

Small Craft

Parrot – a shallop:

A shallop is an open (undecked) double ended boat capable of being rowed or sailed. As well as serving as ship's boats (you should know that not every ship's boat would be considered a shallop), shallops were used as trading vessels in their own right. Shallops could be as large as 30-40 feet and capable of making extended voyages. In September of 1683, the 5 ton shallop (a 5 ton shallop would be about 30 feet long) *Anne* sailed out of Boston harbor bound for Virginia carrying 5 hogsheads of molasses, 2 casks of rum, a cask of wine, salt, provisions and soap. In 1609, John Smith used a very similar shallop to explore Chesapeake Bay.

Shallops generally carried a single mast and one or two sails. The modern term 'sloop' meaning a single masted fore and aft rigged sailboat, is derived from the word shallop. In the 1600s the shallop's mainsail was generally a spritsail. The spritsail was one of the first fore and aft sails used in Europe along with the lateen sail. It appears to have been invented by the Dutch in the late 1400s. The sail is four sided and is supported by the sprit pole which runs across the sail from the base of the mast to the head of the sail (see picture below). Shallops also often carried a staysail, a three sided sail attached to the forestay. The combination of these two sails made the shallop weatherly and easily maneuvered. It could sail much closer to the wind than a square rigged vessel like the *Maryland Dove*, a desirable trait in a coasting trader. *Parrot* is also rigged with leeboards, another Dutch invention. Leeboards are used to prevent the boat making leeway—that is drifting sideways rather than moving forward. Modern sailboats use either a deep fixed keel or a centerboard that can be raised or lowered. The modern centerboard however was not invented until the early 1800s. Leeboards were developed in the late 1400s. In use, the board on the lee side (the side away from the wind) is lowered. Water pressure against the board keeps the boat moving forward not sideways. When the boat tacks (changes direction) the old leeboard is hauled up and the new leeboard lowered.



Figure 1. Parrot under sail. Note the leeboard.

Statistics:

Length 16'.

Beam (width) 5'3".

Draft 1.5'

Designer: William A. Baker

Built: 1978

Olive Branch – a wherry:

Owning some form of boat was essential in 17th century, in the same way that owning a car is in the 21st century. The nature of Chesapeake Bay with its many tributaries meant that, even after horses became more common in the middle 1600s, water was still the primary means of transport for both goods and people. Let us say for example that someone in St. Mary's City wished to visit a friend who lived on the other side of the St. Mary's River. To do so by land would mean a trip of 10-15 miles on foot or by horse, whereas by boat it would be less than a mile. The type of boat ranged from simple dugouts to quite large sailing vessels. Flats (in the 21st century more often referred to as scows or barges) were used extensively as ferries, and the Bay boasts two of the oldest continuously operating ferries in the U.S., the Oxford-Bellevue ferry operating since 1683 and the Whitehaven ferry operating since 1685.

Because there were relatively few boat builders in 17th century Maryland, dugouts and flats dominated early on. Neither requires a great deal of skill to construct while a boat such as *Olive Branch* does. Thus ownership of such a boat would likely be restricted to wealthier individuals until the mid to late 17th century. *Olive Branch* was conceived and built in 1994 to serve as a ship's boat for the *Maryland Dove*. *Parrot*, the actual ship's boat is quite large and heavy. In the 17th century she would be towed astern or stored atop the main hatch at sea. However a number of factors precluded this in the operation of the *Maryland Dove*. When the *Maryland Dove* is away from Historic St. Mary's City on outreach trips, we require access to the main hatch. Whereas *Parrot* would occupy the whole of the hatch, *Olive Branch* only takes up half. In addition, the strain of lifting *Parrot* out of the water would be good for neither *Parrot* nor the crew. Being towed astern risks being flooded (something that did happen in the 17th century) and losing the boat or at least having to stop and bail her out. *Olive Branch* by contrast is a much lighter boat, being constructed largely of cedar. She is light enough that 3-5 people can lift her and carry her aboard and launch her off the side of the ship when necessary.

Wherries were used extensively in both England and America and came in a variety of shapes and sizes, ranging from small craft like *Olive Branch* used as personal transportation or as 'water taxis' to larger sailing vessels such as the Norfolk Wherry which transported cargo on the Norfolk broads in East Anglia until the 1950s.

Olive Branch is based on the Rhodes Wherry, a type found in Lincolnville Maine. The original was built by "Stimp" Rhodes in 1898. The flat bottom was designed to make it easy to launch and land the boat on an open beach. However as previously mentioned, the term wherry goes back to the 1400s.

Statistics:

Length: 12' 10"

Beam: 4' 6"

Capacity: 3 adults

Designer: Walter Simmons:

Built: 1994