

CHESAPEAKE BAY CRABBING SKIFFS

by

HOWARD I. CHAPELLE

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Scale drawings of the boats shown in this publication can be purchased from the Smithsonian Institution's History of Technology Division of the National Museum of American History. All orders are handled by mail. Tell them you want drawings from Chesapeake Bay Crabbing Skiffs and give them the figure number and name/type.

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FIG.	NAME AND/OR TYPE	DESCRIPTION	SCALE
1:	18½ ft. Smith Island crabbing skiff	Lines, sections, sail & spar dimensions	1"
2:	Crabbing flattie with stickup rig	Lines, sail & spar plan	¾"
3:	18 ft. Sloop rigged bateau	Lines, sail & spar plan	¾"
4:	Two-sail crabbing skiff	Lines, sail & spar plan	¾"
5:	Smith Island Skiff	Lines, sail & spar dimensions, scantlings	1"
6:	17 ft. skiff, built at Wingate, Md.	Lines, inboard arrangement, section, sail & spar plan	1"
7:	21'7" Crabbing and oystering skiff	Lines, inboard arrangement, section, sail & spar plan, scantlings	¾"
8:	Hooper Island Sharpie	Lines, sail & spar plan	¾"
9:	Crisfield one-sail bateau	Lines, sail & spar dimensions	¾"
10:	Small crab scraper bateau, one-sail	Lines, scantlings	1"
11:	Caroline, crabbing bateau	Lines, scantlings	¾"
12:	Rosa Lee, crabbing bateau	Lines, deck plan, spar dimensions, section, scantlings	¾"

This copy of Chesapeake Bay Crabbing Skiffs was printed for the use of the Oregon Coots and the Retired Old Guys Sailing Club of Toledo, Oregon.

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Preface

In America today, there is a very significant awakening of interest in our cultural and maritime heritage. The Delmarva Peninsula, isolated from the mainland until recent years, is being rediscovered.

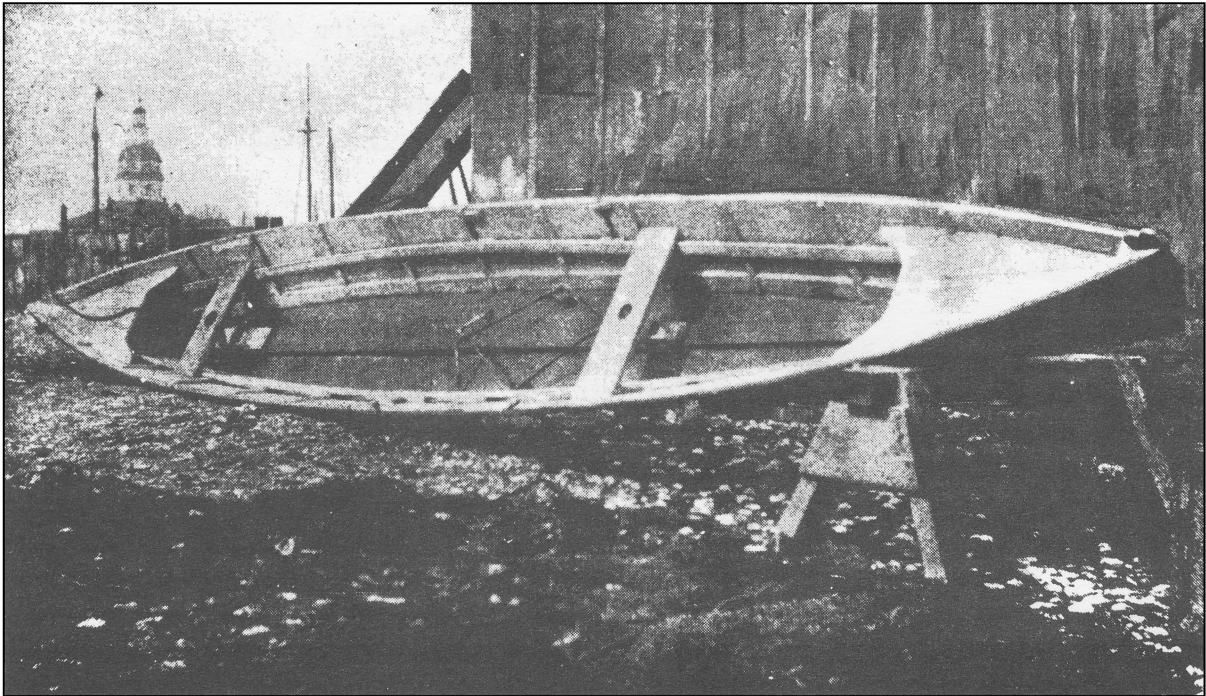
There is a growing awareness of the past and present importance of the Chesapeake Bay, the uniqueness of the people who live on its shores, their pride in the rugged and individualistic way of life, a life-style reminiscent of the past and of the spirit of our forefathers who laid the cornerstones on which this Nation is built. Nowhere else on this continent does the present blend so well with the past. Nowhere else do we find our unspoiled living heritage surrounding us.

The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum is pleased to embark on the publishing of a series of booklets pertaining to the Chesapeake Bay.

This first booklet is reprinted from *Yachting*, June and October 1943. The editors of this informative magazine graciously extended to the Museum permission to republish a two-section article written by Howard I. Chapelle, a former member of the Board of Governors.

For clarification purposes, we have taken the liberty to number the plans in sequence and to enlarge the printed dimensions of the vessels for increased legibility.

Board of Governors
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum



Photograph of the earliest example of a crabbing skiff, taken at Annapolis about 1891. Details of this boat are given in the article.

Introduction

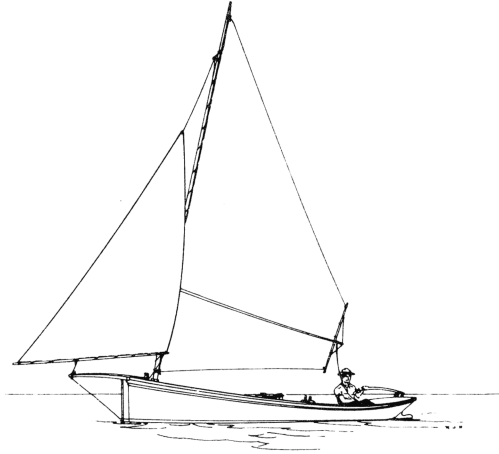
The crabbing skiffs of the Chesapeake Bay had many variations in design and rig. Small, inexpensive and easy to build, they were owned by the watermen. The “watermen of the Bay”—part sailor, part hunter and part farmer—were distinctive and independent individuals who lived off the water, the marshes and the land of this greatest of estuaries. The skiffs were operated seasonally and singly by their owners and were the tools that provided a cash crop, put food on the table, and paid the bills. While numerous, they attracted little attention for they were the little sisters of the larger bateaux and skipjacks and were built during the same period, from the 1880’s through the 1920’s.

The history of these beautiful little skiffs was virtually undocumented until a number of them were singled out by the watchful eye of Howard I. Chapelle and their lines recorded by his unmatched draftsmanship. Mr. Chapelle, a friend and early member of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum’s Board of Governors, retired as Historian Emeritus from his position as Curator of Transportation at the Smithsonian Institution in 1971 to become a resident of Dorchester County, Maryland. He was a regional director of the Historic American Merchant Marine Survey in 1936 and 1937 and had a tremendous impact on stimulating and nourishing the growing interest in the development of American sailing ships and craft. He was an author of many books and articles on maritime subjects, among which are *The Baltimore Clipper*, 1930; *American Sailing Craft*, 1936; *Boatbuilding*, 1941; *The History Of The American Sailing Navy*, 1949; *American Small Sailing Craft*, 1951; *The Search for Speed Under Sail*, 1967. Howard I. Chapelle died in 1975. He gave to the Museum his personal library, many notes and original drawings, for which we are most grateful.

Regrettably, all the details in the plans in this booklet are not as sharp as would be preferred. However, researchers and boatbuilders interested in studying larger prints of the plans may do so by making arrangements with the Museum.

R. J. HOLT

Director
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum



The "Eastern Shore" of Maryland and Virginia has long been noted as a prolific breeding ground for distinctive models of sailing craft. Though the bug-eye, skipjack and log canoe are undoubtedly the best known of all the Bay craft, the crabbing "skiff" is by far the most numerous and is represented by the greatest variety of model and rig. These small craft, usually under 28' in length, are to be found in nearly every waterfront settlement and each section of the "Shore" has one or two favorite models, or rigs. The highly individualistic Baymen are often not content with these, however, and import models from other sections or build to their own ideas, so there are usually a variety of models and rigs in use in a single locality, in addition to the one or two popular types.

The comparatively recent origin of the sailing skiff makes it possible to find practically any of the local models still in existence. So far as has yet been discovered, the skiff was not common on the Bay before the early '80's; the log canoe and round-bottom yawl boat seem to have served the purpose. Such skiffs as were used appear to have been flat-bottomed and, with few exceptions, unsuited for sailing. Curiously enough, the use of the centerboard in small craft came quite late on the Bay; canoes were fitted with keels well into the '80's though the centerboard was in use in Bay schooners and sloops as early as 1822. The difficulty in getting suitable timber for log canoes and the cost of round-bottom yawl boats made the "deadrise" or V-bottom model popular, once it was introduced in the '80's. It is not known whether the skiff preceded the skipjack but it is apparent that the relationship was close.

As a prelude to a discussion of the crabbing skiff, it must be emphasized

that there was no orderly progression in development which could be traced from model to model. Flat-bottom, V-bottom, or a combination of both, and one- or two-masted rigs, were all in use and appear to have sprung into existence about the same time. There was a perfectly logical reason for this: the Bay builder began building skiffs after a long experience with other models and so began with definite ideas as to what was proper. This was equally true of the skiff's owner. Undoubtedly, local conditions and traditions played some part in the choice of a local model though usually the most successful model turned out by a local man was soon accepted as the local type. By this means, the great variety of models and rigs can be accounted for as can, also, the variation in methods of construction.

