

VLR 3/10/15
NRHP 10/7/15

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Claud W. Somers - Skipjack

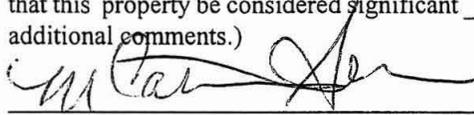
other names/site number #066-5049

2. Location

street & number 504 Main Street, P. O. Box 306 not for publication N/A
city or town Reedville vicinity _____
state Virginia code VA county Northumberland code 133 Zip 22539

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official _____ Date 8/29/05

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other – 20th Century Sail Powered Skipjack _____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____

roof _____

walls _____

other Wood, Metal, Synthetic Sail _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce – Oyster Industry
Engineering – Design and Craftsmanship

Period of Significance 1911 - 1955

Significant Dates 1911

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Thomas Young

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

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

Name of repository: Reedville Fishermen's Museum

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property Less than one

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing
18	387680	4189030

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Wendell G. Haynie, Updated by Register Program Specialist Jean McRae at DHR

Organization: Reedville Fishermen's Museum date 11/12/04, Updated in August 2005

street & number: 504 Main Street telephone 804-453-6529

city or town Reedville state VA zip code 22539

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Reedville Fishermen's Museum

street & number 504 Main Street, P. O. Box 306 telephone 804-453-6529

city or town Reedville state VA zip code 22539

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Summary Description

A glossary and two diagrams are enclosed so that the reader unfamiliar with nautical terminology will understand the following Description and Statement of Significance.

The skipjack *Claud W. Somers* was built by Thomas Young in 1911, in Clam, Virginia. Like most skipjacks, she is a wide sailboat with a hard chine and low freeboard. She has a single mast with oak hoops carrying over eleven hundred square feet of sail, including a club-footed self-tending jib. She is 42'6" long on deck and 14' wide, with a 3' draft. Her mast is 56' tall. Typical of a skipjack's dimensions, her mast height equals the combined footage of her width and length, her boom length is the same as her length on deck, and her bowsprit length is equal to her width. She weighs 8 gross tons and 6 net tons. The *Somers* is built of wood, principally old growth pine, and has a typical Chesapeake Bay cross-planked bottom. One of her most prominent features is a long bowsprit used to help support the mast. The mast sits on a step located on the keelson. Both mast and boom are made of Norway spruce. She has no engine, and uses a small 12' push boat to propel her when not under sail.

Today the *Somers* lies at the dock of the Fishermen's Museum in Reedville, Virginia. Museum staff and volunteers completely restored the boat, as its deteriorated condition demanded. All salvageable parts were reused and other parts were replaced in-kind. The skipjack began its restoration under owner Mr. Alfred Garey Lambert in 1983. Mr. Lambert worked on the boat for seventeen years fully replacing only the bottom of the deteriorated boat. During the final three years of restoration under the Museum's guidance, original parts were salvaged including the ribs, the mast, and the steering gear. Replaced parts include the mast, boom, and oak hoops which were unusable and, in concession with current Coast Guard regulations, updated parts include new fasteners and an additional stainless steel railing in the passenger area.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The descriptive information below follows the structures on the boat, beginning with the bowsprit, the foremost structure on the boat, and concluding with the davits on the rear area of the boat, used to support the push boat.

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Bowsprit

The *Somer's* large bowsprit takes up no space on deck, but yet is an integral component of the sailing rigging. It supports the mast with a head stay running from a fitting called the crance iron at the tip of the bowsprit to the top of the mast. The bob chains support the bowsprit in the opposite direction running from the crance iron to the lower portion of the bow stem at the cutwater. The base of the bowsprit is fastened to the bow of the vessel by the gammon, which is a U-shaped metal bracket on deck at the sampson post. The sampson post is a 5" by 12" oak timber that runs from the keelson through the deck to a height of about 30". The sampson post is a secure station from which the vessel can be towed, anchored, or secured to a mooring.

