1. NAME OF PROPERTY

T-531

Historic Name: *HILDA M. WILLING*

Other Name/Site Number: Chesapeake Skipjack *Hilda M. Willing*

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Dogwood Harbor Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Tilghman Island Vicinity: N/A

State: MD County: Talbot Code: 041 Zip Code: 21671

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private: X	Building(s): ___
Public-Local: ___	District: ___
Public-State: ___	Site: ___
Public-Federal: ___	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: 1

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 _____

6. FUNCTION OR USE

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

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	(Hull) Wood
Walls:	(Hull) Wood
Roof:	(Deck) Wood
Other:	(Superstructure) Wood

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Chesapeake Bay skipjack *Hilda M. Willing*, official number 202528, is a historic working oyster dredge sailboat homeported in Tilghman Island, Maryland. Built in 1905 at Oriole, Maryland, she is 40 feet long, 14 feet wide, and has a depth of 3 feet, 1 inch.

HULL

The hull is cross-planked with a sharp convex bow, flat transom and hard chine. The clipper bow has a sharp raking stem with a curved longhead or cutwater beneath the bowsprit. Mounted on the longhead are hand-carved trailboards with a typical patriotic design. On the cheek boards is an American eagle sitting on a U.S. shield with a cannon, ram rod, and flag crossed at the bottom. On the long board are three U.S. shields separated first by the name of the vessel in yellow and then two leaf clusters painted green. The shields are painted red and white but where it should be blue it is painted black. The vessel name is also painted in yellow on black nameboards mounted just aft of the stem on the bow.
The bowsprit is 18 feet, 11 inches long, and painted white except for the forwardmost 6 feet, 6 inches which is painted light tan. It measures 9 inches wide and 7 feet thick at the aft end. *Willing*'s stern is square with the rudder mounted amidships on pintles. A jib or push block for the pushboat is mounted on the starboard side of the transom and is 17 inches wide and 24 inches high. There are guards mounted along the sides of the hull midships to protect the sides from bumping dredges. The hull is painted white.

MAIN DECK

Willing has a traditional flush-deck with fore-and-aft decking averaging 3¾ inches wide. Stanchion posts are 9½ inches wide, 3 inches thick, and 20½ inches high. There is one crude hawse-hole, without a hawse pipe, cut in the port side, none on the starboard. The king plank is 1 foot, 7¾ inches wide and is made from two pieces of wood. It runs from the bow past the mast but stops short of the hatch. The main hatch is amidships between the mast and the deckhouse. The hatch measures 5 feet, 7 inches wide, 4 feet, 10½ inches long, and 8½ inches high. The hatch coaming material is of 2¾-inch stock. The hatch cover is made from two pieces of plywood painted light tan.

The winders and dredge winch box are mounted aft of the mast. The dredge winch is covered by a box made of plywood, measuring 3¼ feet wide, 3 feet, 9 inches long, and is 3 feet, 5½ inches high. Just aft of the winch box are two side-by-side hand pump openings in the deck each measuring 7½ inches wide by 7 inches long and made from 2- inch stock. A second smaller hatch is located aft of the pumps. It measures 3 feet wide, 2 feet, 3¾ inches long and 6½ inches high.

The cabin is 7 feet, 5½ inches long, 7 feet, 4 inches wide, and 2 feet, 6½ inches high. A window on the forward end measures 20½ inches long and 14½ inches high and is protected by 7 iron bars set in the window framing. A dog house set on the aft end of the cabin is 29¾ inches wide, 46 inches long at the bottom and due to the slant bank of the forward end is only 35 inches long at the top. The dog house door is painted light brown.

The mechanism for the ship's wheel is covered by a box located amidships at the stern. The

box measures 19½ inches wide, 31½ inches long and 24 inches high. A stainless steel wheel controls the hydraulic steering mechanism which replaced the original patent steering engine. Davits for the push boat are mounted facing aft at each side of the stern and are made from 2-inch round pipe. A solid log rail lines the outer edges of the deck forward and double pinrail is fitted aft. Each wooden rail is 2⅝ inches wide and 1¾ inches thick. Everything except as noted above is painted white.

