

VESSEL HISTORY TIMELINE

- 1934 Jun Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company launches the *Electra*, among the last of the eighteen 165 foot US Coast Guard cutters built between 1931 and 1934.
- Oct Commissioned on the 25th, the *Electra* is assigned to duty patrolling the Atlantic coastal waters
- 1935 Nov Acquired by the U S Navy to replace the presidential yacht *Sequoia*, the *Electra* is dispatched to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for conversion.
- 1936 Jan Officially renamed the *USS Potomac*
- Mar Commissioned as a Navy vessel on the 2nd, the *Potomac's* inaugural cruise begins on the 23^d with a fishing expedition to the Bahamas. The *Potomac* is soon referred to as "The Floating White House".
- 1941 Aug Publicized as a vacation cruise, the *Potomac* secretly carries FDR to the heavy cruiser *Augusta*, which then takes him to the Atlantic Charter meeting with Prime Minister Winston Churchill.
- Nov Because of wartime security concerns, orders are issued for the *Potomac* to be confined to protected waters. Still officially the presidential yacht, the *Potomac* is assigned to duty at the Navy's Underwater Sound Testing Station.
- 1945 Nov Decommissioned and returned to the Coast Guard after FDR's death.
- 1946 Jun The *Potomac* is permanently decommissioned from federal service.
- Jul The *Potomac* is turned over to the Maryland Tidewater Fisheries Commission and is used for fisheries patrol and occasional use by the Governor.
- 1960 Apr Aging and expensive to operate, the *Potomac* is sold to W.G.Toone of the Neptune Lines, Inc. for use as a ferry between San Juan, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
- 1962 Mar Hydro-Capitol Inc. a southern California recreational firm buys the *Potomac*, planning to sail her through the Panama Canal to Long Beach and then operating her as an attraction at the Seattle World's Fair after

making repairs. A host of problems brings the enterprise to naught with a decrepit former presidential yacht stranded in southern California.

- 1963 Jul Hydro-Capitol attempts to recoup expenses by trying to present a hastily and superficially “restored” *Potomac* as a public attraction at Redondo Beach using false advertising. Attempt fails after a few weeks and the ship is brought to Long Beach to be sold at public auction.
- 1964 Jan Entertainer Elvis Presley buys the *Potomac* at the Hydro-Capitol auction for \$55,000 in order to keep her from being junked.
- Apr Elvis Presley donates the ship to Saint Jude Hospital of Memphis, Tennessee with the expectation of moving it there and turning it into a floating restaurant. Realizing that the logistics and cost make this unrealistic, the ship goes up for sale.
- May Marie Pagliasso of Fresno, California takes out a \$65,000 loan to buy the *Potomac*. She is an investment partner along with Fresno businessman Carton Taylor, who guarantees the loan, for a group called the Potomac Yacht Historical Society that intends to operate her as a floating disco.
- 1970 After years of financial and legal problems Carton Taylor becomes sole owner of the *Potomac* when the Pagliasso estate defaults on the loan payments after her death.
- Jul Carton Taylor advertises for the sale of the *Potomac*. Aubrey Phillips, a bail bondsman from Long Beach, California arranges for a ten year lease with an option to buy. Possession and financial responsibility are transferred to Presidential Yacht Potomac, Inc. a nonprofit corporation headquartered in Stockton, California.
- 1979 Feb Idle and deteriorating, the *Potomac* is towed to Stockton from Los Angeles.
- 1980 Aug *Potomac* is towed 80 miles to Pier 26 in San Francisco, allegedly for repairs.
- Sep The *Potomac* is seized by US Customs and the Drug Enforcement Agency, along with a drug laden vessel anchored alongside her. Investigators determine that the *Potomac* has been used as a “smugglers command post”

by a Long Beach drug ring using a fraudulent charity, “The Crippled Children’s Society” as cover for its operations.

Oct The *Potomac* is towed to Clipper Cove at the Treasure Island Naval Base to be held as evidence.

1981 Mar Its hull pierced by broken pilings, the *Potomac* sinks in 35 feet of water.

Apr The Navy Reserve raises the vessel, patches its hull at a cost of \$60,000 to the US Customs Service and tows the *Potomac* to Oakland to be readied for auction. The Port of Oakland, under Executive Director Walter Abernathy, is the only bidder and buys the *Potomac* for \$15,000.

May The Port of Oakland establishes the Association for the Preservation of the Yacht *Potomac* and gives it \$400,000 in seed money to restore the ship to its appearance during the Roosevelt era and operate it as a historical and educational resource.

1983 Mar The *Potomac* Association is incorporated as an educational, public – benefit organization and James Roosevelt, FDR’s oldest son, is elected Chairman of the Board of Governors.

1985 Congress, on President Reagan’s recommendation, appropriates a \$2.5 million grant for the *Potomac* restoration project, to be equally matched with locally-raised funding and in-kind contributions of materials and services.

1985-1988 Thorough inspections by naval architects and engineers identify 300 major tasks of restoring, replacing and rebuilding to ready the ship for US Coast Guard certification.

1988 Jun The Colberg Shipyard Company of Stockton, California receives the contract for the first, structural phase, restoration work.

1989 Dec The *Potomac* returns to Oakland for the interior refitting restoration work. The teak deck is relaid and modern equipment necessary for certification is installed.

1990 Oct The *Potomac* is designated as a National Historic Landmark.

1993 Apr The restored *Potomac* takes its inaugural cruise on San Francisco Bay.

1993-1995 Opening to the public is delayed until major retrofitting of the Franklin D. Roosevelt pier, including wheelchair access, is completed. The Potomac Association develops plans for its educational programs, dockside tours, history cruises and privately chartered cruises.

1995 Apr The Potomac is officially opened to the public for tours on the 50th anniversary of Franklin Roosevelt's death.