

The Dorchester Skipjack Committee

The Dorchester Skipjack Committee is the nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that owns and operates the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*. It is composed entirely of volunteers serving all administrative, crew and maintenance functions. Our mission is:

“To preserve and share Dorchester County’s skipjack heritage by:

- Owning a traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjack and operating it as a commercial vessel to (with) the highest standards of safety, professionalism, training and maintenance.
- Operating the boat to attract visitors, encouraging the participation of volunteers and developing and enhancing their appreciation for skipjacks and understanding of their role in the Eastern Shore’s maritime heritage and the Chesapeake Bay’s ecology.
- Preserving and sharing wooden boat building and maintenance skills as documented in the records from building the *Nathan of Dorchester* and as used in maintaining the skipjack”

All volunteers are members of the Dorchester Skipjack Committee. However, to be eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting, a member must have attended at least 25% of the regular business, special or annual meetings during the past 12 months or provided at least 25 hours volunteer service to the Committee in crew time, maintenance, marketing, administrative or other support areas.

Officers and Directors of the Committee are elected each year at the Annual Meeting in November by voting members. The Committee’s current Officers and Board Members are:

President	Ed Nabb	Member	Jim Leech
Vice President	Bud Marseilles	Member	John O’Reilly
Secretary	Lou Hyman	Member	Chris Smith
Treasurer	Dana McGrath		

Other Board Member positions and those currently serving are:

Captains Representative	Frank Newton
Crew Representative	Craig Caldwell
Builders Representative	Dan Cada
Nathan Foundation Representative	Ed Nabb
Boat Designer	Harold Ruark

Dorchester Skipjack Committee meetings are held once a month, at 5:30 p.m. on the first Thursday, at the Dorchester County Airport. All volunteers, crew, docents and trainees are welcome and encouraged to attend.

An email newsletter is sent out on a regular basis to all volunteers. There are links to the schedule, information on activities, and a list of sail crew and docents needed for upcoming charters and public sails. While we require a minimum of captain and three crew when sailing with passengers, our goal is to have a captain and four crew members on each cruise, plus a docent for public sails or when requested for charters.

The *Nathan* website is www.skipjack-nathan.org. It contains up-to-date information about the boat, schedules, rates and contacts, as well as photos of the skipjack and many of our activities. The mailing address for the Dorchester Skipjack Committee is P.O. Box 1224, Cambridge, MD 21613. The phone number for the DSC answering machine is (410) 228-7141.

A Brief History of Skipjacks

Oyster harvesting in the Chesapeake Bay originally was done by hand tonging from small workboats. Schooners from New York began dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay in the 1800s, following the depletion of oysters in Long Island Sound due to overharvesting. About 1865, Maryland passed a law permitting only Maryland citizens, and only in vessels under sail, to dredge in Maryland's Bay waters. This law was intended to eliminate outside interests from harvesting and temporarily reduced the fear of the depletion of Maryland's oyster population. The latter half of the 19th century was a boom time for oyster harvesting in the Chesapeake, with a record 15 million bushels being harvested in 1884. By 1900, more than 2000 oyster dredge boats are reported to have been working the bay. About 600 to 800 of them probably were skipjacks, but the number is uncertain.

The skipjack, now the state boat of Maryland, evolved in the late 1880s as oysters increasingly were harvested from the shallower beds. Skipjacks have a shallow v-shaped wooden hull with retractable centerboard. Dorchester County was a major boatbuilding center, and the first acknowledged skipjack, *Eva*, was built in Cambridge in 1883 not far from where the *Nathan* was constructed. The derivation of the name "skipjack" is murky, but may have come from the fish of the same name. Before 1930, the boat commonly was known as a "two-sail bateau." The skipjack proved easier and less costly to build, maintain and operate than other dredge boats. While many were built by the watermen themselves with few plans in backyard boatyards, most were constructed by professional boat builders. The design uses a basic ratio:

- A. The length of the boom = the length of the boat on deck
- B. The length of the bowsprit ahead of the stem = the width of the boat
- C. A + B = the height of the mast above the waterline

The large expanse of sail carried by these boats provided enough power to haul two full-sized dredges, while the shallow draft, low freeboard and hard chine hull provided a stable platform for dredging and allowed them to work oyster beds that deeper-draft dredgers, such as bugeyes, could not cover. The distinctive raked mast allows the center of effort to remain constant even when sails are reefed or shortened. The skipjack's pushboat or yawl boat provides engine power to get the boat out to the oyster beds quickly. Maryland oyster laws originally prohibited dredging under power. Hauling up the pushboat into the davits before dredging showed marine fishery police that the watermen were abiding by the rules. A 1966 law permitted dredging under power two days a week, originally Monday and Tuesday, but was amended in the 1990s to allow captains their choice of two days. Dwindling oyster harvest and political pressure from watermen with modern workboats led to the law being changed again so that today, any boat may dredge for oysters while under power.

