

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Lanai  
other names/site number Argo, Official Number 209514  
name of related multiple property listing N/A

### Location

street & number 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin  not for publication  
city or town New York  vicinity  
state NY code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10024

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local

Roy Daniel King Date 12/14/17  
Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:)

Alexis Oberendy Date of Action 2-2-18  
Signature of the Keeper

Lanai  
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5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation / Water-related

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Transportation / Water-related

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7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Houseboat / Yacht

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foundation: \_\_\_\_\_

walls: \_\_\_\_\_

roof: \_\_\_\_\_

other: Wood

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

*Lanai (Argo)* (Official Number 209514) is a private motor yacht berthed at the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin in New York City. The Boat Basin is located at the western end of West 79th Street in Manhattan on the lower Hudson River, within Riverside Park. *Lanai* is located on "C" Dock, starboard-side-to, inside the sea wall on the fixed pier.

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### Narrative Description

*Lanai* has a documented length of 71.5' (76 LOA), breadth 16.8', depth 8.1' and a draft of 4'. She is 76 gross tons, 54 net tons. She has a flared, plum bow and slightly raked stern. *Lanai*'s hull is composed of 4" x 2.5" white oak frames with long leaf yellow pine planking topsides and bottom. She is propelled by twin 4-71 Detroit Diesels exhausted through a single stack. She features mechanical engine controls and hydraulic steering. There are two primary decks. The topside main deck includes a pilothouse, saloon and covered promenades and exterior deck.

From the bow and moving aft, *Lanai* has a small open forecastle which features access to the forepeak, two cowl vents, a samson post and a Lofrans horizontal windlass. Anchors port and starboard are held at hull plates and secured through hawse pipes. Promenades enclosed by brass-based iron stanchions have mahogany top rails which wrap the main deck. An overhead structure stretches the length of the main deck covering pilothouse, saloon, promenades, and after portion of the open main deck. It is supported around the deck edge by iron stanchions. The fixed overhead structure (top-deck) accommodates all navigational lights, a 10" Rayline chrome spotlight, a 4kW radar assembly forward, a 25' mast amidships and exhaust stack for engines and generators aft.

The pilothouse is accessed by mahogany doors port and starboard. Five windows are angled around the front and sides of the pilothouse. The interior includes a mahogany console forward with the original helm, binnacle, throttles and engine gauges. The electrical panel is aft to starboard and a pilot berth is directly abaft the helm. An original mahogany paneled half-bulkhead separates the pilothouse from the saloon, which is accessed through a hinged half-door. The center of this half wall features a stained glass window.

The main saloon (deckhouse) features original mahogany paneling, antique wall sconces, carpeted flooring over original pine decks, single doors aft port and amidships starboard, 13 windows, and a boxed beam overhead. Forward on port, there is a mahogany sideboard and cabinets with a wet bar. To starboard of the sideboard is an original mahogany landing balustrade and original staircase leading to the lower deck. At the after end of the saloon is a set of windowed double doors which leads out to the after portion of the main deck.

At the after edge of the main deck, port and starboard, are stairs and passageways that lead to the lower, open, aft deck. In the center of this lower deck is a 9 x 8' deckhouse whose aftermost egress is an antique leaded glass door acquired from Yale University (later addition) that leads to the aft deck. The aft deck features two bitts, and access to a large lazarette below.

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Below, she features a master stateroom, guest stateroom/library, saloon, galley, two full baths and engine room. Stairs from the exterior main deck lead down to a lowered deck aft, which is slightly raised from the level of the lower deck.

From the landing balustrade in the main saloon, an original matching staircase leads below decks to the lower saloon. The stairs finish with squared posts topped with original rounded columns and carved engravings. The lower saloon is also paneled with original mahogany to starboard, and the secretary and bookcase are also original to the vessel. The owner's stateroom and modern Italian marbled en suite full bath is forward. Opposite the saloon is a guest stateroom/library. Aft of the saloon and guestroom is a modern galley and second full bath. A passageway between them leads to the engine room. The passageway continues through the engine room to the aft deckhouse. A short stairway leads up to the aft deck.

Over her past century of service, *Lanai* has seen some relatively minor modifications but maintains her historic character and integrity. In 1918, Arthur and Harriet James lengthened her astern to provide additional crew space, increasing her length from 70 feet to 71.5 feet. By 1932, the foremost section of the pilot house had been enclosed and the main saloon (deckhouse) had been lengthened to provide additional living space on deck. In 1980-81, Thomaston Boatworks restored the *Lanai*; this project included structural work, including the replacement of approximately one-third of her longleaf yellow pine planking. In addition, the arrangement below decks was altered to its present state.<sup>1</sup> Originally, below, she featured a master stateroom with private bath, 18' x 16' saloon, three staterooms, bath and galley forward of the engine room. At that time, she was also fitted with keel-coolers and dry exhaust. She has been re-powered 3 times since her launch. Despite these changes and necessary maintenance, *Lanai's* exterior, main deck interior and framing and craftsmanship substantially retains its integrity.

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<sup>1</sup> Roger C. Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, "The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1: The Early Years 1910-1925," *Woodenboat Magazine* September/October 1996, 83; Robert Tolf, *Trumpy* (St. Michaels, MD: Tiller Publishing, 1996), 41.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Recreation

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1911-1928

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1911

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

John H. Trumpy (naval architect / designer)

Mathis Yacht Building Co. (builder)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance extends from the *Lanai's* construction at the Mathis yards in 1911 through her sale by her original owner, Arthur Curtiss James, in 1928.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

*Lanai (Argo)* is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the earliest extant yacht built and designed by John Trumpy and produced by the Mathis Yacht Building Company. Renowned boat builder John Trumpy (1879-1963) began working in New Jersey's shipyards during the early twentieth century. The John H. Mathis Company created the spinoff corporation Mathis Yacht, in which John Trumpy was a founding partner, in 1910. The success of the company's first build, *Caliph* (1910, designed by Bowes & Watts), inspired more commissions; as Trumpy continued to work on new design strategies for his new breed of luxury houseboat, each of his early boats had a unique design. Trumpy's yachts combined compact, shallow-draft structures, which allowed them to easily navigate shallow waterways, with robust engines, attractive designs, and comfortable interiors. Built in 1911, *Lanai* was the Mathis Company's sixteenth contract and the fifth houseboat to be produced in the Mathis yard. The Company was pleased with the design, and featured the *Lanai* prominently in its advertisements as late as 1922. Few of Trumpy's prewar yachts are known to still exist; as the oldest of these, *Lanai* is a rare example of her type and can illustrate the company's early designs and construction techniques. She is the oldest known surviving example of a Mathis-built, Trumpy-designed shallow draft luxury houseboat, and, thus, represents a significant contribution to the evolution of the modern motor yacht.

