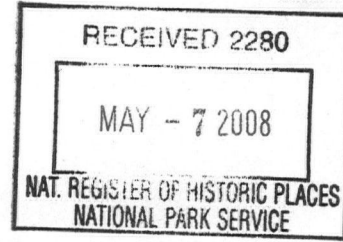


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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 catboat "Witch"

other names/site number "Gypsy," Crowninshield Design #149, "Wren"

2. Location

street & number 35 Lydia Island Road not for publication \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Wareham vicinity \_\_\_\_\_

state Massachusetts code MA county Plymouth code 023 zip code 02571

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.)

Brona Simon April 29, 2008

Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, State Historic Preservation Officer Date  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

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 certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ 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 the Keeper

Patricia Andrews

Date of Action

6/18/2008

Witch  
Name of Property

Plymouth, MA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

\_\_\_\_\_ building  
\_\_\_\_\_ sites  
\_\_\_\_\_ structures  
\_\_\_\_\_ objects  
\_\_\_\_\_ Total

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Catboat \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other Wood (cedar, mahogany, oak), bronze, brass,  
copper, steel, Dacron

**Narrative Description**

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

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 1

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### 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The *Witch*, a wooden catboat now named *Gypsy*, is one of four identical sailing vessels built in 1900 to the same design by nationally known naval architect Bowdoin Bradlee (B. B.) Crowninshield. Designed for recreational sailing and racing, the *Witch*, as originally constructed, had the following dimensions:

Length overall: 22 ft. 4 in.  
Length water line: 14 ft. 2 in.  
Draft: 1 ft. 6 in.  
Beam: 7 ft. 9 in.  
Forward overhang: 3 ft. 9 in.  
Area sails: 311 sf

The original contract, construction plans, specifications and performance calculations for *Crowninshield Design # 149* are held at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, MA, and provide a wealth of detail describing the vessels' characteristics. The boat was built on Cape Cod at the A.C. Howland Co. boatyard in Monument Beach, Bourne, MA, in the winter of 1900-01. The following description is informed by a study of the *Witch* and its plans and specifications performed by Maynard Bray, a noted marine engineer, historian and author.

The *Crowninshield # 149* is characterized by a "skimming dish" profile common to boats built between 1880 and 1905 under the influence of the Seawanhaka Rule. Seawanhaka, a "length-and-sail-area" rule favoring a short waterline, long overhangs, a large sail area, and a scow-like hull shape, was employed to confer a racing advantage.<sup>1</sup> Common to most catboats, the *Witch* has a centerboard rather than a fixed ballast keel; internal ballast in the form of lead was used to increase stability under sail. A balanced rudder shown on the original drawings is not in evidence. A sketch of the deck plan with the present deck hardware is included (see Appendix I).

The *Witch* has the graceful lines of an Edwardian design with a spoon bow, low freeboard, and long overhangs rising out of the water fore and aft. The hull is built of white cedar planks on a steam-bent frame of white oak. The sheer strakes (topmost planking on the sides of the hull) were replaced with cypress, and feature carved cove and scroll work. The hull is fastened with copper rivets, the most durable of all boat fasteners. The wedge-shaped deadwood below the keel is hard pine (longleaf yellow pine). The boat's backbone assembly and floor timbers

(continued)

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<sup>1</sup> The Seawanhaka Rule, named after the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club in New York tried to balance a boat's sail area with its length at the waterline, the two basic features that control the speed of a sailboat. Commonly used between 1890 and 1905, the Seawanhaka Rule was replaced by the Universal Rule in 1905. Thus, the Seawanhaka Rule had some modest influence in the design of *Crowninshield #149*.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 2

are of white oak, chosen for its strength, ability to hold fastenings, and durability. Spruce was used for the bilge stringers and deck beams (not including the four major beams of oak). Diagonal straps of steel were employed to keep the deck from wracking under the twisting force of the rig. Hackmatack (balsam poplar), harvested in right angles of "tension wood," was used for the boat knees. The original white pine deck was later replaced with marine plywood covered with canvas. The seats and bulkhead are mahogany.

Clear oak, steamed to the required oval shape, was originally used for the coaming, which rims the cockpit. Rounded aft coaming, rarely seen today, was common in sailing boats in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The oak coaming was later replaced with mahogany and was raised  $\frac{3}{4}$ " above the original for comfort.

The mast is Sitka spruce and when the boom was replaced, the original boom was used for the topmast of the owner's flagpole. The stainless steel stays include a bowsprit stay, a forestay, three stays each on the port and starboard sides of the mast, a jumper stay (at the top of the mast) and a back stay. The stays date from the installation of the present mast in 1960. Some have been replaced due to wear and damage.

The *Witch*, when catboat-rigged, featured a typical catboat deck plan. Currently, a three-foot bowsprit extends from the extreme bow. A chalk is located on either side of the bow. Aft the bow is a hatch, and between the hatch and the cockpit is the mast assembly. The mast rests in a bronze tabernacle behind a brass jib traveler. A plate holds fast each of the three stays on the port and starboard side decks. Aft the side stays are Genoa tracks and pairs of jib cleats. Just aft the rear coaming is a mainsail traveler. The *Witch's* stern features a ventilator opening, a rear stay tang, a deck cleat, and a flagpole holder. Originally, white pine was used for the flat transom; because pine does not hold fasteners well, the specifications called for "suitable cleats," or boundary pieces screwed to the transom's face.

On the basis of his investigation of the *Witch* and his own boat-building experience, engineer and marine historian Maynard Bray states with certainty that the boat was constructed in a manner typical of high-quality vessels of her size and type. Framing, planking, smoothing, caulking, and painting took place while the boat was supported upside down; the boat was turned over for the interior and deck work. Alternatively, the boat may have been built using a method employed at the nearby Crosby Yard at Osterville in which the backbone and frames were installed in the upright position, and the boat was then tipped from one side to the other while the planks were fitted and hung. Crowninshield's unusually detailed specifications and instructions provided guidance for *Crowninshield #149's* boat shop on particulars such as how to terminate the forward lower frame ends, and how to use a rosin-and-oil mixture to prevent water collection in bilge crevices. Three coats of paint or varnish were specified inside and out, and the bottom was to be painted in green copper paint.

(continued)

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 3

As designed, the *Witch* was a gaff-rigged catboat with an optional bowsprit and jib. A catboat, or cat-rigged sailboat, is a sailing vessel characterized by a single mast carried well forward, a wide beam, and traditionally gaff rigging. Although the *Witch* was converted to an aerodynamically efficient Marconi sloop sometime between 1939 and 1945, the original mast step for a cat rig was in place in the hull until the boat was renovated in 1976-77. Rare brass sail tracks were used, and the boat featured a unique centerboard-raising device and sail slides on the mast and boom. While sail slides were to become common later in the century, most boats of the period laced their sails to their booms and attached the sail luff to mast hoops.

Alterations made to the *Witch* since 1949, when the boat was acquired by its present owner Marjorie O'Brien, are well documented. Professional boat builder David Peterson, reporting on the vessel's condition in 2004, noted that changes prior to 1949 included replacement of a number of planks. In 1960, enhancing the advantage of the earlier conversion to the Marconi rig (ca. 1939 - 45), a taller mast made by Pigeon Spar Company was installed to provide a higher aspect sail; the old spar now serves as a flagpole. The centerboard and centerboard trunk were replaced in 1969. Extensive strengthening was undertaken during the winter of 1976-77 to enable the *Witch* to continue negotiating the choppy waters of Buzzards Bay. Seat risers were replaced with heavier hogging timbers, floor timbers were added near the present mast step and under the aft deck, and sister ribs were added to the hull. A double-planked transom was substituted for the original, which was moved to the boathouse for storage. Using recycled mahogany from the old seats where possible, the coaming was rebuilt and a foredeck hatch added. The seats were replaced with new mahogany and a new teak and mahogany cockpit floor was installed. A new plywood deck was installed, along with cockpit beams. A three-foot bowsprit, half the length of the optional one shown on Crowninshield's plans, was attached to allow for a light-wind Genoa. More recent changes include a new centerboard winch in 1989 and a two laminated sister ribs in 1994.

