

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name S. S. John W. Brown

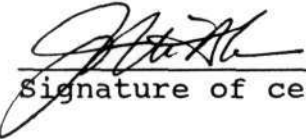
other names/site number B-4611

2. Location

street & number Pier 1, Clinton Street not for publication n/a
city or town Baltimore vicinity n/a
state Maryland code MD county independent city code 510 zip code 21224

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide _____ locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official

7-24-97
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet. _____
_____ determined eligible for the _____
_____ National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet. _____
_____ determined not eligible for the _____
_____ National Register _____
_____ removed from the National Register _____
_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
 of Action

=====

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

_____ ☒ private
_____ public-local
_____ public-State
_____ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

_____ building(s)
_____ district
_____ site
_____ ☒ structure
_____ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____ 1 _____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
_____ 1 _____	_____ 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0
(see Section 8)

Name of related multiple property listing n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DEFENSE</u>	Sub: <u>naval facility</u>
<u>TRANSPORTATION</u>	<u>water-related</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	Sub: <u>museum</u>
<u>TRANSPORTATION</u>	<u>water-related</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
roof _____
walls _____

other METAL: steel

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY
MARITIME HISTORY
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance 1942-1947

Significant Dates 1942

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard, Baltimore, MD

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

USGS quadrangle Baltimore East, MD

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	364400	4347690	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
_____ See continuation sheet.						

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

II. Form Prepared By

name/title Curtis P.; Junker (1984); revised 1996 by Peter E. Kurtze
organization Maryland Historical Trust date September 18, 1996
street & number 100 Community Place, 3rd floor telephone (410) 514-7649
city or town Crownsville state MD zip code 21032-2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Project Liberty Ship, Attn: Capt. Brian Hope
street & number P. O. Box 25846, Highlandtown Station telephone (410) 661-1550
city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21224-0846

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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S. S. John W. Brown
Baltimore city, Maryland

DESCRIPTION

The following is an edited version of a description prepared by Curtis P. Junker, March 18, 1984:

The Steam Ship John W. Brown is a WWII general cargo ship with limited troop carrying capacity built by the U. S. Maritime Commission on the EC2-S-C1 design. This design of ship has a length overall of 441'-7½", extreme breadth of 57', maximum draft of 27'-9", gross tonnage of 7,176, net tonnage of 4,380, deadweight of 10,865 tons and displacement of 14,245 tons. This steel vessel is of the full scantling type with a raked stem, cruiser stern, single screw and balanced rudder. Major compartmentation consists of five cargo hatches, engine room midships, fore and after peak tanks, three deep tanks, double bottom and seven watertight bulkheads. Its engine is a direct acting, condensing, three cylinder, triple expansion steam engine with an indicated horsepower of 2,500 at 76RPM consuming 30 tons of Bunker "C" oil daily and producing 11 knots of speed. The general arrangement of decks starting at the tank top includes: lower hold, second deck or 'tween deck, upper deck or main deck with crew's accommodations, boat deck with officers' accommodations, bridge deck and flying bridge. The after house includes a hospital. Typical wartime crew for Liberties numbered fifty-two persons with twenty-nine gun crew. Defensive armament on the S. S. John W. Brown most likely consisted of a 3"-50 caliber gun forward, a 5"-50 gun aft and ten 20mm AA guns.

Launched in September 1942 as a cargo vessel, the S. S. John W. Brown was modified in 1943 to allow her to carry a limited number of troops in her 'tween decks in addition to cargo. On the exterior, six extra gun tubs were put on: #1 hatch forward port/starboard, house top aft port/starboard and #5 port/starboard. Companionways were put in at #1/2 port/starboard, #2/3 midships, #4 aft s, #5 aft port. The house on the boat deck aft is probably from this time. The bulk of the 'tween deck doors between hatches (#1/2 s, #2/3 port/starboard, #3/house port, house/4 port and #4/5 p) may be from this time with a few done after 1947. The vents at #1 forward port, #1/2 port and two at #2/3 starboard are probably from this time. The 'tween deck heating and extra lighting are probably mixed 1943 and 1947 onward.

Subsequent changes included the removal of the guns and life rafts, which probably took place after the end of the war in 1945. The change from one gangway originally at frame 91 port/starboard to two at #3 aft port and #4 port was done to satisfy municipal code requirements and dates after November 1947 when the ship left States Marine and became a schoolship. The compass and steering platform were removed from the flying bridge post-1947.

