

MAY 17 1985

Survey No. T-540

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic REBECCA T. RUARK

and/or common skipjack

## 2. Location

street & number GIBSONTOWN ROAD N/A not for publication

city, town Tilghman n/a vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland 024 county Talbot 041

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Captain Wade H. Murphy, Jr.

street & number telephone no.: 886-2576

city, town Tilghman state and zip code Maryland 21671

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a liber

street & number folio

city, town state

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft

date 1983-1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state MD 21401

# 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			<input type="checkbox"/> n/a

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 47.3-foot long, round-bottomed centerboard sloop rigged as a skipjack, and commonly referred to as a "skipjack." She was built in 1896 in Taylor's Island, Maryland and is fore-and-aft planked, in contrast to other vessels in the skipjack dredging fleet which are of cross-planked construction. According to her owner, she may have been built to carry a schooner rig. She has a beam of 15.7 feet, a depth of 3.7 feet, and a net registered tonnage of 10 tons. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on white-painted wood hoops at the mast, and a single large jib with a club on its foot. The hull is painted the traditional white.

In shape the vessel has a longhead bow with a raking straight stem and hollow, clipper-like bow lines. Her transom stern is shallow and well raked with some tumblehome; it is carried fully out of the water without the "tuck" at the transom/chine line seen on most cross-planked skipjacks. This feature gives the vessel a long afterdeck. Her rudder is carried inboard. There is a jib for the pushboat in the center of the transom.

The vessel is flush decked, with a spacious deck layout. From the stern forward deck structures include: a steering-gear box placed well forward of the after-rail; a tall cabin with a sliding hatch cover (slide) and three square windows; a hatch with a box for the winders fitted partially over it; a main cargo hatch; and a slant-topped cuddy hatch on the foredeck forward of the mast. Other fittings include oystering gear, rollers for the dredges, a capstan mounted on the sampson post, and pipe-rail around the decks. There are davits for the pushboat at the stern.

The single mast is well raked aft, and is set up with shrouds and turnbuckles, a jibstay, forestay, and topping lift; the forestay is adjusted with deadeyes. The bowsprit is rounded, with wooden grips along its length; it is set up with double bobstays of chain and cable, and chain bowsprit shrouds.

The vessel is decorated with trailboards on the longhead, with the name REBECCA T. RUARK in gold on a black lozenge, a green background, and an eagle/flag/shield/arrow motif in red, white, blue, and gold; red stripes, leaves, vines, and shields fill in the trailboards. There is a gold eagle billet-head on the longhead. The hull is decorated with a red stripe parallel to the sheer but below it. There are carved nameboards at the bow and further aft on the hull, with the name in yellow paint on a black ground and daisy wheels at the ends. There is a black-on-white nameboard on the transom.

# 8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	1896	Builder/Architect	Unknown
check: Applicable Criteria:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D
and/or			
Applicable Exception:	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> none
Level of Significance:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national	<input type="checkbox"/> state	<input type="checkbox"/> local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result--with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom--proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Mondays and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

REBECCA RUARK is of interest as being one of the oldest skipjacks still dredging in the Chesapeake fleet. She was built in 1896 in Taylor's Island, Maryland and last rebuilt in Deltaville, Va., in 1969. She is unusual among the oyster-dredging fleet because, although she carries a typical skipjack rig, she is round-bottomed and fore-and-aft planked, instead of the more typical cross-planked, V-bottom construction. The round-bottomed boat is very strongly built in comparison to the V-bottom type, but, due to her age, little remains of her original construction. The vessel is one of the 21 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912 and one of only 2 surviving to have been built previous to 1900.

(continued overleaf)

REBECCA RUARK has enjoyed a reputation as "the best dredger in the State of Maryland." Under Capt. Emerson Todd, a waterman for almost 65 years, she was based for many years in Cambridge, Md., where the Todd brothers owned a trio of skipjacks: Capt. William Todd skippering the NELLIE BYRD and Capt. Wilson Todd the SALLIE BRAMBLE. Both the NELLIE BYRD and REBECCA RUARK were sold to Tilghman owners in 1983-84 and will now oyster out of that home port. Capt. Emerson Todd once said of the REBECCA RUARK, "It can go anywhere on the Chesapeake Bay--in rain or shine or heavy fog. It's the best . . ." He had a reputation as being one of the most dedicated of the skipjack captains, always the first boat out and the last boat in. For many years Capt. Todd carried on an old tradition, which he had revived, of nailing a small Christmas tree to the top of his mast to celebrate the season.

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tilghman, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

1	8
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3	8	4	2	4	0
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4	2	8	5	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

This working vessel is usually docked at the location indicated in Item 2. Historic boundaries are coterminous with the hull.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M. E. Hayward

organization Radcliffe Maritime Museum  
Maryland Historical Society

date May, 1984

street & number 201 West Monument Street

telephone (301) 685-3750

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
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