*Lanai* is additionally significant under Criterion A in the area of Recreation for its association with the development of luxury yacht recreational culture during the early twentieth century. As the American leisure class developed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, water recreation became a prominent activity. Wealthy individuals owned and raced yachts and were competitive in their search for more powerful boats and attractive, luxurious designs. Arthur Curtiss James, the *Lanai*'s first owner, was a lifelong yachtsman and excellent navigator. In addition to their home in New York City, he and his wife, Harriet, had homeports in Newport, RI, and Miami, FL, where they were active in yachting culture. Arthur also worked with the YMCA in the effort to make boating and navigation accessible to a wider group of people. Under the ownership of a series of individuals, *Lanai* (renamed *Argo* in 1928) remained a part of this upscale recreational culture well into the mid-twentieth century.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **John Trumpy and the Mathis Boat Building Company**

John Trumpy Sr. (1879-1963), a third generation Norwegian boat-builder, received his early training in Norway and worked at a shipyard in Bremen as a young man. Later, he moved to Berlin where he studied at Die Technische Hochschule, earning a certificate in naval architecture in 1900. During this time, he had already begun to develop an interest in pleasure yachts; his final paper focused on the design of a special, ten-meter yacht with a four-foot draft.<sup>2</sup>

Trumpy emigrated to the United States in 1902, toward the end of a period of major Norwegian immigration; between 1866 and 1915, nearly three quarters of a million Norwegians took the same journey. While most traveled to the Midwest to establish farms, thousands worked in boat building enterprises along the east coast. New immigrants could easily find work and a familiar culture and language in the shipyards. In New York, most boat builders were Scandinavian in origin. Even if east coast shipyards were not in the midst of a building

<sup>2</sup> Robert Tolf, *Trumpy*, 23.

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boom, Trumpy would have had no trouble finding work due to his background and professional training. Soon after arriving, he joined the New York Shipbuilding Company (NYSC) as a marine draftsman in Camden, New Jersey. While the company was focused on large commissions for battleships and destroyers, Trumpy remained interested in yacht building and design.<sup>3</sup>

Around that time, John Trumpy became acquainted with John Mathis, the owner of the oldest wooden shipbuilding concern in the port of Camden. Established by 1852, the Mathis Company had a solid reputation in the excellent construction of river steamers, tugs and barges. In 1909, Mathis and partner William Robinson (president of Mathis Ship), hired Trumpy away from the NYSC with the intention of starting a new company. The Mathis Yacht Building Company was incorporated in 1910 with \$20,000 capital. William Wilson Robinson was listed as its president, John Trumpy its vice-president and naval architect, and John Mathis its treasurer. Due to its association with the Mathis Company, Mathis Yacht had the advantage of being able to offer lower prices than competing yacht builders.<sup>4</sup>

The Mathis Yacht Building Company's first build contract was the shoal-draft cruiser *Caliph*, designed by Bowes & Watts. In 1910, *Caliph* came in first in the Philadelphia to Havana race, and won again on the return race to Atlantic City. This feat gave Mathis Yacht great publicity for their yacht building abilities and helped inspire a number of commissions in its inaugural year. However, Mathis did not have the power yacht market to themselves. There was great competition from many other quality yacht builders even in the early days. Working together, William Robinson and John Trumpy carved out a niche in the market for Mathis Yachts focused on the construction of elegant, comfortable, and seaworthy luxury houseboats. They were the only maritime building concern in the country that made a specialty of houseboats.<sup>5</sup>

That same year, Trumpy designed and built his first luxury houseboat, *Cocopomelo*, for William Disston. This new design of motor yacht was designed to be comfortable enough to live aboard, shallow draught enough to run in canals, bays and rivers and also sturdy enough to make coastal passages. Mathis advertised the design of the boat as combining the comfort and space of a houseboat, the elegance of a yacht, and the speed and appearance of a power boat. The *Cocopomelo* featured a draft of 16 inches, a low forward deck, Pullman windows, small pilothouse and "hard top" above. The 70' model proved popular and four more were built with some modifications: the bow was raised for better sea-going ability, and the draft increased to 27" to keep the propellers below the waterline and above the keel line. In these models, setting the engine room and crew quarters aft gave 75 percent of the overall length to the owner and guests. This also allowed the crew to access the engine room and main deck without having to traipse through guest areas. Larger models had the engines located midship, which was needed for better propulsion for their size.<sup>6</sup>

So pleased with his boat, Disston purchased a flush-deck cruiser from Mathis, and his brother, Albert, ordered a 75' houseboat the following year.<sup>7</sup> With much competition by other yacht builders, carving out a niche in the market was crucial. Producing seaworthy, elegant, shallow-draft houseboats with good cruising speed and all the

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<sup>3</sup> Tolf, *Trumpy*, 31-33.

<sup>4</sup> *Automobile Topics*, February 5, 1910, 1190; Taylor and Lewis, "The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1," 78-80

<sup>5</sup> *America's Maritime Progress, New York Marine News Company* (1920): 433.

<sup>6</sup> John Trumpy, "The Coming of the House Boat," *Motor Boating Magazine* (February 1912): 17-20; John Trumpy, "Uses and Delights of the Power Houseboat," *Frank Leslie's Weekly* (March 1912); Taylor and Lewis, "The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1," 82.

<sup>7</sup> *Motor Boating Magazine* (May 1917): 55.

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comforts of home proved to be very successful. Below the waterline, twin screws with two rudders allowed for greater power and maneuverability. The tunneled stern allowed for minimal draft below. Care was taken in his design above decks as well; houseboats featured compact design above for low bridges and a narrow enough beam to accommodate canals, enabling the Mathis houseboat to “go anywhere” as advertised.<sup>8</sup> The company also continued building sea-going cruisers of their own designs as well as the designs of others.

The Mathis Company also took care to outfit the interiors of its boats in materials and furnishings that suited its luxury aesthetic and fit the needs of their versatile houseboats. Much of the boats’ furniture was “built-in” to cut down on the amount of internal movement should the boat be in a sea. Beds, settees, bureaus, bookcases, china cabinets and other furnishings were usually custom fit and bolted down to bulkheads and soles. Tables and chairs were among the few things that were movable.