Certain alterations were made to the interior to accommodate the conversion

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to a schoolship in 1947. In the wheelhouse, the telegraph, magnetic compass, wheel and wood grating were removed. Additions were made to the engine room, including an electric vacuum pump for #2 fuel oil tank, #6 50,000 gallon fuel oil tank forward starboard above the bilges, and its electric pump which is on the forward end of the boiler flat slightly to starboard of the center line. In the crew's accommodation, several spaces were enlarged. The crew's mess was enlarged going aft by taking out the bulkheads at frames 106 and 109, thereby incorporating the three firemen's and three oilers' cabins. The officers' mess was enlarged by taking out the starboard bulkhead and the bulkhead at frame 87, thereby incorporating the five gunners' and four gunners' cabins. The steward's cabin was joined to the cook's cabin by removing the bulkhead at frame 87 with the resulting space being used as the ship's office by the schoolship. Two meeting rooms were created by removing the bulkhead at frame 99 between the four seamen's and three pipers' cabins, and by removing the bulkheads at frames 106 and 109 which separated the bosun, four seamen and four seamen. Stoves were installed in the petty officers' mess.

Except for the guns, life rafts, and gangways, the present exterior appearance of the S. S. John W. Brown is essentially the same as when the ship attained historical significance. Interior alterations are minor and reversible; her historic conversion to a limited capacity troop ship actually limited the number of changes that were required when she became a schoolship. The S. S. John W. Brown retains a high degree of integrity to the period of significance.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The S. S. John W. Brown is significant under Criterion A for its association with the mobilization of equipment and troops during World War II. The Liberty ship played an important role in the war by enabling the critical supply lines to remain open between the United States and the allies in Europe. The S. S. John W. Brown derives additional significance under Criterion C, as an example of the type of vessel that was developed to fulfill the emergency need for a large-capacity cargo ship which could be constructed rapidly. A total of 2,751 Liberty ships were built; the S. S. John W. Brown is one of only two surviving operational examples in the United States, and the only one on the east coast.¹ The S. S. John W. Brown retains a high degree of integrity, and has recently benefited from a comprehensive restoration. The period of significance extends from 1942, when the ship was constructed and launched, to 1947, when she was removed from active service and converted to a stationary educational facility for training merchant seamen.

RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

The following is an edited and updated version of information prepared by Curtis P. Junker, March 18, 1984:

At the outbreak of World War II, the American Merchant Marine was caught unprepared to handle a massive sealoft of war material. In 1939, the U. S. Merchant fleet was only 12,000,000 deadweight tons.² By 1941, 92% of the 1,422 U. S. flag ocean-going ships of over 2,000 gross tons were over 20 years old.³ During the 1939-1945 U. S. Maritime Commission building program, 5,095 non-military vessels were built totaling 52,989,000 deadweight tons. Of these totals, Liberty ships numbered 2,708 (53%) and 29,182,000 deadweight tons (55%).⁴ In the single year 1943, the American maritime industry built a record 1,896 vessels totaling 19,238,646 deadweight tons; 1,238 of these vessels were Liberties.⁵ The

¹ The other Liberty is the Jeremiah O'Brien, hull #806. It is on the National Register and has been restored as a museum in San Francisco at the Golden Gate Nat. Rec. Area.

² Lane, p. 3.

³ Sawyer, p. 12.

⁴ Lane, p. 4.

⁵ Bunker, p. 15.

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Liberty ship represented the design solution that filled the need for an emergency type of simple, standardized cargo steamer which could be mass produced cheaply and quickly by assembly line methods and easily converted to individual service needs. The production record for a Liberty is held by the Robert E. Peary which was assembled and launched in only four days, fifteen and a half hours after keel laying.⁶

The rapid construction created a large fleet in a short time, and enabled the critical supply lines to remain open between the United States and the allies in Europe. "The Liberty ship is the type of vessel which, in its hundreds, is accredited with saving not only Britain, not only the Allied cause, but the whole world from disaster--for there was a great fear that the war might be lost simply because Allied lifelines were stretched almost beyond limit owing to an insufficient number of ships."⁷ A total of 2,751 vessels of the type were built; remarkably, only some 200 were sunk during the war.

Liberty ships carried a crew of between 38 and 62 civilian merchant seamen and 21 to 40 naval personnel to operate defensive guns and communications equipment. The Merchant Marine served in World War II as a Military Auxiliary.⁸ Merchant seamen suffered a greater percentage of fatalities than any branch of the armed services, except the Marines.⁹

The Liberty ship was considered a "five-year vessel" and not able to compete with non-emergency vessels in speed, equipment and general serviceability. However, Liberties ended up doing well plodding the seas as an important segment of major world merchant fleets nearly 20 years later.¹⁰ In the postwar period, its economic fuel consumption, excellent cargo gear and deck machinery, and its 27½' draft made this type of ship very desirable to foreign countries whose fleets had been destroyed by the war. Liberties formed the backbone of postwar fleets whose commerce generated income to build the new ships of the 1950s and 1960s.

