

① WATERFRONT
PIP

Mary Ellen Rooney
Deal Island captions

Some remains of the once-prosperous waterfront of Deal Island Village which was destroyed in the firece storm of 1933. According to Myra Thomas Long, "gále winds blew, the rains came, the tides rose and they called it a hurricane but it had no name...reports received by those on the mainland were meager at first for telephones were out for three days and only by boat could messages be received. The story finally came in that the bridge to the mainland was washed out -- every oyster and crab house either swept away or so badly damaged that salvage was doubtful -- the \$300,000 seafood industry was wiped out -- the steamboat wharf destroyed -- dozens of boats including the huge oyster dredges, crab boats and motor boats wrecked, sunk or driven into the marshes. High waves threatened the Anderson Hotel, the lower floors were flooded and guests were removed by boat. The direct damage was listed as \$50,000 but there was much heavier indirect loss..."

In 1945, Mr. Anderson moved a building from the wreckage inland to the point where it stands today. He began a general hardware business which served the Island's building and marine needs. In 1972, he retired and the business was sold to H. Hass, a retired police officer from Baltimore County. Five years later Vernon Cooper became proprietor. In August 1982, Don Cawood, a fiberglass boat builder and repairer from Annapolis, purchased the business.



Her Majesty — The Log Canoe

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range of 30 feet in length with a beam of 1/7th to 1/8th of its length depending on the diameter of the tree. The depth would be about 2/3rds to 1/2 the beam but there appeared to be no fixed proportion. Some were reported to be as much as 3 feet 9 inches deep.

With the need for water transportation so desperate, the white man soon improved upon the Indian dugouts and by 1700, started shaping both bow and stern into the sharp ended form, in which the canoe has remained to the present time. They abandoned the single log as it was found to be considerably easier to handle and work smaller logs. Canoe builders first used two, then three smaller logs and still later to recent times, four, five, six and sometimes seven.

There were two principle centers of canoe building, one in Virginia and the other in Maryland waters. The canoes built on the lower Eastern Shore around Pocomoke Sound varied considerably with those built in the upper Chesapeake Bay

around the Tilghman Island area.

The method used for the Maryland canoes was to make a half model of the proposed canoe, shaping each log in the model in its full development as it would appear in the actual canoe. The poorly constructed canoes were built using only the "eye" to attain the form, a method colloquially known as "winchum-squinchum" or "rack of the eye".

With the model completed, the logs would be selected and squared off to the proper size. The keel is the largest log and the second and third and fourth were cut to size as indicated in the model. After this preliminary work, the center lines and length were established on the keel log and the rake of the stem and stern laid down. Then the sawing and cutting with the adz and broad axe began.

There was a lot of hard work in shaping the inside and the outside with the hand tools of that era. Key pieces, shaped like a dove tail, were let into the hull inside and out across the seams and then securely fastened with wooden pins. Unless you have a working knowledge of these tools, and very few

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people have, there is no point for this article to describe the various steps to be followed in building a log canoe.

Propulsion of the early canoes varied with their uses. Indians used paddles or poles around the Bay area by standing erect in the canoes while the white man preferred oars.

During the first 150 years of canoe use, it appeared that no one was lazy enough to adapt it to sail to avoid the sweat and hard work of propelling a canoe through the water. Although the lateen, a triangular sail, was well known on the Chesapeake, there appears to be no information on its use on canoes. Rowing with an oar seems to have been handed down from grandfather to father to son.

Throughout the records, the canoe first mentioned with sail is the "METHODIST". Its hull was like those of the Maryland canoes, but the rig had a number of variations, although it appears they originated from the same sources. In the Tilghman Island type, the original rig was

altered by the addition of sprits (clubs) and the jib which appeared about 1870. According to David Pritchard, he cut the first swinging jib, on the upper Bay, for a racing craft, in 1880 which was immediately adopted by the oystermen.

The need for more speed was the reason for the many changes in the sail plan. The final shape was accomplished in about 1875 by altering the sail to triangular in shape with one of the base angles (tack) truncated parallel to the mast and at the same time making the leech angle obtuse. The truncated tack was spread by a light spar called a "club" which was lashed at its center to the end of the sprit and was called a "goose wing" because it looked very much like a clipped goose's wing. Maryland had no gaming laws in those days, so the live goose was used as a decoy by clipping the points of the wings.

The "Methodist", a very famous log canoe, was used by the Rev. Joshua Thomas of Deals Island, the parson of the Islands, for transportation from one island to another on his circuit of Smith's Island, Deal Island, Tangier and Hollands. It was the Rev.'s fishing boat as he was an avid fisherman.

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The "Methodist" was hewed from the trunk of a mammoth tree which grew in the neighborhood of Curtis' chapel and towed to a place in Annapessex where it was launched in about 1805. It was between 20 and 30 feet long with about a five foot beam. It was capable of bearing heavy freight and could live in very rough water with skillful management.