As the live-aboard luxury motor yacht was a new concept in yachting, each successive contract improved upon the previous design. The Mathis company designed and built by request, and also built some boats speculatively for future sale; the latter allowed Trumpy to continue to refine his designs without the pressure of client demands. Completed Mathis / Trumpy boats sold for prices between \$20,000 and \$35,000. Eight of the first ten houseboats built were in the 70’ range, but the lengths for different models ranged significantly. An attempt was made to standardize in 1914 by creating a 43’ boat, but only three were built. A 52’ model in 1919 proved to be popular; nine were sold.

Within the first decade of its existence, the Mathis Yacht Building Company had clearly distinguished itself in the leisure boat market. By 1916, Trumpy had designed 18 houseboats and 8 cruisers, many of which were sold to prominent families; an additional 16 cruisers were designed by other Mathis Yacht builders. During this first decade, Trumpy continually modified his designs, incorporating new changes that made his houseboats more comfortable, seaworthy, and attractive. Trumpy’s designs, which balanced excellent handling, practical needs, and pleasing aesthetics, were lauded by yachtsmen and other boat builders.<sup>9</sup> While Trumpy established the general characteristics of this houseboat design early on, he continued to adapt his design over the course of his career as styles and needs changed. For example, a separate generator and boiler were added to provide plenty of electric light and radiant heat. By 1922, the squared-off slightly raked stern was phased out and the cruiser-style rounded counter stern became favorable, which led to the introduction of the full-deck stern in 1927. The rounded counter stern gave a sleeker look with smoother lines and the full-deck stern extended the useful space for the owner and guests. In the 1930s, Pullman-style windows were phased out and deckhouses were extended for more spacious living interiors. The plum bow remained until WWII.<sup>10</sup>

While Robinson remained an important part of Mathis Yacht, Trumpy took on more and more of the work of designing boats and operating the business. His share in the ownership also increased; by 1921, he had become the company’s majority shareholder at 42 percent.<sup>11</sup> John Trumpy became the president of the Mathis Company in 1939, after serving as its central, driving force for many years. Four years later, he renamed the company John Trumpy and Sons to reflect the increasing role of his two sons, Donald and John Jr., in the business. The name change also reflected the company’s move from its original location in Camden, New Jersey, to a larger facility

<sup>8</sup> Trumpy, “The Coming of the House Boat,” 17-20.

<sup>9</sup> Ken Kreisler, “Trumpy Card. Classics worth saving – the right way,” *Yachting* (2008): 118.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, “The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1,” 82.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, “The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1,” 87.



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in Gloucester City.<sup>12</sup> Trumpy retired from the presidency in 1952, at age 73, but remained active in the company as chairman until his death in 1963. His sons continued running the company for another decade, completing its 263<sup>rd</sup> yacht before closing in 1973.<sup>13</sup>

## The Lanai

The *Lanai* was Contract #16 (number 13 was never written due to superstition) and only the 5<sup>th</sup> houseboat produced in the Mathis yard. Arthur Curtiss James commissioned *Lanai* in 1911 to replace an earlier boat of the same name in his fleet, a fifteen-foot Raceabout yacht built ca. 1903; passing names from one “generation” of boats to another was common practice at the time among devoted yachtsmen.<sup>14</sup> A study of Trumpy’s *Lanai* clearly demonstrates that he had already begun to establish the basic parameters of his houseboat design.

*Lanai* and *Lunaria* (no longer extant), both built in 1911, were sister ships in general layout but could not be built from the same mold, as they were two different widths; *Lanai*’s beam was 16’8” and *Lunaria*’s was 18’6.” While original plans for *Lanai* have not been found, a comparison of *Lunaria*’s below-deck. plans and historic descriptions and images of *Lanai*’s original arrangement suggest that they were similar (Figure 1) Both featured a main saloon (fore), central hallway with staterooms, a galley, and bathrooms, and an engine room and crew quarters (aft).<sup>15</sup> (Figures 2 and 3) Whether any differences in size and layout were by customer request or experimentation on Trumpy’s part are unknown. Due to the modest beam and fine lines of both boats, these early 70-foot boats were able to go about 9 knots, a reasonable speed at the time.<sup>16</sup>

In his design for the *Lanai*, Trumpy specifically intended the boat to be versatile enough to function well in a variety of conditions. Trumpy designed the *Lanai* for southern waters but also made her suitable for summer cruising along the Atlantic seaboard and the Erie Canal. As James hoped to use *Lanai* in a variety of settings, Trumpy gave her a 3’6” draft; while this was slightly deeper than some of his other houseboats, it offered her greater stability and flexibility in where she could be used.<sup>17</sup>

The location of the deckhouse forward gave the helmsman an unobstructed view, affording a clear and unbroken view of deck space, and gave her the appearance of a cruiser. Special attention was given to her longitudinal members to give her the necessary strength required for a shallow-draft houseboat of her dimensions and weight, particularly suited to a coastal voyage. To prevent the propellers from extending below the keel line, the stern was tunneled, giving proper protection for the wheels, also allowing for minimal draught. Her plum bow was raised and flared to protect the pilothouse from seas. Below decks, heat was provided by a hot water system located in the galley and Pullman-type windows afforded more ventilation. Two 25hp gasoline engines provided a cruising speed of 9.5 mph. She could carry 350 gallons of gasoline and 700 gallons of fresh water, making longer voyages possible.

<sup>12</sup> “John Trumpy & Sons, Inc.,” *Motor Boating* (1943): 92.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, “The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1,” 78.

<sup>14</sup> John Parkinson, *The Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club: The Early Twentieth Century, 1897-1940* (New York: Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club, 1965), 91, 154-55.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, “The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1,” 82-83; Trumpy, “The Coming of the House Boat,” 17-20; “Lanai, a Shallow-Draft House Boat,” *Motor Boating Magazine* (September 1912): 22-23.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, “The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1,” 83.

<sup>17</sup> Tolf, *Trumpy*, 40.