Despite these modifications, the *Witch* retains approximately 30-40% of its original material, including the keel, deadwood, clamp, bilge stringer, rudder, many floor timbers and ribs, and the bronze deck fittings. According to Peterson, it is in fair condition structurally and good condition cosmetically. When not being sailed, the *Witch* is stored in a shed on the property of owner Marjorie O'Brien on Lydia Island in Wareham, Massachusetts. It has been sailed in Buzzards Bay every summer but two from June 1949 through 2007.

During the sailing season (usually early June to early November), the *Witch*, now known as *Gypsy*, is docked at a private dock on the west shore of Lydia Island at 35 Lydia Island Road in Wareham. In the off-season, it is stored in a concrete and shingled boathouse (1978) on the west side of Lydia Island not far from the dock. The dock is built of steel beams set on concrete caissons. The floats, walkway, and gangway have a wood deck. The boathouse is constructed of a poured concrete base, concrete block and partial wood shingle sheathing and an asphalt shingle roof. The boathouse is 1½ stories with a loft to store the mast, boom and other nautical memorabilia. Built specifically to house the *Witch (Gypsy)*, it is 40 ft by 20ft. Frank O'Brien, brother of the current owner, designed both the dock and the boathouse. Neither is a part of the present nomination

(end)

Witch

Name of Property

Plymouth, MA

County and State

**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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/entertainment

Social history

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1901 - 1958

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

ca. 1939- 45 Marconi main & jib arrangement

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Bowdoin Bradlee (B.B.) Crowninshield

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

United States Department of the Interior  
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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 1

### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

The catboat *Witch*, a unique vessel that epitomizes the sport of recreational yachting at the turn of the century, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C, with significance at the local, state and national levels. The period of significance for the *Witch* extends from 1901 to 1958, which allows for the typical 50-year cut off. The boat is significant under Criterion A for its association with the social history of recreational sailing and racing in Massachusetts and the nation; its design and construction were strongly influenced by the boating trend spawned by the growth of summer communities on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The *Witch* is strongly associated with the history of American sailing through the innovative yacht design legacy of naval architect B. B. Crowninshield (of the family well-known for its eminence in the Salem-based China Sea trade), and the shipbuilding and marine merchant heritage of the *Witch's* first owners, the Howes family.

The *Witch* is significant under Criterion C for its distinctive catboat design characteristics and its exemplification of the one-design mode popularized at the end of the 19th century. Its physical characteristics are representative of the catboat type and method of construction, and demonstrate the work of a master boat designer. Its unique features reflect adaptation to the racing rules of the time and B.B. Crowninshield's reputation for designing handsome, innovative, race-worthy boats. The conversion from a gaff rig to a Marconi rig (ca. 1939-45) reflects an adoption of the latest sailing technology for racing yachts that had appeared in international sailing competition (the America's Cup) in 1930. This qualified the *Witch* to compete again on a par with the latest recreational racing boats. The *Witch* is also significant under Criterion C for its association with a distinguished naval architect from a powerful and influential family tied to the China Sea trade. The *Witch* may represent the oldest surviving B. B. Crowninshield boat design, and is one of the very oldest actively sailed yachts of any design in the United States. For over a century, the boat has served its original purpose, providing family recreational sailing. The *Witch* retains integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

#### Commission for the *Witch*

The *Witch's* design was commissioned in 1900 by Charles Henry Davis, a wealthy engineer and visionary transportation advocate who founded the National Highways Association. Davis and three of his summer neighbors on Bass River, in Yarmouth, Massachusetts, took delivery of the only four boats to be constructed from the one-class design drafted by naval architect B. B. Crowninshield. Davis was owner of the first catboat, *Hun*, and Osborne Howes II, a grandson of the founder of Howes and Crowell Shipping Company, received the *Witch* (known today as *Gypsy*). Two affluent Howes in-laws, the Donald and Henry families, owned the *Merwin* and *Flossie G.*, respectively. Notably, the four *Crowninshield # 149s* dated from the same year that Crowninshield's innovative *Independence* was built to defend the America's Cup.

A single contract (Design #149 in the Crowninshield Papers archived at the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA), served for all four vessels. The January 1901, agreement stated that the boat owner was to pay the boat builder, A.C. Howland & Co. of Monument Beach, the sum of \$375.00 for construction of a boat, per the Crowninshield plans and specifications. While it is difficult to state unequivocally which of the four boats made to Design #149 is the one named the *Witch*, the chain of ownership and other historical evidence make a convincing claim that the boat owned by Marjorie O'Brien was previously known as the *Witch*.

(continued)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "Witch"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 2

### Bowdoin Bradlee Crowninshield, Naval Architect

Naval architect Bowdoin Bradlee Crowninshield (1867-1948) was a member of the Salem family dynasty that gained wealth and prominence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as shipbuilders and merchants in the East China trade. Two vessels owned by B. B.'s great uncle George Crowninshield, Jr., are considered to be the first recorded yachts in America — the sloop *Jefferson* built in 1801, and the legendary hermaphrodite brig that replaced the *Jefferson* in 1816, *Cleopatra's Barge*. Son of Benjamin Crowninshield and born in New York City, B. B. Crowninshield moved with his family to Marblehead and grew up racing small craft on Massachusetts Bay with his brother, Francis. He was educated at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at Harvard and served in World War I as an ambulance driver. After initial ventures in real estate in Montana and then Boston, he started his marine design career in 1896 as a draftsman with John R. Purdon of Marblehead. Crowninshield left the firm the following year and established his own practice with a partner, John Tandy. For the balance of his career, Crowninshield was involved in a variety of marine-related activities, including design, construction, brokerage, insurance, and personnel and property management.

A prolific, innovative, and versatile designer, Crowninshield is best known for two vessels — the seven-masted schooner *Thomas W. Lawson*, the only seven-master ever built and the largest sailing vessel (385 feet) in the world when it was launched in 1902, and the 1901 America's Cup contender *Independence*. There are conflicting stories on the fate of the *Independence*. Crowninshield's *New York Times* obituary in 1948 reported that the owner of the *Independence*, financier Thomas W. Lawson, refused to comply with the entry rules for the race and was denied permission to compete; it was said that he later had the yacht destroyed. Another source stated that the vessel, although highly innovative, had numerous faults and suffered a series of mishaps that prevented it from winning the role of Cup Defender.

Crowninshield designed vessels of all types and sizes, including commercial, fishing, and racing schooners with a remarkable range of from two to seven masts. Among these, the cargo schooners *Hester* (1917) and *Luther Little* were built at the Crowninshield shipyard in Somerset, MA. They were familiar sights along the Wiscasset, ME, waterfront for 50 years. Other notable boats of his design included the Grand Banks fishing schooners *Tartar* and *Stranger*. Several models of Crowninshield's Gloucester "Grand Bankers" are on display at the Smithsonian Institution.