Many crabbers work along the water's edge with a dip net, either towing the boat and wading, or standing in the boat and rowing or poling. For this purpose, the flat-bottom boat was the most suitable model. From the little evidence available, it seems that the Baymen, being used to log canoes, built these flat-bottom skiffs sharp at both ends, narrow and low-sided. No man in his right mind would row or pole in the summer time, when a sail would enable him to travel "at his ease," so most of these skiffs were fitted with one or two sails.

The earliest example of this class of skiff that has yet come to hand was photographed at Annapolis about 1891 by investigators of the old U. S. Fish Commission. Close inspection shows that the skiff was flat-bottomed, framed and planked in the usual manner. Though mast steps and thwarts are shown, there were neither centerboard nor rudder. It may be concluded that the boat steered with a paddle and she may have had a long, shallow, removable keel made of a plank on edge, to prevent leeway. This boat was probably built for use in the upper reaches of the Severn.

The same general type of skiff is shown in some of the Fish Commission annual reports but with a sloop rig consisting of a jib and leg-of-mutton main-sail. The pictures in the reports are poorly drawn and it is not possible to tell whether or not this type had a centerboard though it may be considered likely. This sloop-rigged skiff was used on the Virginia shore, near Hampton, and elsewhere on the lower Bay.

A modern example is shown in Figure 1; the drawing was taken off at Deal's Island after careful comparison of other boats of the same model there. In size, model and rig, this boat seems to be representative of her class. She was built at Smith Island, Maryland; this small island village has built a large number of skiffs of varying models and rigs and the builders have quite a reputation for producing fast boats. The particular skiff shown here has too small a centerboard, according to her owner, but is otherwise an excellent sailer. Six inches more length to her centerboard would improve her sailing on the wind, though she was impressive in smooth water when the writer saw her under sail. Some of the skiffs of this type have less rake to the ends but, on the whole, there is little variation in model. Occasionally a small boat of this type is seen which is not fitted for sailing; these were once used for duck shooting. There appear to have been few large two-masted skiffs of this model, though at least two examples have been seen; both were about 22' long, quite narrow and rigged with the usual two-masted skiff rig: two leg-of-muttons, with the larger one forward, and no jib. It seems evident that the early two-masted rig in the Annapolis photograph dropped out of common use in this type of skiff.

The common square-sterned, flat-bottomed sailing sharpie, fitted with one mast and a leg-of-mutton sail, was probably as popular on the Bay as on other American waters. A few can still be seen though only the older boats can be

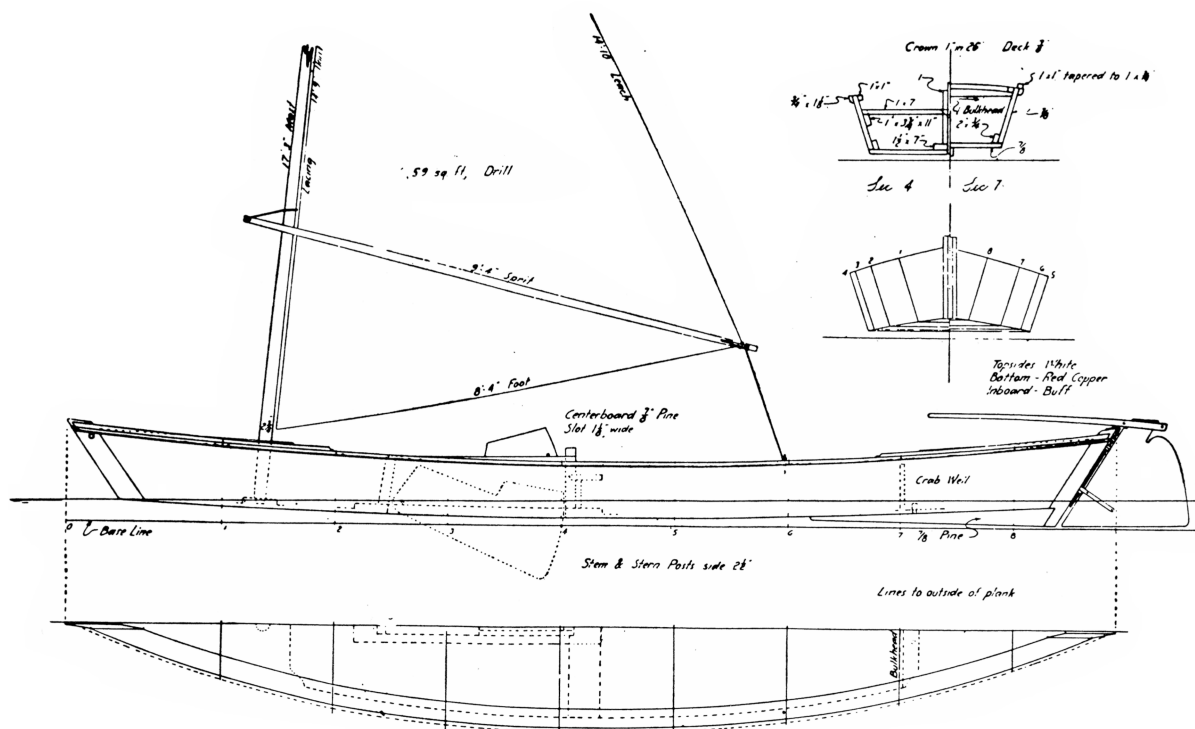


Fig. 1. An 18½-ft. Smith Island crabbing skiff. Lines taken off Nov. 9, 1940 at Deal Island, Md.

said to have much style; these had curved stems, somewhat like the ends of the skiff in the Annapolis photograph, and a graceful sheer. The Chesapeake, or "Hampton Flattie," seems to have been a development of this model. Though the existence of Flattie skiffs was known, it was not until the summer of 1941 that the writer found one in sufficiently good condition to be measured. This skiff was found on the marshes near Bishop's Head, a village on the north side of the mouth of the Nanticoke. She was in good condition except that a marsh fire had damaged her centerboard case and rudder. The owner had her sails and spars and so it was possible to get complete information on this particular boat. She was built by Major Johnson (Major was his name, not rank) at Bishop's Head about 1897 and has been in her owner's possession since built. Johnson was a well-known skiff builder who turned out other models besides the flattie. Like all modern flat-bottom Bay craft, this Flattie has her bottom cross-planked like a skipjack. She was built for crabbing but was used occasionally for oyster tonging and according to her owner, had greater capacity for her length than many of her model.

Like most of her model, the Flattie skiff in Figure 2 was a good sailer in strong winds, considering her small size, but was rather wet. In light airs, she was reported to be rather sluggish compared to the later deadrise skiffs. The model requires little comment; the run is made short to permit weight to be carried aft out of the way of the sail and centerboard gear. To enable weight to be carried without causing drag, the run is carried high at the stern, a characteristic of all Bay-built working skiffs designed for sailing; but the builder kept the run as straight as possible at the extreme stern. The construction was somewhat different from modern skiffs; the keelson did not run to the stem but began at the fore end of the centerboard trunk and was

carried to the transom. The keelson was hewn out of a natural crook of loblolly pine and finished about 3" by 6". It is not possible to say for certain but the keelson may have been rabbeted for the bottom planking where the deadrise exists; if this is the case, the keelson must be about 4" by 6" abaft Station 5.

The most interesting feature is the method of going from the square across planking of the forebody to the herringbone planking of the afterbody. Instead of using tapered cross planking to accomplish this, at about Station 5, the builder used a wide cross-plank, the fore edge of which was straight but the after edge was a deep V with the apex of the V on the boat's center line, pointing forward. The amount of V is great enough to permit the herringbone planking to be made with parallel edges all the way aft to the transom; the angle with the center line of the boat was about 12°.

The boat was well put together and finished; the owner thought she could be improved by lengthening the deck forward and raking the stem slightly. The rig was a common one on canoes in the portion of the "Shore" between the Nanticoke and the Pocomoke rivers but the canoes usually had two masts as well as the "stick-up," or "jigger," headsail. It is impossible to find out with certainty where or how this peculiar sail originated on the Bay. It had the advantages of being easily unshipped and stowed away. The sail was effective on the wind for the luff remained straight, unlike a jib on an unstayed mast which often sags to leeward a great deal. However, the sheet lead was not entirely satisfactory, though some cut the foot of the jigger without as much rise as shown and carried the sheet to fairleads on deck, like a jib. Another method was to fit light shrouds to the mainmast and sheet the jigger to the shrouds. Sheeting to the mast was the standard method.

Baymen also speak of a "stick-out jib," which is not the "stick-up" shown in the Flattie skiff. The "stick-out" is the "balance jib" used by the canoes and some skiffs on the Bay; this was introduced in the late 80's, it is said. This sail was also used on Long Island Sound in the 90's and earlier.

Skiffs are also called "bateaux" on the Bay. In the Northern portion of the Bay, in fact, a bateau is a small skipjack with a half-deck; but in general the name "bateau" is applied to all V-bottom boats, sail or power, by Baymen, and "skipjack" is rarely heard. Around Cambridge, the latter name for the V-bottom was apparently used in the '90's — at least it is found in old account books and sailmaker's drawings — but further south these same sources use the name "bateau" instead. A "one-sail bateau" is any V-bottom having one mast and a single sail; a "two-sail bateau" is a sloop-rigged, or a skipjack-rigged, hull, or a two-masted rig like a bugeye but with no jib. I have noticed the older men refer to sloop-rigged skiffs as "skipjack-rigged", so the name "skipjack" seems to apply to a rig rather than a hull form, at least in the minds of some Baymen, a "three-sail bateau" is a bugeye-rigged skipjack or skiff.

