

MAY 16 1985

Survey No. S-241

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 SUSAN MAY

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number LOWER THOROFARE N/A not for publication

city, town Wenona n/a vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland 024 county Somerset 039

## 3. Classification

| Category                                   | Ownership  | Status  | Present Use                                    |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture           | <input type="checkbox"/> museum                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)       | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> site              | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                          | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input 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 Captain Clifton Benton

street & number telephone no.:

city, town Wenona state and zip code Maryland 21870

## 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

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis, state Maryland 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"/> n/a 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 fore-and-aft-planked sloop with a typical two-sail skipjack rig. She works in the Maryland oyster dredging fleet. Built in 1901 in Pocomoke City, Maryland, she measures 46 feet long, with a beam of 15.9 feet and a depth of 1.6 feet; her gross tonnage is 10 register tons. The wooden hull is painted white, with dark tan trim on the taffrail, cabin door, and hatch covers.

In shape the vessel has a longhead bow, with a sharply raking stem and hollow, clipper-like lines. She has a shallow, steeply raked transom stern with a modified platform similar to a patent stern built over the transom. The rudder is carried inboard, well below the waterline. There is a jig for the pushboat on the middle of the transom.

The deck is flush, with several deck structures. From the stern forward these include: a box over the steering gear, located well forward of the after rail; a tall trunk cabin with a slide and a central, full-length door; a main hatch; a box over the winders; and a hatch laid across the deck just aft of the mast. The boat carried dredging gear, rollers for the dredges, and davits for a pushboat suspended over the stern.

The single mast is well raked aft, and bows a bit aft as well. It is set up with shrouds, forestay, jibstay, and a topping lift. The boom is jawed to the mast. The jib-headed mainsail is laced to the boom and carried on wooden mast hoops. There is a club-footed jib. The bowsprit is squared off on top, and rigged with bobstays and bowsprit shrouds.

Decorations include trailboards with the name SUSAN MAY in gold/yellow on a blue ground, in addition to the tan paint trim on the rails, hatch covers, and cabin door.

# 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/<br>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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)           |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   |  |

| 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.

SUSAN MAY is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks still dredging in the Chesapeake fleet. She was built in 1901 in Pocomoke City, Md. and is among the few members of the skipjack fleet not built with typical Bay-area cross-planked construction. Her hull is that of a sloop, fore-and-aft-planked, with the typical skipjack sailing rig. The vessels KATHRYN (1901) and REBECCA RUARK (1896) are the only others in the fleet to be fore-and-aft planked. SUSAN MAY is one of the 24 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912. She has worked in the oyster dredging fleet since her building and is presently based at Deal Island.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No.

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

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Deal Island, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 18 416870 4220240  
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

Radcliffe Maritime Museum

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  
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21 State Circle  
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