1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: *Rebecca T. Ruark*

Other Name/Site Number: Chesapeake Bay Skipjack *Rebecca T. Ruark*
Chesapeake Bay Sloop *Rebecca T. Ruark*

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Dogwood Harbor Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Tilghman Island Vicinity: N/A

State: MD County: Talbot Code: 041 Zip Code: 21671

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	___
Public-Local:	___	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:	(Hull) Wood
Walls:	(Hull) Wood
Roof:	(Hull) Wood
Other:	(Superstructure) Wood

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.[1]

The Chesapeake Bay skipjack *Rebecca T. Ruark*, official number 110704, is a historic working oyster dredge sailboat homeported in Tilghman Island, Maryland. Built at Taylor's Island, Maryland, in 1886, it is 47 feet 3 inches long, 15 feet 7 inches wide, and has a depth of 3 feet 7 inches. She has a sloop hull with a skipjack rig and is therefore referred to as both a sloop and a skipjack.

HULL

Rebecca T. Ruark's hull is that of a sloop with rounded chine, centerboard and raking stern. It is planked fore and aft, and carries the traditional Chesapeake longhead or clipper bow with a straight, raking stem.

The bowsprit is 24 feet long with 12 x 10 ½-inch siding at the aft inboard end. The forward one-third of the bowsprit is varnished with the rest painted white. The covering boards or saddle above the sheer strake are oak and painted white. The ornamental trailboards mounted on the longhead identify the boat. The letters (all in upper case) are hand-carved and gilded. The boards are painted dark green with a red border. On the aft side of the name is an eagle with a red, white, and blue shield and crossed cannons behind it. A stack of three cannon balls are on each side of the design. Forward of the name is a folded American flag. A gilded eagle figurehead was mounted at the forward end of the trailboards but was lost when *Ruark* sank in November 2000. *Rebecca T. Ruark* also carries a set of quarterboards on the hull near the stern. They are painted red with gold gilded trim and letters. The background behind the letters is black. There is a red painted five-pointed star and maple leaf on each side of the name. As late as 1986, *Ruark* also carried a set of name boards just aft of where the bowsprit shroud fastens to the hull. These were painted red with gilded letters and trim.

There are hawse-holes in the knightheads on each side of the bow. The rudder is a wooden plug rudder carried well inboard and beneath the transom on a round wooden rudder post. The rudder post was replaced March 2001. The hull is painted white down to the waterline and red below. There is no traditional pin-stripe painted along the bead cut in the sides just beneath the oak rub rail (wales) located at midships to protect against the bumping of the dredges. A metal push plate to accommodate the bow of the push boat is mounted in the center of the transom of the skipjack.

A watertight bulkhead was constructed forward of the mast step in 2000 as a requirement by the U.S. Coast Guard in order to take passengers for hire. A round aluminum hatch cover located on the port side provides access to the hold formed by this bulkhead. Lines and sails are stored in this hold. The centerboard is made of oak bed logs and fir plank sides. The centerboard cap was replaced in 2000. The centerboard is lifted by a ¾-inch line that is attached from the centerboard through a pulley on the forward cabin and runs back to the aft end of the cabin, where the captain can control the height of the centerboard by pulling or relaxing the line. About 18 feet of the aft keel and about 8 feet on the forward end of the keel was replaced in 1986.

DECK

The deck is laid flush with fore-and-aft pine and fir decking 3 ⅞ inches wide. Originally the deck is believed to have been all pine. Presently the deck aft of the central hatch is 2-inch fir and forward is 2-inch

[1] This description is based on measurements made by Ralph Eshelman during visits on 19 March and 2 April 2001.

pressure-treated yellow pine. The king plank consists of two 11 ½-inch-wide planks which are beveled on the outer edge. The planks run from the bow to the main hatch waist with the mast set in the middle. The deck and all the superstructure is painted white. The deck beams are made of white oak.

