowed. The twin independent, reversing 6 cylinder Diesel engines can readily be seen from the entryway. They are not the Potomac's original engines; rather, they are from a World War II tug and are somewhat less powerful than the original ones. The ship generally makes about ten to twelve knots. (Since a nautical mile is about 15% longer than a statute mile, that translates to about eleven and a half to fourteen miles per hour.)

Although the smell of the fuel can be noticeable in the engine room and it can be hot and noisy when underway, the Potomac's engine room is among the cleanest and best maintained anywhere.

A couple of years ago we had some problems with a piston in one of the cylinders. It was decided to put the old piston head in the radio room where visitors could see it and get some appreciation of their size.



Figure 22 –
CO₂ System

On the port side of the passageway are several red cylinders (Figure 22). These contain carbon dioxide and are part of the fire suppression system for the engine room.

Continuing to the port side and then going forward we will go below using the midships passageway's portside ladder to enter the crew's quarters.

Quarters For The Ship's Personnel

As one enters the compartment it becomes obvious that it served multiple purposes for the enlisted crewmembers. There are the bunks for sleeping, a pantry, the table for the crew's mess and, in the far corner, the combined office and stateroom. This latter was where John Lynch, the crewmember you saw in the video, had his bailiwick. Food for the crew was cooked in the crew's galley located on the main deck on the port side in a position exactly comparable to the Presidential galley you saw earlier on our tour.

According to Jack Lynch, the crew consisted of 12 stewards, 16 seamen and 26 petty officers. If you count the number of bunks in the crew's compartments and do the division you'll see that the arithmetic doesn't work out. The answer, at least in part, is that the bunks were - in naval parlance - "hot bunks"; that is, more than one individual would use them.

SERVING ON THE POTOMAC

It was an honor to be chosen to serve on the Potomac and it was probably as good duty as one could get. We may be reasonably sure that requisitions from the Potomac were quickly and completely filled. It should be remembered that the Potomac was not used seven days a week, week - in and week - out and many of the crew had families and quarters on shore.

Although President Roosevelt never went forward of the midships passageway and never went below to the berth deck, crewmembers could have occasional contact with him. At such times there would be pleasant and casual conversation – about the fishing, about the weather, about passing ships and boats, etc.

The bunks (Figure 23) may, perhaps, not look too comfortable. But remember that mattresses were used and they certainly were a great deal better than hammocks. One of the footlockers (Figure 24) is kept open to

remind everyone that the Navy told you exactly how to fold and where to keep your gear. Don't forget to look at the diagram inside the footlocker!



Figure 23 - Bunks



Figure 24 - Footlocker

The compartment forward of where we now are (Figure 25) was used by the twelve crewmembers who were stewards, all of whom were Filipino. It should be remembered that prior to President Truman's administration the armed forces were not integrated and the Navy was a rigidly segregated organization. Access to this forward cabin is also possible through the booby hatch. Because the ladder in this compartment is very steep, visitors are not allowed to use it. It is, in fact, the steepest ladder on the ship. As one goes aft the Potomac's ladders become more and more gentle – that is, as one goes from the "business" part of the ship to the presidential and guest areas.



Figure 25 – Crew's Quarters; Forward Compartment



Figure 26 -
Now: Women's Restroom
Then: Crew's Shower



Figure 27 -
Watertight Door

You may have noticed the women's restroom (Figure 26) as you started to go below. Its presence reflects the fact that the Potomac goes out on cruises and needs both a men's and women's restroom. The men's room was the head for the crew of Potomac when she was the presidential yacht. However, while there were women in the Navy then, they would never have served aboard a ship. Today's women's restroom used to be the showers for crew.

Just aft of the crew's quarters are the cabins for the ship's officers, the next stop of our tour. But before we do, note the two watertight doors (Figure 27): one between the two compartments for the enlisted men; one between the officer's cabins and the enlisted men's quarters. These doors, when closed, form part of transverse bulkheads that divide the ship into separate, isolatable areas. These two watertight doors must be completely closed before leaving the ship.