RIGGING

Hilda M. Willing carries the standard skipjack rig of a jib-headed mainsail and a large jib. Her single mast has standing rigging of double shrouds which are adjustable by turnbuckles, a forestay, jib-stay, and topping lift. The mast has a 10½-inch diameter at the deck and rakes aft to a considerable degree. The sharply raking masts and simple rig of skipjacks allowed a large amount of sail to be carried with a small crew because the rake kept the center of effort of the sail near the deck.

The mainsail is laced to the boom and carried on wooden hoops at the mast. The boom is jawed to the mast. The jib has a club along its foot and rigged out to the bowsprit. Lazyjacks are used to furl both the mainsail and jib. The bowsprit is set up with double chain bobstays and double chain bowsprit shrouds.

DREDGING GEAR

She carries two dredges, one on each side with the winders and their motor just forward midships. Where the dredge comes up onboard on each side is a protective horizontal steel roller bar mounted about midships along the rails. A vertical metal bar is mounted to the hull just aft of the horizontal bar to protect the rail from the dredge wire while dredging and hulling the dredge.

PUSHBOAT

In addition to her sail rig, *Willing* carries a motorized pushboat suspended from davits over the stern. This boat nudges into the push block on the starboard side of the transom to provide power when docking or when allowed for dredging.

CHANGES IN ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

As a working vessel, *Hilda M. Willing* has undergone periodic renovation throughout her career. Until 1967, skipjacks by law were limited to sail power only. Thus the stern davits and pushboat are relatively recent modifications. The plywood hatch covers, plywood dredge winch box, stainless steel wheel, and hydraulic steering gear are all later modifications of gear. Her present owner "Pete" Sweitzer made these changes as well as raising the deck about 8 inches.

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: 1, 4

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)

Period(s) of Significance: 1905-1943

Significant Dates: 1905

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

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

The Chesapeake skipjack fleet is the last commercial sail powered fishing fleet in North America and the only "cohesive" sailing fleet in the western hemisphere.[1] Introduced to the Chesapeake Bay in the 1890s, the skipjack became the preferred oyster dredge boat. During the first quarter of this century the skipjack fleet numbered into the hundreds; today only about 25 have survived the hard demanding work of a sailing oyster dredge boat. Only 16 of those survive afloat. Among these *Hilda M. Willing* retains essentially her physical appearance as originally built. *Willing* is also one of the few early skipjacks which is in good physical condition, and repressents one of the smaller and better sailing vessels of the fleet.

Of the skipjacks that survive, two were determined worthy of NHL nomination, *Kathryn* and *Hilda M. Willing*. Among the skipjacks built prior 1943 (the 50 year cut off date), most either were in poor condition, or no longer working as oyster dredge boats. *E.C. Collier*, one of the older boats, is now a display in dry storage. The better conditioned skipjacks such as *Lady Katie*, *Herman M. Krentz*, and *Rosie Parks* are younger than 50 years old. *Kathryn*, represents one of the earliest extant and one of the few fore-and-aft planked skipjacks; while *Willing* represents one the smaller, better maintained, and better sailing skipjacks.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHESAPEAKE SKIPJACK

The Chesapeake oyster fishery dates to the early 1800s when vessels from New England and New York and later New Jersey and Delaware came to the Bay to dredge oysters due to the depletion of their own native beds. Concern for depletion of the Chesapeake beds led to conservation laws banning dredging in Maryland waters in 1820 thereby restricting the harvesting of oysters to hand tonging.

In 1828 Thomas Kensett opened Baltimore's first oyster cannery having been awarded the first United States patent for his process "to preserve animal, vegetable, and other perishable goods." Because oysters were an extremely perishable product for which there was wide demand, they proved the ideal first food product to be experimentally massed-marketed through the use of the canning process. Kensett's process, followed by several other canners, allowed for national distribution of Maryland oysters.