The skipjack's dredging season extends from November through March. In the early days, skipjacks went out for weeks at a time, with buyboats offloading harvests and taking them to port for sale. By the 1950s, skipjacks would return home or to their working ports on weekends, but now they return to port each day. The crew consisted of a captain and four or five crew, including the all-important cook. The captain and cook typically slept in the captains' cabin, with the others sleeping in the forepeak. Oysters generally were piled and stored on deck, fore and aft of the rollers/winch assembly. A wood or coal-fueled stove provided hot, high-calorie meals of easily prepared foods such as soups, fried foods, coffee, molasses and beans. Payment was by shares, with the food bill taken off the top. One share went to the boat for maintenance and upkeep, one to the owner, and one divided among the captain and crew. In the early 1900s, many captains did not own the boat on which they worked.

The large fleet of skipjacks that once worked the Bay waters is now reduced to fewer than two dozen still alive, with only five or six dredging commercially each season. Skipjacks rarely dredge under sail today. Maryland's dredge boat fleet is the last remaining commercial sailing fleet in the U.S.

Emergency Procedures

Man Overboard Procedure:

- **Immediate:** Upon hearing the call of “Man Overboard to (Starboard/Port)!” the helmsman turns the boat sharply in the direction (starboard/port) of the person in the water to keep the prop clear of them. If under sail, a crewman starts the engine. The captain will designate particular crew to take the following actions and other tasks, as needed: A crewman throws the life ring with line attached as close as possible to the victim. A crewman points to the person overboard and continues pointing throughout the rescue, keeping within the helmsman’s sight but out of the helmsman’s line of sight of the victim. The helmsman or other crew member presses the man overboard button on the GPS. Passengers should be told to sit quietly away from the rails and the line of activity.
- **While returning to the victim:** If under sail, crew designated by the captain should quickly lower the sails and secure them minimally. Other crew members prepare for the rescue. Retrieve the rescue harness from where it is stowed in the head. The helmsman should tell crew well ahead of time on which side (starboard/port) of the boat the rescue will take place. The harness is secured to the cleat on the opposite side and laid out on deck in preparation for the rescue. Rescue crew should put on life vests and disengage the cables over the roller on the rescue side. A fender is secured onto the cleat on that side at a level with the rubrail to help prevent injury to the victim in hauling them aboard. Boat hooks are readied for reaching out to the victim. The first aid kit and AED should be retrieved from the cabin in case they are needed.
- **The rescue:** As the boat approaches the victim, the harness should be made ready for use. Using boat hooks to help reach the victim, the harness is then placed around the victim and under the arms. With one or more crewmen hauling on the harness line, other crew help pull the victim aboard over the roller. The victim should be checked to see what first aid may be necessary while other crew secure the cables and rescue equipment.

Fire Procedures

- Immediately maneuver the boat to minimize the effect of the wind on the fire.
- Notify the Coast Guard and other vessels in the vicinity at once. (Channel 16)
- Have crew and passengers don life vests and position passengers away from flames.
- Spray fire extinguishers at the base of the flames at once, for flammable liquid or grease fires. For other combustible materials, douse with water.
- If fire is in the engine space, shut off the fuel supply (under the small hatch amidships for the onboard diesel; under the starboard aft toe rail for the pushboat engine.) Discharge the fixed CO₂ extinguisher for an onboard engine fire (emergency pull is in main cabin on starboard side.)
- Cut off air supply to an internal, below-deck fire by closing hatches, ports and doors.

The *Nathan's* 2012 Season

The *Nathan's* public sailing season runs from late April to early November. April is generally set aside for preparing the boat and the crew for the season, including rigging, crew training and spring painting.

Individuals and groups may charter the boat at a cost of \$500 for two hours (pricing for longer or shorter trips also available). Crew members may charter the boat once each year at half the public rate. Public sails take place each Saturday the boat is in port, from 1-3 p.m. The cost is \$30 for adults, \$10 for ages 6-12, and kids under 6 free. There are one-hour Sunday sails once each month at 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., at \$15 for adults and \$7 for children. Reservations are recommended. There are also other local special events in which the boat participates with free or reduced-rate sails. This year, we will offer free sails on Memorial Day, Fourth of July and at the Dorchester Showcase on September 23rd.

In addition to the boat's local schedule, there are regular and special events throughout the Bay to which the skipjack travels. Her tentative 2012 schedule includes: (Dates of departure and return may be approximate.)