Mast, Boom and Rigging

The 56' mast sits in a slot located on the keelson. It is held in place on deck by several wedges. Two shrouds on each side of the mast offer support by running from the hounds near the top of the mast to chain plates fastened to the side of the hull. The hound is a metal band around the mast about 5' from the top. The shrouds and lazy-jacks are both attached to it. The tension on the shrouds is adjusted by using lines running through the dead eyes. All stays, shrouds, and the topping lift are made of 1/2" wire cable.

The mast and boom are crafted from Norway spruce. Oak hoops attach the sail to the mast, and allow the sail to be raised and lowered quickly. The mast, boom and oak hoops that were on the vessel when the Museum acquired it were all in unusable condition, so Museum volunteers constructed new ones matching the originals as closely as possible. With the exception of the Norway spruce, most of the materials used in the restoration were cut locally on museum property.

The topping lift is a cable running from the masthead fitting to the end of the boom. This supports the boom and adjusts its height. The head stay runs from the masthead to the crance iron at the tip of the bowsprit. The main halyard, which is used to raise the mainsail is also attached to the masthead fitting.

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The shrouds and lazy-jacks are attached to the hound, the metal band near the top of the mast. The lazy-jacks are rope devices running down to the boom, and serve to keep the sail corralled when it is being raised or lowered. The lazy-jack for the jib is fastened to the jib stay near the top and runs to the jib club.

Deck Area

A life jacket locker, required by the Coast Guard, is directly behind the mast and near the front of the boat. The cabin is 5' long, 6' wide, and 2 ½' above desk. It has two entrances, with steps going below, and is divided by the centerboard trunk. The port side (left side) accommodates a portable toilet, while the starboard side (right side) is used for storage of extra gear.

The middle section of the *Somers* contains an additional locker for life jackets, located between two benches for passengers. On working vessels, this is the area where dredging gear, winding gear to pull the dredges aboard, and space for culling and storing oysters would be found. The dredging gear is not assembled on the vessel, but is available for exhibit and educational tours.

The main cabin is near the rear of the vessel, just forward of the steering gear. The size of the cabin is 9' long, 7' wide, and 3' high above deck, with more area under the deck. This area would accommodate up to 6 crewmembers on a working skipjack. They slept, ate, and sought shelter in these very cramped quarters. Since there is little space between the deck and the bottom of the vessel, very little headroom exists. A small wood-burning stove was used to prepare meals as well as provide some heat in cold weather.

The crew carried very few personal belongings while they were working the oyster beds. They returned to homeport each night unless the oyster beds were some distance away or weather prevented their return.

The compass and signal bell are located on the roof of the main cabin near the steering wheel, where they can be easily seen and used. The vessel is controlled from this area using the main sheet as well as the steering gear.

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Hull Construction

The *Claud W. Somers* is a very soundly built boat. The ribs to which the 2" pine side planks are fastened are of oak. At the bottom edge of the ribs is a 3' by 6' chine, which runs the length of the hull on both sides. The cross-plank bottom is fastened at the chine and bottom plank of the sides on the outside and to the keelson on the inside. The keelson is 18" wide and 12" thick, running from the stem to about 12' from the transom. There is a 2 ½" wide by 10' long slot cut through the keelson to allow the centerboard to be raised and lowered. The horn timber, of the same width and thickness as the keelson, runs from the rear of the keelson to the bottom of the transom. The angle at the junction of the horn timber and the keelson gives the hull bottom its uplift at the stern.