Since the sloop rig has been mentioned, this is a good place to illustrate a sloop-rigged skiff. Figure 3 was drawn from measurements taken off a fine skiff at Cambridge Creek in the fall of 1940. This boat was in a dilapidated state and has since gone to pieces. In spite of this, she showed plainly, in both model and construction, that she was the work of a finished boatbuilder. Her hull was a miniature skipjack except that she did not have the "longhead" or clipper bow of the larger boats. The hull was built in the same manner as a large skipjack; there was a heavy keelson hewn out of a natural crook to the profile of the rabbet and with the fore end shaped to form the forefoot, below the chine. The bottom was herringbone planked.

The rig shows the "balance jib." The method used to secure the heel of the

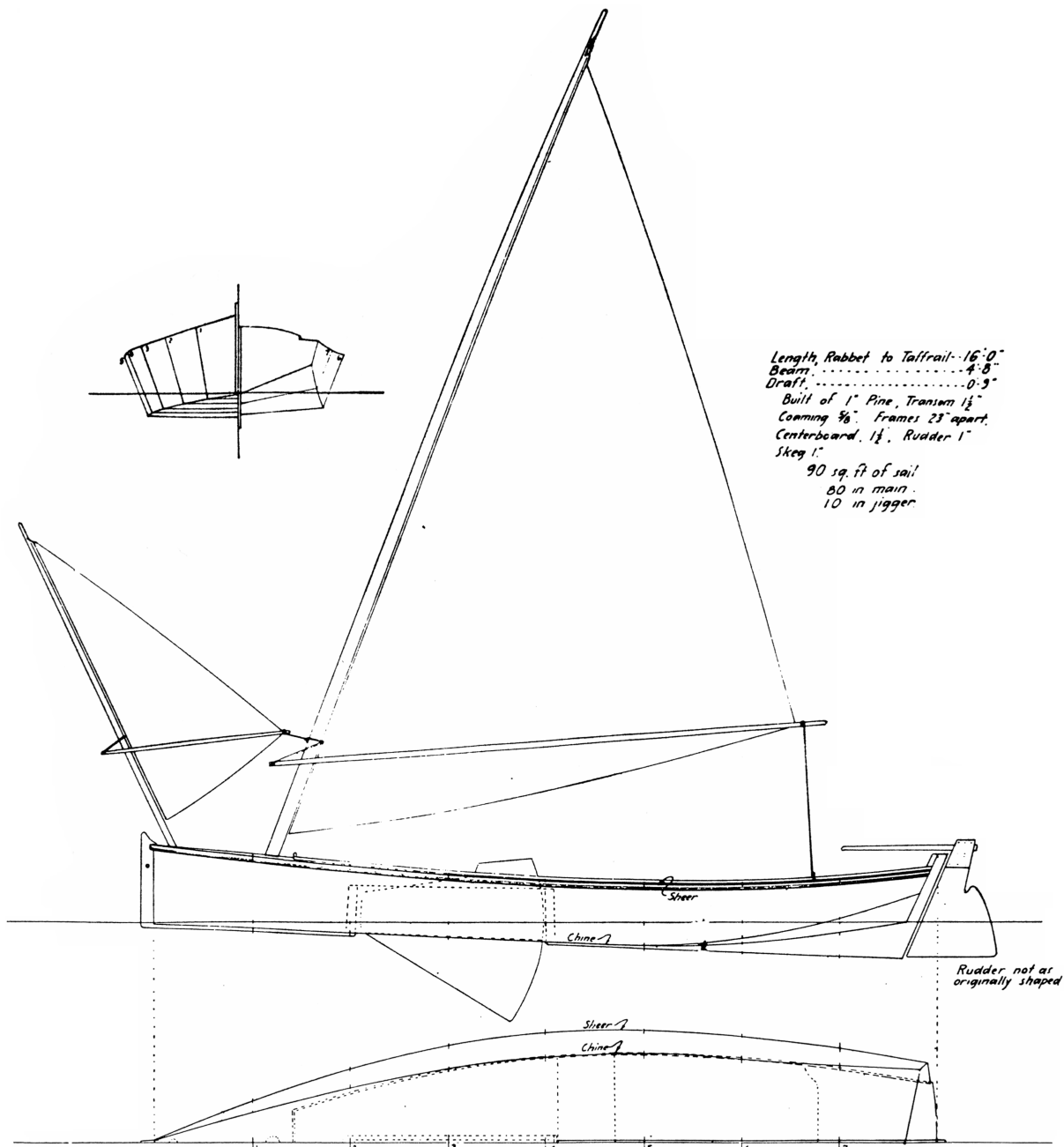


Fig. 2. The individualistic Baymen are not always content with conventional rigs. Witness this "stick-up" headsail on a crabbing Flattie. Lines taken off in August 1941, when it was owned by Wm. Henry Lindsay.

sprit of the mainsail is not the classic figure eight "snotter" but a short length of line spliced into an eye to form a slip noose around the mast with the tail passed through a hole, or notch, in the heel of the sprit and secured to a small cleat on the side of the sprit; or merely tied around the sprit. In recent years, it is not uncommon to see the sprit secured to a standard boom band (with small horse and traveller) placed on the mast instead of the older noose; this prevents the sprit from binding against the mast.

Returning to the hull of the skiff in Figure 3, this model has been considered the fastest until recent times when the smartest skiffs are those built without

forefoot, like a Clapham Nonpareil Sharpie. The rudder form is that used in the earlier skiffs; it probably was the original shape of the rudder fitted to the Flattie Skiff in Figure 2.

Though the sloop-rigged skiff was common, the two-masted rig was popular in some localities, particularly around Cambridge. The rig was usually the two leg-of-muttons, with the larger sail forward, used at one time in log canoes. A few skiffs had a bowsprit and a balance jib but these were usually racing or pleasure boats. The hulls were much alike in appearance, varying in dimensions and in amount of deadrise. All seem to have had raking ends and strong sheer; there was usually a good deal of flare to the sides. This model of skiff is one of the most seaworthy of the Crabbers, owing, no doubt, to the need of an able boat in the rough water at the mouth of the Choptank. While a few of these skiffs were flat-bottomed, most of them had a good deal of deadrise, as in the example. Though the deadrise skiffs could not carry as much sail as the flat-bottomed boats, they were drier and would track with greater certainty in choppy water. It is a noticeable trait of wide, flat-bottomed craft to lose headway when coming about in rough water, and then pay off excessively before pointing up on the new course. Such behavior is really dangerous in an open

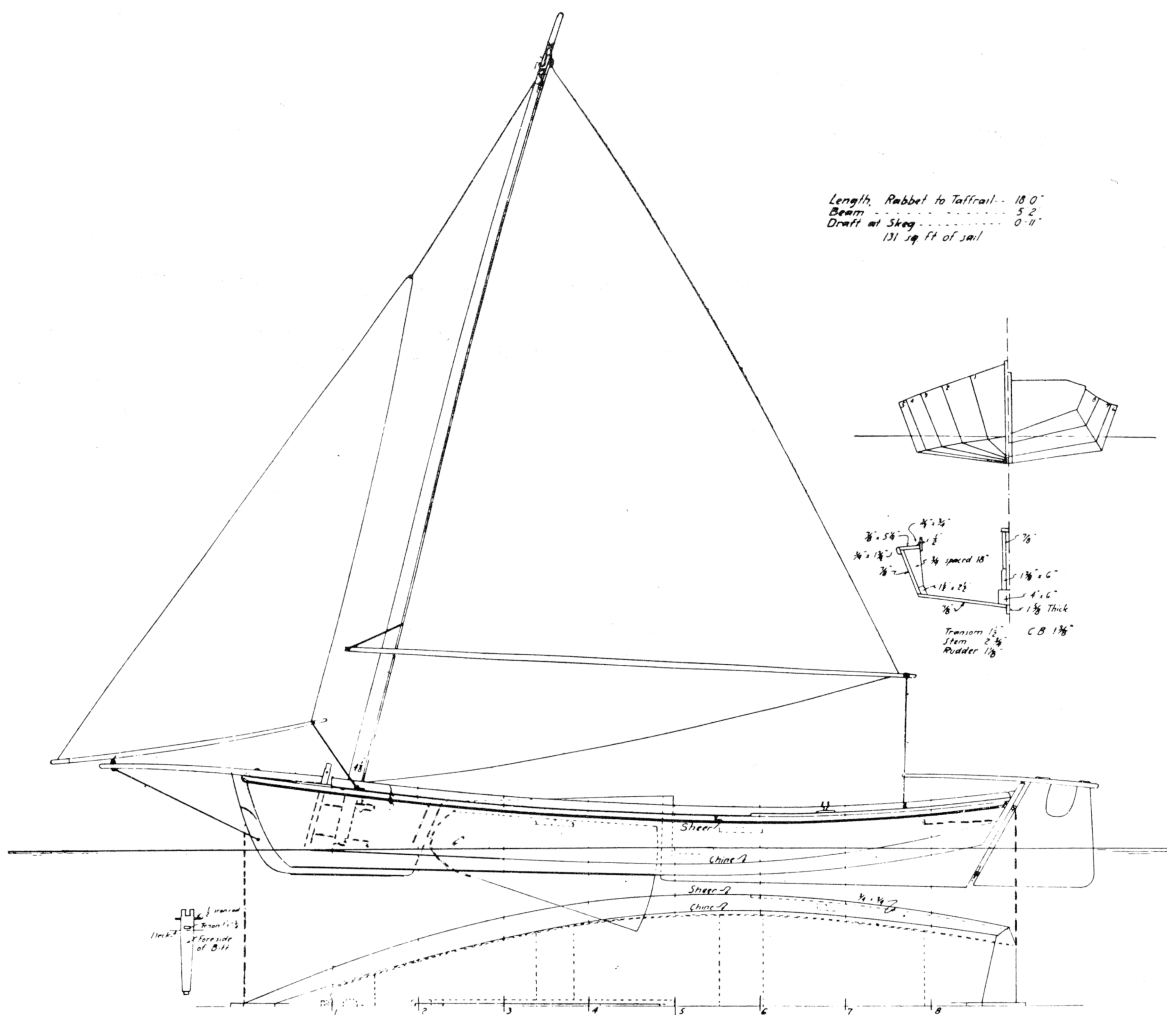


Fig. 3. An 18-ft. sloop or skipjack rigged bateau built at Cambridge, Md. about 1910. Lines taken off Sept. 16, 1940.