From the stem to the station post is 82 inches. The station post is 12 inches wide, 3 ½ inches thick and stands above the deck 2 feet 7 inches. A horseshoe is mounted on the aft side of the station post, open end up to "hold in luck." The distance from the station post to the mast is 3 inches, and from the mast to the main hatch, 15 inches. The main hatch measures 55 inches long, 64 ¾ inches wide, and the waist 7 ⅜ inches high. The hatch coaming (waist) is sided 2 ⅝ inches. The hatch covers consist of two 35 ½-inch-wide by 81 ½-inch-long plywood pieces. From the main hatch to the aft hatch is 100 inches. The aft hatch measures 78 ⅜ inches wide, 57 ¾ inches long, and 9 inches high. The hatch coaming (waist) is made of 1 ⅝-inch-thick pine planks. The aft hatch covers consist of two 29 ¾-inch-wide by 69 ¼-inch-long plywood pieces.

The distance from the aft side of the aft hatch to the cabin is 29 inches. The decking here runs perpendicular to the fore-and-aft decking forward. The low trunk cabin is fitted with a three-sided doghouse on the aft end. A set of double doors lead from the dog house to the hold. The cabin is 99 inches long, 101 ¼ inches wide on the forward end, 97 inches wide on the aft end, and 37 inches high above the deck. There are three windows, one each on the sides and one on the forward end. The top of the cabin was fiberglassed in 2000. A bell hangs on the starboard side of the dog house. A fuel tank is located on the starboard side of the cabin to provide fuel for the push boat when under power.

The forward gunwale is 11 inches high and is made up of 4 ½ x 3 ½-inch stock. The aft gunwale is 7 inches high. The gunwale cap aft is 1 ½ x 4 inches and forward is 6 ¾ x 1 ¾ inches. The gunwale forward of the dredge roller is surmounted by a pipe rail as per U.S. Coast Guard requirements to carry passengers for hire. Aft of the dredge roller is a pin rail. At the stern the pinrail is rounded around the stern. The wooden cap of the pin rail aft is 2 ½ inches wide by 2 inches thick and is 9 inches above the gunwale. An open stanchion pipe railing was added on top of the pin rail in 2000 to meet U.S. Coast Guard requirements to carry passengers for hire. It is made of galvanized upright pipe stanchions and stainless steel pipe rail, 22 inches above the gunwale.

At the after end of the deck is the wheel box which is 3 feet 2 inches long, 1 foot 11 ½ inches wide, and 2 feet 4 inches high. The eight spoke cast metal wheel is embossed "R.H. DOUGHERTY BALTIMORE. MD." along the front outer band. The handles are wood. A pair of davits made of metal pipe stock for carrying the push boat are located at the stern. The lazy board across the davits is made of oak and painted white.

RIG

Rebecca T. Ruark carries the standard skipjack rig – a jib-headed mainsail and a large jib. Her single wooden mast made from Douglas Fir measures 12 inches in diameter at the deck and is 69 feet long; it was installed in 2000. The mast step is made of oak. The mast has standing rigging consisting of two galvanized wire shrouds, a forestay, a wire jibstay and topping lift. Tension is controlled by turnbuckles. Her license number, a metal plaque with number "29" is attached to the shrouds. All running rigging is nylon line. The Dacron mainsail is laced to a varnished boom 52 feet and 9 inches long and is carried on wooden hoops at the mast. The boom is jawed to the mast. The jib has a club along its foot and rigged out to the bowsprit. The bowsprit is setup with double chain bobstays and a single chain bowsprit shroud on each side.

DREDGE EQUIPMENT

Rebecca T. Ruark carries two dredges, one on each side with the winders and winder engine amidships. Where the dredge comes onboard on each side, the hull is protected by a steel roller bar mounted along the rails. A vertical steel roller is mounted to the hull just aft of the horizontal bar to protect the rail from the dredge wire while dragging and hauling the dredge. The dredge equipment is removed after the dredging season to provide deck space for the passenger charter trade.

PUSHBOAT

In addition to her sail rig, *Rebecca T. Ruark* carries a motorized pushboat or yawl suspended from davits over the stern. The pushboat is lashed on to the stern when proceeding under power.