### Crowninshield's One-Design Boats

Crowninshield moved easily back and forth between the design of very large vessels and smaller craft. Concurrent with his work on larger vessels was a series of designs for smaller racing boats that indulged Crowninshield's own racing passion and burnished his reputation for designing competitive racers. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Crowninshield embraced the "one-design" boat trend that had swept the New York and Boston yacht clubs. *The Rudder* magazine reported in 1890 that the concept of building a number of boats off the same plan resulted in more democratic racing, where "it is the best man who wins" rather than the "one man, having outbuilt the fleet

(continued)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

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by having the longest pocketbook, [who]is always sure to win." The standardized approach was cost effective, requiring only a single designer, a single builder, and a single mold. One-design racers allowed a group of friends, such as Charles Henry Davis and his neighbors, to come together and agree upon a type of boat, its particulars, price, and delivery schedule.

B. B. Crowninshield created numerous one-designs in addition to the *Witch*'s Design # 149. His highly original knockabout (a small sloop with a mainsail, jib, and keel, but no bowsprit), *Mongoose*, gained notoriety by racing its way to the class championship in 1898. The following year, the raceabout (a small sloop with the keel of a knockabout but with finer lines and more sail) *Pirate* was described by *The Rudder* magazine as the most accomplished design of its type. In 1908, Crowninshield designed #318, later known as the Dark Harbor 17 ½, for the Manchester Yacht Club. The initial batch of 12 boats built off Design #318 in 1909 increased to a Dark Harbor class fleet of 100 by the 1930s. In contrast, only four boats were built to the Camden knockabout one-design of 1914. Indulging his own racing habit, and cognizant of the value of publicity, Crowninshield continued to race the boats of his creation long after his reputation was firmly established.

### A.C. Howland Company/R. Bigelow Company Boatyard

The *Witch* and its three companion boats were built at the A.C. Howland Co. boatyard of Monument Beach, Bourne, MA, in the winter of 1900 - 01 during, or just prior to, transfer of the yard's ownership to Reuben Bigelow. Bigelow, a fourth-generation boat builder from Nova Scotia, purchased the boatyard sometime in 1901 after a fire damaged the facility. Before Bigelow purchased the yard, he had worked for Howland and had in all probability bought into the business. Building on the equity of the respected Howland name, the yard continued to be known as the A.C. Howland Co. boatyard for a time after the transition.

Reuben Bigelow's great-grandson, Michael Bigelow, speculated in 2005 that the growing popularity of recreational small-craft yachting among affluent summer residents on the Bay attracted Reuben to Monument Beach. The demand for pleasure craft, and catboats in particular, was sufficient at the turn of the century to support five boat builders at Monument Beach, including A.C. Howland, C.C. Hanley, W.W. Phinney, and Frederick Dunn. Catboats were Reuben Bigelow's specialty, although his yard produced top-quality class boats, sloops, and work boats. One of the most famous was the 60-foot schooner *Nina*, a racing yacht built in 1928 that won the Queen of Spain's Cup, the British Fastnet Race, and a 625-mile race from Newport to Bermuda.

The design of the popular and enduring Wenaumet "Kitten" catboat is attributed by differing sources to either Reuben Bigelow or his son, Cecil. The R. Bigelow Boatyard turned out 86 of the one-design racers, which in a 1995 newsletter of the Bourne Historical Society were reported to be "still very much a favorite for the class racing at local yacht clubs as well as being ideally suited for pure pleasure in the usual southwest breeze of Buzzards Bay." In 2002, Berkshire Wooden Boats was licensed to produce traditional Wenaumet Kittens on the Bigelow form.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 4

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Business at the Bigelow yard continued to grow after Reuben's death in 1933, and the operation was led successively by his son Cecil, grandson Myron, and great-grandson Michael. The shop was moved to Phinney's Point in 1954 after suffering virtual destruction by Hurricane Carol; most of its business records, photographs, and models were lost in the hurricane's 15-foot tidal surge. The boatyard moved again in 1963 to MacArthur Boulevard, where it operated until 2004. According to the yard's last owner, Michael Bigelow, the advent of fiberglass in the 1950s substantially reduced the demand for wooden boats. Of the five boat builders at Monument Beach in 1900, only the Bigelow yard existed in 2004. By the mid-1990s, most of the boatyard's work was in hauling and repair, although boats were still built on request. Ironically, the *Witch* was stored at the R. Bigelow Co. yard from about 1969 until 1975 by owner Marjorie O'Brien, who at the time had no idea of the connection between the yard and the catboat's early years.

### Recreational Sailing in New England

When Osborne Howes II acquired the *Witch* in 1901, his family and neighbors were participants in a nationwide phenomenon – enthusiasts engaging in one of many activities newly possible for a burgeoning class of Americans for whom leisure time had become a reality. For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, middle-class Americans worked six days a week and kept a strict Sabbath. Recreational activities required time, a commodity that was not available until industrialization and the end of the Civil War created a new work/play paradigm. According to historian Llewellyn Howland, the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed scores of "social, athletic, cultural, and educational organizations coming into being throughout the United States in response to the ambitions and demands of a newly empowered middle- and upper middle-class."

Numerous sailing clubs were established in this period, including the Eastern Yacht Club, formed on Boston's North Shore in 1870 by dissidents from the venerable New York Yacht Club. Eastern Club racing rules required boats of 30 or more feet in length, leaving smaller craft out of the field. The Beverly Yacht Club was founded in 1872 by an Eastern Club member expressly to provide a venue for smaller racers. Beverly had members from both the North and South Shores and popularized small-boat bayside sailing. It ran its first union race in 1879 in Buzzards Bay off Monument Beach, where breezes were reliable and catboats were already popular.

In 1885, a group led by C.H. Foster and Benjamin Crowninshield (father to B. B. Crowninshield) organized the Corinthian Yacht Club in Marblehead for boats between 16 and 30 feet at the waterline. Like predecessor Corinthian clubs in other parts of the country, the club's objectives were to advance the design of small boats and to promote racing by amateurs who sailed without a paid crew. The name "Corinthian" means a fan of amateur sports, especially a yachtsman, and may refer to the sailing tradition of ancient Corinth. Within a short time of its founding the club had hosted many important small boat races, and had contributed significantly to the dramatic rise of amateur small boat racing on the East Coast. During the early 1900s the club introduced Marblehead Race Week, a full week of racing that drew sailors from around the country and endures today.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "Witch"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 5

When affordable internal combustion engines became available to small craft owners at the turn of the century, yachting completed its transformation from a sport of the elite to one accessible to Americans of more modest means. Historian Howland noted that Thomas Fleming Day, founding editor of *The Rudder* magazine, helped popularize the sport with a series of how-to articles and inspiring narratives of cruises made by amateur sailors in command of their own boats. The sudden proliferation of affordable one-design boats at the turn of century was a natural corollary to the Corinthian phenomenon.

The enjoyment and influences of recreational small-boat sailing and racing were relatively fluid along the East Coast. This phenomenon went hand in hand with the advent of summer colonies, summer hotels, and summer vacations that lasted the entire season. City dwellers who could afford it relocated to the shore for the summer. Escaping the heat, unsanitary conditions, and exposure to diseases prevalent in the summer, families would remain at the shore while the men commuted on the weekends, often by boat. While relatively homogeneous with respect to social class (and income), these East Coast summer colonies and resorts did encourage the intermingling of people with similar interests from other states and cities. The yacht clubs on Cape Cod by and large consisted of summer transplants. Thus, designers, boat owners, and competitors were familiar with one another's work and accomplishments.