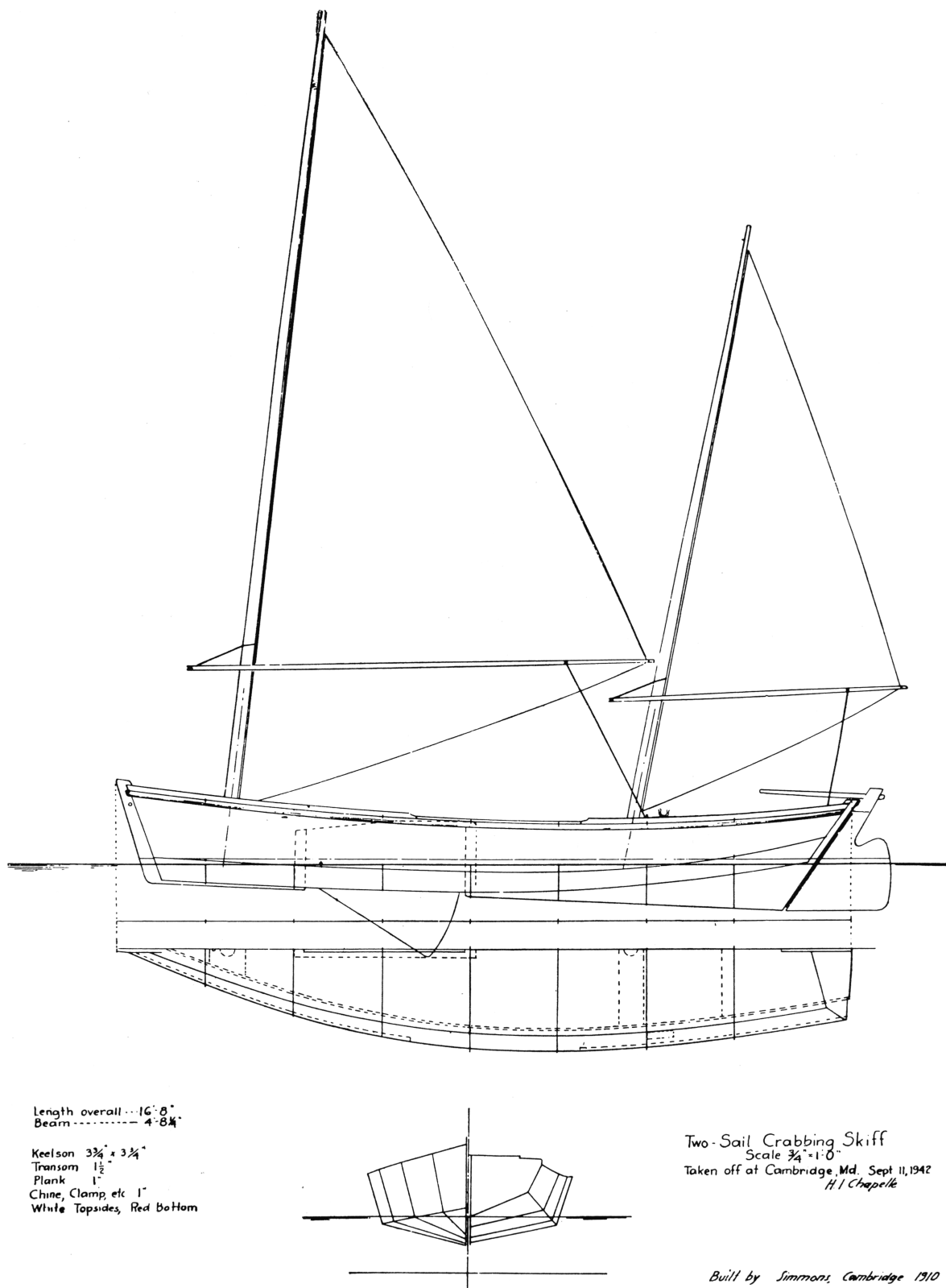


Fig. 4. A "two-sail bateau". Overall length is 16' 8".

or half-decked boat unless the main sheet is handled carefully. The construction of the skiff shown in Figure 4 is the usual Bay deadrise type.

The hanging of the centerboard in Bay skiffs, and in skipjacks too, is quite different from standard practice elsewhere. Instead of merely using a pivot bolt and a bearing in the board, the Baymen generally prefer to slot the pivot hole in the board at an angle to the water line, with the top of the slot higher

than and abaft the lower end. This permits the forward portion of the board to extend a little below the keel or shoe when the board is hauled up; if the boat strikes the bottom, the fore end of the board will rise since the pivot can travel in its slot. The forward lower corner of the centerboard must be well rounded, of course, to prevent its catching or hooking an obstruction. The advantage of this is that a larger area of board may be used when the boat is in extremely shoal water and the board hauled almost up in its case, yet the whole board will enter the case if it strikes bottom. The board is usually 4" to 6" shorter than its case opening, to permit the necessary movement. The slot in the board for the pivot is from 3" to 6" long in small boats, 6" to 8" in the skipjacks. Wooden pivots are preferred to metal bolts, locust or white oak being used in the majority of skiffs. The centerboard is rarely ballasted yacht

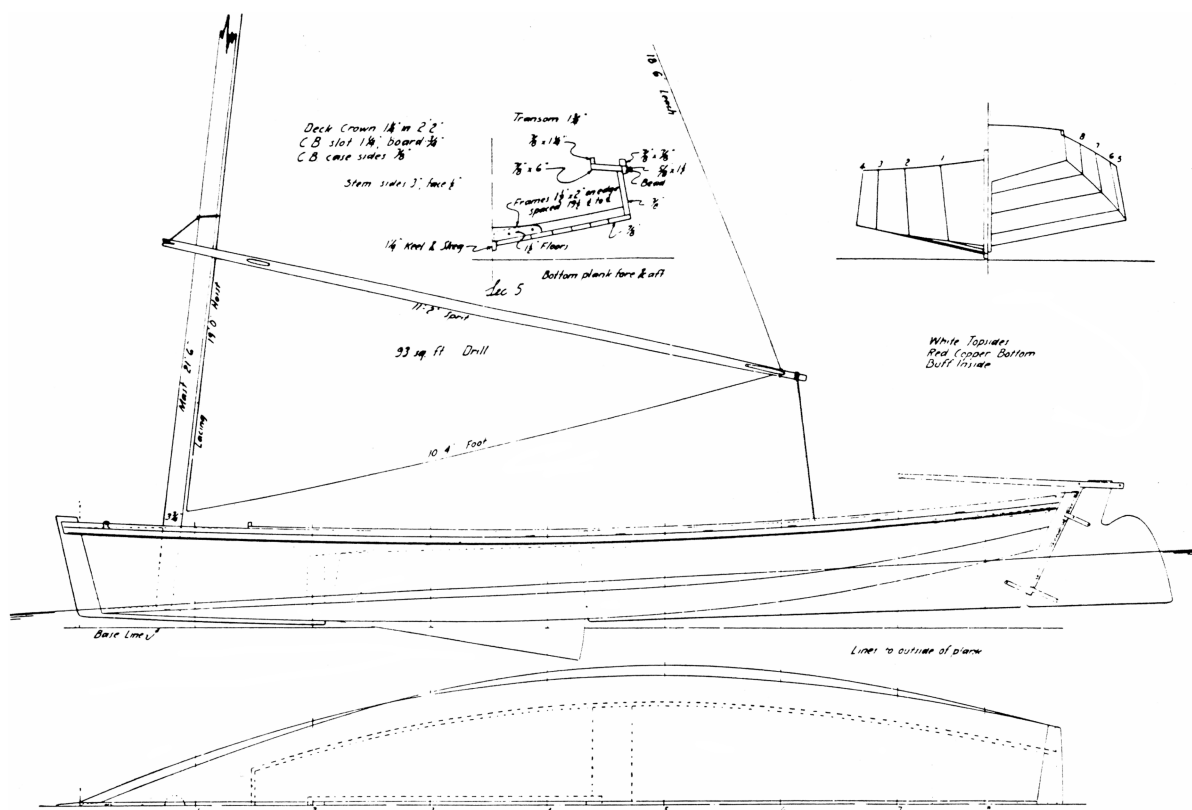


Fig. 5. A recent development of the Smith's Island skiff. The tumblehome is supposed to make the model more close winded when sailing in extremely shoal water. Built about 1904. Lines taken off Nov. 9, 1940, at Deal Island, Md. Owner was Walton Horner of Wenona, Md. About 17 ft. long.

fashion; the board is made of oak and heavily bolted with rod so that it sinks; requires no ballasting. The boards are much thicker than are found in yachts with boards of similar area.