Times don't change much, only the methods. The canoe men, like the average person of today, were in a hurry and when there was no breeze, he got out his paddle stood on the stern and proceeded to scull the canoe to his destination.

The paddle was generally a red oak plank, 8 to 10 feet long 7" wide and 3/4" thick at one end tapering off triangularly to 1 1/2" thick at the other end. There was no row lock, thole pin, or notch ever used, probably a lost art nowadays.

The small canoes in the 1850's carried only 10 to 12 bushels of oysters. Some had one sail but no washboards.

The first canoe brought to St. Michaels was owned by Captain Greenbury Marshall who called her the "Baltimore." She had washboards about 6" wide and carried about 20 bushels of oysters.

The first canoes built in St. Michaels, according to R. D. Lambdin, had keels and most of them were 30' long. In 1872, R. D. Lambdin acquired a 30' canoe built by George W. Goodall of Washington and altered her to a centerboard type, the first one on the River.

Captain Louis Tarr and Captain Nicholas Plummer had Lambdin change their fine canoes to the centerboard type and after that, all canoes were built with a centerboard.

The "Thomas Kirby" owned by R. D. Lambdin won all the Oxford races one year. In 1877 Lambdin built a 28' canoe for J. C. Harper of Beverly which was called the "Dashaway". She won 3 prizes one summer, one at Oxford and two at St. Michaels. In 1890, Lambdin built a three mast canoe for R. S. Dodson Sr., the only 3 mast canoe on the Bay and Mr. Dodson use to go from St. Michaels to Norfolk in her, whenever he desired, usually about an 18 hour trip.

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The racing canoe was developed by the same men who built the work canoes. Racing developed because fishermen, oystermen or crabbers with the days catch, headed for the harbor and the first one in, got the best prices. The first one in, would naturally boast a little, about the superior qualities of his boat and naturally this led to challenges. From 1840, there were organized races in St. Michaels on the Fourth of July with as many as 25 or more canoes but there is little or nothing recorded about these events.

It is known that there was a trophy awarded to the winner and it has been said that the "Douglas Cup" was so named, for the canoe which won it first. It is engraved, "The winner of the race at St. Michaels, 1859, 'THE DOUGLAS,' Samuel T. Harrison." The cup was won again in 1872 by Samuel T. Harrison with the "Anna".

There was a handicap system used in these early races such as 6 seconds per



1859

foot of hull per mile of course. In some of the early starts, the contestants were required to haul the sterns of their canoes on the beach with sails in and unfurled and the crews ashore. At the starting (Please turn to page 35)

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signal, all hell broke loose, with all hands rushing for their canoes, shoving off, fixing rudders, making sail. It generally resulted in quite a mess of tangled gear and oh the language that was used, and with a little imagination, perhaps there was a scorched sail or two.

As a result, a canoe was designed especially for racing which decreased its stability but with the ingenious use of spring boards, stability was helped considerably.

These boards are 12 to 15 feet long by about 10" wide put athwartships over the weather gunwale with the inner end under the lee rail. One or two crew on the outer end of these boards acts as counterbalance to the force of the wind in the sails.

When the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Club was organized in 1885 under the leadership of Captain Morris, changes were made in racing procedure

1—Class races.

2—New form of starting.

The new method of starting was from a standing start, one at a time, accomplished by a disinterested party standing in waist deep water, holding each canoe until ordered released by the STARTER. With this new method, the excitement, bedlam and fancy language could not be enjoyed but the canoe to cross the finish line first was a real sure enough winner.

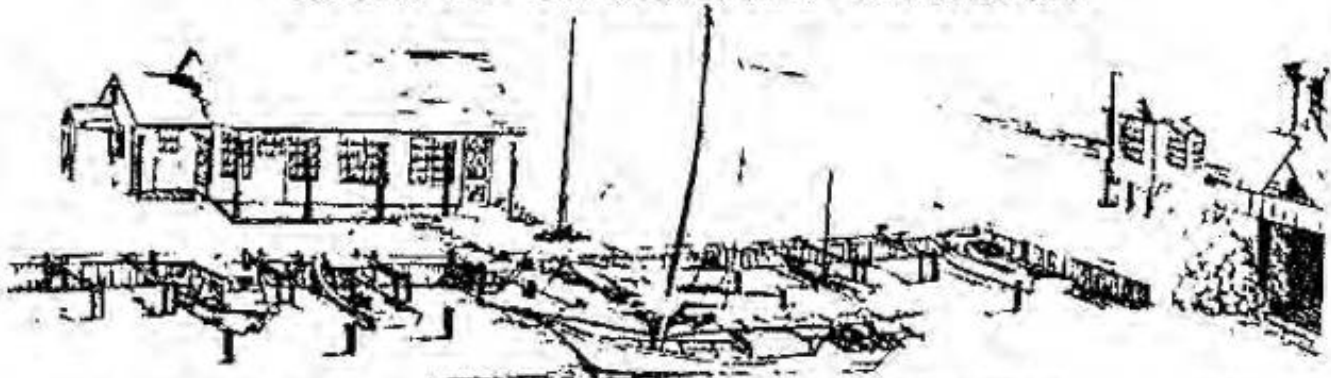
The "ISLAND BLOSSOM" won the first three races and won the Commodore Cup. Other canoes racing during this period were:

THE DASHAWAY 1877 by Robert Lambdin
MARY RIDER 1877 by James Lowry
THE MAGIC 1894 by Charles Tarr
MARGARET P. HALL by Charles Tarr
ISLAND BELLE 1891 by W. S. Covington
ISLAND BLOSSOM 1882 by W. S. Covington
BELLE M. CRANE 1897 by Greenbury Coffin
ISLAND BELLE 1891 by W. S. Covington

By 1903, there was very little interest in log canoes and racing was discontinued. Several clubs in 1910 along the Bay from Norfolk, Washington, Baltimore and Easton

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formed the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Club Racing Association in Easton in an attempt to revive canoe racing but with no success. Another attempt was made in 1921, also without results.

But in 1924, canoe racing resumed under the auspices of the young Miles River Yacht Club, with three boats participating, Island Bird, Sam and the Louise.

As the revival in canoe racing gained momentum, there was an intensive search for the canoes of yesteryear. Many of these canoes being raced today were not always so beautiful nor were they treated as the queens they are today for some have been retrieved from a creek bottom, some half sunken at docks, while others have been rotting away on blocks in back yards.

The racing canoes of today are practically the same design and construction as the old log canoes used by the oysterman. There is less deadrise and a little more beam in proportion to the length

which has added some stability or in other words are somewhat less delicate.

There have been changes to improve the rigging and sail. The masts are longer and the area of the sail has increased. There are additional tackle, battens in the leeches, long bowsprits, and springboards. In 1932, the new canoes had hollow masts with struts, shrouds and guys.

Racing log canoes is a lot of fun for those personally involved and it is also a good spectator sport for those who have followed the racing year after year. Then too there is considerable spectator excitement, if there is a good wind, as genuine acrobatics are required on the long spring boards under the press of canvas. Practically all crew members of each boat have had years of experience but the handling and maneuvering of these boats are tricky and the slightest delay in executing a maneuver or a small mistake results in the inevitable spill. It happens even to the best and most experienced crews.

I don't think a spring board position on the crew would be too attractive to an old man. There is no doubt about it to the contrary not withstanding LOG

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The crew? There is an outrigger jutting astern on which one crewman perches to help handle the main sheet, there are four or more on spring boards depending on the wind, there is a jib man, a fore sheet man, main sheet man, a skipper and a bail boy.

The board men hook one end of their spring board under the leeward gunwale then lay out on the opposite end over the windward side, as far out as required to balance the sail.

There is a heavy centerboard which adds stability but at times, the bail boy is busier than the proverbial one arm paper hanger.

Tacking is accomplished by a frenzied clatter of lumber as the boardmen rush to reset their boards on the opposite side. A crewman occasionally loses his balance and overboard he goes but by the rules of racing, he must be retrieved by the canoe before it finishes. When the race is close, the skipper crowds on sail, a very risky business especially if the wind is gusty. A kite is sometimes used, which is a small sail set at the fore-

