1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: *WM. B. TENNISON*

Other Name/Site Number: Chesapeake Bay Bugeye Buy-boat *Wm. B. Tennison*

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Back Creek, Solomons Harbor Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Solomons Vicinity: N/A

State: MD County: Calvert Code: 009 Zip Code: 20688

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	___	Building(s):	___
Public-Local:	X	District:	___
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	X
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
1	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	0	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ 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 ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. 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):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Transportation	Sub:	Water-related
Current:	Transportation	Sub:	Water-related

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:
Foundation: Wood, logs (hull)
Walls: Wood (superstructure)
Roof: Wood (deck)
Other: N/A

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Wm. B. Tennison is a nine-log sailing bugeye hull converted to powered buy-boat, official number 081674. She is homeported at Back Creek, Solomons Harbor, Solomons, Calvert County, Maryland. *Tennison* was built in 1899 by Frank Laird at Crabb Island (near Oriole), Maryland. She is 60 feet, 6 inches long on deck, has a beam of 17 feet, 6 inches and a draft of 4 feet, 6 inches. Her wide beam and shoal draft, typical of the bugeye type, is ideally suited for oyster dredging on the shallow waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Tennison maintains essentially the appearance of her conversion to a powered buy-boat in 1908-9. She is the only bugeye buy-boat conversion extant and is the oldest licensed passenger vessel in the fifth Coast Guard district and reputed to be the second oldest in the United States.

HULL

The hull bottom is constructed of nine logs of hand hewn heart pitch pine. The hull is approximately 9 inches thick at the center or keel log and tapers to 6 inches at the outermost edges. The wing logs are approximately 6 inches thick to the turn of the bilge and taper to approximately 3 inches at their outermost edges. The keel uses the heaviest log to help stabilize the craft. The four wing logs on each side of the keel log are fastened together with ⅝-inch wrought-iron bolts. The hull has a flat bottom with rounded bilges, and is double ended or sharp at each end. She exhibits a well-formed sheer with raked stem and stern posts.

The hull is framed and planked above the logs to add freeboard. Sawn oak transverse frames 3½ by 4 inches are spaced approximately on 30-inch centers. Sawn oak deck beam clamps measure 2½ by 8 inches. The deck beams are sawn oak sided 5 by 6 inches and spaced approximately 5 feet apart. Main structural members closed by deck beams, frames, and clamps are bolted with galvanized drifts cinch rings.

The forward bulkhead separates the foc'sle from the main hold. When *Tennison* was converted to power, a second bulkhead was added which separated the engine compartment aft from the hold. Both bulkheads, constructed of vertical tongue and groove planking attached to athwartship stiffenings, afford partially watertight compartments.

The centerboard trunk was removed during the 1908-9 conversion. The hull is painted white above the water line and red below. The hull bottom is covered with copper sheathing to just above the waterline for protection from marine boring worms and ice. The rudder is hung outboard of the sternpost on iron pintals.

DECK

Heavy deck planks along the centerline, called the king plank, reinforce the bow from the stem to the foc'sle coaming and then continue aft to the foremast. The king plank is made up of four members each 5½ inches wide forward of the foc'sle and three members aft measuring 8½ inches, 6 inches, and 8¼ inches, reading left to right facing the bow.

Decking is laid fore and aft, of 2-inch by 2½-inch heart pitch pine, seated in bedding compound and fastened with galvanized boat nails. The hold is fitted with hatch coamings and hatch coverings amidship.

A construction detail common to most bugeyes is the very sharp canoe stern, nearly as narrow as the bow. The deck at the stern is given more work space by a "patent stern" which extends out beyond the hull. The patent stern is framed of oak and drifted to the stern post, sheer strake, and covering boards. This technological improvement over earlier bugeyes, was by 1910 a standard feature. The deck is painted white with light tan trim.

