K-541
MYSTERY (log canoe)
Chestertown, Maryland

MYSTERY is a 34'7" sailing log canoe in the racing fleet. She is log-built of five logs with carvel-fitted rising planks, a longhead bow, sharp stern, and a beam of 8'8-1/2". Her sailing rig consists of two masts with adjustable rake that carry a foresail, mainsail, and large jib. Built in 1932 in Oxford, Maryland by Harry Sinclair, MYSTERY gains her significance for being one of the last 22 surviving Chesapeake Bay racing log canoes that carry on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. MYSTERY is of special interest for having been built during the revival of interst in log canoe racing in the early 1930's and for the fact that her foremast (said to be over 70' long) is the largest ever used in a canoe of 35' long or less.

Survey No. K-541

Magi No. 150 5833

DOE __yes __no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic MYSTERY

and/or common log canoe

2. Location

street & number Round Top Road (Kingstown) JIK 2/9/93 ___ not for publication

city, town Chestertown x vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Kent

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	x occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	x private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	x entertainment	___ religious
x object	___ in process	x yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	x transportation
	x not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

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

name Francis E. Schauber

street & number RFD 1, Box 560 telephone no.: 778-2815

city, town Chestertown state and zip code Maryland 21620

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. K-541

Condition		Check one	Check one
_x_ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	___ original site
___ good	___ ruins	_x_ altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

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

MYSTERY is a 34'7" long sailing log canoe carrying two masts and a racing rig. She is double-ended, with a straight stem with little rake and a longhead bow, and a straight, sharp stern. Log-built with carvel-fitted rising planks, the boat was built by Harry Sinclair in Oxford, Maryland in 1932. She has a beam of 8' 8-1/2" and has a centerboard. Originally sailed with a skipjack rig, the canoe now has a Tilghman racing rig and is noted for her very tall masts, The canoe is privately owned and races under No. 8. The hull is painted white and has been reinforced using the WEST epoxy system.

MYSTERY is built of five logs and received hernamе because of the secrecy of her building. She has a longhead, a straight stem with little rake, and a straight, sharp stern on which a rudder is hung on pintles. The boat was built in the Tilghman fashion with carvel-fitted rising planks and wide washboards forming a half-deck. Her stern is overhung with an outrigger, or bumpkin. She carries a long bowsprit with heavy standing rigging.

Her foremast is stayed with two shrouds and spreaders. Foresail and mainsail have clubs at the clew, and sprits. There is a large jib and, with the kite and squaresail, the boat carries almost 2000 square feet of sail. Her new foremast is said to be more than 70' long, but it is a "mystery." The mainmast is shorter, and unstayed. The foremast is the largest ever used in a canoe of 35 feet long or less.

Without auxiliary power, the canoe is towed or sails to and from races. Racing gear includes springboards and extra sails. The canoe is dismantled after racing. MYSTERY's log hull has been reinforced with epoxy using the WEST system. It is painted white, with varnished washboards and spars and some brightwork trim.

8. Significance

Survey No. K- 541

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

Specific dates 1932 **Builder/Architect** Harry Sinclair

check: Applicable Criteria: __A __B __C __D
and/or
Applicable Exception: __A __B __C __D __E __F __G

Level of Significance: __national __state __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 last 22 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay racing log canoes that carry on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. In addition, it is a surviving representative of the oldest indigenous type of boat on the Bay--the working log canoe--which was developed in the 17th century by early European settlers from the aboriginal dugout canoe.

Used for transportation and for harvesting the rich bounty of the Bay, log canoes changed little over the centuries. Constructed of from two to seven logs and ranging in length from 20 to 35 feet, they were rigged with one or two sharp-headed spritsails with or thout a jib set on raking; unstayed pole masts. Easily and cheaply constructed, some 500 existed in Bay waters in the 1880's. The working canoes frist began to be raced in 1840 and by the 1870's area boatbuilders were building canoes specifically for racing, with lighter, thinner hulls and sharper lines. As mast heights increased to increase sail area the canoes became inherently unstable, necessitating the use of springboards and human ballast. Also part of the racing rig is the outrigger added for balance and to enable the sail tender to sit beyond the overlarge mainsail.

With the invention of the gasoline engine many log canoes were converted to power for oystering, but were then converted back to sail as interest in racing waxed and waned over the years. After peak years of popularily in the 1880's and 1890's interest in log canoe racing waned in the first two decades of the 20th century only to be revived again in the 1920's. The popularity of racing, spearheaded by the Miles River Yacht Club continued unabated until the present day, although the number of vessels active in the fleet has varied considerably.

