

VLR-6/16/99 NRHP-8/5/99

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

ORB No. 1024-0018

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 Huntington Tugboat

other names/site number VDHR File Number 122-5002

#### 2. Location

Street & Number 1 Waterside Drive Nauticus Pier not for publication N/A  
City or town Norfolk vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code VA county Norfolk code 710 Zip 23510

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

McCarton Susan 6/30/99  
Signature of certifying official Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
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

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: other (explain):

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

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action



U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Huntington Tugboat  
Norfolk, VA

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Steam Powered Tugboat

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_

other Wood, Metal, Steel, Synthetics

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

**8. 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)

Commerce

Transportation

Period of Significance 1933-1947

Significant Dates 1933

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(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

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of Property less than one

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

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 18 384430 4078380 2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

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

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Norfolk, VA

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

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Amy Wood

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ date April 13, 1999

street & number: 5872 Trotman Circle telephone (757) 484-8179

city or town Portsmouth state VA zip code 23703

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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

Name Tugboat Museum

street & number P.O. Box 3263 telephone (757) 627-4884

city or town Norfolk state VA zip code 23514

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**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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*Huntington Tugboat*  
Norfolk, VA

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## 7. Summary Description

The *Huntington Tugboat*, built at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company in 1933, is moored in a basin of the Elizabeth River. She weighs 271.19 gross tons, is 109' long, has a beam of 29', and a draft of 10' 9" fore and 12' 9" aft. Her hull, constructed of steel plates, is based on an earlier design used for the tugs of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. Her keel and waterline are painted black. Her superstructure is "Huntington Brown" (a reddish brown color with varnish added) and her decks are beige. The wheelhouse is located fore of a single stack.

### Description

*Huntington's* two story superstructure contains the main saloon, two cabins, heads and a galley on the lower level, while the wheelhouse and captains quarters are located on the upper level. The heads and the galley are accessed from the decks exclusively. The main passageway, main saloon and berthing areas can be accessed from the deck or from inside the superstructure. Each compartment has been restored with very few alterations made, save for those made with visitor safety in mind.

The *Huntington's* main saloon is 15' x 16'. Along the port, starboard and aft walls is a tongue and groove oak bench that stands 3'7 1/2" high. The bench is marked "life preservers" in several places and life jackets can be accessed from both the front and top of the bench. There are three entrances to the main saloon- two are from the decks (port and starboard) and one from inside from the main passageway, located midship. There are six portholes, two on each of the exterior walls and two aft. The portholes are spaced 34" apart, with a 68.5" space between them on the curved wall. Each porthole rests in a 2'6" x 2'6" metal frame. The portholes are ringed with brass and the fixtures in the room are brass. The walls are painted white and the floor is covered in an industrial red carpet. Light comes from the portholes and from four lights mounted in each corner of the room. A table holds a ship's log, scrapbook, and the original 48 star flag that she flew.

The main passageway gives access the lower deck and the engine room below. There are two entrances on the decks leading into the main passageway. Inside, the passageway leads to the main saloon, aft, and berthing area and stateroom, fore. Many of the pipes and stacks for the engine room are located in the main passageway; there is a 7'9" space in the floor [now cordoned off] that was originally grated. The grates allowed heat from the engine room to escape. The main beam (located in the main passageway) is inscribed per maritime regulations:

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*Huntington Tugboat*  
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NET TONS 158  
OFFICIAL NO. 232744

The tongue and groove paneling that covers the walls and ceiling of the main passageway have been painted white. The chains and ropes of the bell and jingle method for communicating between the wheelhouse and the engine room run along the ceiling. The system is partially operable and all the parts are still in place. Also visible are two of three brass switch plate made by "R&S Co. New York #496." In this room, as well as others throughout the *Huntington*, are photographs of the *Huntington* throughout the years, from her launch to her restoration.

From the main passageway, a narrow doorway leads to the berthing area and stateroom. The berthing area is narrow and looks directly into the main passageway. On the interior wall of the berthing area are two pine 6'8" bunks, which are flanked by lockers at the head and foot. The room measures 5'3" x 17', with a sink approximately 5' from the door. The entrance to the stateroom is at the foot of the bunks of the first room. Inside the stateroom, the bunks are against the interior wall and also flanked by varnished wood lockers with brass handles. The second room is 7' x 17' with a desk sink, mirror, soap and toothbrush holder [all appearing to be the original fixtures]. Both rooms have a slight gradual downward slope in the ceiling from bow to the stern. In each of the rooms is a four foot heat vent, probably installed in the 1950's. Both berthing area and staterooms open onto the decks; the first room opens onto the deck and into the stairway leading to the topdeck and each have a porthole.