RIG

Originally *Tennison* was a sailing vessel with two masts. During the conversion to power, the mainmast and the running rigging of the foremast was removed. The foremast was retained to hold the hoisting rig used by a buyboat to move cargo. The present foremast, installed in 1976, is at least the second foremast on *Tennison*.[1] Reflecting its new function, it is nearly perpendicular to the deck rather than raked as in the traditional Chesapeake sailing mast. Two wooden gaff-rigged booms on the foremast helped lift cargo over each side of the buy-boat. From each boom hung a bushel-size oyster measuring bucket which was used to empty the vessels of oysters after the catch was sold. The booms and hoisting rig were removed in the early 1970s and replaced with a fixed pipe boom which was subsequently removed in the late 1970s when *Tennison* stopped buying oysters. Standing rigging consists of three galvanized wire stays, one from the bow and one from each side.

PILOT HOUSE

The pilot house is rectangular with a rounded forward side as is typical of Chesapeake buy-boats. Along the front are 3 drop windows. Both port and starboard sides of the pilot house are pierced by an access door and drop window. A third door is located at the aft end of the pilot house. The house is covered with vertical tongue-and-groove cypress siding. A traditional wooden spoke wheel steers the boat through a rope system to the rudder. On the port interior side forward are an upper and lower berth, with an enclosed head aft. Access to the engine compartment is through a floor hatch. The pilot house is painted white inside and out.

CHANGES IN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Originally a two-masted, three-sail-rigged bugeye, *Tennison* was converted to a power oyster buy-boat in 1908-9. The mainmast, centerboard trunk, and the original deck cabin were removed, an engine compartment was built aft and outfitted with engine, shaft and propeller. The rudder was cut out for the propeller, and a pilot house was built on deck.

---

[1] Alton Kersey, phone interview with Ralph Eshelman, 24 August 1993. Notes in author's files. Kersey began working for the J.C. Lore Company in 1956 and in 1962 became manager of the company. During these years he often worked and later captained the *Tennison*.

Tennison, like all old working boats, was subjected to heavy wear and deterioration and was constantly undergoing maintenance and repair throughout her career. A partial rebuild was conducted at the H. Krentz Railway in Harryhogan, Virginia, in 1952. The pilot house was probably rebuilt at this time. *Tennison* was converted from buy-boat to passenger boat in 1977. At this time a canvas fly was attached by stanchions to the side of the vessel providing a protected area from sun and rain over the central hold portion of the deck. The iron side rails were replaced for added passenger safety. Plywood covering over the hold and steering mechanism aft was also added as a safety measure. All of the frames except those under the engine have been replaced as per U.S. Coast Guard requirements.

Presently *Tennison* is undergoing another partial rebuild, a phased renovation over the next three years. The quarter boards believed to date from her 1911 conversion and power winders, dredges, and roller bars are in the collections of the Calvert Marine Museum but are not used onboard the vessel.

Thanks to the original construction of Frank Laird and *Tennison*'s subsequent owners, *Tennison* survives today in good condition. She exhibits her essentially 1908-9 physical appearance of a bugeye oyster buy-boat and is the only such conversion extant of the scores of such converted boats which over the years have been neglected, abandoned and lost.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

NHL Theme(s): XIV Transportation
B. Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures

XII. Business
A. Extractive or Mining Industries
5. Fishing and Livestock

Areas of Significance: Maritime History
Transportation
Commerce
Architecture (Naval)

Period(s) of Significance: 1899-1943

Significant Dates: 1899, 1908-09

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Frank Laird

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Wm. B. Tennison is the last of the bugeyes form oyster buy-boats on the Chesapeake Bay. She represents one of the first bugeyes to be converted to power and one of the few log-hulled vessels left in the world. Her maritime architectural significance is vested in her multi-log hull form and early conversion to power as a buy-boat. Her commercial significance begins with her participation in the sailing oyster dredge fleet of the Chesapeake. The bugeye type dredged more oysters than any other vessel type in the world. As the peak years of oyster harvests on the Chesapeake Bay began to wane in the 1890s the smaller, easier-to-handle and cheaper-to-build skipjack became popular and began to replace the bugeye. The owner of *Tennison* realizing the age of the bugeye was fading, converted her into a powered buy-boat. A few have argued that *Tennison* should be restored to her 1899 sailing condition but *Edna E. Lockwood* already well serves this purpose. *Tennison* instead better represents another significant period of maritime oyster related history--the passage of sail to power and the importance of buy-boats to the oyster industry.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE OYSTER BUY-BOAT