In recent years, the Smith Island Skiff shown in Figure 5 has become quite popular on the Shore. This is a highly unorthodox V-bottom model, as the sides actually tumble home amidships. The bottom is that of the Nonpareil Sharpie, planked fore-and-aft on widely-spaced frames, without keelson, chine log or other longitudinal framing. The strength of the hull depends upon the

sides; the keel or skeg is a plank on edge cut in the way of the centerboard slot, as is the common Bay practice. It is rare to find a Bay-built centerboard hull in which the keel and rabbet are widened in way of the slot; the keel is usually the thickness of the board in width and stops short at either end of the slot. The inside keelson is made wide and heavy and the slot is cut in this member: this avoids a lot of work in shaping the keel to a taper fore-and-aft as required by the usual yacht design. In the Smith Island Skiff, the centerboard case is fitted with logs to insure good fastenings but, on the whole, the boat is

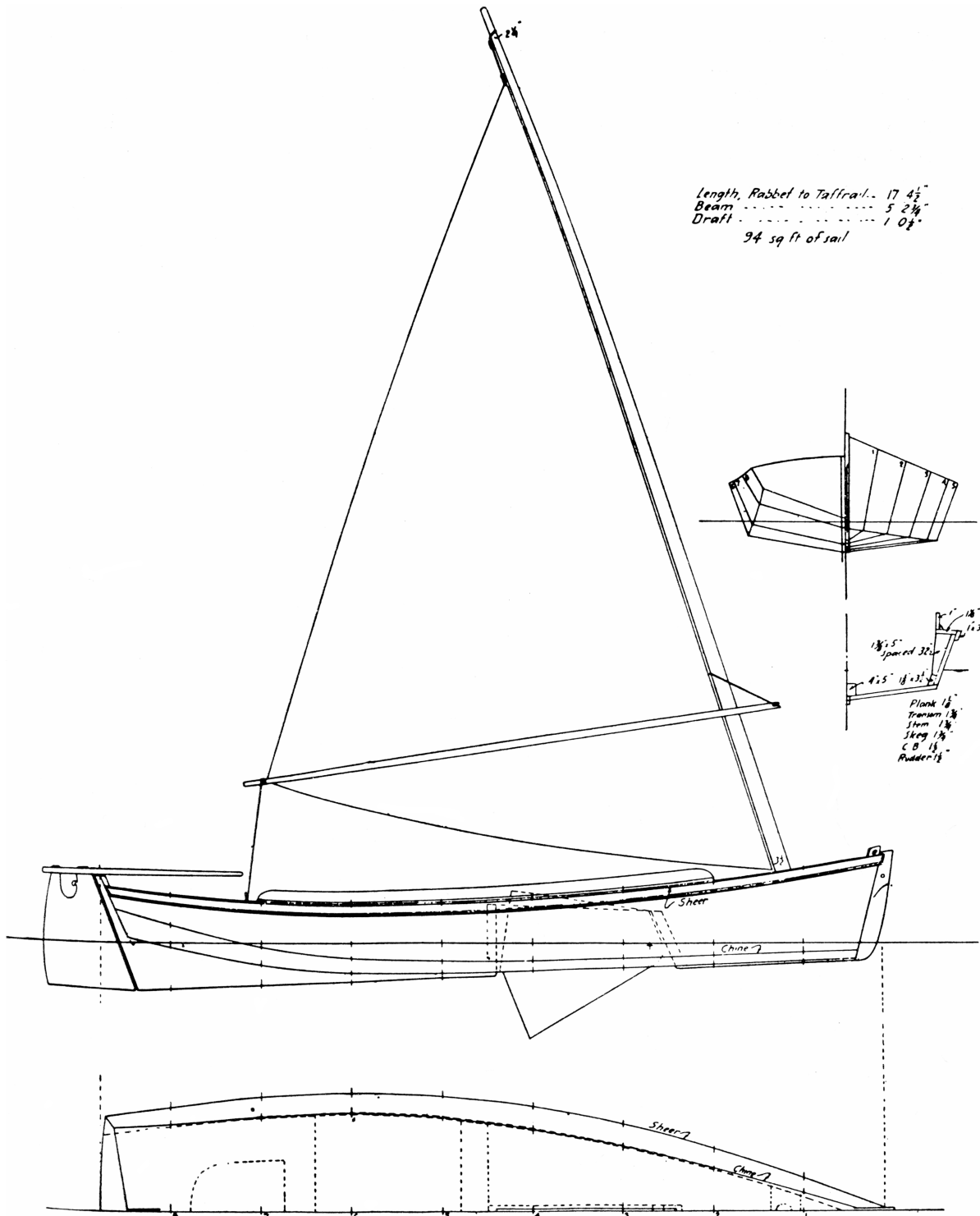


Fig. 6. A 17-ft. skiff built at Wingate, Md., about 1906.

rather weak around the case and so is likely to develop a leak; undoubtedly, this is due to the lack of a keelson. This is one of the two Bay types of dead-rise small boat that is fore-and-aft planked on the bottom. The result is that the Smith Island Skiff has a much fairer bottom than is found on the general run of herringbone planked boats; this has permitted her to attain high speed and so has given her a good reputation with the watermen. The tumble home of the sides, so contrary to yacht practice in V-bottom sailing models, is claimed to make the boats more closed-winded than those with flaring sides. While there may be some truth to this claim, when the boat is in such shoal water that she cannot use the full area of the board, it is doubtful if the advantage is great enough to outweigh the obvious objections. The speed of this class of skiff is due to the fairness of the bottom, forced on the builder by the fore-and-aft planking. The model and construction of these skiffs are limited to boats under 20' over all. The model is built at Crisfield as well as at Smith Island. Because of the success of this particular model, many watermen are convinced that flare is harmful to speed in sailing craft and so a number of wall-sided skiffs have developed; these are, in general, dangerous boats in blowing weather.

When commercial crabbing became an important source of income, the methods of catching crabs were greatly improved. The trot-line was the method most popular with the owners of the small and medium size skiffs. A trot-line was 30 to 200 fathoms of heavy net twine, with a buoy and anchor at each end. The bait was tied into the bight of the line at about fathom intervals, and then the gear was laid out somewhat in the manner a Gloucesterman lays out a trawl. The skiff was fitted with a small roller that was passed under the trot-line and then, under sail or sculls, the boat was moved from one end of the line to the other, the fisherman picking up the crabs with a dip net as they followed the bait to the surface. This method is now used on the motor launches used for crabbing.

Some of the small skiffs shown earlier were used for trot-line fishing; the longer trot-lines were used on large boats. The skiffs used at Bishop's Head, after the Flatties went out of fashion, are good examples of both large and small line-skiffs. Fig. 6 shows a 17' skiff built at Wingate about 1906 and used for crabbing at Taylor's Island. Boats of this model were favored for general waterfront work since they were weatherly and quite able for their size. There are two unusual features in this boat: the knightheads and miniature hawse holes are not typical of the type. In fact, these features are rarely found in any of the skiff type except in some of the older craft: even then, they are far from common. Except for these two features, however, the boat in Fig. 6 is a good example of a small trot-line skiff in her waters, and is a representative size.

Fig. 7 shows a large skiff from the same place; she was built in 1909 for both crabbing and tonging by a noted builder of skiffs, Captain Bill Reeves. Reeves, who not only built fine skiffs but also many large oyster dredging bateaux, was a Nova Scotian who had been trained as a ship carpenter. This skiff, like many of his boats, had a reputation for power to carry sail in a blow. She has moderate deadrise amidships and rather heavy displacement; these features probably explain her power. Skiffs of this size and type usually carried some ballast aft. They had high freeboard, for a Bay model, and were considered most seaworthy for their size. The rudder form shown in Figs. 6 and 7 is the old one that was widely used in this class of boat and is to be seen even yet. It seems to be related to the old rudder used on the sandbaggers of the '70's, and in the later cat boats.

In this same section of the Eastern Shore, the noted Hooper Island "sharpies" developed for crabbing. At first, these were probably all flat bottomed boats

