

T-530

Skipjack ESTHER F.

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 04-05-2004

T-530

ESTHER F. (skipjack)

Tilghman, Maryland

ESTHER F. is a 39.5' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She has a beam of 13.3', a depth of 3.8', and a net registered tonnage of 10. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a single large jib with a club on its foot. Built in 1954 in Fairmount, Maryland following traditional Bay design and construction methods, ESTHER F. 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. ESTHER F. is of special interest as having been built during the post World War II revival of skipjack building for the working oyster fleet.

Survey No. T-530

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☒ no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic ESTHER F.

and/or common skipjack

2. Location

street & number Gibsontown Road n/a not for publication

city, town Tilghman _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district First

state Maryland 024 county Talbot 041

3. Classification

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

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

name Buck Garvin

street & number _____ telephone no.: _____

city, town Tilghman state and zip code Maryland 21671

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 Historic Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state MD 21401

7. Description

Survey No. T-530

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☒ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site	
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved	date of move
☐ fair	☐ unexposed			n/a

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

This oyster dredgeboat is a 39 1/2' long, two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She is built by cross-planked construction methods, has a beam of 13.3', a depth of 3.8', and a net registered tonnage of 10 tons. The ESTHER F. was built in 1954 in Fairmount, Maryland. She carries a typical skipjack rig--a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wood hoops at the mast, and a single, large club-footed jib. The wooden hull is sheathed with copper at the waterline to protect against ice, and is painted white, with red copper bottom paint.

In shape, the vessel has a longhead bow with a raking stem and a squared bowsprit. The transom stern is almost square, with little rake and small "tucks" at the waterline. The hull shape is relatively straight, with little sweep to the sheer or flare to the sides. The rudder is carried outboard on pintles.

The vessel is flush-decked with several deck structures, both original and added. From the stern forward these include: a box over the steering gear; a tall plywood cabin, with a "doghouse" added for the skipper (a new addition); and a small hatch forward. When surveyed, the winders and winder-box were not on deck, which was stripped down for repairs. However, these fittings, along with dredges, are carried when the boat is working. Other fittings include a high pinrail aft, although none was present on the foredeck (possibly because of deck repairs); davits over the stern for the pushboat; and a capstan located at the sampson post on the foredeck.

The single mast is raked slightly aft and is supported by mast partners extending about three feet above deck level. The mast is painted white on its top half but the bottom is bright. It is set up with double shrouds and turnbuckles, rather than the more traditional deadeyes, as well as a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift for the boom. The square bowsprit is set up with a double chain bobstay and wire bowsprit shrouds.

The vessel is decorated with a bright red stripe below the sheer and on the longhead below where the trailboards would fit. Her name is carried on nameboards on the transom, picked out in blue. The name is also painted in blue on her bows.

8. Significance

Survey No. T-530

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/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800-1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☒ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates	1954	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.

ESTHER F. 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 1954 in Fairmount, Md., following traditional Bay design and construction methods for skipjacks. At some point in her career she was converted to a pleasure boat and renamed SNOW WHITE and eventually given to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. Museum officials sold the vessel to Buck Garvin of Tilghman Island. Garvin re-furnished the vessel, restored her original name, and returned her to the working dredge fleet. 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. It is of great interest that even though these vessels were built 50 years after the peak skipjack-building years, their design and construction closely follows turn-of-the-century prototypes.

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

T-530

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tilghman, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 1,8 384240 4285550
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

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
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. T-530

Magi No. 2105305833

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic ESTHER F.

and/or common skipjack

2. Location

street & number Gibsontown Road ☐ not for publicationcity, town Tilghman ☐ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
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☐ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☒ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
	☒ not applicable	☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☒ transportation
			☐ other:

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

name Buck Garvin

street & number telephone no.:

city, town Tilghman state and zip code Maryland 21671

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

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. T-530

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

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

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8. Significance

Survey No. T-530

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/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800-1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☒ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1954 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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9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-530

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

A

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Zone Easting NorthingB

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Zone Easting NorthingC

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D

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E

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F

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G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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
-------	------	--------	------