On both sides and accessible only from the decks, are the heads. Each head is 5'3" x 4'. The floor is black and white tiled. The toilets and sinks are porcelain and are original. Although not originally equipped with a shower, a small showerhead has been added to the wall just above the sink in the starboard head. The door of the port side head is Dutch and fitted with a brass lock. Original plans have the heads segregated by race (see plans included).

Located on the bow is the galley, which can be accessed from both decks. The galley is shaped triangularly, measuring 9' x 12' on the interior wall. The interior wall contains the stove, cabinets, sink, and refrigerator. The cabinets below the counter are all latched to remain close while under way. The counter is lipped to prevent objects from falling from the counter while the tug is in motion. On the wall are wooden cubbyholes with small openings. The floor is covered in lineolinum. The table for the galley is across from and perpendicular to the counter. with a heavy wood bench on each side. The table edge is also lipped. Three portholes run along the walls about 5'5" from the floor, with three on an upper wall set off center from those below and the system of support beams is exposed.

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*Huntington Tugboat*  
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The decks today are steel plates; however, the *Huntington's* lower deck was originally teakwood. The teak lasted about 30 years before beginning to splinter. As the teak splintered, it would snag the lines, making for a dangerous workplace for those on board. In the 1960's, a masonry surface called Shelby-Tuff was slathered over steel plates, replacing the teak decking<sup>1</sup>. The new deck is resistant to chafe and is, so far, rust free. On the bow are the mooring bits, and lines. Also on the bow, the *Huntington's* original wood flagpole carries the Virginia state flag. The stern contains the two-H (towing) bits, hawser capstan and lines for towing.

From the stern, a ladder leads to the top deck (as does a small set of stairs on the starboard side). Three pipes that lead from the engine room vent from the top deck. In the middle of the top deck is a functional fire pump. A smokestack, which had been cut down from its original height of 22', once bore the logo of Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co. (the letters NN, separated by a compass, all within a circle). The owners have restored the smokestack, bringing it back to its approximate height. The angle of the ladder on the stern that leads to the top deck has been altered for the safety of visitors to the *Huntington*.

Located fore on the top deck is the wheelhouse and captain's quarters. Entering the wheelhouse from the stern is the berthing area for the captain. The room consists of oak tongue and groove paneling floor to ceiling. The captain's bunk runs the length of the room, 6'8", and is 4' high. There are four drawers and one small locker located under the bunk. There is a small porcelain sink next to the bunk. Over the sink is an oak slab that folds down to become a table for charts or correspondence. There is one wooden locker similar to those in the berthing areas. There are six windows, all single panes of glass and the doors to the captain's quarters are oak single leaf with two windows. Up three steep steps from the captain's quarters is the wheelhouse.

The wheelhouse is u-shaped and measures 9'3"x 6'0". Oak tongue and groove paneling runs along the lower half of the walls and along the bench. The upper half of the room is windows. There are five 3/1 windows, two single pane windows measuring 2'3"x 1'3" and two single leaf doors with light. There are two 2'x 2' heaters, on each side of the room. In the center of the room is the wheel and throttles. The compass is mounted in front of the wheel. Charts and guides are displayed along the walls. The *Huntington's* original clock and weatherglass are mounted in one corner of the room. The brass speaking tubes and pulleys for the bell and jingle system of communication are still in view, as are the ropes for her horn, which is still operable.

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*Huntington* Tugboat  
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The locks that hold open the doors to the wheelhouse are brass and imprinted:

OCT 8, 1922  
LA PORTE, IND

Whether this date indicates when the latches were constructed or is the date of the founding of the company is unknown. It may be possible that the latches were salvaged from another tug or ordered by the apprentices. On the forward outside wall of the wheelhouse is a small brass bell, engraved:

HUNTINGTON  
1933

The engine room can be accessed from the deck or by a step of steps leading down from the main passageway. The *Huntington* was originally powered by an 800 Horsepower coal-fired steam engine.<sup>2</sup> In 1950, the steam engine was replaced with a 1200 HP GM-12-278A diesel engine with an air clutch. However, the air clutch proved inadequate for the *Huntington*, and in 1952, Newport News Shipbuilding was convinced to switch the engine to an electric drive. The electric drive lasted until 1994, when the *Huntington* retired.

*Huntington's* main shaft stern tube bearing is made of lignum vitae wood. Lignum vitae is a strong, long lasting tree which grows in water. Lignum vitae was commonly used in ship construction in the 1920's and 1930s. However, less than one percent of shipbuilders use it today, as metal is favored over wood<sup>3</sup>.