During the 1880s and 1890s, catboat racing flourished, especially around Cape Cod and New York. Prior to this time, the catboat was familiar as a working boat used by local fishermen. Its ability to navigate the shallow waters of the Cape and to handle the choppy waters of Buzzards Bay meant it was well adapted to the local conditions. As a result, it proliferated on Cape Cod as a recreational boat as well. Its stability and simplicity also made the catboat popular from the East to the West Coast. The *Witch*, *Hun*, *Merwin*, and *Flossie G.* exemplified the era when the smaller recreational catboat was popular. They each entered races at the Wianno Yacht Club in their first several years, competing against each other informally as well as at other venues. The *ad hoc* Bass River Yacht Club staged regular Saturday catboat races beginning in the mid-1890s. The Bass River class grew from three or four boats to a large fleet that had to be handicapped due to the differences in length and the number of sails. The proximity of the several Monument Beach boat builders to the Beverly Yacht Club on Wing's Neck and many other summer sailing clubs on the Cape were thought to further popularize the catboat.

According to the history of the Bass River Yacht Club, "There was steady racing with several classes until 1910. Charles H. Davis in this period had such famous boats as the beautiful sloops '*Atilla*', '*Hun I*', '*Hun II*', '*Kentonia*'... " (all of which were designed by B. B. Crowninshield). As in the case of the other one-design boats gaining popularity with racers, the *Crowninshield* #149 reduced the variables, thus making sailboat racing a test of skill. Inter-club sailing brought the competition of small-boat racing to the next step. The yacht clubs and informal races offered the opportunity to sail against a larger field of competitors. Charles H. Davis, it appears, was keen on competing as he won a race he skippered aboard *Hun* at the Riverside Yacht Club on Long Island Sound on July 7, 1907. Despite all of the interest, as well as organizational, social, and recreational institutions emerging to support this new pastime of the middle class, there were understandable declines in recreational sailing and racing during the two World Wars as well as during the Great Depression. These periods also saw fewer new commissions for yacht designers; however, interest still grew between these periods.

(continued)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

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Outgrowths of the enthusiasm for Corinthian sailing were summer sailing camps, which populated the Cape in the first half of the 20th century. In Chatham, there was Avalon Sailing Camp. Orleans claimed 14 camps between 1905 & 1988, including Namequoit (opened 1925), Owaissa (opened 1909; later renamed Camp Tonset), Viking (opened 1929), Pleasant Bay (opened 1938), Sealore and Seamaid (both opened in the 1930s). Some of these closed by the end of World War II, but others survived until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cape Cod Sea Camps (founded 1922) are still operating in Brewster. A large summer sailing camp on Mashnee Island (closed by 1941) used a ramp alongside the Bigelow Boat Yard to come ashore, implying a likely connection between the two. In addition to teaching sailing, the camps promoted competitive sailing among the camps, correlating to similar junior sailing programs at the yacht clubs.

### The *Witch*'s Career with the Howes

Osborne Howes II (1877-1934), who in 1900 partnered with two Howes family in-laws and Charles H. Davis to acquire one of the four sister catboats built to Crowninshield's Design #149, was the grandson of Osborne Howes I. Osborne Howes I (1806-1893) was a sea captain, shipping merchant, and ship owner who acquired considerable wealth in the era of the China Sea trade. Howes co-founded the Howes & Crowell shipping company in Boston with his brother-in-law, Isaiah Crowell. The firm was known for its collection of fine clipper ships and its innovative ship sail designs.

Osborn Howes (1846-1907) was a lawyer, merchant, editor of the *Boston Herald* newspaper, and Japanese Consul. His son, Osborne Howes II, was a stockbroker and possible owner of a seat on the Boston Stock Exchange. Howes acquired the *Witch* soon after his graduation from Harvard in 1901. Married to Mildred Cox at age 32 in 1909, he was father to two adopted daughters. In 1912 Howes purchased the new 90-foot houseboat/yacht *Santanta*, which was sailed by his family in New England waters in the summer and Florida in the winter. The *Santanta* is active today as an excursion/dinner cruise vessel on the Panama Canal.

The Howes family lived in Brookline, Massachusetts and owned a summer home, dubbed "The Witch House," in Yarmouth, on Cape Cod. Seventeen-year-old Gretchen Howes (b. 1884), one of Osborne Howes II's three siblings, kept a diary during the summers of 1901 and 1902 that is rich with text and photographic references to the *Witch*. An exuberant account of summer life on the Cape, the diary (also named "The Witch House") recorded the comings and goings of relatives and friends and described their activities, including swimming contests, pianola evenings, tennis matches, "rough houses," and sailboat racing.

(continued)

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Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

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The *Witch* and her frequent interfamily races figured prominently in the summer activities of Gretchen, her siblings, and cousins. In 1901, the *Witch*'s first sailing season, diarist Gretchen writes of the hapless boat's misfortunes and rare wins:

Sunday, June 30<sup>th</sup>: Took out the *Witch* – and accident No. 1 occurred – her centerboard escaped through the bottom – Howsey [Osborne Howes II] came and rescued it.

Monday, July 1: Accident No. II: We broke the *Witch*'s boom! – and were towed up river by *Dolly*!

Wednesday, July 3: The *Witch* is reballasted, and sails better – which is a great success in spite of thundershowers.

Thursday, July 4: The Donalds win the race, with Gordon, Malcolm and Hallowell Gardiner as crew. Accident No. III – the *Witch*, with Ken at the helm, Howsey tending sheet, and Gretchen grasping the centerboard rope, comes in last. Each of the crew has his (or her) explanation of how it all happened, and needless to say, each is wholly different from the others.

Friday, July 5: The *Witch* sails mighty well, and holds her own with the *Hun*.

Saturday, July 13<sup>th</sup>: The Donalds win the race again: we came in about a minute behind.

Sunday, July 14: A good wet race in the morning, in which we took our usual place.

Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup>: The *Witch* has a private race with the *Merwin*, and beats her.

Saturday, July 20: After setting the pace for the other boats, in the race, we content ourselves with the third place.

Tuesday, Aug. 6: Johnny Picket brings the *Witch* in last in the "professional race." The *Merwin* is disabled, but the *Hun* comes in first. We all follow in the launch.

Saturday, Aug. 17<sup>th</sup>: Great open race at Wianno – boats all came B.R.B. at 6 o'clock and race to the Wianno pier. The *Hun* wins, and the *Witch* comes second. We follow later in the *Amadee*. The race is very pretty -- even though the *Witch* did come in last in her class.

Although most of the *Witch*'s races during the summers of 1901 and 1902 were informal contests with the three other catboats, the *Merwin*, *Hun*, and *Flossie*; several diary entries and other references mention their participation in larger races at Wianno and Osterville. Frequent scheduled open races at Wianno and Hyannisport were run by the unofficial Bass River Yacht Club, a racing center that was organized in 1896 but operated without a formal charter until 1931.

(continued)

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The Wianno Yacht Club's clubhouse and dock were in place at least by 1903, as documented by a postcard from that year. Wianno purchased The Cotocheset House (a hotel) in 1916 to provide lodgings for its members. Today it serves as the clubhouse. The former Osterville (formerly known as Oysterville) Yacht Club building, moved in 1931 to its present location in West Bay, is also seen in a Wianno postcard, in the year of the move, the Osterville Yacht Club members becoming members of the Wianno Yacht Club.

