

1987

S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA (skipjack)
Wenona, Maryland

HELEN VIRGINIA is a 43.2' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She has a beam of ', a depth of ', and a gross registered tonnage of 10.25. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a single large jib with a club on its foot. Built in 1948 in Crisfield, Maryland following traditional Bay design and construction methods, HELEN VIRGINIA 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. HELEN VIRGINIA is of special interest for having been built during the post World War II revival of skipjack building for the working oyster fleet.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. S-235

Magi No.

DOE yes no

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic HELEN VIRGINIA

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Lower Thorofare n/a not for publication

city, town Wenona n/a vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland 024 county Somerset 039

3. Classification

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

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

name Captain Jack Parkinson

street & number telephone no.: 784-2217

city, town Wenona state and zip code Maryland 21870

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft

date 1983-1984

federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circl

city, town ANNAPOLIS state MD 21401

7. Description

Survey No. S-235

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

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

This vessel is a 43.2'-long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She was built in 1948 in Crisfield, Maryland for the oyster dredging fleet. Her beam is approximately one-third her overall length, following traditional dredgeboat design and she has a gross registered tonnage of 10.25 tons. The vessel is built in typical Bay fashion using cross-planked construction methods. She flies a typical skipjack rig consisting of jib-headed mainsail and a large jib. The vessel has a longhead or clipper bow and a square stern. The wooden hull is painted the traditional white.

HELEN VIRGINIA has a straight, almost plumb stem with an added longhead. Her lines show very little freeboard aft. She is square-sterned with a slightly raking transom. The transom has a rudder mounted on it with pintles and a jig for the pushboat to starboard of the rudder. There are long guards on the hull to protect the sides from the bumping of the dredges.

The single mast is of natural wood, set up with double shrouds adjusted by means of turnbuckles, and a forestay and jibstay. There is a topping lift leading to the end of the boom, which is jawed to the mast. The sails have lazyjacks for easier furling. The mainsail is jib-headed and laced to the boom. The large jib has a club on its foot. The bowsprit, painted white but bright at the end, is set up with double chain bobstays and cable bowsprit shrouds. There are wooden braces leading from the longhead back to the hull. In addition to the sail rig the vessel carries a motorized pushboat suspended over the stern on davits.

The skipjack is flush-decked, with an unusual deck arrangement. A box with steering gear and a wheel is located near the after-rail; forward of this is a low hatch and a tall box over the winder engine. The main cabin trunk with its slide is located just abaft the mast. There is a solid lograil forward and a short pinrail aft. The rails are open at the rollers amidships where the dredges are brought in. Other gear includes oyster dredging equipment--dredges, winders, and winder engines.

The vessel is painted white with red trim running along the braces leading out to the longhead. Trailboards mounted on the longhead have the name HELEN VIRGINIA in gold on a dark green ground with a red-white-and-blue motif of flag, shields, and scrolled vines and leaves. The name is also painted on the lograil at the bows.

8. Significance

Survey No.

S-235

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 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 1948 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 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-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, 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.

HELEN VIRGINIA is of interest as having been built during the post World War II revival of skipjack building for the working oyster fleet. She was built in 1948 in Crisfield, Md., following traditional Bay design and construction methods. She has worked in the oyster-dredging fleet since her building and is presently based at Deal Island. The vessel is one of ten skipjacks built after World War II during a boom in the oyster business, all of which are still active except for the ROSIE PARKS (now at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum). It is of great interest that even though these vessels were built over fifty years after the peak skipjack-building years, their design and construction methods closely followed turn-of-the-century prototypes.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. S-235

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre
Quadrangle name Deal Island, MD Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

1	8	4	1	6	8	7	0	4	2	2	0	2	4	9
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

This working vessel is usually docked at the location indicated in Item 2. Historic boundaries are coterminous with the hull.

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

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M. E. Hayward

Radcliffe Maritime Museum

organization Maryland Historical Society

date May, 1984

street & number 201 West Monument Street

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
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. S-235

Magi No. 2002355833

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic HELEN VIRGINIA

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

 not for publication

city, town Wenona

 vicinity of

congressional district

state Maryland

county

Somerset

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
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<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
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<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
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street & number

telephone no.: 784-2217

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state and zip code Maryland 21870

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courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

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city, town

state

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title

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state

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		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1948 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 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, 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.

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S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

port side

M.C. Wootton

10/83

Helena Virginia



HELEN VIRGINIA

HELEN VIRGINIA

S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

bow

M. C. Wootton

10/83

fallen virginia



S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

stern

M.C. Wootton

10/83

Hel-
Virginia



S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA

Wenona, Md

starboard stern under sail
M.C. Wootton 11/83

Helen Virginia