Skipjack REBECCA T. RUARK

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the "vertical files" at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 04-05-2004

T-540 REBECCA T. RUARK (skipjack) Tilghman, Maryland

REBECCA T. RUARK is a 47.3' long, round-bottomed centerboard sloop rigged as a skipjack. She has a beam of 15.7', a depth of 3.7', and a net registered tonnage of 10. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a single large jib with a club on its foot. She is fore-and-aft planked in contrast to other vessels in the skipjack fleet which are of cross-planked construction. Built in 1896 in Taylor's Island, Maryland REBECCA T. RUARK 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. REBECCA T. RUARK is of special interest as being one of the oldest skipjacks till dredging and for her unusual sloop-like hull construction. She is one of only two vessels in the dredging fleet built before 1900.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

DOE __yes x no

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

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and/or common	skipj	ack				
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state	Maryland	024	county	Talbot (041	
3. Clas	sifica	tion		:		•
Category district building(s) structure site _X object		quisition	Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible x yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Usagricultoagricultoeducatioentertaiogovernoindustriomilitary	ure cial onal nment nent	museum park private residence religious scientific x transportation other:
4. Owr	ner of	Prope	ty (give names	and mailing a	ddresses	of <u>all</u> owners)
name	Captain	Wade H. Mu	rphy, Jr.			
street & number				telep	hone no.	: 886-2576
city, town	Tilghman		state	and zip code	e Maryla	and 21671
5. Loca	ation o	of Lega	al Descripti	on		
courthouse, reg	istry of deeds	, etc.	ı/a			liber
street & number						folio
city, town		: :			state	
6. Rep	resent	tation	in Existing	Historica	l Surve	ys
title		Survey of	Surviving Traditi	onal Chesapea	ike Bay C	Craft
date		1983-1984		federal	x state	county loc
depository for s	urvey records	Maryland	Historical Trust,	21 State Circ	:le	
city, town		Annapolis			state	MD 21401

7. Desc	ription
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Survey No. T-540

Condition excellent good fair	deteriorated ruins unexposed	Check one unaltered X altered	Check one n/a original s moved	ite date of move	n/a
(a)	unexposed				

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.

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Specific date	Builder/Architect Unknown
	olicable Criteria: _xA _B _xC _D and/or plicable Exception: _A _B _C _D _E _F _G _x _ none
Le	vel of Significance: X nationalstatelocal
Prepare bo	th a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and

T - 540

8. Significance

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-toconstruct 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-andaft planked, instead of the more typical cross-planked, V-bottom construction. The roundbottomed 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.

T-540 See Thematic Group nomination cover form, Continuation Sheets No. 8-13.

10. Geographic	al Data	AAACHINA AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA	•
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List all states and counties for	properties over	lapping state or o	county boundaries
state n/a	code	county	code
state	code	county	code
11. Form Prepa	red By		
name/title Anne Witty/	M. E. Haywa	arđ .	
Radcliffe Mar organization Maryland His			date May, 1984
street & number 201 West Mo	nument Stre	et	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 Shaw House 21 State Circle Annaralis, Maryland 21401

(30. 269-2438

Survey No. T-540

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Magi No. 2105405633

DOE __yes __no

3. Classification Category Ownership Status Present Use agriculture public X occupied Accupied X commercial park own for progress educational private resident entertainment religious structure building(s) both work in progress educational private resident entertainment religious entertainment religious Selentific Accessible entertainment religious Selentific Endowment Public Acquisition Accessible entertainment religious Selentific Endowment Selentific Endowment Public Acquisition Accessible entertainment religious Selentific Endowment Endowment Endowment Endowment Selentific Endowment En	1. Nam	e (indicate pr	eferred name)		
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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. liber street & number folio city, town state 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys title datefederalstatecounty	building(s) structure	public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered	x occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessiblex yes: restricted yes: unrestricted	agriculture x commercial educational entertainment government industrial	park private residence religious scientific transportation
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T - 540

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

7. Description

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Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 X 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art x commerce communications	•	ing landscape architecture law literature military music	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater x transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1896	Builder/Architect	Unknown	
opcome dance				

T-540

Significance

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

Level of Significance: national state local

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 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, luare-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.

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8. S	ignificance		Survey No. $_{ m T-}$	-540
Period prehi 1400 1500 1600 1700 1800 1900			literature military music t philosophy	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation
Specific	dates	Builder/Architect		
check:	Applicable Criteria: _A and/or Applicable Exception: Level of Significance:	ABCD		
Prepare	both a summary paragraph	of significance and	a general statement o	f history and

support.

