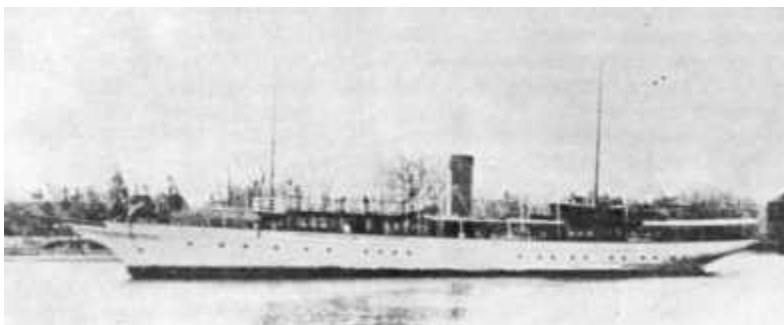


## Presidential Yachts



Yachts Honey Fitz and Sequoia with escort vessel Guardian cruise Potomac river, July 16 1969.  
Photo courtesy Stuart Samuel

During the Civil War President Lincoln on several occasions used the Silver Queen, a steamer of 536 tons, hired by the Quartermaster General War Department, from George N. Power at \$241 per day. It was on this vessel that President Lincoln held his conference with the Confederate Peace Commissioners Alexander H. Stevens, R.M.T. Hunter, and John A. Campbell, at Hampton Roads on February 3, 1865. On March 23, 1865, the President again made a trip from Washington DC to Hampton Roads on board the Silver Queen.

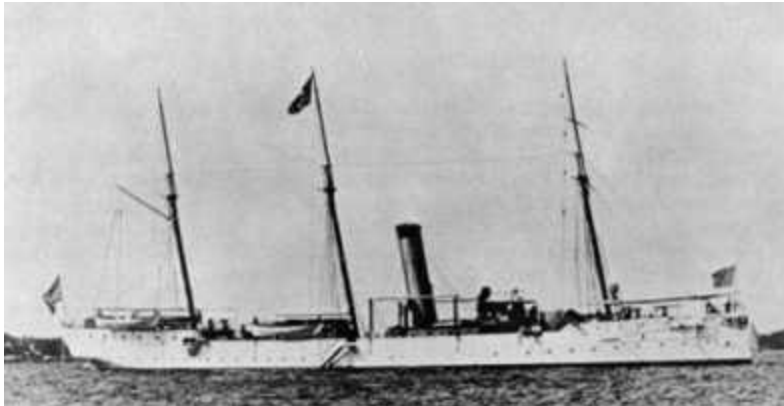


USS Despatch (First Presidential Yacht)

The USS Despatch was a wooden hulled steamer of 560 tons purchased in November 1873. She was 174 feet in length, 25 feet 6 inches beam and draft of 12 feet 4 inches. She made trips to West Indies and Europe before being assigned to the Washington DC area. She made her first cruise as a Presidential yacht with President Hayes on a short trip on the Potomac river on Nov. 9, 1880. She would be used as a

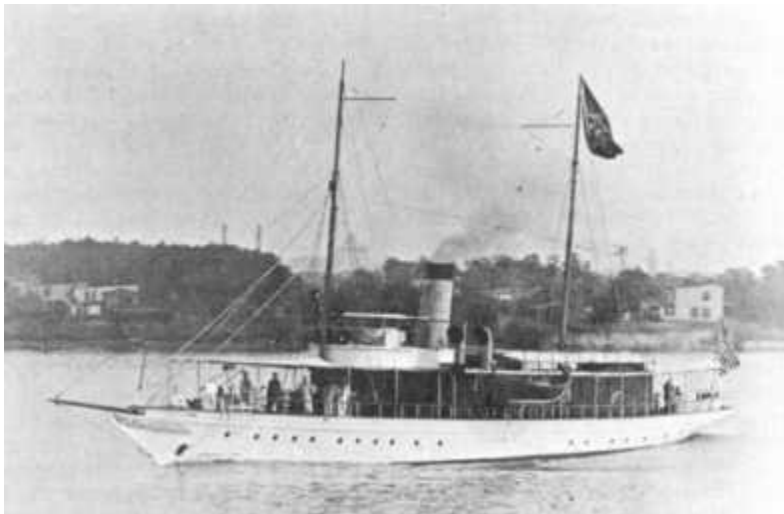
yacht for Presidents Hayes, Garfield, Cleveland and Harrison. The last cruise of that type was on August 11th with Vice President Morton.