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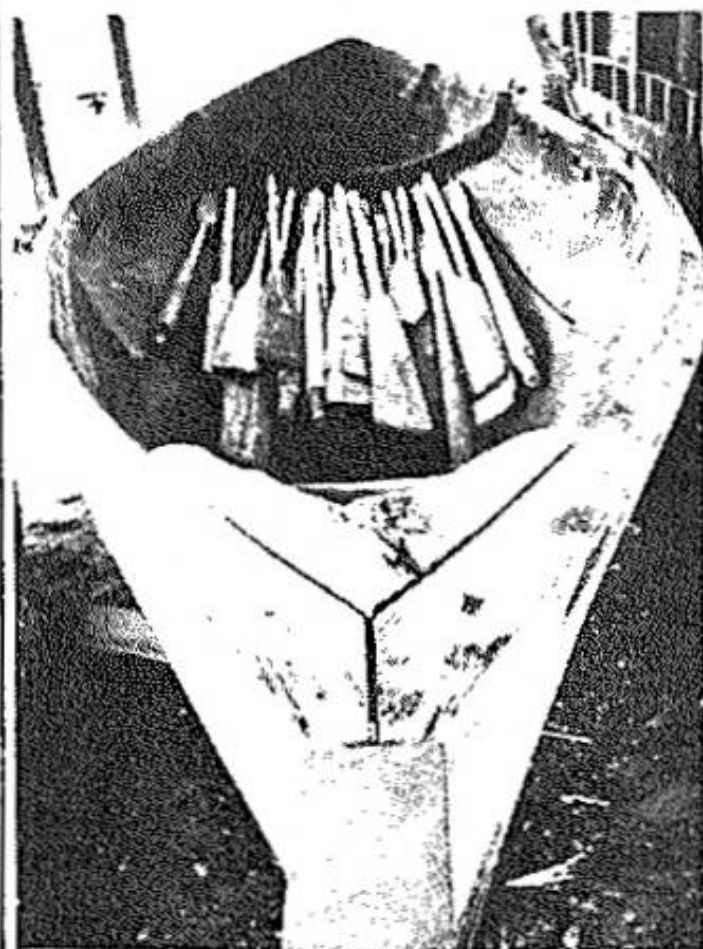
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few years ago and then they were conducted more or less by a committee of three. "Lock," as he is affectionately called, was a member of the Committee but the first thing he knew, he was running the races without benefit of the so called Committee. He is the OFFICIAL starter of each log canoe race and the official inspector to check the measurements of each canoe in each race.

He lays out the course for each race on a printed chart of the racing area and gives a copy to the skipper of each boat in the race to make sure the required course is understood.

The canoe crew prefer a good windward start, a run, and a good windward beat



An old Chesapeake Bay five-log canoe on display at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels.

back to the finish line. The wind doesn't always cooperate as it sometimes will drop out and change, requiring a run the
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entire race. The Skippers and crews aren't too pleased with such a course and to put it mildly as they pass the Committee boat, "Lock" is subject to a lot of heckling and "good-natured" abuse. But when the race is over, and the crews have come ashore, they do admit that they appreciated the attempt to lay out a good course and that the Committee boat has no control over the wind.

The first boat over the finish line is not always the winner as each boat carries a handicap which is deducted from her finish time. The winner is based on corrected time and so are second place, third place, etc., determined.

The Committee boat is quite important to the crews of the canoes in a race, not only for keeping time, but for the starting period.

The procedure used for canoe racing is as follows: Exactly to the second by using a stop watch, a small special cannon on board the Committee boat fires a blank ten minutes prior to starting time and at precisely the same instant, a white shape is run up to the yard arm. This is called the ten minute gun.

At precisely 30 seconds prior to the 5 minute gun, the white shape is hauled down which alerts the crew of all boats in the race that in 30 seconds the 5 minute gun will sound.

At exactly 5 minutes before the start of the race, the cannon is again fired and at the same instant, a blue shape is hoisted. At precisely 30 seconds before the starting gun is fired, the blue shape is hauled down.

At exactly 10 minutes, to the second, from the firing of the ten minute gun, the cannon is again fired to indicate the start of the race and at the same instant, a red shape is hoisted which remains up until every boat in the race crosses the finish line. A boat that has capsized is considered out of the race.

The cannon is fired when the first boat crosses the finish line irrespective of handicap.

The visual signals are quite important and the crews watch the shapes meticulously as the cannon sometimes misfires or it is not heard for a number of reasons which is the reason for the

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The Crisfield Hard Crab Derby has become a major attraction on the Eastern Shore. It is an event that has gained national recognition because it not only arouses the tourists' curiosity, but also is a display of "Shoreman" pride.

In 1946, the late Egbert L. Quinn, editor of the Crisfield Times, published an editorial stating that there were auto derbies, terrapin derbies, and horse derbies, so why couldn't there be a hard crab derby. His associate, the late Charles A. McClenahan, put these words into action. In 1947, Mr. McClenahan, with the help of the local American Legion Post, dumped a few hard shell crabs in a circle on Main Street. The crab which scurried to an outer circle first was declared the winner. Its owner was awarded a trophy.

Every year since the race of '47 the Crisfield Hard Crab Derby has grown with more attractions and exhibits. From that first few minutes race, the activities now span the Labor Day weekend. There are

street parades, boat parades, a beauty contest, a crab picking contest, a crab cooking contest, band concerts, drill team exhibitions, fireworks, and, of course the highlights of festivities, the crab race where over one hundred entries representing California, Hawaii, Alaska, and many other states are competing for the coveted Governors' Cup.

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precise timing of the movement of the shapes by the men on the Committee boat.

When the air is light to no air at all and it appears that there will be little progress in the race or there is an unexpected storm approaching, the Committee boat will cancel the race and the crews are so informed by hauling down the red shape. In addition to this visual signal, a patrol boat is dispatched to each boat in the race to verbally inform each skipper the decision the committee boat has made.

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