CHANGES IN ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The center portion of the keel, keelson, some ribs, and parts of the centerboard trunk are believed to be original to *Rebecca T. Ruark*'s 1886 building. Planks, decking, masts, booms, hatch covers and other elements have been replaced repeatedly over time through the normal wear and tear of wooden work boats. Until 1967 skipjacks were limited by law to sail power dredging only. Thus the stern davits and pushboat are relatively recent modifications. A modern "doghouse" was added to the aft top of the cabin for added protection for the helmsman. Originally the cabin had a slide hatch for an entrance but this has been replaced with hinged double doors below the doghouse access.

Overall *Rebecca T. Ruark* is in good physical condition and retains her basic original appearance. Recent changes, including a watertight bulkhead forward of the mast, heightened rails with galvanized uprights and stainless steel top rails; a push plate; and deck fuel tank, were required for her to have the capacity to work as a charter vessel in the off-season and operate by push boat during part of the oyster dredging season. A 1941 photograph of *Rebecca T. Ruark* on a railway with the hull clearly visible (PK533, Mariners Museum) shows the vessel is essentially the same today as it was then.

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 and 4

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. Architecture (Naval)
V. Developing the American Economy
1. Extraction and Production
VII. Transforming the Environment
1. Manipulating the Environment and its Resources

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

Period(s) of Significance: 1886-1951

Significant Dates: 1886

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Moses Geohegan (builder)

Historic Contexts: XIV. Transportation
B. Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures
XII. Business
A. Extraction or Mining Industries
5. Fishing and Livestock

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

Rebecca T. Ruark is the oldest vessel in the skipjack oyster dredging fleet, the last commercial sail powered fishing fleet in North America. *Ruark* is also the last surviving Chesapeake sloop hull. *Ruark* was built during the heyday of the working sloop on the Chesapeake.[1] Soon after its introduction to the Chesapeake in the 1890s, the skipjack, with its sharp bilge, became the preferred oyster dredge boat. This was largely because skipjacks were less expensive to build and maintain than log ("chunk") or round-bottomed-built vessels. This explains in part why the oldest commercial vessel on the bay, *Rebecca T. Ruark*, a round-bilged sloop hull, is the only extant example of a sloop on the Bay today. *Ruark* is a fast sailer and is well maintained by her captain.

In 1985, the Chesapeake Bay skipjack fleet was recognized for its historical importance when twenty-four skipjacks, including the *Rebecca T. Ruark*, were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other listed vessels included: *Bernice J.* (1904), *Clarence Crockett* (1908), *Claud W. Somers* (1911), *E.C. Collier* (1910, HAER documented, static land exhibit, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum), *Elsworth* (1901), *F.C. Lewis, Jr.* (1907, static land exhibit, Old Harford Town Maritime Center), *Fannie L. Daugherty* (1904), *Hilda M. Willing* (1905), *Howard* (1909), *Ida May* (1906), *Kathryn* (1901), *Maggie Lee* (1903, static land exhibit, Old Harford Town Maritime Center), *Mary W. Somers* (1904), *Minnie V* (1906, rebuilt 1981), *Nellie L. Byrd* (1911), *Ralph T. Webster* (1905), *Ruby G. Ford* (1891, believed abandoned), *Sea Gull* (1924), *Sigsbee* (1901), *Stanley Norman* (1902), *Susan May* (1901), *Thomas Clyde* (1911), *and Virginia W* (1904).

Skipjacks not listed on the National Register include *City of Norfolk* (1900), *Flora A. Price* (1910, static land exhibit, Old Harford Town Maritime Center), *Mamie A. Mister* (1910), *Joy Parks* (1936), *Wilma Lee* (1940), *Helen Virginia* (1948), *Somerset* (1949), *City of Crisfield* (1949), *Esther F.* (1949), *Lorraine Rose* (1949), *H. M. Krentz* (1955), *Martha Lewis* (1955), *Rosie Parks* (1955, water display Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum), *Lady Katie* (1956), *Caleb Jones* (1953), *Dee of St. Mary's* (1981), *Anna McGarvey* (1981), *Connie Frances* (1985), and *Nathan of Dorchester* (1994).