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*Huntington* Tugboat  
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## 8. Statement of Significance

### SUMMARY

Designed and built in 1933 by the apprentices at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., and named for its founder, Collis P. Huntington, the *Huntington* tugboat helped move an estimated 30,000 ships during her time of service at the shipyard, mostly during World War II. Nominated under criteria A, with areas in transportation and commerce, *Huntington* is one of the most enduring tugs of her era. She continued to work after some of her colleagues retired. *Huntington* was retired from service at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company in 1992. She came out of retirement that same year to work for a Bay Towing, a Norfolk, Virginia, towing company. Her final retirement came in 1994.

### History

In 1869, Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker built the Central Pacific Railroad<sup>4</sup>. After this rail line and two other railroad lines proved prosperous, Huntington bought the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad (C&O) in 1879. When Huntington acquired C&O, the tracks only ran from Richmond to Newport News. As Huntington toured his railroad line, he discovered a prime location to start a new empire-- shipbuilding. The C&O tracks ended at a natural harbor and Huntington discovered that the James River provided deep water, an entrance to the sea, water that did not freeze in the winter and weather that allowed year round work. The location was also close to the yards at Portsmouth and Norfolk.

Collis Huntington acquired the land in 1879, extending the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad further into Newport News<sup>5</sup>. Collis Huntington established the Old Dominion Land Company in 1880. As the year went on, Huntington laid out the lots and so began the development of Newport News Shipbuilding. In 1882, the year the Old Dominion Land Company piers opened, more than 100,000 tons of coal had been shipped from the C&O Railroad<sup>6</sup>. As his railroad grew, Huntington sought to found a dry-dock to repair ships. The Chesapeake Dry Dock and Construction Company (as the shipyard was first named) was chartered on January 28, 1886<sup>7</sup>. As the yard expanded, there was a greater need for assistance with the ships that leaving and entering the yard. Collis Huntington had the yard apprentices design a boat for work around the yard. The first tug built there, *Dorothy* (Hull No.1), now stands at the gates of the shipyard as a monument to the workers of Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company.

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*Huntington* Tugboat  
Norfolk, VA

WE SHALL BUILD GOOD SHIPS HERE  
AT A PROFIT -IF WE CAN-  
AT A LOSS -IF WE MUST-  
BUT ALWAYS GOOD SHIPS  
Collis P. Huntington

His motto for the shipyard rang true. When he died in 1900, his shipyard was one of the largest employers on the East Coast. In the years between 1928 and 1939, the shipyard had average earnings of 1.6 million dollars and grew by 3741 employees. In the years between 1929 and 1934, the yard handled over 232 million dollars worth of work on 126 vessels; during the shipbuilding recession of these years, Newport News made a profit of 4.4% (10.2 million). "Modest, yet credible for the depression<sup>8</sup>."

The yard also faced another challenge during the war years-- "building the greatest navy and merchant ships and delivering them at a rate faster than the German submarines could sink them<sup>9</sup>." The shipyard was a busy place during the war and boom years and needed another tug to work the yard. General Order No. 776 called for a new tugboat to be built by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company to replace the yard's primary docking tug *Ideal* with a more modern vessel. On March 2, 1933, the contract to begin building this new tug was granted. The apprentices at the shipyard planned the design for the new tug. The *Huntington*'s design was loosely based on a tugboat design built earlier for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. However, the apprentices decided to widen the beam of *Huntington* by a foot, allowing her to get closer to the ships she was moving. Getting closer to the hull of the ship being moved allowed the *Huntington* more control during the dead moves (when the tug acts as the engine and rudder for the ship being moved.) On August 14, 1933, the keel for the newest yard tug, *Huntington*, was laid. She was launched two months later on October 11, 1933, and quickly became the yard's work tug during this busy time. The *Huntington* moved over 30,000 ships during her service at Newport News. Most of her work was during the war years under Captains R.A Callis (1933-1946), M.L. Ambrose [who became a local legend for his skillful handling of the *Huntington* and the ships that she was to dock. Captain Ambrose was a deckhand aboard the *Huntington*'s predecessor, the tug *Ideal*] (1944-1967), and Reggie Hunley [a former deckhand aboard the *Huntington*](1967-1992).

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*Huntington* Tugboat  
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In World War II, emergency shipbuilding and repair work grew at a staggering rate. Employment at the shipyard grew from 6,500 to more than 100,000 during the years between World War I and World War II, and the output tripled the number of ships built during World War I and four times the gross tonnage of the previous ships<sup>10</sup>. Aside from her other duties, the *Huntington* worked alongside the C&O railroad tug, assisting cargo carriers and troop ships travelling to Europe<sup>11</sup>. *Huntington* was present at the 1939 christening of the *America*, and later towed her into a drydock for transformation into the troop ship *West Point*<sup>12</sup>.