The deck beams are 4" wide and 6" thick. They are sawed rounded to give the deck a slight slope from the midship to the sides at each rib, which are about 2' apart from the stem to the stern. The outer edge of the deck is 2" by 10" wide planking, called the waterway, running the length of the vessel on both sides. In the center of the deck is a 2" by 10" king plank running the length of the vessel. Between the king plank and the waterway, the remainder of the deck is constructed of 1 ½" wide strips 2" thick, conforming to the curve of the vessel, which gives a symmetrical appearance. With the exception of the oak stem, hoops, Sampson post, ribs, and mast step, the rest of the material in the hull is of old growth pine. The fasteners are of bronze, monel, and stainless steel, which is required by the Coast Guard for vessels carrying passengers. The original rails of the vessel were modified with the addition of stainless steel to raise the height to 42" in the passenger area, also a requirement of the Coast Guard.

Steering Wheel Mechanism

The steering wheel has eight spokes, and is 22" in diameter. The stern wheel is attached to a worm gear mechanism, so that turning the wheel moves the gear laterally, similar to rack and pinion steering in an automobile. The worm gear is attached to two arms, and the arms attached to the rudder post. The wheel and worm gear, both cast of iron, are original to the boat.

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Davits

Two steel davits extend over the stern of the *Somers*, and about 6' beyond the stern. The width at the end of the davits is equal to the width of the stern. At the end of each davit is a tackle used to raise and lower the push boat

The *Somers* push boat is twelve feet long. It hangs on davits extending beyond the stern when the boat is under sail, and is lowered to be used to push the *Somers* when sail power cannot be used. It has a 40 horsepower diesel engine and no rudder, which makes it useless as an independent craft. When not used for power the push boat is carried on low-slung davits off the stern just clear of the water.

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GLOSSARY

Bateau – a planked hard chine skiff with a shallow Deadrise bottom.

Beam – the width of a boat measured at the widest point.

Bobchain – a small chain running from the tip of the bowsprit to the stem.

Boom – a spar attached to the base of the mast, which holds the bottom part of the sail.

Bow – the foremost part of the boat, the opposite of stern.

Bowsprit – a larger spar extending from the bow of the sailboat. The bowsprit supports the jib and the lead sail.

Bow Stem – the upright beam at the bow of the boat.

Bugeye – a log or planked round bottomed boat designed for the Chesapeake Bay oyster-dredge fishery.

Centerboard – a device which is raised and lowered to increase the depth of the keel. This increased depth of keel allows the boat to sail more efficiently, closer to the wind, by preventing the boat from being pushed laterally by the wind in relation to its desired direction of travel.

Centerboard Trunk – watertight housing for the center board.

Chain Plate – strips of metal with the lower ends bolted to the boat sides. The purpose of the chain plate is to provide connections to the side of the boat.

Chine – on a ship's hull the chine is the area where the hull goes from horizontal to vertical. A skipjack has a "hard chine" as the bottom of the hull forms a sharp angle with the sides of a hull. Boats with a round hull have a "soft chine" as the hull gradually curves from horizontal to vertical.

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Club Footed Jib – a short spar attached to the bottom of the jib that allows the jib to function

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unattended.

Crance Iron – an iron band on the outer end of the bowsprit.

Cutwater – the forward curve of the stem of the boat just below the waterline.

Deadeye – a round wooden block with a groove around the circumference. A deadeye is attached to the shrouds. A deadeye's purpose is to take the slack out of the shrouds.

Deadrise – a straight line from the base of the keel to the chine, or the amount of flare in the bottom of the boat at the bow.

Davit – a crane that projects from the tern of the skipjack that is used to raise and lower the push boat.

Freeboard – the distance from the deck edge to the waterline, or how much of the hull is above the water.

Gammon – a U-shaped bracket used to secure the bowsprit to the deck.

Headstay – a line running from the end of the bowsprit to the top of the mast to support the mast.

Horn Timber – runs from the rear of the keelson to the bottom of the transom.

Hound – an iron fitting near the top of the mast on which the shrouds and head stay are fastened.

Hull – The main body of the boat.

Jib – a triangular sail in front of the mast.

Jib Stay – a line running from the bowsprit to near the top of the mast that the jib travels on when it is being raised or lowered.