The Howes family kept the *Witch* until about 1926, when it was sold to Ted Frothingham, owner of the "Ship Shore" marina on Bass River. He sold it a year later to Edward Barus, a Howes relative and an employee of the Crosby Yacht yards in Osterville. The *Witch* sailed on Lewis Bay and was reportedly heavily damaged in the 1938 hurricane; it is likely that its conversion to a Marconi sloop rig occurred while storm repairs were being made. Adoption of the Marconi rig, with a taller, triangular sail, continued to make the *Witch* competitive. Beached for several years, she was eventually sold to an unidentified Boston owner around 1940-41. Presumably the Boston owner was the John P. Foley who sold the *Witch*, then named the *Wren*, to the O'Briens in 1949 and reported that the boat had come from Cape Cod about 10 years earlier.

### Marconi Rig

The *Witch's* change to a Marconi rig ca. 1939-45 corresponded to the latest in sailing technology, which held that the Marconi rig (so named for its need for multiple stays, which reminded some of Guglielmo Marconi's radio towers) was the optimal design as compared to the gaff rig for close-haul sailing (sailing upwind). Early adoption of the Marconi rig for racing included the Herreshoff S-Class boats. Designed by Nathaniel G. Herreshoff in 1919, they were introduced in 1920 and quickly became a favorite. Talk of converting existing racing yachts from gaff rig to a Marconi rig appeared at the same time. In 1919 there was discussion that the *Resolute* (also a Herreshoff design), built to defend the America's Cup in 1914, was going to be changed to a Marconi rig in time for the 1920 America's Cup race,<sup>2</sup> the 1914 race having been postponed due to WWI. While *Resolute* won the 1920 America's Cup against the contending *Shamrock IV*, it did so with a gaff rig. The changeover did appear at the 1930 America's Cup contest, which featured J-Class boats with a Marconi rig.

The Marconi rig's triangular main sail is easily distinguished from the four-sided gaff-rigged sail. Among its advantages for recreational sailing, the Marconi rig weighed less, it was easier to hoist and drop the mainsail with no gaff to hoist, it was easier to reef with a shorter boom that did not extend out past the stern, and it could be sailed under the mainsail alone when conditions were breezy or for simplicity. The advantages for racing were universally accepted. The sailing communities in both the United States and Great Britain believed that the Marconi design was aerodynamically superior to the gaff rig, and therefore it became the preferred design for racing. Wind tunnel tests and racing results in many classes confirmed this hypothesis, followed by the widespread adoption of the newer rig. It was shown that in light winds, the tall, narrow sail on a taller mast characterized by the Marconi rig gathered in more brisk winds aloft than found at the ocean surface.

Additional research may reveal details of the sailing and racing career of the *Witch* after 1905. The *Witch* continued to serve for recreational sailing and occasional racing on the Bass River and farther east to

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<sup>2</sup> "Cup Defender May Use Marconi Rig" New York Times Oct. 12, 1919. p. 102.

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Catboat "*Witch*"  
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Osterville. Its early association with the Wianno Yacht Club is documented in the Regatta "Committee Minutes of the Wianno Yacht Club 1901 to 1905," and its informal recreational exploits are found in the diary of Gretchen Howes from 1901 to 1902. The documentation verifies that the four *Crowninshield* # 149s commonly competed against each other and with other boats officially and unofficially, and at various times with amateurs and professionals at the helm. It also suggests that the *Witch* was sailed frequently in its early years. Through most of the 1920s, it seems that the Howeses and their son-in-law, Mr. Taylor, may have used the *Witch* less frequently.

In the second half of its first century, the *Witch* has continued to be a privately owned sailboat. From 1950 through the 1990s its owner, Marjorie O'Brien, has generously invited neighbors and children from the local community to go sailing. There are many instances of three generations of families from the Onset Bay area that had their initial and repeat experiences in sailing aboard the *Witch* and learned some basic sailing methods. Through this and Marjorie O'Brien's practice of sailing throughout the summers, the *Witch* has become a familiar nautical landmark in the Onset Bay area and has been remarked by many passersby onshore and on the water. During this period, the *Witch* (now *Gypsy*) has traveled frequently to Martha's Vineyard and infrequently to other ports such as Newport, RI, and Nantucket.

The Howeses most likely berthed their *Crowninshield* # 149 at Osborne Howes' dock on the Bass River, as shown in an early photograph. When the *Witch* was sold to Ted Frothingham ca. 1926-28, it is assumed that the *Witch* was berthed, stored, and moored at his marina. Edward Barus, another Howes in-law and the third boat owner ca. 1932-34, most likely kept the boat near Osterville. Barus was said to be the foreman at the Crosby boatyard. The next owner, thought to be Mr. Foley (who changed the name to *Wren*), stated upon selling it in 1949 that it had come up from Cape Cod about 10 years earlier. The *Witch* was purchased by Frank P. O'Brien from Mr. Foley in June 1949 as a graduation present for his daughter Marjorie M. O'Brien, the current owner. From 1949-1973, the *Witch* was moored at the family's private mooring just west of Lydia Island, except for the summers of 1955 and 1956. Since 1973, it has been docked in the summers at the family dock on the west side of Lydia Island. During the winters of 1958-1960, the *Witch* was stored ashore at Lydia Island, during the winters of 1961-1962 it was stored at the Marion Boat Yard, at the Jaynes Boat Yard (now OBM) in Onset the winters of 1963-1964, and at Bigelow's Board Yard, Bourne, from 1965-1976.

It cannot be stated with certainty that *Gypsy* was originally the *Witch*, but it is unlikely that it was either the *Hun* or the *Flossie*. The *Hun* had a lead keel added to the hull in 1901 and can be excluded; *Flossie* lacks photographs or anecdotal mention after 1908. The possibility that *Gypsy* might have been the *Merwin* is tenuously supported by the fact that when the catboat was purchased, "Wren" appeared on the stern in unusual half-rounded metal letters that might have been recycled from "Merwin." A member of the Donald family, owners of the *Merwin*, recalled that it had also been fitted with uncommon half-round letters; *Merwin*'s later history has been lost.

(continued)

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Catboat "*Witch*"  
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At the turn of the century, wooden boats were considered to have a lifespan of 12 to 15 years. A wooden boat exceeding a century in age is highly unusual, and an impossibility unless the craft has been assiduously maintained. The *Witch*'s first owner was a family of devoted sailors who, according to relative Ann Taylor (Howes) Maxtone-Graham, "lavished attention on it." Subsequent owners were associated with the boatyard or boat-building trades, and the current owner has kept the *Gypsy* seaworthy for 57 years. Its very survival and its soundly documented history and owner chain strongly support *Gypsy*'s former identity as the *Witch*.

(end)

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Catboat "Witch"  
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(continued)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "Witch"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

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(continued)

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Catboat "*Witch*"  
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(end)

Witch  
Name of Property

Plymouth, MA  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References** See continuation sheet.  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

**USGS Quadrangle:** Onset, MA

1.            361840            4621680  
  Zone 19     Easting            Northing

2.  
  Zone            Easting            Northing

3.                                                                    
  Zone            Easting            Northing

4.                                                                    
  Zone            Easting            Northing

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description** NA  
(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 Lynn Smiledge, Frank E. O'Brien, with Leslie Donovan, and Betsy Friedberg, NR Director

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date April 2008

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

**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 Marjorie O'Brien

street & number 35 Lydia Island Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Wareham state MA zip code 02571

**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

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

Section number 10 Page 1

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### Geographical Data

Boundary Description: The listing entails one catboat originally named the *Witch* (now the *Gypsy*). The boundary of the vessel is all of that area enclosed within its extreme dimensions, as follows:

Length overall: 22 ft. 4 in.

Length water line: 14 ft. 2 in.