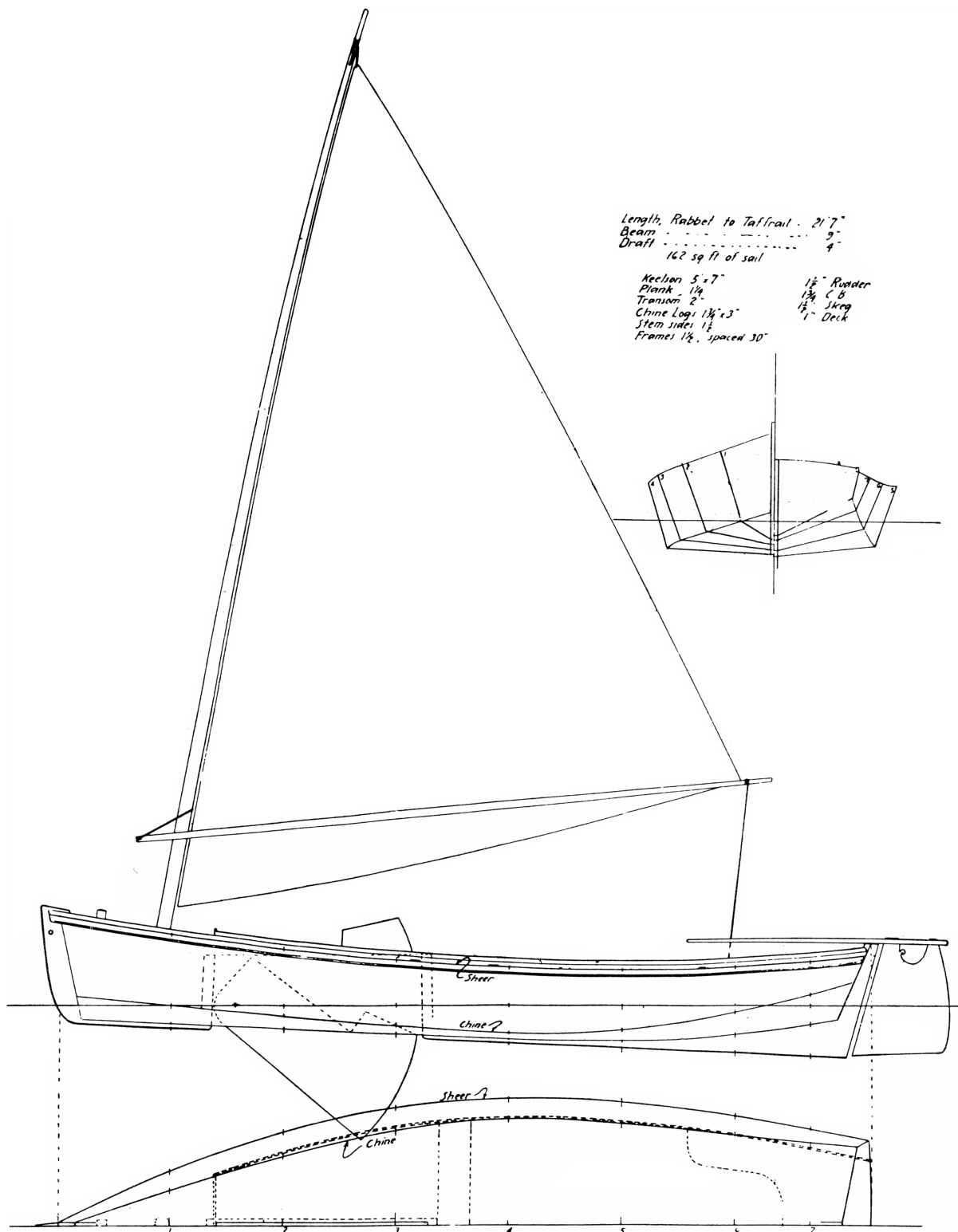


Fig. 7. Capt. Bill Reeves of Wingate built this 21'7" skiff in 1909. It was used for both crabbing and oyster tonging. She could carry her sail in a blow. Owned by Geo. Holliday of Wingate in 1941. Lines taken off August 1941.

(like the Smith Island double-ender shown earlier) but soon developed into a long, low deadrise, canoe-like skiff. This class of boat was not used for crabbing as much as for gunning. Originally, they had a single leg of mutton mainsail.

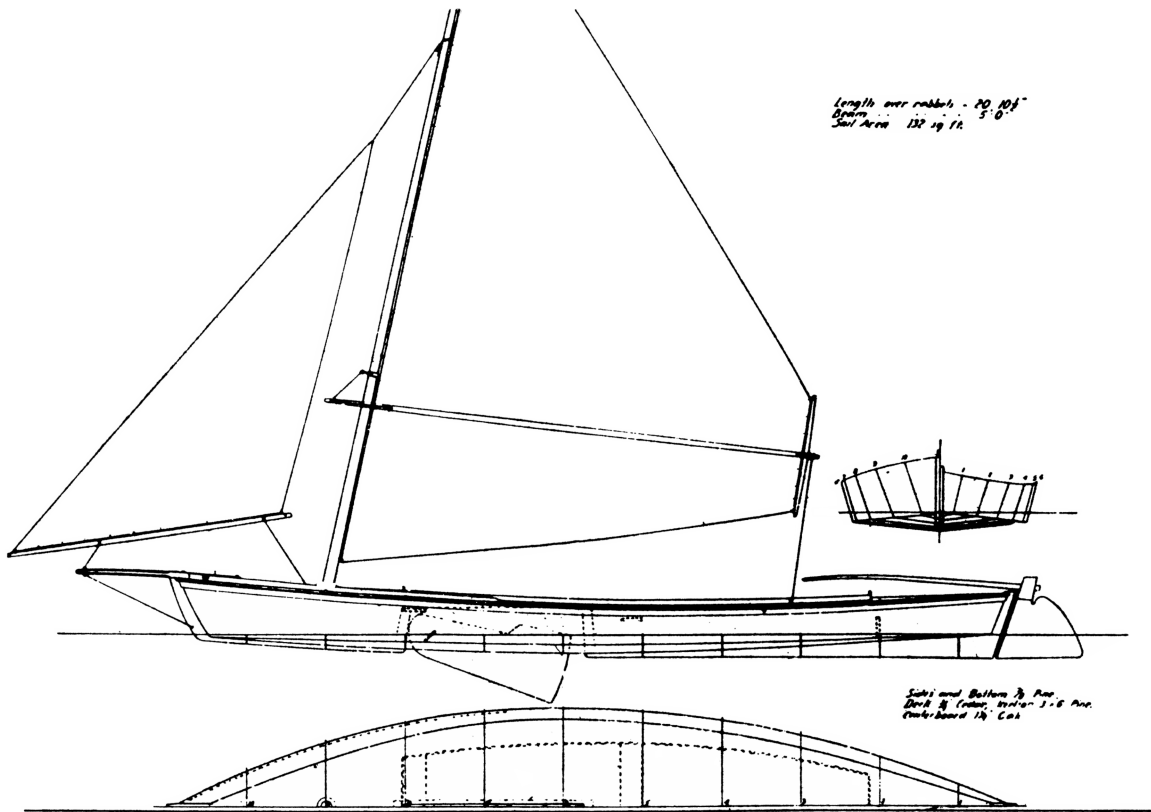


Fig. 8. A Hooper Island "Sharpie", a fine boat with the typical rig of her class. Built about 1921; lines taken off at Taylor's Island in 1940. Length over rabbets is 20' 10½"; beam 5' 0"; sail area 132 sq. ft.

They were fast, and racing soon became popular. Then the balance jib was added and the sail area gradually increased until "springboards" and heavy crews were considered necessary when racing. With moderate sail area, these skiffs are fast and handy; just before the present war began, an attempt was made to revive the class and a few boats were built. The example shown in Fig. 8 is of a fine boat built in 1921, with the typical rig of one of these "sharpies" though, by Bay standards, the sails are too small for racing. This rig is one used for pleasure sailing; this particular boat was never used as a crabbing skiff though many similar boats were.

Some of these "sharpies" had deep forefoot and heel, allowing the deadrise to be carried the full length of the hull and to increase at the ends. Others were modeled like a Nonpareil sharpie, as in this boat, or were quite flat. The length was usually around 20' to 22' and the beam varied from 4' 4" to 5' 6", with a rig to match. Most of the boats carried their beam well forward and were finer aft on deck. Like many of the Bay skiffs, the centerboard was sometimes too small for the sail area. In this case, when racing, the pin was often taken out of the board and it was placed on end, up and down in the case, so that it acted like a dagger board. In past years, the "sharpies" have raced in numerous yacht regattas and the type is well known to most Bay yachtsmen. The example was built, so it is said, for a gunning skiff and these boats usually had more rake to the ends than others. This is supposed to make a "quiet boat;" it often makes an unusually good looking one.

In respect to the "sharpies," the name "sharpie" is not applied to flat

bottomed craft on the Bay so far as I know. This Hooper Island skiff is the only one to which the name is applied and the amount, or lack, of deadrise seems to play no part in the application of the name now, though it may have done so originally. I have heard that a boat named *Frolic* was picked up adrift by a Taylor's Island schooner some time in the late '80's or early '90's. She was described as a long, narrow, flat-bottomed skiff, with a round stern and two leg of mutton sails. From the description, this might be a New Haven sharpie lost by some Yankee schooner on the Bay for a load of oysters, but there is also the possibility that *Frolic* was a Bay-built boat since there was a type of skiff used at Tangier Island that might answer this description although the only one I have seen had deadrise. I have not seen one of these Tangier skiffs under sail but old photos show that they looked like New Haven sharpies when afloat.

In recent years, the greatest number of sailing skiffs and small bateaux are to be found in the vicinity of Deal's Island. The larger boats, ranging from 20' to 28' over all, are used as "crab scrapers." "Scraping" is done under sail and a dredge is used that is quite similar to an oyster dredge but much lighter and smaller. "Scraping" cannot be done on all bottoms, so the same boat may scrape or use a trot-line. In past years, "scraping" could be done only under sail, but power is now permitted and it is probable that the sailing

