

Vienna's Nanticoke River Shipwreck

Prepared for the Vienna Heritage Society

Topic	Description
Detailed Report	<i>Phase I and Phase II Underwater Archaeology Investigations of the Nanticoke River Shipwreck (Site 18DO497)</i> by SEARCH for State Highway Administration, Project AX744A55 (2017)
State Archaeological Site	Site 18DO497
Discovery Date & Place	Summer 2015, beneath US 50 Bridge over Nanticoke River
Entities Involved	• Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), Dr. Julie Schablitsky • Underwater Archaeology Branch of the Naval History and Heritage Command, Dr. Robert Neyland • Maryland Archaeological Conservation (MAC) Laboratory • SEARCH, Project Lead Jeff Enright
Pieces Recovered	30' keel, 20' keelson, floors, futtocks, deadwood, apron, 25 planks, 2 deadeyes, 3 bricks, 3 fasteners (treenail, driftpin, and nail)
Type of ship	Merchant, possibly sloop – not military
Estimated dimensions	Length: 40-45 feet Beam: 10-12 feet Depth of Hold: 6 feet Mast: 1 or 2 sloop-rigged Weight (builder's tonnage): 18-26 tons
Estimated building date	Based on dendrochronology (tree ring analysis from 10 timbers): Completed after 1743
Estimated sinking date	1778-81 (during skirmishes referred to as Battle of Vienna)
Number of masts	At least one, possibly two
Shipwright	Amateur shipwright from small shipyard or plantation
National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Eligibility	SEARCH argued that the Nanticoke River Shipwreck was eligible for listing in NRHP based on design characteristics and unique ties to Maryland and American maritime traditions. However, the Maryland Historical Trust deemed it not eligible based on compromised integrity.
Significance	Few examples of early Chesapeake Bay vessels leading up to the fast pilot boat schooners and Baltimore clippers. Only 41 colonial-era vessels have been documented anywhere in North America.
Duration of Exhibit	On loan to Vienna Heritage Society for 5 years
Future Work	Digital reconstruction and/or recovery of remaining pieces
For More Information	ViennaRadio.com/Shipwreck Listen for interviews with those who helped with recovery on WVCJ-LP 92.9 FM Vienna when Vienna's community radio station goes live in October

Four Preserved Pieces from the Ship on Display

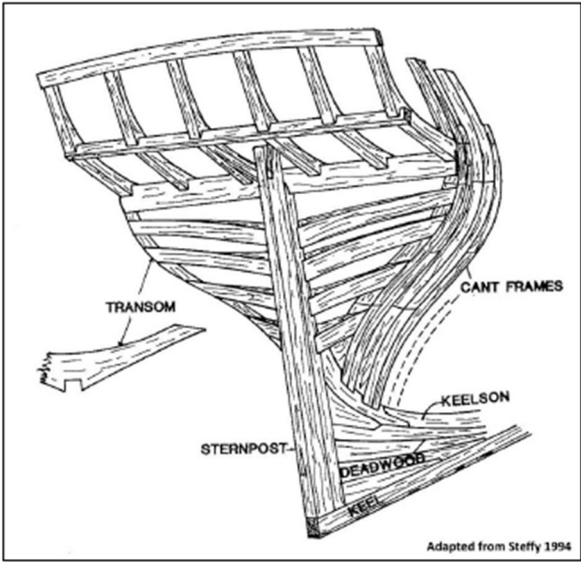


Figure 47. Transom stern construction.



Deadwood Stern & Keel fragments

The deadwood has three notches in both its port and starboard faces to accept half frames (notches on the port side are eroded). A one-in treenail is driven athwartships through the lower, aft corner of the deadwood just above the keel rabbet, which shows **evidence of charring**.

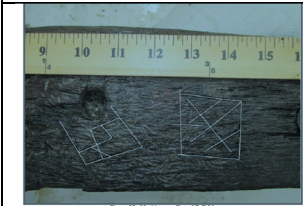


Figure 35. Markings on floor timbers.

NR-FL04 Floor Section

Sat atop the keel, this piece matches with the lateral fastener through the chamfered end of futtock NR-FK01. Both pieces have **faint markings**.



NR-FK01 Futtock

Paired with NR-FL04, this piece also has **faint markings** scrawled resembling either a Roman numeral “X” or partial asterisk within a square. It is possible these symbols denote a master frame, which provides additional evidence supporting the hypothesis that the **shipwright marked the timbers**, instead of the competing hypothesis that these were symbols designed to **ward off evil spirits**, possibly placed by enslaved people.



Futtock NR-FK04

“S” shape indicative of a cant frame that helped fashion a transom stern. SEARCH archaeological divers may have encountered a **transom piece on the river bottom**, but it was **pinned beneath modern debris** and could not be recovered safely in zero visibility.