K-669

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: *NELLIE CROCKETT*

Other Name/Site Number: Oyster Buy-Boat *Nellie Crockett*

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Sassafras River Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Georgetown Vicinity: N/A

State: MD County: Kent Code: 029 Zip Code: 21930

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local: ___
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): ___
District: ___
Site: ___
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: 0

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

FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Transportation	Sub:	Water-related
Current:	Transportation	Sub:	Water-related

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Wood (hull)
Walls:	Wood (superstructure)
Roof:	Wood (deck)
Other:	N/A

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Nellie Crockett, a classic plank-on-frame Chesapeake deadrise design oyster buy-boat (a vessel which traveled to the oysters beds and bought oysters directly from the oyster boats working the oyster beds), official number 225369, is homeported on the Sassafras River at Georgetown, Kent County, Maryland. *Crockett* was built in 1926 for Andrew A. Crockett of Tangier, Virginia. She is 61 feet, 7 inches long on deck, has a 20-foot, 4-inch beam, and has a draft of 6 feet, 5 inches. Throughout her career she has been listed as 52 tons gross and 35 tons net. Her wide beam and moderate draft is typical of buy-boats which must carry large loads in the shallow waters characteristic of Chesapeake Bay. *Crockett* maintains her original physical appearance.

HULL

The hull is composed of wooden frames which support the external planking. Ceiling planking 3½ inches thick lines the inside of the hull throughout except in the engine compartment. Hull framing in the hold area runs diagonally from the sides of the boat to the keelson which is made of three pieces scarfed together. At least five of the frames are original and made from natural crooks of tree limbs and/or roots. The bow stem was built as a single timber but has a replacement piece graven in near the waterline area to repair ice damage. Deck beams are 6 by 6 inches and are supported by hanging knees. The knees vary in size by position but typically are 4½ inches wide, 35 inches deep, and 28 inches long. The present 871 Detroit Diesel was one of a number installed over the years. It was installed by Deltaville Marine in 1971 or 1972.[1] In addition to the engine, the hull interior is fitted with twin 105-gallon galvanized steel fuel tanks and a 90-gallon water tank aft in the hold.

The forecastle has a partially watertight bulkhead made up of horizontal planks 5¾ inches wide. This bulkhead separates the hull into two compartments. The forecastle has an upper and lower bunk on the starboard side.

DECK

The pine deck is laid fore and aft, seated in bedding compound, and fastened with galvanized boat nails. The hold opening measures 25 feet by 13 feet, 6 inches with a 4 foot sided coaming, 8 feet high aft, and 6 inches high on the sides above deck. The opening is covered by two parallel sets of 2-inch-thick, 6-foot by 6-inch planks covered by a sheet of canvas. Located in the center of the hatch is a 12-inch by 12-inch dredge post complete with dredge pulleys still in place. The post rakes aft about 15 degrees. The 41-foot mast is located 10 inches forward of the hatch and measures 12 by 12 inches at the deck. A 1956 quarter and 1951 nickel were found under the mast step when the spar was removed in 1992 for repairs. This would suggest the mast was replaced in the 1950s as it was traditional to place a coin with the date of replacement under the mast step.

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1 Theodore L. Parish interview by Ralph Eshelman (Georgetown, Maryland), 30 September 1933. On file with the author.

The foc'sle hatch is 25 inches forward of the mast. It measures 4 feet, 6 inches long and 3 feet, 2 inches wide, with a raised passage opening of 2 feet, 5 inches long and 2 feet, 3 inches wide, and is built of 1¾-inch material. Just forward of the foc'sle hatch are the deck mounts for a gasoline-powered hoist winch which is now removed from the vessel. The bow bitt is 2 feet, 7 inches forward of the foc'sle hatch and 6 feet from the bow. It measures 7¼ inches wide and 11½ inches long. There are two vertical side bitts measuring 5½ by 5½ inches between the mast and dredge post. Also on each side near the aft end of the hatch are two plexiglass deck lights which cover scuttle holes originally closed by steel covers approximately 12 inches in diameter. The deck openings are 15½ inches in diameter and were once fitted with an iron ring which held the manhole cover.

The edges of the deck are surrounded by a low railing that runs from the hatch to the stern. The rail consists of two wooden plank rails held by iron stanchion posts set on top of 5-inch by 5-inch bulwarks. The lower rail is 3½ inches wide by 2 inches thick and the upper rail is 3 by 2 inches. The lower rail is 4½ inches above the bulwark and the upper rail 4¾ inches above the lower rail. The carved name boards on her forward bulwarks are believed to be original.