Of the approximately 16 skipjacks that survive today, *Kathryn* and *Hilda M. Willing* were designated National Historic Landmarks in 1994. *Kathryn* represents one of the earliest extant and one of the few fore-and-aft planked skipjacks, while *Hilda M. Willing* represents one of the smaller, better maintained, and better sailing skipjacks. In general, the better conditioned skipjacks such as *Lady Katie*, *Herman M. Krentz*, and *Rosie Parks* are less than 50 years old. Of the skipjacks built prior to 1951, most are either in poor condition and/or are no longer working as oyster dredge boats.

In 2001, only thirteen skipjacks dredged oysters: from Deal Island – *Caleb Jones*, *Somerset*, *Fannie L. Daugherty*, *City of Crisfield*; from Cambridge – *Helen Virginia*; from Tilghman Island – *Rebecca T. Ruark*, *Kathryn* (only four days), *Thomas Clyde*, *Esther F.*, *Hilda M. Willing*, *Nellie L. Byrd*, and *H.M. Krentz*. *Martha Lewis* worked one day.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century the skipjack fleet numbered in the hundreds. Some researchers have estimated that a total of nearly two thousand skipjacks were built, all specifically designed for dredging

[1] Thomas C. Gillmer, *Chesapeake Bay Sloops* (St. Michaels, Maryland: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, 1982), 13. Interestingly, Gillmer does not list *Rebecca T. Ruark* in his list of Chesapeake Bay sloops beginning on page 38.

oysters from the Chesapeake Bay. The peak years for construction were during the 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century. When many of the vessels comprising the skipjack fleet were nominated to the National Register in 1985, it was estimated that 35 skipjacks existed; by 1993 only about 16 survived. Of these, it was estimated only 7 to 10 skipjacks would oyster during the 1993-94 season.[2] By the early 1990s, many of these vessels were in poor condition.

The decline in the oyster harvests left skipjack owners little, if any, profit for properly maintaining their vessels. Nevertheless, the Chesapeake skipjack fleet is the last commercial sail powered fishing fleet in North America and the only "cohesive" sailing fleet in the western hemisphere.[3] Many of the surviving examples from the skipjack fleet are maintained in museum or interpretive settings. *Minnie V* is preserved by the City of Baltimore, Maryland, as a floating exhibit at the inner harbor during the summer months. When oystering was profitable, *Minnie V* was leased to waterman for winter dredging. *Rosie Parks* is maintained, interpreted, and sailed by the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum but does not dredge. The museum also uses *E.C. Collier* as a land exhibit. Old Harford Town Maritime Center has the *F.C Lewis, Jr.* as a land exhibit and *Flora Price* and *Maggie Lee* as floating exhibits. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation works with several captains and uses their skipjacks for educational excursions on the Bay, Jackie Russell and his *Dee of St. Mary's* being one example.

Rebecca T. Ruark has the distinction of being among the best sailing skipjacks in the fleet. *Ruark* is considered by some as the fastest skipjack in the fleet and was usually considered a favorite in annual skipjack races. *Ruark* has the reputation as the "best dredger in the State of Maryland," and her former skipper, Emerson Todd, remarked that, "It can go anywhere on the Chesapeake Bay – in rain or shine or heavy fog. It's the best." As testimony to *Rebecca T. Ruark*'s sailing qualities, she won two of three races she ever entered in her class at the annual Chesapeake Appreciation Days races prior to 1999. *Ruark* also won the Deal Island skipjack race from 1988 to 1994 and in 1996 and 1997. *Ruark* came in second in 1998 and only lost the 1995 race when a competing skipjack with a shallower draft was able to sail a shorter route. Captain Wade Murphy once stated "*Ruark* can sail herself," referring to her rounded bottom while he said "the *Sigsbee* [a true skipjack hull which he once owned], she would rip my guts out" referring to the difficulty of keeping the flat-bottomed skipjack in a straight line.[4]

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[2] Larry Chowning, "Chesapeake Buy Boats Go 'Up Town,'" *National Fisherman* 74, no. 5 (September 1993) : 33; and Robert "Pete" Sweitzer, telephone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 13 September 1993.