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Keelson – a stringer that runs down the keel inside the hull to provide additional strength. The bottom boards are nailed under the keelson.

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King Plank – the center deck running from bow to stern.

Lazy Jacks – ropes running from the mast head down to the boom that serve to keep the sale corralled when it is being raised or lowered.

Main Halyard – the tackle used to raise and lower the mainsail.

Mainsail – principle sail of skipjack.

Main Sheet – the tackle used to control the angle of the sail to the wind.

Mast Hoops – wooden rings around the mast attached to the edge of the sail that allows for easy raising and lowering of the sail, also known as Oak Hoops.

Monel – an alloy of nickel, copper and other elements that resists corrosion.

Push Boat – a small motor launch used to maneuver the skipjack when the boat is not under sail.

Ribs – the frames or timbers of the boat, rising from the keel forming the hull shape.

Samson Post – a large timber that runs from the keelson through the deck. The Samson post is a secure station from which the boat can be towed, anchored, or secured to a mooring.

Spar – a rounded wood piece for supporting sail rigging.

Stays – wire cables that support the mast.

Shroud – the standing rigging of a sailboat which gives the mast its lateral support in the same way as the forestay gives it for and aft support.

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Topping lift – a line running from the top of the mast to the end of the boom that keeps the boom parallel to the deck.

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Transom – any of several transverse beams secured to the stern of a boat

Waterway – outward plank of the boat deck grooved to provide a narrow channel to carry water off the deck.

Worm Gear – a series of gears and a screw which transmits the direction of the steering wheel to the rudder, and also provides a mechanical advantage.

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8. Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

From a fleet of 600-700 boats in the last half of the nineteenth century to only five working boats in 2004, the *Claud W. Somers* is significant at a statewide level as one of these five remaining vessels in Virginia. Significant under National Register Criteria A (Commerce) and C (Engineering), skipjacks were built in response to the need for an oyster-dredging vessel that was sail-powered, and capable of maneuvering in the shallow areas of the Chesapeake Bay. Consequently, skipjacks followed a generalized design blue print though each vessel was individually crafted and unique. The period of significance covers the time frame from the *Somers* original construction date of 1911 by Thomas Young through the fifty year register cut-off date of 1955.

After its use as an oyster vessel, the *Claud W. Somers* was purchased in 1983 by Mr. Alfred Garey Lambert who worked on the skipjack until its donation to the Reedville Fishermen's Museum in 2000. After three more years of restoration work, the *Somers* is now in pristine condition and is kept at the Museum's dock where it is used for educational purposes and brief instructive cruising experiences.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Long after the golden age of sail, the skipjack remained this country's last commercial sailing vessel, and now it too has almost disappeared. In the last half of the nineteenth century in the Chesapeake Bay region, there were probably 1000 oyster-dredging boats, of which perhaps 600 - 700 were skipjacks. Their dominance was short-lived, however, mainly due to the depletion of oyster beds. The last half of the twentieth century saw drastic decreases in the number of working boats: 47 in 1962-3, 20 in 1989-90, 12 in 1999-2000, and finally only 5 working boats in 2004-5. Thanks to a generous gift from a skipjack restorer, the Reedville Fishermen's Museum in Reedville, Virginia, has been able to preserve one of these remaining five skipjacks, the *Claud W. Somers*. It now stands, carefully restored, as a reminder of the skipjacks' unique contribution to the history and economy of the Chesapeake Bay region.

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Historically, an 1865 conservation law in Maryland provided the impetus for development of this new kind of boat. That law, in an effort to preserve the diminishing supplies of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, stated in Section 4 that, "... no steamboat, steam vessel or steam machinery shall be used for the purpose of taking or catching oysters with a scoop, dredge, drag, or any other instrument whatever" thus restricting oyster dredging to sailing vessels only. The use of power had to be readily visible, so "push" boats were used. Towed behind the main boat when "pushing" (under power) and stored on the main boat when under sail, they made the law easily enforceable.