Quarters For The Ship's Officers

Two of the cabins, that for the ship's Chief Executive Officer and that for the ship's Engineering Officer are identified by the small plaques above their respective entrances. Like much else on the ship, they are compact but comfortable. The third cabin - the double cabin - presents something of a question as to its use. We used to have plaques indicating that this cabin was for the Secret Service, but they have since been removed. As mentioned earlier, one of the stated reasons for replacing the Sequoia was that there would be room on board the Potomac for the Secret Service men. There are various pieces of evidence that indicate that, in fact, they were on board. On the other hand, Jack Lynch indicates that the Secret Service (together with the press) followed in the Cuyahoga, as was the practice when the President was using the Sequoia. So the Potomac has its little mystery. Perhaps different practices obtained at different times depending on the length and nature of the cruise; perhaps the different practices were used together; or perhaps the explanation is something else entirely.

Ascending the ladder, we are at the last stop of the tour - the Commanding Officers cabin. (Figure 28.)



Figure 28 –Commanding Officer's Cabin; two views

Situated right under the Pilot House, it afforded the skipper of the ship reasonably commodious, although still simple, accommodations. Noteworthy is the absence of a telephone and other communications devices that one might expect to see today - but there was always a sailor to run with a message.

Responsibility for a presidential yacht rested with a president's Naval Aide, generally a Captain. The job of the Naval Aide is undefined, except for attending the president at official functions and having technical command of the presidential yacht. Normally, a Lieutenant Commander would be the actual skipper. When the Naval Aide was on board, he would have use of one of the guest cabins.



Figure 29 – Ship's Bell

If you had been royalty or a head of state, you would have been piped on board. However, you will have to be consoled by knowing that you went on board on the starboard side - the side reserved for the ship's captain. Or so it was in days of yore.

Appendix A

An F D R Chronology

1882	Born at Hyde Park, New York January 30th
1896	Enters Groton
1900 - 1903	Harvard University; A.B. degree June 24 th
1904	Enters Columbia Law School
1905	Marries (Anna) Eleanor Roosevelt in New York, March 17 th
1907	Admitted to New York Bar
1910	Elected to New York State Senate
1912	Reelected to New York State Senate
1913 - 1920	Assistant Secretary of the Navy
1914	Defeated in Democratic Party primary for U.S. Senate nomination
1918	European Inspection Trip, July - September
1920	Runs as Democratic Party nominee for vice -President on ticket with Cox; defeated by Harding, Coolidge
1921	Stricken with polio at Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada in August
1924	Makes nominating speech for Al Smith at Democratic Party Convention, which nominates Davis; Davis defeated by Coolidge
1927	Founds the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation
1928	Again nominates Al Smith; convention accepts Smith; Smith defeated by Hoover
	Runs for, and is elected, Governor of New York
1930	Reelected Governor of New York
1932	Elected as 32 nd President
1933 - 1936	First term; domestic issues dominated; many new agencies formed to lead country out of the "Great Depression"
1936	Overwhelmingly reelected
1937 - 1940	Second term; domestic issues continue to dominate, but world affairs become increasingly important; World War II starts in September 1939
1940	Runs for unprecedented third term and is reelected
1941 - 1944	Third term; bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan brings United States into the war; country unites behind President to work towards bringing war to successful conclusion
1944	Runs for fourth term and is reelected
1945	Dies at Warm Springs, Georgia April 12

Appendix B

USS Potomac and Other Presidential Yachts

When the Coast Guard cutter *Electra* was refitted and transferred to the Navy for President Roosevelt's use as the *Potomac* in the spring of 1936, it joined a very small list of vessels that have served as presidential yachts. A president, as head of state and as commander in chief of our armed forces, has always had the use of any ship of the U.S. Navy. Normally such use would be in connection with official duties, although use for rest and relaxation was not excluded. It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, that specific naval vessels began to be used by presidents as a way to get brief escapes from the daily routine of the presidency.

The first such cruise by a president occurred on November 9, 1880 when President Rutherford B. Hayes, with members of his cabinet, went aboard the *Despatch* for a trip on the Potomac River. Originally the steamer *America*, she was purchased and commissioned by the Navy in November 1873; after being commissioned, she was assigned to dispatch duty because of her speed (12.6 knots, maximum).

For most of the eleven years from 1880 through 1891 - that is, through the administrations of Presidents Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland and Harrison - the *Despatch* operated on the Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay and the coastal waters of the Atlantic from Virginia to Maine. During these years she was often used by the president, cabinet members, members of Congress and other government officials. Wrecked in a gale off the coast of Virginia on October 10, 1891, she was sold for salvage on November 12, 1891.

