

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lettie G. Howard other names/site number Mystic C., Caviare

2. Location

street & number South Street Seaport Museum, off South Street not for publication city, town New York vicinity state New York code NY county New York code 61 zip code 10038

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked), public-local, public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure (checked), object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total).

Name of related multiple property listing: Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official, Date, State or Federal agency and bureau.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official, Date, State or Federal agency and bureau.

5. National Park Service Certification

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

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce-Trade

Fishing

Agriculture-Subsistence

Fishing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

N/A

roof N/A

other Hull - Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The wooden fishing schooner Lettie G. Howard, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is one of only two remaining examples of the Fredonia type that once was the standard design for large American fishing vessels. Lettie G. Howard has been covered with a protective "shiphouse" to prevent deterioration while awaiting restoration. She is owned by South Street Seaport Museum and is afloat at the museum's waterfront center on the East River in New York harbor.

LETTIE G. HOWARD AS BUILT AND REBUILT

Lettie G. Howard was built at Essex, Massachusetts, in 1893 by Arthur D. Story. She is a Fredonia model, two-mast, fishing schooner built for dory fishing. Lettie was 74.6 feet long, 21 feet in breadth, 8.4 feet depth of hold, with a gross tonnage of 59.74 and a net tonnage of 56.76. The hull was constructed of treenail-fastened pine planking over oak frames. Like other Fredonia model schooners, Lettie G. Howard had a long, narrow entrance leading to a midsection with moderate deadrise, and a long run aft to a narrow, strongly raked counter. [1]

On deck Lettie G. Howard had a towing bitt and windlass forward of the foremast, a companionway leading to the forecastle, small mainhatch, mainmast, afterhatch, scuttlebutt, cabinhouse, and patent steering gear. Belowdecks Lettie was divided roughly into thirds by two bulkheads. The forward section held the forecastle in which the fishermen lived in bunks along each side. The fish hold occupied the middle third, while two small storage compartments and a large stern cabin took up the after third.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture (Naval)
Maritime History
Industry (Fishing)
NHL XII-L: Business: Shipping and
Transportation

Period of Significance

1893-1966
1893-1966
1893-1966

Significant Dates

1893, 1923, 1966
1893, 1923, 1966
1893, 1923, 1966

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Arthur D. Story

Architect/Builder

Arthur D. Story

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The wooden fishing vessel Lettie G. Howard, built in 1893, is the last remaining example of a Fredonia model schooner, once the standard fishing boat type in North American offshore fisheries. She is owned by South Street Seaport Museum and is afloat at the museum's facility on the East River in New York City Harbor. [1]

The preceding statement of significance is based on the more detailed statements which follow.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE FOOTNOTES IN TEXT.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

South Street Seaport Museum, NY

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A 18 5841210 45062310
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that area encompassed within the area defined by the extreme length and breadth of the vessel.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The entire vessel's area is encompassed within the boundary.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kevin J. Foster, Historian date August 5, 1988
 organization National Park Service (418) telephone (202) 343-9550
 street & number P.O. Box 37127 city or town Washington, state D.C. zip code 20013

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

The rig carried by Lettie had the mainmast placed just abaft the midpoint of the deck with the foremast well forward. Topmasts were carried on both fore and main masts. When racing to or from the fishing grounds eight sails could be set. These were a flying jib which extended from the end of the long bowsprit to the head of the topmast, a loose-footed outer forestaysail and boomed inner forestaysail, a small foresail set with a gaff and boom, a gaff-topsail, fisherman staysail, mainsail, and main gafftopsail. The huge mainsail was set from a gaff with a boom that extended nearly a third of its length beyond the stern. [2]

In 1923 Lettie G. Howard was rebuilt by new owners to compete with motor fishermen starting to appear in large numbers in the Gulf. The owners took advantage of the rebuilding to have Lettie redocumented as well. This entailed a new set of measurements which differ slightly from the first measurements made in 1893. Then documented as Mystic C., the schooner was registered with a length of 75.4, breadth of 20.8, and 8.5-foot depth of hold. A 36-horsepower engine was installed in 1924 along with a new sternpost and rudder. Subsequent alterations included the removal of topmasts and bowsprit and the addition of an enclosed pilothouse aft. [3]

PRESENT CONDITION OF LETTIE G. HOWARD

South Street Seaport Museum completed restoration begun by Historic Ships Associates in 1968 and returned the schooner's original name Lettie G. Howard in 1972. This work included new masts, removal of the engine and pilothouse installed in 1923-1924, and renewal of rotten structural members with in-kind materials. Lettie continued to sail until 1980 but due to extensive dryrot became a static museum vessel at that time. In 1987 at the recommendation of a marine surveyor the masts were removed and a shiphouse was constructed to protect the decks until restoration work can continue.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

NOTES

1
Merchant Vessels of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), p.95. Howard Irving Chapelle, The American Fishing Schooners, 1825-1935 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1973), pp. 172-180.

2
"Lettie G. Howard under sail," photo in collection of South Street Seaport Museum Library. This is the only known photo of the vessel as Lettie.