It should be noted that Virginia law, with the advent of the gasoline engine, allowed power dredging. However, Virginia oyster beds dredged under power quickly diminished and Virginia oyster dredgers were forced to go to Maryland to dredge, where they were allowed in the Potomac River, but had to abide by Maryland laws.

Other factors - economic, geographic and practical – also influenced the design of the new boat. A depleted oyster supply had left many people near poverty, so boats had to be inexpensive. Much of the area was sparsely-populated so crews had to be kept small, and smaller crews meant that additional hoisting power would be needed. Winds on the Chesapeake Bay were often light, so the boat had to have large sails. Oyster stocks had been depleted by the schooners, so the new boats needed the ability to sail in shallower waters where the dredging schooners had been unable to go. Clearly, the larger dredging schooners and bugeyes of earlier times could not meet these needs. Even the bateau, designed for the shoal waters around Tangier Island, was inadequate for the new era. Something new was needed.

Gradually, a new boat design that would meet the needs of thousands of oyster dredgers evolved. It was based on the traditional flat-bottomed crabbing skiffs, but changed in unique ways. Costs were reduced by making the boats smaller, usually 30 to 60 feet in length, and using flat or V ("deadrise") bottoms. The need for large crews was countered by using only two sails and attaching the mainsail to the mast with wooden hoops so it could be raised and lowered quickly and easily. A mainsail slanted toward the stern of the boat, puts the top of the mast over the center of effort, at the widest part of the beam, where it could be used as a hoist to move oysters from the hold. Increased maneuverability was gained by using a large mainsail that could move a boat in the Chesapeake's light winds while also pulling heavy dredges over oyster beds.

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A shallow draft and a centerboard served to improve maneuverability and allow passage into shallower waters and rivers of the Bay. The allover simpler design of the skipjack produced a smaller and lighter boat that could be made in any shipyard, or as was often the case, in a waterman's own backyard. While no two were exactly alike, they all followed these general guidelines.

Through trial and error, without the use of models or blueprints, oyster dredgers developed several specific measures that were passed by word of mouth to other boat builders. The significant measures were:

- Beam width: one-third the length of the boat
- Mast height: equal to the boat's length on deck plus the beam
- Boom length: equal to the boat's length on deck
- Bowsprit length: equal to the beam.
- Transom width: equal to three-fourths of the beam
- Centerboard length: equal to one-third of the length on deck
- Mast rake: stepped at a point equal to one-third the distance between the bowsprit and the stern so that a plumb line dropped from the top of the mast would hit the center line between the end of the bowsprit and the stern; or approximately 75 degrees to the waterline.

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the skipjack was the boat of choice for oystermen in the Chesapeake Bay. Like its namesake, a fish that skimmed over the water, the skipjack fulfilled the transportation needs of the Bay area residents and fishermen. This very efficient design also proved useful in the off-season when there was no dredging. In the spring and summer, skipjacks transported farm and seafood products to market. People who grew up in the Chesapeake Bay area recall that skipjacks were a common sight in the summertime, loaded with goods such as watermelons.

The *Claud W. Somers* is an outstanding example of the skipjack class of boats, and the best-restored boat on the water today. It was built in the best tradition of skipjacks. Tom Young, of Clam, Virginia, had built boats for twenty years, and had a reputation for fine craftsmanship. He also built fast boats, using an unusual technique: all of his skipjacks were constructed with fore and aft planking on the rear 10' of the boat. He was only thirty-five years old when

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commissioned to build the boat, the first of three he was to build for Mr. Edward Thomas Somers. Mr. Somers named the skipjack for his son, Claude Williams Somers.

