

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-503

Magi No. 2105035633

DOE  yes  noCHESAPEAKE BAY SAILING LOG CANOE FLEET THEMATIC GROUPAUG 15 1985  
SEP 18 1985

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic ISLAND BLOSSOM

and/or common log canoe

## 2. Location

street &amp; number Miles River Yacht Club n/a not for publication

city, town St. Michaels  vicinity of congressional district First

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 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 type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" 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 John C. North

street &amp; number P.O. Box 479 telephone no.: 822-6378

city, town Easton state and zip code Maryland 21601

## 5. Location of Legal Description

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

street &amp; number folio

city, town state

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

## 7. Description

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### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

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

ISLAND BLOSSOM is a 32' 7-1/2" sailing log canoe built in 1892 in Tilghman, Maryland by William Sidney Covington. She has a beam of 6' 7-1/2". Double-ended, her bow is sharp with a straight, slightly raking stem and a longhead, and she has a sharp stern. The canoe was log-built in the Tilghman fashion. The canoe is privately owned by the family of the builder (see also ISLAND BIRD) and races under No. 9. Her hull is painted white.

The canoe has typical log construction, with a sheer strake lapped giving the effect of a sheer rail. Hanging knees support the washboards, which form a half-deck. Overall, she exhibits a slight S-curve to her sheer and slight flare to her topsides. The bow has a straight, raking stem and a longhead. The sharp stern is overhung with an outrigger, or bumpkin; the rudder is hung outboard on pintles. A centerboard passes through the bottom log and is cased in a trunk.

The canoe is rigged with two masts with adjustable rake, a bowsprit set up with a "footrope" of wood, a bobstay, and two bowsprit shrouds strutted out sideways. Sails include a dacron fore, main, and jib, all with clubs. Fore-and main-sails carry sprits. The rig is removed when the boat is not sailing. There are springboards and extra sails for racing.

The hull is painted white and has recently been fibreglassed over. Coaming and rails are bright. The log bottom interior is unfinished, but the hanging knees and seats are painted white. The boat carries nameboards with ISLAND BLOSSOM in black script letters. She flies a white kite with a flower on it under some conditions.

# 8. Significance

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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** 1892 **Builder/Architect** William Sidney Covington

check: Applicable Criteria:  A  B  C  D  
and/or

Applicable Exception:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G  none

Level of Significance:  national  state  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 last 'surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay racing log canoes that carry on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. In addition, it is a surviving representative of the oldest indigenous type of boat on the Bay--the working log canoe--which was developed in the 17th century by early European settlers from the aboriginal dugout canoe.

Used for transportation and for harvesting the rich bounty of the Bay, log canoes changed little over the centuries. Constructed of from two to seven logs and ranging in length from 20 to 35 feet, they were rigged with one of two sharp-headed spritsails with or without a jib set on raking, unstayed pole masts. Easily and cheaply constructed, some 6300 existed in Bay waters in the 1880's. The working canoes first began to be raced in 1840 and by the 1870's area boatbuilders were building canoes specifically for racing, with lighter, thinner hulls and sharper lines. As mast heights increased to increase sail area the canoes became inherently unstable, necessitating the use of springboards and human ballast. Also part of the racing rig is the outrigger added for balance and to enable the sail tender to sit beyond the overlarge mainsail.

With the invention of the gasoline engine many log canoes were converted to power for oystering, but were then converted back to sail as interest in racing waxed and waned over the years. After peak years of popularity in the 1880's and 1890's, interest in log canoe racing waned in the first two decades of the 20th century only to be revived again in the 1920's. The popularity of racing spearheaded by the Miles River Yacht Club, continued unabated until the present day, although the number of vessels active in the fleet has varied considerably.

ISLAND BLOSSOM is significant as being one of the older canoes in the racing fleet--built in 1892 by noted canoe builder William S. Covington--and for today being owned by the great-grandson of the builder. ISLAND BLOSSOM was one of the noted "Island" series of canoes built by Covington in the 1880s and 1890s and along with ISLAND BIRD is the only member of the original five-canoe group to survive. She was constructed to the order of William H. Myers, Sr. of Oxford who had her logs cut from a tract of woodland near Trappe and floated to Tilghman Island. In the 1920's she was sold to Stanley Evans of Elkton who only occasionally raced her. In 1952 she was purchased by John C. North and brought back to Talbot County. Her hull was in good condition but she needed new spars and sails. The sails were cut by Downes Curtis of Oxford. ISLAND BLOSSOM has won the Governor's Cup and Covington trophies many times in the course of her racing career, first under John C. North and then under his son, the present owner.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brewington, Marion V., Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes (Cambridge, Md.: Cornell Maritime Press, 1963)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name St. Michaels, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	8	3	9	4	1	0	0	4	2	9	5	0	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic boundary of this movable vessel is co-terminous with the hull. The vessel is usually stored at the location indicated in Item 2.

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

state	n/a	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty and Dr. Mary Ellen Hayward

organization 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  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438