RIGGING

The single mast is secured by double wire stays on each side and a single stay forward to the stempost. Two 3-inch pipe cargo handling booms are mounted to the base of the mast. When not in use their outer ends rest in chocks atop the pilot house.

PILOT HOUSE

The pilot house is rectangular in plan with the rounded front characteristic of Chesapeake Bay buy-boats. It is 20 feet, 5 inches long and 8 feet, 5 inches wide. It is sided with vertical 2½-inch tongue-and-groove siding, painted white with tan trim. The pilot house is divided into three rooms, each separated at one time by interior doors which are now missing. The front, or wheel room, is the largest, measuring 9 feet, 6 inches long. The original siding is intact but has been covered with a thin wood veneer.

The original six spoke wooden wheel and rope and pulley steering system is still in use. It is embossed on the metal hub behind with "Hesse Martin Ironworks, Portland, Oregon." There are five single light drop windows along the front, port and starboard doors and one window on each side. At the rear port side of the compartment is a heater. An old refrigerator filled with hardware once stood at the starboard rear side of the compartment.

A flush deck hatch to the engine compartment is located on the starboard side floor. Just aft, down 2½ stairs, is the bunk room which is 6 feet, 6 inches long. There is a lower and upper wooden varnish-finished bunk on the port side and head and shower on the starboard side. A port hole is centered above the upper bunk. The head was originally located to the aft end of the room where the shower is today. This room opens to the kitchen which is 4 feet long. There is a window on each side and an exterior door aft. A stove and sink were originally located on the port side and a wooden bench on the starboard, but today the bench has been removed and the sink moved to that side.

CHANGES IN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Crockett has undergone minimal exterior physical change from her original build. Originally, the engine compartment had a non-watertight wall of nearly full height separating it from the cargo hold forward and along the sides to allow maximum storage area. The foc'sle reputedly had a cooking stove on the port side. It is not known exactly when the dredge post was added but this is definitely not original to her build. In the hold is the mount for the crab dredge winch. The winch has been removed and stored by the present owner. The hoisting winch which once was located on deck just aft of the foc'sle hatch is now removed.

The deck manholes mentioned above may date from the vessel's service as a fireboat with the Coast Guard. Surprisingly, there was very little if any alteration by the Coast Guard. Iron stanchions, now removed and stored by the present owner, once supported temporary planks and plywood to build up the sides so the vessel could carry more cargo. Some minor configuration changes already discussed above have been made in the pilot house. Under the Ward ownership, the trim of the pilot house was dark brown, but originally it was varnished. It is now a tan color. The deck is some areas has been covered with a two-part rubber epoxy.

Nellie Crockett, like all work boats, and especially buy-boats, was subjected to heavy wear and deterioration and was constantly undergoing maintenance and repair throughout her career. *Crockett*, however, has changed very little, especially in her exterior physical appearance. The only readily noticeable change is the navigational radar installed by Ward in 1969. She is a tribute to her builder and subsequent owners who cared for her, insuring her survival today as a classic example of a Chesapeake buy-boat.

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:

NHL Theme(s): XIV. Transportation
B. Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures

XII. Business
A. Extractive or Mining Industries
5. Fishing and Livestock

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

Period(s) of Significance: 1926-1943, 1942-1943

Significant Dates: 1926, 1942

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Charles A. Dana, builder

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

Nellie Crockett is a classic frame-and-plank Chesapeake deadrise buy-boat. Larry Chowning, who has written more about them than anyone, refers to the buy-boat as the "tractor trailer of the Chesapeake."[1] Buy-boats were the principle vessels to transport and distribute seafood on the Chesapeake Bay prior to refrigeration, good road systems, and expansion of the railroad.[2] While the oyster dredge boats such as the bugeye and the skipjack are famous as being, or once being, part of North America's last commercial fishing fleet, it was the buy-boat that carried their harvest to market--a vital yet non-glorious aspect of our maritime history. The classic lines of *Crockett* have caught the eye of three of the regions more prominent artists, Franklin A. Saye, Neil Harpe, and John Barber. All three artists have produced paintings depicting *Nellie Crockett*, and two have published prints of the result.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE OYSTER BUY-BOAT

The buy-boat was a vessel, usually of large capacity, operated by oyster-processing companies or to a lesser degree private individuals. They would sail, or with the development of the internal combustion engine, power to the oyster beds in early afternoon to purchase oysters directly from the oystermen working the beds. Buy-boats were popular because they saved oystermen time and expense in not having to go directly to the processing houses to sell their catch. Not all oystermen used the buy-boats, preferring to take their catch to market themselves where the dock price was higher. But most oystermen sold their catch to the buy-boat operators realizing the difference in price did not make up for the extra time and effort required to take the catch to market.