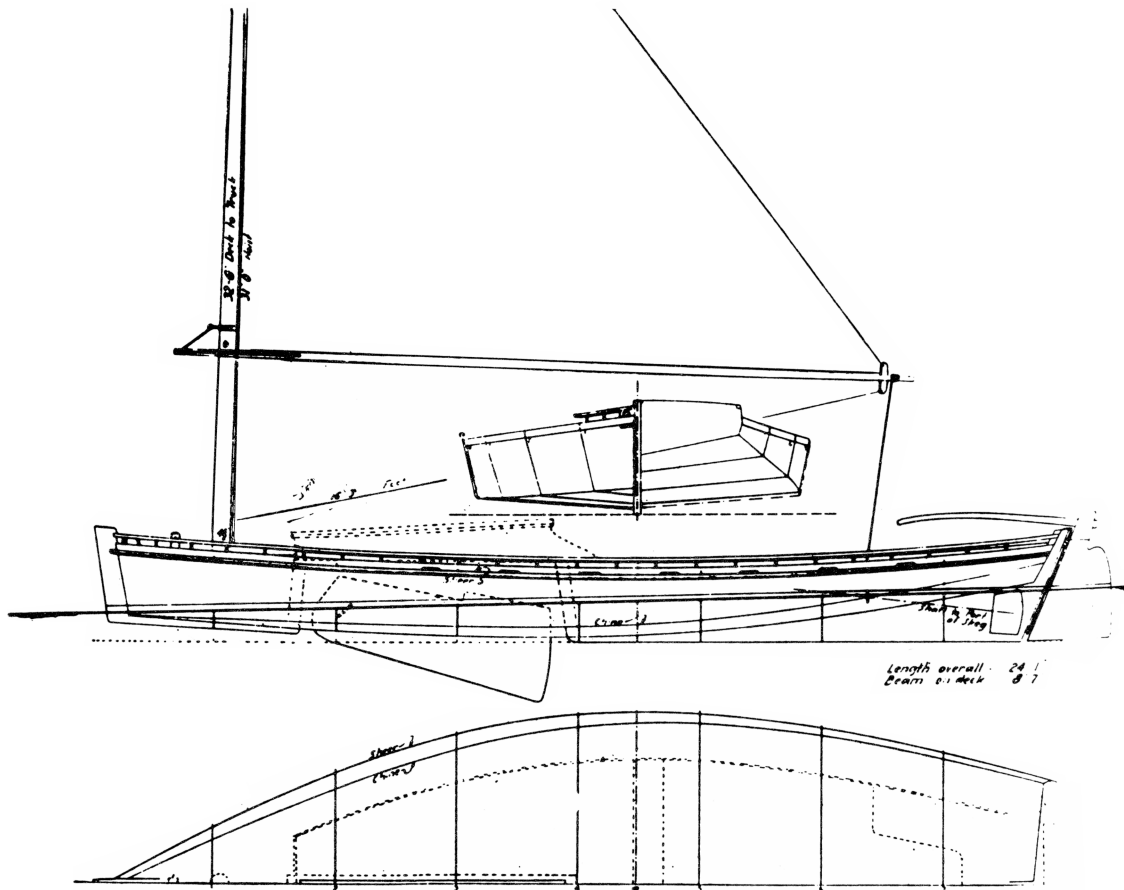


Fig. 9. A "one-sail bateau," a class built extensively at Crisfield and Smith's Island. This skiff was built at Crisfield about 1915. Lines taken off at Wenona, August 1941. Length is 24' 1"; beam on deck 8' 7".

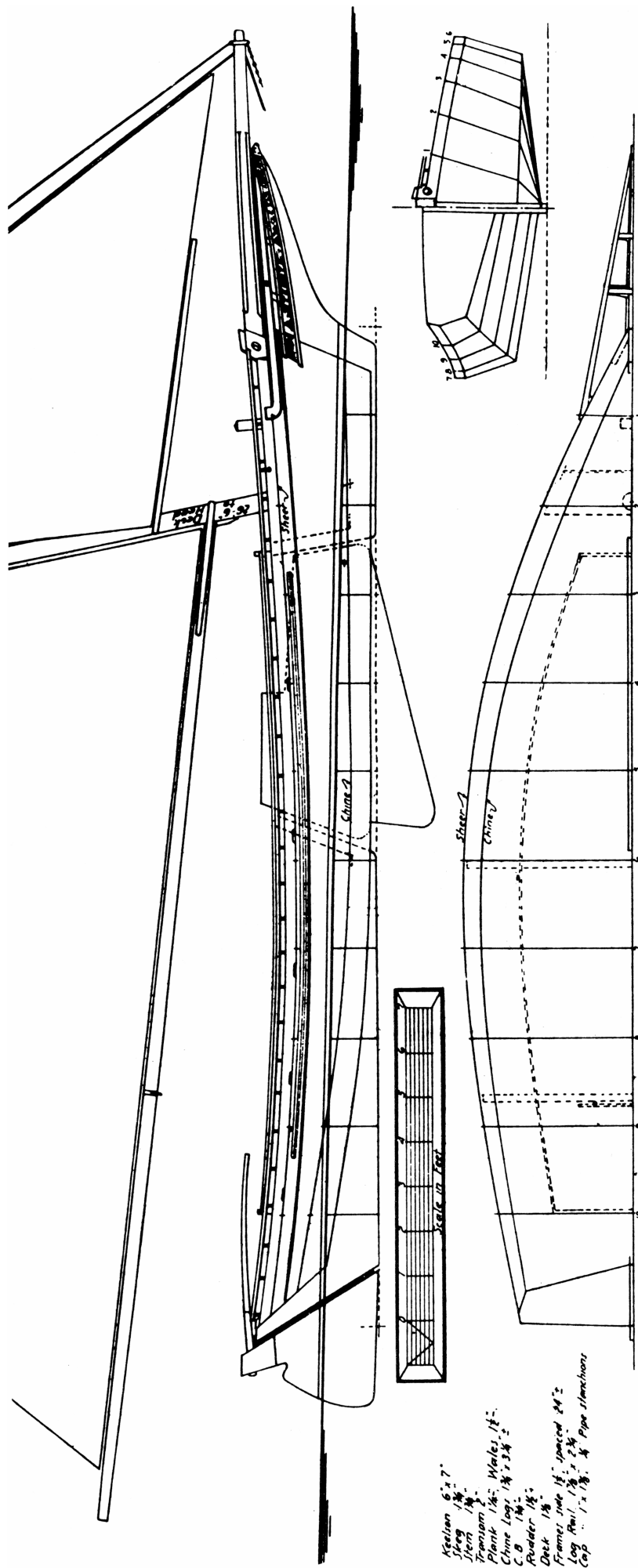


Fig. 10. One of the smaller and older crabbing bateaus. She was built by a skillful carpenter, probably about 1900. Lines taken off at Lower Hoopers Island Aug. 19, 1942. Length, rabbet to taffrail is 22' 6"; beam 7' 8"; draft at skeg 1' 2 1/2".

crabber is doomed to extinction unless a shortage of crabs should lead to another change in conservation laws.

By far the most common of the large skiffs seen at Deal's and vicinity is the "One Sail Bateau" or "One Sail Dinghy." One of these is shown in Fig. 9. This type was built extensively at Crisfield and Smith's Island. There are slight variations in model but the example is reasonably typical. The boats range from 19' to 27', and are quite wide; their shallow hulls make them look wider than they really are. The beam is usually somewhat greater than one-third the overall length and the deadrise is moderate. The hull model is close to that used in the small "Smith Island Skiff" illustrated earlier, but the sides do not tumble home. In the older boats, as represented by the example, there was a slight flare to the sides, greatest forward, and the side boards showed quite a bit of twist. The bottom is commonly planked fore and aft and is of the Nonpareil sharpie form. Occasionally, a herringbone-planked bottom is used but the bottom form is usually the same as in the fore and aft-planked hulls.

The majority of these "One Sail Bateaux" have the open rails shown in the plans. Some of the old boats have hawse holes in this rail but the apparent hawse, or knighthead, timber is false; it is just a filler between log rail and rail cap through which a hawse hole is bored. Most of these craft sit low in the water; none have much freeboard or sheer for their length. As a result, wide side decks are necessary, since they soon put their gunwales under in a breeze. These side decks are made up of a wide covering board and a narrow strip deck extending inboard to the cockpit coaming. The larger boats have a small removable trunk cabin shown in dotted lines in Fig. 9. It is now rare to see one of these boats that has not been bored for power; most of them have had engines at one time or another. Only the old boats seem to have had the block forefoot used on most of the Bay deadrise models; the Nonpareil sharpie forefoot shown in the example is used in all the fore and aft-planked bottom hulls and in most of the herringbone-planked boats as well. The mast usually has little rake but is quite lofty. The type is noted for its sailing but is wet in rough water. Like most one-sail Bay skiffs, this type carries her sail well inboard with the center of effort rather well forward.

The reason this rig is used is that it leaves the sternsheets clear for working, with no tangle of main sheet to worry about. The hulls built in the Crisfield area are usually easily identified by the amount of wood outside the plank ends at the bow; the stem is extremely wide fore and aft; this is to be seen in the example. As in nearly all Bay deadrise hulls, the stem is not rabbeted but an inside stem, or "stem liner," is used. When the hull is planked, the outside stem or cutwater is bolted on. Some of the more recently built "One Sail Bateaux" are ugly since they are without flare in the sides except at the extreme bow. This gives them a depressing, coffin-like appearance but it must be admitted that such boats often sail well. None of this type ever carries a bowsprit or any kind of a headsail. The largest boat of the "One Sail Bateaux" model that I have seen was 34' over all but this seems to have been a freak length. Boats 24' long are the most common size, and are used for scraping for crabs and for oyster tonging.

In Eastern Shore waters, during the crabbing season, the miniature skipjack, or "Crabbing Bateau," was once to be seen in huge numbers. Next to the log canoe, this type was the most popular small work boat from Tilghman's to Tangier. These yacht-like boats were neither true skiffs nor bateaux but combined the features of both. They ranged in size from 26' to 29' although in early years some 22' to 26' bateaux were built. The "Crabbing Bateaux" seem to have had no special type name other than this. In every