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.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-540

"Come Along for a Day on the R.T.R.," Easton Star-Democrat, December 24, 1976

Robert Burgess, Chesapeake Sailing Craft, Part I. (Cambridge, Md: Tidewater Publishers, 1975)

10. Geographical Dat	vata	l D	cal	nic	p	ra	g	90	Ge	O.	1
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Acreage of nominated property	
Quadrangle name	Quadrangle scale
UTM References do NOT complete UTM references	
Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
c	
E	F
	#
Verbal boundary description and justification	

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

statecodecountycodestatecodecountycode

Form Prepared By

name/title	Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward		
organization	Maryland Historical Society	date 5/84	
street & number	201 W. Monument St.	telephone 685-3750	
city or town	Baltimore	state Maryland 21201	

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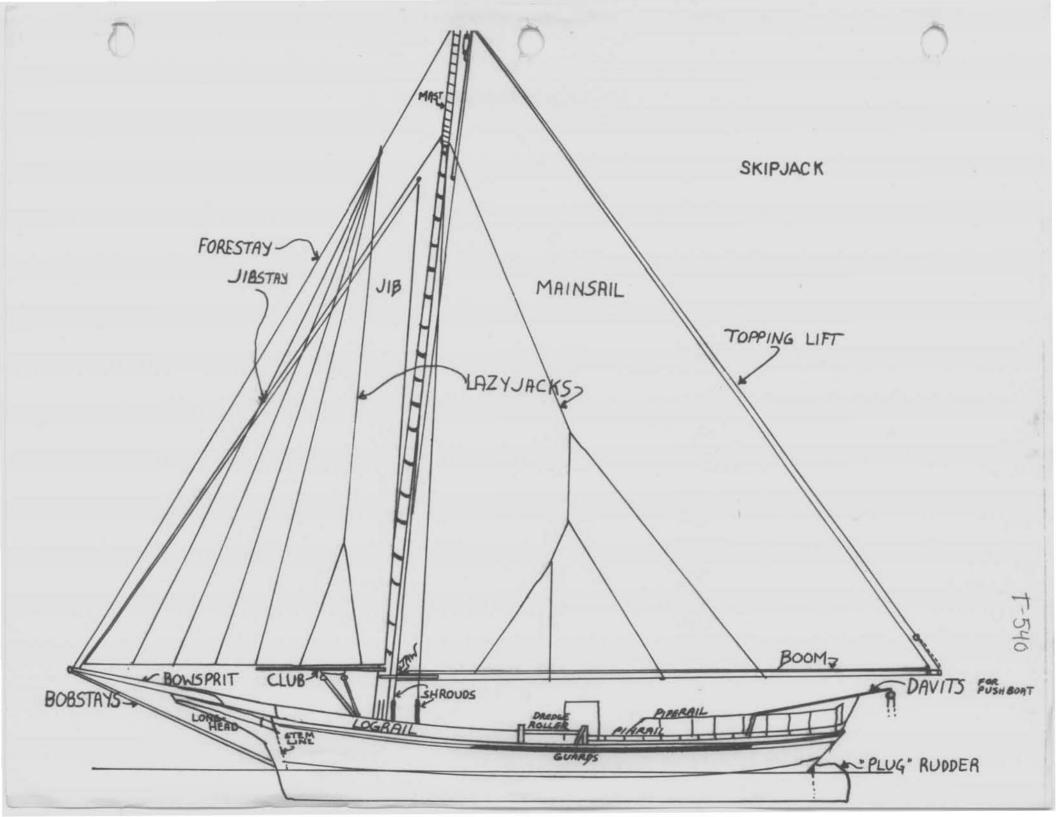
Maryland Historical Trust

Shaw House

21 State Circle

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

(301) 269-2438





REBECCA RUARK Tilghman, Md

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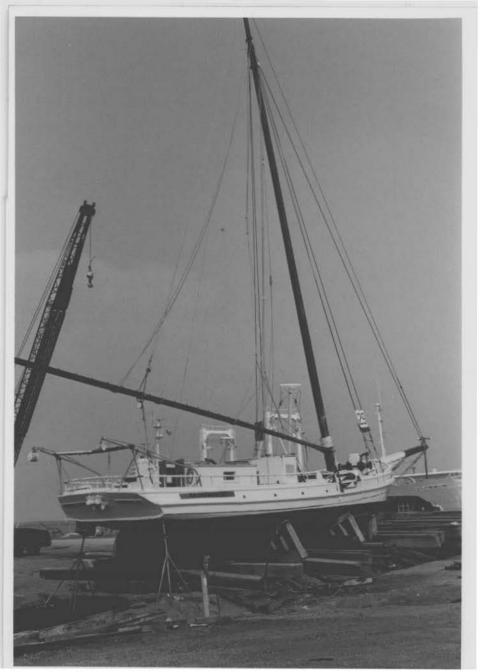
port side under sail M.C. Wootton



REBECCA RUARK Tilghman, Md

bow

M. C. Wootton



REBECCA RUARK Tilghman, Md

starboard side M. C. Wootton



REBECCA RUARK Tilghman, Md

stern M.C. Wootton



REBECCA RUARK Tilghman, Md

starboard side M.C. Wootton