The buy-boat was a vessel that purchased oysters directly from the oystermen working the beds. Buyboats sailed or, with the development of the internal combustion engine, powered to the oyster beds in early afternoon, purchased oysters, and travelled to processing or shipment points. They were operated by oyster-processing companies or to a lesser degree private individuals. Buy-boats were popular because they saved oystermen time and expense in not having to go directly to the processing houses to sell their catch. Oystermen preferred to see more than one buy-boat on the beds to insure a little competition in price. In the Chesapeake if one buy-boat appeared to be getting most of the business, the other buy-boat(s) might raise a bushel basket up its mast indicating it would pay a nickel more a bushel than the other buy-boat(s). Counter measures by the other buy-boat(s) might be two bushel baskets hoisted up its mast, meaning a dime more per bushel. The price wars never got out of hand as rarely did the biding go up more than three or four baskets in an afternoon.

The oysterman tied up his boat to the anchored buy-boat from which a metal bushel measure bucket, perforated on the bottom to allow water to drain, hung from its boom. The tub varied in size over the years but generally was a "twenty-one incher" which meant it was 21 inches from the bottom to the lip. The tub would be lowered onto the oysterman's boat and filled with a flat shovel. As the tub was hoisted by pulley and rope and dumped into the hold of the buy-boat the captain of the buy-boat recorded each bushel on a tally board. When the oyster boat was emptied the oysterman was paid in cash.

Occasionally an oysterman would practice a technique known as "cribbing." This involved placing foreign objects such as rocks or empty shell in the tub. Once caught, and after repeated warning, the oysterman might be "hawsed"; that is the next time this same oysterman came to sell his catch the captain would throw his mooring line back meaning he was not welcome. Word of mouth to other buy-boat operators could seriously affect the

operation of such an ostracized oysterman, thus making such occurrences rare.[1] Not all oystermen used the buy-boats preferring to take their catch to market themselves where the dock price was higher. But most oystermen sold their catch to buy-boat operators realizing the extra time and cost in a trip to the dock usually did not make up for the difference in price.

In the off season, Chesapeake buy-boats were used to haul produce, lumber, and even livestock to markets in Baltimore, Norfolk, Richmond, and Washington, D.C. Since the 1960s, with the advent of trucks and better roads, however, most oystermen unload their oyster catch directly onto their own pick-up trucks backed up to the pier where they dock. They then drive their catch to their favorite processing plant or where the best prices are being paid. This made for a longer day but also allowed higher profits. Today, trucking of produce and lumber is faster, more convenient, and more cost effective. This change in transportation medium marked the end for the buy-boat.

Buy-boats are generally large, well built and capable of long service. Chris Judy compiled a list of 120 known buy-boats used on the Chesapeake Bay. They ranged from *Betty I. Conway*, built in Stoney Point, New York, in 1866 to *Thomas W.*, built in Deltaville, Virginia, in 1961.[2] Only a few survive today.

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF *WM. B. TENNISON*

Tennison was built in 1899 by master carpenter Frank Laird of Monie, Maryland, at Crabb Island (now abandoned) near Oriole, Somerset County, Maryland, on a tributary of the Manokin River off Tangier Sound. The date of 1899 was a late one for the construction of a "chunk" or log hull bugeye. By this time logs were becoming scare and the bugeye was beginning to be replaced by the smaller, easier to operate, and cheaper to build skipjack. This late construction date in part explains *Tennison*'s survival.
Laird also has the distinction of having built the largest chunk bugeye, *A. Von Nyvenheim* in 1906. *Tennison* was built for Benjamin P. and Rufus L. Miles of Monie, Maryland, who used her as a bugeye oyster dredge boat until 1908-9 when she was converted to power. At this time the net tonnage changed from 18 to 11 tons reflecting the loss of hold space now occupied by the engine. *Tennison* essentially maintains her physical appearance from this time period.