The Despatch on its way to Washington DC by way of Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River ran into a storm and sank, October 10, 1891. Everyone aboard at that time survived the accident. In 1997 Ben Benson, a salvage operator working with a magnetometer located the Despatch off Auateague Island.



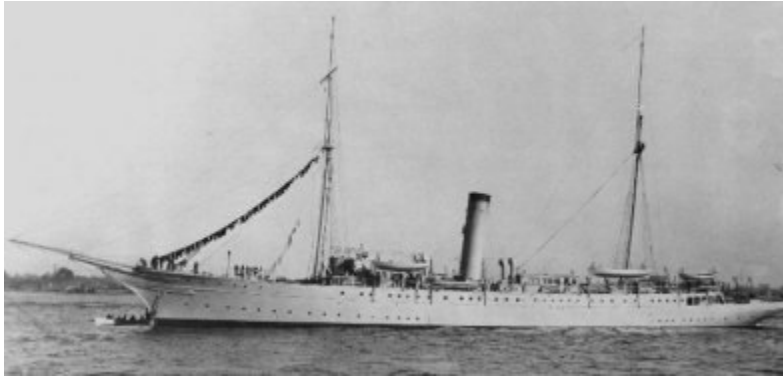
USS Dolphin (Second Presidential Yacht)

The USS Dolphin was a dispatch vessel of 1,465 tons normal displacement, built by John Roach & Sons, Chester, Pennsylvania. Launched April 12, 1884, and commissioned December 8, 1885. In addition to regular naval duties, this vessel at times cruised with the President, the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Navy, the Admiral of the Navy, and various other high government officials and foreign dignitaries. President McKinley was aboard her during the ceremonies at Grant's Tomb on April 23, 1897. She made a number of cruises with the President on board during the period 1900-1902 and the year 1905.



USS Sylph (Third Presidential Yacht)

The USS Sylph was a yacht of 152 tons displacement purchased during the war with Spain for \$50,000. Her length was 123 feet 8 inches, breadth 20 feet. This vessel was placed in commission at the Navy Yard, Norfolk, on August 18, 1898, and soon after was assigned to the Washington Navy Yard. During her 15 years there, she was at the disposal of the President, Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Navy. McKinley was the first President to use the Sylph. President Roosevelt made frequent cruises on her to his summer place at Oyster Bay, New York, and President Taft used this vessel off the New England coast during the summers of his administration. After the Mayflower became the Presidential Yacht, the Sylph remained at the Washington Navy Yard for use of the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Navy.



USS Mayflower (Fourth Presidential Yacht)

The USS Mayflower was a yacht of 2,690 tons displacement purchased March 19, 1898, from the Ogden Goelet estate. Her length was 275 feet; beam 36 feet; draft 17 feet. J. & C. Thompson built this vessel in Clydebank, Scotland, in 1896. She was commissioned at New York on March 24, 1898, and served in the blockade of Cuba during the Spanish-American War and subsequently in Puerto Rican waters. In 1902 the Mayflower was assigned to duty as the Presidential Yacht. Upon completion of this duty she joined the North Atlantic Fleet. Later in the same year she was employed as the flagship of Admiral Dewey and in 1903-1904 as flagship of the squadron in Caribbean. During July to October 1904, she cruised in the Mediterranean. In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt utilized this vessel in arranging terms of peace between Russian and Japan. She continued to be used as the Presidential Yacht by Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, and Coolidge until March 22, 1919. When Herbert Hoover became President he ordered her to be laid up in the interest of economy. After being partially destroyed by fire at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1931, the Mayflower was stricken from the Navy list and her hulk sold October 19, 1931. This ended her career in the United States Navy. She was used as a coastal patrol boat by the Coast Guard during WWII. After the war she was sold and secretly outfitted to carry Jewish settlers from Europe to Palestine. In Sept. 1948 she arrived at Haifa carrying the settlers from Exodus, a refugee ship which had been previously turned back from Palestine. We do not have her subsequent fate.



Flag from the USS Mayflower now on display at the Quartermaster Museum Fort Lee, VA



USS Sequoia AG-23 (Fifth Presidential Yacht)

The USS Sequoia was classified as an "Auxiliary--Miscellaneous" vessel with 100 tons displacement; length on water line, 99 feet, extreme beam at water line, 18 feet 2 inches. The Mathis Yacht Shipbuilding Company, Camden, New Jersey built her, in 1925. This vessel was taken over by the Navy from the Department of Commerce on March 25, 1933 and placed in commission on that date at Annapolis, Maryland. She was assigned to the Washington Navy Yard where she was fitted out as the Presidential Yacht. President Roosevelt made cruises in her during the period 1933-1935.