Oystermen preferred to see more than one buy-boat on the beds to insure a little competition in price. In the Chesapeake, if one buy-boat appeared to be getting most of the business, the other buy-boat(s) might raise a bushel basket up its mast indicating it would pay a nickel more a bushel than the other buy-boat(s). Counter measures by the other buy-boat(s) might be two bushel baskets hoisted up its mast, meaning a dime more per bushel. The price wars never got out of hand as rarely did the biding go up more than three or four baskets in an afternoon.

The oysterman tied up his boat to the anchored buy-boat from which a metal bushel measure bucket, perforated on the bottom to allow water to drain, hung from its boom. The tub varied in size over the years but generally was a "twenty-one incher" which meant it was 21 inches from the bottom diagonally to the lip. The tub would be lowered onto the oysterman's boat and filled with a flat shovel. As the tub was hoisted by pulley and rope and dumped into the hold of the buy-boat the captain of the buy-boat would record each bushel on a tally board. When the oyster boat was emptied the oysterman was paid in cash.

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1 Larry Chowning, "The Venerable Buy Boat: Tractor Trailer of the Chesapeake," *National Fisherman Yearbook* (1986), p. 49.

2 Larry Chowning, "Chesapeake buy boats go 'up town'," *National Fisherman* (vol. 74, no. 5, Sept. 1993), p. 33.

Occasionally an oysterman would practice a technique known as "cribbing." This involved placing foreign objects such as rocks or empty shell in the tub. Once caught, and after repeated warnings, the oysterman might be "hawsed;" that is, the next time this same oysterman came to sell his catch the captain would throw his mooring line back meaning he was not welcome. Word of mouth to other buy-boat operators could seriously affect the operation of such an ostracized oysterman, thus making such occurrences rare.[3]

In the off season Chesapeake buy-boats were used to haul produce, lumber, and even livestock to markets in Baltimore and Washington D.C. Since about the 1960s, however, with the advent of trucks and better roads, most oystermen unload their oyster catch directly onto their own pick-up trucks backed up to the pier where they dock. They then drive their catch to their favorite processing plant or where the best prices are being paid. This makes for a longer day but also higher profits. Now during the off season, trucking of produce and lumber is faster, more convenient, and more cost effective. This transportation change marked the end for the buy-boat.

Several of the larger Chesapeake buy-boats have been relocated to the West Indies to haul freight, and two in Baltimore's Harbor have been turned into floating restaurants specializing in steamed crabs.[4] Chris Judy compiled a list of 120 known buy-boats used on the Chesapeake Bay ranging from *Betty I. Conway*, built in Stoney Point, New York, in 1866, to *Thomas W.*, built in Deltaville, Virginia, in 1961.[5]

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF *NELLIE CROCKETT*

Nellie Crockett was built by Charles A. Dana in 1926, at Crisfield, Maryland, for Andrew A. "Shad" Crockett of Tangier, Virginia. She was named for one of Crockett's daughters.[6] She was issued a temporary enrollment on 13 March 1926. *Crockett* carried potatoes, watermelons, lumber, tomatoes, and "shucking oysters."[7] From 1926 until 1947, *Crockett* was owned and operated by Mr. Crockett, excepting three years during the Second World War when the boat served in the U.S. Coast Guard.

The U.S. War Shipping Administration bought the boat for $6,000 on May 15, 1942, for use as a Coast Guard fireboat for the 5th Naval District. The Fifth Naval District included such ports as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Maryland, and Norfolk, Virginia. As *CG-65015F*,

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3 Larry S. Chowning, *Harvesting The Chesapeake: Tools & Traditions*, Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1990, pp. 120-126.

4 Chowning, 1993, p. 33.

5 Chris Judy, "Chesapeake Buy-boat List" (vertical history file, Buy-boats, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland).

