

FIREBOAT DUWAMISH
South Lake Union Pier
Seattle
King County
Washington

HAER WA-174
WA-174

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

FIREBOAT DUWAMISH

HAER No. WA-174

LOCATION: South Lake Union Pier, Seattle, King County, Washington

RIG/TYPE OF
CRAFT: Fireboat

PRINCIPAL
DIMENSIONS: Length: 120' (as built in 1909)
122'-8" (after modification in 1949)
Beam: 28'
Depth: 9'-6"

DATE OF
CONSTRUCTION: 1909

DESIGNER: Eugene L. McAllaster, Seattle naval architect

BUILDER: Richmond Beach Shipbuilding Company

SIGNIFICANCE: Fireboat DUWAMISH is one of the oldest extant fireboats specifically built for the purpose of firefighting and retains a high degree of integrity. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1989.

PROJECT
INFORMATION: The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is part of Heritage Documentation Programs, a division of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Manager. Todd Croteau, HAER Maritime Program Coordinator, managed the project. Jet Lowe, HAER Photographer, produced the large format photography in 2004. Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, compiled the data pages in 2005.

CHRONOLOGY

1909	Construction of Fireboat DUWAMISH
1914	DUWAMISH managed to save the Seattle waterfront on July 30 when the Grand Trunk Pacific Dock caught fire
1940s	Transferred to U.S. Coast Guard during World War II to serve as a patrol boat
1946	Returned to Seattle Fire Department
1949	DUWAMISH undergoes modernization after Seattle Fire Department gets World War II surplus naval vessel
1985	CHIEF SEATTLE, an aluminum and fiber-hulled fireboat, replaced DUWAMISH
1986	Designated a Seattle City Landmark
1989	Designated a National Historic Landmark

DESCRIPTION AND ALTERATIONS

Constructed in 1909 by the Richmond Beach Shipbuilding Company after Eugene L. McAllaster's design, Fireboat DUWAMISH fulfilled the need for an effective fireboat in the Seattle area. The original "ram" bow, according to the National Historic Landmark study, could sink wooden ships when all other firefighting measures failed. With the shift from wooden vessels to steel ones, DUWAMISH's bow was reconfigured in 1949 as part of a complete update. The riveted steel-hulled DUWAMISH (originally constructed with a wood deck) was steam driven when first built by "4 Mosher watertube boilers which propelled the vessel to the maximum speed of 10-1/2 knots." In 1949, "two General Electric 500-volt direct current, air-start 725-h.p. engines powered by these 8-cylinder 800-h.p. Cooper-Bessemer diesel generators" replaced the original ones. The change improved DUWAMISH's speed to 14 knots, thereby decreasing response time.¹ Conversion to diesel-electric was possible because the Seattle Fire Department had acquired a surplus World War II naval ship and used its parts.² The engine conversion also resulted in the replacement of the original "three American-LaFrance steam piston pumps" with the more powerful "two electrically-driven DeLaval centrifugal pumps." The modification made DUWAMISH the most powerful fireboat in the country at 22,800 g.p.m. The manifolds, made by A.J. Morse & Son of Boston, were another important feature of the

¹ James Delgado, *Duwamish* Fireboat National Historic Landmark Study, designated June 30, 1989. Statement of Significance is available online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/maritime/nhl/duwamish.htm>, accessed March 2005.

² See the Puget Sound Fireboat Foundation's website on Fireboat DUWAMISH, <http://www.fireboatduwamish.org/parent/history.htm>, accessed March 2005.

fireboat. The water delivery system was brought above deck to prevent flooding of the hull in case of a pipe break.

CONCLUSION

Fireboat DUWAMISH remains as “the second oldest surviving fireboat built specifically as a fire-fighting vessel in the United States,” and retains a high degree of integrity “as the best preserved, largely unchanged example” of an early twentieth century fireboat.³

³ Delgado, National Historic Landmark Study.