Tennison's conversion was an early example. Of the hundreds of sailing bugeyes dredging in the 1880s, less than 50 survived to 1938.[3] Records from the *List of Merchant Vessels of the United States* indicate *Tennison*'s registered homeport varied from Crisfield, Maryland, to

---

1 Larry S. Chowning, *Harvesting The Chesapeake: Tools & Traditions*, Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1990, pp. 120-126.

2 Chris Judy, "Chesapeake Buy-boat List" (vertical history file, buy-boats, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland).

3 Robert H. Burgess, *Chesapeake Bay Sailing Craft*, Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1975, p. 16-17; and Marion Brewington, *Chesapeake Bay Bugeyes*, Newport News, Virginia: The Mariner's Museum, 1941.

Norfolk and Newport News, Virginia, during the Miles ownership. The type and size of the first engine installed on *Tennison* was said to be a 37 horsepower Palmer engine[4] but the *List of Vessels of the United States* does not indicate engine size until 1924 when a 37 horsepower engine is confirmed as being installed.

In 1910 the Miles sold *Tennison* to Alphonse Lafayette Hazelwood of Eclipse, Virginia, who used her till 1930 for hauling produce in Virginia, making frequent trips to Norfolk and across the Albermarle Sound into the Carolinas. It was during one of these trips while loaded with 500 barrels of Carolina sweet potatoes, that *Tennison* collided with a tugboat, damaging her port side and losing some of her cargo. The captain of the tug was reputedly drunk.[5]

Tennison was also used as a buy-boat during the oyster season. During the Hazelwood ownership she was painted white with green trim and green or grey decks. The foc'sle at this time had three bunks, a table for eating and a cooking stove. It is probable that the Palmer engine was replaced with a 60 horsepower engine during this period. Hazelwood rented *Tennison* to Barney B. Winnal of Carrollton, Virginia, for a few years to haul oysters and finally sold her to Winnal in 1933 for $2,050. Winnal registered *Tennison* as a freight boat and sold her to O. A. Bloxom of the Battery Park Fish and Oyster Company located on the Pagan River near Smithfield, Virginia. At this time *Tennison*'s homeport was registered as Norfolk, and by 1944, her use was recorded as fishing. Bloxom sold her to the J.C. Lore & Sons Company of Solomons, Maryland, in 1945.[6]

The Lores's used *Tennison* as a buy-boat and for dredging oysters on their private beds where power dredging was allowed. They installed a 36 horsepower Palmer gas turbine engine (purchased from G. T. Elliott of Hampton, Virginia) to drive her dredge winders as well as a new Delco lighting system.[7] The Lore Company had *Tennison* overhauled at the H. Krentz Marine Railway in Harryhogan, Virginia in 1952. The Krentz yard, established in 1905, had a good reputation for wooden work boat repair. Scores of skipjacks, and other Chesapeake workboats had their repair work done here.

During this rebuild several changes took place. The pilot house was rebuilt and the deck replaced. One report indicated the deck was raised 10 to 12 inches to provide more room in the hold,[8] although there is no physical evidence that this ever took place. Alton Kersey,

---

4 Ernest Hazelwood, taped interview by Paula Johnson, 23 October 1981 (tape and transcription in archives of Calvert Marine Museum).

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.* The *List of Merchant Vessels of the United States* shows the *Tennison* as still being owned by Bloxom in 1945. This no doubt is because Bloxom sold her late in the year after her annual registration papers were already filled out. The Lore's owned the *Tennison* at least by September of 1945 as can be verified from an article appearing in the *Southern Fisherman* on this date.

7 *Southern Fisherman*, "Samples Show Oysters Fat and of Good Quality in Maryland," September 1945.

8 E. Maston Krentz, Sr., interview by Ralph Eshelman, 16 March 1987 (written notes on file, *Wm. B. Tennison* vertical history file, Calvert Marine Museum).

the last to operate *Tennison* as a buy-boat never heard of such a change.[9] During the Hazelwood ownership it is stated there were two hatch openings in the deck, possibly dating from the configuration when hand winders were still used onboard. With the deck replaced during the Krentz rebuild it may be possible that this is when the configuration from two hatches to one hatch took place.