Draft: 1 ft. 6 in.

Beam: 7 ft. 9 in.

Forward overhang: 3 ft. 9 in.

Area sails: 311 sf

Boundary Justification: The *Witch* (now the *Gypsy*) is listed at the property where it has been owned and from which it has been sailed since 1949, at 35 Lydia Island Road, Wareham, Massachusetts.

(end)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Catboat "*Witch*"  
Wareham (Plymouth), MA

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: Frank O'Brien, 2004-05

- 1 "Witch" at her mooring
- 2 At dock, view of deck and bow sprit
- 3 On trailer, view of bow
- 4 On trailer in boathouse, view of stern
- 5 Under the deck, looking toward the bow
- 6 Under the starboard seat, looking toward the bow
- 7 Under sail, view toward stern with owner

### HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS FROM COLLECTION OF MARJORIE O'BRIEN

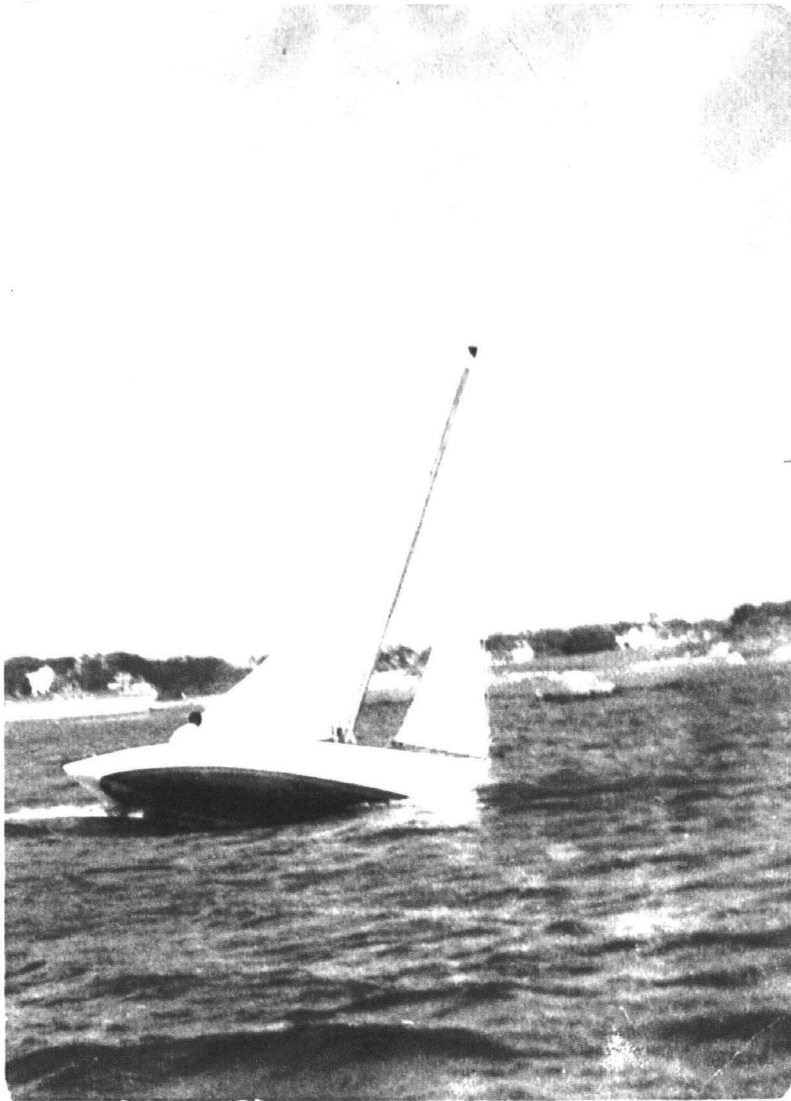
1. 1920s. Woman is Gretchen Howes Waldo, whose diary entries are quoted in Section 8.
2. 1920s. Young girls fishing from the "*Witch's*" gaff.
3. Early 1950s. With wire-fix terrier "Skipper" at base of mast.
4. 1951 Shown with catboat mast and Bermuda rig.
5. Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. "*Witch*" is in background.



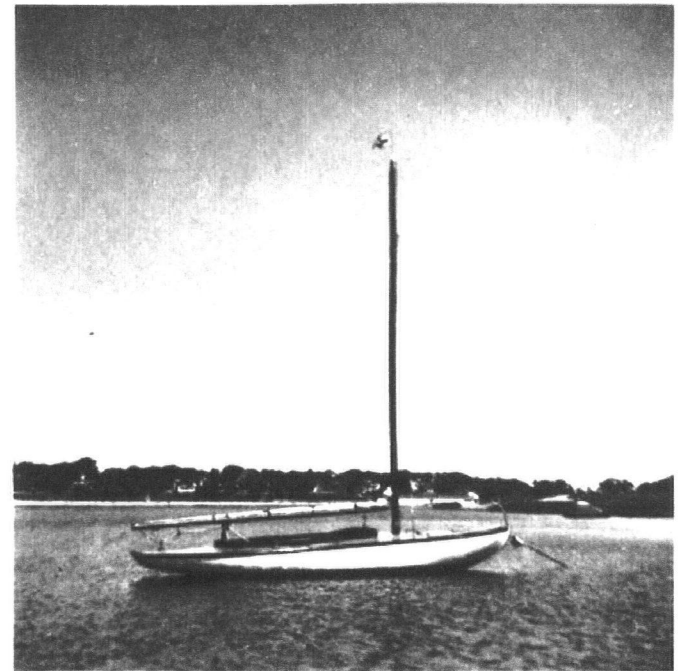
1. 1920s. Woman is Gretchen Howes Waldo, whose diary entries are quoted in Section 8.  
(Collection of Marjorie O'Brien)



2. 1920s. Young girls fishing from the "Witch's" gaff. (Collection of Marjorie O'Brien)



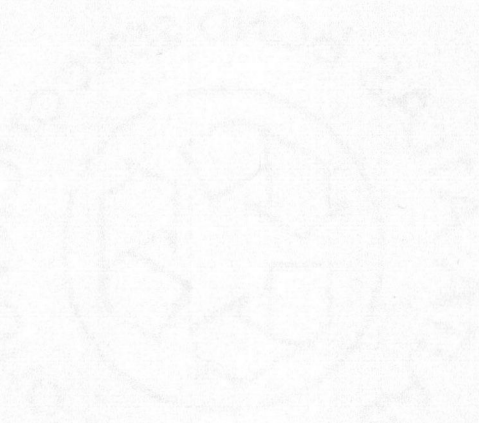
3. Early 1950s. With wire fox terrier "Skipper" at base of mast.  
(Collection of Marjorie O'Brien)