The *Somers* was first registered at Crisfield, Maryland, and later sold to several different Maryland captains, who now needed sailboats for their local oyster-dredging. Under Captain Curwin Evans of Ewell, Maryland, the *Somers* not only worked on the bay, but also won the annual Chesapeake Bay skipjack race in 1931. Again in 1966, under Captain Linwood Benton, Jr., she scored her second Bay skipjack race, all the more impressive since the races were discontinued between 1931 and 1960. According to Mrs. Effie Young Lewis, granddaughter of the *Somers*' builder, subsequent captains and owners of the skipjack included John Tawes Tyler, Raymond Evans, Ralph Gladden, Thompson Wallace, Harry Larrimore and Jack Parkinson. The most tragic event in the *Somers*' history occurred when Thompson Wallace owned and sailed her as captain. One of only two black skipjack captains on the bay, he was sailing in 1976 with a crew of five family members, including his son who was home on leave from the Navy, when a sudden gale with seventy mile per hour winds, suddenly struck. All six men were lost, including Captain Wallace and his son.

The boat was raised in two days, having sunk in only 15 feet of water. Captain Dan Larrimore used the boat for several more years, followed by Captain Jack Parkinson who is listed as an oyster dredger on the *Somers* in 1981-1982. In 1983, Mr. Alfred Garey Lambert of Towson, Maryland purchased her for \$16,000. Mr. Lambert, a decorated World War II fighter pilot, spent nearly every weekend of the next seventeen years restoring her. When his health began to fail, his cousin, Mr. Everett Fairlamb, approached an official of the Reedville Fishermen's Museum, about donating the *Somers* to the museum.

The Museum Director at that time, Angus Murdoch, was enthusiastic, as were others, including a local boat builder who saw the boat in Tilghman where it had been in dry dock for more than ten years. They decided that the boat was worth restoring, thanks to Mr. Lambert's work on her. This was a careful decision, because previously the Museum had been offered another skipjack, but her condition was so poor that she was transported in a steel frame to hold her together; this one, the Museum had declined. Mr. Lambert died before the transaction was completed, however, and his children, Caroline Lambert Benson and Robert Lambert gave the boat to the Museum as a memorial gift in honor of their father.

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In May 2000, Reedville Museum workers towed *Claud W. Somers* to the Fishermen's Museum on the water in Reedville, where it was met by a huge welcoming committee. Work began the following winter at Cockrell's Marine Railway in Ophelia. Interestingly, workers discovered that Cockrell's had hauled the *Somers* previously, and had worked on many other skipjacks, so knew the boats well. Costs were met by museum members, businesses and friends, who donated more than \$100,000 and provided 4,000 hours of labor.

The Reedville Fishermen's Museum staff directed the restoration, and strongly emphasized authenticity. Though an almost complete overhaul was required, all salvageable parts were reused. Parts original to the boat that could be salvaged included the ribs, the mast, the steering gear, and some of the transom. Work by Mr. Lambert was also used when possible. About eighty percent of the bottom that he installed was still in good condition, and so was retained. When the keelson was replaced, Museum workers simply removed half of the bottom, put in a new keelson, then re-nailed the bottom boards put in by Mr. Lambert.

Authenticity dictated that when a piece was taken off the boat during restoration; a new piece with the identical measurements was put back on. No measurement or design was changed. Nor was the shape of the hull changed. However, minor concessions to technology and Coast Guard regulations were necessary. They included:

- Treated lumber to prevent rotting
- Monel fasteners below the water line
- In place of the hatch, a small raised cabin to accommodate a toilet for passengers
- Stainless steel rail
- A storage box for life jackets
- Two benches for passengers, and
- New push boat.

All other parts were new, and to the extent possible, were made from the same materials used in the original. Certainly, there would be no inboard motor, as was the case with several recently-restored skipjacks. Also, the boat still wears the Maryland license number, 55, which remains forever with the boat, never granted to another boat. Preservation of the *Claud W. Somers* reinforces our appreciation of an era and a boat that are unique in American history. And, as Richard Moe, President of the National Trust has been quoted as saying, "This is the last

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chance for the commercial skipjack fleet and for the continuation of a century-old way of life.” Restoration complete, the *Somers* began its new life in 2003.