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In this model, the engine room and crew quarters were aft which enabled crew to enjoy the aft deck out of view from passengers, as well as access the main deck without disturbing the guests inside. Engines set further forward would create greater cruising speed but would sacrifice valuable space amidships, which was not favorable for the 70' design.<sup>5</sup> Trumpy was fully confident of this design, noting in two articles that he believed that his vessels, which were seaworthy inland as well as off the coast, combined with the well-appointed, spacious interiors, created the perfect synergy to appeal to all. He also noted that many indications seemed to point that the *Lunaria* / *Lanai* design was the closest approach to the houseboat of the future, as it was a compromise between comfort and speed, accommodations, crew needed, draft and space below desired.<sup>18</sup>

Once completed, *Lanai* was purchased by Arthur Curtiss James, who wanted the boat delivered to his winter home in Miami. In January 1912, the *Lanai* made her maiden voyage from the Mathis yard in Camden, New Jersey, to her owner in Miami, Florida. The trip caused quite a stir and attested to the durability of the Trumpy design. It was reported that "the river at that time was filled with ice from 10 to 15 inches thick all the way from Camden to Delaware Breakwater, and as it was impossible to run her propellers in the ice-filled river, she was put in tow of a sea-going tugboat. From the Breakwater she had to make the trip outside to Norfolk as the Chesapeake Canal was closed to navigation, being frozen up solid."<sup>19</sup> Upon her arrival, the owner, Mr. James, cruised the Florida Keys and considered a trip to Havana. Trumpy stated that "nothing can more strongly illustrate the capability of the shallow-draft houseboat than this trip of the *Lanai*"<sup>20</sup>

*Lanai* was featured prominently and consistently in advertising for Mathis in such monthly magazines as *Motor Boat* and *Motor Boating* as late as 1922. Advertisements noted her maiden voyage battling ice floes and storms at sea, spacious interior, comfort, yachty lines and always mentioned her prominent owner, ex-commodore of the New York Yacht Club, Arthur Curtiss James. Ads often spoke of the Mathis brand by extolling superior craftsmanship, economy of operation, the Florida winter resort scene, and even how "big men determine the best with exactness before they buy...to have been the choice of such men...is of itself an unsurpassed commendation of Mathis-built houseboats."<sup>21</sup> The company marketed its boats heavily in aquatic publications and newspapers but also medical journals, and occasionally written to appeal to a particular potential customer. Costs ran from \$20,000 - \$35,000 with completion in approximately 90 days. Boats were delivered completely furnished.<sup>22</sup>

*Lanai*, and the Trumpy boats that preceded her, made a rapid impression on the yachtsmen and yachting culture. Their designs reflected a strong shift away from the clunkiness associated with houseboats toward a sleekness and "yachtness" that wealthy boaters desired. Through his attention to detail in his early work, Trumpy gained Mathis Yacht a reputation for craftsmanship, careful construction, and an air of luxury absent from earlier, less-inspired houseboat designs.

## **Arthur Curtiss James & Early Twentieth Century American Yachting Culture**

During the nineteenth century, Newport and Long Island Sound became known for their yachting and racing culture. The New York Yacht Club formed in 1844 in New York City and the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht

<sup>18</sup> "Trumpy, "The Coming of the House Boat,"17-20; "Lanai," 22-23.

<sup>19</sup> "Lanai," 22-23.

<sup>20</sup> John Trumpy, "Uses and Delights of the Power Houseboat," *Frank Leslie's Weekly* (March 1912).

<sup>21</sup> Advertisement, *Motor Boating Magazine* (November 1920): 72.

<sup>22</sup> "Marketing a \$35,000 Luxury Through Advertising," *Advertising and Selling Magazine* (February 1917): 14.

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Club in 1871 in Oyster Bay. Members included the wealthiest Americans and titans of industry, among them, the duPonts, Guggenheims, Morgans, Matthews, Astors and Vanderbilts. Racing and leisure sailing on both sailboats and motorboats of all sizes was common. By 1901, there were 22 clubs as part of The Yacht Racing Association of Long Island Sound.<sup>23</sup> After the railroad came down to Miami in 1896, many of the wealthiest men began buying property and built opulent mansions, particularly in Coconut Grove, creating a “millionaires row.”<sup>24</sup> Miami quickly joined Newport and New York by becoming the winter playground of that set in the early 20th century. The shallowness of Biscayne Bay and the Keys coupled with the great amount of socializing that was done made the shallow draft cruising houseboat the perfect amenity. As James was an ex-commodore of the NYYC and SCYC and had homes in Newport, New York, and Miami, he and his yachts were active participants in this culture north and south.

*Lanai* was first owned by railroad tycoon, philanthropist and yachtsman Arthur Curtiss James (1867-1941) and his wife, Harriet Parsons James (1868-1941). James was born into great wealth as the grandson of the founder of the Phelps Dodge Company, an American mining company, and eventually became the largest private owner of railroad stock in the country. From 1908 until his death, he served as the director of Phelps Dodge and for a time, as its vice president. He also served as president of the Curtiss Southwestern Company and as the chair of the Western Pacific Railroad Company.

James preferred the public view him as a yachtsman rather than a captain of industry, and he shunned publicity for his many philanthropic gifts. James held the prestigious title of commodore of the New York Yacht Club from 1909-1910, as well as of several others, and was familiarly known as “Commodore” to friends and business associates.<sup>25</sup> The Jameses had mansions in New York City, Newport and Coconut Grove, Miami. They were great philanthropists and gave generously to the arts and education. Amherst College, YMCA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Children’s Aid Society are among many which benefitted from the couple’s generosity.

As a lifelong yachtsman, James was a proficient navigator and enjoyed long ocean voyages. And, although yachting was most often thought of as recreation for the leisure class, it was his view that yachts should be more than toys for the rich. He stated that “Yachtsmen have been criticized and in some cases justly for using their magnificent fleet of vessels as mere toys. What an assistance they might be in advancing our knowledge of geography, if their pleasure trips could be turned to some practical account.” And that “The yachtsman who is able to, should command his ship at all times...to improve his navigation and seamanlike qualities.”<sup>26</sup>

To that end, James attended classes to learn terrestrial and celestial navigation, passing exams and showing himself fit to earn an Unlimited Master’s License.<sup>10</sup> If James was aboard, he was in command, be they pleasure trips aboard *Lanai*, on schooner *Coronet*’s (NR listed) famous voyage to Japan, on transatlantic voyages, or the circumnavigation on his 212’ steam driven barque, *Aloha*.<sup>27</sup> His strong belief in ship handling and navigation led him to finance the YMCA Nautical School’s purchase of a 108’ schooner to aid in training young men for

<sup>23</sup> A.F. Aldridge, *The Yachting Record: Summaries of all Races Sailed on New York Harbor, Long Island Sound and off Newport in 1901* (New York: Thomson & Co., 1902).