April 28	Oxford	Oxford Day
September 2-4	Deal Island	Skipjack Race
September 6-9	Baltimore	Defenders Day (transport War of 1812 reenactors)
September 22	Cambridge	Skipjack Race
October 5-8	Solomons Island	Patuxent River Appreciation Days

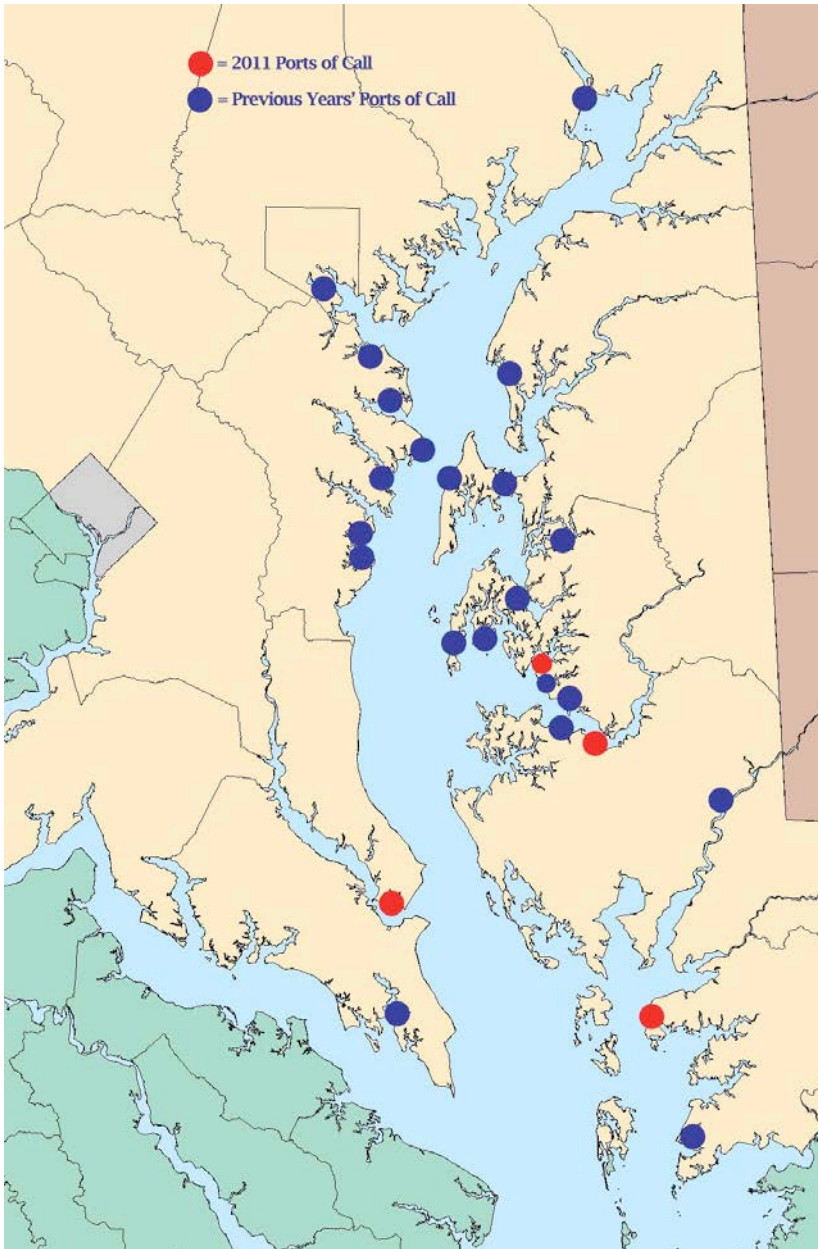
2011 Statistics:

Days Underway:	106		
Number of Passengers:	1938		
Passenger Trips:	117		
Number of Sail Crew, Docents, Trainees Participating:	34		
Number of Crew Days*:	673		
Average Number of Days Per Crew Member*:	20		
Median Number of Days Per Crew Member*:	13.5		
Distribution of Days Per Crew Member*:			
80+:	0	30-39:	0
70-79:	2	20-29:	7
60-69:	0	10-19:	8
50-59:	1	1-9:	13
40-49:	3		

*Includes captains, sail crew, docents and trainees participating on board

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Ports of Call



- Annapolis
- Baltimore
- Bay Bridge Marina
- Cambridge**
- Crisfield
- Deal Island**
- Dogwood Harbor
- Havre de Grace
- Horn Point
- Island Creek
- Knapps Narrows
- La Trappe Creek
- Magothy River
- Neavitt
- Oxford**
- Pickering Creek
- Rhode River
- Rock Creek
- Rock Hall
- Sandy Point
- St. Mary's
- St. Michaels
- Shady Side
- Solomons Island**
- Vienna

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Nathan Gear



Recommended Personal Gear

- Gloves (required)—sailing gloves or other leather-palmed gloves to prevent rope burns.
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Foul-weather gear—rain jacket and pants, boots—especially necessary for long-distance trips.
- Drinking water is provided, but crew members should bring any food or other drink they may require for their time on the boat.
- Overnight trips require a sleeping bag or other bedding, change of clothes and personal toiletries.

Nathan Gear

- *Nathan* Red Crew Shirts and Yellow Docent Shirts are available only to qualified crew and Committee members. Their cost is \$24 each. Replacements for regular crew due to wear while volunteering onboard are free.
- *Nathan* red t-shirts are \$15 for crew and trainees, \$20 to the general public.
- *Nathan* hats are \$15 for crew and trainees, \$20 to the general public. As with crew shirts, replacements due to wear onboard (within reason—hold on to your hat in the wind!) are free.
- *Nathan* windbreaker jackets are available to crew and Committee members only, at a subsidized cost of \$16.

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