N.S. Savannah Returns from Dry Dock



NS Savannah reaches the Golden Gate Bridge in 1962 en route to the World's Fair in Seattle. U.S. government archives

WASHINGTON – The N.S. Savannah, the world's first nuclear-powered merchant ship, was to begin its journey back on Feb. 13 from dry-docking in preparation for decommissioning, the Maritime Administration said in a release.

Having spent the last few months at Northeast Ship Repair in Philadelphia undergoing maintenance, the ship will be back at home at the Canton Marine Terminal in Baltimore by Feb. 14.

The only U.S.-built, nuclear-powered merchant ship, the Savannah was in Philadelphia for general inspection, repairs and structural modifications. The ship was a demonstration project for the potential use of nuclear energy and was named after the SS Savannah, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

The N.S. Savannah, which was deactivated in 1971, was in service between 1962 and 1972 as one of only four nuclear-powered cargo ships ever built. Soviet icebreaker Lenin, launched in 1957, was the first nuclear-powered civil ship.

While the last nuclear fuel was removed from the Savannah nearly 50 years ago, there are still components of the nuclear power plant that need to be removed to support its decommissioning. A contract for decommissioning the vessel's nuclear plant is expected to be announced later this year.

Once the ship is back in Baltimore, it will be open for limited tours.