<sup>24</sup> Coconut Grove, “The History of Coconut Grove,” Available at <<https://coconutgrove.com/history>>.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Glass Cleland, *A History of Phelps Dodge 1834-1950* (New York: Knopf, 1952).

<sup>26</sup> Mabel Loomis Todd, *Corona and Coronet: Being a Narrative of the Amherst Eclipse Expedition to Japan, in Mr. James's Schooner-Yacht Coronet, to Observe the Sun's Total Obscuration 9th August, 1896* (LaVerge, TN: Nabu Press, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Karl Vogel, *Aloha Around the World* (G.P. Putnam’s Sons: New York, 1923).

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work at sea.<sup>28</sup> He also sat on the advisory committee for the YMCA's Marine Engineering Academy, which served the purpose of training young men to become licensed ship engineers.<sup>29</sup>

### Later History of the *Lanai / Argo*

The Arthur and Harriet enjoyed the *Lanai* but decided they needed additional space to accommodate longer trips. In 1918, the *Lanai* was lengthened astern, adding more room to the crew quarters and increasing her gross tonnage. A 1932 photograph (Figure 4) also shows the forward most part of the pilothouse enclosed and main saloon (deckhouse) having been lengthened.<sup>30</sup> Arthur Curtiss James admired the *Lanai*'s design and seaworthiness so much that he commissioned a second, larger version in 1928, eschewing the improvements that Trumpy had made to his overall design in the previous sixteen years.<sup>31</sup>

James sold the *Lanai* to another New York Yacht Club member, George L. Shearer, in 1928. Shearer changed her name from *Lanai* to ARGO upon request from Harriet James.<sup>32</sup> The Jameses retained the name *Lanai* for their new Mathis/Trumpy houseboat, which was an 85' version of their first. Shearer held her until 1931, when she was sold to yet another NYYC member/inventor/industrialist and owner of the Cincinnati Reds, millionaire Powel Crosley Jr, of Crosley Radio and automobiles.<sup>33</sup> At this time she was berthed in his yacht basin at the *Seagate* (NR Listed), Crosley's home in Sarasota, Florida.<sup>34</sup>

*Argo* (formerly *Lanai*) was frequently mentioned in the society pages of New York and Miami newspapers, often hosting guests for social occasions as well as racing in Long Island Sound with the Larchmont and Seawanhaka-Corinthian Yacht Clubs, which included the Vanderbilts, Guggenheims and Morgans among their members.<sup>35</sup> Several later the owners utilized ARGO for chartering. In the early 1960s, *Argo* was owned by Commander Gilliam of the US Navy and berthed in Key West, Florida, as a home for his family. According to the commander's family, both President Kennedy and Cliff Robertson were guests aboard during the filming of the movie "PT-109." Ernest Hemingway and classmate Alan Shepard, among others, are also said to have spent time aboard. Whenever the commander was reassigned to a new base, the family sailed her there, making the trip along the coast several times. In 1980 and 1981, *Argo* was restored by Thomaston Boatworks, which completed some structural work, replaced some of her planking, and further lengthened the main saloon (deckhouse). Since 1981, *Argo* has been berthed in New York City, where she continues to charter to select clientele.

<sup>28</sup> YMCA of the USA, *Association Men* 29 (1903): 523.

<sup>29</sup> *The Marine Review* March 43 (1913): 110.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Righter, "Crosley's Yacht has Long, Rich History," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, December 1, 2006. Includes historic photo of Powel Crosley Jr. with ARGO at Seagate.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor and Dale B. Lewis, "The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1," 83.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from the Department of Commerce authorizing name change, May 29, 1928. National Archives.

<sup>33</sup> Owner's Oath approved by Department of Commerce March 15, 1932. National Archives.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Banks, *Crosley: Two Brothers and a Business Empire That Transformed a Nation* (Cincinnati: OH, Clerisy Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> *New York Times*, August 2, 1915.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

Listing in “Merchant Vessels of the United States” has *Lanai* registered as 1912, but numerous ads featuring *Lanai* specifically say “built by us in 1911.”<sup>36</sup> Also, the 1912 NJ Board of Engineers Report does not include *Lanai* in the list of vessels built by the Mathis yard in 1912.<sup>37</sup> It is also unlikely that any shipyard would launch a wooden boat in the dead of winter into the ice-filled Delaware River to do sea-trials before delivery to Florida.

Owner history:

1912-1927 Arthur Curtiss and Harriet James, homeports Newport,  
RI and Miami, FL  
1928-1932 George L Shearer and Associates, homeport Miami, FL  
1932-1937 Powel Crosley Jr, homeport Miami, FL  
1937-1941 Eugene Jones & Richard Gill, homeport St Augustine FL  
1941-1943 Florida Motorworks (Eugene Jones), homeport St Augustine FL  
1943-1957 Ernest Linwood Willis Sr, homeport Wilmington, NC  
1958-1960 William V Cox, homeport Virginia Beach, VA  
1961-1972 Commodore Gail H Gilliam, homeports Key West FL,  
Portland ME  
1972-1980 Jack W Ross, homeport Portland ME  
1981-1990 Roland Stearns, homeport New York, NY  
1990-present Christopher Williamson, homeport New York, NY

<sup>36</sup> Advertisement, *Motor Boating Magazine* (January 1917), 95; Advertisement, *Motor Boating Magazine* (March 1917), 90; Advertisement, *Motor Boating Magazine* (March 1919), 75; Advertisement, *Motor Boating Magazine* (June 1919), 91; Advertisement, *Motor Boat Magazine* (October 1920), 62.

<sup>37</sup> New Jersey Board of Engineers, *Report* (1912): 26.

Lanai

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### **Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Letter from the Department of Commerce authorizing name change, May 29, 1928. National Archives.

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*New York Times*, August 2, 1915.

Owner's Oath approved by Department of Commerce March 15, 1932. National Archives.

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Righter, Elizabeth. "Crosley's Yacht has Long, Rich History." *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, December 1, 2006.

Taylor, Roger C. and Dale B. Lewis. "The Mathis-Trumpy Story. Part 1: The Early Years 1910-1925," *Woodenboat Magazine* (September/October 1996): 73-88.

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*The Marine Review* March 43 (1913): 110.

Trumpy, John. "The Coming of the House Boat." *Motor Boating Magazine* (February 1912): 17-20.

Trumpy, John. "Uses and Delights of the Power Houseboat." *Frank Leslie's Weekly* (March 1912).

