

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

K-501

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received AUG 5 1985
date entered SEP 5 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic BERNICE J. DEWITT

and/or common Chesapeake Bay skipjack

2. Location

street & number Town Dock, foot of High Street n/a not for publication

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

state Maryland code 24 county Kent code 029

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

4. Owner of Property

name Captain Andrew McCown
Echo Hill Outdoor School

street & number

city, town Tolchester (Worton P.O.) vicinity of state Maryland 21678

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a

street & number

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional
Chesapeake Bay Crafthas this property been determined eligible? yes nodate 1983-1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

7. Description

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 <u> n/a </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

This vessel is a 42' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. Built in 1904 at Young's Creek, Virginia by W. Thomas Young of Parksley, she shows typical Bay cross-planked construction methods. She has a beam of 15', a depth of 3.3', and a gross register tonnage of 8. Her overall length is 58', to the end of the bowsprit. The vessel carries a typical skipjack rig - a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wood hoops at the mast, and a large jib with a club on its foot. She has a longhead bow and a low square transom stern. Her wooden hull, approximately 75% original is painted the traditional white. The skipjack, which worked dredging oysters through the 1970s, is now owned by a non-profit educational organization and is used for outdoor education on the Upper Bay.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

BERNICE J. has a high bow with an almost plumb stem and a deep cutwater. Her transom is rounded and surrounded with beading. Originally built of yellow bull pine, the vessel has been restored using the same material with the addition of some oak. Her deck is close-laid and 90% original. She was said to have been "built with a hatchet" by W. Thomas Young.

The vessel has a centerboard and a plug rudder carried on a rudder stock mounted inboard of the transom. There was a chock for the pushboat centered on the transom but this is now used for an outboard engine as the pushboat has been removed, being too heavy for the vessel. Davits for the pushboat remain. The single mast is 57' high and is raked aft. It is set up with double shrouds, a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift leading to the end of the 42' boom (measuring the same as the deck). The bowsprit is squared on the tip and the longhead is braced with head rails of wood. The sails are of dacron and were made in Hong Kong for the skipjack, VIRGINIA W. and passed along to BERNICE J. when the former was re-rigged. The mast and boom also formerly belonged to the VIRGINIA W. There are lazyjacks on both main and jib for easier furling.

The decks are flush, of close-laid planking. Deck structures include: a wheelbox with steering gear inside and the wheel mounted on the forward end; a cabin with three tiers including a doghouse providing full-height standing room, with four round ports along its sides; a small deck hatch; a large two-tiered deck hatch abaft the mast; and a sampson post on the foredeck. The deck is surrounded by a low lograil deepening into a pinrail aft. At present no dredging gear is aboard although future plans call for the installation of a set of hand winders to be used for demonstration.

The vessel is painted white. Decorative trailboards with the name BERNICE J. set against a background of scrolled vines and leaves and a flag-shield motif are carried on the longhead.

8. Significance

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1904 **Builder/Architect** W. Thomas Young

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks, although no longer a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States, being used instead for educational programs. 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. BERNICE J. is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks surviving in Chesapeake waters, although no longer a member of the dredging fleet. She was built in 1904 by W. Thomas Young of Parksley, Virginia on Youngs Creek, Accomac County, Virginia and was named after the builder's first child. Young was said to have "built more dredge boats than can be remembered, including the CLAUDE W. SOMERS of 1911. BERNICE J. is also of interest because she is believed to be the first skipjack ever owned by a black - Melvin Christy of Chrisfied, Maryland who oystered along with his wife and used the vessel through 1981. The Echo Hill Outdoor School acquired the vessel from Christy in that year and restored her for use as a "floating classroom." The vessel is still laid out as a working dredgeboat and will soon have a set of handwinders aboard for demonstration purposes. This is of great educational value as handwinders have not been used on skipjacks since c. 1920. Although restored by the Echo Hill School, BERNICE J. is 75% original, and must have been an extremely well-built vessel. She is the official representative of Kent County and flies the County flag, as well as the Maryland flag. She is the only skipjack with an outboard engine rather than a pushboat.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890s 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 for another pass over the oyster beds.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951)

Mary Corddry, "Restored Skipjack will serve as floating camp," Kent County News, 8/31/83.

