Capsule Summary
SM-816
Combs Creek Marine Railway
Compton vicinity
Private circa 1870s

The Combs Creek Marine Railway is just one of a greatly diminishing number of railways once commonly seen along the county's numerous creeks, inland bays, and sheltered harbors. Once at the center of a thriving community of watermen, boat builders, maritime merchants, and laborers, the railway remains in operation. The original winch is still used. The maker's name and location as well as the patent and reissue dates are all included on the machinery. William H. Smith, Incorporated of Springville, New York made the winch when it was originally patented on May 12, 1874. On July 19, 1881 the winch was apparently reissued possibly because of defects. Interestingly a sloppily welded seam is visible on the winch. Important resources such as marine railways are quickly being replaced by hydraulic lifts as a means of pulling boats out of the water and storing or repairing them.

Historic photographs of the Combs Creek Marine Railway from the late-nineteenth to early twentieth century are currently held by the Calvert Marine Museum. These resources as well as any oral history or documentary research about the railway should be collected during future recordation efforts.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. SM-816

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Combs Creek Marine Railway
other	

2. Location

street and number	W side of Combs Creek, just E of 21670 Joe Hazel Road	__	not for publication
city, town	Compton	x	vicinity
county	St. Mary's		

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

name	Kevin and Linda Barnes				
street and number	21670 Joe Hazel Road			telephone	N/a
city, town	Leonardtown	state	Md	zip code	20650-2516

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	St. Mary's County Courthouse	tax map and parcel	TM-39, P-34	
city, town	Leonardtown	liber	MRB 400	folio 231

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

_____ Contributing Resource in National Register District
_____ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
_____ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
_____ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
_____ Recorded by HABS/HAER
_____ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
_____ Other:_____

6. Classification

Category
_____district
__x__building(s)
_____structure
_____site
_____object

Ownership
_____public
__x__private
_____both

Current Function
_____agriculture
__x__commerce/trade
_____defense
_____domestic
_____education
_____funerary
_____government
_____health care
_____industry
_____landscape
_____recreation/culture
_____religion
_____social
__x__transportation
_____work in progress
_____unknown
_____vacant/not in use
_____other:

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
__1__	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
__1__	_____	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
__0__

7. Description

Inventory No. SM-816

Condition

___ excellent ___ deteriorated
___ good ___ ruins
x__ fair ___ altered

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

The Combs Creek Marine Railway is situated on the west bank of Combs Creek, a tributary of Breton Bay and ultimately the Potomac River near the rural community of Compton, Maryland. The railway slopes downward from west to east and lies just to the south of the house with the address of 21670 Joe Hazel Road (SM-817). The property is bounded by residential lots to the north and south, Combs Creek to the east, and Joe Hazel Road to the west.

The marine railway consists of a engine and winch situated on an incline approximately forty feet above the waterline of Combs Creek. Two rails extend east to west from the engine and wench and well into the water. Piers positioned astride the submerged rails aid in pulling boats up onto a wood frame carriage specially equipped with rail car wheels. The boat is then pulled up on the carriage that rests on the rails until it is well above the water and can be easily accessed for painting or scraping. The iron winch is marked with the makers name, location as well as patent and reissue dates. It reads "Winfield H. Smith, Inc., Springville, New York." It says further that it was "Pat May 12, 1874 reissued July 19, 1881."

8. Significance

Inventory No. SM-816

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
__ 1600-1699	__ agriculture	__ economics	__ health/medicine	__ performing arts
__ 1700-1799	__ archeology	__ education	__ industry	__ philosophy
1800-1899	__ architecture	__ engineering	__ invention	__ politics/government
x 1900-1999	__ art	__ entertainment/ recreation	__ landscape architecture	__ religion
__ 2000-	x commerce	__ ethnic heritage	__ law	__ science
	__ communications	__ exploration/ settlement	__ literature	__ social history
	__ community planning		x maritime history	__ transportation
	__ conservation		__ military	__ other:

Specific dates **Architect/Builder**

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

_____ National Register _____Maryland Register ____x____not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Combs Creek Marine Railway is just one of a greatly diminishing number of railways once commonly seen along the county's numerous creeks, inland bays, and sheltered harbors. Once at the center of a thriving community of watermen, boat builders, maritime merchants, and laborers, the railway remains in operation. The original winch is still used. The maker's name and location as well as the patent and reissue dates are all included on the machinery. William H. Smith, Incorporated of Springville, New York made the winch when it was originally patented on May 12, 1874. On July 19, 1881 the winch was apparently reissued possibly because of defects. Interestingly a sloppily welded seam is visible on the winch. Important resources such as marine railways are quickly being replaced by hydraulic lifts as a means of pulling boats out of the water and storing or repairing them.

Historic photographs of the Combs Creek Marine Railway from the late-nineteenth to early twentieth century are currently held by the Calvert Marine Museum. These resources as well as any oral history or documentary research about the railway should be collected during future recordation efforts.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. SM-816

Hammett, Regina Combs. History of St. Mary's County, Maryland: 1634-1990. Ridge, Md: Self-published, 1994.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	1.16 acres		
Acreage of historical setting	1.16 acres		
Quadrangle name	Leonardtown	Quadrangle scale:	1:24 000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is bounded by residential lots to the north and south, Combs Creek to the east, and Joe Hazel Road to the west. A more specific description of the properties boundaries can be found in St. Mary's County Land Records Liber MRB 400, Folio 231.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Kirk E. Ranzetta, Historic Sites Surveyor		
organization	St. Mary's County Department of Planning & Zoning	date	August, 2000
street & number	22740 Washington Street	telephone	301-475-4662
city or town	Leonardtown	state	Maryland

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties 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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

SCALE 1:24 000

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DASHED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
BATHYMETRIC CONTOUR INTERVAL 1 METER WITH SUPPLEMENTARY
0.5 METER CONTOURS—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER

SM-816
Combs Creek Marine Railway
Compton
St. Mary's County
Leonardtown Quad

Sm - 216
Combs Creek Marine Railway

Looking N
1 - 2

MET
ONL

-816
Combs Creek Marine Railway

Looking E
2 2