President Hoover spent his last Christmas in office aboard the Sequoia.



### USS Potomac AG-25 (Sixth Presidential Yacht)

The USS Potomac was classified as "Auxiliary Miscellaneous" vessel with 370 tons displacement; length 165 feet; beam 23 feet 9 inches; mean draft 8 feet 1 inch. She was built for \$1.5 million by the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company, Manitowoc, Wisconsin and delivered to the US Coast Guard as the patrol boat Electra in 1934.

Roosevelt didn't feel safe aboard the all wooden Sequoia used by his predecessor, Herbert Hoover. Afraid of a fire at sea, he had the Electra refitted at the Navy Shipyard Portsmouth, VA and recommissioned by the US Navy as the USS Potomac.

The President who led the country through the depression and most of WWII turned the yacht into a "Floating White House", often taking weekend fishing trips to escape the oppressive Washington heat and humidity and to relieve his sinusitis and asthma.

Roosevelt had a small cabin with a single bunk, a joining bathroom and for his beloved dog Fala, a sleeping basket. There is a saloon with a large table for dinner parties. FDR designed the bathtub himself. To get below decks an elevator was installed in a false smokestack. It was operated by the President using a rope and pulley. An electric motor could have been installed but FDR used the elevator as a form of exercise.

In 1939 the President hosted King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England. Other guests during WWII included the exiled royal families of Norway and the Netherlands. Eleanor Roosevelt went on occasional cruises, but never slept aboard. She had been afraid of the water since she had to be rescued as a child after a collision at sea.

As America stood on the threshold of WWII, the Potomac played a vital role in a bit of nautical trickery. Reportably on a Cape Cod fishing trip FDR departed the yacht for the cruiser Augusta at Nantucket

Island. When the Potomac sailed through the Cape Cod canal en route to Washington a crew member wearing the President's signature cape and waving the famous cigarette holder doubled as the chief executive while FDR went to meet Winston Churchill off Newfoundland to sign the Atlantic Charter.

The Navy staffed the yacht with two officers and a crew of 54 men of which 12 were Filipino stewards.

Weight added above the main deck had made the Potomac top heavy and subject to capsizing. In 1941, she was condemned as unseaworthy. She did however continue as the Presidential Yacht until the USS Williamsburg was put into service. The US navy decommissioned the Potomac in 1941.



False smoke stack with FDR elevator from the USS Potomac which was removed during the overhaul and now located in Cambridge, Maryland.

(Photo courtesy Chad Maikus)

She served the state of Maryland as a fisheries research vessel from 1946 until 1960; later used as a ferry in the Caribbean and then a floating museum dedicated to FDR.

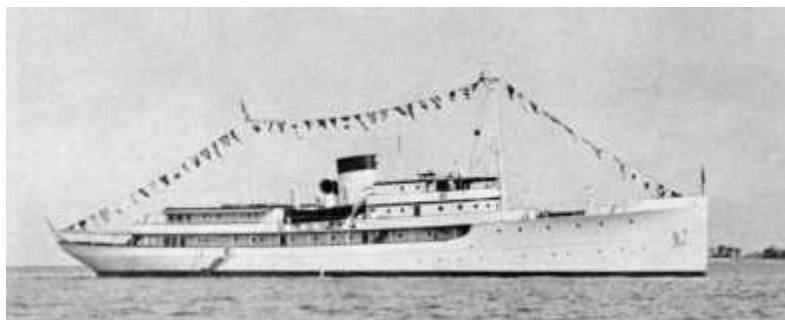
In 1964 Elvis Presley purchased her for \$55,000. Elvis gave the ship to Danny Thomas and the St Jude's Hospital auctioned the Potomac. After several owners she was seized in a drug raid and the US took over ownership. By this time the Potomac was in disrepair and everything of value had been removed.

Put up for auction with a minimum bid of \$20,000, no bids were received. Later a bid was accepted for \$15,000 and restoration was under way. Restoration cost \$5 million with half a government grant with matching funds from private sources thanks in a large part by efforts by FDR's son James and grandson Michael.



Restored Potomac photo taken Feb.14,1999.  
(Courtesy David Lee Wood)

The USS Potomac may be visited at the FDR Pier, Jack London Square, Oakland, CA.