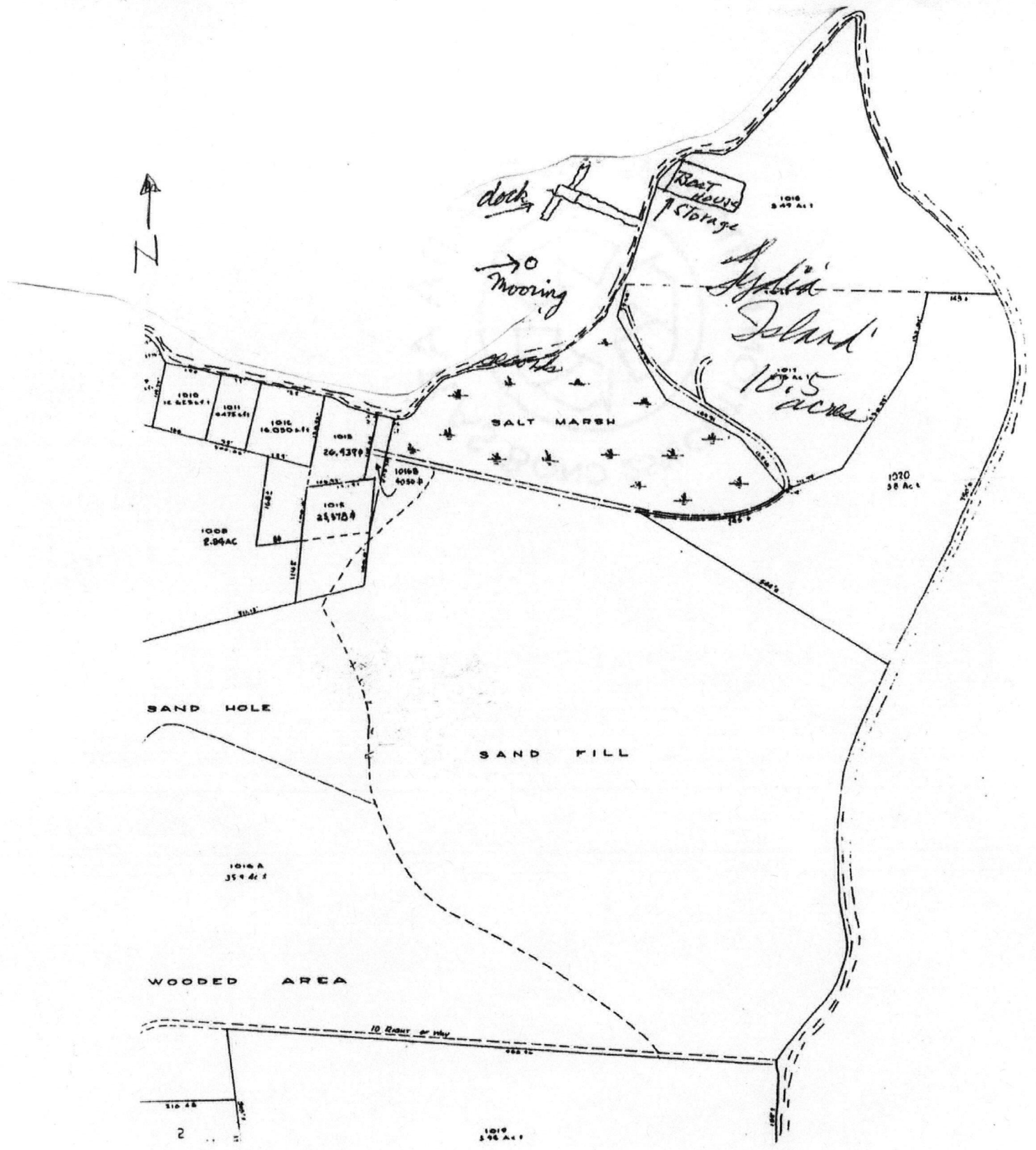
4. 1951 Shown with catboat mast and Bermuda rig.  
(Collection of Marjorie O'Brien)



5.. Early 20th Century. "Witch" is in background. (Collection of Marjorie O'Brien)







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY WITCH (catboat)  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Plymouth

DATE RECEIVED: 5/07/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/23/08  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/07/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/20/08  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000533

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 6/18/2008 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Extremely rare surviving example of an early 20th century (1901) recreational racing yacht once common on American coasts. See Kevin Foster's email comments (chief, NPS National Maritime Heritage Program) on significance and historic integrity.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A&C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 6/18/2008

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



At her mooring  
Frank O'Brien photo, 2004-05  
"Witch"  
Wareham, Plymouth County, MA  
Photo No. 1



Frank O'Brien photo, 2004-05

at dock, view of deck and bow spit

"Witch"

Wareham, Plymouth County, MA

Photo No. 2



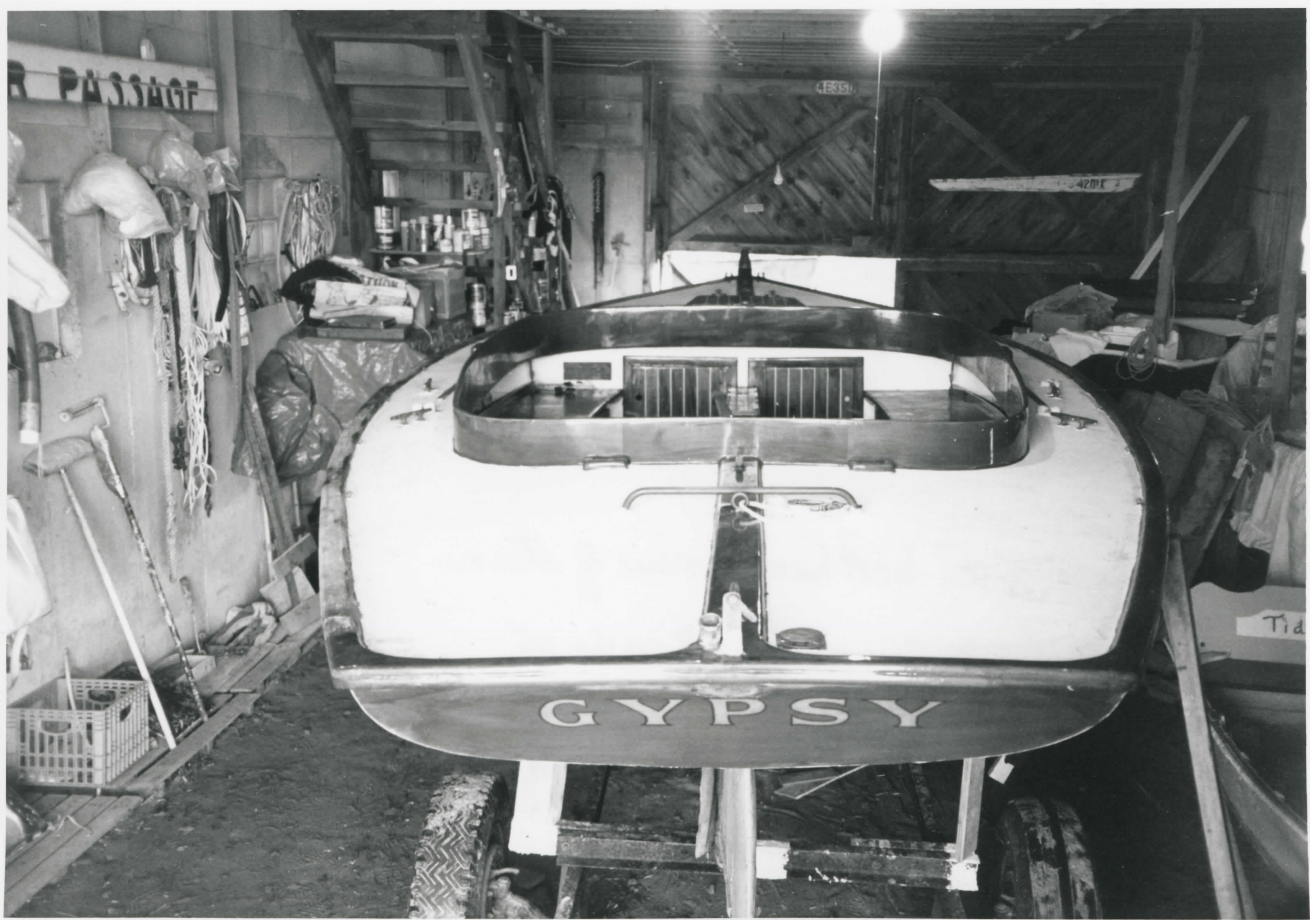
on trailer, view of bow

Frank O'Brien photo 2004-05

"Witch"