6 Parish interview.

7 Chowning, 1986, p. 51.

Crockett was one of a number of converted commercial vessels and yachts adapted to fight fires in large ports. *Crockett* served in the military until November 17, 1945, when she was decommissioned.[8]

After the war ended, the War Shipping Administration sold off vessels that were no longer needed for defense purposes, many at bargain prices. Crockett bought back his vessel for $10 on 6 December 1945. He sold a half share in *Nellie Crockett* to William Smith and quarter share to Charles M. Crockett for $750 (it not clear how much each paid for their share but probably $250 per quarter share) on 28 May 1946. During this period the original 45 horsepower engine was replaced with a 60 horsepower engine. On 24 December 1947, they sold (or probably more precisely gave as a Christmas present) Priscilla Crockett a quarter interest in *Crockett* for one dollar. William Smith bought Charles M. Crockett's half share for $1000 on 17 January 1949. Priscilla and Charles Crockett then resold her to Gus Forbush in 15 August 1950. Forbush changed the engine this time to a 165 horsepower engine.

On 24 July 1950, Gilbert Ashley bought *Crockett* and changed her registered homeport to Baltimore. Prior to this *Crockett* had retained her original Crisfield homeport designation. Ashly sold a half share to J. Harry Porter and a half share to Harry B. Porter of Baltimore, Maryland, on 15 September 1952, who returned her homeport to Crisfield. The Porter's sold a half share to James H. Ward, Sr., and William H. Ward of Reedville, Virginia, on 29 August 1957. William sold his half share to James on 14 February 1966.

In a 1986 interview James Ward stated, "I run seed from the first of October until the season closes on June 15." He noted that he ran 32 loads in the spring and 31 in the fall from the seed beds in Virginia to the oyster beds in the upper bay. Ward continued, "On the day I bought the *Nellie Crockett* 31 years ago there were 54 of us [buy-boats] on the James River buying oysters from 800 tong boats." On the first day of the oyster season in 1986 there were only Ward's *Crockett* and one other boat waiting to buy seed. Ward states that when it is too cold to run seed oysters (the seed will die when temperatures are at or below freezing) he would dredge crabs. In 1986 he dredged crabs "for about six weeks."[9] Ward Sr. died in 1988 and *Crockett* was last operated by the Ward family in February 1990.

Ward's son states that while under their ownership they never stored seafood in the hold because of the smell it made in the bilge and the "hassle" to get it back out. They would haul 2200 bushels of oysters on her deck and kept 10 to 12 tons of granite ballast in the bilge. This granite was removed and used to build the porch of this son's house. He also states they hauled sand and gravel in the hold. An anchor, supposedly the original, is in the hold. [10] Theodore L. Parish of Georgetown, Maryland bought *Crockett* in 1990 and is the current owner. Parish has Ward's *Crockett* logbook.

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8 Robert L. Sheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1982), p. 246.

9 Chowning, 1986, p. 51.

10 Parish interview.

The Parish family manage a major marina and repair yard within the Chesapeake Bay drainage. This fortunate situation, and their desire to preserve *Crockett*, bodes well for her immediate future care. Parish plans to use her in conjunction with his salvage business and for "play".

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brewington, Marion V. *Chesapeake Bay Bugeyes*. Newport News, Virginia: The Mariner's Museum, 1941

_____. *Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes*. Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1963.

Burgess, Robert H. *This Was Chesapeake Bay*. Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1963.

_____. *Chesapeake Bay Sailing Craft*. Pt. 1. Cambridge, Maryland: Cornell Maritime Press, 1975.

Chowning, Larry S. *Harvesting The Chesapeake: Tools & Traditions*. Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1990.

_____. "The Venerable Buy Boat: Tractor Trailer of the Chesapeake", *National Fisherman Yearbook*, 1986.

_____. "Chesapeake buy boats go 'up town'," *National Fisherman* vol. 74, no. 5, Sept. 1993, p. 33.

de Gast, Robert. *The Oystermen of the Chesapeake*. Camden, Maine: International Marine Publishing Co., 1970.

Johnson, Paula J. *Working The Water: The Commercial Fisheries of the Patuxent River*. Charlottesville, Virginia: Calvert Marine Museum and The University of Virginia Press, 1988.

Judy, Chris. Chesapeake Buy-boat List, vertical history file, Buy-boats, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland, 1978.