Bernice J., Jewel of Kent County, Pamphlet published by Echo Hill Outdoor School, 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Chestertown, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification : The historic boundaries of this floating vessel are conterminous with the hull. The boat is docked 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

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/M. E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society date May 1984

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

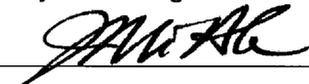
city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21201

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

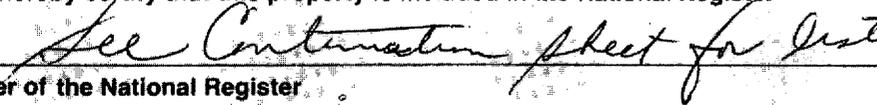
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature  date 8-1-85

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only

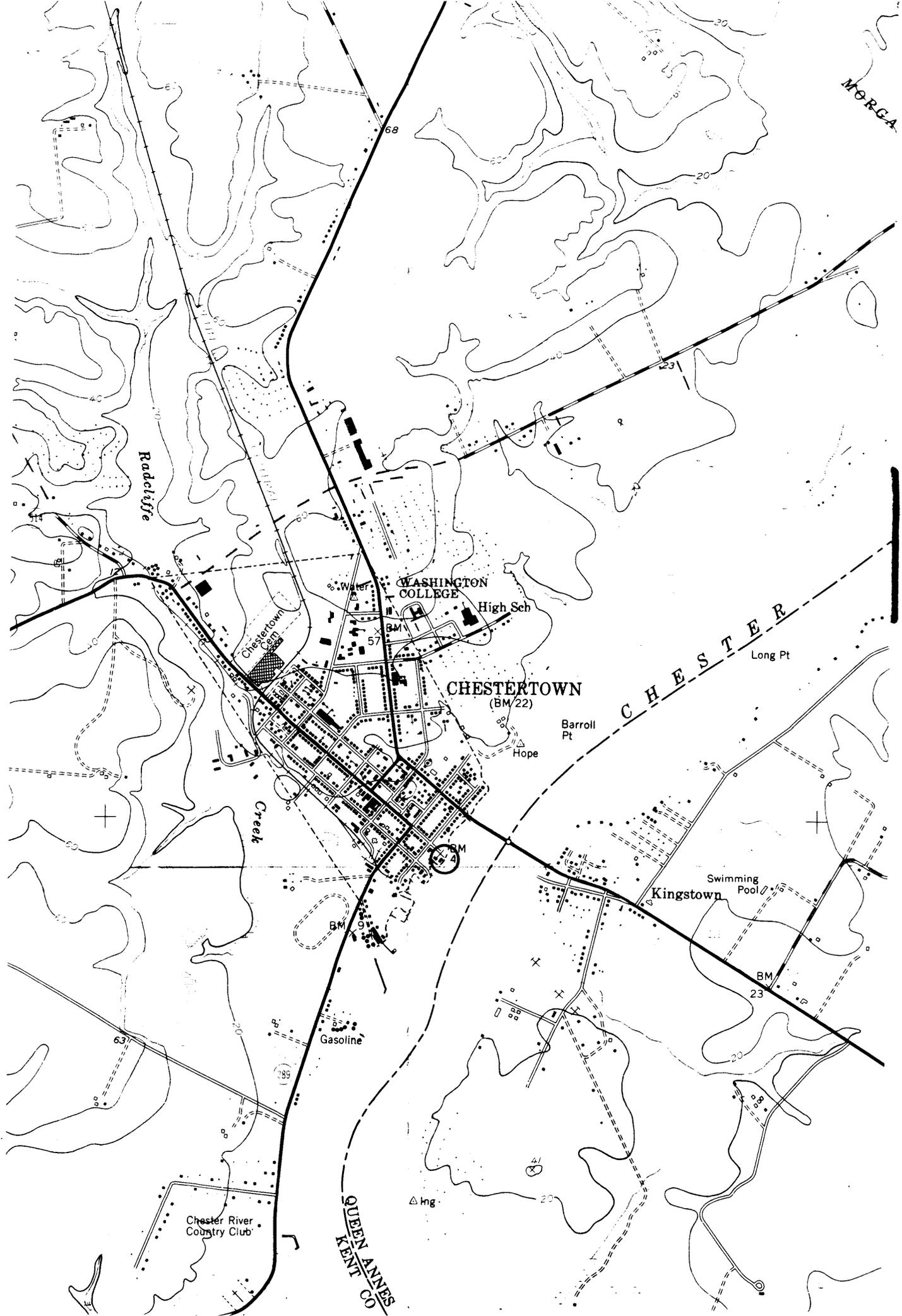
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration



MORGAN

Radtiffe

WASHINGTON COLLEGE
High Sch

CHESTERTOWN
(BM/22)

CHESTER

Long Pt

Barroll Pt
Hope

Creek

Swimming Pool
Kingstown

Gasoline

Chester River
Country Club

QUEEN ANNES
KENT CO