Ironically, after her rebuild, *Tennison* was left "high and dry" on the shore of the Poquoson River, Virginia, after suffering through hurricane Hazel in October 1952. When she was pulled back into the river, a long scar in the hull resulted from being dragged over an obstruction. This damage is supposedly visible when *Tennison* is haulled out of the water. In 1955 the present 165 horsepower Grey Marine 6-71 diesel engine was installed. It is believed to have been taken from a surplus naval landing craft.[10] The present hold and hatch coaming configuration was made at the Rice Marine Railway, Reedville, Virginia in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The result was a larger main hatch hold opening over the previous smaller single opening. The larger hatch made it more convenient to store oysters below for more stability while working on the often choppy and stormy, Potomac River.[11]

Tennison was used by the Lore Company till 1978 when the company closed. Under Lore ownership she was registered as homeported in Baltimore 1946-1954, Annapolis 1955-1973, and Washington, D.C., 1974-1980. The Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland was able to purchase *Tennison* and the J.C. Lore & Sons oyster house in 1979 through a Heritage, Conservation, and Recreation Service grant of the U.S. Department of Interior. Under the museum's ownership, *Tennison* is still associated with the very processing house for which she bought oysters for 37 years.

Alton Kersey, owner and operator of the vessel at the time of the purchase, knew the end of *Tennison*'s career as a buy-boat was near. To help maintain the vessel he began taking onboard passengers for hire. The museum has continued this use to the present allowing *Tennison* to help maintain her keep as a working vessel.

As the oldest licensed passenger vessel in the Fifth Coast Guard District and reputedly the second oldest in the United States, *Tennison* receives annual inspection and survey by the U. S. Coast Guard. This has required regular mandatory maintenance and repair work which has resulted in a vessel in good to excellent condition. At present the vessel has just completed the first phase of a two phase, three year renovation program conducted in close cooperation with the Coast Guard. During this renovation, the bow stem and false stem were replaced, as well as the bullwarks from the gangway on each side around the stern.

Wm. B. Tennison exhibits the classic physical characteristics of a buy-boat converted from a log-hull-constructed bugeye and as such represents the last of her type. Despite considerable research, the identity of Wm. B. Tennison, for whom the vessel was named, is unknown.

---

9 Kersey interview.

10 Kersey interview.

11 Kersey interview.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brewington, Marion V. *Chesapeake Bay Bugeyes*. Newport News, Virginia: The Mariner's Museum, 1941.

_____. *Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes*. Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1963.

Burgess, Robert H. *Chesapeake Bay Sailing Craft*. Pt. 1. Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1975.

_____. *This Was Chesapeake Bay*. Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1963.

Chowning, Larry S. *Harvesting The Chesapeake: Tools & Traditions*. Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1990.

Hazelwood, Ernest. Taped interview by Paula Johnson, 23 October 1981, tape and transcript in archives of Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland.

de Gast, Robert. *The Oystermen of the Chesapeake*. Camden, Maine: International Marine Publishing Co., 1970.

Johnson, Paula J. *Working The Water: The Commercial Fisheries of the Patuxent River*. Charlottesville, Virginia: Calvert Marine Museum and The University of Virginia Press, 1988.

Judy, Chris. Chesapeake Buy-boat List, vertical file, buy-boats, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland, no date.

Kersey, Alton. Phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, Solomons, Maryland, 24 August 1993.

Krentz, E. Maston, Sr. Interview by Ralph Eshelman, Harryhogan, Virginia, 16 March 1987, notes on file, *Wm. B. Tennison* vertical file, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland.

"Samples Show Oysters Fat and of Good Quality in Maryland", *Southern Fisherman*, September, 1945.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one (1) acre

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	372300	4242680

Verbal Boundary Description:

All that area encompassed within the extreme length and breath of the vessel.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary incorporates the entire area of the vessel as she lays at her berth.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Ralph Eshelman, Maritime Historian
Academy of Natural Sciences
Benedict Estuarine Research Laboratory
Benedict, Maryland 20612

Telephone: (301) 274-3134 or (410) 326-4877

Date: August 23, 1993.