Canning increased the demand for oysters and the ban on dredging was repealed in 1865, though dredging was restricted to specific deep water oyster beds and sail-powered vessels only. These resource conservation laws served to help save commercial sailing vessels by banning steam and later internal combustion engine powered vessels from dredging.

Due to the heavy demand for oysters the Chesapeake bugeye oyster dredge boat reached its popularity. By the 1880s over 700 Maryland licensed dredge boats consisting of pungies,

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1 Thomas C. Gillmer, *Working Watercraft*, (Camden, ME: International Marine Publishing Company, 1972), p. 54.

schooners, sloops, and mainly bugeyes dredged the Bay. In 1884-1885 a record 15 million bushels of oysters were harvested from the Bay. But, as with the oyster grounds to the north, this demand and resulting over utilization of the resource caused the decline of the native Chesapeake oyster population. By the 1890s shipbuilding costs also began to rise due to depleted supplies of large timbers and higher labor costs. Similarly, large trees necessary for the construction of the traditional bugeye log hull were becoming scarce. These changes in natural resources brought in the age of the skipjack.

A vessel was needed that was cheaper and easier to construct than the popular "chunk" or log built bugeyes and traditionally framed schooners; that had a shallow draft so it could navigate the shallow waters of the Chesapeake; and had enough sail power and deck space to operate efficiently as an oyster dredge boat. The skipjack, a shallow draft, centerboard sailing vessel specially designed and adapted for use in the Chesapeake Bay as an oyster dredge boat met this need.

The skipjack, according to Chapelle, is the direct descendant of the sharpie which was introduced to the Chesapeake Bay from Long Island Sound about 1868. The sharpie never became popular on the Bay, perhaps because the Bay was larger and required a bigger more burdensome boat than the Sound. Chesapeake oystermen also preferred the sloop rig over the double masted sharpie because the sloop rig was more powerful for dredging in light winds. Thus regional preference and water conditions dictated a need for a sharpie-like craft which was made more beamy by adding a little deadrise aft.

These sloop rigged vessels, rarely over 30 feet in length, were called Hampton flatties.[2] The V-bottom or hard chine hull originated after the American Civil War in the Long Island Sound area from the "Northern skipjack" type, but it was the Chesapeake which adopted the hard chine and popularized it.[3] Thus the skipjack (or two-sail bateau as they were also called) may be the result of a complex evolution, possibly including the sharpie, the northern unframed skipjack from Long Island Sound and the square-sterned and often flat-bottomed Chesapeake crab skiff referred to as the Hampton flattie.

Chesapeake boat-builders enlarged these skiffs to 25 to 50 feet, giving them a V-bottom or deadrise hull covered by a deck, cabin, and powered by a single-masted two sail sloop rig. The resulting skipjack is characterized as unframed, hard chine (angular sided versus a rounded bilge), typically cross or herring bone planked, with a V-bottomed hull form with one mast and two sails. A few of the early hulls were framed with fore and aft planking.

Rules of thumb for skipjack design include, maximum beam on deck equal to 1/3 length on deck, centerboard length is equal to 1/3 length on deck, mast length is equal to length on deck plus beam, boom length is equal to length on deck, and bowsprit length is equal to

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2 Howard I. Chapelle, "The Migration of An American Boat Type", (*Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology*, Paper 25, U.S. National Museum Bulletin 228, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1961), p. 148-149; and Howard I. Chapelle, *American Small Sailing Craft: Their Design, Development and Construction*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1951).

3 Richard J. Dodds and Pete Lesher, editors, *A Heritage In Wood: The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Small Craft Collection* (St. Michaels, Maryland, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, 1992), p. 45.

beam. Skipjacks were comparatively inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by competent house carpenters or skilled oystermen; the skills of boat builders familiar with the more complicated to construct rounded bows and rounded bilges were not needed.