USS Williamsburg AGC-369 (Seventh Presidential Yacht)

The Williamsburg was originally the yacht "Aras"(Sara backward). She was constructed by the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, for Mr. Hugh J. Chisholm, and was launched on December 8, 1930. The yacht ARAS had her trial trip on January 10, 1931 and had 614 net tonnage; length 243 feet, 9 inches; breadth 36

feet, 1 inch; depth moulded amidship 21 feet, 10 inches. She was acquired by the U.S. Government on April 24, 1941 and renamed the USS Williamsburg PG-56. When President Truman assumed office the USS Potomac had been condemned by the Navy Department as being unfit for duty in open waters and recommended using the U.S.S Williamsburg as the Presidential yacht. President Truman accepted the recommendation and on November 10, 1945 took her first cruise as the Presidential Yacht. President Truman made several short cruises down the Potomac. On August 16, 1946 the USS Williamsburg departed Washington, D.C. with President Truman on board, for a trip to Quonset Point, Rhode Island. On August 20, 1946 she got underway for Bermuda in company with the USS WEISS returning to Washington September 2, 1946. President Truman entertained several foreign leaders aboard the yacht; May 1, 1947, President Miguel Aleman of Mexico; December 5, 1950, Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee and January 5, 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The Navy manned the Williamsburg with 8 officers, 130 men and 26 stewards.



Presidential Lounge





First Lady's Stateroom



President's Stateroom

On March 26, 1953, President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Rene Mayer, Republic of France, and their respective advisors had a conference and luncheon on board. They departed in the late afternoon after a short trip down the Potomac River. In mid-April President Eisenhower announced that he no longer required the USS Williamsburg and ordered the Presidential yacht decommissioned on July 1, 1953. In the interim two and one-half months, the President desired that wounded hospitalized veterans, of the Korean War, be taken on afternoon trips down the Potomac River. That program was pursued.

Inactive from 1953 to 1962, she then served the National Science Foundation until damaged in a drydock accident in 1968. She was subsequently sold to become a hotel/museum in New Jersey, but she was instead laid up. In 1993 she was sent to Genoa, Italy for conversion to a cruise ship. Due to lack of interest and lack of funds, work on the Williamsburg has ceased and it is now abandoned, still in Genoa, awaiting sale



Once spotless, the USS Williamsburg became a derelict in Italy.



Lenore (Eighth Presidential Yacht)

The Lenore was a vessel of 94 tons displacement, length 92 feet, beam 16 feet and draft of 5 feet. Built in 1931 for Sewell Avery, Chairman of Montgomery Ward by the Defoe Boat Works of Bay City, Michigan. It was christened the Lenore after Lenore Avery, Sewell's second daughter who died at age 4. She originally was used to cruise the waters of Lake Michigan near Avery's private estate on the Les Cheneaux islands, which are in Lake Huron off Michigan eastern shore. The yacht was often used to pick up guests who had arrived at Mackinac City by train from Chicago. Serious disagreements between Montgomery Ward and the government over Roosevelt's NRA wage and price provisions led to the seizure of the boat by the government in 1942.

Renamed the Lenore 2, she was used as a training ship for submarine crews in Portsmouth New Hampshire and later as an escort for the Presidential Yacht Williamsburg. The Lenore frequently carried the secret service agents who accompanied the President while he was aboard the 255 foot yacht.

In 1953, President Eisenhower retired the splendid but costly Williamsburg from active service, authorizing the refurnishing and overhauling of Lenora II at a cost of \$200,000. She was rechristened Barbara Ann in honor of his granddaughter and was used for occasional cruises, and in the summers of 1957 and 1958 she sailed to Newport, Rhode Island where she conveyed the president to and from his golfing excursions.

With the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy, the yacht was refitted and on March 7, 1961 was renamed the Honey Fitz, honoring JFK's maternal grandfather (Former Mayor of Boston, and member of the House of Representatives, John Francis Fitzgerald).



President Kennedy boarding the USS Honey Fitz



Chief Boatswain Blaine Price playing with John Jr's sailboat aboard the USS Honey Fitz Aug. 25, 1962.

President Johnson did not rename the Honey Fitz and preferred it to the larger Sequoia which was still at the Washington Naval Yard.



Honey Fitz

President Nixon renamed the yacht Tricia after his daughter, and had the vessel auctioned off in December 1971 after a brief tour of duty providing cruises for hospitalized Vietnam veterans. The boat was purchased by Joe Keating who named it the Presidents.

The yacht was completely restored and refitted as it was during Kennedys term and was used for charters based in New York City. She was sold to unknown buyers at the Kennedy Memorabilia Auctions for \$5,942,500. When the boat left overhaul, the painted transom was once again embellished with Honey Fitz in gold leaf.