The *Somers* has sailed in the Bay’s annual Labor Day skipjack race, as well as the Turkey Shoot Regatta on the Rappahannock River. It sailed to the 250th anniversary celebration of the founding of the town of Smithfield, Virginia. At that event, Ms. Jeanne White, ran to the boat and exclaimed to the crew that she was the great granddaughter of Mr. Somers, thought the restoration was beautiful, and contributed \$1000 to the restoration fund. At the Annapolis workboat festival, a man came forward who had worked on the *Somers*, and he, too, was very happy to see its excellent condition. There are also Skipjack Cruises every other week and instructional sessions for schoolchildren. In fact the *Somers* is the focal point of the Museum, and Museum visitors often ask to see it.

While the donation of the *Somers* to the Reedville Fishermen’s Museum was rather serendipitous, it is nevertheless true that the boat is in a most appropriate place. Reedville, Virginia was a busy center for both ship-building and fishing, including oystering. There was a significant oyster industry in the immediate area. Oyster shucking houses were located on almost every creek and block of town. Boats built nearby included workboats used for oystering, crabbing and pound-netting. Deck boats were also built in the area. The Reedville Fishermen’s Museum is a very active museum, with a knowledgeable and dedicated staff and a large cadre of volunteers. In addition to the time and dollars contributed to the *Somers*, there are forty Coast Guard-certified volunteers and two licensed Captains who sail the *Somers* on its educational trips. Finally the museum’s location, within a few yards of deep water in Cockrell’s Creek where the *Somers* lies, gives the many old salts who work at the Museum ready access to her when she needs attention.

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Section 10: Geographic Data

The Reedville Fishermen's Museum is located on Route #360, or Main Street, in Reedville, Virginia. The Museum's property is approximately one acre in size, and consists of six museum buildings and a large mooring dock. The dock currently accommodates two large boats, including the *Somers*, and several small boats, and is large enough for groups of passengers to use when boarding the large boats for cruises and educational sessions. The *Claud W. Somers* will be permanently moored here.

The attached maps show the area from three perspectives:

- 1) The topographic map shows the Reedville Quadrangle using UTM projections. The Museum is located in pencil on this map.
- 2) The map of the Reedville Historic District shows the Museum in Block #28.
- 3) The chart shows Reedville's water location on Cockrell's Creek, and the nearby Wicomico River and Chesapeake Bay.

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the *Claud W. Somers* is the physical location of the boat when docked at the Reedville Fishermen's Museum located on Route 360 in Northumberland County, Virginia. Moored at the Museum's dock are several boats including the skipjack, *Claud W. Somers*, and the deck boat, *Elva C.*

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the skipjack, *Claud W. Somers*, and the space in which she is docked when not in use for cruise tours by the Reedville Fishermen's Museum along the Chesapeake Bay.

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Claud W. Somers Skipjack
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Photographic information:

Claud W. Somers Skipjack, 066-5049

Reedville Fishermen's Museum, Northumberland County

Negative: 22080

Negatives stored at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Photographs taken November 2004 by the Director of the Reedville Fishermen's Museum