[3] Thomas C. Gillmer, *Working Watercraft* (Camden, ME: International Marine Publishing Company, 1972), 54.

[4] Herman Russell Dize, interview by Ralph Eshelman, Tilghman Island, Maryland, 10 September 1993; Pat Vojtech, *Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks* (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1993), 7; and *Rebecca T. Ruark*, National Register of Historic Places nomination (1985), Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, MD.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHESAPEAKE SKIPJACK

The Chesapeake oyster fishery dates to the early 1800s when vessels from New England and New York, and later New Jersey and Delaware came to the Bay to dredge oysters due to the depletion of their own native beds. Concern for depletion of the Chesapeake beds led to conservation laws banning dredging in Maryland waters in 1820 thereby restricting the harvesting of oysters to the more labor intensive and time consuming hand-tonging. This historic concern for the conservation of the oyster population has grown as harvests have declined during the twentieth century. More recent recognition of the oyster's vital importance as a natural filter has increased our awareness of its role in maintaining the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. Overexploitation of the oyster beds has seriously impacted the health of the Bay, and consequently the vitality of the oyster population.

In 1828 Thomas Kensett opened Baltimore's first oyster cannery having been awarded the first United States patent for his process "to preserve animal, vegetable, and other perishable goods." Because oysters were an extremely perishable product for which there was wide demand, they proved the ideal first food product to be experimentally mass-marketed through the use of the canning process. Kensett's process, followed by several other canners, allowed for national distribution of Maryland oysters.

With the increasing demand for oysters, the ban on dredging was repealed in 1865. However, dredging was restricted to specific deep water oyster beds and to sail-powered vessels only. These restrictions helped save commercial sailing vessels by banning steam and later internal combustion engine-powered vessels from dredging.

In the 1880s, over 700 Maryland-licensed dredge boats consisting of pungies, schooners, sloops, and the popular Chesapeake bugeye dredged the Bay. In 1884-1885 a record 15 million bushels of oysters were harvested from the Bay. But, as with the oyster grounds to the north, the high demand and the resulting over-harvesting caused the decline of the native Chesapeake oyster population. By the 1890s shipbuilding costs also began to rise because of depleted supplies of large timbers necessary for the construction of the traditional bugeye log hull and the sloop and schooner hulls, and higher labor costs. These changes in the availability of natural resources and labor brought in the age of the skipjack.

A vessel was needed that was cheaper and easier to construct than the labor-intensive "chunk" or log-built bugeyes and traditionally framed schooners, that had a shallow draft so it could navigate the shallow waters of the Chesapeake, and had enough sail power and deck space to operate efficiently as an oyster dredge boat. The skipjack, a shallow draft, centerboard sailing vessel specially designed and adapted for use as an oyster dredge boat in the Chesapeake Bay met this need.

The skipjack, according to maritime historian Howard Chapelle, is the direct descendant of the sharpie, which was introduced to the Chesapeake Bay from Long Island Sound about 1868. Generally these boats were flat-bottomed, in lengths up to 65 feet, and had one- and two-masted rigs. The sharpie never became popular on the Bay, perhaps because the Bay was larger, with the possibility of heavier seas, and required a wider, more substantial boat than did the Sound. Chesapeake oystermen also preferred the sloop rig over the double-masted sharpie because the sloop rig was more powerful for dredging in light winds and could be handled by a smaller crew. Thus regional preferences and water conditions of the Chesapeake Bay dictated a need for a sharpie-like

craft but sloop-rigged with an increased beam and the addition of a little deadrise aft. These new vessels, rarely over 30 feet in length, were called Hampton flatties.[5]

Chesapeake boat-builders began to make changes to the flattie design, enlarging the skiffs to as much as 50 feet, giving them a wider V-bottom hull covered by a deck with cabin. The V-bottom or deadrise hull, which has been referred to as the "Northern skipjack," originated after the American Civil War in the Long Island Sound area, but it was the adoption of the form by the Chesapeake that popularized it.[6] Near the same time that the hull form was evolving, the rig was simplified to a single sharply raked mast with two sails, rather than the gaff sloops which could set three sails. The resulting vessel is characterized as unframed, hard chine (angular sided versus a rounded bilge), typically cross or herring bone planked, with a V-bottomed hull form with one mast and two sails. A few of the early hulls were framed with fore-and-aft planking. Thus the skipjack (or two-sail bateau as they are also called) is likely the result of a complex evolution, possibly including the sharpie, the northern unframed skipjack from Long Island Sound, and the square-sterned and often flat-bottomed Chesapeake crab skiff (Hampton flattie.)