A commissioned ship of the U.S. Navy would not be given the specific role of presidential yacht until 1898, when the Navy assigned the *Sylph* to the Washington Navy Yard. In the meantime, the *Dolphin* - an unarmored cruiser commissioned on December 8, 1885 and which had been built as the first of what was then called the "New Navy" - was used from time to time by Presidents Cleveland, Harrison and McKinley, as well as by various other dignitaries and notables. Her period of service in the Navy was a long and illustrious one; she was decommissioned on December 8, 1921.

President McKinley took only a few cruises during his term in office. Once the *Sylph* - which had been commissioned on August 18, 1898 - became available, he used her as the presidential yacht. Although President Theodore Roosevelt took over another vessel as his presidential yacht, both the *Dolphin* and the *Sylph* continued to be used by the Navy. Thus, for example, FDR - when he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy in President Wilson's administration - used both the *Dolphin* and the *Sylph* on various occasions.

The next ship to be taken over and converted into a presidential yacht was the *Mayflower*. Built as a private yacht in Scotland in 1896, she was bought by the U.S. government in 1898 for use in the Spanish-American War as a dispatch boat. The *Mayflower* subsequently became the flagship of the Caribbean squadron and was used

as Admiral Dewey's flagship during a review of the fleet in 1905. It was on this occasion that Theodore Roosevelt saw her and decided to make it his presidential yacht.

The *Mayflower* had a long and industrious career for 24 years, serving 5 Presidents - Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding and Coolidge. It was on board the *Mayflower* when she was at Oyster Bay (T R's home on Long Island, New York) that the President introduced the representatives of Japan and Russia to each other to begin the conferences that later, at Portsmouth N H, led to the treaty that ended the Russo - Japanese War. Interestingly, it was the *Dolphin* that carried the Japanese delegation to Portsmouth. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to President Roosevelt for his role in ending the war.

Although America had its millionaires in the 19th century, economy and Jeffersonian simplicity was taken to be a virtue in the White House until the turn of the century. The acquisition of the *Mayflower* represented this change in attitude. As a presidential yacht, she was the last word in beauty and comfort with an elegantly appointed dining saloon and a well-selected library; cabins for the President, his wife, and about a dozen guests; a reception room and a smoking room. For President Taft, the President's suite was modified to install an oversized marble bathtub. By the time of President Harding the predominant color of the dining saloon was "Mrs. Harding blue", a color emphasized by a number of blue vases and candlesticks added by Mrs. Coolidge.

In 1914, during Wilson's term, the *Mayflower's* service as a presidential yacht was briefly interrupted while she served as a patrol boat.

It was said of President Coolidge that it often seemed that Calvin Coolidge's main pleasure in life was the privilege of taking weekend cruises on the *Mayflower*. Although President Coolidge distrusted the sea, and on one famous occasion was photographed when he was seasick, the President used and enjoyed the yacht.

One of the very first acts of President Hoover in 1929 was to give up use of the *Mayflower* for reasons of economy. During the Navy Department alterations, which were to turn her into a survey vessel, an intense fire broke out. So much water was pumped into her that she sank at the dock. Sold in 1931 as junk, raised and refitted, she would have a surprising end to her career.

The person restoring the *Mayflower* to her original splendor was a wealthy financier. His fortunes turned, however, and he had to sell the yacht - just before fleeing the country to escape prosecution and irate investors. In succeeding years she had many owners with many different ideas for using her. Among these ideas were: using her in South American coastal trade, doing a historical restoration, using her as a floating dance salon - even selling her as scrap to the Japanese government. Legal difficulties, money shortages and poor business conditions frustrated each of these ideas in turn as she languished in Atlantic ports.

Then, with the start of World War II, she was bought by the War Shipping Administration in July 1942 and renamed the *Butte*; transferred to the Coast Guard in July 1943 she was recommissioned the *Mayflower* on October 19th and assigned patrol and escort duty along the Atlantic coast. Decommissioned in July 1946, she was sold in January 1947 to be used for seal hunting in the North Atlantic; however she was damaged by fire early in March. Resold early in 1948, she now sailed under Panamanian papers with a new name: the *Malla*. Ostensibly to be used in coastal

Mediterranean trade, she actually sailed secretly to Haifa carrying Jewish refugees from the ill-fated *Exodus*.

President Hoover did not enjoy sailing. At such times as he did go on a cruise, he would either use available naval vessels or be the guest on yachts of friends. In 1932, at the end of his term as president, he took two fishing cruises. The first, in August, was on the Potomac River; the second, in December, was along the Florida coast. On both of these occasions he used a Department of Commerce inspection ship - the *Sequoia*.