MYSTERY gains her significance has having been built during the revival of log canoe racing in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The vessel was built by Harry Sinclair of Oxford in 1932 for John D. Williams who also commissioned the canoe JAY DEE. Because there was a great deal of secrecy involved in her construction the canoe was given the name MYSTERY. A later owner, John Whittum, sailed the canoe for a few years with a skip-jack rig before re-rigging her as a canoe. Under Whittum MYSTERY won the Governor's Cup in 1962. Several years ago the vessel created a stir with a new 60' foremast, the largest ever used in a log canoe of 35 feet or less, and in 1983 MYSTERY appeared for the Governor's Cup race with another new mast, this one reputed to be the longest ever, but again, the "mystery" of its height was not divulged.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. K-1

Marion V. Brewington, Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes (Cambridge, Md: Cornell Maritime Press, 1963)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____ **Quadrangle scale** _____

UTM **References** do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

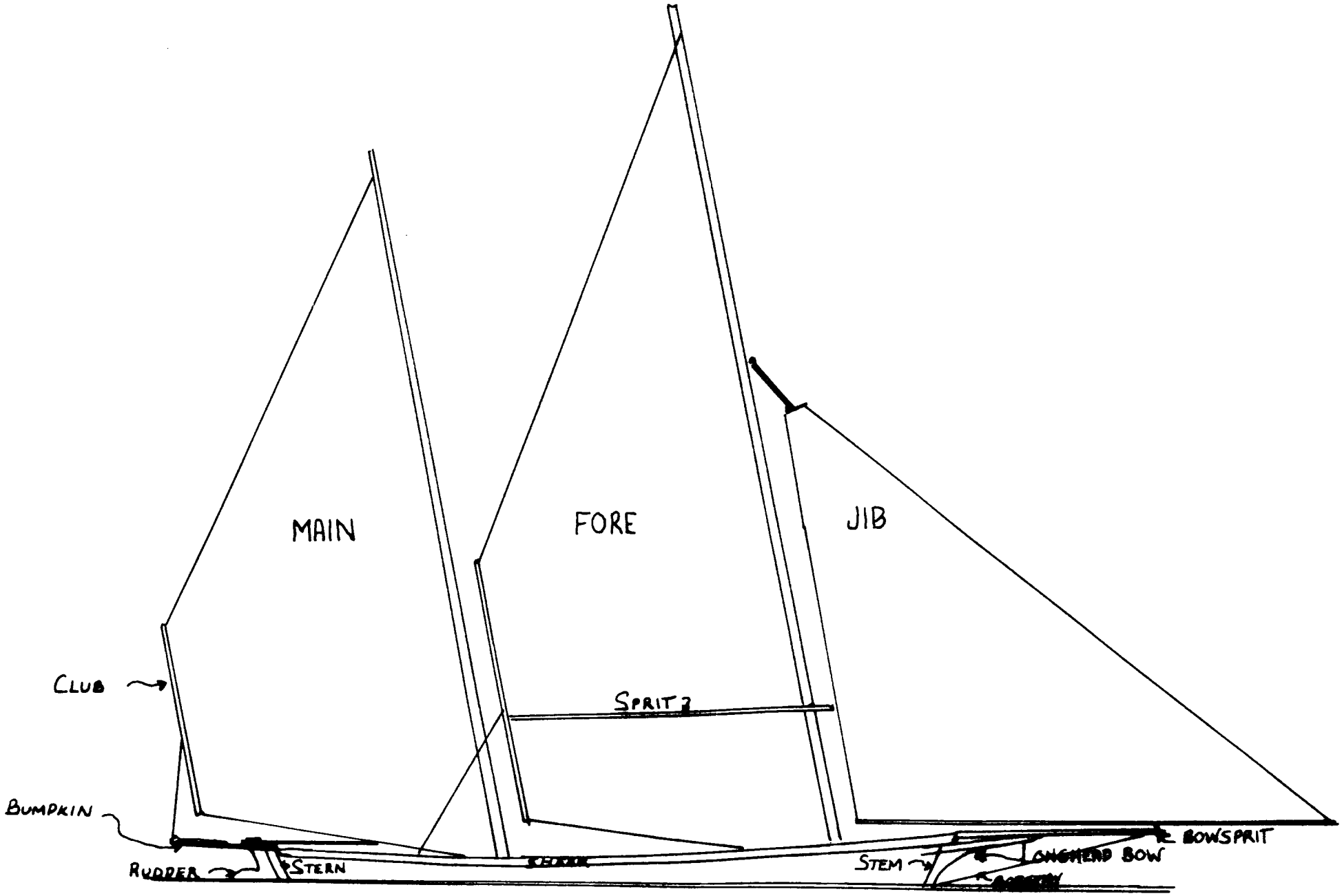
name/title	Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward		
organization	Maryland Historical Society	**date**	5/84
street & number	201 W. Monument St.	**telephone**	685-3750
city or town	Baltimore	**state**	Maryland 21201

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
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

PS-2746



SAIL PLAN OF TILGHMAN ISLAND CANOE after drawing by J.G. Earle

K-641

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
5762 I SE ELKTON 34 MI.
(BETTERTON) KENNEOYVILLE 5.3 MI.
WORTON 2 MI.
2'30"
12'30"
MORGAN
CREEK
CHESTER RIVER
Radcliffe
Creek
WASHINGTON COLLEGE
High Sch
CHESTERTOWN
Long Pt
Barroll Pt
Hope
Kingstown
Swimming Pool
CHESAPEAKE BAY
SAILING-
LOG CANOE
FLEET
THEMATIC GROUP
18-410400-4340180
(QA-422) MYSTERY
K-541

8
8

K-541

MYSTERY
Chestertown, Md.

port side - under sail
M.C. Wootton 7/83