

T-525

Staten Island "Yankee" skiff
St. Michaels, Maryland

This vessel is a 22'8" long lapstrake skiff of a type known as a "Staten Island" or "Yankee" skiff. Built in the late 19th century, possibly in Staten Island, New York, this vessel was used for tonging for oysters on the York River, Virginia by John L. Gage of Dandy, York Co., who oysterèd with the boat from just after World War I to the 1960s. The vessel is now on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. This vessel is significant as being a rare survival of a type of skiff brought into the Chesapeake by northern oystermen, one of whom settled on the York River where the skiff type was popularized. Many similar lapstrake skiffs were owned by packing houses around the Chesapeake and rented out to tongers.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-525
Magi No. 2105255633
DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Staten Island "Yankee" skiff CBMM 68-116-1

2. Location

street & number Hill street _____ not for publication

city, town St. Michaels _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district _____

state Maryland _____ county Talbot

3. Classification

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

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

name Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

street & number _____ telephone no.: 745-2916

city, town St. Michaels _____ state and zip code Maryland 21663

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. T-525

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

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

This boat is a 22'8"-long lapstrake skiff with a 6'2" beam. She is of the type known as a "Staten Island" or "Yankee" skiff, meant to be rowed. Built in the late 19th century (c. 1870s -1890s), possibly in Staten Island, New York, this example was used for tonging on the York River, Virginia, by John L. Gage of Dandy, York County, who oystered with the boat from just after World War I until the 1960s. The skiff represents a rare survival of a type brought into the Chesapeake by northern oystermen, one of whom settled on the York River where the skiff type was popularized. Many similar lapstrake skiffs were owned by packing houses around the Chesapeake and rented out to tongers. This example, distinctive from the indigenous Bay boats, is on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels.

The boat is lapstrake-built of 7/8" cedar planks on oak frames. It has a curved stem and a heart-shaped transom stern, with a graceful sheer line. It has a rounded chine with a long run aft. The construction rises from a semi-box (plank) keel, patterned after that used on Jersey beach skiffs; this deepens into an 18" skeg at the stern. There are eleven sets of frames set 17" to 21" apart. There are naturally-shaped frames further hewn to fit. Hewn knees are fitted from the sides to the transom stern, and there is a small apron piece at the bow.

The skiff is open, with platform seats fitted at bow and stern. Floorboards run from the stern seat forward to a plank-on-edge bulkhead fitted forward of the third frame. This forms a compartment for carrying oysters. There is a culling board, 24 1/2" wide, set athwartships. Two sets of square thole pins are set well forward, into reinforcements between frames inside the sheer strake. The skiff was rowed with 9'-long oars with 3' blades, but the type was not suited to motorization. The culling board, decking, and thole pins are replacements furnished at the Museum.

Restored by the Museum since its donation in 1969, the skiff is painted white with dark green trim on the sheer. The inside of the hull, decking, thole pins, and culling board are also green, while the oars are white. There is copper bottom paint below the waterline.

8. Significance

Survey No. T-525

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 checked="" 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 c. 1870-1890 Builder/Architect Unknown

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 a rare survival of a type of vessel not indigenous to the Chesapeake, but which became important to the oyster industry in the later 19th century. The vessels were common to the Staten Island area of New York but were imported into the Chesapeake by northern oystermen, one of whom settled in the York River area where the skiff type was popularized. Many similar skiffs were owned by packing houses around the Chesapeake and rented out to tongers.

The skiff type is distinctive from the indigenous Chesapeake types and forms an interesting comparison with the local examples also in the Museum collection. In place of the local V-bottom, deadrise form, the Staten Island skiff shows a rounded chine, a curved stem, and plank-on-frame construction--construction techniques far more time-consuming and difficult than the typical Chesapeake deadrise construction. The skiff was meant to be rowed and the type did not lend itself to motorization.

The skiff was donated to the Museum by John L. Gage of Dandy, York Co., Virginia, who oystered with the boat from the age of 14--from just after World War I until the 1960's. The boat was restored by the Museum after its donation in 1969.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-525

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, Co., 1951)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references:

A

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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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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	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 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



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Staten Island "Yankee" skiff
St. Michaels, Md.

starboard side
M.C. Wootton

5/84