When FDR became president it was decided that the *Sequoia* would become his presidential yacht. Accordingly, she was commissioned as a naval vessel on March 25, 1933 and thus becoming next in the line of presidential yachts. With a length of about 100 feet, the *Sequoia* was the smallest of the presidential yachts; the *Sylph* was 124 feet, the *Potomac* 165 feet the *Despatch* 174 feet, the *Dolphin* 257 feet, and the *Mayflower* an imposing 273 feet.

While the *Sequoia* had a fairly good size cabin and bath on the main deck, there were two very small double cabins and three tiny single cabins on the deck below. The dining saloon could sit eight and there was a comfortable lounging deck aft. The small size and simple accommodations suited the President, particularly since he did not want a luxury yacht during the depression when so many people were in dire need. Also, he wanted a shoal-draft craft for fishing and exploring the coves of Chesapeake Bay from the water side.

Because the *Sequoia* had gasoline engines, a wood hull and was not a good sea-going vessel, concern for the safety of President Roosevelt led to its replacement as the presidential yacht by the *Electra*. In announcing that the *Electra* had been chosen as the new presidential yacht, the President said that the change was being made because of insistence that he use a fireproof boat and also that he had approved the change because it would mean a saving in both manpower and fuel, since the *Electra* would accommodate Secret Service operatives, who previously had followed the *Sequoia* in the *Cuyahoga*, a smaller Coast Guard boat.

When President Roosevelt picked the name "Potomac" for his new presidential yacht on December 12, 1935, he had chosen a name which three vessels operated by the Navy had previously borne. The first was a frigate; launched in 1822 and which later circumnavigated the world in 1831-34.

The *Sequoia*, once she was replaced by the *Potomac*, was no longer the presidential yacht during the remainder of FDR's term in office. However, it did remain in use as the official yacht of the Secretary of the Navy. Later, she would be used again as the presidential yacht by Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter.

After the death of President Roosevelt, the Navy Department condemned the *Potomac* in the fall of 1945 as being top-heavy and unfit for duty in open waters. Accordingly, she was decommissioned and then sold to the state of Maryland.

To replace the *Potomac*, President Truman accepted the *Williamsburg*, which formally became the presidential yacht on November 10, 1945. The 244 foot long steel-hulled, diesel-powered yacht - originally named the *Aras* - had been built in 1931 for private use. It was purchased by the Navy in 1941, commissioned the *Williamsburg* October 7, 1941 and fitted out as a gunboat. Her service in the years before becoming

the presidential yacht included a year in and around Icelandic waters and three years along the Atlantic coast.

A slim white ship with a crew of about a hundred, the *Williamsburg* was powered by Diesel engines, was air-conditioned and was equipped with radar and communications facilities. It had four guest staterooms, in addition to the President's quarters. President Truman had the use of two pianos when on board. One was in the main dining room - the other was in his private study. Also available was a television set.

In December of 1952, it was reported that President - elect Eisenhower was planning to decommission the *Williamsburg* because of its high operating costs and the large crew that was required. Then, in March of 1953 the Navy reported that President Eisenhower had decided to keep the *Williamsburg* for use as a place for intimate government conferences. Apparently, the Secret Service felt that the yacht offered the perfect place for them to guard him while he worked on Government problems. Nevertheless, by June it had been decided that the ship should be decommissioned as being a symbol of needless luxury. In its last weeks of service as the presidential yacht, it was used to take wounded veterans on afternoon excursions on the Potomac River. She was decommissioned on June 30, 1953 and turned over to the Potomac River Naval Command for maintenance and preservation. From April 1959 until being struck from the Navy list on April 1, 1962 she was in "special status".

Four months later she was transferred to the National Science Foundation for conversion into an oceanographic research vessel and renamed the *Anton Bruun*. In 1968, after numerous scientific cruises in the Indian Ocean, she suffered severe damage while laid up for repairs in a floating dry-dock when the dry-dock sank unexpectedly. A commercial concern bought her with the intention of turning her into a combination floating hotel-restaurant-museum.

