

MARY 16 1984

Maryland Historical Trust  
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Magi No. 2103385733  
DOE  yes  no

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

**1. Name** (indicate preferred name)

historic NELLIE L. BYRD

and/or common skipjack

**2. Location**

street & number Gibsonstown Road n/a  not for publication

city, town Tilghman n/a  vicinity of First congressional district

state Maryland 024 county Talbot 041

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property** (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Daryl Larrimore

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone no.:

city, town Tilghman, Maryland state and zip code 21671

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a liber \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ folio \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys**

title Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft

date 1983-1984  federal  state  county  local

postory for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state MD 21401

# 7. Description

Survey No. T-538

Condition		Check one	Check one		
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed				

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 53.6-foot long, two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a "skipjack." Built in Oriole, Maryland in 1911 for the oyster dredging fleet, she is Bay-built using cross-planked construction methods. She has a beam of 26.7 feet, a depth of 4.8 feet, and a net tonnage of 18 tons. She carries a typical skipjack rig with a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wood hoops at the mast, and a single large jib with a club on its foot. The hull is painted the traditional white.

The vessel has a longhead bow with a slightly raking stem and a wide, square transom stern with considerable rake. The stern shows a long, shallow tuck where the chine meets the transom. The vessel is particularly wide amidships, giving her generous work space on deck. The rudder is carried outboard on pintles mounted on the transom and skeg; the jig for the pushboat is set on the starboard side of the transom. The hull has heavy ice sheathing carried well above the waterline.

The boat is flush-decked. From the stern forward deck structures include: a box over the steering gear; a cabin with a slide offset to port; a small hatch; a box over the winders; a main hatch; and a medium-sized cuddy with a slide, located just aft of the mast. There is a low taffrail surrounding the deck, higher at the stern. The pipes of the rail and the davits for the pushboat are painted white.

The single mast is well-raked aft, about 15° to 20°, and is set up with double shrouds and turnbuckles. There are also a forestay, jibstay, topping lift, and lazyjacks. The boom is jawed to the mast; both mast and boom are natural oiled wood. The bowsprit is hexagonal, round at its end. It is set up with one chain and one cable bobstay, and two chain bowsprit shrouds. The boom is set high and is patched with metal strips. The pushboat is carried on pipe davits over the stern.

Decorations include trailboards mounted on the longhead, with the name NELLIE L. BYRD in gold on a green field with a red surround, and eagle, flag, and arrow motifs. On the nameboards at the bow, the name is painted red on a black ground. There is a painted eagle billet-head on the longhead.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. T-538

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	1911	Builder/Architect	Unknown
check: Applicable Criteria:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D
and/or			
Applicable Exception:	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> none
Level of Significance:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national	<input type="checkbox"/> state	<input type="checkbox"/> local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result--with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom--proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Mondays and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

NELLIE BYRD is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks still dredging in the Chesapeake fleet. She was built in 1911 in Oriole, Maryland following traditional Bay-area design and construction methods. She has worked in the oyster-dredging fleet since her building. For many years NELLIE BYRD was owned by Capt. William Todd of Cambridge and, at 53 1/2' long, was the largest skipjack in Dorchester Co. A trio of skipjacks, owned and skippered by the Todd family, was for many years based in Cambridge. Capt. William Todd's brother Wilson owned the SALLY BRAMBLE and his brother Emerson, the REBECCA T. RUARK, also sold to Tilghman in 1983-84.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No.

See Thematic Group nomination cover form, Continuation Sheets No. 8-13.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tilghman, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 18 384240 4285550  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

### Verbal boundary description and justification

This working vessel is usually docked at the location indicated in Item 2. Historic boundaries are coterminous with the hull.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M. E. Hayward

organization Radcliffe Maritime Museum Maryland Historical Society date May, 1984

street & number 201 West Monument Street telephone (301) 685-3750

city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
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