Todd, Mabel Loomis. *Corona and Coronet: Being a Narrative of the Amherst Eclipse Expedition to Japan, in Mr. James's Schooner-Yacht Coronet, to Observe the Sun's Total Obscuration 9th August, 1896*. LaVerge, TN: Nabu Press, 2010.

Tolf, Robert. *Trumpy*. St. Michaels, MD: Tiller Publishing, 1996.

Vogel, Karl. *Aloha Around the World*. G.P. Putnam's Sons: New York, 1923.

YMCA of the USA. *Association Men* 29 (1903): 523.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** .03 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>585530</u> Easting	<u>4515497</u> Northing	3	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing
2	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing	4	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale. *Lanai (Argo)* is a floating vessel moored at the "C" dock of the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin, located at West 79<sup>th</sup> Street in the Hudson River in Manhattan, NY. Her boundaries are self-contained and confined to the extent of the ship's hull and decks.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

As a floating vessel, the boundaries of *Lanai (Argo)* are self-contained. There is no historically significant association between the vessel and the individual dock where she is currently moored. She has been berthed here since 1982.



Lanai

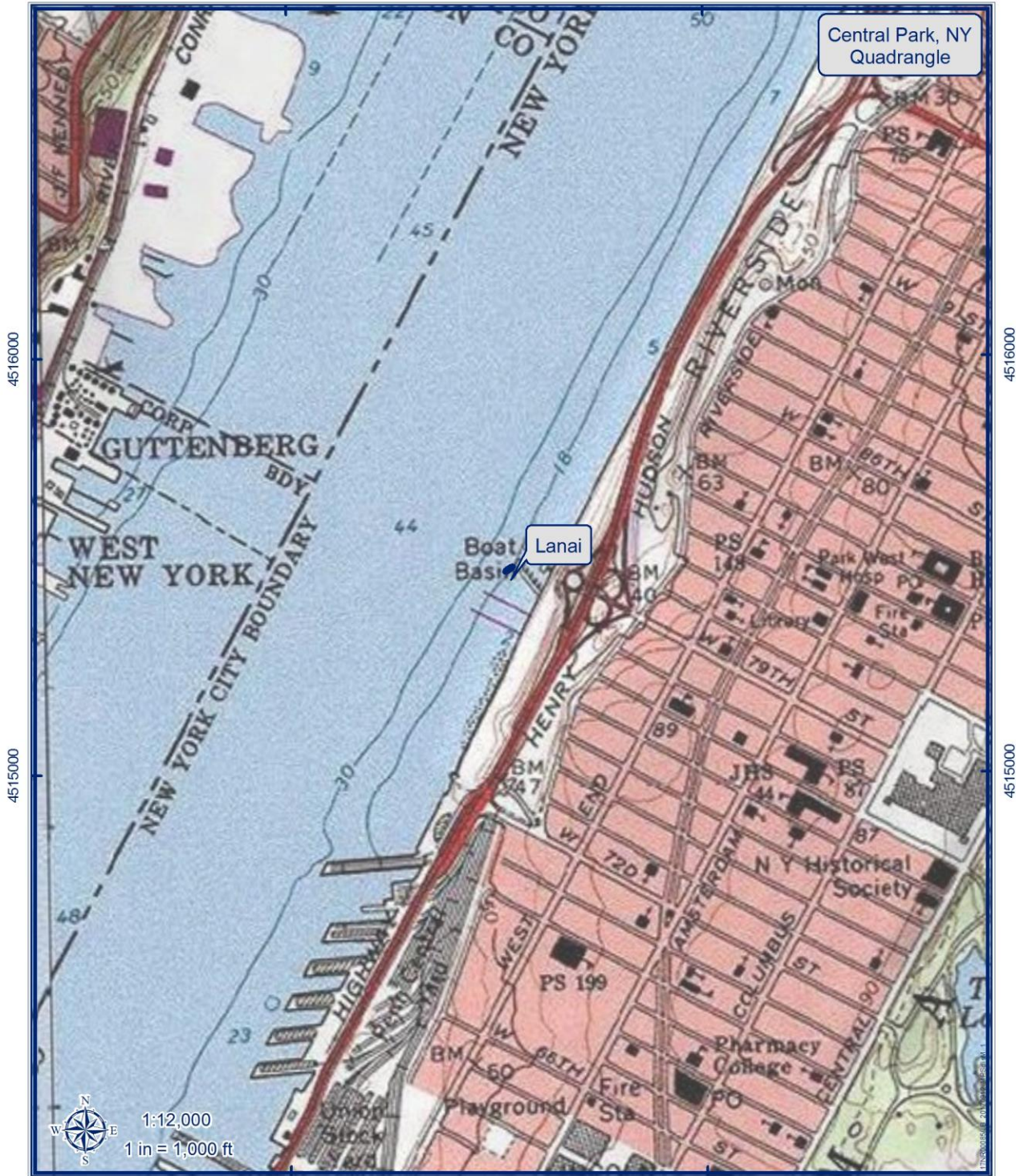
Name of Property

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County and State

Vessel Lanai  
New York, New York Co., NY

79th Street Boat Basin  
New York, NY 10024



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

Lanai

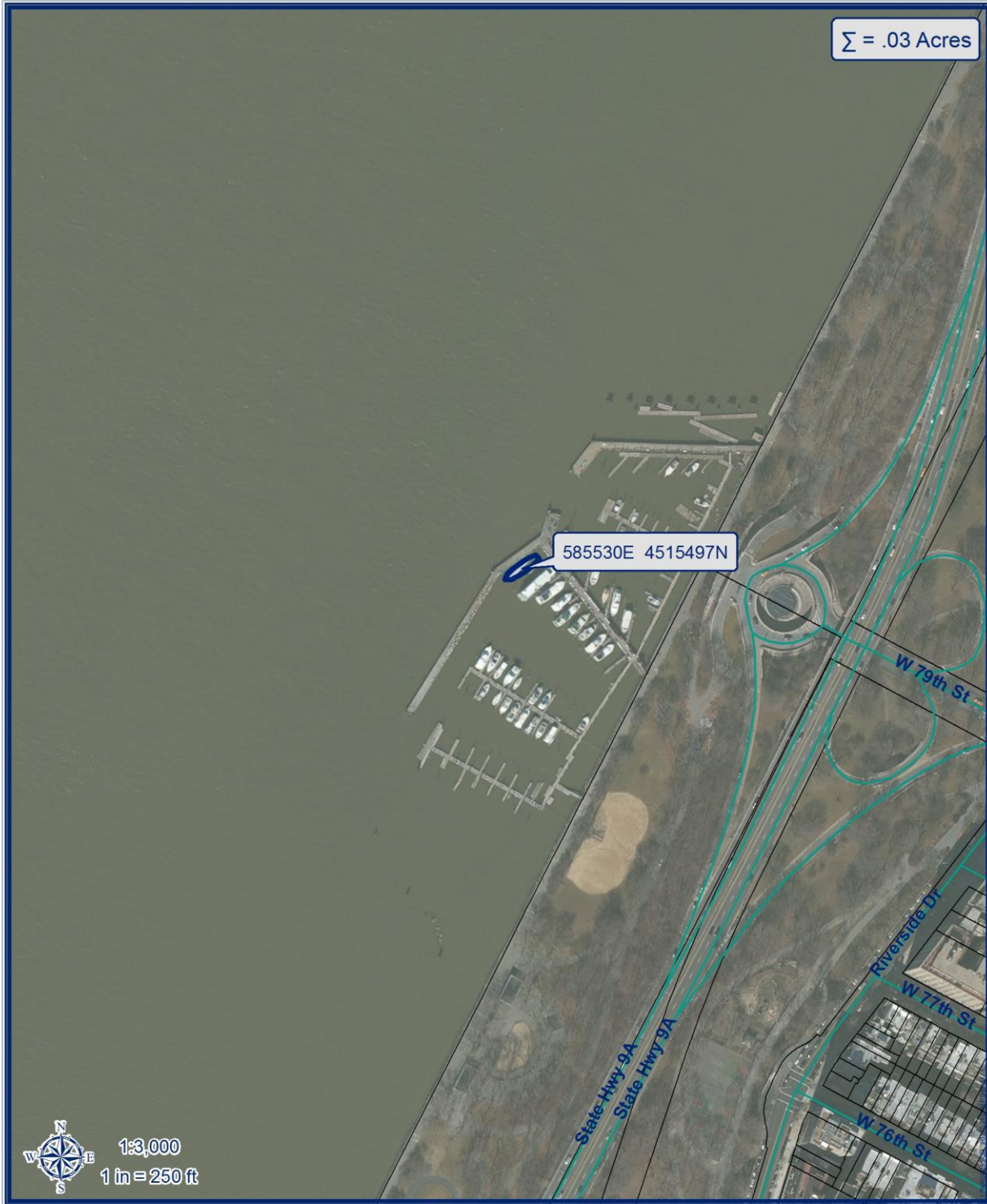
Name of Property

New York County, NY

County and State

Vessel Lanai  
New York, New York Co., NY

79th Street Boat Basin  
New York, NY 10024



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



roads  
Lanai

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY  