Many technological advances were made during the Liberty shipbuilding program. A steel cold-rolling process was developed to save steel in the making

⁶ Sawyer, p. 18.

⁷ Sawyer, p. 13.

⁸ Bunker, p. 11.

⁹ Biaggi.

¹⁰ Bunker, p. 17.

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of lightweight cargo booms. A portable welding plant which moved at a walking pace was invented. The state-of-the-art of welding was advanced sufficiently to produce the first all-welded ships. Steel brittle fracture and crack arresting were really understood for the first time. Prefabrication was perfected, with complete deck houses, double-bottom sections, stern-frame assemblies and bow units speeding production. (The internal compartmentation and superior construction of the Liberty ship was important because it allowed Liberty ships to sustain wartime damage no pre-war merchant ship could survive.¹¹)

The S. S. John W. Brown was built in 41 days as a general cargo ship at the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard in Baltimore, launched on Labor Day, September 7, 1942, and named after an American labor leader to recognize the contribution of organized labor to the war effort. Her maiden voyage began on September 29, when she left Baltimore for New York to load equipment and supplies for transport to the Persian Gulf for Russian aid. In 1943 she was converted to a limited capacity troopship, able to accommodate up to 500 persons in addition to cargo. She is a combat veteran of Mediterranean landings at Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, and Southern France. She carried American troops, Free French Troops, and transported Italian and German POWs from Italy to Bizerte, North Africa. After VE day in May 1945, she transported troops home from Europe. She was operated from the end of the war until 1947 by the State Marine Corporation as a merchant freighter; her last transatlantic voyage took place late in 1946, when she returned to New York from London. In November of 1947, the U. S. Maritime Commission loaned the S. S. John W. Brown to the New York City Board of Education to replace the City's ferryboat Brooklyn as a stationary maritime schoolship. Licensed officers taught students deck, engine and steward skills on fully operational cargo gear, deck machinery, engine room and galley. On June 30, 1982, the Board of Education closed the schoolship because of maintenance costs and the high cost of converting the ship to classrooms. The ship was transported to the James River, where she joined the reserve fleet.

Maritime preservationists then began a campaign to gain ownership of the vessel for restoration as a museum and national maritime memorial to shipyard workers and seamen who constructed and sailed American merchant ships during World War II. Since 1988, Project Liberty Ship has undertaken a comprehensive program of restoration on the S. S. John W. Brown, involving 350,000 hours of labor contributed by 3,500 volunteers, many of them former shipyard workers, merchant seamen, or military personnel who worked or traveled aboard Liberty ships. In 1991, the vessel made her first cruise of the Chesapeake Bay under steam. Over the next several years, further major restoration enabled the vessel to steam beyond the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays to several ports, including New York,

¹¹ Sawyer, p. 33.

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Boston, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Project Liberty Ship offers periodic day cruises of the Chesapeake Bay and annual trips to more distant ports.

In 1985, the ship--then located in Newport News, Virginia--was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. When the S. S. John W. Brown was relocated to her home port of Baltimore in 1988 to begin restoration, the owners inadvertently failed to comply with National Park Service procedures concerning relocation of historic properties, resulting in the removal of the vessel from the National Register. The present documentation is prepared in order to re-nominate the S. S. John W. Brown to the National Register in her permanent location.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Biaggi, Hon. Mario. "A Bill to Establish the 'John W. Brown' as a Merchant Marine Memorial." Congressional Record, February 17, 1983, p. 14.

Bunker, John Gorley. Liberty Ships: The Ugly Ducklings. New York: Arno Press, 1972.

Francis J. Duffy, "Preserving a Liberty Ship," Ships Monthly, April 1979, pp. 15-17.

Lane, Frederic C. Ships for Victory: A History of Shipbuilding Under the U. S. Maritime Commission in World War II. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 19??

"Liberty Ship 'John W. Brown' Transfer (HR 1556) March 11, 1983." Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Merchant Marine of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, House of Representatives, Ninety-Eighth Congress, First Session. Serial No. 98-7. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983.

"Maritime Memorial," Journal of Commerce, New York, November 1, 1983.

Sawyer, L. A. and W. H. Mitchell. The Liberty Ships: The History of the 'Emergency' Type Cargo Ships Constructed in the United States During World War II. Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1970.

Jack Sherwood, "The Love Their 'Ugly Duckling'," Chesapeake Bay, vol. 26, no. 4, August 1996, pp. 40-45, 64.

Juliet Taylor, "Sailing for Freedom: Liberty Ships of World War II," Living History, Spring 1996, pp. 6-9.

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GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property comprises that area encompassed within the extreme registered dimensions of the vessel; viz. 441'-7½" x 57'.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries are limited to the ship itself.



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