Over time a set of rules for skipjack design and construction evolved. Generally the following hold true for skipjacks: the maximum beam on deck is equal to ⅓ length on deck; the centerboard length is equal to ⅓ length on deck; the mast length is equal to length on deck plus beam; the boom length is equal to length on deck; and the bowsprit length is equal to beam. Skipjacks were comparatively inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by competent house carpenters or skilled oystermen. The skills of boat builders familiar with the more structurally complicated rounded bows and rounded bilges were not needed.

One suggestion for the origin of the name skipjack that certainly seems appropriate, is that it is an archaic English word meaning "inexpensive yet useful servant."[7] The typical cost of a skipjack in 1905 was $3,000. It is said the skipjack is the most economical survivor of the Chesapeake sailing workboats.[8] The skipjack's wide beam, hard chine, and low freeboard provided a stable, large working and storage platform. The single-masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail (a few had gaff-rigged mainsails) and large jib, "was easy to handle, powerful in light winds and was handy in coming about quickly without losing way [tacking]," which was necessary for their continuous "licks" (passes) over the oyster beds.[9]

The first recorded herring-bone planked skipjack is the 1891-built *Ruby G. Ford*, which last sailed about 1986 and is now abandoned and in ruins at Tilghman Island, Maryland.[10] R. J. Holt, former Director of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, suggests in his introduction to Chapelle's "Notes on Chesapeake Bay

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[5] Howard I. Chapelle, "The Migration of An American Boat Type," (*Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology)*, Paper 25, U.S. National Museum Bulletin 228 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1961), 148-149; and idem., *American Small Sailing Craft: Their Design, Development and Construction* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1951).

[6] Richard J. Dodds and Pete Lesher, eds., *A Heritage In Wood: The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Small Craft Collection* (St. Michaels, Maryland: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, 1992), 45.

[7] Frederick Tilp, "Did You Know?," *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* 15, no. 5 (1985) : 15.

[8] Gillmer, *Working Watercraft*, 54.

[9] R.J. Holt, introduction in Howard I. Chapelle's *"Notes on Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks,"* (St. Michaels, MD: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, n.d.; reprint of article in *The American Neptune* 4 (1944)).

[10] Ibid.; and Fredrick Hopkins, telephone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 1 September 1993.

Skipjacks" that the *Ford* may have been replanked as most of the early skipjacks were framed with fore-and-aft planking such as the *Kathryn*, built in 1901. Hard chime boats have no need for bottom frames because of their sturdy cross planked bottoms.[11] *Rebecca T. Ruark* being a sloop hull with round chime is fore-and-aft planked.

By the 1930s the fleet, that numbered close to 2,000 in the early years of the twentieth century, had dwindled dramatically as old vessels were abandoned in the face of low oyster prices due to an almost non-existent market. This trend continued until the post-World War II era, which saw a revival of the oyster industry and a group of new skipjacks added to the fleet, bringing the numbers up into the 70s. By 1971 the fleet had dropped to 43 vessels, with a more or less steady decline since. Of the approximately 16 skipjacks still working the Chesapeake, only a little more than half date from the pre-1930s period. Most of these have been rebuilt at least once and, despite various rebuildings, a few still carry the same name.

New additions to the fleet were built in the 1950s, the 1970s such as the *Dee of St. Mary's* (1979), one in the 1980s – *Connie Francis* (1982), and even one in the 1990s – *Nathan of Dorchester* (1994). Several vessels have been bought by individuals to be converted to yachts – conversion that is not ideal because of the low hold height. **P**leasure boaters have required more head room, which too often resulted in intrusive cabin additions on deck.