After the war, work for the *Huntington* slowed down a bit, but it never stopped. During her service at the shipyard, the *Huntington* helped move:

- every aircraft carrier built at the yard, including the *USS John F. Kennedy*, *USS Forrestal*, *USS Ranger*, *USS Essex* and the *USS George Washington*
- luxury liners *United States*, *Queen Elizabeth II*, *Norway*, *Oceanic* and *America*. (*Huntington* moved the ship into drydock to become the troop ship *West Point* and then moved her again for the transformation back into the luxury liner *America*).
- every submarine built at the shipyard through 1992; including the *USS Nevada*, the Navy's largest Trident Ballistic submarine
- the largest ship to enter an American shipyard, the 252,000 ton *London Lion*
- the largest ship ever repaired at the shipyard, the *M/S Kirsten Maersk*<sup>13</sup>.

*Huntington* not only moved ships, she moved people as well. Besides carrying soldiers to rendezvous with troop ships, the May Club, an "organization of top production personnel"<sup>14</sup>, held annual parties aboard the *Huntington*. The *Huntington* also carried the Board of Directors for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (David Brinkley was one of the guests that day). Admiral Hyman Rickover, Lawyer Edward Bennett Williams, as well as presidents of the Shipyard and Tenneco, have also been guests aboard the *Huntington* during her service at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company<sup>15</sup>.

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*Huntington* Tugboat  
Norfolk, VA

Unfortunately, *Huntington* shared the fate of her predecessors and in 1975, she was replaced with a larger, and more modern, tug. With a new tug coming, the *Huntington* was to be sold and her name passed on to the new tug. However, for mostly sentimental reasons, the *Huntington* was kept as a reserve tug at the shipyard. Age, and time soon took a toll on her and in April 1992, she was sold to Bay Towing Co. of Norfolk. In an ironic move, when the tug *Dorothy* was to be returned to the Newport News Shipbuilding, it was *Huntington* who tugged her back to shipyard where they both were built, worked and retired from. Bay Towing was able to operate the *Huntington* for a few years, but much needed and expensive engine repairs forced her retirement in 1994. After her sale in 1992, the tug that replaced her was renamed *Huntington*, so the name still lives at Newport News.

When the *Huntington* was finally retired, many of those who had worked aboard her took some pieces as mementos. When word of her restoration spread, her wooden flagpole, ship's clock, barometer and numerous charts were some of the items returned. Many of the *Huntington*'s former crew, from captains to mates returned to give advice and assistance in restoring and to share stories of their days aboard the *Huntington*.

Now serving as a museum dedicated to the history of tugboat life, the *Huntington* is permanently berthed at Nauticus, a Maritime Museum located in Norfolk, Virginia. Although no longer operating, her engines are still present. Visitors are encouraged to tour all of the *Huntington*, including the engine room, try out the fire station and ring the ships' bell.

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*Huntington Tugboat*  
Norfolk, VA

ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Hunley, Reggie. "The Huntington" (unpublished article) Norfolk, VA: American Rover Office, 1995. Photocopied. p2
  - <sup>2</sup> Hunley, p1
  - <sup>3</sup> Newport News Shipyard Bulletin, May 1991. p2
  - <sup>4</sup> Lewis, Oscar. The Big Four New York: Alfred Knopf, 1938. p263
  - <sup>5</sup> Tazewell, William. Newport News Shipbuilding: The First Century Newport News: The Mariner's Museum, 1986 p28
  - <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>7</sup> Ibid
  - <sup>8</sup> Tazewell, p105
  - <sup>9</sup> Tazewell, p108
  - <sup>10</sup> Tazewell, p105
  - <sup>11</sup> Newport News Shipyard Bulletin, June 1992. p5
  - <sup>12</sup> Tazewell, p105
  - <sup>13</sup> Hunley, p3
  - <sup>14</sup> Tazewell, p102
  - <sup>15</sup> Hunley, p4

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*Huntington Tugboat*  
Norfolk, VA

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Hunley, Reggie. "The Huntington" (Unpublished article) Norfolk, VA: American Rover Office, 1995.  
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Newport News Shipbuilding Bulletin, May 1991

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Tazewell, William. Newport News Shipbuilding: The First Century Newport News: The Mariner's  
Museum, 1986.

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*Huntington Tugboat*  
Norfolk, VA

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The tugboat at permanent berth at the Nauticus pier, Norfolk, Virginia.

**Boundary Justification**

Boundaries include everything within registered dimensions *of the structure.*



200 000  
FEET

2.4 MI. TO U.S. 18  
VIRGINIA BEACH (U.S. 60) 1.6 MI.

HUNTINGTON  
VDAR 122-5002

E 384430  
N 4078380

4078

4077

50'

4076