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.

Survey No. S-235

Magi No.

DOE ___yes _x_no

# Maryland Historical Trust
# State Historic Sites Inventory Form

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street & number Lower Thorofare n/a ___ not for publication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 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ district | ___ public | x__ occupied | ___ agriculture | ___ museum |
| ___ building(s) | x__ private | ___ unoccupied | x__ commercial | ___ park |
| ___ structure | ___ both | ___ work in progress | ___ educational | ___ private residence |
| ___ site | **Public Acquisition** | **Accessible** | ___ entertainment | ___ religious |
| x__ object | ___ in process | x__ yes: restricted | ___ government | ___ scientific |
| | ___ being considered | ___ yes: unrestricted | ___ industrial | x__ transportation |
| | x__ not applicable | ___ no | ___ military | ___ 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 x__ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circel

city, town ANNAPOLIS state MD 21401

# 7. Description

Survey No. S-235

| Condition | | Check one | Check one | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ excellent | ___ deteriorated | ___ unaltered | n/a original site | |
| x good | ___ ruins | x altered | ___ moved | date of move n/a |
| ___ fair | ___ unexposed | | | |

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. He 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 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ prehistoric | ___ archeology-prehistoric | ___ community planning | ___ landscape architecture | ___ religion |
| ___ 1400–1499 | ___ archeology-historic | ___ conservation | ___ law | ___ science |
| ___ 1500–1599 | ___ agriculture | ___ economics | ___ literature | ___ sculpture |
| ___ 1600–1699 | ___ architecture | ___ education | ___ military | ___ social/ humanitarian |
| ___ 1700–1799 | ___ art | ___ engineering | ___ music | ___ theater |
| ___ 1800–1899 | x commerce | ___ exploration/settlement | ___ philosophy | x transportation |
| x 1900– | ___ communications | ___ industry | ___ politics/government | ___ other (specify) |
| | | ___ invention | | |

**Specific dates** 1948 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: x A ___B x C ___D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F x G

Level of Significance: x 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

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Deal Island, MD Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 18 | 416870 | 4220240 | B | | | |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

**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 | | |
| organization | Radcliffe Maritime Museum<br>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
Anna-lis, Maryland 21401
(30. 269-2438

PS-2746

Survey No. S-235

Magi No. 2002355833

DOE __yes __no

# Maryland Historical Trust
# State Historic Sites Inventory Form

## 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 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ____ district | ____ public | x occupied | ____ agriculture | ____ museum |
| ____ building(s) | x private | ____ unoccupied | x commercial | ____ park |
| ____ structure | ____ both | ____ work in progress | ____ educational | ____ private residence |
| x site | **Public Acquisition** | **Accessible** | ____ entertainment | ____ religious |
| ____ object | ____ in process | x yes: restricted | ____ government | ____ scientific |
| | ____ being considered | ____ yes: unrestricted | ____ industrial | x transportation |
| | x not applicable | ____ no | ____ military | ____ 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. 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. S-235

| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
|---|---|---|---|
| ___ excellent | ___ deteriorated | ___ unaltered | ___ original site |
| X good | ___ ruins | X altered | ___ moved date of move _____ |
| ___ fair | ___ unexposed | | |

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| X 1900– | ___ communications | ___ industry | ___ politics/government | ___ other (specify) |
| | | ___ invention | | |

**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

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# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. S-235

Robert Burgess, Chesapeake Sailing Craft, Part I (Cambridge, Md: Tidewater Publishers,1975)

Howard I. Chapelle, Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks (St. Michaels, Md: CBMM, n.d.)

