The Los Angeles Fire Department Historical Society (LAFDHS)  
Plan to Preserve LAFD Fireboat 2 – The Ralph J. Scott  
By Frank Borden, LAFD Retired Assistant Chief and Director of Operations of the LAFDHS

The LAFDHS has been working with the Los Angeles Fire Department Preserve Fireboat 2 Advisory Committee since its inception nearly two years ago to develop a plan that meets our three simple goals of the Historical Society, to preserve, educate, and memorialize. An initial plan was developed and approved by this committee to proceed with the placement of the Ralph J. Scott in an enclosed land berth fitting of this historic vessel. This decision to place the vessel on land was made after careful deliberations regarding the condition of the boat and selecting the best option for displaying it so that the most people will benefit from it over the many years to come. The LAFDHS has been the trusted caretaker of hundreds of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) and Historical Society items that have immeasurable value and consider this fireboat to be one of the most historic items in the LAFD inventory. The Ralph J. Scott has been an important part of Los Angeles history for over 78 years and it is our goal to make sure that this vessel is retained by the citizens of Los Angeles who originally purchased it in 1925 and received the benefits of it as the main protector of the Port for all those years. To be sure it was operated and maintained by countless members of the LAFD who were very attached to this boat and worked very hard to keep it running and in top shape for over 77 years which is a record of continuous service for a first line fire apparatus anywhere in the country. This boat is not just a piece of machinery, it is an icon in the city and in the fire service. It is our position to maintain it as the property of the City of Los Angeles and not let it go into private ownership as some have proposed. A marine survey of the Scott was recently conducted by Robert Allen Ltd. The conclusion was the vessel should be removed from the water due to its poor condition. The boat sprung a leak in the hull on November 8, 2003 with near catastrophic results. Quick action by retired fireboat pilot Bill Dahlquist, the LAFD and Larson’s Boat Yard saved the boat from sinking. Due to its condition it should be moved out of the water to an interim location on land as soon as possible. Preferably in the port near Fire Station 112 at Berth 86.

The Ralph J. Scott is currently being taken care of properly and with the utmost care and respect by the LAFD and LAFDHS. A maintenance plan was developed and implemented to make sure the boat is operational and kept clean and as protected as possible while in the water. Some of the removable items were stored for security purposes until the boat is prepared for display. We plan to work with various organizations including the National Park Service, the Port of Los Angeles, and maritime and preservation experts who have joined us in our effort to preserve this vessel and retain its National Historic Landmark status and the City of Los Angeles Cultural/Historic Monument status.

The committee to preserve the boat is made up of the full spectrum of representatives from government, the private sector, and the community. The approved plan calls for an interim maintenance and security program by the LAFD; A haul out for inspection and assessment; The development of a preservation plan to include protecting the vessel, the plan for the vessel’s use, documentation, stabilization, interpretation, treatment approach and long term maintenance. The LAFDHS is supporting the construction of a berth on land with a protected boathouse in the new Waterfront Promenade area between Fire Station 112 and the Maritime Museum. We would
never jeopardize its historic value in any part of this project and have enlisted the help of experts in the field of maritime preservation to ensure that all the appropriate steps are taken to reach our goal. Our position to place the boat out of the water conforms to the best alternative to preserve a vessel by the National Park Service Standards for Historic Vessel Preservation as follows: “A vessel that is out of the water, in a protected environment such as a building, can be treated in virtually the same manner as any museum artifact. Given adequate structural support, protection, and environmental control, such a vessel, once stabilized, can be preserved indefinitely.”

The “Scott” should be placed in a beautiful setting near the water and its last assignment, Fire Station 112, that provides for its protection and security and for full access by all who visit it. The site will be surrounded by displays from the boat to include photographs, videos, equipment items, and memorabilia that has been preserved for many years so that the complete story of this vessel can be told to the thousands of visitors who will come to learn about its history and the significant role it played in the protection of the port.

The LAFD Historical Society is fully committed to making sure the “Ralph J. Scott” becomes the focal point in the Port for people to enjoy for generations to come. We want to be certain that this project conforms to our goals as follows:

That the Ralph J. Scott is preserved in the most effective way possible
That the Ralph J. Scott provides the optimum educational opportunity for all who visit.
That the Ralph J. Scott and the crew who served for over 77 years are properly memorialized.

LAFD Fireboat 2 – The Ralph J. Scott
   At Old Boat 2’s Station

Berth 227 San Pedro, Terminal Island – Circa 1976

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