

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet

Item number K-3060

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K-3060:

1. Property Name: KATHERINE M. LEE

2. Location: Anchored at Daniel Fox's dock, in the Leipsic River, on the South bank opposite Front and Lombard Streets in Leipsic, Delaware.

3. Owner: Daniel Fox, Leipsic, Delaware.

4. Property Description:

The Katherine M. Lee was built by Parsons Bill Boats in Greenwich, New Jersey, and launched as a sail-powered oyster schooner in 1912. This boat has always been used on the Delaware Bay and sailed out of Leipsic or Port Mahon harbor. An early photograph of the Katherine M. Lee shows the vessel dredging for oysters off the New Jersey coast. At the time of the photograph, the Katherine M. Lee was working under sail with a two-masted arrangement and forward jib. The two masts were slightly raked sternward with the dredge machinery located almost directly amidships. A low cabin stood toward the rear of the schooner with the wheel located immediately behind the hatchway leading below deck. The lower area of the vessel was primarily used for storage and sleeping areas with a cooking and dining area situated beneath the cabin. The oysters and other cargo were typically carried on deck.

The Katherine M. Lee continues to work the Delaware Bay as an oyster schooner. The rigging was removed in the 1940's, when the vessel was converted to diesel power. The bowsprit and both masts have been totally removed. A pilot house was added to the top of the original cabin to accommodate new steering gear and navigation equipment. The cabin is still in its original condition and was not altered, except for the slight flattening of the roof. The vessel has a seventy-foot keel, eighty-five foot overall length, nineteen-foot beam and six-foot draft. The hull is composed of sawn timbers fixed in place with iron spikes and protected with wooden plugs. The carvel-planked hull is seamed with a combination of cotton, oakum and seaming compound. All the framing is of white oak.

SIGNIFICANCE: MAGGIE S. MYERS, ANNIE R. SHILLINGSBURG and KATHERINE M. LEE

The schooners are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C because they describe regional shipbuilding and design as it evolved on the nineteenth-century Delaware Bay. Due to their connection with the Delaware Bay oyster industry, the schooners are also eligible for listing under Criterion A. The significance of the Maggie S. Myers, Annie R. Shillingsburg and Katherine M. Lee lies in their documentation of the actual working of the Delaware oyster trade and their description of a regional boat

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type. All three vessels, as was the case with almost all of the oyster schooners sailing out of Delaware in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were built in New Jersey boatyards. Throughout their history, these three boats were registered in Delaware with Delaware captains. On occasion when Delaware crews were not available, the schooners were taken by their shippers to the New Jersey side of the Bay to be fully manned. As a boat type, the "Jersey schooner" was a two-masted vessel with large jib sail, broad beam and shallow draft. In the 1940's, both the New Jersey and Delaware fleets were converted to power dredging utilizing diesel engines. In the conversion process the sail rigging was removed, the masts cut down in size or taken out, and the bowsprits cut back to the hull. Despite these visible changes, the basic hulls of the vessels retained their integrity as regards boat building technology and ship design that evolved during the nineteenth century to meet the need for an efficient and reliable means of harvesting the rich oyster beds of the Delaware Bay. That the boats continue to be used in the same manner indicates a highly successful work method combining boat, dredge and man.

The Maggie S. Meyers, Annie R. Shillingsburg, and Katherine M. Lee anchored in Leipsic Harbor continue to be maintained and used for oyster dredging on the waters of the Delaware Bay.