# 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of nominated property** _____

**Quadrangle name** _____ **Quadrangle scale** _____

UTM **References** do NOT complete UTM references

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | | | | B | | | |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

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

| state | code | county | code |
|---|---|---|---|
| state | code | county | code |

# 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

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return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

PS-2746

S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

port side
M.C. Wootton 10/83

HELEN VIRGINIA

HELEN VIRGINIA
HELEN VIRGINIA

S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

bow
M. C. Wootton 10/83

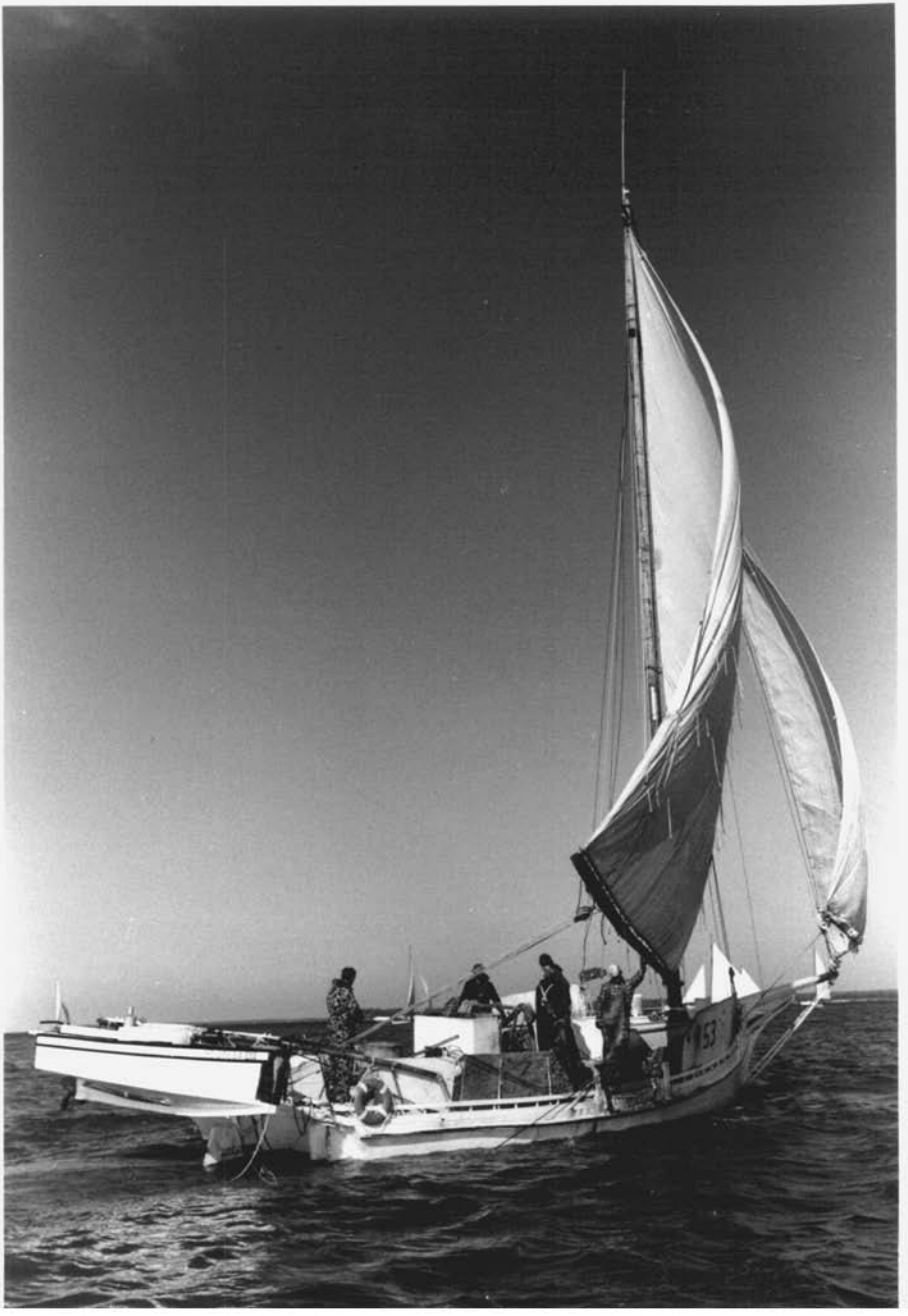
Helen Virginia

Helen Virginia

S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

stern
M.C. Wootton 10/83



S-235

HELEN VIRGINIA
Wenona, Md

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

Helen Virginia