Photo 1: View showing bow spirit lines; frame #2

Photo 2: Profile of skipjack; frame #3

Photo 3: Aft quarter view showing push boat and davits; frame #5

Photo 4: Push boat used to power skipjack when not under sail; frame #6

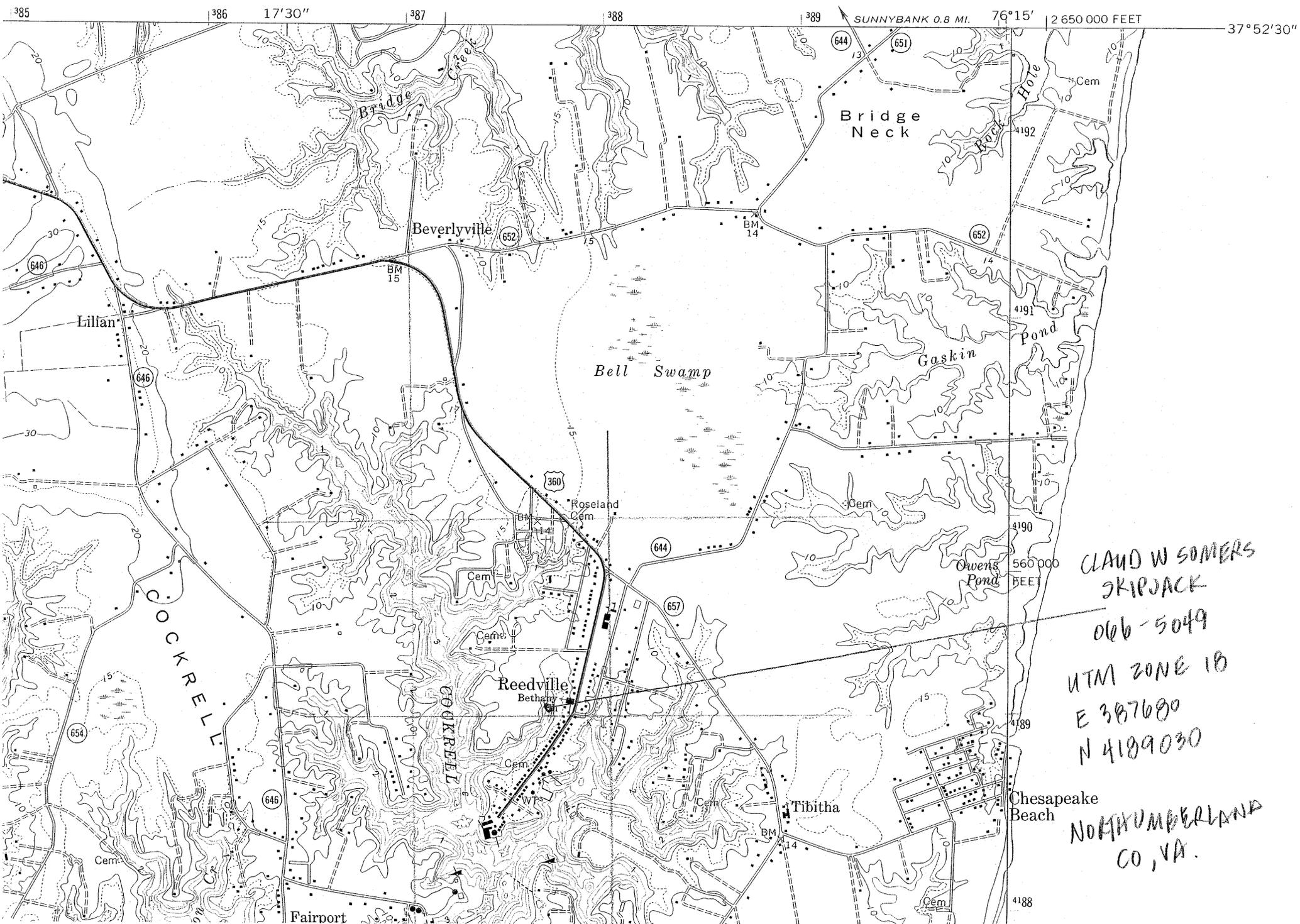
Photo 5: Stern area showing rigging system; frame #8

Photo 6: view looking aft showing life jacket locker, safety railings, aft cabin, and push boat davits; frame #12

Photo7: Entry to forward cabin showing deck and railing; frame #13

Photo 8: View of aft cabin and steering; frame #17

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(SMITH POINT)



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