One suggestion for the origin of the name skipjack which certainly seems appropriate is that it is an archaic English word meaning "inexpensive yet useful servant"[4] The typical cost of a skipjack in 1905 was $3000. It is said the skipjack is the most economical survivor of the Chesapeake sailing workboats.[5] The skipjack's wide beam, hard chine, and low freeboard provided a stable, large, working and storage platform. The single-masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail (a few had gaff rigged mainsails) and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly without losing way, which was so necessary for their continuous "licks" (passes) over the oyster beds.[6]

The first recorded herring-bone planked skipjack is the 1891 built *Ruby G. Ford*, which last sailed about 1986 and is now abandoned and in ruins at Tilghman Island, Maryland.[7] Holt suggests the *Ford* may have been replanked as most of the early skipjacks were framed with fore and aft planking such as the *Kathryn*, built in 1901. Hard chine boats have no need for bottom frames because of their sturdy cross planked bottoms.[8]

Some historians have estimated that nearly 2,000 skipjacks have been built, all specifically designed for dredging oysters from the Chesapeake Bay. The peak building years were during the 1890s and first decade of the 20th century. By the 1930s the fleet had dwindled dramatically as old vessels were abandoned in the face of low oyster prices and an almost non-existent market. This trend continued into the post World War II era which saw a revival of the oyster industry and a group of new skipjacks added to the fleet, bringing the numbers up into the 70s. By 1971 the fleet had dropped to 43 vessels, with a more or less steady decline since. When the skipjack fleet was nominated to the National Register in 1985 it was estimated 35 skipjacks existed; by 1993 only about 25 survive afloat. Of these, approximately 16 skipjacks still work the Chesapeake with only just more than half dating from the pre-1930s early period. Most of these early boats have been rebuilt at least once and a few carry the same name although they have been completely rebuilt. It is estimated only 7 to 10 will dredge this winter.[9] Many of these are in poor condition. The decline in the oyster harvests leave little if any profit available to the skipjack owners to properly maintain their vessels.

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4 Frederick Tilp, "Did You Know?", *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*, (Volume 15, Number 5, 1985), p. 15.

5 Gillmer, p. 50.

6 R. J. Holt, Introduction, in *Notes on Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks* by Howard I. Chappelle (St. Michaels, MD: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, reprint of 1944 *American Neptune* article), p. unpaged.

7 Holt, *Ibid.*; and Fred Hopkins, phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 1 September 1993.

8 Gillmer, p. 50.

9 Ed Farley interview by Ralph Eshelman, Tilghman Island, Maryland, 10 September 1993.

Recent additions to the fleet include the *Dee of St. Mary's*, built in 1979, the *Connie Francis*, built in 1982, and the *Nathan of Dorchester*, under construction in 1993. Several vessels have been bought by individuals to be converted to yachts—a conversion which is not ideal due to the low hold height. Pleasure boaters often have required more head room which too often resulted in ugly cabin additions on deck.

The skipjack fleet has become a preservation priority in Maryland. The governor and the Maryland Historical Trust prepared a Skipjack Preservation Plan in 1988. One result of this effort was the creation of a shipyard along the waterfront of Fell's Point, Baltimore. Operated by the Lady Maryland Foundation's Maritime Institute, the yard repairs skipjacks using the labor of inner-city children under the supervision of trained shipwrights. Thus far several skipjacks have received repair work in this yard.

With the oyster harvest at an all time low and repeated threats of a moratorium on oystering in a desperate attempt to conserve the depleted oyster beds, the working skipjacks remaining in the fleet are in trouble. With little if any profit being made by their owners, the maintenance of the skipjacks is suffering. A few captains have attempted "dude" charters with mixed, but mostly limited success. Even the skipjack which is considered the Chesapeake's most economical sailing workboat cannot make a living for her owner when the oysters are too scarce to make a profit.