The skipjack fleet has become a preservation priority in Maryland. The governor and the Maryland Historical Trust prepared a Skipjack **P**reservation **P**lan in 1988. One result of this effort was the creation of a shipyard along the waterfront of Fell's **P**oint, Baltimore. Operated by the Lady Maryland Foundation's Maritime Institute (now the Living Classrooms Foundation), the yard repairs skipjacks using the labor of inter-city children under the supervision of trained shipwrights. More recently a second state-wide plan was developed that included improvement of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's railway for use by the skipjack fleet. This railway is much more convenient as it is located significantly nearer to the homeports of the fleet. Thus far several skipjacks have received repair work at this facility, including *Rebecca T. Ruark.*

With the oyster harvest at an all-time low and repeated threats of a moratorium on oystering in an attempt to conserve the depleted oyster beds, the working skipjack fleet is a threatened cultural resource. With little if any profit being made by their owners, the maintenance of the skipjacks is suffering. A few captains have attempted "dude" charters, taking paying passengers out on the skipjack for tours, with mixed success. Even the skipjack, which is considered the Chesapeake's most economical sailing workboat, cannot make a living for her owner when the oysters are too scarce to make a profit.

The extinction of America's last commercial fishing sailing fleet is unfortunately possible. This sailing fleet has survived as long as it has because of the ban on powered dredges, although a powered push boat or yawl is allowed to motor the skipjack to and from the beds. Beginning in 1967 the skipjacks were allowed to dredge under power on Mondays and Tuesdays. This law was relaxed so that dredging under power could be on any two days per week except Sunday. In fact, most skipjacks today operate mostly on power days. Thus technically, much of the sailing fleet is not truly a working sailing fleet anymore.

[11] Gillmer, *Working Watercraft,* 50.

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF *REBECCA T. RUARK*[12]

Rebecca T. Ruark was built by Moses Geohegan in 1886 at Taylor's Island, Dorchester County, Maryland, for William T. Ruark. *Rebecca T. Ruark* was named for his wife, a common maritime tradition.[13] *Ruark* is said to have been built as a two-masted schooner and converted to a sloop. The mast step for the mainmast was supposedly located approximately near the aft end of the main hold. A "saddle" for the mainmast was reputedly visible prior to the 1986 rebuild.[14] Regardless of whether this is true, *Ruark* has been rigged with one mast since her first vessel documentation recorded in 1887. *Ruark* is round-bilged with fore-and-aft planking. While some of the earlier skipjacks were built with fore-and-aft planking, no other surviving skipjack has a rounded-chine like the *Ruark*, a result of having a sloop hull.

Ruark's official number is 110704. In 1887 *Ruark* was reported as 47.3 feet long, with a 15.7-foot beam and 3.7-foot draft, and weighing 10.51 gross tons and 9.98 net tons. *Ruark* was homeported in Baltimore from 1887 until 1899 when her homeport changed to Crisfield, Maryland. In 1899 her gross and net tonnage was changed to 10 tons. In 1902 the homeport changed back to Baltimore. On September 16, 1923, W. Alvin Cook of Henry Street in Cambridge, Maryland, became owner of *Ruark*. Her use was listed as oystering with a crew of three and *Ruark*'s homeport was changed to Cambridge. On December 19, 1939, W. Alvin Cook sold *Ruark* to Herman L. Cook for $5.00.

On August 8, 1951, Emerson G. Todd and his wife Linda Todd of Cambridge bought *Rebecca T. Ruark* from Herman L. Cook for $5.00. Herman apparently was the executor of the W. Alvin Cook estate, suggesting that Alvin died in 1939 and his wife died in 1951. It also suggests Emerson Todd was possibly related to the Cook family based on the cost of the sale. Todd sold a one-third interest to Donald S. Todd and another one-third interest to Emerson G. Todd, Jr., on September 3, 1970, for $5.00. Emerson, Jr., and Donald apparently were sons of Emerson, Sr. The Todds sold ownership of the vessel to *Rebecca T. Ruark*, Inc., for $30,000 on February 1, 1979. This was done after two crew members fell overboard and drowned. By placing the skipjack into a corporation it limited the liability of the owners to only the company and not them personally. The Todds owned the vessel until 1984 when she was bought by Captain Wade H. Murphy, Jr., of Tilghman Island, Maryland. Murphy had owned the skipjack *Sigsbee* since 1964. Baltimore was "revoked" as port of documentation effective July 1, 1983. From 1989 to 1994, Norfolk, Virginia was listed as port of documentation, although *Ruark*'s homeport was Tilghman Island, Maryland.