3
Norman Brouwer, "Lettie G. Howard - History," typescript on file at South Street Seaport Museum Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN FISHING SCHOONER

The history of the development of American fishing vessels separated from that of Europe early in the colonial period. The first vessel types engaged in fishing in the colonies were of two broad categories, one derived from the plank-built European shallop and the other from dugout canoes of native Americans. Both types gradually adapted to the conditions of various regions and fisheries. [2] On Chesapeake Bay the dugout grew so large that three logs and a partial deck were required. Later more logs were added to produce the five-log "brogan" and later the seven-log "bugeye." [3]

The shallop grew to become seaworthy enough to allow offshore fishing. Plank-built shallops were given decks with "standing rooms" to fish from and divided into two types by the 1750s. Sharp-sterned double-enders called "pinkies" competed against square-sterned "dogbodies" in races to port that meant higher values for the first to sell his catch. Both dogbodies and pinkies used a simple type of schooner rig with no bowsprit that required only a small crew. As the size of these schooners increased so did the rig that moved them. Bowsprits, and later topmasts, spread more and more sail. [4]

Fishing was done from the schooner herself until the size of schooners had grown so large that smaller two-man boats called dories could be carried and fished from. By 1840 pinkies had reached a maximum size of about 50 feet on deck and were eclipsed by the fishing schooners of square stern design. [5]

The dogbody type hull with full, bluff lines developed into increasingly sharp vessels of 60 to 80 feet long called "bankers," "sharpshooters," and "clippers." Sharpshooter and clipper hulls maintained the shallow draft of predecessors while increasing speed through the use of finer lines and greater length. Bankers were nearly as full-bodied as dogbodies but used increased size for more capacity rather than for greater speed. All three types had an above-water profile with a strong sheer line and a long cutwater and head extending far beyond the bow.

The tendency toward sharper designs for higher speeds continued into the 1890s when the ultimate clipper type appeared. This type was named for the schooner Fredonia, built in 1889.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

Fredonia had a graceful, short clipper stem, long bowsprit, rockered keel, sharply rising floors, gently rounded turn of bilge, and a long raked counter. Her smooth, graceful lines allowed great speed and handiness and soon found many imitators. Later, through the 1890s, "Fredonia model" schooners, designed with greater capacity, became the most common type in the New England and Gulf of Mexico fisheries and though surpassed by later designs, were stplular as powered fishing boats replaced sail in the 1920s. [6]

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF LETTIE G. HOWARD

Lettie G. Howard was built in 1893 by Arthur D. Story at Essex, Massachusetts, to the popular Fredonia model. One of the most famous of New England shipbuilders, Story had built a number of successful schooners and owned three of eight shares in Lettie G. Howard. The other owners were William H. Perkins (2/8), Frederick Howard (2/8), and Edgar Rondall (1/8). [7]

Lettie fished with dories on the Grand Banks until 1901 when she went aground on Brown's Island Shoal southwest of the United States Life-Saving Service station at Gurnet, Massachusetts. Surfmen from the station carried her anchor out beyond the surf and she was refloated. [8] The year following her grounding Lettie G. Howard was sold south like many other New England schooners. Her new owners, E.E. Saunders and Co. of Pensacola, Florida, employed Lettie G. Howard in fishing for red snapper on the Campeche Bank off Yucatan, Mexico. The Thomas Welles Company, another Pensacola concern, bought the Saunders fleet in 1922. When too-frequent repairs made further service uneconomical, Lettie was laid up.

After a year out of service Lettie's documentation was surrendered and she officially ceased to exist. The Oscar Henderson shipyard in Bayport, Florida, rebuilt Lettie G. Howard with sufficient small changes to allow a new registration. The rebuilt vessel was renamed Mystic C. and rejoined the Welles Company fishing fleet in May 1923. In 1924 Mystic C. entered the yard again and was given an engine and a new stern post and rudder to allow her to compete against the power boats then entering the fisheries in great numbers. [9]

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

Mystic C. continued to work in the Gulf of Mexico fishery, downrigged and relying on her engine in later years. Many fishing schooners with sound hulls were kept at work in this way. Bowsprits and topmasts were removed and a wheelhouse was added aft. In 1966 Mystic C. was sold to Historic Ships Associates of Gloucester, Massachusetts, for use as a museum ship in Gloucester. Mistakenly identifying the former name of Mystic C., Historic Ships Associates renamed their vessel Caviare after a Gloucester schooner of that name built in 1891. The clipper bow, bowsprit, and main topmast were returned to the traditional Fredonia silhouette and some interior restoration was done while at Gloucester. The museum failed and the schooner was sold to South Street Seaport Museum in 1968. South Street completed the restoration begun by Historic Ships Associates and after extensive research identified and returned the name Lettie G. Howard in 1972. [10]

NOTES

- 1
James P. Delgado, ed. Evaluative Inventory of Large Preserved Historic Vessels in the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1987), entry for Lettie G. Howard.
- 2
William Avery Baker, Sloops and Shallops (Barre, Massachusetts: Barre Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 82-97.
- 3
Marion Brewington, Chesapeake Bay; A Pictorial Maritime History (Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1953), p. 63.
- 4
Howard Irving Chapelle, American Sailing Craft (New York: Bonanza Books, N.D.), pp.63-96.
- 5
Howard Irving Chapelle, The American Fishing Schooners, 1825-1935 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), pp.23-75.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

6

Ibid, pp. 172-199.

7

Norman Brouwer, "Lettie G. Howard-A History," typescript on file at South Street Seaport Museum Library.

8

Annual Report of the United States Life-Saving Service
(Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 140.

9

Brouwer, "Lettie G. Howard."

10

Ibid.