The extinction of America's last commercial fishing sailing fleet is unfortunately possible. This sailing fleet has survived as long as it has only due to the ban on power, although a powered push boat or yawl is allowed to motor the skipjack to and from the beds. Beginning in 1967 the skipjacks were allowed to dredge under power on Mondays and Tuesdays. In fact, most skipjacks today operate mostly on power days. Thus technically, much of the sailing fleet is not truly a working sailing fleet anymore.

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF *HILDA M. WILLING*

The *Hilda M. Willing* was built in 1905 at Oriole, Somerset County, Maryland, along the Manokin River off Tangier Sound. She was homeported at Crisfield, Maryland with a crew of five. Samuel L. Laird of Oriole, Maryland, was owner by 1926 and sold her to Thornton Webster, of Wenona, Maryland, in 1927. By 1929 Roland Bozman of Wenona became the owner with her crew reduced to four. Bozman sold the *Willing* to R. E. Hoffman who resold her to Addie M. Jones by 1941. T. Rayner Graham owned her in 1943 and abandoned her in Annapolis, Maryland, as many others had done wiht their skipjacks during the war. Leslie Pope of Oxford, Maryland, bought her for $400. Pope changed her homeport to Cambridge, Maryland before reselling her to Robert F. "Pete" Sweitzer in 1947 for $1600.

The 69-year-old Sweitzer has owned *Willing* ever since; over 45 years. This may be the longest ownership of a skipjack in the fleet's history. Since he has owned her, he has done most of the repair and maintenance work on her himself. He is recognized among the fleet as a good boat builder.[10] Because of the age of *Willing*, she was built for the hand winder

[10] Farley interview.

days when the deck was heavily crowned so the sides would be low to the water for ease in bringing in the dredge.

Willing's owner has kept her working by making the necessary improvements to allow his boat to compete economically. This has required that changes be made from the original configuration. In 1949 Sweitzer was the first to install an automobile engine on a skipjack for hauling in the dredge. Prior to this, most captains had replaced the hand dredge with one cylinder Hettinger engines which shook the boats greatly as they ran. Sweitzer raised the sides of the vessel taking out the crown of the deck but leaving the same depth of the hold in the center. Higher sides were now preferred for stability due to the weight of the dredge gear. Most skipjacks built after the 1930s had this higher sided look. At the same time Sweitzer added a longer boom, deepened the centerboard, added a 2" by 8" oak skag to the keel, and took the traditional rake out of the mast making it plumb. Sweitzer in his own words said he "made a dumb boat into a smart one".

Willing is said to be the only skipjack which can come about with out use of the centerboard. She is noted for her ability to dredge in light air and her ability to dredge in heavy wind without her jib—a feat not many skipjacks can follow. The original trailboards were replaced in 1952 when Sweitzer hand-carved the set now on *Willing* following the original pattern. *Willing* also had a small eagle figurehead which was taken off after it deteriorated and was never replaced. About 1978 Sweitzer replaced the original Lake steering gear with the present hydraulic gear. He still has the original gear as well as the original deadeyes now replaced with turnbuckles. "Pete" Sweitzer has a reputation for doing what he thinks is best, not what is tradition or what the other watermen do. Sweitzer played a significant role in getting the Maryland legislature to pass the Monday and Tuesday dredge law—one many of the skipjack captains fought and now realize saved the skipjack from an earlier extinction.[11]

[11] Robert "Pete" Sweitzer phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 13 September 1993.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ 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	384240	4285550

Verbal Boundary Description:

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

Boundary Justification:

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Ralph E. Eshelman, Maritime Historian
(and heavy use of the Chesapeake Bay Skipjack Fleet National Register Nomination by Mary Ellen Hayward)

Address: Academy of Natural Sciences
Benedict Estuarine Research Laboratory
Benedict, Maryland 20612

Telephone: 301/274-3134 or 410/326-4877

Date: September 26, 1993