In 1986, Captain Murphy, Jr., took *Rebecca T. Ruark* to Deltaville, Virginia, where she was rebuilt. Murphy mortgaged his home and spent all of his savings to complete the $80,000 project. After her rebuild was complete, Murphy used *Ruark* to dredge oysters.

On the afternoon of November 3, 1999, at the mouth of the Choptank River, about two miles off Upper Bar Neck Point, *Rebecca T. Ruark* ran into gale. Fearing *Ruark* would swamp Captain Murphy dropped anchor and telephoned his wife with his cell phone. Rescue boats were soon on the way. In an effort to save his vessel,

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[12] Many of the dates in this section are taken from "General Index of Abstract of Title" for the *Rebecca T. Ruark* obtained from the National Vessel Documentation Center, USCG, April 2, 2001.

[13] Wade Murphy, telephone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 1 March 2001.

[14] Wade and William Murphy, interview by Ralph Eshelman, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michael's Maryland, 2 April 2001. Murphy stated a Judge Legates of Cambridge would often visit the vessel and he would always claim *Ruark* was originally built as a schooner.

Captain Wade reluctantly tossed 70 bushels of oysters into the Bay—a big harvest for the time after a hard day's work. A 42-foot workboat *Island Girl*, began to tow *Ruark* to shore but the high seas began to fill the hull. The *Ruark* crew bailed with buckets but *Ruark* capsized and sunk in 20 feet of water. Captain Murphy recalled, "It was so rough. There were 10- to 12-foot seas. I've never seen it blow so hard so long. She was awesome." A diver later confirmed that the hull was intact. The first attempt to raise *Ruark* failed. Finally the Maryland Port Administration funded $12,000 to raise her. Divers positioned slings fastened to a floating crane that brought *Ruark* back to the surface. *Ruark* was taken to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum for repairs. McCormick Company paid for a new set of sails that advertise "Old Bay Seasoning," the seasoning synonymous with the Chesapeake. To help defray cost of repairs Captain Murphy cut the mast of *Ruark* into many pieces and had decoys carved from them, which he sold. *Ruark* was re-launched in June 2000. An estimated 200 hours of labor was donated to the task, but the rehabilitation still cost $60,000.[15]

In 2001 *Rebecca T. Ruark* was being used as a charter vessel in the off-season. Captain Murphy markets *Ruark* via his web site <www.skipjack.org>, brochures, and lectures. Several well-known Chesapeake Bay artists, including George McWilliams and Franklin A. Sayle, have done paintings of *Ruark* from which prints are sold. *Rebecca T. Ruark* and Captain Murphy have been featured in numerous national and regional newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*; have appeared on *National Geographic*, CNN, and PBS; and are included in many books about the Chesapeake Bay and watermen.

Captain Wade H. Murphy, Jr., is said to be the only third-generation skipjack charter waterman in the world. His grandfather, James Henry Murphy, was the owner of the skipjack *George W. Collier*. Murphy intends to work *Rebecca T. Ruark* so long as he can make a living from her. He hopes to be able to pass on his boat to his son William Erwin Murphy. Like most of the captains of the skipjack fleet, a share of the oyster profits go back into the maintenance of the boat to prepare her for another season. It is the pride Murphy has for his boat, however, that gives *Ruark* the best chance for survival.

[15] State of Maryland Office of the Governor Press Release, "State-led salvage effort successfully raises 113-year-old skipjack from the Choptank River," 5 November 1999; Eugene L. Meyer, "A Bad Day On the Bay," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1999; and Vojtech, 3-9.

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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
___ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
A 18 383855 4285767

Verbal Boundary Description:

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

Boundary Justification:

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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