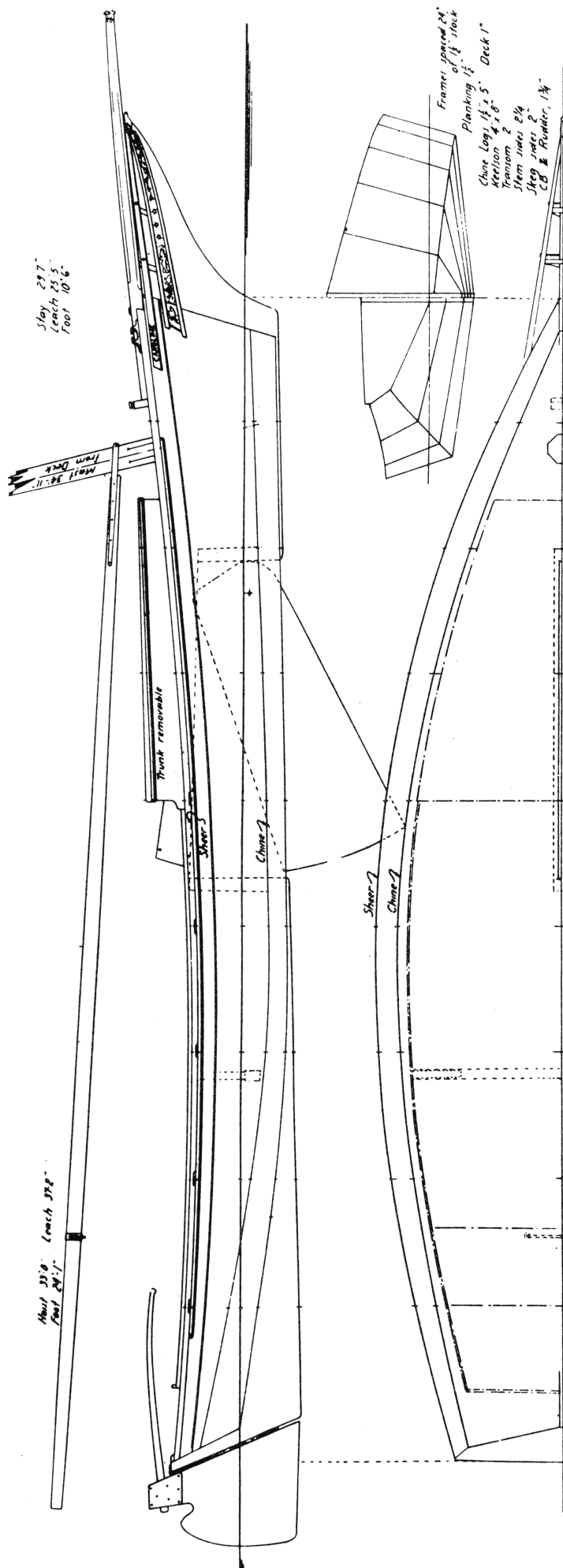


Fig. 11. A crabbing skiff built near Deal's Island. She sailed with little ballast, unlike some of the later boats of her type. Built at Oriole, Md. in 1910-11. Lines taken off Sept. 16, 1941. Length rabbet to taffrail 27' 7"; beam on deck 8' 10"; draft at skeg 1' 5".

respect, they were reduced scale copies of the larger oyster dredging bateaux, or "Skipjack," except that the Crabber had no permanent cabin trunk and was usually half-decked. All the headwork of the larger boats' cutwaters was retained. The rig was the same, except that the smaller boat omitted shrouds entirely. Today, this type is rapidly disappearing and the remnants of a once numerous fleet are wearing out at Deal's Island or nearby crabbing centers. At Deal's Island, these crabbers are used for both tonging and dredging for oysters; using a light handpower dredge gear for the latter work.

One of the oldest examples of this type, and one of the prettiest that I have yet seen, is shown in Fig. 10. This boat, now an abandoned wreck, was built by an expert carpenter and was well finished in all respects. Only 22'6" long, she was much smaller than the rest of her type to be seen today. I have been told by boatbuilders that bateaux of this size were once built to use a small "scrape" and for tonging and transportation in waters around some of the Bay islands. There was no means of dating the construction of this little boat but, as a guess, 1900 would not be many years away from the correct date. She was probably built somewhere in the vicinity of Deal's Island.

A more typical boat is shown in Fig. 11. This is a rather old boat, now a hulk, that was built at Oriole, a small village on the mainland near Deal's Island. Though rather cheaply built, she was not rough and had nicely carved and painted trail boards. Instead of the knightheads and open rail of the earlier Crabber, she has only a simple log rail. The useless but ornamental knightheads and hawse are replaced by a modern iron chock. This boat has her mast and board well forward; in the opinion of the man who had her last, she would be improved as a sailer if both were moved aft.

Fig. 12 is an example of the best and most recent "Crabbing Bateaux," a boat built near Pocomoke in 1918. She is somewhat better finished than the boat shown in Fig. 11 but, in general, is quite similar in construction. This boat has a relatively short run, it will be noticed, and a rather sharp bow. Though not originally designed for power, her relative fullness aft made her suitable for the installation of a small motor. When measured, this engine had long been removed. An offset shaft is often used when converting old sailing bateaux as it does not require cutting the drift bolts that hold the rather thin skegs together. The stuffing box is always at the inboard end of the shaft log. In some boats, the outer shaft bearing is of wood lined with water hose — a cheap "rubber bearing." The engines are supported by two heavy cross bearers, running from chine to chine; with short engine beds on top.

The construction midship section is shown on this plan and idea of the size of scantlings used in these boats can be obtained from it. They are heavily built compared to yacht V-bottoms of the same general size designed for sailing. The strength of these Bay V-bottom hulls is to be traced to their heavy, hewn keelson, cut to the profile shape out of a crooked pine tree by broad-axe and plane. In the "Crabbing Bateaux," where there are no thwarts, the transverse strength is obtained by two "strongbacks." These are made of a heavy floor timber, usually siding 4" and moulding 6" in a 28' hull, running from chine to chine and resting on top of the keelson, to which it is drift bolted. At the sides, knees are worked in from the top of these floor timbers to the gunwale. The top of the floor timber is usually at, or a little above, the top of the chine logs and the bottom edge is not shaped to the deadrise of the bottom; if deadrise requires, it may be notched for the top of the keelson as well as for the chine logs. One strongback is placed just abaft the mast and supports the partners. The other is well aft, about one-fourth the length of the boat from the transom. Often the after strongback forms one of the cross bearers that

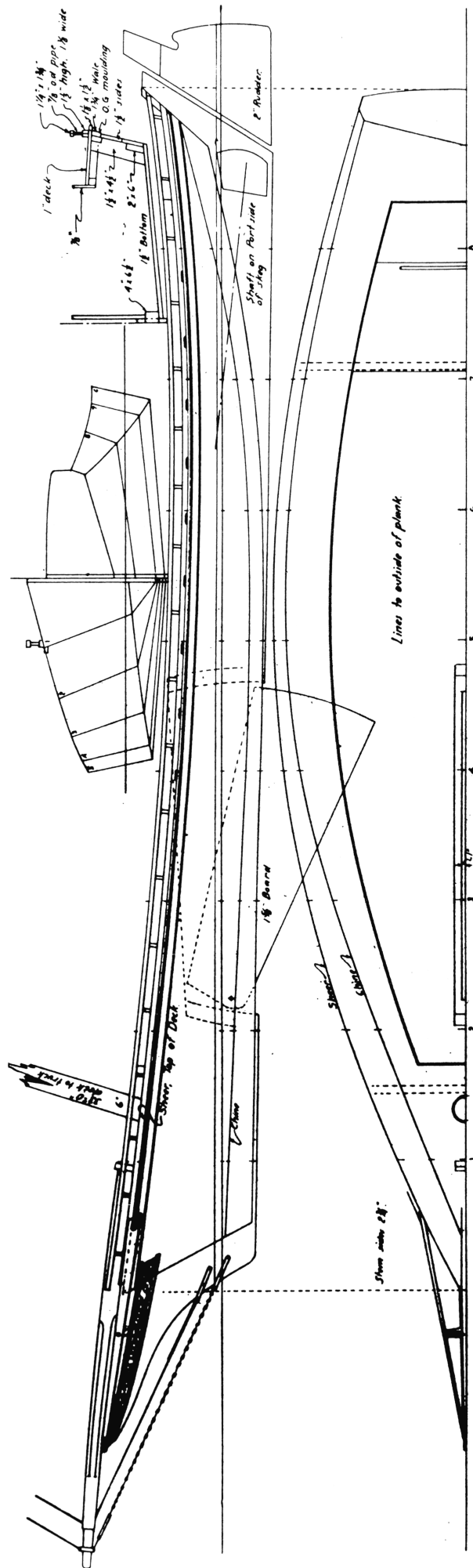


Fig. 12. One of the best and most recent crabbing bateau designed to carry an engine, which has long been removed. Lines of this bateau, the ROSA LEE, were taken off Jan. 10, 1940. Length rabbet to taffrail 27' 0"; beam 8' 11"; draft 1' 2 1/4".

support the engine beds. The foremost bearer is often tied together athwartships by a tie rod half way between chine and gunwale; this passes through planking and knees on each side and is forelocked at each end outside. A turnbuckle at the center line of the hull enables adjustments in tension to be made. Without these strongbacks, or without closely spaced deckbeams, the shoal hulls of the "Crabbing Bateaux" will work a great deal under sail, particularly when loaded. The long life of the Chesapeake Bay skipjacks under hard usage is due to the construction methods employed; the timber used is loblolly pine.

The skiffs and bateaux illustrated in this article do not represent all the types to be found on the Bay. The Tangier model has been mentioned but no opportunity to take off the lines of a good example has arisen. The Western Shore of the Bay also has local types as yet unrecorded. One of the most common is the "Potomac River Dory-boat," a deadrise model usually planked lengthwise on frames; she has her chines carried quite high forward. This type is said to have been developed directly from the flat bottomed "Black Nancy" or "Hampton Flattie." In looks, the boats are much like the old Florida deadrise skiffs.

In view of the number of yachts of deadrise model built with the bottom planked lengthwise, it is interesting, perhaps, to find that only a relatively small proportion of the Chesapeake Bay-built V-bottom craft are so planked. The use of lengthwise planking is known to Bay builders, as has been shown in the Smith Island and Crisfield skiffs, so it must be assumed that the builders, generally, are convinced that the cross planking used gives the stongest hull with no loss in speed.

Before leaving the subject of skiffs, some of the latest built "Crabbing Bateaux" developed a feature that was later used in a few of the largest dredging bateaux. In these bateaux, the rabbet is fair from amidships to the transom, in a long flattened curve. The chines, however, are carried in a flat, almost horizontal, curve to the water line, where they break suddenly upward to high quarters at the transom. This is done to give a long run combined with sufficiently high quarters to prevent slapping and pounding. Another advantage obtained is increased carrying capacity. When light, the hulls on this model usually sail fast but when loaded they are less effective and show a tendency to drag.

It is apparent that the Bay builders design boats to fit wholly local conditions, even in the comparatively narrow limits of the Chesapeake. This is one opportunity for future development in yacht design. The relative low cost of the Chesapeake Bay types of V-bottom hull would give a sound basis for the application of such a development.