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Lanai  
Name of Property

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County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Denise Meagher (edited by Jennifer Betsworth, NY SHPO)  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date October 2017  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Lanai (Argo)

City or Vicinity: New York

County: New York State: NY

Photographer: Denise Meagher

Date Photographed: September 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY\_New York Co\_LANAI\_0001  
Starboard bow, facing northeast

NY\_New York Co\_LANAI\_0002  
Starboard bow, facing east

NY\_New York Co\_LANAI\_0003  
Full port, facing west

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NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0004  
Starboard quarter, facing south

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0005  
Exterior stern, facing southwest

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0006  
Starboard midships, facing southeast

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0007  
Main deck midships, facing southwest

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0008  
Interior, bridge, facing southwest

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0009  
Interior, upper saloon, facing northeast

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0010  
Interior, upper saloon, facing southwest

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0011  
Interior, lower saloon, facing southwest

NY\_New York Co\_ LANAI \_0012  
Interior, lower, master bath, facing southeast

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

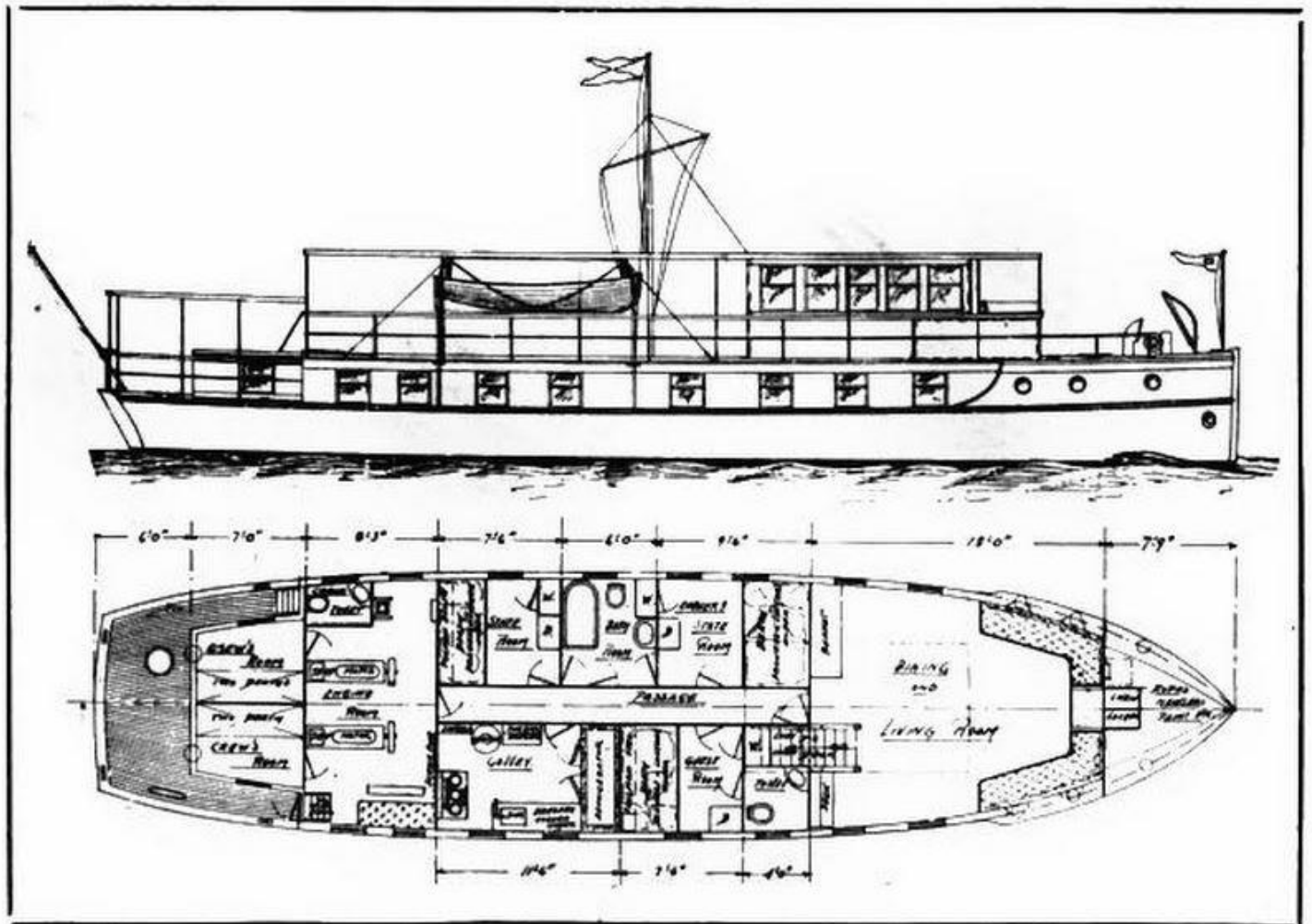
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Lunaria is another 70-footer. Her hull has a draft of 27 inches and is better adapted for general cruising than that of Cocopomelo.

