

CHOPTANK HERITAGE SKIPJACK 2014 RACE

Dorchester Skipjack Committee
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The skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*, host vessel for the race, sails by the lighthouse at Long Wharf in Cambridge, where spectators can get close-up views of participating skipjacks.

Large Turnout of Skipjacks Expected at Choptank Heritage Race

Cambridge will be treated to a sight not seen in many years, if weather and boat conditions cooperate for this year's Choptank Heritage Skipjack Race on Saturday, September 27. More skipjacks than ever are expected for the race, which is free for spectators. Best views are from Long Wharf for the start and finish or Great Marsh Park for the middle legs of the race.

The annual race on the Choptank River began in 1997 and, with Deal Island's Labor Day event, is one of only two skipjack races still held on the Chesapeake Bay. Major sponsorship of the Cambridge race has been provided by the Pauline Foxwell Robbins and William David Robbins Charitable Foundation Trust.

A number of skipjacks not seen at the race in recent years are likely participants, including two that have been under restoration. The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's newly restored *Rosie Parks* is expected to compete. Race organizers hope the newly restored *Helen Virginia*, winner of this year's Deal Island race, will make the trip up the Bay, although she reportedly would not be racing with her all-female crew, as she did at Deal Island. The sight of as many as a dozen skipjacks on the Choptank may have older spectators recalling earlier days when working sail vessels filled the Cambridge harbor.

Volunteers of the nonprofit Dorchester Skipjack Committee organize the race, with a commitment to keeping it alive to support the skipjacks and the community. The boats compete for pride, not prize, with each participating skipjack receiving equal show-up money, derived from sponsorships and donations. The skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*, acting as host vessel for the event, donates her portion back to the race to allow larger awards to the other skipjacks.

The National Bank of Cambridge established and continues to sponsor the Choptank Heritage Cup Trophy, on which the winning skipjack and her captain's names are engraved. The trophy is displayed at the Dorchester County Visitor Center, while the winning captain takes home a smaller version of the cup. Capt. Wade Murphy, Jr., won the 2013 race with his skipjack, *Rebecca T. Ruark*.

In addition to the National Bank of Cambridge, other major annual sponsors are the Nathan Foundation and Snappers Waterfront Café, where the post-race luncheon, trophy presentation and this year's Captains and Crew Reception take place.

Craig's Drug Store is a returning sponsor for both the reception and the race t-shirts. The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, GKD-USA and Delmarva Public Radio are Captains Deck Sponsors. Other sponsors include Aero Energy, Bailey's Chesapeake Jewelers, Bay Country Communications, The J.M. Clayton Company, Delmarva Power, Delmarva Printing, Hebron Savings Bank, The Talbot Bank and Thomas' Funeral Home.

During the race, in addition to great views, Long Wharf will offer bleacher seating, food and gift vendors and exhibitors. Bill Smith will fire off his cannon to salute the vessels as they parade out from Cambridge Creek and to signal the official race start. Thomas Parker is bringing his traditional buyboat, *Thomas J*, down from Chestertown to serve once again as the race committee boat.

For those who like their skipjacks on a smaller scale, members of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Model Skipjack Club will hold a regatta for radio-controlled skipjacks, conditions permitting. All race festivities at Long Wharf are free.

The public can meet and greet the skipjack captains and crews on Friday evening, September 26, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Snappers in Cambridge. Reception tickets are \$30 if purchased in advance or \$35 after September 20. Tickets are available online through the current-race page of the *Nathan's* website, www.skipjack-nathan.org, where also may be found any last-minute changes in the lineup of expected boats.

Race programs, skipjack race t-shirts and 50/50 raffle tickets will be available all weekend, at the reception, during the race at Long Wharf, and at the *Nathan's* booth at Sunday's Dorchester Arts Showcase. Proceeds benefit the Choptank Heritage Skipjack Race.

For more information, to become a race sponsor or to make a donation, contact the Dorchester Skipjack Committee at 410-228-7141 or visit its website, www.skipjack-nathan.org.

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