Nellie Crockett abstract of title (U.S. Coast Guard, Documentation Office, Norfolk, Virginia).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ 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: #

ıary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
X Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
___ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one (1) acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
A 18 424030 4357220

Verbal Boundary Description:

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

ndary Justification:

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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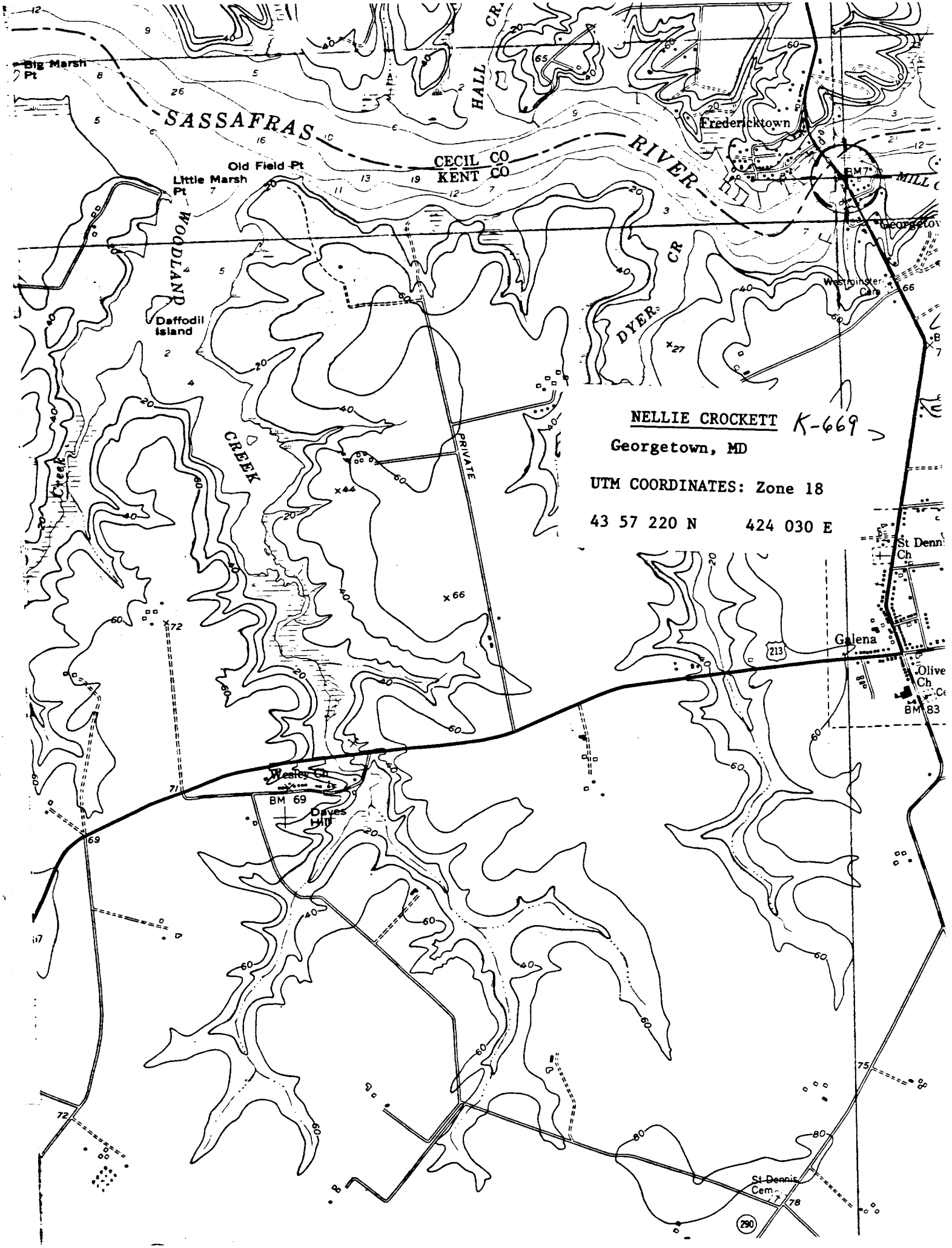
Date: August 28, 1993


Big Marsh Pt
SASSAFRAS
RIVER
CECIL CO
KENT CO
Old Field Pt
Little Marsh Pt
HALL CR
Fredericktown
MILL
Georgetown
WOODLAND
Daffodil Island
DYER CR
Westminster Cem
CREEK
PRIVATE
NELLIE CROCKETT K-669
Georgetown, MD
UTM COORDINATES: Zone 18
43 57 220 N 424 030 E
St Dennis Ch
Galena
213
Olive Ch
BM 83
Wesley Ch
BM 69
Daves Hill
St Dennis Cem
290

K-669

NELLIE ROCKET
Georgetown, MD
Owner: Theodore L. Parish
Port Bow Quarter View
At Anchor, Sassafras River
Photo #1 by Theodore L. Parish
Courtesy of: Owner