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

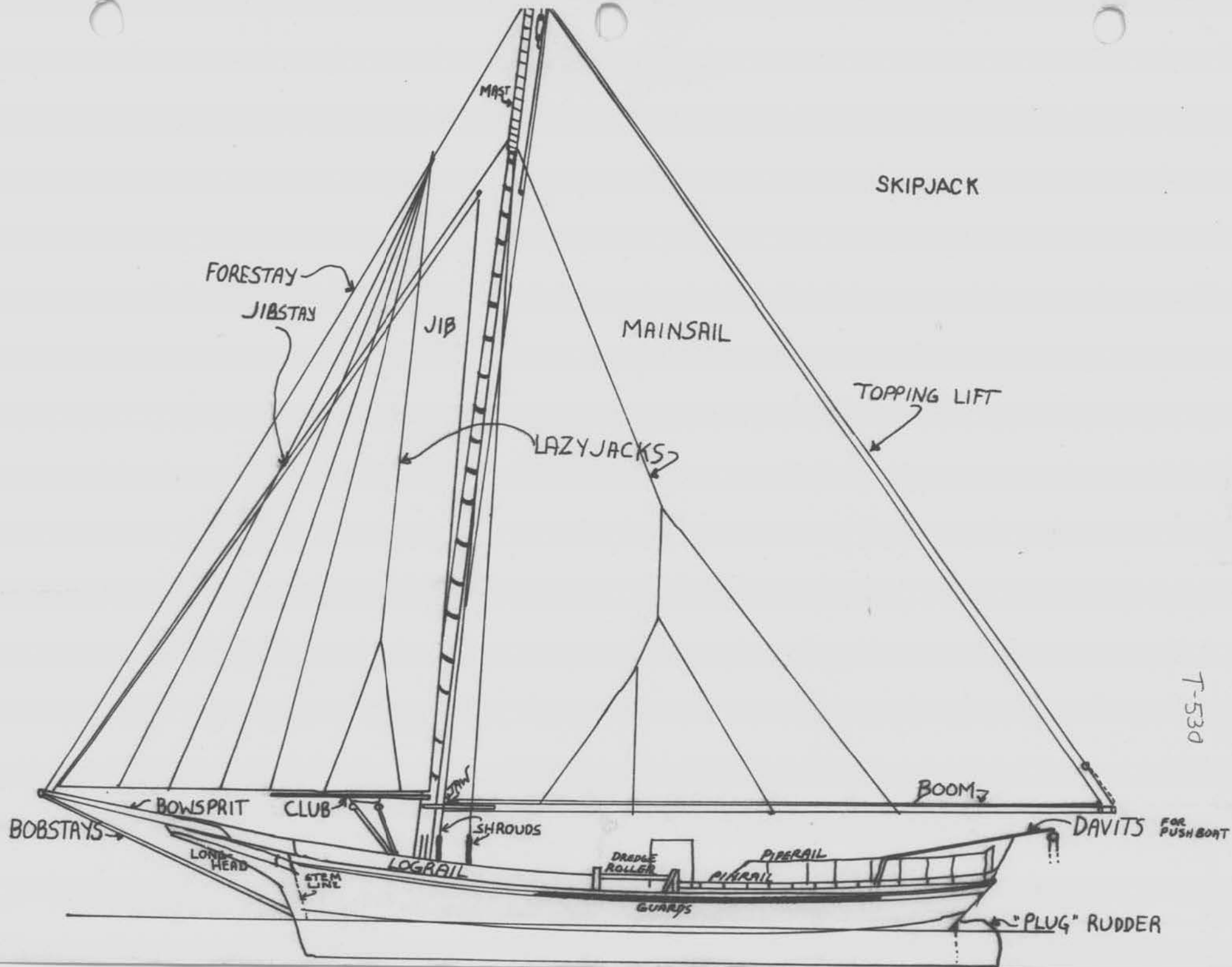
city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

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T-530



402-7

T-530

ESTHER F.
Tilghman, Md.

Starboard bow
M.C. Wootton 7/84



402-17

T-530

ESTHER F.
Tilghman, Md.

Starboard stern
M.C. Wootton 7/84

90⁹/₁₀



T-530

ESTHER F.
Tilghman, Md.

Starboard side-deck, bow
M.C. Wootton 7/84

402-8



402-13

T-530

ESTHER F.
Tilghman, Md.

Deck view - stern
M.C. Wootton 7/84