Wareham, Plymouth County, MA

Photo No. 3



GYPSY

Tid

PASSAGE

CESSY

420E

on trailer in boathouse, view of stern  
Frank O'Brien photo, 2004-05

"Witch"

Wareham, Plymouth County, MA

Photo No. 4



under the deck, looking toward the bow

Frank O'Brien photo 2004-05

"Witch"

Wareham, Plymouth County, MA

Photo No. 5



under the starboard seat, looking toward  
the bow

Frank O'Brien photo

"Witch"

Wareham, Plymouth County, MA

Photo NO. 6



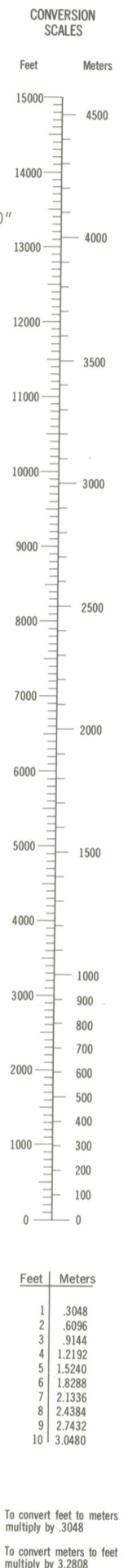
under sail, view toward stern with owner

Frank O'Brien photo

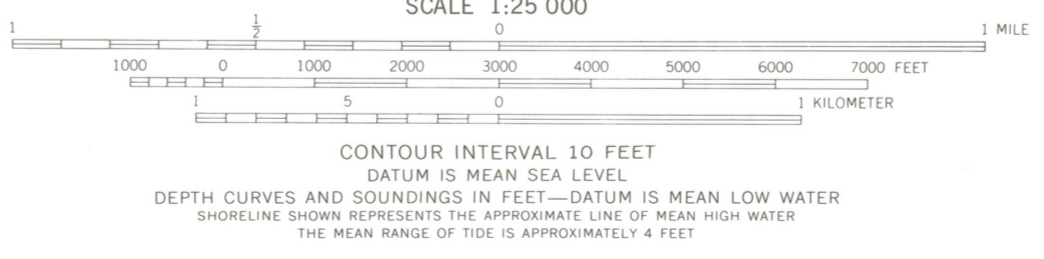
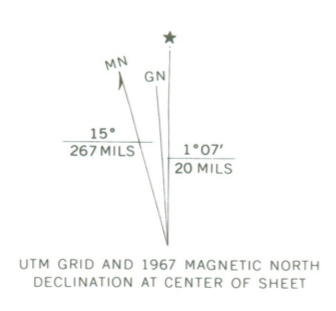
"Witch"

Wareham, Plymouth County, MA

Photo No. 7



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Topography by planetable surveys 1936. Revised from aerial  
photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967.  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Chart 260 (1965)  
and Chart 251 (1966). This information is not intended for  
navigational purposes.  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,  
zone 19  
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information furnished  
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works



Primary highway, all weather, Light duty road, all weather,  
hard surface improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry  
weather

U. S. Route State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ONSET, MASS.  
N4137.5—W7037.5/7.5

1967  
AMS 6867 II NW—SERIES V814

"Witch" (Gypsy)  
35 Lydia Island Rd.  
Wareham, MA 02571





**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

April 29, 2008

Mr. J. Paul Loether  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Catboat "Witch", Lydia Island Rd., Wareham (Plymouth), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Leslie Donovan, Lynn W. Smiledge, consultants  
James Mellon, Wareham Historical Commission  
Marjorie & Frank O'Brien  
Brenda Eckstrom, Wareham Board of Selectmen  
Planning Board Chair

Kevin Foster  
06/17/2008 04:28 PM  
EDT

To: Patrick Andrus/WASO/NPS@NPS  
cc:  
Subject: "Catboat" Gypsy/Witch Nomination

Hi Patrick,

Enclosed are my comments on the nomination for the wooden sailing yacht *Gypsy*, which we discusses last week.

The nomination is clearly written and makes a good case for listing the boat at the local and state levels of significance. With a bit more context the nomination would also support listing at the national level. If we ever do an NHL study of recreational boating this yacht should be considered for inclusion in the study.

I noted a few errors in the nomination but none that are particularly troubling for listing the boat on the National Register. I suggest adding a note to the documentation that includes the following comments:

The architect (naval) is listed on the form, but the builder was omitted. A.C. Howland should be added to that section.

My unanswered question is the original name of the boat. As the previous names are not certain it may be best to list the boat as *Gypsy*, and add some sort of specific note that boat is probably the *Witch*, b) *Wren*, c) *Gypsy*. I would suggest what ever is the best format to allow the search function to turn up these other names.

I have a reservation about the designation of this boat as a "catboat." A "catboat" in American small craft usage has a meaning specific to a particular rig, and a small range of hull designs that carried that rig. According to McEwen, W.A. & A.H. Lewis, *Encyclopedia of Nautical Knowledge*, Cambridge, MD: Cornell Maritime Press, 1953, p. 75, a catboat is a sailboat with a single fore-and-aft sail set from gaff and a boom, with the mast stepped well forward. De Kerchove, Rene, *International Maritime Dictionary*, Second edition, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1961, defines a catboat as a centerboard sailing boat characterized by a single sail, no jib, a small length-to-breadth ratio (they were quite wide), a bow with a great deal of freeboard, and a large cockpit. The mast is "a very stout stick" with no shrouds, set right forward in the bow. *Gypsy* has not had a catboat rig since she acquired the marconi rig, moved the mast (about 7-8 feet) aft, and later extended the rig by adding a genoa sail and a short bowsprit from which it could be set. The changes in rig made her a sloop, i.e. a shoal draft, broad beamed, centerboard-carrying, single-masted sailboat. That said, historically yacht owners and some of the people who marketed them were often rather loose in their use of correct maritime nomenclature (it is not jargon). It should also be noted that the rig change played a significant role in the continued use of the boat in racing and happened during the period of significance. My question is should the nomination include "catboat" as the descriptor: I might suggest "sailing yacht" instead.

It may also be useful to you to sum up my impression of the changes to the boat over time. During the period of significance the boat was generally maintained by replacement of materials using traditional methods and materials, such as the renewal of the centerboard and centerboard trunk. Other changes allowed the boat to continue to compete in racing and include the entirely new rig (mast moved aft about a quarter of the length, new mast, new boom, new style rudder, the original mast step removed and a new mast tabernacle fitted, structural strengthening of the new mast area, and the addition of a bowsprit). Some of the modern changes including additional structural strengthening, a new style of transom planking, and a new hatch fall outside of the period of significance but are of the same sort of change intended to allow an old boat to continue the rigorous activity for which it had been built. So even though changed, the boat preserves a great deal of historic integrity and is an extremely rare survivor of thousands of recreational racing yachts once common on American coasts. List this puppy!

One other tiny note, the name of the four masted schooner in Wiscasset, Maine alongside the *Luther Little* is *Hesper*, not *Hester*. (section 8, p. 2) If I don't mention it some "down-easter" will.

oZxoxZ

Kevin J. Foster  
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National Park Service  
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