

Survey No. T-542

Magi No.

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic SIGSBEE

and/or common skipjack

2. Location

street & number KNAPPS NARROWS n/a not for publication

city, town Tilghman n/a 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"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Captain Wade H. Murphy, Jr.

street & number telephone no.: 886-2576

city, town Tilghman state and zip code Maryland 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

Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft
title

date 1983-1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state MD 21401

7. Description

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

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

This vessel is a 47-foot long, two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly known as a "skipjack." She was built in 1901 in Deal Island, Maryland for the oyster dredging fleet. She has a beam of 15.8 feet, a depth of 3.8 feet, and a gross registered tonnage of 8 tons. She is built by cross-planked construction methods. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wood hoops at the mast, and a single large job with a club on its foot. The wooden hull is painted white.

The vessel has a longhead bow and a square transom with little rake. There is little "tuck" to the stern, but it meets the chine above the waterline. The rudder is carried inboard.

Decks are flush, with a surrounding low pinrail except at the work area amidships. Deck structures from the stern forward include: a box over the steering gear; a trunk cabin; a small hatch; a box built over the winders; and a main hatch over the centerboard trunk. Other fittings include oystering gear, winders, and davits for the pushboat, which is suspended over the stern.

The single mast is set almost plumb; it came from the old skipjack ROBERT L. WEBSTER and was cut down to fit SIGSBEE. It is set up with double shrouds with turnbuckles. The bowsprit is squared-off on top and is led back to a flat sampson post. The bowsprit is set up with double chain bobstays, and cable-and-chain bowsprit shrouds. Other rigging includes a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift led to the end of the boom, which is jawed to the mast; lazyjacks are used on the sails.

The vessel is decorated with trailboards, with the name SIGSBEE carved on a red field, a green ground with vines and leaves, and a flag-and-shield motif in red, white, and blue, with cannons. The name is also painted in black letters on the hull. The davits for the pushboat are accented in black.

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	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 1901 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

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 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.

SIGSBEE is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks still dredging in the Chesapeake fleet, She was built in 1901 in Ox Deal Island, Md. following traditional Bay-area design and construction methods. Her mast was re-sued from the old skipjack ROBERT L. WEBSTER, a common way of recycling vessel parts. She has worked in the oyster-dredging fleet since her building and is presently based at Deal Island. The vessel is one of the 27 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912. She was involved in a three-way collision with the SEA GULL and the AMY MISTER in the 1969 Chesapeake Appreciation Days races at Sandy Point, Md, as reported in Sports Illustrated.

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tilghman, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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3	8	4	0	4	0
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4	2	8	6	2	6	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

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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