Figure 1. *Lunaria* plans, 1912.

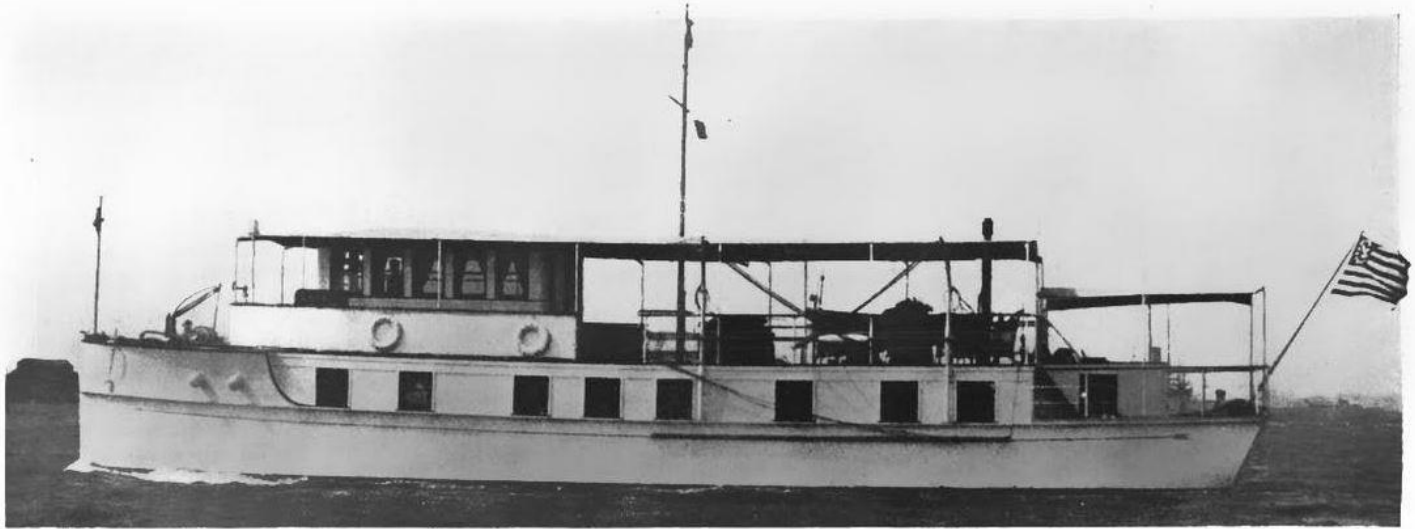
Trumpy, John. "The Coming of the House Boat." *Motor Boating Magazine* (February 1912): 17-20.

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Judged by the standards of the new class to which she belongs, Lanai is a very trim looking craft.



The boat is handled from the deckhouse, which is placed well forward.

Figure 2. *Lanai*, 1912.

"Lanai, a Shallow-Draft House Boat." *Motor Boating Magazine* (September 1912): 22-23.

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**The main saloon is 18 feet long.**

Figure 3. *Lanai*, 1912.

"Lanai, a Shallow-Draft House Boat." *Motor Boating Magazine* (September 1912): 22-23.



Figure 4. *Argo*, 1934.

Righter, Elizabeth. "Crosley's Yacht has Long, Rich History." *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, December 1, 2006.















ARGO  
EST. 1988











SWITZ  
CENT

AMERICAN THEATRE'S  
MERRY WITCH

THE FROG PRINCE





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 12/19/2017      Date of Pending List: 1/29/2018      Date of 16th Day: 2/13/2018      Date of 45th Day: 2/2/2018      Date of Weekly List: 2/2/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      2/2/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

**NYC**  
Landmarks Preservation  
Commission



Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair

November 30, 2017

Sarah Carroll  
Executive Director  
SCarroll@lpc.nyc.gov

1 Centre Street  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

212 669 7902 tel  
212 669 7797 fax

Mr. Michael F. Lynch, P.E., AIA  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Director, Division for Historic Preservation  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 189  
Peebles Island Resource Center  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Re: LANAI (also known as ARGO), located at the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin, New York,  
NY

Dear Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Lynch:

I am writing on behalf of Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the **LANAI**, located at the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin in Manhattan, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission's Director of Research Kate Lemon McHale has reviewed the materials you submitted and has determined that the LANAI is **outside the Commission's expertise**. Therefore, based on this review, the Commission **has no comment on the eligibility** of the LANAI. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Sarah Carroll

cc: Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research, Landmarks Preservation Commission



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

DEC 19 2017

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner

14 December 2017

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following twelve nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

John and Sarah Trumbull House, Dutchess County  
New Guinea Community Site, Dutchess County  
George W. Bellows House, Ulster County  
Wampsville Presbyterian Church, Madison County [not owned by religious]  
Lipe -Rollaway Corporation Building, Onondaga County  
Ridgewood Reservoir, Kings and Queens Counties  
Greenacre Park, New York County  
*Lanai*, New York County  
Smith-Ransome Japanese Bridge, Suffolk County  
Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens County  
Saxe Embroidery Company Building, Bronx County  
Kingston City Almshouse, Ulster County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office