During the remainder of President Eisenhower's term in office there was no presidential yacht. Then, as mentioned above, President Kennedy brought back the *Sequoia* into service. President Carter finally sold the *Sequoia* in 1977. She was purchased by the Presidential Yacht Trust in 1981 and restored. The Trust planned to return the *Sequoia* to the government in 1988 after its restoration. However, President Reagan declined the offer. For several years thereafter the *Sequoia* was sent to various parts of the country by the Trust for public tours and cruises. The *Sequoia* was later bought by a private individual and continues to be available for tours and cruises.

Because the *Sequoia* had served so many presidents and had been remodeled and refurbished so many times, her restoration produced a kind of "generic" presidential yacht - historically accurate in individual details, but representing a spectrum of 44 years of the presidency.

Appendix C

Fala and President Roosevelt



Figure 30 – Fala and FDR at Hyde Park; October 1944

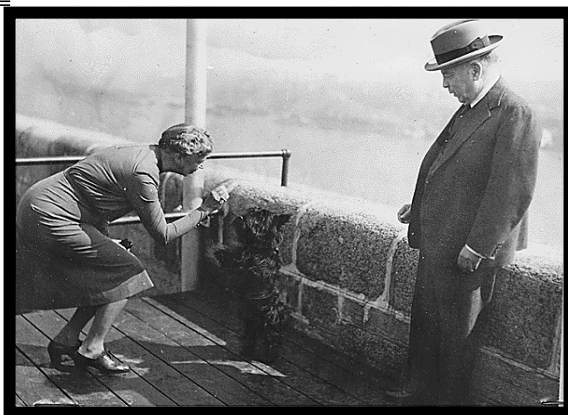


Figure 31 – Eleanor, Prime Minister MacKenzie King and Fala at Quebec; September 1944

Fala was a 7-month-old Scotch terrier when he was given to President Roosevelt in November 1940. He became FDR's favorite pet and accompanied the President just about everywhere, including trips overseas.

Before going to FDR, Fala had been taught how to behave and how to do tricks by FDR's cousin and very dear friend, Margaret "Daisy" Suckley. Fala could sit up, rollover, jump and even curl his lip into a smile.

Originally named Big Boy by his first owner, he was renamed by FDR. The President's name for him was Murray the Outlaw of Falahill, after one of FDR's Scottish ancestors. Within very short order, everyone was using his nickname - Fala.

As noted, Fala was FDR's constant companion at the White House, at Hyde Park and at Warm Springs. Fala slept in the President's bedroom, usually at the foot of the bed. On trips – whether long or short, whether by train, car or ship – Fala was there. (Figure 30.) This meant, of course, that Fala met (and entertained) many famous people on many important occasions.

Among the people and/or occasions were: Winston Churchill at the Atlantic Conference in Newfoundland in August 1941; FDR's defense plant inspection trips in September 1942; President Camacho of Mexico in April 1943; Prime Minister MacKenzie King of Canada at the Quebec Conferences in August 1943 and September 1944. (Figure 31.)

Perhaps the most famous remarks made by FDR about Fala occurred on September 23, 1944 in his after dinner, kickoff political speech for the 1944 election campaign. Earlier that year, in July, President Roosevelt had gone to Pearl Harbor for a conference with General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz. The President then went on to Adak and Juneau in Alaska before returning to Seattle. Shortly thereafter rumors began to spread that Fala had been left behind and that a destroyer had been sent

back for him, at some outrageous cost. Somewhere about the middle of his speech, FDR - using his not inconsiderable talents to move an audience with humor, satire and airy scorn – said:

These Republican leaders have not been content with attacks on me, or on my wife, or on my sons – no, not content with that, they now include my little dog, Fala. Well, of course, I don't resent attacks, and my family doesn't resent attacks, but Fala does resent them. You know, you know Fala's Scotch and, being a Scottie, as soon as he learned that the Republican fiction writers in Congress and out had concocted a story that I had left him behind on an Aleutian island and had sent a destroyer back to find him – at a cost to taxpayers of two or three or eight or twenty million dollars – his Scotch soul was furious. He has not been the same dog since. I am accustomed to hearing falsehoods about myself – such as that old, worm-eaten chestnut that I have represented myself as indispensable. But I think I have a right to resent, to object to libelous statements about my dog.

It may not be too much to believe that the laughter generated by these remarks ultimately cost Tom Dewey the election.

After President Roosevelt died in April 1945, Fala lived with Eleanor at Val-Kill, her house at Springwood. When Fala died in April 1952, he was buried in the Rose Garden near his master.



Figure 32 – Fala and President Roosevelt;
The FDR Memorial, Washington D.C.