

Lightship No. 83 “Swiftsure” History

LV-83/WAL-508

Built in 1908 at the New York Shipbuilding Company of Camden, NJ for the US Lighthouse Service, Light Vessel 83 commissioned into USLHS service in late 1904 and was assigned for duty on the US West Coast. Reaching San Francisco in early 1905 following a trip around Cape Horn in South America, LV-83 took up station off Cape Mendocino marking Blunts Reef.



So stationed for the next 25 years, LV-83 was reassigned North to the San Francisco station, where it marked the sea lane approaches to the Golden Gate until the outbreak of the Second World War. By then part of the US Coast Guard following the merger of the UHLHS and USCG in 1938, the vessel was requisitioned by the US Navy as an Examination Vessel for San Francisco Harbor, and spent 1942-1945 as a patrol ship screening inbound and outbound ships from the major West Coast Port.

Returned to USCG custody in 1946 and resuming her station off the Golden Gate until 1951, LV-83 was transferred to the US Coast Guard's 13th district and began rotational duty at the Columbia River, Umatilla Reef, and Relief Lightship Stations for the next decade.



Decommissioned from USCG service in 1961 and donated thereafter to the Northwest Seaport Museum, it began service as a museum ship with her RELIEF markings, which it would wear for another 35 years before a major overhaul was conducted in 1996. Emerging from the shipyard with a new coat of paint and wearing the markings of the Swiftsure station, LV-83 is under a complete topside and interior restoration project.

As the oldest Lightship on the West Coast and one of the oldest surviving Lightships in the United States, LV-83 was declared a National Historic Landmark, a Seattle Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

Year Built: 1904

Built At: New York Shipbuilding Co. - Camden, (NJ)

Design: Steel hull, single screw, 2 steel masts with wood spencers; wood decks and wood deckhouse's.

Length: 129'

Propulsion: single screw,

Sister Vessels: LV 78, 79, 80, 81 Station Assignments;

Blunts Reef (CA)

San Francisco (CA)

Relief (West Coast)

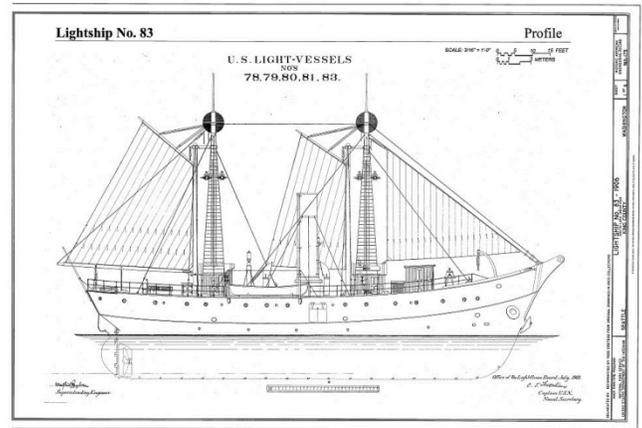


LV-83, as EXAM Vessel WW II - 19 August 1942 LV-83, as San Francisco in the late 1940's



HISTORICAL NOTES:

- Delivered late 1904 or early 1905 (date not found)-
- 1905: Feb 14, cleared New York for San Francisco in company with LV 76. Capt Robert
- Quinton commanded LV 76, Capt E.M. Trott commanded LV 83 and designated senior Master for the voyage. Each Master "was furnished instructions, credentials, and means for prosecution of his voyage to the Pacific Coast." (Date of arrival at San Francisco not found)-
- 1906: Placed on Blunts Reef (CA) off Cape Mendocino-
- 1906: Dragged off station in heavy storms Nov 3-7, Dec 9-11-
- 1907: Dragged off station in heavy storms Jan 6-8, Feb 24-27, Mar 22-25, Jun 19-28; off station for repairs during April-
- 1915: Jan, during a storm registering 110 mph winds, dragged 2 mi off station-
- 1916: Jun 15, between 0145 and 0330, 155 people were taken aboard the lightship; being the passengers and crew of the steamer BEAR, stranded in dense fog nearby; people later transferred to other vessels in the vicinity-
- Remained assigned to Blunts until 1929-
- 1929: Assigned to San Francisco until 1942 when withdrawn during WWII
- 1945: Reassigned to San Francisco station until 1951, then assigned Relief duty until 1960
- In 1905, the LV-83 along with LV-76 made the approximately 15,000 mile voyage from Staten Island, NY around Cape Horn to San Francisco, CA. in roughly 124 days.
- Retired from Lightship Duty; 1960, age 54
- 1968 Northwest Seaport, then "Save Our Ships", purchased the vessel.
- 1996, it was designated the "SWIFTSURE" to reflect Seattle's closest Lightship Station and to commemorate her status as the last surviving Lightship to serve on the SWIFTSURE Banks Station.



It is moored at Northwest Seaport, located in Seattle's Lake Union Park.

It retains her original Steam propulsion system.

Northwest Seaport is in the process of a two year restoration project designed to replace the wooden deck, restore the electrical systems, and much more.