In 1998 William Kallop, a New York business man, took sole possession of the yacht. It remained for two years on dry land at the Offshore Specialties Fabricators yard in Houma, LA., a company owned by Kallop. There it became a blighted wreck, its paint peeling, boards rotting, the stateroom in shambles, the interior stripped bare and all the once fine furniture removed. In April 2002 it was moved to P&H Construction Yard in Mobile, AL. There the yacht is to undergo a complete restoration for the pleasure of the owner.



The Honey Fitz at the Construction Yard Mobile, AL.



Restored Honey Fitz Mobile Bay, Al. October 22, 2002. Photo courtesy Keith Jones.



Margie(Presidential Yacht)

Margie was built by the Fisher Boat Works Inc, Detroit, Michigan in 1940 for L.P. Fisher, Vice President of Fisher and Company. Acquired by the War Shipping Administration in 1942 for the Coast Guard, she was transferred to the Navy in 1945.

Length 64 feet, beam 14 feet 6 inches, she has a main lounge, dining area and after deck which can be used as a sundeck. She has 3 bunk rooms with eight bunks. Six to eight guests may be accommodated comfortably.

First named Margie in honor of President Truman's daughter, Mrs Truman often used her for trips on the Potomac and to the Chesapeake Bay.

Ike renamed her The Susie E. in honor of one of his granddaughters. She was made available to the Vice President and the cabinet.

President Kennedy renamed the yacht Patrick J. in honor of his parental grandfather. In April 1963 the Patrick J. went to Hyannisport with the Guardian for the President to use while there.

President Nixon renamed her The Julie in honor of his daughter and moved the yacht to Key Biscayne where President Nixon retained his winter vacation retreat. President Nixon sold the Julie at auction.



### Guardian

The Guardian was built by the Electric Boat Works, Groton, Conn. The Guardian was started 27 June 1946 and launched 7 Sept 1950 as PT 809.

The boat has an overall length of 105 feet, beam of 22 feet and a draft of 6 feet.

After serving as an experimental craft she was assigned to the Potomac River Naval Command in Nov 1959 as a civil defense boat and an escort for the Presidential Yacht. The name Guardian was assigned in February 1960.

The Guardian carried 2 16 ft fiberglass water jet boats. These boats were used to transport secret service agents and was used for water skiing by Mrs Kennedy and other guests.

After the Presidential yachts were deposed, the Guardian was released from Presidential service and transferred to a naval aviation squadron in Norfolk, VA area. She was modified at Cambridge, MD for use in retrieving target practice drones in various ranges along the Virginia/Maryland/North Carolina coast. The Soviets were quite adept at recovering the drones and all of their electronic technology. It was felt that something fast like a PT boat might aid in the recovery of the drones. The Guardian was based at Little Creek NAB and renamed DR-1 aka Retriever. Later she was assigned to the special boat unit in support of the Navy SEALs. At present we do not have the final chapter of the Guardian. However, she was the longest serving PT-boat. Two of the Guardian's sister ships the PT 810 and PT 811 were sent to Vietnam and later expended as targets off the Hawaiian Islands.



USS Sequoia (Last Presidential Yacht?)  
(Photo courtesy Samuel Stewart)

After being replaced as the Presidential yacht, the Sequoia was assigned to the Secretary of the Navy and was docked at the Anacostia Naval Station. She remained across the river from the Washington Navy Yard until 1964 at which time President Johnson again had her designated as a Presidential yacht and she joined the HoneyFitz at the Washington Navy Yard.

Kennedy celebrated his last birthday on board the Sequoia. (The Honey Fitz was at Hyannis Port, MA at the time)

Johnson used the Sequoia several times. He was tall and had problems with the low ceilings. He had the floor of the shower of the Presidential Stateroom lowered 6 inches so he could stand straight while taking a shower. He also had a bar installed in the space where Franklin Roosevelt's wheelchair elevator had been.

President Nixon spent his last hours as President aboard the Sequoia. President Carter said he would have no need of the Sequoia and it was sold at auction for \$286,000.

Was the Sequoia the last Presidential Yacht ever?? As an old retired navy person, I hope not. There is something to be said for those who go down to the sea in ships. JFK loved the sea and the Honey Fitz with its 4 diesel engines and narrow beam was one of his favorite places. Perhaps some day we will again have a President who has a love for the sea.





Jet Boat (Photo courtesy Chip Marshal)

Two mahogany Jet Boats were acquired in 1958. These boats were used by the Eisenhowers at Newport, Rhode Island and by the Kennedys at Hyannis Port, Mass.